

## Corporeality/subjectivity in clinical psychology: weaving theoretical-epistemological threads to embroider a complex object of study

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**Abstract:** This essay aimed to present the initial development of a notion of a human *corporeality/subjectivity* in the field of clinical psychology, based on the notion of subject proposed by Edgar Morin in his work *The method*. The researchers understand that the insertion of this notion in the epistemological discussions of this field of knowledge, regarding the problem of fragmentation of the notion of subjectivity, can contribute with initial reflections to think about a possible alternative of integration of its object of study. Based on complex thought, a first definition is proposed, pointing to four main dimensions and their respective notions: that of the individual-subject, consisting of three complex systems (organic-sensori-motor, psychic-affective-relational and mental); that of eco-subjectivity; the socio-historical-cultural; and that of the species. The study concludes by considering the ontological and epistemological challenges inherent to the problem of subjectivity fragmentation, relating them to the problem of unity in Psychology, and indicating the need for their confrontation by the proposal presented.

**Keywords:** corporeality, subjectivity, epistemology, clinical psychology.

### Introduction

This article aims to present the first definition of a notion of human *corporeality/subjectivity* based on the notion of subject/subjectivity elaborated by Edgar Morin in his work *The method* (1996b, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2005). It also introduces the notion of corporeality/subjectivity in the field of clinical psychology considering the discussions related to epistemological issues. It is understood that the insertion of this notion in the epistemological discussions of this field, a “field of dispersion” (Garcia-Roza, 1977) with different matrices of psychological thought (Figueiredo, 1991, 2013) and the consequent proposals of dichotomous study objects (Neubern, 2004, 2014), can contribute with initial reflections to think of a possible integration alternative. This study also considers the problem of the unification of psychology, which is a very challenging question, present since its origin as a modern science (Figueiredo, 1991; Silva, 2016).

For the complex thought proposed by Edgar Morin, the subjectivity theme necessarily includes the corporeality theme. From an ontological and epistemological point of view, human corporeality and subjectivity must be considered relationally and on an emergency continuum<sup>1</sup>,

forming a complex organized unit or a complex system. The investigation of this relationship between corporeality and subjectivity from complex thought began in previous works (João, 2018, 2019; João & Brito, 2004), focused on other fields of knowledge. This theoretical essay will seek to develop and deepen the initial reflections and the direction to the field of clinical psychology.

### Birth of psychology as a science and fragmentation of subjectivity

Concerning the discussions about the subject and subjectivity in Western thought, Morin (1996a) states that this issue is extremely controversial and paradoxical, since it is both evident and non-evident. Its evidence can be attested in the presence, in almost all languages, of the first-person singular (I); in the reflexivity wrought by Descartes’s thought in concluding that, when not being able to doubt that he doubted, there would be an “I” that thinks, giving rise to a notion of subject that becomes the first principle of reality; and in the theologies, philosophies and metaphysics that deified and made the subject and subjectivity absolute.

Nevertheless, according to Morin (1996a), from the point of view of modern science, the subject is dissolved in the midst of physical, biological,

parts, and which retroact on the very activities of the system to which they become inseparable (Morin, 1997).

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of emergence means that the global products of the activities that form the systems (complex organized unit), from the atom to *homo sapiens*, have their own qualities, which are irreducible to their isolated



sociological or cultural determinisms. Its subjectivity is nothing but contingency, a source of errors, which justified the exclusion of the observer from observation, of the thinker, who constructs concepts, from conception. In the human and social sciences, the conception of subject has often been obliterated. In the case of psychology, it was replaced by stimuli, responses, and behaviors. In history, it was disregarded by social determinisms. In anthropology, it was buried by structuralism.

Involved by this process of domination of modern scientific rationality, psychology in the late 19th century became a science from the works of Fechner, Wundt, and their followers, especially the North-Americans, such as J. Cattell and Titchener, who founded an experimental and behavioral psychology based on empirical and mathematical reductionism (Figueiredo, 1991; Figueiredo & Santi, 2006; González Rey, 2003). However, at this same historical moment, other theoretical currents also emerged, contributing with ideas and reflections that criticized this domination and pointed other directions to the study of psychological phenomena, in order to recognize subjectivity in them. For example, the psychology of Brentano's act and the gestalt psychology of Wertheimer, Köhler, and Koffka (Figueiredo, 1991; González Rey, 2003), the latter resulting from a holistic understanding of the psychological phenomenon.

In this sense, psychoanalysis had a decisive and fundamental importance for this recognition (Figueiredo & Santi, 2006), which was based on Freud's sensitive listening, a key element for understanding the symptoms arising from the sufferings of the subjects present throughout his story (Sundfeld, 2000) and which allowed him to discover an unconscious psyche that acts in default of the subject. Still on the importance of psychoanalysis for the discussion on subjectivity, as explained by Prado Filho and Martins (2007), it is through their field of knowledge that this theme/problem will pass into the domains of psychology in the first half of the 20th century. Another author who highlights the contributions of psychoanalysis to the inauguration of a new field for the construction of psychological thought is González Rey (2003), when stating that its heuristic value is in the creation of a new space of meaning, a new area about what was being studied in psychology.

The contribution of psychoanalysis should be highlighted from the Freudian reference, in particular, and also from the various psychoanalytic perspectives that were developed and continue the challenging work of understanding the complexity of human subjectivity (Birman, 2013; Celes, 2012; Figueiredo, 2009; Green, 1995, 2008; Mezan, 1996, 2019). And there are still the different schools that have emerged influenced by psychoanalysis, but having as their main contribution the purpose of presenting an

answer to psychoanalysis to what it did not assume as important for the understanding of the human psyche. This study highlights the contributions of Wilhelm Reich (1942/1984, 1933/1995) and his followers for recognizing the human potential for change and transcendence, and of the humanist schools, among which are the Gestalt therapy of Frederick S. Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1969/1997).

However, despite the contributions of psychoanalysis to the recognition of subjectivity as an object of study of psychology, throughout the 20th century different authors – such as Foucault, Castoriadis, Guattari and Deleuze, each with particular contributions – pointed to the limitations imposed by psychoanalysis for a more complex understanding of subjectivity concerning, among other basal aspects, the socio-cultural dimension (Bastos, 2001; González Rey, 2003; Japiassu, 1995; Prado Filho & Martins, 2007). Among the criticisms, it is worth mentioning those with most repercussions: the establishment of universal categories for the comprehension of the human psyche (subjectivity) and its basis of biological nature.

These same authors, besides exposing their criticisms regarding psychoanalysis, also presented important ideas for broadening and complexifying the understanding of human subjectivity. After them, and in the last decades of the 20th century, authors have emerged with the aim of elaborating proposals for psychology which bring new contributions to the debate about subjectivity, including Gergen (1996) and Lax (1998). Respectively, with the elaboration of social constructionism and postmodern thinking in clinical practice (Neubern, 2004), authors start defending a psychology of discursive social exchanges based on language and, according to González Rey (2003, 2005, 2011, 2017; González Rey & Mijitán Martínez, 2017), with the proposal of a cultural-historical subjectivity, based mainly on Vygotsky's work.

From the discussions about subjectivity in psychology, this investigation understands that this is an object of study marked by distinct epistemological notions and that gain different theoretical-conceptual definitions, each delimiting a notion that highlights an aspect or dimension of subjectivity in particular, tending to confine it only to this detached dimension or aspect, which different dichotomies have established. For this reason, one can understand that a possibility of a resurgence of the epistemological and theoretical debate for the understanding of subjectivity in clinical psychology, in the sense of seeking to overcome different fragmentations, lies in the contributions of Morin's complex thinking (1984, 1990, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2005). With this epistemological proposal, one can believe that it is possible to develop reflections that may contribute to the attempt of proposing articulations between

the different dimensions of the human condition (individual-society-species) and subjectivity that were considered as traditionally opposed and dissociated by modern rationality, among which body and psyche, conscious and unconscious, individual and society, internal and external, affectivity and cognition, historical and current (Fuks, 1995; Neubern, 2004).

### **Brief contextualization of the epistemological scenario of clinical psychology**

The different psychologies (Figueiredo, 1991) that form the area of knowledge called psychology, and clinical psychology, as one of its fields of study and intervention, were constituted, throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, under the eyes and lights of modernity (Fuks, 1995; González Rey, 1997, 2003; Japiassu, 1995; Neubern, 2001, 2004; Silveira, 2018). Guided by these lights, which had in linear determinism, in experimental control, in the search for irrefutable certainties, and in the establishment of order through the universal laws governing nature the presuppositions of modern science (Morin, 1990, 1998, 2000; Santos, 1989, 2006), psychology had to forge investigative strategies that tended to reduce and simplify. Strategies that imposed the exclusion of the notions of subject and subjectivity as their object of study (Figueiredo, 1991; Neubern, 2001, 2004; Sundfeld, 2000), leaving them in a marginal position throughout their history and their different systems of ideas by virtue of the Cartesian mark, the split between subject and object (Morin, 1998).

As elucidated by Figueiredo (1991, 2003, 2013), these impacts of modern rationality did not only focus on the notion of subjectivity, but established the fragmentation of psychological knowledge, instituting different psychologies, each based on both divergent and convergent matrices of thought, proposing miscellaneous study objects. In his epistemological analysis, the author proposed the establishment of two large groups of matrices of psychological thought, with their internal subdivisions marked by oppositions.

On the one hand, we have the scientificist matrices – the nomothetic and quantifier, the atomistic and mechanistic, and the functionalist and organicist matrices –, in which the proposals of psychologies are conceived and practiced as natural science, corresponding to what is understood as the natural order of the world and phenomena, governed by general laws that can be known and explain the psychic and behavioral phenomena, which can then be controlled and predicted. On the other hand, we find the matrices constituted from romantic and post-romantic thinking – the vitalist and naturist, the comprehensive and the phenomenological and existentialist matrices –, for which the object of psychology are expressive forms,

as modes of communication, which are formed in the possibility of being apprehended by the cognoscenti subject via interpretation. That is, the actions, products and works of a singular subjectivity – endowed with meaning and value – which are expressed through them and can thus be known. For post-romantic matrices, the meanings are not only those accessible directly by consciousness, because there are meanings behind meanings in addition to meaning-generating mechanisms. Therefore, it would be necessary to establish interpretative methods, techniques and criteria that would allow a non-immediate understanding of others and of the subject with his/her own self (Figueiredo, 1991, 2003, 2013).

Notwithstanding the different matrices identified in the thought currents of psychology (Figueiredo, 1991, 2013), according to the analysis of some authors (Fuks, 1995; González Rey, 2003; Neubern, 2004; Morin, 1998), it was the influence of one dominant paradigm, characterized by the tendency towards simplification and reduction, which determined the constitution of the various schools and the different theoretical models and clinical methods of modern psychology, related precisely to the different currents of thought indicated by Figueiredo (1991, 2003). Among the schools, there stand out psychoanalysis, humanism, phenomenology, behaviorism, systemic and their derivations (Neubern, 2004), as well as the most recent proposals of the end of the last century, such as social constructionism and post-modern clinical practice. It is necessary to differentiate behaviorism from others, given its explicit and inseparable commitment to the explanatory principles of the founding epistemologies that underpin the demarcation of the scientific with the experimental method.

This dominant paradigm in the aforementioned schools was made present mainly by the logical principle of disjunction that separates the fundamental concepts or the master categories of intelligibility. The corollary of such fragmentation was the advance of universalist, isomorphic tendencies to pathologization, naturalization of the human, and essentialist reification of the psychological phenomenon, which prevented the emergence of subjectivity as the object of complex study of clinical psychology. At the same time, one must recognize that most of these schools, with the development of their systems of ideas (theories), have contributed to break with this same paradigm (Neubern, 2004; Plastino, 2001) and have developed and continue to develop a field of discussion that criticizes their own systems of ideas. Such contributions have enabled the design and emergence of another paradigm, which is being built from the spirit of complexity.

Especially in relation to clinical psychology, we can identify a controversial situation, whose origin is considered from psychoanalysis, as well as

from the other theoretical proposals that emerged in response to psychoanalysis, which is a good portrayal of this situation. In order to gain visibility and rise to the status of scientific truth, the various theoretical proposals were based on the isomorphic ideal proposed by the simplification paradigm, in order to occupy the position of holders of the enlightening knowledge about the human psyche (Figueiredo, 1991; Neubern, 2004).

The paradoxical character of this context of clinical psychology was due to the antagonism between the strong influence of the simplification paradigm, which, using the experimental method as its main instrument of epistemological domination, imposed the isomorphic ideal as a basis, and the tendency of the schools in proposing, each in its own form, theories about the human psyche, an object of study that escaped the assumptions of that paradigm. Even so, the theories produced in this context of psychology characterized the psyche from universal and definitive categories, seeking “natural” regularities through a single originary and constitutive aspect, and letting the singularities of the subjects escape. Such a perspective has created limitations to recognize the complexity of human subjectivity in its different dimensions (Fuks, 1995; Neubern, 2004).

This controversial origin of clinical psychology, in which the theories in clinical psychology which assumed subjectivity had in common the inexistence of the experimental procedure as a method that could point out which one would be the most reliable, indicated a breaking point with the simplification paradigm. This situation, as Neubern (2004) understands, while characterizing a break with this paradigm, also brought negative consequences, such as dogmatic theoretical postures, and also created the conditions for the proliferation of theories, each bringing in their scientific communities the mark of power relations, strongly linked to the tendency of theoretical homogenization, and little tolerant to deviant proposals.

This configuration, which marked the birth and development of clinical psychology, highlights the need for a radical epistemological criticism of the colonization of the dominant paradigm (Neubern, 2004), considering the complexity of this process. It is beyond the impact of the isomorphic ideal in the schools of clinical psychology, which have not been guided by the experimental method, that lies the fertile ground for the ideas that are leading us to another paradigm, alongside the other perspectives that were elaborated at the end of the 20th century.

In order to overcome these obstacles of the dominant paradigm and establish a dialogical discussion, this investigation proposes to elaborate and introduce in clinical psychology the notion of *corporeality/subjectivity* based on Edgar Morin’s complex thought. For that, the study will use the work *The method*, by this same author, to accomplish such investigation.

## **A first definition for the notion of human corporeality/subjectivity in light of complex thought**

From the concept of subject/subjectivity developed by Edgar Morin in his work *The method*, this investigation will present the first definition of the notion of corporeality/subjectivity as a proposed object of study of clinical psychology that points to the alternative of integration of its different dimensions. Having this work as its epistemological and theoretical basis, the concept of corporeality/subjectivity is a theoretical-conceptual formulation that, while seeking to indicate the specificity of human (anthroposocial) subjectivity, is inextricably grounded by theoretical-conceptual notions related to the physical world (*physis*) and the biological world (*bios*), as proposed by the author. This physical and biological condition of human subjectivity establishes its inseparable relationship with corporeality, as already indicated in previous works (João, 2018, 2019; João & Brito, 2004). For this reason, a complex concept of subjectivity can only be thought and defined from its inseparability with corporeality, from which it emerges in simultaneous constitution.

To begin elaborating the concept in question, starting from the idea of corporeality and then, evidencing its inseparable and continuous relationship with subjectivity, it is necessary to clarify the important notion of system as a complex organized unit<sup>2</sup>. According to Morin (1997), a system is a set of different parts, united and organized, and is presented as “*unitas multiplex*”, that is, a paradox that allows us to understand that “from the angle of the whole, it is one and homogeneous, considered from the angle of the constituents, it is diverse and heterogeneous” (p. 102). This indicates the need to consider the system as a complex unit, that is, neither the whole can be reduced to the parts nor the parts to the whole, just as the one cannot be reduced to the multiple, nor the multiple to the one. The notions of whole and parts and of one and multiple must be conceived together in a complementary and antagonistic manner.

The notion of system as a complex organized unit allows the understanding that human corporeity

2 This notion points to the need to consider an inseparable trinitarian macroconcept: system/organization/interrelation, in which the concept of organization is Edgar Morin’s main contribution to the development of systemism, in the sense of overcoming systemic reductions and pointing to the way that recognizes the need for complex thinking. “It is the knot that links the idea of interrelation to the idea of system” (Morin, 1997, p. 125). It should be conceived in a first definition as “the disposition of relation between components or individuals, which produces a complex unit or system, endowed with qualities unknown to the components or individuals. The organization inter-relationally links different elements or events or individuals that then become the components of a whole. It guarantees solidarity and solidity in relation to these links, and thus guarantees the system a certain possibility of duration despite random disturbances. Therefore the organization: transforms, produces, binds, maintains” (p. 101).

in its multidimensionality, constituted from what can be called, according Morin's (1997) thought, emergent processes that occurred throughout the evolution that led the *physis*, the *bios* and the anthroposocial sphere, as already explained in a previous work, "to a process of evolution with successive increases in the degree of complexity of systems/organizations, starting with the formation of atoms, arriving on this planet, developing into the evolution of species, and the emergence of the human species" (João, 2018, p. 45). In this sense, corporeality holds the inheritance of this entire evolutionary process, configured as a multidimensional complex unit, in which we can identify different dimensions, which are complex systems, as parts of a larger complex system, which form the whole of the human individual-subject. This, in turn, is part of even larger complex systems, human societies-cultures, which in turn are part of the complex system of the human species, which, alongside the systems of the other species and the geophysical constituents, comprises the larger ecosystem, the biosphere as a complex system that encompasses the whole of the many complex systems that form planet Earth.

In order to continue the development of the first conception of corporeality (João & Brito, 2004) from this founding condition, namely, the inseparability and continuity between corporeality and subjectivity, giving due emphasis to the latter, we propose the following definition to the notion of human corporeality/subjectivity in the light of complex thinking: complex corporeal/organized subjective unit from which the qualities and dimensions belonging to the human emerge. Based on the *selves*, organizational (multidimensional) macro concept – informational/computational/communicational self-(geno-pheno-ego)-eco-re-organization – we can identify in this corporeal/subjective uni/plurality the being, the existence, the individuality and the subjectivity: the condition of living human individual-subject.

In this perspective, corporeality and subjectivity constitute a complex organized unit, or a complex system. This complex unit between corporeality and subjectivity means that the inseparable relationship between these two dimensions of the human being in his/her individuality constitutes a system/organization that we might call corporeal-subjectivity. At the same time being a system/organization that emerges from another system/organization – that is, the subjectivity emerges from corporeality – it becomes a new whole, a system of systems, which has certain autonomy compared to the former, relatively but significantly as it allows to ontologically ground a new dimension and a new system. However, it maintains an inseparable relationship of dependence with the former, the corporeality, which thus characterizes the *unitas multiplex*, as proposed by Morin (1997).

This corporeality must still be understood as a complex unit that guards the condition of being an organism, and from which the subjectivity is constituted simultaneously, emerging mainly in its uniqueness as a heterogeneous human dimension, while maintaining its unit inseparable from corporeality. The organism must be understood from the cellular being and its interrelations, which occur through the computation occurring in and between each cell. The key notion of computation proposed by Morin (1999), related to the treatment of information (dealing with signs, indexes and data) by the cellular being, allows him to develop a principle of complex identity to support the notion of subject<sup>3</sup> (subjectivity) from the egocentric and self-referential condition of every living being. Justifying the idea of cellular *computing*, this principle of identity allows us to understand that from the unicellular one can abstract a kind of informative principle "I am myself" in his/her self-organization. In this sense, it can be stated that subjectivity has its first level of emergence in the unicellular being as well as in the cellular being, and in their cellular interrelationships, being endowed, then, with the quality of subject and being in the condition of individual; that is, each unicellular being or each cell is already an individual-subject.

Resuming the relationship between corporeality and subjectivity, as stated by Morin (1999), we must emphasize that there are three levels of emergence and organization of subjectivity in the human individual-subject, each of which retains its relative autonomy, establishing the boundaries between each level and indicating that even articulated and dependent on each other, they do not develop a linear relationship, but rather a proper and independent functioning. The first level occurs in the myriads of interactions between the cells that make up the organism, preserving a relative autonomy of the neurocerebral system and the phenomenon of consciousness as a reflexive activity mediated by language, even though they maintain relations of feedback and recursivity<sup>4</sup>. This first level justifies the statement that organism and subjectivity are simultaneously constituted. The computational interrelationships between cellular

3 For Morin (1999), the notion of subjectivity is inseparable from the notion of subject. Corresponding to the levels of complexification of the condition of subjects, whether phylogenetic (from unicellular beings to human species) or ontogenetically (from cellular being to a human being organism in its different moments of development), the human subjectivity emerges on three different levels of the individual-subject and also at the social level, maintaining a recursive relationship between these various levels, as will be elucidated in the development of this article.

4 The notion of retroaction brings the idea that the whole retroacts as a whole over all the particular moments and elements from which it arose (Morin, 1997). The notion of recursion, as one of the three principles of complex epistemology proposed by Morin (1996a), allows us to recognize the processes where products and effects are necessary for their production and causation.

subjects-individuals constitute an individuality and a first-level organismic subjectivity which is present in all multicellular living beings (plants and animals), including human animals.

The second level of subjectivity emerges from the activity that takes place from the retroactive and recursive relationship between the neurocerebral system and the *mind/spirit*<sup>5</sup> immersed in a culture. From this relationship emerges the psyche, the cerebral level of subjectivity, partially and superficially conscious, being largely immersed in the unconscious. We must also consider, from the first emergence level of subjectivity, the existence of an organic but noncerebral protopsyché, present in each cellular being and in cellular interrelationships, a phylogenetic inheritance present from the unicellular ones. This protopsyché establishes a relationship of retroaction and recursion with the brain psyche.

From this same relationship emerges the mind/spirit, which maintains with the psyche an inseparable relationship. The mind/spirit is the “sphere of brain activities in which computing processes assume a cogitating form, that is, thought, language, meaning, value, and where the phenomena of consciousness are updated or virtualized” (Morin, 1996b, p. 80). The psyche is the individual-subjective aspect of mind/spirit activities, from which the affective, oneiric, phantasmatic attributes of mental/spiritual activity are constituted. And just as mental/spiritual activity retroacts over the branched neurocerebral system throughout the organism, the brain psyche also retroacts over the entire organism, establishing the relationship already indicated with protopsyché. In this sense, the human corporeality/subjectivity can be considered to have a dual system (Morin, 1996b), a neurocerebral and a psychic one (which includes protopsyché), the latter referring to the inseparability and continuity between psychic and mental/spiritual phenomena.

The third level of subjectivity is that which Morin (1999) claims to be the radically new level: that of consciousness. For this first defining moment, we can briefly state that consciousness as a reflexive phenomenon implies two branches that establish a complex (complementary, concurrent and antagonistic) relationship: that of cognitive or practical activities and of self-awareness.

This conception of the bio-logical grounding of human subjectivity, which is at the same time a conception of the human subject, allows us to emphasize its globality, its thickness and its multidimensionality.

These three levels maintain an inseparable, ring-like relationship, constituting a recursive ring in which subjectivity as a whole is the product and effect of each of the three levels, while becoming the cause and producer of each of the three levels. This allows the maintenance of the human individual-subjects' indivisible unity.

To highlight the multidimensionality of the human being, the notion of corporeality/subjectivity sought to define for the human individual-subject will be organized into three dimensions, each being a (sub)system/organization of this one/plural system/organization, or this complex organized unit, called corporeality/subjectivity. They are: *organic-sensori-motor*, which holds the first emergence level of subjectivity, the protopsyché of the myriads of interactions between the cells that make up the organism, as well as the second level, with regard to the participation of brain/psyche activity in every motor action, constituting motor/subjective configurations from the interrelationship of these two levels of subjectivity and, consequently, of the two other dimensions; *psychic-affective-relational*, a first system of psychic elaboration, with an already expressive and communicative function (Pagès, 1986, 1993), nonverbal (corporal) and verbal, related to the second emergence level of subjectivity, which generates, together with the mental/spiritual system, subjective configurations constituted by meanings formed by the affective processes and by the phantasmatic, imaginary and oneiric aspects formed from the symbolic/mythic thought and language, composing the whole of mental activities; and *mental/spiritual*, a second system of psychic elaboration, also related to the second emergence level of subjectivity, constituted by cognitive activities involving the properly-human intelligence, and the rational/empirical thought and language, which will participate in the generation of meanings that make up the subjective configurations that enable the third emergence level of subjectivity: the consciousness. Being at the same time an emergency related to inseparability and continuity between the three dimensions, consciousness is a radically new phenomenon made possible by these attributes of the third dimension of the human being's corporeality/subjectivity.

In the human individual-subject's perspective, these three dimensions or complex systems shape human subjectivity. However, this complex subjectivity of a human individual-subject can only emerge because of the relationship between a corporeality/subjectivity carrying a neurocerebral system and the society-culture in which it is immersed. Thus, it is necessary to highlight another level of human subjectivity, constituted in the sphere of society and culture. For Morin (1997, 1999, 2003), societies, conceived from an organizationist (and not organicist) principle developed in his work *The method*, are formed from the integrative associations of multicellular individuals-subjects (counterparts and second degree entities).

5 In the French version of the work *The Method (La méthode)*, Morin (2003, p. 34) uses the word “esprit” due to a lack of the French language, which “compacted in this term two different and linked entities: the Latin *mens* (*mind*, mind) and the spiritual (*spirit*, *spirito*, *spirit*)”. To clarify this question, the author states that “when I say ‘spirit’, I mean *mind*, like all the different qualities that arise from it, including Vico’s *ingegno* (combinatorial, inventive aptitude).” We will use the phrase expression *mind/spirit* to maintain this reference to the original in French.

Endowed with a high degree of individuality formed by the development of the neurocerebral system in its complex interrelationship with the reproductive system and the emergence of the psychic system, human beings constitute third-degree entities: superorganisms, societies. In this author's proposal, the social phenomenon emerges

when interactions between individuals of the second type [human beings] produce a whole that is not reducible to individuals and which retroacts upon them, that is, when a system is constituted. Therefore, a society exists when communicative/associative interactions constitute an organized/organizing whole, which is precisely the society, which, like every entity of systemic nature, is endowed with emergent qualities and, with its qualities, retroacts as a whole on individuals, turning them into members of this society. (Morin, 1999, p. 221)

Articulating this perspective proposed by Morin with the relevant contributions of authors such as Castoriadis (1982), Guattari & Rolnik (1986) and González Rey (2003; González Rey & Mijtáns Martínez, 2017), this study aims to develop a conception of social subjectivity. Considering the need to articulate the different constituent aspects of this other dimension of subjectivity, the socio-historical-cultural expression is proposed for its definition. Maintaining a recursive relationship with the subjectivity of the human individual-subject, this other dimension of subjectivity is also constitutive of the psychic-affective-relational processes, of the mental/spiritual activities and consciousness, involving thought, language, meaning, sense, value, habits and customs.

Besides an individual and social subjectivity, we have yet another dimension of the organization of subjectivity, related to the dimension of the human species. This dimension of human subjectivity comes from the complex relationship between what Morin (1999) calls *genos* (generic, genetic and generative), *phenon* (phenotype, hic et nunc phenomonic individual existence in an environment) and *oikos* (ecological dimension, third organizational dimension of life). Being constituted at the intersection between *genos* and *oikos*, the human individuals, as *phenon*, bring in them the inheritance of these two other dimensions of life that affect their subjectivity. As bearer of the *genos heritage*, which is an inheritance from the species, the individual has a subjectivity constituted in this inseparable relationship with the species itself.

And just as *genos* allow us to consider this dimension of species-related human subjectivity, the *oikos*, the ecosystem/organization, as the organizing reality from which human individuals-subjects are also constituted in their self-eco-organization, receiving

and removing matter, energy and information for their permanent self-re-organization, allows us to consider another dimension of human subjectivity: the eco-subjectivity. Through this dimension, which involves the other two dimensions of human subjectivity, human individuals-subjects establish their autonomy-dependence relationship with the entire biosphere (totaling the set of life in the earth's crust) and the geophysical environment, that is, the planet Earth.

So far, we can thus consider that the different and main dimensions of human corporeality/subjectivity are: the individual-subject, the eco-subjectivity, the socio-historical-cultural and the species; these four dimensions constitute and participate in the subjective production and human experience.

## Final considerations

The main objective of this study was the presentation of a first definition of the concept of corporeality/subjectivity for clinical psychology. The epistemological questions approached here were limited to expose a general and partial panorama of this discussion in clinical psychology regarding the problem of subjectivity fragmentation. The elaboration of this concept is an attempt to point a way in dealing with this issue.

Knowing the ontological and epistemological challenges inherent to this problem, we have sought to develop such foundations in the proposed doctoral thesis in the Graduate Program in Clinical Psychology and Culture of the Universidade de Brasília, since August 2016. Due to the limitations of this publication, the developments already achieved were not presented. However, we acknowledge the irremediable need to justify ontologically and epistemologically the basis of the theoretical and conceptual proposal that has been shown here and to establish a rigorous discussion with the field of clinical psychology and general psychology.

It is still necessary to indicate that this proposal is supported by the theory of (systemic) organization elaborated by Morin in his work *The method*. Theory constructed according to the path taken to reach the method (of complexity), and which can be regenerated by the method itself, considered by Morin (1990) as strategy, initiative, invention and art, which establishes a recursive relationship between method and theory. In the background, the epistemic is presented as a way of thinking about the method, theory and practice of psychology in its foundations, being so primordial and necessary and yet forgotten in the discussions of contemporary psychology (Holanda, 2019).

Such an oblivion places psychology before weaknesses, such as the fragmentation of its object of study, which in its history has been characterized as the multiplicity of theoretical-epistemological proposals. This question of fragmentation inevitably brings the

problem of the unit of psychology, present since its origin as a modern science. A problem that should be understood, precisely, as the lack of consensus between the different perspectives of psychology, regarding its ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions, and the growing fragmentation of this area of knowledge in several different theories and practices (Silva, 2016).

It is before this question, in the face of psychology, that lied the motivation to try taking a first *baby step* with the first definition of the notion of human *corporeality/subjectivity*, a newborn theoretical-conceptual proposal. This step is taken with the feelings of care and epistemic humility that are so necessary and indispensable for any vision of unity (in diversity) that is sought.

### **Corporeidade/subjectividade na psicologia clínica: tecendo fios teórico-epistemológicos para bordar um complexo objeto de estudo**

**Resumo:** Este ensaio teve como finalidade apresentar o desenvolvimento inicial de uma noção de *corporeidade/subjectividade* humana para o campo da psicologia clínica, a partir da noção de sujeito proposta por Edgar Morin em sua obra *O método*. Entende-se que a inserção desta noção nas discussões epistemológicas desse campo do conhecimento, no que concerne ao problema da fragmentação da noção de subjectividade, pode contribuir com reflexões iniciais para se pensar uma possível alternativa de integração do seu objeto de estudo. Fundamentada no pensamento complexo, é proposta uma primeira definição que aponta para quatro principais dimensões e suas respectivas noções: a do indivíduo-sujeito, constituída por três sistemas complexos (orgânico-sensorio-motor, psíquico-afetivo-relacional e mental); a da eco-subjetividade; a sócio-histórico-cultural; e a da espécie. Conclui-se considerando os desafios ontológico e epistemológico inerentes à problemática da fragmentação da subjectividade, relacionando-os ao problema da unidade na Psicologia, e indicando a necessidade dos seus enfrentamentos pela proposta apresentada.

**Palavras-chave:** corporeidade, subjectividade, epistemologia, psicologia clínica.

### **Corporeité/subjectivité en psychologie clinique: tisser des fils théoriques- épistémologiques pour broder un objet d'étude complexe**

**Résumé:** Le présent essai présente le développement initial d'une notion de *corporeité/subjectivité* humaine dans le domaine de la psychologie clinique, basée sur la notion de sujet proposée par Edgar Morin dans son ouvrage *La méthode*. L'insertion de cette notion dans les discussions épistémologiques de ce domaine de la connaissance, en ce qui concerne le problème de la fragmentation de la notion de subjectivité, peut contribuer, avec les réflexions initiales, à réfléchir à une éventuelle alternative d'intégration de son objet d'étude. Sur la base d'une pensée complexe, une première définition pointe vers quatre dimensions principales et leurs notions respectives: celle de l'individu-sujet, constituée de trois systèmes complexes (organique-sensoriel-moteur, psychique-affectif-relational et mental); l'éco-subjectivité; le socio-historique-culturel; et les espèces. Il conclut en considérant les défis ontologiques et épistémologiques inhérents à la problématique de la fragmentation de la subjectivité, en les reliant au problème de l'unité en psychologie et en indiquant la nécessité de ses confrontations par la proposition présentée.

**Mots-clés:** corporeité, subjectivité, épistémologie, psychologie clinique.

### **Corporeidad/subjectividad en psicología clínica: tejer hilos teórico-epistemológicos para bordar un objeto de estudio complejo**

**Resumen:** El presente ensayo tiene como objetivo presentar el desarrollo inicial de una noción de *corporeidad/subjectividad* humana para el campo de la psicología clínica, a partir de la noción de sujeto propuesta por Edgar Morin en su trabajo *El método*. Se entiende que la inserción de esta noción en las discusiones epistemológicas de este campo del conocimiento, en lo que concierne al problema de la fragmentación de la noción de subjectividad, puede contribuir con reflexiones iniciais para pensar una posible alternativa de integración de su objeto de estudio. Basado en el pensamiento complejo, se propone una primera definición que apunta a cuatro dimensiones principales y sus respectivas nociones: la de individuo-sujeto, constituída por tres sistemas complejos (orgánico-sensorio-motor, psíquico-afectivo-relacional y mental); la de eco-subjetividad; la socio-histórico-cultural; y la de la especie. Se concluye considerando los desafíos ontológicos y epistemológicos inherentes a la problemática de la fragmentación de la subjectividad, relacionándolos con el problema de la unidad en Psicología, e indicando la necesidad de sus confrontaciones por la propuesta presentada.

**Palabras clave:** corporeidad, subjectividad, epistemología, psicología clínica.

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