

GUEST EDITORS' NOTE

Psy cultures: psychoanalysis, subjectivity and politics

This special issue is the result of the work being done by an international study group on the history of psychoanalysis and other branches of psy knowledge. We will explore a thematic double: on the one hand, the insertion of psychoanalysis into local cultures, transforming them and being transformed by them, and, on the other hand, the ever complex, never linear relations between psychoanalysis and other forms of knowledge and practices that constitute what we characterize as psy cultures.

We perceive psy cultures as embracing not only the development of scientific disciplines geared to the study and management of subjectivity and the mind, but also all discourses and practices associated with such disciplines, as well as the forms of reception, circulation and dissemination of such disciplines. The use of the term in the plural seeks to emphasize the multiplicity of modes and levels in which psy knowledge permeates local cultures and the great variety of the forms that their diverse reception and implementation have acquired.

In the knowledge about subjectivity, psychoanalysis has become a type of hallmark of the twentieth century in Europe and the Americas (North and South), serving as a *Weltanschauung*, especially in intellectual and academic circles, but also being widely disseminated to a broader audience. At the turn of the twenty-first century we witness the crisis of both psychoanalytic *Weltanschauung* and psychoanalysis as a discipline. Alternative therapies with a greater or lesser emphasis on the body and, above all, the recent advance of biological psychiatry and the neurosciences seem to be challenging the Freudian approach and the therapeutic devices associated with it.

However, it is not only about psychoanalysis and the neurosciences. The psy cultures encompass a broader and more complex universe. Especially in regions such as Latin America (but not only there), where the modernization process has gone down different paths, where Western academic culture coexists with local or even imported traditions (as is the case with the African elements), which also underwent a process of reinterpretation giving rise to all manner of hybrid forms, the construction of psy cultures had specific characteristics.

Moving away from the more canonical stories about the spread of psychoanalysis and psy cultures in general, this supplement focuses on Latin American examples and other “peripheral modernities,” such as the case of the transition to democracy in Spain, in Italy

in the 1960s as well as in a few Eastern European countries. We seek, therefore, to approach psychoanalysis, its history and its articulations with other knowledge from a socio-cultural universe different from that with which it is usually considered.

The supplement is divided into four thematic blocks. In the first one, involving themes around “psy cultures, developments and tensions,” different dimensions of the configuration of a psy culture and its developments and tensions are discussed, paving the way to the more localized debates of the following sections. The article by Mariano Ben Plotkin questions the unwavering specificity of psychoanalysis as knowledge and practice. Emphasizing hybrid variants and porosities, he questions the multiple spaces that such knowledge occupies within the expanded universe of psy cultures, particularly in Latin America. Luiz Fernando Dias Duarte, for his part, focuses on the complex relations between the social sciences – especially anthropology – and psychoanalysis, two disciplines that in other works he characterized as being inserted in the western romantic tradition. Finally, the work of Carlos Alberto Uribe seeks to define a modern Latin American (or at least Colombian) variant that, unlike that proposed by classical sociology, has never become “disenchanted,” remaining immersed in a system of localized rituals within a therapeutic culture of hybrid characteristics.

In the second block, involving the theme “psychoanalysis and political context,” three cases in which psychoanalysis coexists with concrete political circumstances of European countries that we could characterize as representative of “peripheral modernities,” are analyzed. Anne-Cécile Druet examines the process by which, in post-Franco Spain, the exiled Argentine psychoanalysts, mostly of a Lacanian persuasion, were responsible for the creation of a psychoanalytic community and for the more general dissemination of psychoanalysis. Such events allow us to question the place of the “center” and the “periphery” in the processes of the transnational circulation of ideas. Carmen Lucia Montechi Valladares de Oliveira focuses on the development and behavior of Brazilian psychoanalytic societies in the period of the military dictatorship, linking the supposed political “neutrality” professed by psychoanalytic societies to the diffusion of the Kleinian variant in Brazilian psychoanalysis. The work of Judith Mészáros discusses the vicissitudes of the psychoanalytic revival in three countries that belonged to the Soviet bloc, showing their similarities and differences and linking them with the history of their respective psychoanalytic movements in the interwar period.

The two articles that constitute the third thematic block – “psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic cultures” – focus on the place occupied by psychoanalytic thought in the processes of cultural modernization in Chile and Italy. In both cases the spread of Freudian thought occurred on the fringes of the great diffusion centers and psychoanalytic associations, constituting a kind of “alternative history” of their transformations. The text of Mauro Pasqualini focuses on a specific path of diffusion of psychoanalysis during the 1960s in Italy: marketing studies. Pasqualini discusses the use of elements of psychoanalysis proposed by Melanie Klein to analyze (and influence) consumption patterns in post-war Italy. Mariano Ruperthuz Honorato, for his part, shows the diffusion of psychoanalysis among a broader audience in Chile of the first half of the twentieth century, focusing its attention on self-help courses and popular literature.

The last thematic block – “psychoanalysis and neurosciences” – deals with the tensions and dialogues between these two ways of thinking of “body-soul” relations. The articles by Maria

Jimena Mantilla and Jane Russo seek to raise issues that transcend the simplifying concept of a kind of struggle between reductionist physicalism and humanizing psychologism. Mantilla takes the notion of “cerebral plasticity” as the core of her analysis to show possible crossover points between psychoanalysis and the neurosciences within a broader cultural context defined by the cerebralization of subjectivities. The author proposes the notion of semantic resonance to define “ideas that, although different, resonate in a space of common meaning.” Finally, Jane Russo seeks to reflect on the rise of the “cerebral individual” or “somatic self” to replace the “psychological individual” of the last century. She argues that this phenomenon can be seen as a reconfiguration of the tension between the Enlightenment and romantic traditions that configured the modern idea of subjectivity.

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