PSYCHOLOGY AS A TECHNIQUE
OF SUBJECTIFICATION

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Se propone de forma tentativa una concepción de la Psicología que pretende desplazar las cuestiones epistemológicas (qué clase de ciencia es, de serlo) y las teóricas y metodológicas (cuál debe ser su objeto y su método) adoptando una perspectiva basada en la genealogía de cuño foucaultiano y en la antropología de la ciencia de autores como Bruno Latour. Para ello, se marca distancia con la llamada Psicología crítica y se argumenta que la Psicología importa más por lo que hace que por lo que dice (aunque decir es también hacer) y que funciona ante todo como una práctica de subjetivación. Se termina revisando brevemente algunos trabajos que intentan mostrar ese funcionamiento en casos concretos.ee tip es o no una ciencia, o qu quñe el trabajo de Gesine Sturm y colaboradores (2010). resistencia a su avance
Palabras clave: Etnopsicología, Genealogía, Subjetividad.

A conception of psychology is tentatively proposed which aims to displace epistemological questions (what kind of science it is, if it is a science) and theoretical and methodological questions (what its object and its method should be). Instead, a perspective is adopted that is based on Foucauldian genealogy and the anthropology of science by authors such as Bruno Latour. An attempt is made to create distance with respect to so-called critical psychology. It is argued that psychology matters more for what it does than for what it says (although saying is also doing) and that it functions mainly as a practice of subjectivation. This paper ends by briefly reviewing a number of works that attempt to show this functioning in specific cases.
Key words: Ethnopsychology, Genealogy, Subjectivity.

PROBLEMATIZING PSYCHOLOGY
At least within the profession, the hegemonic conception of psychology is based on two presumptions, one epistemological and the other theoretical: the epistemological one assumes that psychology is a science because it applies the so-called scientific method; the theoretical one assumes that its object is the mind or behavior and its purpose is to discover the laws that govern them with a view to creating techniques that promote our well-being. It is often considered that such laws rest on the anatomical and physiological objectivity of the brain. In any case, the epistemological and the theoretical are linked to the political: psychologists, with their expertise, have the last word regarding human behavior. They provide evidence about our true nature and, correcting what deviates from the norm, they apply techniques based on this evidence to individuals and populations. It seems almost immoral, then, to problematize a science whose objective is the well-being of the people.

However, the problematization has not ceased to occur. The theoretical discussions are as old as the discipline itself and are

in good health. Recently Marino Pérez (2018) recalled in this same journal that turning to the mind, behavior or brain leads to dualist or reductionist blind alleys, and he defended a psychology centered on the subject. To show that the hegemonic conception of the subject is far from being the only possible one, Pérez notes that there are at least five orientations that do not share it: incarnated phenomenology linked to the so-called new science of the mind, the contextualist derivation of Skinnerian behaviorism, ecological psychology, cultural psychology, and existential psychology. In the same direction, although not in the same sense, are the works of Tomás R. Fernández and collaborators (e.g. Fernández et al., 2003, and Sánchez, 2009), who turn rather to the constructivist traditions of authors such as Baldwin, Piaget, and Vygotsky.

As for the epistemological, to assume that psychology is scientific requires forgetting much of the literature of recent decades about science (see, e.g., Brown & Stenner, 2009; Bueno, 1995; Law, 2004; Latour & Woolgar, 1995; Stengers, 2006, 2008); but not because the scientificity of the discipline must be denied, but because the very idea of science is problematic. It is not evident that there is such a thing as the scientific method. Nor is it evident that psychology is a well-defined area of knowledge (compared with philosophy, psychiatry, anthropology, sociology, self-help, social engineering, etc.). Instead of taking for granted the disciplinary legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of a supposed scientific psychology, we could take a step back to gain perspective and analyze it as a practice of subjectivation alongside others -of course, a practice linked to discourses, justifications, and theories. In the first instance, as a phenomenon, this is how it is presented to us.

Of course, this step back cannot help but imply a certain epistemology, if you wish to call it that. In particular, it implies a constructivist conception of how psychology (the discipline) and psychology (the psychological) have been historically constituted. Constructivism here opposes realism, naturalism or positivism, but does not imply a type of social constructionism according to which realities are reduced to mere discourses linked to power games. On the contrary, everything we call objective is real, simply by being constructed (and not only discursively), exactly as noted by some versions of the so-called *Science and Technology Studies* (e.g., Latour, 2008). The psychological is real insofar as psychology (and other practices) make it real. Subjectivity is not prior to its production. Another matter is what type of subjectifications are built in each case (see some approaches and analysis in Ferreira, 2011, 2014, 2015, and Loredo, 2015, as well as those referred to in the last epigraph).

Subjectivation practices are procedures that aim to modify subjectivity or create it and make people experience themselves and behave in a certain way. Some subjectivation practices are confession, spiritual exercises, self-care, *ars moriendi*, writing, parenting, etc. (Blanco & Cohen, 2015; Blanco & Loredo, 2016; Loredo, 2012, 2016; Loredo & Blanco, 2011; Martínez, 2015; Pérez, 2015). This is equivalent to what Michel Foucault (1990) called technologies of the self and Peter Sloterdijk (2009) called anthropotechnics. Needless to say, from this point of view, it is not pertinent to assume the existence of natural or universal psychological functions. Although they are usually based on a certain idea of what a human subject really is or what a human subject should be like, it is the practices of subjectivation that perform the different modes of subjectivity. It is these that contribute to producing human nature.

Thus, and beyond the prestige that in the modern world it means to consider something scientific, it is necessary to reinterpret epistemological questions (is psychology a science?) and theoretical ones (which psychology is better?) showing how psychology actually works in all its heterogeneity. Of course, this implies questioning its unity as a discipline, which is purely institutional, consisting of university departments and professional colleges; and it also implies leaving aside the discussion about its scientificity and focusing on the analysis of the procedures by which it has become necessary -socially and individually functional- producing the same forms of subjectivity to which it then reverts through clinical, labor and educational units. Therefore, the idea is not to argue about which psychological theory is better, but about how to understand the functioning of psychology/ies. And this is without prejudice to the fact that a psychology conscious of its condition of subjectivation practice and addressed as such could be developed. In fact, non-psychological subjectivation techniques are perfectly possible. It depends, of course, on their use and the values that accompany them. All psychologization implies subjectivation, but not the other way around. For example, practices of subjectivation like those of the ancient philosophical schools can hardly be considered as not psychological, but are not even psychological *stricto sensu* (Hadot, 1998).

A CRITICISM OF CRITICISM

Before we continue, it may be useful to focus on a perspective that is often presented as criticism: one that, rooted in Marxist and countercultural approaches, revolves around what is usually called precisely critical psychology (by way of example: Álvarez-Uría & Varela, 1986; Merani, 1980; Parker, 2010; Rendueles, 2005; Rodríguez, 2016). Without denying the irrevocable contributions of this perspective at the time of denouncing the psychologization of life or revealing the functioning of psychiatric power -antipsychiatry is an essential tradition- it often seems as if it were supposed that psychology and the related disciplines are kind of allies of what is usually called -with negative connotations- capitalism or neoliberalism: psychological practices function as a socially de-politicizing control ram that delves into the repression of our true nature turning problems that, in reality, are part of life and should be solved with moral strength and mutual support, into pathological problems of a technical nature, (perhaps with a "return to the community" or a repoliticization of the people). Often it is considered, thus, that capitalism -or even modernity in general- has undermined the social relations that previously seemed to be healthier and has individualized everything creating intimate discomforts which benefit from accomplices, the disciplines of psychology, which in turn reinforce them.

One problem with this point of view is that it seems to assume the existence of a true human nature or a personal authenticity violated by the psychological units, which then appear as something purely negative, repressive. Another problem is the idealization of the community and the political versus the individual. It is forgotten that, even from a strictly Foucauldian perspective like the one that frequently inspires this point of view, all power -at least all power that does not limit itself to killing- is a producer or positive as well as a repressor. It is also forgotten that the dichotomy between community and individual is as tricky as any other, and that the community is as much a source of security as of conflict. As a consequence of these omissions, the psychological disciplines are condemned without warning that they do not constitute a monolithic block and that, in any case, they represent something historically irreversible as management procedures of the experience of oneself (it is impossible that anthropotechnics do not exist, including the use of psychotropics).

Problematizing psychology, then, is not tantamount to dismissing it as bad science or denouncing its oppressive character, but analyzing it with the eyes of an anthropologist, so to speak. With this perspective, it would make as little sense to consider it to be simply a science -for the time being, because it is plural, it is not *one*- as to consider it an instrument of domination or a spurious knowledge. Its objectivity, its truth, would be given by the forms of subjectivation that it establishes through its practice. Be that as it may, if there are better and worse ways of doing psychology it will not be for purely epistemic reasons (supposing that it even makes sense to speak of *purely* epistemic motives), but rather taking into account ethical, moral and political questions, regarding what we want to be, and how we want to live.

A GENEALOGICAL VIEW

Obviously, my approach is not unprecedented. It appears in genealogical and ethnographic works on the world of psychology. It is well known that the genealogical perspective of Michel Foucault (1988) stems from a distrust of closed narratives, a concern for socio-cultural contexts and power relations typical of each era, and an attention to detail and concrete practices rather than to theories or general discourses. Nikolas Rose (1996, 1999a) has applied this perspective to psychology, addressing it as a set of discourses and practices that have a performative effect on its own object of study and intervention, subjectivity:

> "Psychology is significant less for what it is than for what it does. Psychology [...] has altered the way in which it is possible to think about people, the laws and values that govern the actions and conduct of others, and [...] of ourselves. What is more, it has endowed some ways of thinking about people with extra credibility on account of their apparent grounding in positive knowledge. In making the human subject thinkable according to diverse logics and formulae, and in establishing the possibility of evaluating ways of thinking about people by scientific means, psychology also makes human beings amenable to having certain things done to them by others. It also makes it possible for them to do new things to themselves. It opens people up to a range of calculated interventions, whose ends are formulated in terms of the psychological dispositions and qualities of human individuals conduct themselves, and whose means are inescapably adjusted in the light of psychological knowledge about the nature of humans" (Rose, 1996, p. 123).

Genealogy intersects with the question of subjectivity because, as Foucault (1987) himself explains, the problem of how we have become what we are is the one that triggers genealogical research. More specifically, it is the questioning of the forms of government of individuals that refers to subjectivity. According to the interpretation of Gilles Deleuze (2015), the topic of subjectivation helped Foucault to exit the impasse of the circle of knowledge-power. This expression refers to the fact that the theorizations (knowledge) of human activity -ethical, religious, moral, psychological, philosophical, etc.- are necessarily linked to political practices (power). From the point of view of the knowledge-power circle it would seem that any human activity must be disciplined, included within a framework defined by certain power relationships and certain scientific knowledge that underpins them. Now, if that is so, how do new things emerge, which are not planned, and are not disciplined? According to Deleuze, precisely through (some) processes of subjectivation. Human activity is disciplined, subject to knowledge-power relations, and at the same time it can overflow this disciplining.

Deleuze emphasizes that subjectivity arose in classical Greece thanks to the practice of a form of government among free and equal men that demanded that, in order to govern others, one must also govern oneself. Self-government then became the cause and consequence of politics (and what Foucault called technologies of the self were aimed at it):

> "[There is] a double unhooking or 'differentiation': when the 'exercises that enabled one to govern oneself become detached both from power as a relation between forces, and from knowledge as a stratified form, or 'code' of virtue. On the one hand there is a 'relation to oneself that consciously derives from one's relation with others; on the other there is equally a 'self-constitution' that consciously derives from the moral code as a rule for knowledge. This derivative or differentiation must be understood in the sense in which the relation to oneself assumes an independent status" (Deleuze, 2006, p. 100).[1]

Thus, subjectivity is always derived, and not primary or natural, given that it comes from knowledge-power relations: "governing oneself is a regulating condition, it is not a constituent at all" (Deleuze, 2015: 100). This does not mean, however, that subjectivity is reducible to that from which it derives. It acquires autonomy, a life of its own, and precisely for that reason it constitutes a vortex of creation of novelties. According to the metaphor used by the French philosopher, this is so because it duplicates something preexisting - it does not operate *ex nihilo* - but duplicates it with variations:

> "[The double of the subject] is not a doubling of the One, but a redoubling of the Other. It is not a reproduction of the Same, but a repetition of the Different. It is not the emanation of an 'I', but something that places in immanence an always other or a Non-self" (Deleuze, 2006, p. 98).

Of course, the relationship between knowledge, power and subjectivity is far from static. It is not that subjectivity escapes from the circle of knowledge-power and from that moment acquires absolute autonomy. Immediately new forms of knowledge-power rework it, that is, transform the very practices of subjectivation that they had generated. They try to capture them, discipline them:

> "The obligatory rules for power must be doubled by facultative rules for the free man who exercises power. As moral codes here and there execute the diagram [...], a 'subject' must be isolated which differentiates itself from the code and no longer has an internal dependence on it. This is what the Greeks did. [...] [However] the relation to oneself will be understood in terms of power-relations and relations of knowledge. It will be reintegrated into these systems from which it was originally derived. The individual is coded or recoded

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[1] This quotation by Gilles Deleuze and the two following ones by the same author do not correspond exactly with the quotations in the Spanish version of this article, because they come from a course taught in French and the transcriptions of the Spanish and English editions differ slightly.

within a 'moral' knowledge, and above all he becomes the stake in a power struggle and is diagrammatized" (Deleuze, 2006, pp. 101-103).

Well, the history of modern psychological knowledge is a genealogical continuation of that process. This knowledge constitutes an instrument of capture and production of subjectivity, and tries to colonize the latter in competence -and sometimes collaboration- with other knowledge such as medicine or those linked to esotericism. Psychology is the heir of the independization of the relationship with oneself, but - contrary to Deleuze's proposal- it treats this relationship as a constituent, based on coercive principles, instead of treating it as a regulator, based on facultative principles. It does so by championing a typically modern phenomenon: the scientific thematization of subjectivity. It is in science that the guiding principles of subjectivity are sought, which is considered substantive rather than relational or derivative. However, psychology continues to host a vast repertoire of anthropotechnics that at the same time present continuities with the old (Loredo & Blanco, 2011) and introduce novelties, as occurs in all genealogies.

An essential novelty in the late nineteenth century was the fact that scientific psychology was born linked to forms of social engineering that required self-governed subjects, reflective individuals who internalized the rules of coexistence. In another place (Castro & Loredo, 2018) we have coined a neologism to refer to this alliance between psychology and citizenship production: *psytizen*. Of course, the *psytizen* can appear in many ways depending on the time and the socio-political context. Currently, the most visible model of the *psytizen* is that of an enterprising individual in search of happiness. Studies on governmentality -a spin-off of Foucault's research on the connection between subjectivity and government- emerged since the 1980s coinciding with what is often called neoliberalism, which exacerbates the tendency to decentralize power by transferring management from politics to individuals, understood as maximally self-governed subjects and seekers of personal authenticity. The State is a promoter of ventures and a creator of niche markets based on individual responsibility and self-discovery. Mitchell Dean (1999), one of the representatives of the studies on governmentality, has underlined the connection between the entrepreneurial ideology of entrepreneurship and the self-management and countercultural movements, where freedom is self-governed autonomy rather than emancipation. But *psytizenship*, as I say, is not exclusive of the current or postmodern time. The aforementioned Nikolas Rose (1996, 1999a, 1999b, 2007), another representative of studies on governmentality, is the one who has placed the most emphasis on the psychology disciplines as a set of technologies of the self, set in modern government techniques. Rose studies these disciplines as devices that perform subjectivities, ways of living, ways of experiencing oneself and others. He notes that there are several competing forms of expertise clustered around a dominant tendency that strives to totalize the field of contemporary technologies of the self but, at the same time,

produces cultural conditions such that the very subjects on whom they act demand psychotherapies and practices of subjectivation that constantly surpass the edges of disciplinary psychology (again we can use the esoteric ones as an example). Psychology techniques penetrate people's lives in such a way that people experience themselves through psychological categories that constitute them not as subjects but as subjects of a certain variety: there are diverse and proliferating ways of being a subject, and psychology itself contributes this proliferation.

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC VIEWPOINT

How do these performative processes of subjectivation take place? In his work, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence,* Bruno Latour studies "the moderns" with the attitude of strangeness typical of an anthropologist and maintains an ontological pluralism that questions what he considers the typical dualisms of modernity, linked to the distinction between nature and culture. In the seventh chapter of the book (Latour, 2013) projects this attitude on what modern thought has agreed to consider psychological, although it goes beyond disciplinary psychology. He attempts to understand how psychological or subjective interiority occurs, taking into account that the distinction between interiority and exteriority is an artifice that is not to be taken very seriously. Latour resorts to what he calls beings of metamorphosis, which are those that modify subjectivity by being invisible; for example, demons or emotions.

The moderns say we have done away with superstitions and established the reign of techno-scientific rationality. Our discourse contrasts with that of traditional societies, with their plethora of invisible and yet existing beings. For the moderns, however, invisible beings do not exist, or rather, they only exist in the world of the psychological in the mind-, as errors or illusions. In fact, says Latour, for the moderns, psychology usually plays the same role as epistemology only the other way around: it deals with subjectivity, usually associated with the error, just as epistemology deals with objectivity, associated with the truth. Now, subjectivity and objectivity are defined by mutual opposition, so we can ask ourselves if modern people have really gotten rid of invisible beings. The fact is that modern societies suffer from a myriad of problems related to the psychological: there are forces that overcome the self and require psychotherapies, psychotropic drugs, self-help, etc. All this is part of a production network of psychological interiority that, although as a network it is by definition external, supposedly gives access to the true self, it reveals it. For example, as Vinciane Despret (2001) notes, emotions have played an essential role in the definition of subjectivity since the Romantic era and, like other invisible beings in traditional societies, they have a double dimension of controllability and uncontrollability that forces us to manage them with the help of experts.

Interestingly, then, the moderns claim not to believe in invisible beings and at the same time we are immersed in a psychologized culture: "the same informants who say they are

free from all superstition are, however, overflowing when it comes to describing an experience that seems to arrive from the 'outside'. That experience is that of feeling touched by an *emotion*" (Latour, 2013: 189). In addition, emotions and psychological experiences in general are usually lived in the form of empowerment of the individual on the part of something that is not the self, but usually in a passing manner, like a kind of crisis or transformation. In fact, we have difficulties externalizing or objectifying the forces that at the same time possess and sustain us:

> "To exist, for a self [...], is first to resist successive waves of fright, any one of which could devour us; but each could also be shifted off course by an attraction, a snare, a device, a gimmick, any sort of artifice thanks to which we suddenly discover that the beings [of metamorphosis] that were deceiving us are on the contrary helping us to exist, finally, that we can surf on them, through them, with them, thanks to them, by dint of skill, as on a wave that carries you away but that isn't targeting you personally" (Latour, 2013, p. 192).

We have difficulties externalizing the forces that possess and sustain us just because we consider them interior; not really real, but "purely psychological". We are uneasy due to the fact that they are not the self but they are not outside it either (as they are in traditional societies). We do not know what psychological interiority responds to. Latour suggests that we stop denying the existence of invisible beings -the question would rather be what their mode of existence is- and take the therapeutic devices as a model of the way in which the production of this interiority operates. Of course, psychology is not only psychotherapy, but psychotherapeutic practices are perhaps a synecdoche of psychology as a whole, since they materialize the subjective effects of psychology according to principles formulated by it. Therapeutic devices would become what the laboratory is for natural, visible, objective beings. In the words of the French sociologist, "therapeutic devices are the only ones that have escaped -in practice if not in theory- the generalized denial of invisible beings" (Latour, 2013, p. 193).

In order to understand in what sense psychotherapy can function as a model for the construction of the psychological, it is useful to turn to some ideas of Tobie Nathan (1999, 2001, 2013), whom Latour himself mentions. Nathan is a sort of relativist heir to the French ethnopsychiatric tradition. Relativist in the sense that he moves away from the pretense of finding universal structures of the human mind and turns his gaze towards the different discourses and practices that in different cultures produce something similar to what we call psychological. He also pays special attention to the rituals and artifacts that mediate therapeutic ceremonies, noting the techniques with which they are manipulated and put in contact with people. On the other hand, their sessions of psychotherapy with immigrants are group sessions (translators, anthropologists, and relatives of the patient can attend) and mix the beliefs of patients with Western psychological categories, as well as the techniques of each cultural environment (exorcisms, witchcraft,

voodoo, psychotherapeutic strategies, etc.). The purpose is to achieve a climate of mutual influence that allows the resolution of the conflict in practical terms.

Nathan emphasizes that the self is not alone: the subject is not an entity seeking itself. Psychological interiority itself does not exist. The self is always assembled with rituals and with other visible or invisible beings. There is, therefore, a give and take between being possessed by the beings of metamorphosis - experiencing discomfort, alienating oneself, losing control- and possessing them -controlling them, making them pass by, compelling them to act in our favor. Psychotherapeutic techniques do not aim to do anything other than manage the forces that possess us and at the same time constitute us. Nobody is free of these forces, of these beings of metamorphosis, because we experience the same as what happens to Kant's dove, which can fly thanks to the very same air that provides resistance to its advancing. Being a subject is being subject. The beings of metamorphosis limit us and at the same time make us subjects: "the continuity of a self is not assured by its authentic core and, in some way, native, but by its capacity to be carried away, without being transported, by forces capable of breaking it or, on the contrary, of being installed in it at any time" (Latour, 2012: 195). A good psychotherapy transforms us, produces (new) subjectivity, because it makes something that could harm us pass by or transform us into something else. Of course, not all rituals nor all words cure; everything depends on the art of elusiveness applied to beings of metamorphosis, says Latour. The key distinction is then not between scientific and non-scientific practices, but between good and bad therapy. Now, modern psychology carries a danger: by assuming that the beings of metamorphosis live within the self, it makes things easier for them to be harmed; this is why the techniques used by Tobie Nathan seek to externalize them, exorcise them, although they do not always have a demonic nature, but depending on how we manage our relationship with them, they will be angels or demons:

> "This proteiform character is familiar to all of us, since we touch on it in dreams during nearly half of our existence and in our waking moments the rest of the time. What would we do without them? We would be always and forever the same. They trace throughout the multiverse —to speak like James— paths of alteration that are at once terrifying (since they transform us), hesitant (since we can deceive them), and inventive (since we can allow ourselves to be transformed by them). [...] It is only if we are afraid of them that they start deceiving us cruelly" (Latour, 2013, pp. 199-200).

NOT BEING COMPLETELY IN ITSELF

I will conclude by referring to a handful of studies on psychological practices that can help us to see psychology in a distanced way -that is not distant or dismissive- and to better appreciate what its objectivity consists of as a technique of subjectivation (Ferreira, 2014; compilations of works done from

a perspective related to the studies of Science, Technology and Society in Ferreira, 2015, and Sisto et al., 2017). It is, as I suggested earlier, about adopting a point of view that goes beyond criticism and is comparative and analytical. Perhaps what the works that I will mention here have in common is that, read from a certain perspective, they show the functioning of "common factors" that confer efficacy on any therapeutic interventions (Pérez, 2013) and probably to all psychosocial interventions -formal ones or informal ones- understood as practices of subjectivation. These common, transversal factors revolve around issues such as the "therapeutic alliance", the ritual, mediations, resignification and creation of meanings, props, ceremonies, etc., as is particularly evident in the work of Gesine Sturm et al. (2010).

These authors, inspired by ideas like those of Tobie Nathan, carried out an ethnographic study of a transcultural therapy (with immigrants) showing how the interaction between patients and the therapist and co-therapists generates a dynamics of negotiation of meaning, the result of which is often a healing in which the beliefs of the patient are included and at the same time new shared meanings are created regarding the symptoms of the condition, their causes, and the mediators and techniques that enable us to tackle them. From a similar perspective, works by Arthur Arruda Leal Ferreira and his collaborators (Ferreira et al., 2012, 2013) combine qualitative and quantitative methods (surveys, questionnaires) to study the subjectivizing effect of psychotherapy sessions and the influence of the expert discourse on psychology students. They show how patients and students tend to adhere to the said discourse and, in the case of the patients, they show docility towards it, among other things interpreting themselves according to the categories of the experts.

From a more typical approach to social constructivism, based on Erwing Goffman, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, Sue E. Estroff (1985) long ago carried out an ethnography in a psychiatric clinic interviewing patients and workers and observing their routines. This study teaches us how the institution itself performs madness. Not because patients are simply puppets of the surrounding context, but because they are part of a relationship game that it is very difficult to get out of because practically any behavior is susceptible to being interpreted with a psychopathological undertone, i.e., within the rules of said game. In this sense, the institution, with the therapeutic techniques and the daily routines that are practiced in it, produces the same subjectivities that it deals with.

Returning to the issue of psychological expertise, studies by Samuel Lézé and collaborators, based on ethnographies of prisons and psychiatric trials in criminological and judicial contexts (Fernández & Lézé, 2011, 2014; Fernández et al., 2010), highlight the moral-political component of expertise and the weight of expert authority in decision making. This authority affects the moral dimension of psychotherapy and underpins the performative nature of the experience of the prisoners and those prosecuted with regards to their self-esteem and their sense of guilt and responsibility. Incidentally, Lézé has also participated

in an interesting review of ethnographies of child psychology (Béhague & Lézé, 2015). Another interesting work on the creation of psychiatric diagnoses, carried out from a basically Latourian perspective, is that of Silvia C. Geneyro and Francisco J. Tirado (2015).

Also, there are a number of Foucaultian qualitative investigations with an ethnographic component that study issues such as psychotherapeutic listening techniques linked to forms of surveillance dependent on modes of government of urban poverty in Argentina (Epele, 2015) or the functioning of psychotherapy groups with transsexuals requesting surgery in Brazil (Oliveira, 2014). This last study, based on interviews and participant observation, shows the tension between resistance and discipline linked to the production of transsexual subjectivity through the very fact that undergoing surgery necessarily entails being the subject of psychological expertise. Equally Foucaultian is the perspective that presides over the field work of Toril B. Terkelsen (2009) in a Norwegian psychiatric institution, which shows how it tries to normalize patients so that they become self-governing and responsible subjects, including the tensions and conflicts that this attempt generates.

Another line of research is the one that puts in the foreground the narratives of the patients themselves about their experience (Cortés et al., 2005; Martínez-Hernáez, 2017), sometimes analyzed from a gender perspective (Zapata, 2014). Autoethnographic reports -which in a way relate to the old tradition of autobiographical writing- could also be included in this category (e.g., Trivelli, 2014).

Finally, there are several works with an ethnographic component on psychological units whose purpose is practical-demonstrative, that is, they seek to discover phenomena on which to establish improvements in clinical and related interventions. This is the case of Christopher Wagstaff and collaborators (2012) in sports psychology, those of Scott P. Sells and collaborators (1996) and Thomas Edward Smith and collaborators (1994) in couples therapy, or that of Neal A. Newfield and collaborators (1990) in systemic family therapy. Finally, Fran Babiss (2002) studies with the same applied purpose treatments for problems such as anorexia or addictions.

If something useful can be taken from this heterogeneous set of publications it is that what we call subjectivity is always *in medias res*. It is part of assemblies in which other subjectivities and other objects participate, and is only perceived as unstable and relational. The poet Carlos Marzal expresses it in the following way: "It's strange, it's funny, it's surprising: / I'm not completely in me, and when I go to what I should have been, everything has changed. / I am where I am not, and in what is not me, / and even in no matter where, / and even in no matter when." With this inspiration, it may be worth trying something paradoxical: for psychology itself to depsychologize itself by applying that perspective of estrangement. Thus, perhaps it would attenuate the psychopathologization of life's problems without denying them or giving up solving them. However, the preferences for some or other techniques to manage these problems do not depend on purely epistemological or

theoretical principles, but are constitutively linked to values and choices about how we want to live, which are also open and coexist with others.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

There is no conflict of interest.

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