Psychoanalysis as a belief system: a research program outline

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Abstract

This article lays out an agenda for research on the establishment of psy cultures in Latin America. It begins by analyzing some of the debates on the nature of psychoanalysis, a discipline located between the sciences, philosophy and common sense. It argues that the place of psy cultures needs to be problematized as emerging out of modernity in a cultural space like Latin America, where the very concept of modernity differs greatly from that of central countries.

Keywords: psy cultures; psychoanalysis; cultural modernity; Latin America.

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It is well known that, from early times Freud was concerned with the universe in which the discipline and knowledge he was creating would be inserted. Although the texts in which he specifically discusses the problem of the emergence of a possible psychoanalytic worldview (*Weltanschauung*) are rather late (Freud, 1974b, 1974a), the dimension we could characterize as "rational," descended from the "enlightenment" tradition of psychoanalysis – as opposed to the other variety, associated with the "romantic" tradition" (Duarte, 2013; Roudinesco, 2014) – raised a series of issues for him, both of an epistemological and strategic nature. Psychoanalysis was born and developed as an essentially hermeneutic discipline associated, therefore, with history (Plotkin, sep. 2013). However, Freud's early, lasting (to the point of being anachronistic) and firm adherence to the conceptual schemes of evolutionism, both of the Darwinian and Lamarckian variety (Sulloway, 1992; Maffi, 2012a), strongly influenced his vision of psychoanalysis as belonging to the universe of *Naturwissenschaften*. It could be argued that, from its very beginnings, psychoanalysis has occupied an "interstitial" space between the natural sciences and the humanities. Along with his biological speculations, Freud – who was partly following nineteenth-century scientific paradigms – found analogies and examples taken from literature, the theater, poetry and history.[1]

However, Freud's response to the possibility that psychoanalysis might provide or become a worldview is well-known and scathing: psychoanalysis could not generate a specific *Weltanschauung* simply because, as a science, it belonged to the scientific *Weltanschauung*. In Lecture XXXV of the *New introductory lectures on psychoanalysis*, entitled "The question of a *Weltanschauung*" (Freud, 1974a), which in a sense continues and expands arguments he had presented in *The future of an illusion* (Freud, 1974b), his main concern was both to ensure that psychoanalysis would have a place among the sciences, and to separate it from the other two possible universes of knowledge in which it might be included: philosophy – which worried him mainly because of its claim to generate a coherent, seamless image of the universe (Freud, 1974a, p.160) – and religion. However, in another, earlier text (Freud, 1974c), in which he dealt briefly – and probably for the first time – with the problem of a supposed psychoanalytic *Weltanschauung*, he linked it not to cognitive constellations or beliefs with which psychoanalysis might be associated, but rather to possible misreadings of some of the conclusions arising within psychoanalysis itself. Indeed, in his work *Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety*, Freud (1974c, p.2838; emphasis in the original) seems to be worried about the fact that

> [M]any writers have laid much stress on the weakness of the ego in relation to the id and of our rational elements in the face of the daemonic forces within us; and they display a strong tendency to make what I have said into a corner-stone of a 'psycho-analytic *Weltanschauung*.'

In light of this possibility, Freud (1974c, p.2838) warns, "Yet surely the psycho-analyst, with his knowledge of the way in which repression works, should, of all people, be restrained from adopting such an extreme and one-sided view". In other words, for Freud, psychoanalysis was – and should be – linked to rationality descended from the Enlightenment tradition for two reasons: firstly because of its nature as expert knowledge, in opposition to the worldviews associated with other, non-scientific forms of knowledge; and secondly because of the

emphasis on what we might call the "Apollonian" dimension of its conclusions versus the more "Dionysian" side.[2]

Another nucleus of concern for Freud stemmed from the need to keep his system within the universe of expert forms of knowledge, versus what might be described as "common sense." Indeed, his definition of *Weltanschauung* as "an intellectual construction which gives a unified solution for all the problems of our existence in virtue of a comprehensive hypothesis, a construction, therefore, in which no question is left open and in which everything in which we are interested finds a place" (Freud, 1974a, p.3191), somewhat resembles modern anthropological and sociological descriptions of "common sense" as a cultural system. As Clifford Geertz (1983, p.80) argues, "men plug the dikes of their most needed beliefs with whatever mud they can find."

The problem is that, despite Freud's concerns and attempts to make psychoanalysis a science – attempts which often led him to dead ends – it is true that the Freudian system's place in a scientific universe is one of the issues most disputed by his critics, who have not hesitated to call it a "pseudoscience."[3] Indeed, the system of ideas and practices Freud created has been associated by some sociologists and anthropologists, such as Robert Castel (1973), with beliefs and practices associated to religious systems; and it has been argued that in certain cultural spaces, psychoanalysis in its various forms became part of "common sense."[4]

Within the field of anthropology, Claude Lévi-Strauss has devoted some well-known pages to establishing the structural similarities between psychoanalysis and shamanism. For Lévi-Strauss (1977a, p.164), the shaman, like the psychoanalyst, is a "professional abreactor." The French anthropologist argued there were two basic types of similarity between psychoanalysis and religious beliefs. Firstly, as in religious systems, Lévi-Strauss saw a tendency in psychoanalysis (at least as he knew it at that time) to become precisely what Freud denied: a *Weltanschauung*. By broadening the patient-recruitment universe from those considered abnormal to "representative samples" of the patients' social group, a danger arises "that the treatment …, far from leading to the resolution of a specific disturbance within its own context, is reduced to the reorganization of the patient's universe in terms of psychoanalytic interpretations" (Lévi-Strauss, 1977a, p.167). The second kind of link he proposed between shamanism and psychoanalysis was a deeper one, since it involved a structural similarity between the respective methods:

> In both cases the purpose is to bring to a conscious level conflicts and resistance which have remained unconscious, owing either to their repression by other psychological forces or … to their own specific nature, which is not psychic but organic … In both cases also, the conflicts and resistances are resolved, not because of the knowledge, real or alleged, which the sick woman progressively acquires of them, but because this knowledge makes possible a specific experience, in the course of which conflicts materialize in an order and on a level permitting their free development and leading to their resolution (Lévi-Strauss, 1977b, p.179).

According to Lévi-Strauss, in both types of treatment (shamanistic and psychoanalytic), the goal is to reconstruct a myth that the patient has to live or relive so as to produce a healing experience. This is possible thanks to the efficacy that both psychoanalysis and shamanism possess on the symbolic level. However, in shamanism, the myth – and also the

practice – is collective in nature, whereas in psychoanalytic treatment the myth is individual, created by the patient from elements taken from his own past (Lévi-Strauss, 1977b, p.180). Within this universe of profound similarities, Lévi-Strauss establishes a series of parallelisms and oppositions between shamanism and psychoanalysis (De la Peña, 2000, p.5). It can be argued that, for Lévi-Strauss, psychoanalysis was the form adopted by shamanism in modern societies dominated by individualism.[5] Both shamanism and other forms of religious belief, Lévi-Strauss claims, are centered less on ending suffering than on rendering it intelligible and tolerable (Lévi-Strauss, 1977b, p.178; Geertz, 1973, p.104), which is perfectly compatible with the goals Freud himself had established for psychoanalysis – at least at the outset – when he argued that much would be gained if hysterical misery could be transformed into common unhappiness (Breuer, Freud, 1974, p.305). If theodicy involves the problem of establishing compatibility between the existence of evil and the omnipotent characteristics attributed to the divine (Weber, 1997) – in other words, if theodicy makes evil comprehensible – in this case we could speak of a "psychodicy," meaning an attempt to make the suffering of the soul comprehensible.

At the same time, when we examine the historical development of psychoanalytic practice, it seems clear that they could be fruitfully analyzed using some theoretical tools originating in the sociology of religions as Robert Castel suggested over four decades ago. Could we not take some of the characteristics attributed by Pierre Bourdieu, in a now-classic text, to the religious field, and apply them to the psychoanalytic field? Can the psychoanalytic field not be seen as a battle to obtain the monopoly of a particular type of "soul cure," in which we note the presence of a specialized body of providers, as opposed to a universe of "lay" demand? Can we not make out an emerging set of mechanisms for excluding other forms of soul cure, which are reinterpreted as archaic in light of the "good news" of psychoanalysis? And likewise the presence of heretics, sects, etc. that fight over the accumulation of symbolic capital within the field of psychoanalysis? As with other successful sects, has psychoanalysis not evolved, in a sense, into a church – or rather various churches that compete amongst one another – all proclaiming themselves the bearers and guardians of the orthodoxy/ies, and identified by hierarchical, dogmatic systems? (Bourdieu, 1971). Bourdieu points out that churches adapt to consumer demands by adjusting their offer, but they are extremely rigid when faced with prophets or sects that might threaten their specific monopoly. When this happens, they generate systematized, canonical forms, only accessible via specific apprenticeship (Bourdieu, 1971, p.327; Castel, 1973, p.128 and ff.) Is there not a parallel between these reactions on the part of the church and Freud's flexibility when trying to spread psychoanalysis in distant lands, as opposed to his rigidity when "prophets" or "sects" arose who disputed the monopoly he claimed over psychoanalytic therapy? (Plotkin, Ruperthuz Honorato, in press).

A fair amount has been written about psychoanalysis as "common sense." In its different forms and branches in countries like the USA (at least up until the 1960s), France, Brazil and particularly Argentina, psychoanalysis has long outgrown its status as "expert discourse" and become a lens through which at least some sectors of society view reality (Turkle, 1992; Castel, 1973; Figueira, 1985; Berger, 1965; Plotkin, 2010; Plotkin, Visacovsky, 2007; Visacovsky, 2009). That is to say, it has become, as Peter Berger (1965) argues (borrowing

from Alfred Schutz), part of the "world taken for granted," meaning a part of reality that is not debatable and is thus located beyond critical analysis.

Psychoanalysis-science, psychoanalysis-religion, or psychoanalysis-common sense? Or, put in another way, in what conceptual universe should psychoanalysis be placed? As Élisabeth Roudinesco (2014, p.271) has argued, Freud invented a "discipline" (her quotation marks) that can be integrated neither into the field of "hard" science nor into the human sciences. One of the problems identified by the sociological study of psychoanalysis – a problem pointed out by Berger in 1965 and referred to in a different sense by Castel – concerns its claim of "extraterritoriality" (a courtesy demanded by psychoanalysis that Berger does not see reciprocated by it). The problem with the supposed "extraterritoriality" of psychoanalysis can be seen in at least two dimensions that probably have less to do with the discipline's epistemological foundations than with its strategies for legitimizing and constructing authority regimes, which have been generated since Freud's time and have mostly lasted to this day.

In the first place, the claim of extraterritoriality can be seen in the eccentric position that psychoanalysts themselves attribute to their discipline in terms of the *Weltanschauung* in which Freud himself sought to locate it: that of science. Psychoanalysis claims to be a unique form of knowledge about an object that is also unique: the unconscious, and, therefore, it is by its very nature irreducible to any other form of knowledge. Psychoanalytic experience, the foundation of psychoanalytic knowledge, is supposedly incommensurable (Eidelsztein, 2008, p.77). If this were true, then psychoanalysis would be impervious to any type of critique formulated outside itself, critiques that are generally interpreted as forms of resistance at best, and at worse, as the product of unresolved neuroses on the part of those who formulated them. Freud himself (1974e, p.1965) wrote that "it is similarly impossible for me to argue with those psychologists and neurologists who do not recognize the premises of psychoanalysis and consider its results contrived."[6] It is interesting to note an experience described by Lévi-Strauss himself, which occurred when he attended Jacques Lacan's first lecture in the seminar series at the École Normale Supérieure: "Frankly, I confess that I, the listener, basically couldn't understand anything. And there I was in the midst of an audience who did seem to understand" (quoted in Lézé, 2010, p.25).[7] It seems that "understanding" the different forms of psychoanalysis can only be achieved by means of initiation rites rather than through rational mechanisms. In fact, in current psychoanalytic training (although this has not always been the case), the couch – the subjective, initiatory dimension – has precedence over the lecture-hall – the more rational, objective dimension – as a training mechanism, and above all as a means of reproduction within the psychoanalytic field (Maffi, 2012b).

Although it could be said that all disciplines, whether scientific or not, contain initiatory elements among their mechanisms for reproduction and legitimation, the fact is that those mechanisms play a much greater role in contemporary psychoanalysis, since they have become part of its identity as a form of knowledge and as a profession (Russo, 1999). The problem is that this stress on the subjective nature of the transmission of psychoanalytic knowledge largely precludes the possibility of dialogue between psychoanalysis and other forms of knowledge whose legitimacy is based on constructing an image of objectivity in their methods and objects, regardless of the complexities surrounding the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity that are present in any form of knowledge, even scientific.[8]

Although in recent decades there has been discussion within the history of science about the close link between the construction of the idea of scientific objectivity and the development of a concomitant concept of subjectivity (Daston, Galison, 1992, 2007), what I wish to stress here has nothing to do with an epistemological position. Rather, it concerns the emphasis on one or the other of those dimensions in the mechanisms of reproduction within the psychoanalytic field. In that sense, psychoanalysis differs from other scientific disciplines. We should bear in mind that Lacan's way of transmitting knowledge is still described today by his disciples and followers as "teaching," which suggests that the transmission of knowledge has a certain unilateral structure (and, I would add, a rather anachronistic one), in which a "master" teaches his disciples, who can only fully count themselves as such if they have passed through the initiation rite of psychoanalytic treatment.[9]

The second dimension of the claim to psychoanalysis' extraterritoriality has perhaps even more profound consequences. It is associated to the fact that because of its alleged peculiar nature psychoanalysis is placed outside of the "rules of the game" of social and human practice that, therefore, do not apply to it. Thus, not only does it not resemble any other form of knowledge (whether scientific or not), but (partly for the same reason), it cannot be analyzed by social sciences.[10] From that point of view, psychoanalysts are denying the social dimension of their practice, which may be understood as a particular set of forms of interaction that occurs within a specific field, with its own rules and struggles over the accumulation of symbolic capital; struggles which are, meanwhile, fairly obvious to anyone who takes the time to examine them with a little care (Lézé, 2010). Therefore, we could say that for important sectors of the psychoanalytic movement, only those who have undergone psychoanalysis – and in the extreme case, only psychoanalysts – are equipped to understand the form in which the "psychoanalytic field" operates, a field which they would argue is not actually a field at all, since it supposedly functions outside the logic of fields. To a large extent, the authority regime that validates psychoanalysis is based on this claim of extraterritoriality, on the fact that psychoanalysis is a form of knowledge that cannot be compared to any other and is, therefore, associated with a practice that eludes any form of regulation, whether legal or symbolic, or any system of "objective" evaluation that might compare its efficacy to that of other therapeutic practices.

Pierre Bourdieu has repeatedly pointed out the fallacy of claiming extraterritoriality, even for sociology. Any form of social interaction based on a belief system – as all forms of social interaction are, to some degree – (Bourdieu, 1987, p.157) can be analyzed sociologically, historically and also ethnographically as a historical experience. However, the success of psychoanalysis' "claim of extraterritoriality" is seen in the absence (at least until very recently) of true empirical social research, either ethnographic or sociological, on the workings of the psychoanalytic field in contrast to the plethora of studies on other dimensions of the "psy universe."[11] In Buenos Aires, a city which is currently considered one of the world capitals of psychoanalysis, there have been no studies of this type to date.

But to return to the problem posed at the outset: what are we talking about when we talk about psychoanalysis? Or rather, how should we talk about psychoanalysis? Within what conceptual and practical universe should we locate it? Put more simply, as a socially-determined and historically-situated practice, does psychoanalysis belong in the same

constellation of systems of interaction in all the cultures in which it operates, even for actors located in different positions within a given system of social, economic and cultural stratification? Do providers and those who use their services share the conceptual universe in which they locate psychoanalytic practice?

To begin to answer these questions (and this article simply attempts to formulate some hypotheses on the subject), we need to use the concept of "psy cultures" (and I stress the plural, for reasons I shall discuss later), which we could describe as a series of symbolic devices, practices and discourses that give meaning to the processes whereby subjectivity is constructed and managed.[12] It has often been argued that the emergence of "psy cultures" is one of the consequences of the formation of modern subjectivity in the western world – at least in many of its more visible areas – and of the concomitant rise in the psychologization of the modern subject. From this point of view, what has occurred is the conformation of a series of devices associated with expert discourses designed to put the subject "into discourse" and intervene in it. This has been studied from various different angles by authors such as Michel Foucault, Nikolas Rose, Eva Illous, Jacques Donzelot, and many others. The rise of a "therapeutic culture," they claim, is one of the most visible results of this process, and psychoanalysis and its multiple derivations are perhaps its most successful version.

The majority of these studies assume that the creation of the modern subject was a more or less linear process that began, broadly speaking, in the early modern period (the sixteenth century), and intensified in the eighteenth and above all the nineteenth century, with the rise of liberalism and in particular the "second wave of modernity" linked to the second industrial revolution. Eli Zaretsky (2004, p.91) has argued that "twentieth-century modernity was oriented toward interiority and subjectivity from the first". In this sense, psychoanalysis and the psychologization of the modern individual in general have been interpreted as secular substitutes for traditional religious practices, which lost influence thanks to the weakening sense of community that occurred as a result of modernity (Berger, 1965; Gellner, 1993), as well as transformations within the family due to the loss of authority and "unmapping" of the father figure, and other changes (Figueira, 1985).

At this point, I would like to digress for a moment and examine whether the vigorous growth of certain areas of "psy cultures" in various Latin American countries has the same meaning as the one ascribed to it in Europe and the USA. In some countries in the region, notably Argentina and Brazil, the development of psychoanalysis as a therapeutic practice, as an expert discourse and, to a certain extent, as "common sense" has aroused the curiosity of foreign researchers and visitors in general. So far, analyses of the evolution and development of "psy cultures," and psychoanalysis in particular, in various Latin American countries have been fragmentary and have usually treated the process of modernization-formation of the modern urban individual as a fact, rather than a problem (see Duarte, Russo, Venancio, 2005, and, in particular, the introduction to Duarte, Carvalho, 2005).

However, if the spread of psychoanalysis and psy cultures more broadly is linked to the formation of the modern subject, then we have to examine the nature of subject-formation in cultures in which the process of modernization itself – as Néstor García Canclini (1989) has argued decades ago in a now-classic text – is incomplete and undergoing all kinds of hybridizations. How should we characterize cultural spaces in which the survival of

intersubjective relations very different to those seen in the cultures of reference (Europe, the USA) can be demonstrated both subjectively (on the level of perceptions) and objectively (i.e., proven by social analysis) (Duarte, 1986, 2003); where the rise of "psy" devices (as understood in Europe and the USA) coexist and compete with other more or less traditional ways of managing subjectivity and "soul cures," even among urban subjects described as "modern?" What "elective affinities" would develop from a local point of view between the different ways of constructing and managing subjectivity seen in different social sectors in Latin America, and what would be the location(s) of psychoanalysis within them?

The early spread of psychoanalysis in Latin America was linked to cultural modernization. From 1910 on, in various countries in the region, it was discussed as a new medico-psychiatric technology. In other instances – the case of Brazil being the most significant, although examples can be found in Chile and elsewhere – psychoanalysis was appropriated by sectors of the intellectual elite, and during the regime of Brazilian dictator Getúlio Vargas it became a sort of "state knowledge," linked above all to new pedagogical practices. In the late 1930s, doctors and anthropologists who defined themselves (and were perceived) as psychoanalysts (such as Arthur Ramos in Rio de Janeiro; Durval Marcondes in São Paulo, or Ulisses Pernambucano in Pernambuco), held influential positions in the official educational systems of various states in Brazil (Plotkin, Ruperthuz Honorato, forthcoming). Psychoanalysis also played an important role in mass culture. In cities like Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile or Rio de Janeiro, from the 1930s-1950s, there were interactive spaces in newspapers and on the radio (in Brazil) where "experts" – some of whom actually were so – analyzed and discussed dreams sent in by readers and listeners from a psychoanalytic point of view. There was a concurrent rise in psychoanalysis-based self-help literature that has only very recently started being replaced with another variety associated with the neurosciences. Psychoanalysis constituted a new discourse on sexuality that replaced (or, in some cases, complemented) traditional discourses linked to eugenics or Catholicism, as seen, for example, in women's magazines throughout the continent, especially starting in the 1960s, or even earlier (Plotkin, 2007, 2010; Ruperthuz Honorato, 2015; Plotkin, Ruperthuz Honorato, forthcoming). However, the practice of psychoanalysis has recently been associated with searches of a spiritual nature. Again, Pierre Bourdieu's arguments – although they refer to the French context – can help point the way towards understanding this multiplicity. According to the French sociologist, modernity led to a profound change in the religious field, blending it into a broader universe that included other forms of "soul cure," among which he explicitly mentions psychoanalysis (Bourdieu, 1987). In this sense, sects, psychoanalysts, psychologists, some actors in the medical field, sexologists, teachers of bodily expression, such as Asian martial arts, social workers, New Age practices etc. – and in the case of Latin America, the persistence, appropriation and reconfiguration of traditional therapeutic practices, whether local or African in origin, or others linked to Catholicism – all of these formed part of "a new field of struggle over the symbolic manipulation of the conduct of private life and the orientation of one's vision of the world, and they all develop in their practice competing and antagonistic definitions of health, of healing, of the treatment of bodies and of souls" (Bourdieu, 1987, p.119). Given the (re)emergence of conceptions that could be described as holistic, the classic separation

between body and soul (and the healing systems associated with them) started to blur, and this led to a need to reconfigure and reconceptualize the psy field.

The first thing we can ascertain is that while in the "cultures of reference" (I prefer this term to "central countries" or other similar expressions) psy cultures present as a multiple phenomenon, in Latin America this multiplicity is even greater. It is a multidimensional, wide-ranging phenomenon, which developed in an asynchronous way. This has caused a series of problems that we are far from solving but that need to be examined and analyzed empirically. Firstly, there is the problem of defining our object. Where should we set the limits of psy cultures in order to acknowledge the scope of the problem but also allow a working definition of the object of study? Let us take Argentina as an example. It is a country in which, from the 1960s on, psychoanalysis has played a central role in the development of the culture and identity of the urban middle classes. For some decades now, Buenos Aires has been one of (if not the) world capitals of psychoanalysis, not only in terms of the number of analysts but, fundamentally, because of the extent to which psychoanalysis has penetrated different aspects of everyday middle-class life and even some parts of working-class life (Plotkin, 2010; Visacovsky, 2009; Plotkin, Visacovsky, 2007). The nature of the process and the reasons for this are extremely complex, and this is not the place to analyze them.

That said, the problem that arises from this declaration is that it usually functions as an *a priori* basis for, and limit on, research (a problem I acknowledge in my own work, Plotkin, 2010). Argentina (at least in terms of its urban areas) is a "psychoanalyzed" country, and much of the research on the issue has been devoted to noting, rather than problematizing this, meaning that the current scholarship has attempted to explain "how and why" Argentina became a psychoanalytic country, instead of observing what this means for different social actors, by analyzing the various syncretisms, limits and coexistences.[13] Psychoanalysis has become a "normal" discourse both from the point of view of everyday life and from the point of view of those analyzing the phenomenon. "Other" ways of negotiating subjectivity are seen precisely thus: as "other" in terms of the "normalization" supposedly imposed by psychoanalysis – as alternative, contestatory, competing with the couch (Gorbato, 1994).

The problem, therefore, lies in closing the *a priori* gap between psychoanalysis and "other" ways of managing subjectivity and "healing souls" in this specific social and cultural context. We need, rather, to examine the nature of, and the relationships between, a series of devices and mechanisms that of course include psychoanalysis, but also many other discourses and practices whose identity should emerge from empirical research, all of which have – as García Canclini argues – allowed Argentinians, Brazilians, Chileans etc., to come up with their own particular way of entering into, staying in or leaving modernity as subjects and have also contributed to constituting them as such. But first we should ask in what particular ways modernities (since there is more than one, and they should be seen above all as unfinished processes) were inscribed on those cultural spaces, and what the place of psy cultures is within them. These psy cultures, if examined carefully, can be seen as much more plural, heterogeneous, mutually permeable and "contaminated" than one might think. This process has been studied in the case of Brazil – where research on the topic is more advanced – by Duarte y Carvalho (2005), among others, and in Colombia by Carlos Uribe (in this special issue).

I will now present some actual recent cases of these processes of hybridization. Although these are isolated cases, I consider them relevant because they are "ethnographically dense;" meaning that, in some way, they show the limits of what is possible. They thus allow us to draw some generalizations beyond their illustrative nature.

The first is taken from an ethnographic study by the anthropologist Nicolás Viotti (2014, p.15) of charismatic churches in Buenos Aires. One of his informants, an assiduous and regular member of one such church – significantly located in a part of the city informally known as "Villa Freud" because of the number of psychoanalysts there – told him about her prior experience with psychoanalysis and her ongoing experience with charismatic healing:

> I think you can spend years there [seeing a psychoanalyst] and nothing happens; whereas you come here and the Holy Spirit touches you. It touches your psyche, too, because it's something that goes through your whole body, your head … We're missing something and the spirit gives you what you need, it completely fills you up. Your body, your head, your unconscious, your soul, everything (Viotti, 2014, p.15).

Note the number of revealing aspects emerging from this small excerpt. Firstly, the informant had abandoned a secular practice for another associated with a sacred universe, particularly Catholicism, which had a strong local tradition; thus, in this sense, she was going against the classic theories of modernization. But secondly, her criteria for efficacy are still "modern." She gave up psychoanalysis because "you can spend years there and nothing happens;" whereas the charismatic churches, through the mediation of the Holy Spirit, provide better efficacy and immediate results. Thirdly, the charismatic experience, unlike psychotherapy, is holistic in nature, since it includes the body, the soul and the unconscious. Lastly, the experience of religiosity does not exclude terms and concepts that are clearly psychoanalytic in origin: the Holy Spirit also touches the unconscious.

There are multiple bridges between traditional practices – in many cases redefined by their links to other types of transnational, New Age-style practices – and psychotherapy. The son of a disappeared political detainee (this time in Montevideo) started treatment with a psychologist in an attempt to reconstruct his past. Upon reaching an impasse in treatment, the psychologist recommended that he consult her husband, a doctor who had tried various spiritual paths and who might be able to help him find his own. When he had listened to the patient's problems, the doctor announced, "You're crying out for treatment by the Indians." Thus the patient got involved with Charrúa shamanism (Gorodischer, 2012, p.161-162). As seen in both cases (there is no point in adding further examples, although there are a great many of them), psychotherapy, generally of a psychoanalytic nature, and other traditional practices, or ones linked to "alternative modernities" – we could include here Ravi Shankar's *The art of living* and certain types of yoga, among others – constitute elements of a broader universe of tools for managing spirituality that compete with, and at the same time complement, one another. There is much empirical work to be done in order to understand the nature(s) of this universe.

Some years ago, when I was asked to be a consultant for a documentary on the spread of psychoanalysis in Argentina, I was surprised by the links drew by psychology undergraduates at the Universidad de Buenos Aires between psychology and other practices. Part of the

documentary involved brief interviews with first-year psychology students who were asked why they had chosen that subject (one of the most highly-subscribed degree programs in the Universidad de Buenos Aires, with a strong Lacanian psychoanalytic focus). The interviews were held at the entrance to the school of psychology and were apparently conducted randomly, without any kind of preparation. Strikingly, a number of those interviewed linked their interest in psychology to an interest in astrology. In this sense, it is not surprising that an astrology workshop titled "Getting to know myself through the stars" is included in the Neighborhood Health Program (Salud Mental Barrial) for a public hospital in Buenos Aires (Astrología…, 7 jun. 2016).

Lastly, in winter 2014, the Museum of Modern Art in Buenos Aires held a series of talks by various different experts on the links between art and the unconscious, to accompany an art show whose works – at least according to the curators – were associated with the idea of the unconscious. These talks were given by specialists in different ways of conceptualizing the unconscious. As one might expect, one of the lectures was given by a psychologist-psychoanalyst, and another by a prestigious neuroscientist. The other two (there were four altogether) were given by a psychologist (with a doctorate in psychology) who also directed a research center on paranormal phenomena, and by a psychologist who introduced herself as a specialist in Tarot and was invited as such.[14] This last example shows that even within a space associated with "high culture," like a museum of modern art, there exists a heterogeneous vision of the unconscious, a gaze in which psychoanalysis – a discipline and form of knowledge that common sense links to the "discovery" of the unconscious – is competing for discussion space not only with other disciplines accepted as scientific, but also with other forms of knowledge that can hardly be placed within the scientific field. It is also striking that both the Tarot expert and the specialist on paranormal phenomena held degrees (one of them a doctorate) in psychology. The "contaminations" work both ways and the Tarot practice has undergone a process of psychologization recently, at least in Buenos Aires (Battezzati, sep. 2014).

Should we be surprised by these facts? Or should we rather conclude that they are evidence of different – but not, from various local perspectives, incompatible – ways of thinking about and managing subjectivity and/or finding tools to improve a state of distress? The problem, then lies less in defining whether psychoanalysis is a science, a type of religion or a religion substitute, but rather in asking in what universe of belief systems the Freudian system is inserted by the different actors involved in each cultural space and sub-space.

All of this would allow us to take another look at the psychoanalytic "authority regime" as a practice linked not only to institutional mental health systems, as seems to be the case in France and for the most part in the USA, at least until the 1980s (Lézé, 2010; Hale, 1995). Perhaps we should not be looking primarily (or not only) there for the social insertion of psychoanalysis in Argentina and other Latin American countries, but rather at a heterogeneous, multiple and complex therapeutic universe for constructing subjectivity, one that combines holistic conceptions with other dualistic ones (body-soul); one that would include Ravi Shankar, the growing body of self-help literature, different types of religiosity, traditional healing practices; cognitive therapies and their multiple hybrid versions such as mindfulness practice; but also at one that might be defined as "public forms of psychoanalysis"

such as that practiced by Gabriel Rolón, an Argentinian psychologist, best-selling author and playwright whose theatrical works are based on his psychoanalytic cases. Rolón also leads public discussion sessions that rather resemble group therapy modeled on self-help, and he appears in radio and television programs.[15] Can we conceptualize this type of phenomenon as evidence of a breakdown of the association between psychoanalysis and individualism? How should we interpret this phenomenon in cultures like Buenos Aires or São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, where the vicissitudes of psychoanalytic therapies are an almost obligatory topic of conversation in social gatherings? If the basis of psychoanalytic therapy lies in the distinction between the public and the private sphere, what happens when the private – and with it psychoanalytic experience – becomes public?

If what I have been proposing is plausible, it is necessary to take into account the specificity and also the multiplicity of psy cultures and psychoanalysis as social practices and discourses, based on empirical analysis. But in order to do that, we need to gain some analytic distance, which we can do not by assuming that urban societies in Argentina or Brazil are "psychoanalyzed," but by examining as broadly as possible the multiple ways those subjectivities are managed, and above all the historical process by which they were constructed (the historical dimension of the process is crucial). Likewise, we need to take into account the places occupied by the different forms of psychoanalysis, which are certainly understood differently by different social actors. I would like to return to some parts of Bourdieu's (1971, p.315) analysis of religions, particularly his observation that religious representations and behaviors that claim to be part of a single original message actually owe their diffusion in social space to the fact that they are ascribed radically different meanings and functions by different groups or classes. These types of meanings are imbued with hierarchical systems and worldviews that are linked to social class, gender differences and, to a lesser extent in a city like Buenos Aires, ethnic identities (on the case of Brazil, cfr. Duarte, 1986; Velho, 2012). As Sônia Maluf (s.d.) has shown regarding religions in Brazil, one has to explore the subjects, map the movement back and forth, the flow, the webs of different forms of knowledge and practices, "even if that means associating things that are not supposed to be grouped together." To do this, it is vital to try and understand the local categories that clients of the various practices (including psychoanalysis) use to conceptualize themselves. Are they sufferers? In search of wellbeing? Constructing subjectivity? These multiple characterizations are linked to the type of benefit the actors seek to obtain from each type of practice (and their possible combinations); an issue we know little about yet, particular as regards psychoanalysis.

To do this sort of analysis, I believe that for every period studied, it is vital to try and reconstruct the universe of what can be thought and said – what Marc Angenot (2012) calls the social discourse – within the space of psy cultures, and how it developed, since the formation of devices linked to the construction of subjectivity is essentially a historical process and must, therefore, be studied historically.[16] We need to pay attention both to the continuities and the ruptures or gaps in "social discourse" linked to psy cultures. The acceptable forms of what is sayable define legitimate practices (and how they are perceived by the various actors), the criteria for legitimacy and the discourses that are acceptable at a given point in a particular social space. We need to look also at the place these practices occupy in the social and symbolic world.

When we consider the universe of what is sayable in a given social context, it is vital to pay attention to the multiple porosities existing between expert discourses and social practices; between high culture and what is usually understood as "popular culture," as well as the universe defined by common sense. If there is one factor that explains the success of psychoanalysis, it is its capacity to place itself at the intersection of all these cultural spaces. Psychoanalysis is a therapeutic practice and an expert discourse on sexuality, subjectivity etc., but it also has a privileged channel of diffusion via popular publications, television programs, plays, women's magazines and child-rearing texts. Although classic sociologists and a few modern ones (Weber, Bourdieu, Canguilhem) have tended to establish a clear division between science and common sense, as Visacovsky (2009) has shown, it is obvious that psychoanalysis defies such a clear separation (it is certainly not the only case of this, but is perhaps the most visible one). Indeed, to understand the phenomenon of the spread of psychoanalysis and, by extension, of psy cultures, we need to focus on these gaps and "gray areas" as productive spaces for defining new practices and discourses.

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NOTES

[1] In his autobiographical writing, Freud (1974d, p.2762) mentioned that his inspiration for studying medicine came, on the one hand, from his reading of the works of Darwin, and on the other from Goethe's *Fragment über die Natur*.

[2] On the Apollonian and Dionysian dimensions attributed to psychoanalysis, especially among intellectual circles in the USA, see Ross (2012).

[3] See, for example, Grünbaum (1984).

[4] Although throughout this text I usually use the term "psychoanalysis" in the singular, in fact, as in any system of ideas and beliefs, in this particular case there are as many "psychoanalyses" as there are reading and reception systems. Therefore, just as one cannot speak of one single "Marxism," neither can one speak *strict sensu* of one single "psychoanalysis." On the other hand, within the psychoanalytic movement (just as within Marxism), there are innumerable sects, each of which considers itself to be the purveyor of "true psychoanalysis." In this article, I treat psychoanalysis as a set of discourses and practices that are legitimized by their inclusion in a genealogy going back to Freud and his system. Fundamentally, what are of interest here are the circumstances in which the Freudian system takes shape as a mechanism capable of legitimizing other discourses and practices. For discussions of different readings of psychoanalysis, see Damousi, Plotkin (2009).

[5] It is interesting to note that Luiz Fernando Dias Duarte and Emilio Carvalho (2005, p.492) have shown a cultural affinity between the western religious tradition and the process of psychologization. For a comparative historical analysis of religious and therapeutic practices in France, see Guillemain (2006).

[6] The problems inherent to any external critique of psychoanalysis can also be linked to the difficulties psychoanalysts have encountered in historicizing their practice and discipline. See Plotkin (sep. 2013).

[7] In this and other citations of texts from non-English languages, a free translation has been provided.

[8] A typical case in which this connection between the objective and subjective dimensions is "repressed" is that of modern neurosciences, above all in regard to the popularization of images of the brain, in which something that is a product of interpretation in general is presented as an objective reality.

[9] The differences between the forms of knowledge-transmission have been studied from the anthropological point of view by Fredrik Barth (1990, 2002, among others).

[10] In the case of Brazil, see Russo (1999). For a discussion of the gaze of belief-systems as seen from within, see Bourdieu (1987, p.106-112).

[11] A recent ethnographic study on the way the psychoanalytic field works in France is that of Lézé (2010), who points out the problems of extraterritoriality.

[12] I am aware of the difficulties involved in using the term "culture." As a working definition (without ignoring the complexities involved), I use that of Clifford Geertz (1973, p.5), who argues that culture is the set of webs of significance that man has spun for himself, or, more precisely, that it is a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which human beings communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life (p. 89). Needless to say, it is the result of multiple complex processes. For a debate on anthropologists' use of the concept of culture, see Borofsky et al. (2001).

[13] It is only very recently that anthropologists have begun carrying out this type of work. See, for example, Viotti (2014) and Semán (2008).

[14] On the "psychologization" of the Tarot in Buenos Aires, see Battezzati (sep. 2014).

[15] The few existing ethnographic studies of the psychoanalytic field were in fact done within the public health system (Visacovsky, 2002; Lakoff, 2005). The case of Rolón – and particularly his audience – is being studied by Colombian sociologist Felipe Vergara Gómez.

[16] Marc Angenot (2012, p.38-39) defines social discourse as the discursive forms included within the historical limits of everything that is sayable or writable at a given historical moment in a given cultural space. In particular, he refers to "irreducible assumptions about the socially plausible, to which all those involved in the debates refer as the basis for their divergences and disagreements."

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