

FRENCH PERSPECTIVES IN WORK PSYCHOLOGY: ANALYSIS OF APPROPRIATION PROCESSES IN BRAZIL

*PERSPECTIVAS FRANCESAS NA PSICOLOGIA DO TRABALHO:
ANÁLISE DOS PROCESSOS DE APROPRIAÇÃO NO BRASIL*

*PERSPECTIVAS FRANCESAS DE LA PSICOLOGÍA DEL TRABAJO:
ANÁLISIS DE LOS PROCESOS DE APROPIACIÓN EN BRASIL*

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Abstract: The Psychodynamics of Work and Ergology, as well as disciplines adhering to Work Clinics, have been appropriated as a recurring reference by Brazilian researchers. Therefore, this article intends to analyze the historical-social developments of the relationship between center and periphery, France and Brazil, considering that such appropriation must be critically evaluated. Thus, aiming to analyze the relations between the French perspectives of Work Psychology and the historicity of the processes of appropriation of such ideas in Brazil, the scenario of the emergence of French studies and their paths in Brazil were evaluated, as from the dissemination of the Psychotechnics. The study showed the importance of historically identifying the asymmetrical way in which the French perspectives of Work Psychology were appropriated, either in consonance with liberal ideas (in the 1920s-1940s), either in opposition to neo-liberal currents (from the 1980s/1990s).

Keywords: Working Conditions; Ergonomics; Ergology; Psychodynamics of Work; Industrial Psychology.

Resumo: A Psicodinâmica do Trabalho e a Ergologia, assim como disciplinas aderentes às Clínicas do Trabalho, têm sido apropriadas como referencial recorrente por pesquisadorxs brasileiroxs. Sendo assim, este artigo pretende analisar os desenvolvimentos histórico-sociais dessa relação de centro e periferia, entre França e Brasil, considerando que tal apropriação deve ser avaliada de forma crítica. Assim, sob o objetivo de analisar as relações entre as perspectivas francesas da Psicologia do Trabalho e a historicidade dos processos de apropriação de tais ideias no Brasil, foram avaliados o cenário da emergência de estudos franceses e seus percursos no Brasil, a partir da disseminação da Psicotécnica. O estudo mostrou a importância de historicamente se identificar a forma assimétrica como as perspectivas francesas da Psicologia do Trabalho foram apropriadas, ora em consonância com o ideário liberal (nos anos 1920-1940), ora em oposição às correntes neoliberais (a partir dos anos 1980/1990).

Palavras-chave: Condições de Trabalho; Ergonomia; Ergologia; Psicodinâmica do Trabalho; Psicologia Industrial.

Resumen: La Psicodinámica del Trabajo y la Ergología, así como disciplinas adheridas a las Clínicas del Trabajo, han sido apropiadas como referencia recurrente por investigadorxs brasileñxs. Por lo tanto, este artículo pretende analizar los desarrollos histórico-sociales de esta relación entre centro y periferia, considerando que tal apropiación debe ser evaluada críticamente. Así, con el objetivo de analizar las relaciones entre las perspectivas francesas de la Psicología del Trabajo y la historicidad de los procesos de apropiación de tales ideas en Brasil, se evaluó el escenario del surgimiento de los estudios franceses y sus caminos en Brasil, a partir de la difusión de la Psicotecnia. El estudio mostró la importancia de identificar históricamente la forma asimétrica en que se apropiaron las perspectivas francesas de la Psicología del Trabajo, ya sea en consonancia con las ideas liberales (en las décadas de 1920-1940), o en oposición a las corrientes neoliberales (de los años 1980/1990).

Palabras clave: Condiciones de Trabajo; Ergonomía; Ergología; Psicodinámica del Trabajo; Psicología Industrial.

Introduction

On 19 September 2019, at the Center for Studies in Occupational Health and Human Ecology (CESTEH), of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz/RJ), a meeting was held with some Brazilian researchers involved in the study of the relationship between human activity and productive labor. The main motivation for the meeting was the presence of Professor Yves Schwartz (1942-), considered responsible for the development of Ergology.

At that event, Schwartz made a general overview of the situation of the discipline and lamented the research shutdown at the APST (Analyse Pluridisciplinaire des Situations de Travail — Département d'Ergologie — Université de Provence), which had definitely occurred after a gradual process of discontinuities over the last years. As a result, he made a statement that is of special interest for the development of this article: “Ergology has developed more in Brazil than in France”.

In the debate that followed, one of those present recalled that Christophe Dejours (1949-), responsible for the development of the Psychodynamics of Work, would have said the same, that is, that his approach originally elaborated in the French context had developed more in Brazil than in France itself. Given this, Schwartz conjectured that such appropriation could be explained by the strong intellectual influence that France had on Brazil since the 19th century.

In an interview years before, Schwartz had already stated that there were some aspects that contributed for Brazil to be one of the main countries to explore Ergology and its concepts: “In Brazil’s case, the Brazilian intellectual culture has an interest for European and French culture, on the part of human sciences, since a long time ago” (Schwartz, 2013, p. 334).

Now, all this discussion around these French perspectives on work — it is important to make this aspect explicit right away in this introduction — also concerns the field of Social Psychology. In Brazil, this theme of Work Psychology has maintained, for decades, direct crossings with Social Psychology of a more critical base, a fact that can be seen mainly after Social Cognitive-Experimental Psychology, under American bias, ceased to be totally hegemonic in Latin America (Silva, 2019). With the intensification of popular resistance against the dictatorship and the consequent process of political openness at the end of the 1970s, the transformations in Brazilian society also affected the conception of the social function of the psychologist, which necessarily led to the questioning of the role of this professional in the corporate world.

In that historical moment, the interest in the construction of a critical social psychology gave rise to the creation of the Brazilian Association of Social Psychology (ABRAPSO), in 10 July 1980, at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), during the 32nd Reunion of the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (SBPC). It is clear that themes related to Work Psychology interest ABRAPSO since its emergence, since already in 1984 its leaders elected Work Psychology as theme of the 5th Regional Meeting, held in São Paulo. As a matter of fact, as the industry workers’ claims became more visible in the Brazilian scenario, with many strikes despite the military dictatorship, the criticism that the activities of Work Psychology were intrinsically reactionary was gaining more academic penetration.

A book that was published in this same year, 1984, and republished many times later, is considered until today as emblematic of this expressive transformation of Brazilian Social Psychology: “Psicologia social: o homem em movimento” [Social psychology: the man in motion]. This work broke with the North American tradition of positivist Social Psychology and its publication also serves to prove, from its initial moment, the relation of ABRAPSO

researchers with Work Psychology. At the time, in a classic text considered as seminal (Codo, 1984), Wanderley Codo problematized the condition of the work psychologist as the Big Bad Wolf of psychology because they were supposedly hired by the boss to face the interest of the worker. Since then, productive restructuring, the impacts of technology, the man-machine dynamic (a system that includes the human being, the machine and the environment) and many other elements of Work Psychology have attracted the attention of social psychologists.

However, there is yet another reason why the object of this research really interests the analysis of Social Psychology. In addition to being inserted in the context of the relation between Work Psychology and Critical Social Psychology, this article has an epistemological approach focused on the analysis of historical and social conditions that favor the production of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Studies on relations between hegemonic and peripheral centers are gaining more prominence as a result of the perception that knowledge and science are legitimized as a field of dispute and power (Mazzetti, Rubin-Oliveira, Pezari-co, & Wielewicki, 2019).

However, despite the visibility of some disputes, it is difficult to make a categorical statement in order to explain why Ergology and Psychodynamics of Work received such marked attention in the Brazilian academic environment, compared to the original means of circulation of such formulations. Nonetheless, there are obvious similarities between the two approaches. Many authors even refer to a more general term — Work Clinics — to represent a set of approaches that have in common the notion of work as an activity and the emphasis especially on subjectivity (Clot, 2011). Consequently, this includes perspectives such as Ergonomics of the Activity, Psychosociology, Psychodynamics of Work and Ergology, which are characterized by the concern with the historicity of the processes present in work situations (Castro & Leão, 2020).

As a matter of fact, there are interwoven historicities both in the worker's activity and in the development of research fields. This issue of the historicity of processes in Work Psychology, by the way, is what guides the scope of this article. The focus is neither Ergology nor the Psychodynamics of Work per se, but the social history of Psychology. What is sought is to inquire whether the interest of Brazilian intellectual culture in French culture was effectively transformed into initiatives in the field of Work Psychology, throughout the historical period in which this area of study began to gain more defined contours.

Although based on denominations of Psychotechnics, Techno-psychology or Industrial Psychology, there are many studies in the History of Psychology that deal with Work Psychology. This investigation, however, has a distinct contribution due to its perspective, which is not very common, as it focuses on appropriations of French psychology. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to analyze, within the framework of critical studies on knowledge transfer between center and periphery, the relations between the French perspectives of Work Psychology and the historicity of the processes of appropriation of such ideas in Brazil.

Yet, an investigation on the processes of institutionalization of Work Psychology in this peripheral country may fall into the simplicity of thinking that the reception of psychological theories and practices occurs in an uncritical manner, since for many people psychology would be constructed as a hypothetically neutral science, with objective methods. However, the field of studies on the center-periphery relations shows exactly the opposite (Brock, 2014; Gavroglu et al., 2008). Thus, this article's view is to go beyond deterministic and static perspectives, analyzing how the transposition of scientific knowledge from a region to another (supposedly understood as "center" and "periphery") must be questioned in its power games.

Therefore, the way to be developed here will not be to see if French Psychotechnics (or Ergology, or even Psychodynamics of Work) has been adequately adapted, considering its technical procedures and concepts, in order to evaluate the performance of peripherals (in this case, the Brazilians) in incorporating the demands of scientific knowledge imported from the *Champs Élysées*. What is intended is to analyze eventual alliances, confrontations and local disputes that may have occurred within the reception processes of all these French influences, since other investigations on the emergence of Work Psychology in Brazil verified conceptual displacements, theoretical divergences and ideological resistance (Castro, 2014; Dadico & Siqueira, 2021).

General scenario of the emergence of French studies in Work Psychology

In 2007, Professor Yves Clot, an important researcher linked to both Yves Schwartz and Christophe Dejours, presented a conference on the history of Work Psychology in France during an event held at the Fluminense Federal University, which was later published. This material is particularly relevant in the scope of this article because it reifies the enunciative scene of a French theorist talking about French studies with Brazilian co-enunciators.

Yves Clot (2010) distinguished three French-speaking generations of labor analysts. In his analysis, he tried to show that French psychotechnics, focused on the analysis of work, gradually deviated from its initial, more critical approach. And little by little it moved towards psychotechnics centered on the aptitude and suitability of the person depending on the job, according to propositions based on the Scientific Organization of Work, a method massively disseminated in Europe and America. He also considered that more critical contributions would only return years later.

The first generation of labor analysts started to act in the beginning years of the 20th century, preceding the arrival of Taylorism in factories in France. In this generation, regarded as being of the founders of French language psychotechnics of work, the names of Suzanne Pacaud (1902-1988) and Jean-Maurice Lahy (1872-1943) are mainly highlighted by the critical perspective. In his 1916 work, — The Taylor system and the physiology of professional work (*Le système Taylor et la physiologie du travail professionnel*) — Lahy explicitly criticized the Taylor's system (Tomás & Ianeva, 2017).

The emphasis on this initial context is justified because these first generation authors, more concerned with the analysis of work than with adapting the worker to a given function, ended up being made invisible in history, according to Clot's own assessment (2010). The following years erased the emphasis of more critical studies in favor of a more functionalist contribution. Thus, even in France, psychotechnics was strongly associated with performance control and modeling methods based on Taylorist concepts. The historical picture is paradoxical because after an initial humanist critique of Taylorism, psychotechnics became one of the greatest instruments at the service of the current economic system. And, as we will see further below, it was this French psychotechnics amalgamated with Taylorism that quickly arrived in Brazil.

Therefore, the first generation was that of a Work Psychology that was lost from its initial course because it thought that there was a desirable adequacy, that is, a cross between the aptitudes likely to be found in workers and the definition of the needs of the job. Consequently, in this positivist bias, it turned against the workers, even though it initially started from a psychology of the worker.

The periodization arbitrated by Clot (2010) divided what he called the second generation into three distinct currents, but with a common point, as these French currents developed a critical attitude towards the psychotechnics characterized by selection tests, which then took shape in France. One of these currents is the cognitive work psychology by Jean-Marie Faverge (1912-1988) and Jacques Leplat (1921-), currently known as ergonomic psychology, which highlighted the conceptual differentiation between task and activity. A second current refers to ergonomics, led by Alain Wisner (1923-2004), who created the terms “prescribed work” and “real work”. It is worth noting that this distinction between prescribed and real work conceptually supported Wisner’s Activity Ergonomics, an approach that was an important influence on the emergence of Ergology in the 1980s (Vieira & Santos, 2012). The other current, the third, inaugurated by Louis Le Guillant (1900-1968), emphasized the psychic function of work and mental health issues of the worker.

The third generation of labor analysts, the one in which he himself, Yves Clot, fits, brings together several contemporary researchers. Clot (2010) considers that the aspect that unites them is the search for actions that transform work, a tendency present in the French-speaking tradition. He highlights the Clinic of Activity, represented by him, the Psychodynamics of Work by Dejours and Ergology by Schwartz, often referred to as the Work Clinic.

The importance of outlining a general scenario of the emergence of French studies in Work Psychology is to allow the identification of which discursive practices were appropriated in the Brazilian context, and based on which assumptions. In France, Work Psychology did not completely follow the same tracks as “American industrial psychology” (Clot, 2006, p. 100). Thus, a word still needs to be said about how these French influences were constituted in Brazil, mainly because the predominant tendency in our country, in the middle of the 20th century, was that of French psychotechnics with a more positivist and functionalist bias, strongly marked by the adequacy of workers to the needs of the job.

First moments of French influence in Work Psychology in Brazil

The beginnings of Work Psychology in Brazil can be identified in the first decades of the 20th century (Castro, Facchinetti, & Portugal, 2018), when industrialization in Brazil was incipient and the country had a peripheral economic position in the world context. At that historical moment, the industrialization process in the US and Europe was much more advanced and practices that alluded to more efficient production were being consolidated, with a focus on adapting human beings to machines. These notions circulated in a field called Industrial Psychology at the time. The publication in the United States, in 1913, of *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency*, by Hugo Münsterberg, indicated emphases that were based on the Taylorist precept of the right person in the right place and led, in the first half of the 20th century, to the massive implantation of mental and aptitudes tests, specialty of the approach disseminated as Psychotechnical, and developed from the influence of the Scientific Organization of Work, proposed by Frederick W. Taylor (Baptista, Rueda, Castro, Gomes, & Silva, 2011).

In that historical scenario, this disparity in Brazil’s underdeveloped condition, compared to that of developed countries, resulted in the importation of ready-made models that aimed at an idealized rational organization of work. The influence of the United States was outstanding, but it is important to show that despite the strong American hegemony in this field, French influences in Work Psychology were also formed in great part of the 20th century.

Thus, the option for a French perspective was not fortuitous, but, on the contrary, was part of a well-articulated trend.

It is worth remembering that, at the beginning of the 20th century, France exerted strong influence on Brazilian intellectual means, for instance, in the creation of Franco-Paulista institutions in São Paulo from 1908, which aimed to provide greater cultural exchange between France and Brazil. Many meetings of these institutions happened in the office of the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* and effectively financed the continuous French influence at the time (Moraes, 1994; Vercesi, 2010).

The interest in psychotechnics applied to work arose in the Rio de Janeiro/RJ, São Paulo/SP, Minas Gerais/MG axis, with a French emphasis mainly on the capital of São Paulo, which played an important role in the studies that gave rise to the theme. This is because São Paulo presented a greater development in the process of urbanization and industrialization in the country. A prominent character in this horizon was Georges Dumas (1866-1946), a professor at the Sorbonne involved with the institutionalization of French scientific psychology, a frequent contributor to *O Estado de São Paulo* (with several texts in the period 1923-1930), and one of those responsible for creating the Franco-Brazilian Institute of High Culture (in 1922), the Franco-Brazilian Liceu/SP and the Franco-Paulista Technical Institute (both in 1925). The first course taught by him at Escola Normal de São Paulo (Normal School of São Paulo), in 1912, had several classes on psychology, and in the 1920s such courses were even more frequent, with consequent publication in the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*. Due to his influence, Dumas was responsible for recommending French professors to come to Brazil later (Consolim, 2017, 2021).

However, many convergent episodes occurred concurrently. In 1924, Roberto Mange (1885-1955), Swiss mechanical engineer, had the initiative of implementing procedures of professional selection and guidance at the Mechanics Professional School (annexed to the Arts and Crafts Lyceum), based on the application of psychotechnics (Batista, 2013; Dadico & Siqueira, 2021). Later on, Mange would be responsible for the creation of the Course of Rational Organization of the Work and the Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial (National Service of Industrial Education - SENAI).

At the same time that Mange was dedicated to administering tests at the school of mechanics, more precisely in 1925, Lourenço Filho (1897-1970), a Brazilian educator, reactivated the Experimental Psychology Laboratory of the Normal School of SP. His work in the laboratory was based, above all, on sources of Franco-Geneva psychology: Alfred Binet (1857-1911), Théodore Simon (1872-1961), Édouard Claparède (1873-1940), Henri Piéron (1881-1964) and Léon Walther (1889-1963), among others, some involved with the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland (Monarcha, 2001). The proximity of Lourenço Filho with renowned professionals from Europe, especially from France and from places that receive French influence, as is the case of Geneva, made possible the development of studies not only in the field of education but also oriented towards Work Psychology, based essentially on Psychotechnics, thus welcoming these French conceptions in the country.

Both Roberto Mange and Lourenço Filho were members of the so-called “Grupo do Estado”, a group of São Paulo intellectuals who, under the command of Julio de Mesquita Filho (1892-1969), from the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, shared a liberal perspective. Driven by this group and in partnership with the Franco-Paulista Technical Institute, French specialists were invited to carry out courses, conferences and lectures. Indicated by Dumas, the first guest was Henri Piéron (1881-1964), professor at the Institute of Psychology at the Universi-

ty of Paris. In his speeches, Piéron highlighted the importance of psychotechnics in industrial work processes and in remodeling the foundations of popular education (Moraes, 1994).

From July to August 1927, Piéron taught a theoretical-practical course at the Psychology Laboratory of the Normal School, directed by Lourenço Filho, who transcribed and published the French professor's lectures in the work *Psychologia e psychotechnica*, edited by the Normal School of SP. Likewise, Piéron gave lessons at the Railroad Selection Service, directed by Mange (Augras, 1965). It is noteworthy that Henri Piéron had an important role in French psychology, replacing Binet in 1912 in the direction of the Experimental Psychology Laboratory of the École de Hautes Études, linked to the Sorbonne, originally created by Théodule Ribot (1839-1916). Piéron was also responsible for the creation of the Institute of Psychology at the University of Paris in 1921 and for the National Institute of Professional Orientation – INOP, in 1928 (Ouvrier-Bonnaz, 2007).

Piéron's presence in SP is a good example of French influence. He had already taught a psychotechnics course in RJ in 1923, on the initiative of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences, an entity closely linked to the Franco-Brazilian Institute of High Culture. His arrival in São Paulo, however, followed the foundation of the Franco-Paulista Technical Institute, in 1925, an organization that would become a strong articulator of academic collaboration between France and Brazil, and effectively responsible for sponsoring such courses on psychotechnics in the capital of São Paulo. (Dadico & Siqueira, 2021).

Faced with the *mise en scène* of this context of debates on the scientific orientation of work, the Commercial Association of São Paulo also decided to hire an internationally renowned specialist in the area of Work Psychology in 1929. The chosen one was Professor Léon Walther (1889-1963), a Russian psychologist based in the French-speaking part of Switzerland and linked to the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute (created by Claparède), who was called to teach courses and help in the creation of an Institute of Organization Science of Work (Moraes, 1994). Everything indicates that the intention of the group of intellectuals from São Paulo was to create the Institute along the lines of INOP in Paris. However, the contingencies of the time — the economic crisis of 1929 — postponed the project for about two years.

Léon Walther held a series of conferences on scientific management of work, his work being translated by Lourenço Filho and published in 1929. The referred work — *La Technopsychologia du travail industrial*, originally from 1926 — had been one of the first published in French to deal with the fields of Technopsychology applied to industrial work. Nonetheless, on this trip to Brazil, Walther was not restricted to SP. Before, at the invitation of the government of the State of Minas Gerais, he had stayed for three months at the School for Improvement of Teachers in Belo Horizonte, where he contributed to the implementation of the Laboratory of Psychology (already started by Théodore Simon). Years later, in 1948, he would return to Brazil to work for the National Commercial Learning Service — SENAC, in the then capital, RJ (Antonini, 2001).

A highlight in the period was the creation of the Institute for the Rational Organization of Work (IDORT), in 1931. The idea of creating an institute dedicated to the scientific organization of work was built on the suggestions of French professors and, on the Brazilian side, by Lourenço Filho, along with his work partner, Roberto Mange, who was seconded by IDORT to be responsible for the professional education project. It was from IDORT and its counterpart created in RJ, the Institute of Professional Selection and Orientation (ISOP), that many proposals for professional qualification in the country were discussed in the following years (Antonacci, 2011).

In 1948, together with Léon Walther, who was returning, another French psychologist arrived in Brazil to work at SENAC, Pierre Weil (1924 -2008), a former student of Piéron and Walther. The mission at SENAC consisted of implementing the training of the teams that would work in psychotechnical activities at that institution, recently opened in the capital, RJ. This work aimed to adapt, with an emphasis on commercial work, what Roberto Mange was doing at SENAI, an institution created a few years earlier, in 1942. As Director of the Teaching Division of the National Department of SENAC, where he remained for 10 years (1949-1958), Weil developed several studies, having published many articles in the ISOP's magazine *Arquivos Brasileiros de Psicotécnica*.

This brief trajectory, outlined from the 1920s to the end of the 1940s, shows that the French psychology that arrived in Brazilian lands, in the first half of the 20th century, was precisely the one criticized by Clot, predominantly marked by the psychotechnics that aimed at adapting the human being to the functions of the job, through selections mediated by professional aptitude tests (Clot, 2010). Such French psychotechnics (also referred to as *technopsychology*) intended to create a significant field of practical applications in the school and work spheres, serving for a supposedly efficient organization of productive activity (Monarcha, 2001).

The issue of Work Psychology in the center-periphery relation

There is, under the term "*indigenous psychology movement*", a growing movement that dates back to the 1980s (Sinha, 1984), and is characterized by its concern to analyze the distinct role that psychology assumes in peripheral countries, as well as the factors underlying the impact place of psychological theories and concepts. This movement evolved into a recognized thematic area of research within *Cross-cultural Psychology* (Adair, 1999), and the analysis of the reception process of scientific theories in countries seen as peripheral has been the subject of interesting research (Smith, 2005). In the Brazilian context, investigations in the History of Psychology allow us to verify that those who receive certain knowledge do not do so passively, but, on the contrary, tend to act — sometimes assimilating, sometimes disagreeing with psychological techniques — depending on local configurations and autochthonous conventions.

The analysis presented in this article problematizes the social-historical processes of appropriation of French perspectives in Work Psychology in Brazil. Research on the incorporation of Western psychology in peripheral countries has shown that there are internal influences in the reception contexts that conduct the way in which given knowledge is appropriated. These internal influences, configured around local disputes, are often made invisible, but ultimately allow us to understand why certain theories are incorporated in one way and not another. For example, studies carried out in India show that Western psychological techniques were adherently incorporated into the general scenario of modernization in the country (Sinha, 1998).

In the case of French influences on Work Psychology in Brazil, it is possible to verify that the appropriation of concepts and categories were also socio-historically mediated by economic and social demands. It was not nostalgia for the *Belle Époque* that led Henri Piéron to be invited to give lectures at the Normal School of São Paulo. Internal dynamics of this school led to the invitation due to the interest in modernizing teaching and the prestige that Psychotechnics carried with it. Data from the time show that about 40% of school-aged chil-

dren were out of school, an indicator of the undesirable discrepancy between the schooling of São Paulo's population and the idealized industrialization project (Dadico & Siqueira, 2021). The economic development projected for SP was interpreted as a result of necessary educational reforms and productive adequacy of labor in the industry. The economic liberalism of the period, therefore, saw psychotechnics as an important ally.

Therefore, the discussion of the French influence from the 1920s to the 1940s only makes sense through the configuration of a framework of relations in which the action of local elites that aimed at the elaboration of initiatives aimed at economic development is perceived. Furthermore, Brazilian intellectuals of the period also benefited politically from linking their names to the notoriety of eminent foreign professors. Therefore, the institutional meaning of Psychotechnics was transmuted in relation to the fields of production, in France, and of appropriation, in Brazil.

The intellectual environment of Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte and São Paulo, contrary to what happened in the French university environment, were closely linked to the State, since the vast majority of Brazilian scholars held public office and some functions in administration began to demand academic credentials. For enthusiasts of Psychotechnics in Brazil, the reception of these techniques also meant establishing links that would legitimize their social and professional ascension. For the French, on the other hand, the most important thing was to build an international trajectory to obtain scientific recognition abroad, as the moment was marked by a progressive loss of reputation of French psychology in relation to its Anglo-Saxon counterparts (Consolim, 2021).

Stimulated by the newspapers of the time, a series of demarcations in the political and economic spheres contributed to the insertion of proposals by Georges Dumas, Henri Piéron, Léon Walther and, later, Pierre Weil, about the rationalization of work. The two main institutes promoting and financing this circulation were the already mentioned Franco-Brazilian Institute of High Culture (created in 1922) and the Franco-Paulista Technical Institute (created in 1925), respectively in RJ and SP (Consolim, 2021). However, in the political game of the period, it is also necessary to realize that the São Paulo elite sought different references of what was happening in the country's capital, Rio de Janeiro. This point seems to be fundamental to understand the uniqueness of some developments in Work Psychology in São Paulo.

Tensions between the country's capital and São Paulo culminated in a civil war with almost three months of fighting and thousands of deaths in the 1930s. This civil war — the Constitutionalist Revolution of 1932 — took place in a context in which the São Paulo elites sought to regain the political protagonism they had lost with the 1930 Revolution and with Getúlio Vargas' rise to power.

The French presence, therefore, took place in a particularly troubled period and of structural changes in the country, still under the effect of the economic crisis of 1929. Claparède himself, when he was visiting Brazil — in RJ and MG —, ended up being detained in Belo Horizonte when the 1930 revolution broke out, and for days he felt anguished at having been isolated from any communication with the rest of Brazil and the world (Santos, Mignot, & Perdomo, 2021).

Faced with open confrontation, it would be consequently difficult to imagine operational convergences between São Paulo and the Vargas government, which perhaps explains some distances over the years, including between IDORT and ISOP, respectively in São Paulo and Rio, which had very similar profiles, but articulated in distinct psychological associations.

The emergence of interest in Ergology, Psychodynamics of Work and Clinics of Activity, nonetheless, took place in a completely different framework. During the 1980s, the field of workers' health was established in Brazil, under the influence of Latin American social epidemiology and the social movement fighting for health. This period of political-union effervescence implied new references for understanding the health-disease process, with emphasis on Work Environment: the Struggle of Workers for Health (booklet of the Italian trade union movement, published in Italy by Ivar Oddone in 1977 and in Brazil in 1986) and The madness of Work (by Christophe Dejours, published in Brazil in 1987); works that contributed to new intervention practices in work processes. Due to this whole scenario, the Federal Constitution of 1988 gave rise to public policies aimed at workers' health, within a set of activities with epidemiological surveillance and health surveillance actions, according to the Brazilian Organic Law on Health No. 8.080/90 (Pessanha et al., 2022).

Indeed, at the end of the 1980s, the country was moving away from the period of authoritarianism imposed by the civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985), and critical ideas could circulate more easily. Brazilian universities — which did not even exist in the 1920s — were already better structured and the professors were no longer linked mainly to federal government administration bodies. Thus, researchers in Work Psychology were free to seek the references they deemed appropriate for their research, without any hegemonic direction.

At the turn of the 1980s to the 1990s, the theoretical field of Work Psychology had already gone through what was conventionally called the “crisis of Brazilian Social Psychology” (Silva, 2019), with the overcoming of the hegemonic US model of positivist-experimental basis, centered on applied techniques. Thus, all these autochthonous articulations contributed to the appropriation of critical perspectives such as those of the Work Clinics. And in the 1990s, Brazil was experiencing the oppressive winds of neoliberalism that turned against workers, an aspect that made the contributions of these more critical French theories even more relevant. Brazilian universities were ready to take higher flights.

However, the asymmetry between the French and Brazilian university environment in the final decades of the 20th century (and even today) deserves a closer look. In Brazil, there was an openness to transdisciplinary dynamics that did not exist, likewise, in France. Moreover, Europe as a whole is very much characterized by disciplinary divisions between fields of knowledge and university departments, due to very old traditions of institutionalization of areas of knowledge. An epistemology such as Ergology, for example, strongly marked by transdisciplinary views like other Work Clinics, indicated demands and requirements that were neglected and misunderstood in the French university environment. An idea such as participating in multidisciplinary teams did not gain much space in the career of an academic within French universities. In Brazil, this type of difficulty did not occur (and does not currently occur). Brazilian researchers make crossings between Work Psychology, Production Engineering, Linguistics, Education and Ergonomics with a much greater theoretical opening.

All these frameworks problematize the relationship between French influence and Brazilian appropriation. Yves Schwartz himself, when describing some interdisciplinary experiences with Brazilian researchers and former students in a 2016 interview, made statements that allow us to verify two-way relationships, back and forth, counterflow, in these relations between center and periphery:

The discovery of Brazil — for us in Ergology it was a bit of a discovery (laughs) — was a great luck for the development of the ergological approach... There is in Brazil an openness to transdisciplinary dimensions... The advantage of working with friends, Brazilian colleagues, it's this openness... This openness is a way to expand Ergology's reflections in new sectors, new concepts, new disciplines, not entirely new for us, but the cooperation deepened our reflection and therefore our relationship with Brazil is very rich and favorable for the development of the ergological approach. (Schwartz, 2016, p. 232)

Something similar can also be said about the Psychodynamics of Work. When asked about divergences and convergences between the French and the Brazilian scene, in an interview given to a Brazilian researcher at CNAM (*Conservatoire des Arts et Metiers*), in Paris, Dejours admitted that, as a result of cultural differences between Brazil and France, there are researchers who have made various adaptations in the Brazilian context (Macêdo & Heloani, 2018).

Therefore, the issue of Work Psychology in the France-Brazil relationship cannot be seen in a reductionist or reifying way. It is not possible, for example, to say that there was French colonization in Brazilian Work Psychology, as this study shows how much Brazilian issues guided the appropriation of imported knowledge. If in an initial moment the Brazilian intellectual elites saw the French Work Psychology — Psychotechnics — as a key that made it possible to open the door of economic liberalism, years later what Brazilian researchers sought was a series of references to throw away that same damn liberalism. Aspect that shows that there was no continuity of processes, but deep ruptures.

A view focused on the French diachronic horizon allows identifying relevant cuts and discontinuities. The French perspective in the 1920s-1940s — drawn from the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology at the *École de Hautes Études*, L'Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the Institut National d'Orientation Professionnelle (INOP) — came from the scientific mainstream of France. The Work Clinics — Ergonomics of Activity, Psychosociology, Psychodynamics of Work and Ergology — are configured, in turn, in a diametrically opposite pole, since they were, and are, counter-hegemonic currents.

If the viewpoint turns to the Brazilian landscape, however, asymmetrical characters also emerge on the scene. The local environment of dialogue with French influences indicates very different social actors. The French perspective of the 1920s to the 1940s dialogued with entrepreneurs from the Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais axis and with intellectuals interested in the capitalist industrialization process in the country. The Brazilian interlocutors of Work Clinics are exactly on the opposite spectrum of the social fabric, interested in a Psychology of Work that is separated from the hegemonic field of Organizational Psychology, that is, a Work Psychology more focused on the transformation of work contexts and the emancipation of the worker, without recommending functionalities of management processes guided, in general, by criteria of optimization in costs and profit.

Final considerations

The goal pursued in this article was to research the relations implied in the historicity of the processes of appropriation of French perspectives of Work Psychology in Brazil. To this end, the text assumed historical-argumentative aspects, almost like an essay, in dialogue with critical studies on the transfer of knowledge between center and periphery: the “*indigenous psychology movement*”.

Bibliographic and bibliometric surveys on Work Psychology, in Brazil, point to a significant presence of contributions from disciplines adhering to Work Clinics, mainly of French origin. In general terms, one could even say that Brazil incorporated French influences in 1920-1940 and 1990-2020. A more astute look, however, will have to recognize that Brazil was not the same in these two periods, nor were these influences similar. Vargas’s Brazil is not the Brazil of redemocratization and Work Clinics are not Psychotechnics. The idea of a homogeneous, linear and watertight appropriation makes no sense.

The attempt to explain this phenomenon through cumulative conjectures seems doomed to failure. It is not possible to identify, over the decades, facts that, descriptively grouped, allow us to perceive how the influence of the hegemonic center was accumulating and solidifying in the peripheral country. Wanting to understand the historicity of the processes of appropriation of French perspectives of Work Psychology according to their supposed evolution over time is a mistake, precisely because the analysis of the period shows a series of discontinuities. French Psychology was appropriated in an asymmetrical and out of step way, sometimes in line with liberal ideas (in the 1920s-1940s), sometimes in opposition to these same liberal currents (under the nickname of neoliberals, from the 1980s/1990s onwards).

Therefore, given the general scenario of the emergence of French studies and their paths in Brazilian lands there is no reason to understand the notion of French Psychology as a constitutive concept of a reified and fixed identity over the years, in the field of human factors at work. What proves to be more pertinent and relevant is the analysis of a historicity marked by the heterogeneity and irruption of autochthonous events, which raise adhesions and insurgencies, receptions and disapprovals, expropriations and receptions. The impact of French prospects, in the end, always depended on the state of the productive forces at a given moment. Thus, it is necessary to search for a perspective capable of seeing the factors underlying the contexts of appropriation that conduct, or not, the way in which Brazilian Work Psychology develops.

T. N. - Translator’s notes:

All the direct quotes and titles were freely translated from the Portuguese original, as referenced next, by the article’s translator. Moreover, the word “fluminense” refers to the Brazilian state of Rio de Janeiro, in the same way as the word “paulista” regards the state of São Paulo.

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