Chapter 1
The Topic of Subjectivity Within Cultural–Historical Approach: Where It Has Advanced from and Where It Is Advancing to

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Abstract The topic of subjectivity has been historically overlooked by a psychology mainly grounded on rationalism and empiricism. In fact, subjectivity as such was also absent in Soviet psychology, mainly as a result of the prevailing political and ideological climate in the Soviet sciences, which left no room for the matter of subjectivity. Nonetheless, in Soviet psychology, there were important theoretical antecedents for advancing a theory of subjectivity on a cultural–historical basis. This introductory chapter draws a picture based on important premises to advance the topic of subjectivity in Soviet psychology; new relations between authors and classic topics of Soviet psychology are constructed, along with new interpretations of historical aspects, through which the topic of subjectivity appeared as one possible path in the development of the legacy of Soviet psychology. The introduction of subjectivity into cultural–historical psychology is an attempt to transcend the individual character and ontological vagueness of the two concepts used by Soviet psychology to refer to psychological systems: consciousness and personality. Nonetheless, this path in the advancement of the topic of subjectivity has also been enriched by dialogue with other theories, which has influenced its comprehension as an ontological definition of human phenomena, whether social or individual. The transit of this proposal on subjectivity through dialogue with Latin American critical social psychology, Social Representation theory, and lately, some critical authors from different theoretical backgrounds, is also discussed in this chapter.

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Over the last ten years, new interpretations related to cultural–historical psychology have emerged with particular intensity. This has generated not only new avenues along which to advance its legacy, but also new interpretations of concepts and questions that have remained overlooked for decades by both Soviet and Western psychology. This effort has led to interesting historical divergences, embracing theoretical and historical questions that have also contributed to defining new alternatives for the development of that legacy which, at some points, seemed to be frozen within those dominant interpretations that reduced it to a static and erroneous representation that equated Vygotsky, Luria, and Leontiev. In doing this, on behalf of cultural–historical psychology, their contexts, the different points of their lives, and the more general movement within which their work took place, Soviet psychology, were completely omitted. This dominant position has been widely criticized since the end of the 1980s, both within Soviet and Western psychology, advancing a new understanding of that history (Chudnovsky 1988; González Rey 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014a, 2015, 2017a; Leontiev 1992; Mikjailov 2006; Miller 2011; Orlov 2003; Van Der Veer and Valsiner 1991; Yasnitsky 2009, 2012; Yasnitsky and Van der Veer 2016; Zavershneva 2010, 2016; Zinchenko 1993, 2012).

Among the new topics that have appeared in Soviet psychology since the 1980s, we emphasize subjectivity, although its emergence characterizes a theoretical discussion due to its omission from that psychology, rather than a program of research (Abuljanova 1980; Chudnovsky 1988; and, decades later in the 2000s Serguienko 2009; Skotnikova 2009). The development of a theory of subjectivity from a cultural–historical standpoint has been our main focus since the 1990s (González Rey 1997, 2002, 2005). Despite the absence of a research line in Soviet psychology, the dialectical inspiration of some authors advanced important questions and concepts that, in fact, highlighted subjective phenomena. On our path to advance subjectivity as a theoretical proposal, a research program has been developed, which has also demanded new epistemological and methodological proposals; it is the presentation of this program that is the main goal of this book.

Nevertheless, every new theoretical proposal that leads to new ontological and epistemological constructions cannot avoid a historical and philosophical discussion on its main premises. This is not the subject of this book but has been advanced elsewhere (González Rey 2009, 2011, 2014a, b, 2015, 2016, 2017a, b; Gonzalez Rey and Mitjans 2017a, b). As part of the series, "Perspectives in Cultural-Historical Research," we consider it important in this introductory chapter to affirm that the focus of this book is centered on the legacy of Soviet authors and theories that have been largely ignored in their similarities and relationships both within Soviet psychology and beyond it. These authors and their theoretical legacies are essentially: (1) an alternative reading of Vygotsky in relation to A. N. Leontiev and his followers; (2) Rubinstein, Ananiev, Miasichev, Yarochevsky, and Bozhovich, as psychologists who shared the early experiences of Soviet psychology and; (3) later Soviet authors, such as Abuljanova (1973, 1980), Chudnovsky (1988), Lomov (1984), and Nepomnichaya (1977), who explicitly advanced new useful contributions on subjectivity from a cultural–historical standpoint (González Rey 2014a, b, 2016, 2017a, b).

It was not easy at all to advance on subjectivity as such within a psychology dominated by a theoretical imagery, the Marxist character of which was defined by an objective representation of human psyche, and which developed itself within a political context in which idealism was defined as a political enemy. An objectivistic materialism without any room for explicit advances on subjectivity characterized the sequence of official psychologies that dominated Soviet psychology from the mid-1920s to the mid-1970s: Bechterev's reflexology, Kornilov's reactology, and Leontiev´s activity theory. All of these centered on explaining human psyche as determined by something external, and on replacing psyche by something different, such as complex formation of associative reflexes and energy (Bechterev), external influences from which behavior was understood as reaction (Kornilov), or operations with external objects that become internal, properly psychical, through internalization (Leontiev). That situation within Soviet psychology was defined by Abuljanova as follows: "The attempt to materialize the psyche or assign its materiality through its identification with something different reveals the anti-dialectical character of this form of knowledge" (Abuljanova 1973, p. 49).

Renouncing an advance on the definition of human psyche was an ontological renunciation that was based on the vagueness that characterized the definition of some of the most promissory concepts developed by Soviet authors. Instead of being qualitatively different from the concepts used by dominant Western psychology, those used by Soviet authors were different in their orientation but, in the end, they were also defined through the traditional taxonomy of fragmented concepts that made impossible specific ontological definitions for psychic phenomenon. The attempt to advance the theoretical representation of a specific human phenomenon within the cultural–historical conditions that characterize human life is one of the main goals that oriented this theoretical proposal on subjectivity.

It was not only the nature of psychic phenomena that remained vague in Soviet psychology. The narrow definitions of culture and social phenomena were also striking in that psychology. That position was made clear by Luria as follows:

> The psychologists as a rule share the objective positions of physiologists but carry on their work on a much broader basis, approaching psychology from the point of view of that structural behavior which is determined by social conditions. To that wing belong most of the Russian psychologists who do not accept the mechanistic point of view of the reflexologists. It will suffice in this connection to mention the names of Professor Kornilov, Professor Blonski (his psychological work is of a distinctly genetic character), Professor Basov and L. S. Vygotsky (Luria 1928, p. 347).

Luria's statement expresses the most general position shared by Kornilov's group at that time, including Vygotsky. Despite his appeal to social conditions, these were understood as mere external influences acting as determinants of human behavior. Rather than advancing on human sociality, Luria's definition represented a very behavioral understanding of environment, which was closer to behaviorism than to a new representation of social conditions.

Paradoxically, preceding the wider comprehension of social processes among the tendencies previously mentioned as being officially dominant in Soviet psychology was Bechterev's perspective of human sociality on the basis of the concept of energy

and the different complex formation of associative reflexes (Valsiner 2001) This fact to some extent explains why Bechterev's disciples in the School of Leningrad were those authors who made the most relevant contributions to the comprehension of social realities, actively attending to the topic of communication and institutions in Soviet psychology (Ananiev 1977; Miasichev 1960; and following them, their disciples: Lomov 1989; and Bodalev 1983).

The difficulties in advancing the topic of subjectivity within the multiple labels by which Soviet psychology has appeared in Western psychology have been as great as those that were faced during Soviet times due to the incomplete way in which that legacy was appropriated by Western psychology, as well as the cognitive–linguistic lenses through which it has mostly been interpreted (González Rey 2014). Those labels, such as sociocultural psychology, cultural psychology and cultural–historical and activity theory (CHAT), were mainly developed by North American cognitive and linguistic interpretations (Bruner 1995; Cole 1963; 1998; Werstch 1985). The topics that we have advanced since our studies in Moscow (González Rey 1979; Mitjáns Martínez 1995), such as personality, motivation, creativity, and communication, remained completely excluded from those interpretations. Together with the focus of North American interpretations, the lack of literature in the West on the history of Soviet psychology, along with the absence of translations, with very isolated exceptions, of some of its best known figures, has made it very difficult to open new discussions on that psychology within the dominant myth, through which the dominant interpretation became the "true and unique interpretation," a movement that was beyond the intention of its pioneers.

Alongside the aforementioned issue, it should be stressed that Vygotsky himself never completely overcame an intellectualist view of psychical processes and of development. He was highly contradictory in his effort to advance on the unity of intellectual and emotional processes in the last period of his work, being more centered on intellectual functions in his most instrumental period, between 1927 and 1931 (Leontiev 1984; González Rey 2009, 2011, 2014a, 2016; Matusov 2011; Yasnitsky 2010, 2012; Zavershneva 2010, 2016). As Matusov argues:

> People's social relations are essentially instrumental and that is why higher mental functions are a result of the internalization of these social relations or in Vygotsky's own words, "genetically [i.e., developmentally], social relations, real relations of people, stand behind all of the higher functions and their relations (Matusov 2011, pp. 102–103).

The higher psychological functions were detached from their subject and, consequently, from the system of social relationships in which the subject appears through living communicative acts subjectively engaged and not only through psychological functions. Cognitive reductionism was very characteristic of activity theory. One of its main representatives, D. B. Elkonin, openly expressed that reductionism: "The idea of this so-called internal—or, I might better say—intellectual activity has become confused with the question of the division of any activity, including intellectual activity, into an orienting and an executive component" (Elkonin 1995, p. 32). So, the identification of internal and external activity by its structure was mainly

referred to as intellectual processes. Emotions, motivation, and imagination were stripped from the intellectual functions.

Nonetheless, the concepts from the last period of Vygotsky's work began to receive special and increasing attention as part of the renewal of the interpretation of Vygotsky's legacy in recent years (Fakhrutdinova 2010; Fleer et al. 2017; Fleer and Hammer 2013; González Rey 2009, 2011, 2014, 2017a; Veresov 2016; Veresov and Fleer 2016; Yasnitsky and Van Der Veer 2016).

The reinterpretation of the first and last periods of Vygotsky's work has been mainly centered on the concepts of *perezhivanie*, emotions, imagination, and social situation of development. Among these, however, the concept of sense has remained mostly ignored, despite the isolated efforts of two Russian psychologists to bring it to light (Leontiev 1992; Yarochevsky 2007). Paradoxically, this was the most attractive concept for us, when we introduced the concept of psychological sense into our work on personality (González Rey 1995; González Rey and Mitjáns Martínez 1989).

Having completed his Ph.D. in 1979 in Bozhovich's laboratory, supervised by Chudnovsky, González Rey followed two main principles advanced by Bozhovich and her team. The first was the comprehension of motives as psychological formations integrated by different needs, aspirations, desires, and other motivational-related elements, which appeared to form a truly motivational formation. In this regard, for Bozhovich: "Already in the second year of life, the first type of personality psychological formation appears—the motivational representations that appear as a result of the first synthesis of intellectual and affective elements (in other words—needs and consciousness) allowing the child, to some extent, the opportunity to leave the limits of any immediate situations" (Chudnovsky 2009, p. 17). The second principle was closely related to the first one, even in Chudnovsky's statement; this is the capacity of personality to transcend the limits of any immediate situations, i.e., its generative capacity.

The idea of psychological formation represented, in fact, a strong subjective psychological resource that was the basis of Bozhovich's emphasis on the generative capacity of personality even in early childhood. In Bozhovich's words:

> Developing on the basis of the individual assimilation of social forms of consciousness and behavior, once the personality emerges it frees the individual from immediate subordination to the influences of the environment that surrounds him, allowing him not only to adapt to it, but to transform the environment and him/herself (Bozhovich 2009, p. 368).

These two interrelated principles developed by Bozhovich allowed her to advance in terms of the legacies of Vygotsky, Rubinstein, and Bakhtin, who attempted to use the concept of refraction as a path to avoid the mechanistic and deterministic character of the concept of reflection that was dominant in Soviet psychology. Also, Bozhovich's emphasis on transformation brings to light the creative character of individuals over the social environment, advancing in the opposite direction to the principle of assimilation that was dominant in Soviet education, based on the principles of Leontiev's activity theory (Koshmanova 2007).

Despite the fact that Bozhovich advanced Vygotsky's concepts related to motivation, personality, and creativity, which were mostly developed by him at the first

and last periods of his work (González Rey 2011), she was also critical of Vygotsky's intellectualist deviations, both in his definition of *perezhivanie* and in the role attributed by him to conceptual thinking in the psychological development of adolescents. On the latter, she noted:

> In a concrete analysis of the transition age, he (Vygotsky, *our note*) considered as the most important fact the formation of concepts…. In this reflection, there was no room for, and there was no need to pay attention to, other driving forces of development; moral consciousness exerted itself as an automatic consequence of the formation process of conceptual thinking (Bozhovich 2009, p. 295).

Apart from Vygotsky's active search for concepts capable of embodying the unit of affective and intellectual processes, a principle that was also followed by Bozhovich, in fact, he did not achieve this goal as a result of the absence of a new ontological definition by which that unit could be sustained. This unit could not emerge by grouping traditional concepts as integrative parts to be assembled into a new concept as, in our opinion, occurred with the concepts of motivational formations, senses, and perezhivanie.

The advances made by Vygotsky and Bozhovich on the topics of personality and motivation were, perhaps, the main attempts to advance a representation of human psyche as a generative, and not an assimilative system. Nevertheless, the comprehension of human psyche as a new qualitative phenomenon that characterizes not only individuals, but the wide range of human phenomena, still seems to be far beyond Soviet psychology.

As Tolstyx stated:

> Recently, it is possible to observe researchers' growing interest in questions of subject and subjectivity. It is possible to say that these issues have progressively found their place, which, in the second half of the XXth century was occupied by the research on personality (Tolstyx 2008, p. 134–135; our translation from Russian).

Among the facts that should be considered in such a reduction of the scope of Soviet psychology to individuals are the following aspects:

- The absence of a strong social psychology, which was restricted to the School of Leningrad that was overlooked for decades during the political hegemony of Leontiev in Soviet psychology, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s. One of the worst consequences of activity theory for Soviet psychology was the omission of the topic of communication that was treated through the S-O-S scheme, according to which relations with others are always mediated by an object. The objectivistic, instrumental, reactive, and behavioral psychology implemented in Kornilov's reactology had its finest expression in Leontiev´s activity theory.
- The absence of the topics of symbolical processes and realities that were mainly reduced to the sign mediation of psychological functions (Zinchenko 1993). This gap led to the symbolical nature of all human psychological functions being ignored: The psychological nature of functions was replaced by sign mediation, something critically recognized by Vygotsky at the end of his life (Zavershneva 2016). Symbolical productions are never constrained by the immediate relation

with external influences, which was difficult to accept in a psychology constructed as determined by external influences. Symbolical processes, on the contrary, are devices by which human intuitions, based on imagination, find specific expressions through new creative images, language, models of thinking, and even concepts, which primarily have no direct relation with external influences. Human capacity to create cultural realities within which human beings live and, in turn, are created by them, is something that deserves new theoretical constructions, among which the topic of subjectivity should be considered.

- The absence of the topic of the symbolic constrained the comprehension of both of sociality and culture, which are closely interrelated to the symbolical nature of human processes and realities. That relation implies the advancing of a definition of human phenomena that simultaneously characterizes the human mind, social realities, and culture as three instances permanently interwoven with each other in such a process within which one is configured as part of the natures of the others.
- There was a split created within Soviet psychology between activity (considered by Leontiev as the main ontological definition for a Marxist psychology), consciousness, and personality (as psychological systems, as defended by Vygotsky at the beginning and end of his work, as well as by Bozhovich, Rubinstein, Miasichev, and Ananiev in that first generation of Soviet psychology, and after them by Abuljanova, Brushlinsky, Chudnovsky, Lomov, Zinchenko, among others). This split separated consciousness and personality from the living system of social relations, making impossible such an integration proposed above between mind, social realities, and culture. The principle of the unity between consciousness and activity proposed by Rubinstein was completely overlooked in such a way that activity was detached from its subjects.
- The fact that the symbolical remained beyond the comprehension of psychical processes did not allow a transcendence of the traditional taxonomy of fragmented concepts used by traditional psychology to define specific psychological functions and contents that appear separated from each other as different entities, such as imagination, fantasy, thought, perception, motive, and personality. All of these have been traditionally used to refer to individuals in Soviet psychology.
- The split between emotions and intellectual processes was intended to be overcome by units capable of integrating both processes, but without advancing a new ontological definition of those units, such as the concepts of *perezhivanie* and sense proposed by Vygotsky which, rather than making explicit a new qualitative nature of human psyche, were defined by groups of psychological elements, without specifying anything qualitatively new in terms of their psychological nature. Intellectual and cognitive processes are only one specific expression of the wider range of symbolical processes, and its comprehension by both cognitive psychology and Soviet psychology was restricted to concepts, meanings, and representations directly resulting from external influences and information. Symbolical productions, however, always imply creation, in which imagination, fantasy, and emotions appear as new qualitative units assembled by models within which symbolical processes and emotions must appear, one configured within the other. Such units define the ontological nature of subjectivity as the topic is advanced in this book.

The aforementioned aspects must be overcome in order to advance the topic of subjectivity from a cultural–historical standpoint, and these demands advancing simultaneously the interrelations between theory, epistemology and methodology, topics that have been closely interrelated since the beginning of this theoretical proposal. On this path, from which our interest in personality gradually became an interest in a new construction capable of embracing individuals within their multiple levels and their network of social functioning, two facts in González Rey's trajectory were important. First, his work at the Institute of Psychology of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, where he completed the degree of Doctor in Science in 1987. That institute represented, at that moment, the main political force through which an important turning point was occurring in Soviet psychology as a result of which new topics, interpretations, and paths were beginning to be opened; the monopoly of Leontiev´s activity theory was beginning to be overcome.[1]

B. Lomov, director of that Institute and a disciple of Ananiev, together with his critique of the individual character of Leontiev's definition of activity, brought to light a comprehension of communication as a living interactive process that, far from being external to human psyche, is inseparable from it: "(…) communication is considered an important determinant of the whole psychical system, of its structure, dynamic and development. However, this determination is not external to psyche. The psyche and communication are intrinsically interrelated with each other (Lomov 1984, p. 248; our translation from Russian). Also, Lomov brought to Soviet psychology the topic of dialogue and the figure of Bakhtin, both of them having been completely overlooked throughout the history of that psychology.

By working in that Institute, González Rey realized it would be impossible to sustain a cultural–historical psychology centered on individual concepts, as well as the importance of finding ways capable of advancing a theoretical definition of human psyche that was not restricted to individuals. González Rey's first paper attempting to integrate personality and communication appeared in Soviet psychology (González Rey 1983). In these same years, González Rey was closely engaged in the emerging critical movement within Latin American social psychology, in which were grouped authors like M. Montero, I. Martin-Baró, S. Lane, among others (González Rey 1989, 1994, 2004); new dialogues emerged, his representation on sociality advanced, and his interest in individual psychological processes did not wane.

As a result of these new exchanges and experiences, in 1991, the concept of social subjectivity was formulated by González Rey, beginning a theoretical search to open a new path in the study of personality that would allow the study of the complex and multiple ways through which personality emerges as inseparable from social reality, which is also characterized by having a subjective functioning. One of the paths along which to advance a psychology capable of integrating these concepts is in process.

This proposal on subjectivity has also been influenced by dialogue with other authors and theories, mainly with social representation theory (González Rey 2002,

[1] For more information on the shift that occurred at that time within Soviet psychology, see González Rey (2016a).

2005, 2012, 2015). From this proposal, dialogue has also been established with authors associated with different critical theoretical proposals, such as Burman, Castoriadis, Frosh, Holzkamp, and Parker. An interesting and strong cooperation with cultural–historical authors, who have also advanced Vygotsky's legacy on emotions, perezhivanie, and imagination, is in process, generating new paths within the cultural–historical legacy (Fleer et al. 2017; Fleer and González Rey 2017; Adams and Fleer 2017; Fleer and Quinones 2013, among others). This dialogue continues in depth in some of the chapters in this book.

The resistance to subjectivity did not proceed only from Soviet psychology. Since subjectivity has been reduced to a metaphysical concept associated with a universal human nature within modern rationalism, the term has remained associated with this philosophical imagery. Modern empiricism, from Bacon to Hobbes, from Hobbes to Locke, and from Locke to Berkeley, advanced the relation of experience and thought, which far surpassed Descartes in its clarity and precision (Cassirer 2009). Following a philosophical historical sequence, subjectivity has never again been considered relevant, neither for the study of human phenomena, nor for science.

During the first half of the twentieth century, a strong empirical and behavioral psychology[2] began its hegemony in the USA, and very quickly that hegemony was extended all over the world. An atheoretical, instrumental, empirical, and individual psychology was dominant during the twentieth century (Danziger 1990, 1997; Koch 1999). European psychology, mainly Gestalt psychology and psychoanalysis, was an exception, although the latter had serious difficulties in considering itself as psychology despite Freud's clear position in this respect in the last period of his life. Marxism too was not a fecund arena from which to advance the topic of subjectivity.

Chudnovsky explained the omission of subjectivity in Soviet psychology as follows:

> The general emphasis on studying a person as an object of social development cannot lead to psychological inquiries addressed toward the question of subjectivity. This means, in fact, that the excessive and unilateral emphasis on given external influences and the relevance of the assimilation of the world's objects become the basis for the emergence of consciousness (Leontiev 1975). The essence of personality is identified by the internalized internal activity and is understood as an internal moment of activity rather than as the subject of activity (Chudnovsky 2006, p.78; our translation from Russian).

In the quotation above, the author outlined a matter that is beyond the limits of Soviet psychology, appearing, to some extent, as part of a Marxist imagery to consider external facts and realities as determinants of consciousness. Marx himself was very contradictory in relation to the topic of subjectivity, which he addressed in a highly comprehensive way, taking into account the theoretical resources available to him in the nineteenth century. In his own words:

> The supersession of private property is therefore the complete emancipation of all human senses and attributes; but it is this emancipation because these senses and attributes have become human, subjectively as well as objectively. The eye has become a human eye, just

[2]The reference to a behavioral psychology is not restricted here to behaviorism; in fact, behavioral psychologies include all those in which behavior represents their ontological definition.

> as its object has become a social, human object, made by man for man. The senses have therefore become theoreticians in their immediate praxis (Marx 1992, p. 389).

It is amazing how two contradictory ideas co-exist within the same quotation. On the one hand, Marx recognized something that, even today, is still difficult to recognize within a Marxist imagery: "The senses have therefore become theoreticians in their immediate praxis." This means that there are no objects that, in themselves, define human practices; they are our created fictions and creations are what define them.[3] So, the split between theory and practice, which still prevails in some Marxist circles, is impossible, because practice is based on theory. On the other hand, Marx made this process dependent on the supersession of private property, as if the historical evolution of mankind had not happened on the basis of the development of human subjectivity.

Eagleton criticized one of Marx's most quoted statements from "The German Ideology": "Social being is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by social being" (Marx 1976, p. 49). He asked: "How can being determine consciousness when consciousness is an integral part of it?" (Eagleton 2016, p. 85). It is precisely such a split between social being and consciousness that emerges as one of the bigger barriers created by Marxism for the study of subjectivity.

Nonetheless, Marxist dialectics and its orientation toward theoretical systems offers options to advance the topic of subjectivity on a new basis, as was clearly evidenced by Soviet psychology, in which the constraints on advancing this topic proceeded from political and institutional facts rather than from philosophical reasons.

However, the new basis on which the rejections of subjectivity have continued since the second half of the twentieth century came from a sequence of philosophical positions that culminated in the French post-structuralist discourse, oriented toward the rejection of meta-narratives and an extreme relativism from an epistemological point of view. The Heideggerian call to replace the presence by the process found its best expression in that discourse. The cult of language as the only ontological ground for all human phenomena, as proclaimed by the linguistic turn in philosophy and shared by highly influential philosophers, such as Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Gadamer, was based on the discursive turn that defined the post-structuralist realm. Social constructionism was the most direct heir of that movement in philosophy. However, in human thought, nothing is as it looks. Social constructionism also expresses a rational intellectualism that has omitted human emotions and, as such, human motivations, both engulfed by discursive terms (González Rey 2018).

The present book aims to give a picture of the way in which this theoretical proposal on subjectivity has advanced new epistemological and methodological options capable of attending to the demands resulting from the research and social practices

[3] In fact, any human theory only generates forms of intelligibility on its subjects' questions, which contacts with the study matter are temporarily defined by the new practices, knowledge, and realities that are advanced on the basis of that theory. Nonetheless, theory is never a copy or a reflection of reality, which implies the impossibility of detaching fiction from it.

that have developed from the proposal. Some of the challenges, contradictions, and demands for the proposal are explicit in the chapters of the book.

The need to bring back the topic of subjectivity on a new theoretical, epistemological, and methodological basis mainly answers the following demands:

- Taking forward the theoretical construction of an ontological definition of human phenomena that is non-reducible to language, discourse, behavior, or whatever other definition that has been used to replace human psyche as such. In this definition, subjectivity deals with a general quality of all human phenomena, whether social or individual.
- The need to advance on concepts understood as dynamic units capable of being malleable and of appearing in different ways to be inseparable from the wide range of human experiences within the simultaneous social networks and practices in which human beings are involved. These units are ontologically defined by a new human quality that emerges as simultaneously symbolical and emotional, a quality in which we recognize subjectivity as an ontological definition. These qualitative units, subjective senses and subjective configurations, are permanently interwoven with each other in human experiences, within which social and individual historical constellations of facts appear simultaneously through these different dynamic units. Both concepts allow the overcoming of most of the classical dichotomies that have historically been associated with psychological knowledge: internal/external, behavior/trait, conscious/unconscious, emotions/cognition, personality/function, and so on.

Subjective senses and subjective configurations, as dynamic units of different order, are permanently expressed one within the other, in such a variable way that they cannot be defined by contents, as has usually been the case with the traditional psychological concepts. Unlike linear concepts, such as the motivation to study, which is only defined by positive behaviors addressed toward study, through the concept of subjective configuration, as explanatory of human motivation, the interest in study is inseparable from other sources of subjective senses that apparently have little to do with study, but through which the cosmos of the life of the student appears in different ways and at different moments through study.

The proposal on subjectivity discussed in this book is not opposed to concepts addressed toward understanding the complex symbolic social networks within which social and individual subjectivities emerge. Discourse is a symbolic system that articulates many different symbolic social constructions, forming a living system within which particular symbolic social constructions, such as gender, race, sex, and illnesses, are embedded. These specific symbolic constructions, in their intermingled relations with social symbolic institutional realities like religion, morals, science, and policy, form the social dominant order, forming sociocultural subjective realities that are inseparable from the singular appearance of subjective phenomena, whether social or individual, within those realities.

Every social symbolic construction, organized as discourses, social representations, and other social theoretical constructions, does not directly activate human behaviors, whether in social instances of in individuals. These symbolical systems

appear as the basis on which subjective senses and subjective configuration emerge as a result of how these constructions are being experienced by individuals and groups. The ways in which social constructions emerge in individuals and social instances represent subjective productions that, instead of answering objective facts, produce them, as a result of a subjective configuration that is generated within a given experience.

Social symbolical realities should become subjective senses and configurations in order to function as human motivations. Subjectivity is a motivated system within which imagination emerges as the cornerstone of all human creations. These creations are the basis on which culture and social order are continuously renewed, having a historical course.

In this proposal, subjectivity, sociality, culture, and history of both individuals and social instances can be studied simultaneously, transcending any illusion to objectify human behaviors in the attempt to make them deductible from rational or objective given conditions. Human subjective productions generate diverse rationalities that are always part of the interweaving game of different and unexpected social and individual subjective configurations, which suddenly can emerge in such unexpected behavior that must be understood through its subjective configuration. Taken outside of subjective configuration, it must be taken as delirium. These unexpected processes are the basis of all human institutionalized orders.

The book has been organized as an expression of a research program that has become a constant source for new challenges and paths to be advanced as a requirement to make theory a living system. In following this path, we departed from the firm epistemological conviction that the value of science is in opening up new paths of intelligibility on studied subjects that for one or another reason do not acquire visibility from other theoretical frameworks. The book has been structured following three important criteria: (1) to make explicit the theoretical representation on which the research program that includes most of the chapters of the book is based; (2) to open a dialogue with authors who look at the proposal from different angles, creating new avenues in relation to those discussed by our research team in Brazil; and finally (3) to present a series of research studies that were carried out in areas frequently omitted by cultural–historical psychology, such as the social subjectivities of institutions, mental health, learning as a subjective process, sexual education, psychotherapy, innovation, and teacher training.

We aim to open up new dialogue within cultural–historical theories, and others that have a lot of common with them, looking for new intelligibilities from which new challenges for our own development can emerge. The book, far from attempting to be a system of rules, intends to open up new options within cultural–historical psychology.

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