
GENDER RELATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE IN PSYCHOLOGY: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE CRITICAL THEORY¹

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ABSTRACT. This paper presents some recent discussions raised by the feminist critical theory, which contribute to put in question the scientific objectivity of Psychology. It is alleged, first, a false neutrality of genre, built on the idea of a generic human being. This discussion leads to a necessary revision of supposedly universal concepts. One of these concepts is that of justice that pervades studies on moral in Psychology of Development. At the same time, it discusses the prevalence of a certain gender in universities, by establishing and legitimizing specific experiences in the construction of knowledge in the area. It explores works of feminist authors identified with the Critical Theory, focusing on the question of identity, as well as the political implications of language concepts involved in their positions. Finally, dialoguing with authors of the first generation of the Frankfurt School, it is proposed to consider the dialectic between concept and experience for building new knowledge and strategies for gender equality. It is expected to show that the feminist critique reached important pillars of psychology, which, like science, cannot remain inert in front of the new challenges. The various fields of psychology need to mobilize for construction of emancipatory strategies in order to ensure the very validity of the knowledge produced in the area.

Keywords: Feminism; language; critical theory.

RELAÇÕES DE GÊNERO E CONHECIMENTO EM PSICOLOGIA: CONTRIBUIÇÕES DA TEORIA CRÍTICA

RESUMO. Este trabalho apresenta algumas discussões recentes levantadas pela teoria crítica feminista, que contribuem para problematizar a objetividade científica da psicologia. Denuncia-se, primeiramente, falsa neutralidade de gênero que, embutida na ideia de um ser humano genérico, conduz a uma necessária revisão de conceitos supostamente universais. Um desses conceitos é aquele de justiça, que permeia estudos sobre moral em psicologia do desenvolvimento. Ao mesmo tempo, discute-se a predominância de determinado gênero nas universidades, instituindo e legitimando experiências específicas no processo de construção de conhecimentos na área. Exploram-se artigos de autoras feministas identificadas com o campo teórico-crítico, com foco na questão da identidade, bem como nas implicações políticas das concepções de linguagem envolvidas em suas posições. Por fim, dialogando-se com autores da primeira geração da escola de Frankfurt, propõe-se a consideração da dialética entre conceito e experiência para a construção de novos saberes e estratégias visando à igualdade de gênero. Espera-se mostrar que a crítica feminista atingiu pilares importantes da psicologia, que, como ciência, não pode permanecer inerte frente aos desafios que lhe vêm sendo colocados. Os diversos campos da psicologia precisam se mobilizar na construção de estratégias emancipatórias, capazes de assegurar a própria validade dos conhecimentos produzidos pela área.

Palavras-chave: Feminismo; linguagem; teoria crítica.

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RELACIONES DE GÉNERO Y CONOCIMIENTO EN PSICOLOGÍA: CONTRIBUCIONES DE LA TEORÍA CRÍTICA

RESUMEN. Este artículo presenta algunas discusiones recientes planteadas por la teoría crítica feminista, que contribuyen a cuestionar la objetividad científica de la psicología. Se denuncia, en primer lugar, una falsa neutralidad de género, basada en la idea de un ser humano genérico, que lleva a una necesaria revisión de conceptos supuestamente universales. Uno de estos conceptos es el de la justicia que impregna estudios sobre moral en Psicología del Desarrollo. A la vez, se analiza la prevalencia de un determinado género en las universidades, lo que resulta en el establecimiento y la legitimación de experiencias específicas en la construcción del conocimiento en el área. Se exploran artículos de autores feministas identificadas con el campo teórico-crítico, centrándose en la cuestión de la identidad y las implicaciones políticas de los conceptos del lenguaje involucrados en sus posiciones. Por último, en diálogo con los autores de la primera generación de la Escuela de Frankfurt, se propone considerar la dialéctica entre el concepto y la experiencia para la construcción de nuevos conocimientos y estrategias para la igualdad de género. Se espera que muestre que la crítica feminista alcanzó importantes pilares de la psicología, que, al igual que la ciencia, no pueden permanecer inertes frente a los retos que se han planteado a él. Los diversos campos de la psicología tienen que movilizar a la construcción de estrategias emancipadoras para garantizar la validez misma del conocimiento producido en el área.

Palabras-clave: Feminismo; lenguaje; teoría crítica.

Introduction

Some recent studies, at the Brazilian national level, have sought to bring the discussions about the feminism into the psychological disciplines in Brazil especially through: a) the investigation of the women's role in the History of Psychology (Portugal & Jacó-Vilela, 2012); b) addressing the relational character that the gender issues entail for the psychological practice - debate that has been conducted especially within the regional councils of Psychology and by work groups from the various research associations in the area; or even c) problematizing the training and professional exercise of the psychologist as to gender issues (Gesser, Oltramari, Cord, & Nuernberg, 2012; Borges, Canuto, Oliveira, & Paz, 2013; Melo & Barreto, 2014).

This paper focuses on the epistemological aspects raised by the recent feminist criticism, which analyzes the implications of the historical prevalence of a male perspective in the philosophical and scientific contexts, seeking to discuss some of its implications for the construction of the knowledge in psychology. This discussion problematizes certain objectivist pretensions of the discipline, since the assumptions taken as neutral, objective and impartial, are actually carriers of a particular worldview. That is, some perspectives and psychological concepts do not correspond to human beings in general, as intended by the theory, but they are founded on a false neutrality of gender. The initial focus of this criticism is the complaint of the concept of a "generic human being", whose supposed universality finds, however, a very concrete correspondence in a certain gender.

Simone de Beauvoir (1949/1970) was one of the first thinkers concerned in demonstrating how the epistemic subject, ideally abstract and identified with the human being, in general, is actually coincident with the figure of the man, not being also extendible to the woman. Far from being asserted (or be able to assert herself) as a subject, the woman is regarded *the Other*, an object³ – category in which not only delegitimizes the reflective activity of women, but encompasses a whole set of social, cultural and personal consequences analyzed by Beauvoir (1949/1970) throughout her work. These involve from the questionable definition of what is a woman – her biological, psychological and social situation – to her history, relationships with herself and with the world.

Today, the feminist criticism is concerned in denouncing and analyzing the conditions by which it was established this false neutrality of gender within the modern Western thinking (Okin, 2008) and the implications of this problem for the political philosophy, for the theory of knowledge and for the emancipatory struggles of the several social groups in contemporaneity.

³ It is interesting to note that women make their entry in Psychology exactly as object of study: when hysterical women begin to fill the psychiatric clinics at the end of the 19th century, giving rise to the emergence of Psychoanalysis.

It is important to note that the university itself, as potentially reproductive or questioning institution of the status quo, is deeply enmeshed with the problem, from the moment in which the relativization of its foundations endangers its institutional role, calling into question the objectivity and legitimacy of its contributions to the construction of the knowledge and to the promotion of autonomy.

One of the strands of this criticism denotes the growing perception that the traditional academic environments have become substantially white and male, and that this fact is not only due to the numerical prevalence of men of a certain social class in positions of higher power. If on the one hand the division of labor itself in modern societies offer greater competitive advantages to men in the labor market, on the other, it is verified that the criteria, even for evaluating the intellectual merit, are traversed by a discursive logic formatted in a historical picture of exclusion.

Young (2001) defends that a respectful greeting and the valuation of alternative discursive forms (such as narration and the use of particular examples, eventually more present in the speeches of women) can help to ensure the right to voice of actors traditionally silenced in the public spaces. A right that is presented as a key component of the equal rights under the democratic systems. A consideration to be made here is that it cannot be corrected distortions so deeply intertwined with prejudice and the several forms of reification only with a greater attention to peculiar speeches of speakers commonly discredited, furthermore already formed in particular environments, essentially private. The necessary verification of discursive differences between the different genders and social groups, as well as the unequal reception in public spaces, which must be clearly combated, cannot be remedied, however, only with proactive and tolerant measures, restricted to the field of argumentative disputes. The increased presence and voice of women in the public spaces is presented as effective demand. Another problem raised here arises within complex institutions, and/or whose immediate purpose is not political – not entailing therefore a political prominence –, as is the case of universities – whose mission demands first the establishment and evaluation of academic merit.

The criticism of Seyla Benhabib (1991) to the disregard of the *concrete other* in the history of the Western thinking contributes to the focusing on *epistemological conceptions* that guide the production of a generic language historically associated with a universe of male experience. Benhabib (1991) – and, also with certain difference of focus, Cohen (2012) – recovers the work of Rawls to denounce the way in which the dichotomy between public and private is established, which is operated since the liberalism of Locke.

In the process, she locates the roots of a public-private distinction, which was instituted in order to preserve the family from the state interferences, which ended up, in fact, excluding both the notions of power and of justice from the family universe, ceasing to reach the women and consider them as citizens holders of rights. As denounced by Benhabib (1991), such a division ensures to the man the full control over the family and, consequently, over women, since then condemned to the perennial cycle of the domestic activities of reproduction. Given this situation, it is necessary to review some important assumptions on which several disciplines configured in this context are supported (that the author proposes in accordance with a “genealogy of the theories of social contract”, expressed through an examination of the distinction traditionally established between justice and good life).

The notion of justice and the Psychology of Moral Development

Since a certain notion of justice is inherent in the studies of development of morality in Psychology, Benhabib (1991) recovers the criticism of Carol Gilligan to the Manual for Cognitive and Developmental Psychology of Lawrence Kohlberg (published in an article of the 1980s, called “Moral development on the threshold of adolescence and adulthood: criticism and reconstruction of the Kohlberg’s Theory”) to discuss the theoretical and practical implications arising from a particular view of State.

The mentioned study of Kohlberg, which investigated longitudinally 26 university students, showed a significant regression of the development in the passage from adulthood to adolescence, pointing to the need for a review of the theory. Although confirming these findings of Kohlberg, both Gilligan and collaborators noticed an additional discrepancy between the theory and the results of the study, mainly with regard to the persistent low level in the score of women in relation to men. The article then proposed a distinction between “post-conventional formalism” and “post-conventional contextualism”,

understood as capable of encompassing the two types found in the study. In the first group, of post-conventional formalists, the problem resolution would normally be given through the construction of a system capable of resolving any moral problems from abstract concepts such as social contract or natural right. In the second group, of post-conventional contextualists, no response was perceived as objectively correct when separated from its context – some answers and ways of thinking, in this group, stood out in relation to others.

The explanation of Gilligan for the discrepancies identified in the study will be given as a function of a “distinction between ethics of justice and right and ethics of care and responsibility” (Benhabib, 1991, p. 88), engendered since the moral judgment of women showed to be, tendentially, “more contextual, more immersed in the details of the relationships and narratives” (p.88) and more inclined, therefore, to reveal feelings of empathy and sympathy for another particular.

Gilligan agrees with Piaget in affirming the need to define a peak of maturity that sustains a developmental theory, calling into question, however, the maturity model instituted: “The contextuality, narration and specificity of the moral judgment of women is not sign of weakness or deficiency, but manifestation of the view of maturity that sees the ego as being immersed in a network of relationships with others” (Benhabib, 1991, p. 88).

The answer of Kohlberg to Gilligan sustains, diversely, that justice and right, care and responsibility are not responsible for two different paths of development, but for two distinct moral orientations: an orientation for the rights and guidance for the care, which would not be dichotomous with each other. Kohlberg ends up considering that the post-conventional contextualism of Gilligan would relate more to ego issues than to problems of moral development.

The presentation of this confrontation by Benhabib (1991) aims, as previously announced, at highlighting the profound and varied consequences of the historical dissemination of a model of justice committed to its roots, which eventually relegated women to the “home of emotions” (Heller, 2009). The imagery pertinent to the moral and political traditional theories would have profoundly impacted the modern consciousness, and would be present from the most banal examples of fight between brothers, reported by Freud and Piaget, to the role of the mother in the education of Emile of Rousseau, in which the modern women, immersed in the daily ahistoricity of the private life simply cannot find place.

Benhabib (1991) defends the necessary inclusion of the point of view of the other concrete as a way of ensuring the maintenance of the theoretical potential of universality as a concept (of an “interactive universality” to use the term defended by her). Thus, she argues, it is necessary that the abstraction of the ordinary, reported to the particular, starts including among its assumptions the equity and complementary reciprocity as a way of ensuring the recognition of needs and the values related to the private sphere.

Despite the importance of this solution, it is necessary to stress, however, that her consideration does not correct itself the distortions produced in the universe of experience itself where the differences between genders are engendered. That is, the historical exclusion of women from public spaces (and also from institutions of the production of knowledge) cannot be reversed with the exclusive resource to the conceptual criticism. The conditions for overcoming the barbarism involves the dialectical appropriation of this history, of forms and contents through which our culture was constituted and today is revealed. This is exactly why it is insufficient that the academic language reaches the universe of women (such as the consideration of the other concrete embraced by Benhabib seems to make possible), but to the woman must also be provided the appropriation of a conceptual-abstract language and the opportunity for its exercise, without which her own experience while articulated to language, tends to become potentially poorer.

Having as horizon the transformation of institutions and public spaces, academic or not, in order to make them more permeable to the participation and experience of women, as well as the transformation of the knowledge produced in these spaces, the question becomes: what are the necessary strategies to propitiate this change?

In this debate, very different positions can be confronted according to the diagnosis that each one offers and/or also to the very notion of criticism intertwined to them. In the face of the assertion that the nominalism would offer a limited doctrine, insufficient to encompass the specificities of women as concrete beings (Beauvoir, 1949/1970) especially within a conceptual-abstract framework historically

masculine, the different theories have been addressed mainly in the contradictions embedded in the use or refusal of *identity terms* as a basis for the political struggle of women and marginalized social groups.

It is significant to notice, in this sense, that a great part of the feminist authors considered representatives of the “new feminist left” in the United States, above all, claim an affiliation in the Critical Theory of Society (Silva, 2008), dialoguing with the communicative paradigm of Habermas (1981/2012) and/or the concept of recognition redefined by Axel Honneth (2003).

In a quite arbitrary way, it can be divided the critical positions developed in this field between: a) those that reiterate the strategic importance to defend the notion of an individual and/or group identity as a way to ensure the access to public policies and the fight for justice/recognition; and b) those that, contrarily, seek to deconstruct these identities, as they deem unnecessary to unify excessively plural agendas around movable categories, which reified, however, could contribute more to the oppression than for the emancipation of groups already stigmatized. In the second group, two strong exponents of the contemporary feminism are found: Judith Butler and Nancy Fraser.

The issue of gender identity

To Judith Butler (1990/2003), although the representation gives visibility to women as political subjects, on the other hand, this representation promotes relapse into a normative function that distorts what is true about women. Radicalizing the criticism of the nominalism undertaken by Beauvoir, while denouncing the polarity “determinism-free will” present in her philosophy, she denounces the dangers to state that all elements of the situation, such as the body, are traversed by cultural and discursive constructions, when conversely, as reminded by Foucault, it is the soul that ends up becoming a prison for the body. Given the instability of the subject, the use of a term supposedly able to cease the information about him would redounding in a reification of gender relationships.

Butler (1990/2003) defends that the idea of a “unit” does not constitute a requirement for political practice. On the contrary: the category “women” itself remains in dispute, in the same way as that of “gender” continues as an “open coalition”. Thus, with the intention of deconstructing the political operations that produce and conceal these operations, and inspired by the French post-structuralist criticism, she defends the need to conduct a feminist genealogy, project to which she is dedicated in her work.

Faced with the temporal contradiction posed by an idea of normativity fed by (rather than builder of) formative practices and by her own experience, Butler (1990/2003) argues that the experience itself relates to normative ideals. This, at the same time in which, paradoxically, she assumes that the categories of gender would dissipate by themselves in the case of a break of the heterosexual hegemony, that is, the use of certain terms automatically becomes unnecessary in a material context that no longer requires its use.

The path adopted by Fraser (2001), in turn, proposes a discursive strategy directly reported to her own evaluation of the strategies of remediation of the injustice verified today. As a diagnosis, one of the great innovations brought about by the work of Fraser (2001) refers to the reintroduction of the discussions about the different forms of material inequality produced in the core of the neoliberalism as necessary to correct what she suggests that it is a “lapse of false consciousness”. A “Lapse” that would have been limited to the replacement of a socialist imagery – expressed in terms such as “interest”, “exploitation” and “redistribution” –, by another imagery, centered on notions such as “identity”, “cultural domination” and “recognition”. In this sense, she defends a critical theory of recognition combined with a social policy of equality, which is able to remedy socioeconomic injustices that are in addition to those cultural-symbolic, but are not included in these.

The different nature of these two problems would involve different strategies to confront them, which could no longer be reduced to recognition measures, but that also allow, importantly, redistribution measures (although there may be important interlacements between each other). Among the several social communities, some would demand a redistributive model of justice and others, a recognition model, while some, more difficult to analyze, would adjust simultaneously to both models.

Fraser (2011) then dedicates herself to explore the extremes and meanders of these conceptual spectra.

In this analysis, Fraser (2001) does not bother to discuss the adequacy or not of certain conceptions for the existing communities. In the case of gays and lesbians, for instance, it would be less relevant to know what views of sexuality in question are. Her concern, in this moment, is focused on the evaluation of possible remedial needs demanded by the group. Thus, it is possible to notice that, although homosexuals may suffer economic injustices, these are not rooted in the economic structure, but emerge as a result of an unjust cultural-evaluative structure. Issues of "race" and gender, in turn, would imply in the formation of ambivalent collectivities, which means saying that, despite their peculiarities, both groups accommodate political-economic and cultural-evaluative dimensions at the same time. The principle of gender, for instance, is defined as basic in structuring the political economy. That is, with justice, it would be possible simply to abolish the economic distinctions between genders. However, as sexism also implies the depreciation of woman in an androcentric culture, its remediation requires the bestowal of a positive recognition. The dilemma arises exactly when recognition and redistribution end up pointing to opposite directions.

Fraser (2001) proposes then that measures of recognition and redistribution should be discussed in the light of the alternative conceptions of *affirmation* and *transformation*. The first would be aimed at "correcting undesirable outcomes of social arrangements, without disturbing the framework that generates them", whereas the second would aim to restructure the "generic framework" itself, which would produce these results (p. 266).

By analyzing the several intersections between the application of affirmative and transformative remedies with policies of redistribution and recognition, the author concludes that the affirmative remedies produce perverse effects in relation to both the economic and the cultural injustices. In the first case, because these remedies would end up supporting and shaping class differences, rather than abolish them. In the second case, because as a dynamic resultant of the first measure, the affirmative practices would culminate in stigmatization. Therefore, the transformative practices would be, in general, more advisable, in as much as they target the transformation of the macro-economic structures themselves, producers of inequalities, tending therefore to undermine the differentiation of class in the root (Fraser, 2001, p. 270). Therefore, these would promote reciprocity and solidarity, modifying the recognition relationships themselves, and consequently, the ambivalences inherent to certain collectivities. In this way, it can be perceived that, although she has used ideal types as a tool in her analysis process, she highlights the difficulty in delimiting the collectivities in question, at the same time in which the core of her proposal also points to a cultural deconstruction, now coupled, however, to the economic socialism as a goal of justice.

By criticizing the rapprochement undertaken by Fraser (2001) between gender and race issues, Ina Kerner (2012) seeks to show that sexism and racism are constituted in different ways. In an inherent appropriation of the Foucault's philosophy, the work of Kerner (2012) also contributes to shuffle the picture of the identities established, when showing that fixed arrangements are insufficient to address cross-problems resulting from a specific combination of injustices. For her, only in some cases, racism and sexism would give rise to mutual analogies, and their interlacements would be necessarily associated with the context in which they occur. This does not mean, however, that the complex relationships between them are self-exclusionary, but that the several forms of interrelationship between both call for a more detailed analysis that Kerner (2012) qualifies as the study of *intersectionalities*⁴. These interlacements would be unfolded into both an epistemic dimension, insofar as it becomes more complex to encompass a plurality and internal differences of the categories into specific representations, and a personal dimension, insofar as the ethnic and gender identities, for instance, can hardly be differentiated clearly in their formation process.

Iris Young (2001) inserts the problem of identity within her criticism of the deliberative democracy, understanding that, instead of being presented as a prerequisite of deliberation, the unit should appear

⁴ To Kerner (2012), "the term 'intersections' serves as a symbol for all *possible* forms of combinations and interlacements of different forms of power expressed by categories of difference and diversity, especially of 'race', ethnicity, gender, sexuality, social class/stratum, as well as, eventually, of religion, age and disabilities" (p. 55, italics by the author).

as objective of the political dialogue. In this way, the consensus should include, as far as possible, the pluralities in conflict, overcoming subjectivist perspectives and private interests. When analyzing the contradictions embedded in this model, especially with regard to the maintenance of privileges via consensus, Young (2001) bets on the effectiveness of the communicative process and on its rationality by proposing a model of communicative democracy able to overcome the need to identify the several groups in the face of the representative bodies, in the name of greater plurality and direct participation. The communicative democracy would involve, thus, a transformation in the experience itself, favored by the confrontation of plural positions with an increasing understanding of the social processes in which the experience itself is founded, which in turn would lead to a greater social objectivity⁵.

In the first group, now defending the strategic importance of a notion of identity, in addition to the works of Seyla Benhabib (exposed at the beginning of this article, with her weighting about the need to consider the other concrete as a epistemic component of the moral categories), there are the works of Susan Okin (2008) and Jean Cohen (2012).

Although also starting from a criticism of the deleterious effects that assumptions structured in a public-private dichotomy (which traditionally excludes women from the public sphere and the right to justice), and without breaking completely with the notion of deconstruction, Okin (2008) criticizes what she calls "merely terminological responses to feminist challenges" (p. 309). According to her, "neutral terms ... often obscure the fact that a large part of the real experience of 'people', while they live in societies structured by gender relationships, in fact depend on what their genders are" (Okin, 2008, pp. 309-310). As an emphatic example of her argument, the author shows that a correct conduct of the discussion on abortion cannot be undertaken disregarding that the relationship of the mother with the fetus is completely different from that of the father. Both from the psychological and historical-anthropological point of view, the experience of women conducts to different forms of constitution of their psyche and individuality. The defense of individuality allows extending the rights once guaranteed only to the head of the family to women as individuals, to whom would also fit the right to privacy, as indeed a form to correct the inequalities produced in the private sphere.

In an even more explicit way, Jean Cohen (2012) defends a 're-description' of the rights to personal privacy as a contribution to the task of theorizing about an "egalitarian, democratic and liberal 'identity' policy, adequate to the modern civil societies" (p. 166, emphasis of the author). The incisive argument of Cohen (2012) shows that, behind the struggle for the right to individuality, privacy and intimacy of the woman is the right to protection of the conditions that nurture the formation of her unique concrete identity – including her right to difference in relation to the current social norms and integrity of her personality –, as a background of the picture in which is included the defense of the rights to abortion. As "it is not a coincidence that we have bodies", these are "central to our most basic sense of individuality, to our identity and our personal dignity" (Cohen, 2012, p. 195). That is, at the center of the controversy about abortion is "precisely the individuality and identity of the woman" (p.196).

With this dual division around the different concepts and disputes nurtured around the issue of identity in its broad spectra, I did not intend to offer a reductionist or innocuous classification of the issue, but to highlight the grounding theoretical concepts that have guided the recent feminist criticism. From the division proposed, it becomes easier to perceive that many of the solutions found in this context have oscillated predominantly between nominalist and deconstructionist alternatives, avoiding a dialectical understanding of the relationships between language and experience.

Starting from the need to incorporate the recent contributions made in the field of critical theory to the problem put by gender inequality in the construction of knowledge and psychological practices, I consider important to recover some studies of authors of the so-called "first generation" of the Frankfurt School, able to offer a deeper understanding of the relationships between experience and language, thus paving new ways for issues that continue in dispute in the field of feminist criticism.

⁵ Recovering the confrontation between Socrates and the sophists in the "Gorgias" of Plato, Young makes a compliment of the rhetoric (that Socrates would not have been able to distinguish effectively from the truth). Hence her proposal for a model of public debate capable of overcoming the inequalities posed in the access of marginalized groups to the word - a factor that could constitute a prior blockage to the democratic project.

Final Considerations

The female experience in building new knowledge

Since subjects appropriate the language culturally established throughout their personal history, and that the language itself is built as words are necessary within a particular context of experience, both poles need to be encompassed together and dialectically in a discussion about the transformation of gender relations within the institutions, including the institutions responsible for the production of knowledge. Before the diagnosis that women have historically been set apart from public spaces, it is necessary to justify why their absence in these spaces constitutes an effective problem for the construction of knowledge in Psychology. Hence the importance to recover some works of authors of the so-called “first generation” of the Frankfurt School, especially those that address the relationship between experience and language.

Although these authors have not been devoted to problems involving gender relations, except at specific times, a more accurate understanding of the relationships between experience and language can nourish significantly the feminist criticism, suggesting furthermore best strategies articulated for coping with inequalities of gender and their consequences.

By recovering the reading of Theodor Adorno (2001) of the notion of Kantian “scheme”, it is possible to highlight the mutual relationships between experience and concept for promoting understanding. While for Kant (1781/2012) “the pure sensible concepts are not built on images of objects, but on schemes” (p. 183), “the categories [susceptible of empirical use] without the schemes are only functions of the understanding relating to concepts, but they do not represent any object” (p. 187). That is, the Kantian philosophy have sought to resolve the discrepancy between the category that describes the object and the object itself arguing for the existence of an “intermediate stage between intuition and concept, a type of model or image” (Adorno, 2001, p. 131). The use of these models that makes possible both to recognize what we perceive and associate an image to the concept. The decisive question that crosses the knowledge construction process in this context is that, in the contemporary societies, we find ourselves increasingly provided with ready schemes rather than build own schemes, fruit of our experience, in our relationship with things. This process passes through both the process of elaboration of concepts (leading to generalizations that no longer keep similarities with their objects) and the perception of objects, now distorted and compromised by false projections – giving rise to prejudice. As the perception of the object is finalized by elements inside the subject and outside the object, it is opened space for the intervenience of the suffering repressed – which operates on the psychological basis of the prejudice and pathological apperceptions (as in the case of those that give rise to the attack on the Jews). Hence the difficulty to combat the prejudice in general, and specifically that of gender, in which we discuss here.

In part, this would be the reason why the decline of the experience contributes to the corrosion of the *Bildung* and the diffusion of an alienated spirit: the self-determination of consciousness is replaced for cultural elements approved beforehand, while at the other extreme, the consciousness demerged and distant from the praxis manifests itself in the form of a simulacrum of the experience, strengthening its reification and producing a false consciousness. Then one of the evident losses in the disregard of the female experience of the formative processes: distancing from the female experience, the knowledge established, lame, return to society as schemes. Knowledge produced exclusively by men does not necessarily correspond to the diversity of the experience that this knowledge seeks to explain, besides excluding beforehand a source of experience that, for themselves, men are not automatically able to supply⁶.

⁶ The defense in the consideration of the female experience for the construction of the knowledge is not about the guarantee or preservation of “a place of speech” (Safatle, 2016), or to ensure a more equitable division of the cultural assets (without disregarding, I highlight, such quite legitimate guidelines, especially considering the shameful growth of the political, social and economic inequalities under the neoliberalism).

Since language and experience are indelibly associated, the question then becomes how to guide this circle of mutual determinations into a virtuous circle, in which both the criticism is able to give rise to less stereotyped perceptions, external to the needs of the concrete subjects, and, on the other hand, the experience can participate in the construction of more vivid knowledge, in line with the objective and subjective needs of all their people, and not only of their portion already constituted as political and thinking elite.

The terms constructed from the increment in the psychological knowledge need to be nourished by a vivid relationship with the experience. Experience which, given its simultaneously historical, social and individual, universal and particular character, is the only one able to offer occasion to the thought, as well as the necessary ballast to ensure the validity of the knowledge produced in Psychology. In this sense, it seems little fruitful to act only at one end of this chain, notably that of the language – whether through the deconstruction of discourses or through the affirmation of gender identity. As long as it is not possible to promote transformations of experience able to give *specifically* rise to egalitarian gender relations, the language of inequality will continue to be heard and produced. The institutions responsible for the formation and production of the knowledge need to engage actively in this process, considering the complexity of the phenomena involved therein.

I hope that I have succeeded in this very short article to show first that the feminist criticism achieved important pillars of Psychology that, as science, cannot remain indifferent or inert before the challenges that have been posed to it. The various fields of Psychology need to be mobilized in the construction of emancipatory strategies able to ensure the very validity of the knowledge produced in the area. More than that, it seems clear that it is still necessary further progress in the construction of knowledge capable of responding to the demands and challenges proposed in an ever more incisive way by our society, offering strategies more articulated in promoting gender equality.

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