



# New Waves in Social Psychology: Research Practices—Beyond the Disciplinary Epistemic and Academic Limits

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One of the most significant difficulties in writing about this topic is precisely the definition of social psychology (Gergen, 1982; Ibañez, 2004; Íñiguez-Rueda, 2003; Munné, 1980/2016; Teo, 2018). For both its apologists and its prominent critics (Canguilhem, 1968; Foucault, 1983), it has been common to understand psychology as a closed field, a relatively univocal discourse, inextricably associated with the “scientific” tradition, and the result of a limited number of practices. However, if we analyze the main complexities when defining what has been and is social psychology, these precisely help us to identify its contemporary features. Ultimately, what we call “new waves” is nothing more than legitimizing several of those features of social psychology, relatively marginalized in narrow definitions, accommodated to certain guilds or institutional walls.

What are these *new waves* in social psychology? They are, from our point of view, the irruption in the instituted, of those forms not previously

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represented, of the concerns about oneself and others, which now reappear as symptoms, in many cases, with the same difficulty of being registered,<sup>1</sup> but now, also more than ever, they precipitate. Of these precipitates, we show here some of the most visible—some of them, not without ambiguities and contradictions, will also be illustrated in the chapters that follow.

As it is known<sup>2</sup>, it is difficult to separate the knowledge produced by science, from the social practices that produce it and from the institutions in which it is represented; to which we would have to add<sup>3</sup> the imaginary representations that dominate what that field is and the unrepresented and unrepresentable imaginary that strikes.

In this sense, we appreciate that we are in a good moment of emergency in the praxis<sup>4</sup> and the institutional framework<sup>5</sup>, of many of those approaches to social psychology, which for a long time were not mainstream in the mainstream academic institutions nor did they precipitate as objects sensitive to being assigned to the set of psychological knowledge. Still, they coexisted as discourses on the otherness of the object.

This chapter opens the door to the analysis of some of these features and their consequences, both for the production of knowledge and practices and the institutional legitimation of this knowledge and practices and the emergence of associated networks<sup>6</sup> beyond the traditional scientific communities.

Several axes define these features, and they are more diverse than we could address in this chapter. Some of them will be very well represented by some authors in the chapters that follow. Here we will limit ourselves to those that are crucial and seem necessary to us when talking about new waves of social psychology: *the blurring of disciplinary boundaries, epistemic diversification, the renunciation of methodological “aseptic-ism,”*

<sup>1</sup>If you want as a result of the re-legitimization of positivism (Machin, 2010), in “paperism,” “methodologization,” or the capitalization of knowledge and the university institution as never before.

<sup>2</sup>By the sociology of science and the social studies of science and technology, among other approaches.

<sup>3</sup>Taking into account several of the self-reflective analyses of social psychology represented in this book

<sup>4</sup>Represented in the diversity of forms of existence of social psychologists as agents of change, transformation, and social and cultural creation.

<sup>5</sup>Departments and schools, scientific journals, congresses, and manuals, among others.

<sup>6</sup>A topic that will also be addressed in other chapters of this book.

*theoretical diversification, the legitimation of other cultural knowledge, the transition from one era of logos to another of transformative praxis and creation, and the political axis of the constant struggle for legitimizing the diversity of theoretical and methodological currents in social psychology.*

The general idea of *new waves* tries to avoid the temptation to make too abstract generalizations; it is about movements and ups and downs, ephemeral, alive, changing, immeasurable, but that does not go unnoticed by anyone who approaches the borders of that sea of practices, discourses, and knowledge. Undoubtedly, these new waves share traits with their times, which allow them a legitimation in certain institutional spaces and communities—real or virtual—that, in our opinion, require greater attention than that granted by those unions or walls of the instituted. The idea of *waves* also refers to a tendency of the imaginary fluid that contains and emerges forms of social psychology, with practical and instituted references and without a claim to representativeness. In this sense, references to social practices—such as research, social intervention, cultural transformation, or militant movements—are a way of visualizing these waves, to give an account of their existence at the level of representation—reproductive, transformative, or creative—and to relate them to other waves yet to emerge.

Legitimation will be one of the topics to discuss here. This is closely related to the instituted or group powers—of human collectives without a clear instituted reference or against the grain of their instituted referents. As we understand it, the legitimizing action sometimes has more disastrous effects on the evolution of thought and social creation than it is recognized. On the one hand, it anchors those legitimate scientific ideas, subjects, or guilds. On the other hand, it limits, hides, and marginalizes the appearance of other significant veins that coexist with the legitimized ones.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>When Sabina Spielreim (1912) was writing about the function of repression as a force that dominates and shapes, that generates conflict not only in subjectivity but also in the body, referring to what is to be instituted, she was anticipating some ideas that now seem great and novel to us in Butler's speech (Butler, 1993) but which at the time were marginalized and in turn expropriated by various men of psychoanalysis (Carotenuto & Trombetta, 1981, 1983; Volnovich, 1999). This could seem paradoxical if we consider the internal legitimation problems and outside its disciplinary and institutional borders that the psychoanalytic tradition itself has had to face. Examples like this are numerous in all the humanities and social sciences, and other sciences, which exceed the interest and possibilities of analysis of this chapter.

## THE BLURRING OF DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES

As has been widely documented (Íñiguez-Rueda, 2003; Garrido & Álvaro, 2003; Gergen, 1982; Teo, 2018), social psychology does not arise exclusively within general psychology but appears at the same time as ideas within philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and other social sciences and humanities, and also in the space of the production of popular questions and knowledge about collective subjectivity, some of which were welcomed respectively by “scientific” disciplines. If in a period—geographically and temporally well limited, no less influential until today—social psychology was intended to be a disciplined field, some contemporary productions<sup>8</sup> make a single and unifying discourse untenable.

In this sense, one of the trends in these new waves is the return to some of the questions of these initiatory moments in their respective disciplines that gave rise to them. Thus, in that return or reformulation to its foundational questions, the tensions of humanistic or social, scientific, or literary fields show at least a possibility of controversy.

The closure on models that approached the exact and natural sciences on the one hand or empiricism and positivism on the other limited—at least in most academic spaces—the conceptions of social psychology. However, in parallel to the chairs of social psychology, research, texts, papers, congresses, theories, and methods continued to be produced, on and in interaction with the psychosocial, with collective subjectivities and with social subjects and actors. The humanities departments produced texts that would have advanced much to interpret “traditional” problems focused in the academic spaces reserved for social psychology, from experimental or quasi-experimental perspectives. The philosophical implications of the findings of quantum physics on indeterminacy, and the systematic review of the problem of continuity (Machin, 2010), did not find a place in those chairs focused on nineteenth-century methods and approaches of the physic. This, however, did not prevent other productions, with content, results, and methods<sup>9</sup>, from making creative use of these ideas to put into perspective the complex reality they were studying without their being included within the discourse of social psychology.

<sup>8</sup>With the generation of deconstructive strategies, social action, or methodological lateral-ity, among other disagreements with the academic mainstream.

<sup>9</sup>Today, as a result of these new waves, recognized within the broad spectrum of social psychology.

In the 1960s of the last century, this production of problems, today accepted by social psychology as part of its disciplinary spectrum, was significant: George Devereux, in 1967, in one of his last works, covers many of these ideas and focuses them to a new look at psychology; Lacan, in 1961, dialogues with Merleau-Ponty; Foucault writes *Folie et déraison histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Foucault, 1961), *Les Mots et les Choses* (Foucault, 1966), and *L'archéologie du savoir* (Foucault, 1969), texts with consequences for social psychology. Meanwhile in 1968, Gilles Deleuze has published *Différence et Répétition* and in 1972 *L'Anti-Œdipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie*<sup>10</sup>, systematically cited today by supporters of a non-essentialist, posthumanism. Beforehand, in Russia, Vigotsky wrote, already in 1927, *The historical significance of the crisis of Psychology*, and to the long tradition—Czech, Hungarian, Bulgarian—of studies on culture, art, and aesthetics, important approaches were incorporated into the subjective production of cultural knowledge, acts, and products.

If, indeed, one wanted to ask about the emergencies of the man-culture/nature nexus, the logical thing would have been to accept the analysis was taking place in the middle of philosophy or aesthetics. Still, those discussions had to wait half a century to have full space in social psychology. Today it is easy to find “novel” works in social psychology on these topics; they are, however, effects of the legitimation of these practices and knowledge, which should always have belonged to him. As a result of a new *blurring of disciplinary boundaries*, both the permeability of this knowledge and practices and their legitimation beyond the old boundaries imposed by closed disciplines are favored.

However, the Latin American context has been especially eclectic, not only in the use, assimilation, reception, or reproduction of theoretical or methodological referents but also in the own production of *trans* knowledge both in the theoretical referents and in the relationship between disciplinary perspectives. For this side of the ocean, the history of relative gradual separation of the social sciences and humanities, experienced by the various disciplines at the end of the nineteenth century and which would affect the first half of the twentieth century, was not so. Many authors maintained their tendency to blur these disciplinary boundaries

<sup>10</sup>The social as a space of partial connections, dominated by desiring machines “(...) terre nouvelle où le désir fonctionne d’après ses éléments et ses flux molécules...” (Deleuze & Félix, 1972: 379). It will have consequences for the so-called post-humanist or non-essentialist approaches, for problems relevant to social psychology.

based on an eclectic—or elective—enlightened rhetoric throughout the nineteenth century well into the twentieth century (Ramos, 1989; Machin, 2008).

The theoretical diversification that manifested itself as disseminating trends and currents of social psychology, once it left the academies, was unstoppable (Machin, 2010). It was impossible to collect in a book. It can be illustrated just by reviewing the multiplicity of magazines of the last three decades<sup>11</sup>.

We prefer to use the word “waves”, to refer to the great diversity of theoretical and methodological alternatives difficult to frame in a term that is not exclusive. It is one of the more significant differences with classical Social psychology or with the initial differentiation experienced after what was identified as the “crisis of Social psychology”.

The diversity of disciplinary associations was the first step towards a belated recognition of Georges Canguilhem’s (1968) observation on the disciplinary dispersion of approaches given the nature of its “object.” As Canguilhem remarked, the Greek classics had “(...) Studies related to the soul (...) divided between metaphysics, logic and physics. (...)” (P. 391). Indeed, in these new waves, we meet again with approaches to problems of social psychology, from philosophy, anthropology, medicine, or even biology or physics. This disciplinary contamination of social psychology issues results from its recognition as “science of the soul” rather than the result of the professional intrusion<sup>12</sup>. The relation cultural/natural constitutes an operation to emphasize that the precipitates of that “soul” on which one is interested to study, appear as a result of man’s action on culture, society, nature, and himself. Many of these works prefer to omit adjective, considering in itself the operation of the nexus<sup>13</sup> for any study of soul concerning the human being.

<sup>11</sup> Currently, the SCOPUS database, with the subject filters: Arts And Humanities Close Health Policy Close Psychiatry And Mental Health Close Public Health, Environmental And Occupational Health Close Multidisciplinary Close Applied Psychology Close General Psychology Close Psychology (Miscellaneous) Close Social Psychology Close Social Sciences Close, identifies 12,523 journals Psychology Close Social Sciences Close. If we leave only social psychology, 335 different journals still appear. If we consider the criteria required by these indexers to include journals and the dispersion of works in other journals of the humanities, social sciences, mental health, and so on, we could presume such dispersion would be overwhelming.

<sup>12</sup> As it used to be called from a “scientific” psychology.

<sup>13</sup> You can review Hammack et al. (2019); Tucker (2018); Teo (2018).

Epistemic diversification appeared as a meta-theoretical trend, after theoretical diversity, as an attempt to rectify the indiscriminate dispersion. It is no problem for anyone today to affirm that positivism was dominant in psychology (Machin, 2010) and the social sciences for a long time<sup>14</sup>. As we mentioned before, what is interesting about the period of these new waves, at least for the production of knowledge and research, is that the emergence of other epistemic alternatives can no longer be hidden or delegitimized.

Indeed, it was the Anglo-Saxon tradition that most welcomed positivism<sup>15</sup> as an *episteme*. Still, it existed in most chairs, departments, and the like in schools of psychology in most countries of the world. Even in France, where structuralism as an episteme and its derivations dominated the academic world for several decades, psychology maintained serious ties with positivism. In the former USSR, with the strong presence of the Cultural Historical Approach—and its exciting origin links with structuralism, via Russian formalism or psychoanalysis—positivist manuals and their ways of narrating the story were used when operational definitions were required. Research and the rich Vigotskian thought was degraded, by way of Leontiev and others, in positivist pragmatics, with vague ties to the cultural-historical perspective.

The Cuban context, eclectic par excellence throughout the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, had an exciting reception of the Cultural Historical Approach—the dialectical and historical materialist episteme—with important productions based on questions, premises, and theoretical arguments of Vigotsky. However, each time that an attempt was made to adjust to the methodological, it returned to the pragmatic positivist episteme of the manuals of “research methodology,” where Mario Bunge first and Sampieri late became the most cited authors of methodology in research psychology (Machin, 2010). The line of training of PhD’s was adjusted to the most positivist and experimentalist of psychology, and the attempts to evade it failed. Psychoanalysis—both in its phenomenological version and in its most structuralist one—never became

<sup>14</sup>It continues to be so even today, in statistical terms or concerning indicators in which contemporary science is instituted.

<sup>15</sup>Among other reasons, due to its ability to produce interchangeable, marketable objects (Machin, 2010).

part of academic discourse until very recently, more for reasons of praxis and the rigidity of the instituted than for political decisions<sup>16</sup>.

In most Latin American countries, almost except for Argentina and some academic spaces in Brazil, where psychoanalysis had a wide reception (Ben Plotkin, 1996), and in Cuba, with the influence for several decades of the Cultural Historical Approach and Marxism<sup>17</sup>, positivism was until very recently the dominant trend in psychology<sup>18</sup>. However, in this context, community praxis beyond the academy, as Maritza Montero (1998) points out, facilitated the penetration of other forms of knowledge production and created cultivation in this way for future emergence in academic discourse. On the other hand, as in the USA and many European countries, the departments of humanities, schools of philosophy, philology, and art criticism gave room to other authors, questions, and reflections; at a certain point, they ended up contaminating the chairs of social psychology as well. In this way, thinking today about violence, gender, or social movements, it is impossible to do it apart from a list of perspectives so diverse, rich, and in many cases contradictory and even antagonistic<sup>19</sup>.

This diversification, as we mentioned, sometimes almost syncretic, nevertheless contributed to the diversification of the field of social psychology and in turn to the emergence of previously unexpected swings in it.

In this sense, it was proposed, regarding the transformations in the studies of identities, to review its evolution as a *logbook* to understand the epistemic traits that social psychology has adopted, in its transit through

<sup>16</sup>As was the case in the former USSR, Luria and Vigotsky had to abandon their ties with psychoanalysis for political reasons. Nevertheless, this “resignation” allowed Vigotsky to develop his rich theoretical apparatus still insufficiently known—or misinterpreted—from the so-called critical psychology on the other side of the Berlin wall.

<sup>17</sup>According to Pablo Guadarrama González (1986: 35-54).

<sup>18</sup>As happened for most social sciences and some humanities, review in this regard: Guadarrama (2004, 2011): 125-149).

<sup>19</sup>It happened contrary to all discursive logic or the explicit position of the authors themselves, even, against the current even of the original traditions that may have developed while ignoring each other—as if structuralism and hermeneutics—(Eco, 1992). Eco (1992) tells us how he distanced himself from Derrida, on the validity of the interpretations, regarding his request for a letter of adhesion. Derrida, on his part, lashes out with his own version, distancing himself from the theoretical perspective, both from Eco and Habermas, in communications to his students. However, nothing has prevented them from appearing cited and analyzed side by side in texts on specific topics, the same as Foucault with Derrida or Deleuze with Butler, even against the grain of all logic or discursive coherence (Machin, 1998), of the differences between the closure of interpretation and an opening of interpretation (Ferraris, 1981).



various “moment,” not necessarily successive<sup>20</sup>: *identities as individual facts, identities as objective collective phenomena, identities as objective collective phenomena, identities as a subjective phenomenon, identities as a space of social tension, and identities as a process under construction.*

On the last of those places, we will stop briefly, for being one of the representatives of these new waves. At this time, we find authors from a phenomenological, structural, or critical episteme. Authors we lump together in this “moment” share, however, the dissolution of the idea of the collective/individual division to approach studies of phenomena of identity production at different levels. Instead, identity appears as the result of ephemeral social constructions. In this sense, the use of methods focused on the individual subject is combined with collective work methods, interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. It undoubtedly supposed the definitive renunciation of identities as something objective, represented, or representable, a renunciation of essentialisms. It means an emphasis on identities as ephemeral or fading—identities as indecisive and multi-determined phenomena. Identities under construction, to be deconstructed. But, mainly, identities as a result of the return of an unrepresented and unrepresentable remainder. The need is recognized, for its elucidation, of the return to other disciplines such as philosophy (Tucker, 2014) or anthropology. It results from popular knowledge and social movements, the feminisms, and queer theory<sup>21</sup>, among others. This last

<sup>20</sup> You can review the work, Machin (2014) *Identities as a logbook of the epistemic trends of research in Social Psychology*, from which we extract a synthesis of the stages not discussed in this chapter: “Identities as individual facts: From an episteme positivist centered on the subject/individual, Identity as a result of the influence of others on the individual, Use of experimental methods, Confidence in the “objectivity” of identities. Identities as objective collective phenomena: Although they were also maintained from a positivist episteme, now they were going to look for the phenomenon centered on the collective—group/community/social/national identity. Identity appears in this case as a result of social interactions, national and cultural traits. Maintained the use of experimental methods and were incorporated the questionnaires and mass application tests. Of course, there is confidence in the “objectivity” of identities and an essentialist proposal. However, they were the first steps towards a psychosocial approach. Identities as a subjective phenomenon: A phenomenological or structural episteme focused on the collective—group/community / social/national identity. Identity as a result of social construction. Use of methods centered on the individual and collective subject, interviews, focus groups, participant observation. Emphasis on the subjective nature of identities. Result of the contribution of symbolic interactionism and social constructionism.”

<sup>21</sup> Hammack, one of the best representatives of this trend, describes it from what he calls the queer axiom (Hammack et al., 2019).

moment, representative of the new waves, appropriates those approaches that understand “identity” as never fully constituted, of the developments of Jean Luc-Nancy when proposing identity as becoming rather than as being, or define it, closer to Butler<sup>22</sup>, as a performative instance (Hammack et al., 2019).

According to several of its authors, criticism of identity in being was one of the pillars of this turn, according to which seeing something in the order of Being, and not of transition, of transit, of becoming, will have. In addition to the epistemic limitation, that emphasis complies with an etic problem: it stigmatizing the subjects. The assignment of traits to the “subject,” to the group, to the “structure”—of any level and order—has epistemic limitations that put structuralism in question and place it on the same side of positivism, despite its attempt to get out of this framework thru the return to the Freudian concept of non-inscription. At the same time, it has the ethical cost of channeling the subjects, no longer in psychiatric categories, but now, structural ones.

For example, in this sense, the Heideggerianism of specific passages of Lacan, and some Lacanians, appropriate it from a place that constitutes the renunciation of the questioning of the subject. The epistemic itinerary that Parker, Zizek or even Nancy or Butler rescue; associated with the possibility of questioning the “subject” itself (Parker, 2009), of its universality in politics according to Zizek; of the body (Butler, 1993)<sup>23</sup>; or the identity in its temporal sense<sup>24</sup>; as oppositional or dualistic<sup>25</sup> according to Nancy

<sup>22</sup>Despite their differences, Judith Butler, Slavoj Zizek, and Ernesto Laclau declare that they agree in stating that the “‘identity’ itself is never fully constituted; in fact, since identification is not reducible to identity, it is important to consider the incommensurability or gap between them” (Butler et al., 2000: 1).

<sup>23</sup>In *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, Butler, Zizek, and Laclau point to revising the universality. That links Zizek to the political. Yet, at the same time, he relates Butler to the unrealizable of the subject in discourse. With significant differences among each other on the question of the “subject”: (...) “There are significant differences among us on the question of the “subject”, and this comes through as (...) we each attempt to take account of what constitutes or conditions the failure of any claim to identity to achieve final or full determination” (Butler et al., 2000: 2).

<sup>24</sup>Nancy points to the ephemeral identity, as revealed in its construction process, and that dissolves at that very moment.

<sup>25</sup>Nancy (2007) returns to this problem in the prologue to the Spanish edition of *58 indicios sobre el cuerpo, Extensión del alma*, stressing the impossibility of a Cartesian dualism “(...) the body is foreign [estrangement] to the spirit only if this strangeness [étrangèreté] -and this strangeness [étrangèté]—are inscribed in the heart of egoic intimacy and thus allow him to

(2007) are some of the best examples of that tradition. The structural, in its moment of continuity, renounces the tradition in which the Freudian work is inscribed. Freud proposes an episteme of the discontinuity of the subject, as a feature that makes possible the emergence of the living human ( $\zeta\omega\nu\nu$ ) (Canguilhem, 1968) and its forms of Being (Foucault, 1969) as well as possible approaches to knowledge about him (Bachelard, 1971).

Thus, one of the most significant consequences, for one of the epistemic turns of these new waves in social psychology, is related to this continuous return of the non-registration of the subject in the networks, as recognition of his discontinuous being, of the various forms of manifestation of that discontinuity, and of that non-inscription in culture.

Several of the approaches to these problematic marriages between epistemes, in particular the Freudian and Marxist (Machin, 1998), reappear in Castoriadis's work, via the concept of social imaginary and its inscription in the institutional, not absent of contradictions when it has to address the unrepresentable and its signs in culture. The solution he offers is precisely in finding in the institutionable, not instituted, forms of expression of the imaginary beyond the objective (Machin, 2000; 2011 (2005), which are, however, a non-Marxist parenthesis of his work. The costs of the non-assimilation of these passages from Castoriadis's work—by some sociologists who made it positive—are analyzed in Chap. 6.

### THE RENUNCIATION OF METHODOLOGICAL “ASEPTIC-ISM”

The field of the “methodological” was undoubtedly one of the most favored with these new waves. Academic researchers of social psychology of almost the entire twentieth century pursued the ideal of the non-contamination of the researcher with his field. The renunciation of this ideal was a visible crest in these new swells.

Not only was relegated this epistemic position of the aseptic research, a paradigm of the nineteenth-century exact and natural sciences—which social psychology copied—but was dissolved, the entire rigid methodological apparatus associated with it. Today, it is difficult to find someone who demands that the researcher not be contaminated with the “object” or study subjects. As has been commented in other places, this

relate to himself [á soi] while connecting to the world (in truth, these two relationships are inseparable)” [In Spanish in the original, translation by us].

contamination, recognized since the first decade of the twentieth century by physics<sup>26</sup>, took almost a century more to reach social psychology.

It is worth mentioning that the costs of this turn—pointed out by Devereux in *From Anxiety to Method*—are not only ethical but epistemic and theoretical. In this sense, various assertions, prior or contemporary to the behavioral and positivist period of social psychology<sup>27</sup>, are later taken up under the euphemistic label of “situated knowledge,” evading, on the one hand, the discussion about the social and historical determination within Marxism<sup>28</sup>, they were the first step in recognition of the referentiality of all knowledge<sup>29</sup> and the incorporation of great methodological diversity that some of the authors who collaborate with the text they try to illustrate.

This “pollution” of the knowledge also affects the diversification of knowledge since essentialisms are no longer “the alternative.” In this sense, the legitimation of this contamination in the production of knowledge could only have occurred due to the death of the meta-stories. Still, at the same time, thanks to its existence, since before them, it would only have appeared as an undifferentiated part of the knowledge about man and his cultural/natural insertion.

<sup>26</sup>The Heisenberg uncertainty principle is one of the most cited, but in reality, it was the beginning of the fracture with the idea of continuity for physics. In the same way, he favored the position that faced the traditional asepsis of the researcher in his relation to the object of study in the exact and natural sciences.

<sup>27</sup>Canguilhem’s alert about oblivion “concerning historical circumstances and the social media in which they are led to propose their methods or techniques and make their services accepted” by behavioral psychologists coincides with Vigotsky’s ideas. It also conduces to Vigotsky to propose that all psychology was social. Later, Enrique Pichon-Riviere followed a similar path to affirm a Social Psychoanalysis.

<sup>28</sup>On some of Marx’s statements that, which gave rise to later discussions, review, for example, Marx, K (1857-1858: 234).

<sup>29</sup>Philip Hammack, for example, illustrates the perspective offered by the queer perspective by proposing an episteme of open axiom, which transitions from an essentialist perspective of intimacy to a contextual one: “The queer axiom of open possibility shifts our epistemology from one concerned with essential intelligibility of human intimacy in some transhistorical form to one fundamentally concerned with meaning in context” (Hammack et al., 2019: 583).

## THE LEGITIMATION OF OTHER CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

This legitimation appeared closely related to the epistemic diversification that, in a way, pluralized and democratized the field of social psychology and, on the other hand, contributed to order the indiscriminate production of apparently diverse currents, authors and theories, a legitimation of knowledge which occurred “popular” (Teo, 2018). At the same time, it is a relative of a new twist to the construction that this epistemic ordering supposed on the theoretical diversity of social psychology after the crisis of positivism.

In this sense, it is appropriate to recognize Teo (2018) that the legitimation<sup>30</sup> of social knowledge came to attenuate the epistemic violence established for several decades by academic positivism. According to Held (2019), epistemic violence would not be rectified only with the recognition of “other” or folk knowledge, which would constitute a certain risk of naive conception about folk knowledge and the neutrality of its effects in some themes like discrimination<sup>31</sup>. She proposes the adequacy and circumscription of the contextual validity of the knowledge: “On my interpretation, homogenization here entails epistemic violence” (Held, 2019: 3).

Probably, the confusion of many psychologists, self-named “critics,” arises from the erroneous interpretation of the Vigostkian approach on folk knowledge. In Vigotsky, the concepts related to an eventual epistemology—zone of proximal development, social situation of development, or experience—are concepts related to the link. In this sense, if you want to associate it with the so-called critical psychology, it must be done to understand this as an episteme of linking knowledge. From the parents of the critical approach, it also points to procedures based on the gnoseological bond. For the timely appreciation of this type of knowledge, Devereux (1967) proposes recognizing the transference as data as a result of

<sup>30</sup> In truth, it’s relegitimization because these always existed as part of the discourses about the man and his relationship with himself and nature; they were relegated as a result of the predominance of scientism in psychology.

<sup>31</sup> “We should of course investigate the bases for selection of all concepts and conceptions in psychology. But this does not entail a clear line of demarcation between folk concepts from below and expert concepts from above. If by “from above” Teo means only the concepts that are selected by scientists for their fit with questionable regulatory purposes, then the worry is not (a) the folksy vs. scientific nature of the concepts themselves, but rather (b) the reasons for their selection, which implicate the ways in which group differences are interpreted and the real-world purposes to which those interpretations are put” (Held, 2019: 5).

knowledge on the link on the researcher's side. There is no denial of the real, as some authors said, but recognition of the real as current and active, from the reading in the subject of the emergencies of the bond, with other subjects, with culture, and with nature.

## THE TRANSITION FROM ONE ERA OF LOGOS TO ANOTHER OF TRANSFORMATIVE PRAXIS AND CREATION

Much has been written about this topic, particularly from Latin American community social psychology and gender studies/interventions in social psychology. As anticipated in the conception of the social imaginary in Castoriadis (1987, 1994, 2015), and some developments of that concept in Latin America (Machin, 2006; 2012); transform and perform reality, rather than ideals—contained in the moral imperative—constitute a need for the social psychologist as a subject. It has antecedents in Marx's idea of realization<sup>32</sup>, in whose work this bet remained unfinished, as well as in Vigostsky's for social psychology (1962; 1978; 2004). Undoubtedly, any of the twentieth-century versions of the dominant *episteme* in social psychology remained in the emphasis of reproduction—which in Marxism has its cardinal sin in the supposed “Lenin theory of knowledge.” Gergen's anti-representationism theses were the spearhead for social psychology that ended, in some cases, at the subjective extreme of creationism (Gergen, 2014).

In this book, you will find on this subject essential updates to these discussions in the texts of Beatriz Macías (Chap. 2), Claudia Calquín and Iván Torres (Chap. 8), and some sections of Chap. 6, praxis and return of the imaginary, and 10, validation of the current creation of the subject in the networks.

The *political axis of the constant struggle for legitimizing the diversity of theoretical and methodological currents in social psychology* is another of the most definitely visible features of these waves. At some point, we commented that the way out of the so-called crisis of social psychology had involved at least three alternatives: following the mainstream, consolidating it, and adapting it to new social and disciplinary demands; build new disciplinary fields closed on themselves, with political interest for

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, *Grundrisse* TII, Pgs. 2. 3. 4; 457, on the relationship between objectification and subjectivation as a function of the temporal axis and the idea of subjective as potentiality; and TII, p. 162, on the absence of mediation.

professional associations, but relatively little significance for the set of disciplinary knowledge and even less for society and culture; or to critically transform the objects, the episteme, the methods, the theoretical foundations, and the ethics of the traditional perspective of social psychology, without imposing previous disciplinary and epistemic limits.

According to various authors (Gergen, 1982; Domènech & Ibañez, 1998; Íñiguez-Rueda, 2003; Machin, 2010), after the crisis of traditional social psychology, in the academic context, there were still those who preferred to remain attached to the mainstream, with the same concepts and problems, with a similar positivist approach, but consolidating and adapting it to the new disciplinary and social demands.

In some contemporary works, it is evident that the alternative of restructuring consolidated fields and theories is still a trend, at the time anticipated by Lakatos<sup>33</sup> as a way of updating the theoretical corpus of a paradigm to preserve its core. In this sense, one can find works such as those of Gergen on social constructionism (Gergen, 1999) or those of Jonathan Potter (2011) on discursive psychology or others that update the concepts of the traditional theoretical field<sup>34</sup> of social psychology in contemporary discussions.

The emergence of new guilds, around the reification of approaches, epistemologically different from those of traditional social psychology, but just as closed in on themselves as traditional social psychology when it was mainstream (Crespo, 1995; Machin, 1998), is one of the riskiest trends for the future development of social psychology. In the presentation of his book, Thomas Teo comments<sup>35</sup> that his texts had appeared in magazines rather than in books because he belonged to a psychology department, whose academic practices recommended the publication of papers; before

<sup>33</sup> In particular, in several of his works, his lecture—and transcription—from 1973 can be reviewed as one of his most clear communications on the dynamics and particularities of “research programs.”

<sup>34</sup> The lector can review the attempt to re-legitimize discursive social psychology by updating the traditional concept of attitude in social psychology in Potter, Jonathan; Hepburn, Alexa & Edwards, Derek (2020: 336-356).

<sup>35</sup> “Psychology, in emulating the natural sciences and not the humanities, the arts, or the concept driven social sciences, has copied many of the subcultural practices of the natural sciences. One important custom is the primacy of peer-reviewed journal articles over book publications that have remained central in many of the humanities. Because I work in a psychology department and sometimes begrudgingly follow the rules of the disciplinary game, some ideas presented in this book have been published in journals, book chapters, and conference presentations” (Teo, 2018).

publishing long texts such as suggested by the humanities departments. This statement, made casually, is not minor; it is a common fact in many academic contexts, which have closed themselves off from new forms of legitimacy that drive the evolution of diverse forms of knowledge complex due to their rigidity and cloistering. The scientific departments limit establishing validation rules of their academics, with bibliometric indicators associated with specific publications. Others, with a humanities aspect, do it with the emphasis on philosophical texts of the current or inclination of that guild. In all of them, other more subtle practices<sup>36</sup>, such as the devaluation of the use of specific authors or styles, alien to those who lead the culture or the institutional unconscious, are comfortable for them; they establish rigid criteria of discipline and legitimation, which the new tendencies of social psychology try to fracture systematically. In this sense, we see philosophical texts appear in journals or communications from psychology congresses, as presentations close to anthropology or social sciences, or sociology in legitimate spaces for philosophy, not without discomfort for the walls of the instituted<sup>37</sup>.

Finally, a third way out of the crisis of social psychology can be mentioned, represented in those who chose to legitimize objects, problems, epistemes, theories, and methods, which, although they had existed long before, now had the explicit purpose of transforming the foundations of

<sup>36</sup> Foucault's concepts of "alethurgy," or rituals, are inexorably linked to every institution in a more or less visible way. In Foucault's alethurgy, several authors associate it with his 1983 redefinition "(...) the act by which the truth is manifested (...)" (Foucault, 2010 (1984), p. 19); however, if we review his previous course from 1979 to 1980, we end up understanding later in his analysis as something that transcends the act to grouping ritualized practices "(...) the rites and procedures of veridiction (...)" (p. 66) "(...) that set of procedures and say (...)," which ensure belonging to specific communities, with varying degrees of institutionalization, is an essential advance in the identification of cultural processes apparently alien to the recognized traits for academic unions, but as effective as the rituals instituted in norms and protocols, insofar as "(...) there is no exercise of power without something that resembles it" (Foucault, 2014 (1984): 67). In Castoriadis, there are several passages in his work on the idea of how rituals "drive" institutions and their practices, but particular interest can be seen in the chapter "The institution and the imaginary" of his work. In it he puts religion as an example, as a paradigmatic case of what is instituted. Armando Bauleo (1994—unpublished lecture notes), a follower of Enrique Pichon Riviere's work, works from the concept of the "institutional unconscious," the process of constitution of practices governed by norms that sustain the institution beyond what is instituted.

<sup>37</sup> Greater length and other scenes on the subject can be reviewed in the communication: Machin (2018). Clinic, politics and university (s); subordinações, sobreposições e tensões. Roteiro for a contemporary setting.



social psychology and blur its limits (Machin, 2020). It is this third way that we have tried to document in this chapter and this book and which provides that character of relational, political, and social creation and action to the knowledge of social psychology (Gergen, 2014; Bhatia, 2015; Teo, 2018; Tucker, 2018; Hammack et al., 2019). As we discussed before, these waves always bring their hangovers. If we review the proposal, Teo (2018) when referring to critical social psychology as an alternative to the epistemic violence of academic knowledge, in its legitimate attempt to democratize knowledge, supposes a symmetry of theoretical knowledge/folk knowledge in the definition of the “critical,”<sup>38</sup> hardly sustainable without falling into trivialization in the construction of knowledge (Held (2019)).

### THE QUESTION ABOUT GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY AS A POSSIBILITY REVISITED

One aside, they require other emerging features, as they are relatively more controversial in themselves but no less emerging when these *new waves* are visualized. One of the unmistakable signs of these *new waves* is undoubtedly the way to revisit the question of the possibility of a general or individual psychology<sup>39</sup>. Although the discussion of this topic exceeds the purpose of this chapter<sup>40</sup>, it is necessary to remark some elements which contributed to these *new waves* of social psychology.

As part of this return to the origins of social psychology, the recognition arises in most currents in psychology that are recognized as “social” or “cultural” that the processes that are studied are no longer “individual.” Although this was an idea in many of its founders<sup>41</sup> and later became a common idea in social psychology, it was far from the consequences for psychology. Nevertheless, the question now exceeds the statements for

<sup>38</sup> On this subject, the contribution to the discussion of the work of Beatriz Macías, contained in this book, is fascinating.

<sup>39</sup> See the works of Hammack et al. (2019), Parker (2009), el Teo (2018), and Potter et al. (2020), among others.

<sup>40</sup> It is evaluated in Chap. 1 of a book of Machin, R (Ed.) The general psychology examined, still unpublished.

<sup>41</sup> Vigotsky (1927), Freud (1929-30), and also, of course, in the first sociologists, who contributed to the emergence of the field of social psychology, or some of the parent anthropologists of several of the current trends in social psychology such as George Devereux (1967), among others.

social psychology itself. It takes up this in its repercussions for psychopathology, health psychology, medicalization processes, judicial psychology, and even studies of mental processes of such traditions far from this as the so-called neurosciences.

The “individual” will cease to exist, for most of these trends that we include here in *new waves*. It will cease to exist, on the one hand, because precisely that which we call undivided will not be more than an illusion both of the subjects themselves and of the society that inoculates that phantom in those subjects. But secondly, it will not exist since every process considered “individual” has its origin and destination in a connecting, cultural, and social space.

Vigotsky, in his early works, doubted the need for social psychology, whereas all psychology was social. On the other hand, his own work is a sample of this. Most of his concepts, rather than allude to the individual, refer to the relationship of some individuals with others. Then, the later developments of his work show the procedures in which that called “social” is verified, by understanding, for example, that psychological processes occur twice, once on the outside—of the subject—and another on the inside<sup>42</sup>. In the same way, when dealing with “object relations,” he analyzes that from the moment the adult gives him an object to the child, he gives him more than an object; he is given all the culture that this object embodies. Thus, for Vigotsky (1925; 1927; 1978), the adult would be in charge of unravelling those cultural processes embodied in the thing for the child. On the other hand, when referring to the social function of interaction with objects, he recognizes the character of a social entity to any natural thing. It appears from the beginning of human life as a simulation mechanism and at the same time abstraction -or representation- of the functions that he will do with them. Thus, a stick can be a comb, even when with it only the hairstyle occurs virtually.

In Freud’s case, James Strachey shows us how the evolution of his work led, first, to the recognition of the extraction of the norms of culture from the first object relations<sup>43</sup>. From the first sensations, in the child, according to Freud, these influences are inseparable. And then, in the process of

<sup>42</sup>A division that he proposes as provisional, and that finds its moment of synthesis in the concept of the *social situation of development*, condenses his reflections on human development and adheres to a monism that denies an eventual dualism didactic purposes—in his work.

<sup>43</sup>Review James Strachey’s “Introduction” to Freud, Sigmund (Freud, 1930 [1929]) The malaise in culture, Freud, Sigmund, Complete Works, T XXI.

separating external sensations, from those received from their internal organs<sup>44</sup>, painful incorporation into culture appears. Freud supposes an operation of “discernment” to this separation, which is usually forgotten, but which will nevertheless be one of the features of the human being, differentiated from the rest of the animals. In the same way, when recognizing the claim that the child must make to recover that which comes from the other, he fully incorporates it as being painfully linked. In this work<sup>45</sup>, Freud ends up giving civilization its preponderant role in every constitution of the psychic apparatus. Thus, the entire text of “Civilization and Its Discontents” goes through that ambivalence of recognizing the linking nature of the human symptom while trying to ask about the determination in “the human” of that disposition to the relational as symptomatic<sup>46</sup>.

In any of the cases, a longing for returning to the discernment of that bond, and of the consequences in terms of symptoms, emergencies, and processes in the individual, of that primordial bond is identified in many of the social psychologists who write today; either through subjectivity-objectivity, culture-nature dichotomies, or contemporary monisms (Tucker, 2018; Teo, 2018; Hammack et al., 2019; Potter et al., 2020).

In the same way, interesting reflections on the *sources of knowledge in human sciences* have appeared in this *sea*; some of them will be discussed in Chap. 6, but we do not want to stop highlighting here some of the destinations towards which they point. In principle, it seems to tell us that to believe in the documents, which were written by people, rather than the word of the people, is at least naive, if not hypocritical, mercenary, and so

<sup>44</sup> “You must be most intensely impressed by the fact that many of the sources of excitement from which you will later discern your bodily organs can send you sensations at all times, while others—and among them the most desired: the mother’s breast—They temporarily remove him, and he only manages to recover them by bellowing in demand for assistance. In this way, an “object” as opposed to the self for the first time is something that is “outside” and only through a particular action is it forced to appear” (Freud, 1929-Freud, 1930: 67-68).

<sup>45</sup> But that had been a constant throughout his work and has as its antecedents other texts from other texts such as “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920) or “Totem and Taboo” (1913 [1912]), to only cite some texts outside of his well-knowns “cultural works.”

<sup>46</sup> According to Freud, “the extent to which culture is built on the renunciation of the instinct cannot be ignored” (p. 96). In this way, he affirms that this “(...) “cultural denial” governs the vast sphere of links social among men” (p. 96) while calling us to “ask ourselves about the influences to which cultural development owes its origin, the mode of its genesis and what commanded its course” (p. 97).

on. In human cultural products, there is not one that could be considered privileged, just as their material works are not, nor is language, their own body, or their associations, their feelings or sensations about themselves and what affects them (impacts, impresses). This renunciation of the eventual reification of specific sources, which could also be considered part of that process of delegitimization/legitimation mentioned earlier, also has consequences for the multiplication of data and methods for social psychology.

## FORWARDS

By way of “things to come”<sup>47</sup>, we would like to return at least to social psychology and its connection with other disciplines in this work.

The fact that the so-called sociological social psychology has been privileged and recognized as such, after the crisis of the experimental period of psychology, was not the result of chance, several factors came together in it: the letter of recognition that sociology had been having in the universities and in the social world, a certain marginality that anthropology had given itself, the relegation of philosophy and linguistics to schools of the humanities, while psychology remained in those of social sciences.

This panorama has changed. It has become rarefied, also due to social change, the contamination of knowledge through technology, among society in general and in schools and faculties themselves, where the same can be seen in schools that try to marginalize the psychoanalysis or philosophy, like others, to any manifestation of “rationalist” psychology. This degree of contamination and controversy has served psychology understood as social psychology well in a certain sense: its objects and legitimate fields of study have been diversified, its interpretive theoretical sources considered valid have been diversified, its methods have been mixed, they have trans-disciplinary spaces appeared, which are carried out in the object of study itself, beyond the disciplinary origins of its researchers, its theoretical references or its data collection procedures, and even what could

<sup>47</sup>I also take up this term here, as a tribute to Kenneth Gergen, and his words when he graciously agreed to make the prologue to this book, after unexpected situations in his life prevented him from participating as one of the authors with a chapter, as we had planned between 2019 and 2020: “... it’s been an enormously difficult year for me (...) and your work somehow lives now into the future.” “I am glad I can participate(...).” “I shall look forward...” Ken (Correspondencia entre el 12 de marzo y el 5 de abril de 2021).

properly be considered as data, have been erased, hopefully in the future, the rigid boundaries of the disciplines.

This book will try to show some of those movements in the disciplinary boundaries that these new waves have erased, hopefully for enough time to make the substance of this new “*ajiacó*” be cooked fully.

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