

ΨΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΑ

hoc est,

DE HOMINIS

REFLECTIONE ANI-
MO, ET IN PRIMIS OBTE-
HUS, commentationes ac disputationes quorun-
dam Theologorum & Philosophorum no-
stræ ætatis, quos vetta pagina

Editorial

Ángel Gordo & Jan De Vos

This issue of *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* represents a collaborative effort to continue unravelling the modern, and ever expanding, tendency to manage non-psychological issues in psychological terms. The most important challenge, here, lies in probing the boundaries between the non-psychological and the psychological and exploring ways to transcend them.

In the first part of this issue we have gathered those papers that are characteristic of the emergent shift from the critique of the discipline to the scrutiny of psychological culture— defined here as the way psychology has moved beyond the boundaries of academia and professional practice. This also entails a shift away from the analysis of the psy-sciences, particularly their institutional and knowledge-based synergies (psy-complex), to the wider political and economic conditions which enable, and conceal, the naturalization

of their knowledge, practices and the social orders implicit to them (psychologising). The papers in the second part of this issue principally focus upon the move from the mapping out of these interrelated processes, their distinct incipient or explicit presence in the historical liberal-neoliberal continuum, to the articulation of practices geared towards the transformation of psychologised subjects (de-psychologisation).

The contributions in Part I represent a systematic attempt to scrutinize the move from processes of individualization to psychologism in a wide range of social and cultural spheres, with particular attention to disciplinary and legal bases (Álvarez-Uría et al; Rodríguez), vulnerable institutions and subjects (Crespo and Serrano; McLaughlin), and the sociocultural flow of psychologising logics (González; Cohen). As such, these particular papers shed a critical light on the way psychology as a discipline occupies terrains which ordinarily would not be classified as “properly” psychological ones, as well as looking askance at how the psy-sciences have become a hegemonic discourse delivering and investing in ways of looking upon oneself and upon the world. Subsequently, as Álvarez-Uría *et al.* note, this scrutiny involves asking: “how and why some individuals become detached from their social world? What prompts the creation of this inner space? What social groups does the psychologisation of the self mainly affect and why?” Nevertheless, the unceasing search inherent to the psychologised life and ‘thought style’ also involves “putting social structures and social dynamics between parentheses” which, according to the authors, is “the very condition which ensures the success of professionals in the field of psychology”.

Examining this move between psychologism and psychologisation also requires the critique of psychology from within other scientific disciplines vis-à-vis psychology’s misappropriation of certain presumably extra-psychological realities, as Rodríguez notes in regard to the reluctance of psychiatry and medicine— at least within the context of the Spanish legal system— to recognise the clinical “nature” of psychology. For its part, González analyses the managing of social differences by means of psychologising them, in turn, concealing sociological phenomena such as stigmatisation, naturalisation, foreignisation and their wider conditions of possibility.

Psychologisation, minimally defined, could also be conceived of as the overflow of psychology and their emerging formations. This overspill of psychology is also exemplified by Cohen who shows the way Buddhism has been incorporated into a psychologised logic, thus opening up space for more “positivistic, neuroscientific and evolutionary explanations for our sense of self and being”. This tendency, Cohen pinpoints, follows the emergent search for neural correlates of consciousness which, as the author notes, led to some Buddhist monks to place themselves: “in MRI scanners and ha[ve] their meditative prowess measured and explained in terms of brain structure, function and electrochemistry”.

A third psychologising dimension under scrutiny in Part I concerns not only erroneous applications of psychology, but foremost a misuse of psychology. These critiques address the entanglement of psychology with power mechanisms, and the way it helps to turn the political field into a psychological domain apt for psychological intervention—excluding any apparent social or economic aspect of the expropriated arenas. Crespo and Serrano's analysis of the psychologisation of work, in the context of European Union institutions and policies, could be framed in this group of critiques. While discussing the notion of "flexicurity", the authors claim that the psychologisation of work is: "symptomatic of the new employment culture, whose fundamental pillars are the fight against dependence, the achievement of autonomy and the promotion of individual responsibility". Within this individualising framework: "the depoliticization of employment goes hand in hand with the politicization of subjectivity".

If Crespo and Serrano elucidate how political and economic fragility gets transformed into personal vulnerability under current political and economic conditions in the European Union, McLaughlin illustrates the way the institutionalization of vulnerability within social policy, and the adoption of a therapeutic sensibility within wider society, goes hand in hand with the de-politicisation of social struggles (miners in UK) and immigration policy. As part of the therapeutic turn, McLaughlin also details how the overlap of both ends of the left/right political divide has contributed to the replacement of Politics by a "therapeutic politics" (with a small p).

If these three interrelated examinations of psychologisation entail a critique on psychology, then it is clear that there are but two possible conclusions envisioned: It might be argued that, apart from an ill-guided overflow of psychology within science, culture or politics, there can still be a positive place for psychology; or, in contrast, the verdict could condemn psychology as an obsolete theory and praxis that should be eradicated. However, as we learn from the contributions in Part II, such bipolarity may conceal other positions in-between.

This is certainly the case with Van De Veire who, drawing on critical sociological analysis of contemporary psychologically invested culture (Adorno, Lasch), suggests that social conventions and ceremony might protect us from further psychologisation, and prevent us from more direct domination or "naked brutality" because: "the attempt to adapt to a presupposed norm is not the effect of a strong authority; it is the result of a lack of figures that symbolize that authority. Without the symbolic assumption of authority, the subject endlessly speculates about what the Other desires from him— a speculation which is the essence of psychologisation." A similar logic is pursued in Gómez's attempt to: "track down in Badiou's thinking some critical elements for the de-psychologisation of love and sexuality and, at the same time, to make explicit some important strategies that both Badiou and Lacan apply to de-psychologize both philosophy and psychoanalysis".

Psychologisation and, by extension, psychology may be conceptualised as an outcome, a central feature of neoliberalism or, alternatively, as a process rather than a steady condition— insofar as being in a psychologised milieu does not entail being fully psychologised or being the only play in town. The final two papers in this issue pose and debate the issue of psychologisation in these terms. Madsen & Brinkmann argue that psychologisation has become such a pervasive phenomenon that it is practically no longer feasible to speak of psychologisation as: “something distinct from other systems of meaning that can be subjected to critique”. The current ubiquity of psychology, the authors continue, makes it harder, “to detect, problematise, and criticise” it and that: “even the questioning of the lack of alternatives itself is a result of psychologisation.” Nevertheless, the authors continue, the fact that psychologisation has become a normative theory under neoliberal government means that one should be more optimistic regarding future rebellions against it.

The dispersal of psychological discourse has also legitimized specific notions of emotions and the emotional society as major inflections of current psychologising logics, despite some of the contradictions it leads to. As Marc De Kesel’s notes, the discourse on emotions: “acknowledges that, as subjects, we are free and independent [...] At other moments, the same discourse acknowledges our freedom to be the product of an objective, determinant logic denying a proper status to subjectivity.” In this way, the argument follows, by “listening to our ‘emotions’, we hear speak our true ‘self,’ as the pop-psychological credo runs”.

By establishing a parallelism between Lasch’s cultural critique of psychologisation and the Flemish novelist Paul Boon’s recreation of “psychological untruthful stories”, De Vos raises the point of whether these kind of cultural critiques and literary strategies demonstrate that the discipline of psychology “is inadequate and structurally failing, or be it that the late-modern human being itself has reached a position beyond the psychological”. De Vos contends that these critical attempts, which draw upon psy resources while trying to depart from psychologising logics (or meta-psychologisation), entail accepting that: “late-capitalism is the expropriation of subjectivity [...] where the subject is robbed of its subjective abyss, as this is filled by the signifiers, the imagery and the forced upon roles of the psy-sciences, that its subjectivity is ‘ghouled’ upon by late-capitalism”.

In a similar regard, Mentinis considers the pro and cons of the various conceptualisations of psychologisation, whilst analyzing the possibility of a revolutionary psychology by focusing on two forms of psychologisation regarding the Zapatista movement among commentators against and pro it. Mentinis claims that however much connivance it has with neoliberalism: “psychologisation needs to perform continuous operations, not only in order to simply re-establish itself— to make itself present— but also in order to depoliticise and colonise actions that escape it”. This processual understanding of psychologisation means that: “there is always something that escapes psychologisation: that there is resistance, and resistance is politics, even when, on occasion, it is mixed with pseudo-

psychological jargon". Mentinis, finally, suggests that the task consists of working towards: "a kind of psychology that de-psychologises itself and aligns with radical politics. This will not be an alternative psychology, nor will it be a new radical discipline; on the contrary, it will be revolutionary psychology as a process, as a radical repertoire of action that aims at the disappearance of psychology in its present form". The key aspect, then, as Mentinis notes, is not simply resisting the psychologist of our own life and position within it, but also engaging in the destruction of certain state structures, or disengaging aspects of life from the state and psy-science's grip.

Are we lost in psychologisation? Is there no outside of psychology and psychologisation? These are questions and dilemmas that are shared by the contributors in this issue, whether they focus on the foundations and exemplifying logics of psychologisation and the legal and institutional bases (Part I), or envisage strategies and actions to render visible the socio-political investments behind psychologisation processes (de-psychologised) as a powerful syntax of neoliberal language (Part II). The debate is still open. Each of the articles in this issue can be classified as an attempt to realize a critique of psychologisation beyond its deadlocks.