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## Subjectivity and Objectivity in the Contemporary Psychology: Historical, Epistemological and Philosophical Notes<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** We resume the philosophical and methodological analysis on psychological knowledge by authors from the first half of the twentieth century in order to establish a dialogue with those authors from the first decade of the twenty-first century who, historically, epistemologically and philosophically, discuss the path taken by the psychology to establish itself as a science, in line with the discussions on the history of the creation of the scientific objectivity notion and on the subjective elements of that construction. We highlight that the particular focus is on the definition of the research method, on considering subjectivity and on the discussion about consciousness. We point out a consensus over time: the demand for a critical and reflexive analysis on the production of the psychological knowledge and the affinity of this production with the research practice and the professional practice. Dialoguing with different authors, we conclude that the epistemological, philosophical and historical analysis of the psychological knowledge has allowed the development of an innovative way of conceiving the research practice and the professional practice which, rather than denying the cultural and political biases, started the methodological search that allows considering them.

**Key words:** Knowledge; subjectivity; objectivity.

## Subjetividade e Objetividade na Psicologia Contemporânea: Apontamentos Históricos, Epistemológicos e Filosóficos

**Resumo:** Retomamos a análise filosófica e metodológica de autores da primeira metade do século XX sobre o conhecimento psicológico e estabelecemos um diálogo com aqueles do primeiro decênio do século XXI que, historicamente, epistemológica e filosoficamente, discutem o caminho tomado pela psicologia para se estabelecer como ciência, em consonância com as discussões sobre a história da criação da noção de objetividade científica e sobre os elementos subjetivos dessa construção. Evidenciamos que o foco particular está na definição do método de pesquisa, na consideração da subjetividade e na discussão sobre a consciência. Apontamos um consenso ao longo do tempo: a demanda de uma análise crítica e reflexiva da produção do conhecimento psicológico e a afinidade dessa produção com a prática de pesquisa e a prática profissional. Dialogando com diferentes autores, concluímos que a análise histórica, epistemológica e filosófica sobre o conhecimento psicológico tem permitido a elaboração de um modo inovador de se conceber a prática da pesquisa e a prática profissional que, ao contrário de negar os vieses culturais e políticos, passou à busca metodológica que permita considerá-los.

**Palavras-chave:** Conhecimento; subjetividade; objetividade.

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## Subjetividad y Objetividad en la Psicología Contemporánea: Apuntes Históricos, Epistemológicos, y Filosóficos

**Resumen:** Retomamos el análisis filosófico y metodológico de autores de la primera mitad del siglo XX sobre el conocimiento psicológico y entablamos un diálogo con aquellos del primer decenio del siglo XXI que, histórica, epistemológica y filosóficamente discuten el camino seguido por la psicología para establecerse como ciencia, en consonancia con las discusiones sobre la historia de la creación de la noción de objetividad científica y sobre los elementos subjetivos de esa construcción. Destacamos que el enfoque particular está en la definición del método de la investigación, en la consideración de la subjetividad y en la discusión sobre la conciencia. Señalamos un consenso a lo largo del tiempo: la demanda de un análisis crítico y reflexivo de la producción del conocimiento psicológico y la afinidad de tal producción con la práctica de investigación y la práctica profesional. Dialogando con diferentes autores, concluimos que el análisis histórico, epistemológico y filosófico sobre el conocimiento psicológico ha permitido la elaboración de un modo innovador de concebirse la práctica de la investigación y la práctica profesional que, en vez de negar los aspectos culturales y políticos, pasó a una búsqueda metodológica que posibilita considerarlos.

**Palabras clave:** Conocimiento; subjetividad; objetividad.

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The publications on the epistemology, philosophy and history of the psychology, in these first two decades of the twenty-first century, show a particular consensus: a critical analysis of the knowledge production in the psychology and its relationship with the research practice and the professional practice. We can say that this analysis has been prepared in line with the discussions on scientific knowledge in general, such as those developed by Daston and Galison (2007) among others, and they have focused the story of creation of the objectivity notion and, paradoxically, the subjective elements of this construction, for example, the evidence of the convergence among the history of the genre and the history of the science and the medicine.

In the psychology, the central aspect of this discussion has been the path analysis taken by this area to be recognized as a science, with particular focus on the following themes: the experimental method definition, the subjectivity question and the consciousness study (Richards, 2002 ; Morawski, 2005; Smedslund, 2009; Gergen, 2010; Robinson, 2010, among others), the historic dimensions of the psychological discourse (Haaken, 1988; Danziger, 2013; Graumann & Gergen, 2006) and, related to the historical dimensions, the called psychology territories (Asch & Sturn, 2007).

These themes have guided the discussion to the historical, epistemological and philosophical nature on the development of the psychological knowledge in order to support and defend a reflection attitude and a critical assessment of such knowledge through the meaning discussion on the objectivity conception and on counterpoint brought by considering the relationship between consciousness and subjectivity. For this, the authors have taken up the discussion of classical authors, situated in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, on the establishment of the psychology as a science and on the relationship between theory and method, highlighting that this is an issue that remains on the agenda, explicitly, since then, as is the case of William James (1890), Horace Mann Bond (1927) and Saul Rosenzweig (1933) discussions, as it is also the case of the foundation of the principles expounded in the first half of the twentieth century by Lev Seyonovitch Vygotsky, Jean Piaget and Henri Wallon.

In this study, we have recovered the main arguments of those authors, circumscribing our reference to the consciousness and to the subjectivity through them, in order to explain the epistemological convergence among their reflections and those of the current publications. Far from pretending to exhaust the subject or the complex concepts involved in this convergence, our aim is to highlight that there is a dialogue between the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, which is maintained by focusing on the relationship between consciousness and subjectivity in contrast to the objectivity conception and the scientific neutrality and to the arguments for the defense of a psychology, aiming the continuous search of the reflection and the criticism about its own production and practice.

## Vygotsky, Piaget and Wallon: a Single Voice in Defense of the Psychology

In 1979, the then Soviet Psychology published a written version of a lecture given by Vygotsky, in 1924, in the Second All-Union Congress of Psychoneurologist, in which he analyzes the question of the consciousness in psychology: Consciousness as a Problem in the Psychology of Behavior. It is a brilliant contribution by Vygotsky for the Psychology in an era that prevailed as in Europe as in the United States and then in the Soviet Union, the concern in supporting an approach based on data that were intersubjectively replicable, thereby defining a model for the study of the psychological processes that banish the term conscience of the psychology.

Vygotsky's conference (1979) argued the opposite: the human consciousness could not be ignored, since, it is ignored, any distinction between the human behavior and the animal behavior would be obliterated. Moreover, the author said, while ignoring human consciousness, "the sociology is '*biologized*' and the psychology is '*fisiologized*'" (Vygotsky, 1979, p. 7, italics added).

Two arguments are critical to the author support his thesis. The first concerns the implications of banning the awareness of the psychology. If the option were to ban the consciousness from the psychology, according to him it would remain only two possible choices: the first would be to argue in favor of the thesis about the impossibility of studying the complex forms of the human mental activity. The second would choose to consider the mind as a secondary phenomenon, so that everything could be explained without it, in fact, to be considered. Now, as the author says, such an option would lead inevitably to an absolute biological reductionism. The second argument relates to the first: if the option were to ban the consciousness from the psychology and embrace a reductionist biological approach it would prevent the access to the study of the structure and to the analysis of the human behavior and it would create, necessarily, the false notion that the human behavior is a sum of reflections.

Arguing against these two options, Vygotsky (1979) defends the thesis that the consciousness is an essential property of man, mediated by his experience with the world, so that the higher mental functions cannot be explained by the reductionism to the elementary processes, since there are different levels of psychological functioning, each one with specific and irreducible characteristics. Following this reasoning, the author proposes that the psychology unit of analysis is the activity that integrates the individual and interactive social characteristics cognitive of the conducts. According to his thesis, it is from the progressive internalization of mediators' instruments, including the verbal signs, whose role is primordial, that the conscious thought is built on humans and it regulates other mental functions. In this way, the awareness becomes a social contact of the human being with himself. Therefore, we can state that the main theoretical and conceptual framework of Vygotsky's approach is the semiotic mediation.

Many authors analyzed the work of Vygotsky in its various aspects, especially in the 1980s, and we can point to a consensus among them: the work of Vygotsky mirrors the psychologist concerned with the issues of the psychological practice and the researcher concerned with questions of the method. In this regard, we highlight, for example, Brown, Metz and Campione (1996) and the authors of the different chapters of the classic book edited by Wertsch (1985).

It is in response to this concern that Vygotsky proposes, in a lecture given in 1930 and published in Brazil in 1996, the instrumental method, for the study of the higher psychological functions, or the superior behavior, in reference to the link between tool and sign in the psychological activity. He conceives it as "a historical-genetic method that introduces a historical viewpoint in the investigation of behavior" (Vygotsky, 1996, p. 98) and defending its use, he states:

a) the area of the social-historical and ethnic psychology, which studies the historical development of behavior, its various stages and forms; (b) the area of investigation of the higher, historically developed mental functions – higher forms of memory (cf. investigations of mnemotechnics), attention, verbal or mathematical thinking, etc.; (c) child and educational psychology. ... The instrumental method seeks to present the history of how the child in the process of education accomplishes what mankind accomplished in the course of the long history of labor (Vygotsky, 1996, p. 98-99).

Shortly before, in 1925, in a text entitled "Psychology and knowledge critique", Piaget defended a converged position, showing a thesis that, as several authors argue, has far more in common with Vygotsky than is commonly understood (see, for example, Brown, Metz and Campione, 1996):

The true philosophical method is now the historical-critical method. Considering so, what can be the relationship between the psychology and the knowledge theory? Should we ask or not to the psychology to give the exact critical meaning of the notions and the rational principles? ... Between the genetic psychology and the historical critical analysis there is more and more kinship. (Piaget, 1925, p. 197-198).

Piaget takes up this thesis in 1929, in a lecture to the studies on the History of scientific thought, Faculty of Science, University of Geneva, and published the same year by *Archives de Sciences Physiques et Naturelles*. He states, early in the text, that one of the clear requirements of the contemporary scientific spirit is, in fact, the requirement of reflection, arguing that the history of the scientific thought is needed to the science in order to have knowledge of how it develops.

For Piaget (1967), the need for reflection on science and the consideration of its history would imply in the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach to the scientific knowledge, in which the psychology would be understood as a junction point among the different areas of knowledge, being up to it, the psychology, to explain how such areas are built and keep them in a dialectical relationship. The defense of interdisciplinary bases his definition of psychology as "the science of the subject and of his actions" (Piaget, 1967, p. 16) and justifies his opposition to the positivism position, since this "limits the field of science to the analysis of the observable and, therefore, to the description, to the measurement and to the relations among phenomena" (Piaget, 1972, p. 154), allowing only the "discovery of a set of functional laws which are more or less general or special ones" (p. 154).

Thus, the main criticism of Piaget to the positivist view is the real division in a number of territories, making them match to the defined fields of different scientific disciplines: "the lightest model of such conception is provided for classifying the sciences proposed by Auguste Comte who shared his subjects according to a double order of increasing complexity and decreasing generality" (Piaget, 1972, p. 154). Therefore, we can say that the epistemological reflection plays, in the Piaget psychological work, the role of necessary condition for empirical research and it is based on a critical attitude to the pre-formist and innatism theses, as in Vygotsky's and Wallon's theories. It was to defend the issues concerning the role and the activities of the subject in the knowledge, object of his genetic epistemology, which he developed the clinical method, as opposed to the method of tests, which were considered, at the time, as the objective method, par excellence for the intelligence study.

Then, among 1920 and 1930, the first publications of his studies on the genesis of thought overflow of talks transcripts and observations protocols, followed by his analysis and new hypotheses of study. According to the author, the clinical method consists in "talking freely with the subject, rather than be restricted to fixed and standardized questions" so that this method preserves "the advantages of an interview adapted to each child" (Piaget, 1947, p. 7) and at the same time, engenders "the attainment of consciousness and the formulation of its own mental attitudes" (p. 7).

For Piaget (1977) the attainment of consciousness "appears in all the aspects as a conceptualization process of rebuilding and then surpassing, in the semiotic and representation plan, which was acquired in the plan of the action schemes." (p. 271). Therefore, Piaget (1977) studies since the attainment of consciousness of the motor acts to the attainment of consciousness of own thoughts and its representation, to defend what is still a challenge: the attainment of consciousness, from a psychological point of view, "is a much more complex process than a simple insight perception and yet the laws of conceptualization that it assumes in all the cases have to be analyzed" (p. 11). It is not, therefore, a sudden enlightenment, but from a psychological development.

Developing an epistemological reflection very close to those by Piaget and Vygotsky, Wallon states his philosophical position, from a questioning of what science is and the place of psychology in it. In 1963, the French journal *Enfance* published a special issue entitled "Henri Wallon, buts et méthodes de la psychologie", in which sixteen articles by this author which were written among 1929 and 1958 were published. From 1963, we will resume the article "Psychologie et matérialisme dialectique", written in 1951 and in which his position is particularly clear.

Wallon (1963) begins his text with the provocative question about the scientific psychology, which, in his opinion, "has two possible meanings. Has the psychology an object of its own? Can the psychology object be set to the scientific determinism?" (Wallon, 1963, p. 31). To the first question, Wallon says that the positivism, in Auguste Comte voice, answered by the negative, advocating that in the individual there would be a biological being, whose study would be the province of the physiology and a social being, explicable collectively by the sociology. Wallon reacts considering this position as "two determinisms between which the human being is reduced to nothing" (Wallon, 1963, p. 31).

To the second question, the existentialists replied that the science was a collection of devices that could have some practical utility, but it would deform, it would alter and it would pervert the reality and, thus, it would alienate our freedom. In the view of the existentialism, Wallon says (1963), it would be true only that which translate the essence of our being, that is, the perpetual, unpredictable, unique and incomparable renewal of impressions, feelings or images that arise every instant of time, in our consciousness. Wallon argues against (1963) and defends that subsisted a concept submission to the destiny and to the fatality idea, in the existentialist position, under the name of absolute freedom.

The defense he prepares to the psychology is along with Vygotsky and Piaget position: nor "a biology annex" (Wallon, 1963, p. 32) or "an anteroom of the human sciences" (p. 63), but a connection between "the biology and the human sciences" (p. 63), so to constitute in a dialectical analysis of the foreground. So Wallon (1963), with a very similar attitude to Gergen (2010), as we shall see afterwards, argues that the nervous activity "is to the body the sign systems that lead it to react appropriately to the circumstances, in the broadest sense of the term" (Wallon, 1963, p. 33). According to him, such exchanges are selected at any moment by the higher nervous activity between the organism and the environment, so that it is no longer fully distinct biological from the social: "it is the process of which they are the two complementary constituents. And this substitution from the process to the property, from the act to the substance, is, precisely, the revolution that the dialectics operated in the way we know" (Wallon, 1963, p. 33).

Thus, the Wallon's thesis - as with Vygotsky's and Piaget's theses - is in favor of a reciprocal interaction process between man and the environment: "... transforming its living conditions, the man transform himself. Today, his techniques require in order to be understood, developed and implemented, the intelligence of abstract formulas, of systems made of symbols" (Wallon, 1963, p. 34). Thus, the value attributed to the consciousness, as to Vygotsky and to Piaget, is central to this author: "the consciousness, single object or at least essential and central of the psychology, unites, therefore, with no possible distinction, the reality and its intelligible image" (Wallon, 1959, p. 207).

So, there is a dialogue among these three authors, in spite of many insist on opposing them. The analysis of the internalization and externalization processes in the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, for example, exposes a common important set of epistemological and methodological principles: for both the relationship between internal (internalized actions to Piaget, intrapsychological functions to Vygotsky) and external (overt action to Piaget and interpsychological functions to Vygotsky) is constantly changing through the development. For them, the inner and outer realities are not two different, static, defined once and for all entities: they are built and their borders are unstable (see Martí, 1996, for example).

Thus, in the context of Piaget's, Vygotsky's and Wallon's theories, the subjectivity is preserved: there is in none of them neither the idea of a biological determinism nor the idea of a socio-cultural determinism. Similarly, there is no reductionism to the neurological explanations. This is the common voice of the dialogue among them and the authors of these first two decades of the twenty-first century.

### **The Dialogue Between Two Centuries: Psychological Discourse, Consciousness and Reflexivity**

The nature of epistemological and philosophical publications, in these first decades of the twenty-first century, resume and update the reflections mentioned in the previous topic. They discuss the implications between the research method and the psychological practice as well as

they criticize the behavior naturalization as it is focused, in particular, on research with neuralbrain contribution.

It is evident in these publications that this discussion has been made possible primarily from the change in the perspective of the own study of the history of psychology, both as an area of the knowledge and as the professional area. In our view, it is worth resuming the route of this perspective change in the history of the psychology because it bases, directly or indirectly, our actions as Brazilian researchers and professionals.

As we know, although this is still little discussed, several generations of academics teachers and, therefore, Brazilian professional formers were, in turn, formed in European and North American universities, in different decades, bringing different influences to their teaching practice and research. Thereby, resuming this discussion and pointing out aspects of the route of a psychology focused in the project of producing paradigms to match to the spoken established sciences – and it paid little attention to its history as was the case of "Völkerpsychologie" (the classic work of Wundt) -, to a psychology that went on to stress the intentionality significance of the human activity in the construction of the knowledge focusing on the historicity and on the social context of the psychological processes, we are also returning to certain aspects of the history of Brazilian psychology.

The reference to the Wundt work is not random in this text. In fact, this author remains, in the view of the vast majority of the psychology students, the founder of the experimental psychology. It is a very limited view of what is his vast work, which includes his inter and multidisciplinary approach and he also supported the activities of a laboratory where great thinkers were received, as the philosopher and anthropologist Geoge Mead, for example.

In this limited view of Wundt, the case of "Völkerpsychologie" is emblematic. Although this is a work of ten volumes, the "Völkerpsychologie" was relegated for a long time into the background in the proper books on the History of Psychology. Mueller (1979) highlights, for example, that Boring (1929, cited by Muller, 1979), devoted 700 pages to the Wundt work, limited to 10 lines to comment the "Völkerpsychologie", a work that Wundt himself defined as "the natural history of man" (Mueller, 1979, p. 13) and that, according to him, "it could give a scientific answer to the problem of higher mental processes" (p. 13).

Wundt believed so, and that is what was overlooked in the analysis of his work, that the higher processes such as the reasoning, the beliefs, the myths, the thought and the language, belonged to a sphere non-reducible to the intra-individual processes that can be studied in the laboratory. It was thanks to the changes in the knowledge conceptions, the scientific knowledge and, by implication, in the changing of the conception on historical knowledge that the historians psychologists began to turn the vision of their own activity as area historians. It was also thanks to these new conceptions that the Wundt "Völkerpsychologie" moved to the place it occupies today (see, for example, Ferrari, Robinson & Yasnitsky, 2010).

That is why, Grauman and Gergen (2006) state that this new view of the historical analysis had and has dramatic implications for the conception of the psychological science and for its future. Dramatic because, as these authors say, in its extreme, the contemporary arguments have reversed the master and the servant, instead of the scientific research be seen as the source of knowledge, for which the history should necessarily be a servant, it started to have the view that the historical analysis provides the necessary prerequisite for the sophisticated demand that is required from the psychological research by the contemporary society (Grauman & Gergen, 2006). In other words, the scientific theory cannot be excluded from the history; on the contrary, the psychological understanding is itself an instrument of the historical and the cultural processes. This means, this means that without understanding the historical context, the field of knowledge moves without a goal with a view to the future.

So, our intention to reflect on the dialogue between the twentieth and the twenty-first century is to emphasize the relationship between the understanding of the consequences of the scientific commitment and the convergent criticism present in this dialogue in order to highlight the relevance of the historical, epistemological and philosophical analyzes which allow to take into

account the cultural tradition, the evolution of its institutions and the human condition. Other authors have proposed the same task and we will highlight some of them.

Jill Morawski analysis (2005), for example, is compatible with the above due to three main reasons. Firstly, because she send us back to the American psychology between the nineteenth and the twentieth and its assumptions about the absolute objectivity and the discourse of the Experimental Psychology, from the early twentieth century, in defense of an alleged moral and indifference and detachment ethical order, through a scientific ideology in which, as the author says, only occasionally, some psychologists made reference, among brackets, to the subjective position of the experimenter. Secondly, because Morawski (2005) discusses the reflexivity by analyzing the demand for total eradication of the self-consciousness in favor of the objectivity, declared as the core of the scientific method. She highlights the disputes and, therefore, the subjectivity and the non-neutrality within the scientific community itself, bringing what is still little known: the critical and reflective analysis of authors such as William James (1890), Horace Mann Bond (1927) and Saul Rosenzweig (1933). These are authors who, in an era in which the reflection was associated with elements which were considered dangerous from the subjectivity – because they could contaminate the experimental procedures – created and analyzed resistance strategies, demanding and proposing an alternative science.

Thirdly, because the period chosen by Morawski (2005) is between the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, as in the analysis we did before resuming Vygotsky, Piaget and Wallon. She deals with three examples of the critical reflection located among 1890 and 1934, period in the United States of the publications of the First Experimental manuals, the establishment of the University Laboratories and the formal organization of psychologists as a Professional Society (APA). So, this was the period of hegemony of a consensus model of experimentation that consolidated a standardized set of experimental techniques, understood as a condition sine qua non from the true scientific psychology. As the authors discussed before – Piaget, Wallon and Vygotsky – James, Bond and Rosenzweig point out the limitations of this dominant model from the natural science of the experimentation: the disregard of the reflexivity, of the human complexity and of the human plasticity, as well as the disregard of the cognition, of the social status and of the unconscious processes of the scientists themselves in their research practice.

Morawski (2005) starts with William James (1890) who recognized the subjectivity of the researcher and referred to the falsity of the scientific objectivity, although this recognition had been ignored with rare exceptions. The second author analyzed by Morawski (2005) is Horace Mann Bond (1927) who questioned what was then unquestionable: the scientific neutrality. The central question of this author were the biases of the results in the evaluation of black children through standardized tests. Coining the term the experimenter game he had two central arguments: the bias of the influence of the ethnic discrimination on the test results on the intelligence and the consequent disregard of the influence of the social environment on the psychological development process. Bond made visible the experimenter cognition as part of the scientific practice: the rules of what he called the experimenter's game were not seen by him as technical difficulties, but as a description of how science was practiced and the ideology that underlaid it.

According to Morawski (2005), the problem raised by Bond was never actually faced properly; he was only solved "in a gentleman and kind manner, founded on the concept of 'rapport', considered as a positive relationship between the researcher and the subject that supposedly would transcend the ethnic diversities" (Morawski, 2005, p. 88), so there is still the understanding of this issue "as a cognitive bias of the subject and not of the experimenter" (p. 88).

While James stood the reflective condition in the experimenter and Bond located the biases of the rules imposed by the experimentation, Saul Rosenzweig (1933) pointed the reflective processes of the experimental situation, implicating in his analysis all the participants: the experimenter, the participant and the social dynamics of this situation. He argued that "the experimental situation in psychology is itself a psychological question" (Rosenzweig, 1933, p. 337, quoted by Morawski, 2005, p. 89). The heart of the reflection of this author, who was based in the

psychoanalysis, is the argument that the human condition of the experimenter psychologist was reflected in the experimental situations, so that the human experimentation is intersubjective. To Morawski (2005), the James, Bond and Rosenzweig reflections promoted a much more accurate understanding of the experimentation than that developed by the experimenters themselves.

Robinson (2010) is another author interested in the kind of analysis we are proposing and, as Morawski (2005), he also quotes William James (1904) to defend an ethical and a moral psychology, to whom the starting point would be the conscience. He starts from the argument that there is something undeniable, "a conscious being is one who concludes that there are other minds than his own" (Robinson, 2010, p. 790). This awareness, besides promoting the knowledge sharing, it would engender the responsibility, so that the Robinson's contribution (2010) to critical and reflexive psychology is the relationship that he establishes among this psychology, the consciousness and the human life, understood not just as social, in the sense of mutual standards of influence but civic, in the sense of regulatory statutes, rules of law and ethics. Thus, the maintenance of the neutral scientific conception no longer has any effect in this context. The Richards (2002), Smedslund (2009, 2012a, 2012b) and Gergen (2010) philosophical and epistemological discussions highlight this clearly.

In the early of the twenty-first century, Richards (2002) builds, in appropriate and courageous unquestionably way, a text from speeches at the turn of the millennium by the British Psychological Society and the American Psychological Association, both focused on the recognizing of the central contribution from the psychology to society, and, therefore, in the development of the area. To assess the credibility of this rhetoric, the author says, it is necessary a reflective and critical assessment of the current functioning of the Psychology in the modern societies: a psychology from the psychology. According to the author, one of the means to make such an assessment would be the history of psychology and the psychological character of psychology itself, as well as its cultural place. Thus, he sets out to highlight the reflective and multiple character of the psychology from a circuit that interconnects the following points: 1. The personal psychology of the psychologists and the understanding of their professional role; 2. The nature of psychology that they produce; 3. The social context in which they produce, which includes the psychological conditions; 4. The current state of the psychology itself and its subject matter.

Richards (2002) argues, therefore, an approach that emphasizes the socioeconomic nature of the aspects mentioned above, proposing the study of the genesis of the psychological ideas through four main questions: 1. What is a psychologist? From where and how the psychologists get their ideas? What do they do with them? 2. In which forms of psychology do they convert itself? 3. To whom do they work? What are their goals? What kind of power or authority do they perform? 4. How does their psychology mediation affect the psychology itself?

In short, Richards (2002) proposes to consider the psychologist subjectivity as well as a person, individually conscious and able to meet and conduct himself like any other, through the transitions with the others. This means, in short, to consider him as a member of the community that exists and reproduces himself in an incessant processing and reprocessing of his own experiences, accessible and meaningful collectively through the different storage modes and the communication that expands, through the language and its multipurpose. Exploring how this happens - that is, the production, the dissemination and use of the psychological language, ideas and concepts - is, for the author, which in fact can tackle the issues mentioned above, position that converges with the historical research by Danziger (2013).

The Smedslund's trilogy (2009, 2012a, 2012b) dialogues closely with the authors cited above and in particular with Richards (2002). In the first text, Smedslund (2009) discusses the relationship between the survey data and its use in the psychological practice, emphasizing the difficulties in the generalization of the empirical psychological data and arguing that the psychological practice has particular characteristics, since it must take into account four characteristics of the psychological processes: 1. they are influenced by an infinitely large number of factors; 2. they are sensitive and unstable; 3. the regularities are due to the systems sharing of family implicit



meanings; 4. the individuals are particularly unique and unpredictable because they are influenced by random events.

In the second text, Smedslund (2012a) analyzes the implications of the issues raised in the first. He takes into account the psychological professional practice and proposes a model that considers three sources of knowledge: what we know about human beings, since we are all human beings; what we know about each other, since we participate of shared meanings systems (language and culture); what we know about each person (unique) in situation.

For the author, the systematization of the psychological knowledge is implicit in these three sources, since its preparation takes place in the world of human beings who interact in these shared meanings systems. According to him, to account for the myriad variations in concrete situations, the psychological practice involves the use of this knowledge in a way that is innovative and creative and in the consideration of the understanding of this practice as mutual inspiration collaboration. It is the defense, so that the relationship between the professional psychologist and the other is much more complex than a mere influence of one direction, i.e., from the psychologist to the other.

The third text of Smedslund's trilogy (2012b) deals with the theoretical question of what we know about human beings, considering that, ultimately, we are all human beings. He then proposes the discussion of nine axioms relating to broad proposals - on the mind, the intentionality, the reflexivity, the verbalization, the learning, the responsibility, the morality, the feelings and the vulnerability - regarded as those who organize and summarize how people see people, that is, on how we understand the subjective phenomenon.

In this trilogy, the mentioned author takes the question up the from the authors of the early twentieth century, concerning the relationship between the general and the particular just as well the relationship among the unique aspects of people as opposed to the general and technical classifications, within which the singularities can lose the sense. It is in reference to this question - and, ultimately, to the subjectivity - that the demand for critical and reflective evaluation of psychology as a field of knowledge and its professional practice and research is based.

Gergen (2010) echoed this demand by developing a critical analysis of the so-called brain and behavior movement, an approach whose central thesis is that the explanation of all the psychological functioning is in the neural brain causes. He situates this movement in the recent decades, but recovers its path from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, highlighting, once again, the importance of analyzing the construction of the psychological knowledge in that period and, in particular, the importance of analyzing the meaning and implications of efforts to insert the psychological knowledge in the natural sciences, as it is called.

The Gergen (2010) analysis converges with that by Fávero (2010), concerning the relationship between the history of the science and the use of the naturalization ideology as a way of dealing with social, cultural, political and economic conventions as making part of the natural order, that is, as if they were dictated by the nature and, hence, unchanged and unavoidable. Gergen (2010) argues that the explanations for human action cannot be reduced to the neural activity and the primary brain functions act on the basis of the cultural processes: our brain is acculturated, as he says. Joining him to those already cited, Gergen (2010) argues, thus, the importance of the critical evaluation both with regard to decisions on the directions of the researches in psychology, as to the implications of this in relation to the political and social practices.

## Conclusion

Our intention was to highlight that the publications about the history, the epistemology and the philosophy of the psychology in this early twenty-first century revisit the issues already present in the early twentieth century. Dialoguing with different author, we try to demonstrate that the historical, epistemological and philosophical analysis of the psychological knowledge have allowed a particularly innovative change in the way of conceiving the practice of the research and the professional practice. Thus, such a change has outlined a path between the conception of a

scientific activity seen as ideal and in which the analyzes of the cultural and political bias should be controlled and prevented, and the methodological search that, on the contrary, allows considering and studying these same aspects. So, a long way was elaborated from the critical analyzes of the 1970s (Janice Haaken 1979, for example), concerned with the meaning and the implication of the adoption of methodological procedures aimed at overcoming the so-called sources of bias - including cultural, ideological and political data - overcoming, as is known, considered essential to reach an impartial and neutral representation of reality, and the contemporary challenge that, by contrast, puts the psychological knowledge in relation and interaction with the social, ideological and historical interests.

With the contemporary demand for a psychology acting increasingly in different fields - from the health context to the legal context, for example - the decontextualisation of the psychological knowledge construction has lost its meaning, since the focus is precisely to consider the interaction and the mutual influence among the everyday social experience - that is, the collective experiences from a historical, ideological, political and economic point of view - and the individual experiences.

The joint effort is, therefore, the defense of the need to build a psychology that is reflective and critical which consider, as Morawski says (2005), that the psychologist and the researcher in psychology are human beings dealing with a psychology and a history of the material and cultural world. Now, to keep this consideration entails taking into account two related issues: the conception of the human being and the conception of the scientific knowledge. That is, the psychological thinking, including the conceptions of the human nature and the subjectivity, has played a key role in both the formation and history of the psychology (Asch & Sturn, 2007) as the foundation of the reflective and critical thinking about the psychological knowledge.

Thus, we can say that the three lines of research of the history of psychology, which are interesting to the science history - psychological discourse history; the subject and the professional history in their social and cultural contexts and the subjectivity history - not only are present in the current discussions about philosophy, epistemology and psychology history: more than that, they are in its own heart. The work by Jacó-Vilela (2012) with a rich bibliographic reference on the inclusion of the psychological practice in Brazil in the early twentieth century it is a great example of this.

In other words: the defense of a psychology that reflects on itself - either from the point of view of the practice of the psychological research, or from the professional practice point of view - does not dissociate itself from the analysis of the language categories in the formation and in the psychology history. Danziger (2013), for example, has insisted on the advisability of taking the current diversity of psychological objects as a starting point to explore the social context of their own emergency, in order to produce a historical analysis of the use of language that defines, describes, categorizes and modifies these same psychological objects. This emphasis on the relationship between history and language is sustained through basic propositions implicated each other and which is linked with the epistemology and the philosophy: the language is an absolutely necessary factor for the existence of a knowledge area and is likely to continue; the language is constitutive of its reference objects and the languages of the subjects are no exception; the language is historical.

So, even a historical analysis of the use of language allows, according to Danziger (2013), highlighting the socio-political aspects of the area, such as the interaction of the various professional interests, the nature of the rivalries and the alliances, the marketing of the area products etc. Thus, the author argues that the terms that identify the most general categories of the psychology such as intelligence, emotion, motivation, cognition, consciousness, memory and others have a history, with persistence and recurrence of similar metaphors that do not cease to mediate meanings, pointing historical continuities often eclipsed by discontinuities in the use and understanding of particular categories. We consider, therefore, that both key propositions of this author analysis are closely related to the defense of the psychology that evaluates itself critically and reflectively: 1. The categories that, eventually, become psychological interest always operate within a framework of social practices particular and social demands; 2. The historical changes

that generate such demands lead, in turn, to changes in the practices and in the conceptions of the objects.

The common idea that we seek to highlight here is, therefore, an attitude that aims not to ignore the political and the ideological implications of the professional and scientific activities nor the subjectivity involved in them. It is, ultimately, a positive attitude: it is through the subjectivities in the plural which is glimpsed the actual flowering of social change as it is within the contemporary psychological discourse, if we consider, as Robinson (2010), that life mental is a life of meaning and to consider the human consciousness means, ultimately, to consider the way in which the knowledge, the desire, the belief and the judgment are integrated humanly, in the action plans of the professional and scientific activities.

In short, the discussion we brought here is the great current challenge, as it involves the understanding that the civic life requires empathy, understood as a form of shared consciousness: the development product of a consciousness that allows you to see the entire of the diversity of the human behavior. It remains, therefore, the task of reflecting on how the understanding of the relationship between theoretical and practical concept is permeating the psychology to do, whether in the research, whether in the psychological practice and how much and how such a discussion has effectively got into the psychologists formation.

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