

Subjectivity in debate: Some reconstructed philosophical premises to advance its discussion in psychology

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Abstract

The topic of subjectivity has been treated peripherally by philosophy. It has appeared in philosophy not as a specific human phenomenon, but attached to other concepts without specifying its ontological definition, such as intersubjectivity, the place of the Other in the emergence of the self, consciousness and so forth. This paper reconstructs some of the overlooked moments and ideas of several classical philosophers, such as Marx, Dewey, Merleau Ponty, Cassirer and Foucault, in order to identify in their works important antecedents to advance a different concept of subjectivity. The concepts and questions which are raised by those philosophers and which are revived in this paper have remained overlooked both by philosophy and psychology because of the lack of any representation of subjectivity capable of making them more visible. The ontological monopoly of language and discourse in explaining all human phenomena, taken together with the critique of theoretical systems and of epistemology, has found in social constructionism its strongest expression in psychology. The value of theoretical systems in generating intelligibility about complex and configurational phenomena is recovered, along with the need to develop new epistemologies capable of generating intelligibility on such systems. Finally, I argue that a new theoretical and epistemological avenue is opened up for the development of psychological thought.

KEYWORDS

cultural-historical approach, philosophy, psychology, subjectivity, symbolical realities

1 | INTRODUCTION

The topic of subjectivity as discussed in this paper represents a theoretical avenue that departed from the legacy of some of the theoretical principles advanced by Soviet psychology, which remained in shadow for decades in both Russian and Western psychology. Despite Marxism being detached from its dialectic in its official Soviet interpretation, there were Soviet authors for whom the philosophical inspiration in Marxist dialectic was an important source for their thought. At the beginning of the XX century, when the emergent and strong American psychology, inspired by natural sciences, promoted a separation from philosophy and social sciences in general (Danziger, 1990; Koch, 1992), theoretical discussions implying philosophical questions were replaced by an empirical, natural and instrumental psychology, with North American behaviorism being one of its best expressions.

Despite the apparent distance and contradictions between them, Soviet science, through Pavlov's doctrine of conditioned reflexes, was one of the inspirational sources of American behaviorism. In turn, behaviorism inspired the behavioral-objective trend in the search for a Marxist objective psychology in the Soviet Union, embodied by the reactological-behavioral positions of Kornilov and his group in the 1920s (Kornilov, 1930; Luria, 1928; Vygotsky, 1965).

However, Soviet psychology was diverse and different theoretical positions were in dispute within it. Nonetheless, the interruption of those paths that were being advanced by Soviet psychology at the time of the disappearance of the Soviet Union prevented its different legacies from advancing forward and did not allow a new, unofficial history of that psychology to be put forward. Everything carried out during the Soviet period has been underestimated, leading to a non-critical "Westernization" that has deeply affected all spheres of Russian scholarship, including psychology. Together with the abandonment of the important main research lines and theoretical discussions that were in process within Soviet psychology in its final period, American interpretations of that psychology came to monopolize the promotion of Soviet psychology in the international arena. As a result of this precarious situation, new versions of the history of Soviet psychology, and new paths concerning its philosophical and theoretical implications did not emerge for decades.

Subjectivity was one of the topics that began to appear in discussions for the first time in Soviet psychology in the 1970s and 1980s. The topic of subjectivity, in fact, has been treated by philosophy, not as an end in itself, but as attached to other phenomena without specifying its ontological nature, such as intersubjectivity, the place of the Other in the emergence of the self, consciousness and so on. With the modern philosophy of consciousness, the topic of subjectivity has never again appeared at the center of philosophical discussion. Its presence has been admitted, but only peripherally and in a very unspecific way. As Teo has noted: "Subjectivity, with a basic definition of a first-person perspective (Zahavy, 2005), is discussed in scientific psychology, but its epistemological status is puzzling because a general scientific theory of subjectivity does not exist" (Teo, 2017, p. 252).

The non-existence of a scientific theory of subjectivity is not only puzzling for its epistemological status, as Teo stressed, it is also puzzling that different theoretical and philosophical

questions simply do not appear because of the absence of subjectivity as a legitimate reference for scientific knowledge. In relation to the place of subjectivity in psychology, Teo continued: "Subjectivity as a topic is maintained at the margins of the discipline, often addressing the relationship between subjectivity and the self or identity" (Teo, Idem).

After the linguistic turn in philosophy, subjectivity became increasingly considered as a remnant of the modern philosophy of consciousness, and was consequently treated as a metaphysical concept; language became the ontological definition of human phenomena. On the basis of language, modern hermeneutics replaced epistemology and subjectivity was explicitly rejected. Many new theoretical and philosophical questions were posed by this new dominant philosophical orientation, which in sequence could be associated with different philosophers and tendencies, such as Heidegger, Gadamer, Wittgenstein, American pragmatism, French structuralism and post-structuralism. Nonetheless, subjectivity continued to be referred to as a first person and intrapsychic perspective; the term had been used indistinctly for consciousness and reason, being located in individuals, and separated from emotions, body and sociality. The aim of this paper is to bring to light a new theoretical proposal on subjectivity, understood as a new ontological definition¹ of human phenomena, whether social or individual. At the same time, the paper discusses ideas and intuitions of relevant philosophers that can find in this new proposal on subjectivity a new path for their own development.

The historical roots of this proposal on subjectivity are beyond the scope of this paper. They have been discussed elsewhere (González Rey, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2016, 2017a). Nonetheless, it is important to highlight those Soviet psychologists and 'schools' whose legacies inspired this proposal on subjectivity. Among the psychologists who attempted to transcend the narrow materialistic, naturalistic and objectivistic path that characterized the official versions of that psychology at different historical periods of its development, could be mentioned Rubinstein and his group, Ananiev and the School of Leningrad, Vygotsky between 1932 and 1934, and Bozhovich and her research group.

In fact, none of the above mentioned authors detached behavior, action or activity from their subjects as carriers of psychological systems. It was mainly some of the disciples of Rubinstein, such as Abuljanova (1973), together with Bozhovich (1968), who were the first Soviet psychologists in opening up the discussion about the ontological definition of psychological phenomena. Bozhovich stated:

It is not true that, or at least it is very polemic to consider that, the study of psychological processes as such, unavoidably leads to reductionism, a position that is characteristic not only of the representatives of traditional psychology, but also those psychologists who look for the explanation of psychological processes in the physiology, logic, activity, i.e. for terms from outside of psychology. (Bozhovich, 2009, p. 365 – my translation from Russian)

Despite the growing consciousness of Soviet psychologists about the need to explain the specific psychological nature of human beings, in fact three important theoretical premises for advancing this goal were absent in that psychology: the topic of the symbolic in its broader meaning, the topic of communication, and a wide comprehension of social reality and of culture (Gonzalez Rey, 2014, 2016, 2017b).

The transition from personality to subjectivity in our work (González Rey, 1993, 1997) was oriented by the search for a new ontological definition capable of distinguishing all human phenomena whether social or individual. This new phenomenon should be specifically

differentiated from the concept of psyche, because its cultural genesis implies a new quality that is impossible to grasp through the concept of psyche as the term has historically been used. The cornerstone for advancing a cultural-historical definition of subjectivity capable of integrating body, sociality, culture and human mind, implies reintegrating the topic of the symbolic in psychology within its inseparability from emotions. The symbolic partially entered psychology via psychoanalysis and the theory of social representations, and later came to be at the center of discursive and dialogical psychologies, which appeared unified in terms of social constructionism.

Unlike the above mentioned positions, our proposal on subjectivity completely changes the role of emotions which, once they have emerged through symbolical devices, becoming in themselves symbolical, are based on such a definition of subjectivity that is beyond linguistic means and rationality. Emotions stopped being an epiphenomenon and came to be understood as the integration of body, sociality and mind, opening up new paths for the understanding of human processes. These emotional-symbolical units were coined as subjective senses, which are never frozen in time and space; they are in movement, and through this movement one sense is always embedded within others, forming different subjective configurations. While subjective senses are always in process, subjective configurations are more stable because they integrate not only subjective senses; once they emerge, they become sources of subjective senses that define how one concrete experience is subjectively lived.

Both subjective senses and configurations are part of the individuals and social instances in movement. Actions appear as subjective configurations in process, not as external to subjectivity. This fact transforms actions into permanent sources of subjective senses, which actively involve agents and subjects of actions, either individual or social. This malleability and continuous involvement in actions allows subjective senses and configurations to capture the multiple and simultaneous ways in which individuals, groups and institutions experience the endless social symbolical productions which take place within human life, such as health, illness, race, gender, physical appearance, disability, nationality and so on. This is why this definition of subjectivity appears as cultural-historical; the social microcosms of individual and social instances emerge as subjective configurations that capture how experiences and facts are lived, transcending the representation that objective conditions determine how an experience is lived.

The above statement does not lead to any kind of subjectivism. On the contrary, it represents a dialectical comprehension capable of transcending the dichotomy between objective and subjective; there are no objectivities in human existence separated from subjective productions. This is what characterizes human phenomena. Reality and fiction are inseparable from human processes; this is the strongest and weakest trace of human existence.

In prior works we introduced, discussed and advanced this proposal on subjectivity in terms of its theoretical, epistemological and methodological challenges (González Rey, 2009, 2014, 2016, 2017a, 2017b; González Rey & Mitjáns Martínez, 2017a, 2017b). New approaches to professional practices in different areas have also been discussed and proposed (González Rey, 2011; González Rey, Goulart, & Bezerra, 2016; González Rey, Mitjáns and Bezerra, 2016; Mitjáns Martínez & González Rey, 2017; Goulart & González Rey, 2016).

As far as the theory, and the program of research grounded on it, are concerned, one challenge gains force; this is to introduce this discussion on subjectivity within a dialogue with philosophy at a time when philosophy is mainly dominated by trends that have overvalued language, discourse, local knowledge and deconstruction, dismissing possible new ontological and epistemological routes for philosophical thinking. This paper aims to demonstrate how many of the points highlighted by this proposal on subjectivity have appeared in isolated ways with relevant philosophers, but have never been discussed as part of their legacy. These philosophers'

ideas and positions selected for discussion in this paper gain new meanings, either for advances in the topic of subjectivity, or for opening up new topics for discussion in the philosophical arena. It is not our intention to characterize any philosophical system, or the complete works of any philosopher, which would be an impossible enterprise; the paper is looking to open up possible new dialogues capable of inaugurating new theoretical domains in both social sciences and philosophy.

2 | THE PRESENCE OF SUBJECTIVITY THROUGH ITS DIFFERENT PROCESSES BEYOND A PHILOSOPHICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE TERM

The Cartesian legacy, related to the dichotomies between nature and reason, consciousness and body, prevailed in the version of Rationalism upon which modern philosophy was founded. For Cartesian Rationalism, “God thus becomes the bond between thinking and body, between truth and reality” (Cassirer, 2009, p.95).

The discussion of the interweaving movement between nature and experience, and between culture and body, has recurrently demanded the attention of philosophers from different theoretical positions. Apart from the fact that subjectivity has seen no light within those discussions, some topics, such as motivation, imagination, and the relation between body and psychical functions, have received attention.

In the XVIIth century, emotions were viewed as distortions of reason, although emotions and passions were in the focus of Descartes (2009) and Spinoza (2010). However, it was in the XVIIIth century that emotion, passion and imagination were placed in the epicenter of philosophical thought. Authors like Condillac, Voltaire and Leibnitz replaced reason as the main human feature, making it dependent on affection. Vauvenargues stated in 1746 that the true nature of man does not lie in reason, but in passion (Cassirer, 2009).

That interweaving between reason and affections was typical for the philosophers of the Enlightenment, who brought into focus topics like motivation, and the articulation between passions, imagination and thought. These are key questions in advancing a theory of human mind. However, this theory has not advanced in philosophy, in psychology, or in human sciences in general. For the philosophers of the Enlightenment, affection was an expression of needs and instincts located in the human body, a tendency that is still shared today by many psychologists and psychological theories.

The point is: why is it that, until the present, there has been no theory of subjectivity understood as a general quality of human phenomena, whether individual or social, which emerges within cultural, social, and historically located contexts? In my opinion, four very interrelated facts strongly influenced this absence of the topic of subjectivity in the XIXth century: (1) the emphasis on social relations as productive forces, as emphasized by Marx; (2) the development of science as an objective and empirical enterprise; (3) the power gained by medicine and psychiatry based on objective biological characteristics; and (4) the emergence of positivism as a philosophy of sciences.

In any case, Marx, like other philosophers, has rarely been associated with subjectivity in topics discussed in the XXth century, such as ideology, alienation and fetishism, which are subjective by their own nature. We will discuss below some of these philosophers, including Marx, according to their influence on social sciences up to the present day, bringing to light topics closely related to subjectivity as a specific quality of human phenomena.

The best evidence of the need for a theory of subjectivity in philosophy is the fact that philosophers have centered on sociality, history and politics, for instance Eagleton (2016), Marcuse (1966) and Adorno (1998), needing to appeal to Freud in discussing non-rational human phenomena. This fact has evidenced two very interrelated phenomena. The first is how the specific ontological character of subjectivity is completely unknown, attempting to locate its expression in an unconscious, the genesis of which is referred to as non-cultural and universal body drives. The second is the position resulting from the strong influence of psychoanalysis in the West as a culturally well-established domain. It is quite astonishing that the transit from human psyche to subjectivity, once human beings and culture transformed into two sides of the same coin, has been so largely ignored by philosophy, in which it appears only intuitively and indirectly.

The linguistic turn in philosophy was not reduced to the philosophy of language. Language has continued to be the center of philosophy until today in one way or another and, as such, it has monopolized the different tendencies of psychological thought addressed toward transcending the naturalism, empiricism, and instrumentalism dominant in psychology. The linguistic and discursive turns, integrated as moments of the same theoretical sequence of authors like Wittengenstein, Heidegger, Gadamer, Foucault, Derrida, and Rorty, defined a strong core within which pragmatism, hermeneutics and discourse have appeared closely inter-related as the basis of post-structuralist thought. This powerful avenue of modern philosophy found in post-structuralism a synthesis of some of its main principles, becoming dominant since the last quarter of the XXth century up until today. Dominant representations in critical social sciences and psychology are grounded, in one way or another, in this sequence of philosophical thought.

3 | TRANSITING CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHERS IN AN ATTEMPT TO IDENTIFY THE HEURISTIC VALUE OF SUBJECTIVITY FOR PHILOSOPHY

Advancing in the opposite direction to the deconstructionist fashion, we attempt in this topic to reconstruct dominant interpretations of philosophers who had important aspects of their work overlooked. Those aspects can be used to open up new alternatives to those dominant interpretations within which their legacies have remained encapsulated.

One of the flags raised against subjectivity has been pragmatism through the definition given by authors such as Rorty (2002), Davidson (2001), and Putnam (1975). Dewey, one of the main pragmatic authors, was also included by the aforementioned authors within that rejection. However, Dewey was very cautious and creative in relation to the treatment of the mind in philosophy. “We dispose all too easily of the effort of the schoolmen to interpret nature and mind in terms of real essences, hidden forms, and occult facilities forgetful of the seriousness and dignity of the ideas that lay behind” (Dewey, 1910, p.7).

In that statement, Dewey made an appeal to consider that it is possible for important ideas to unfold from scholastic constructions about mind and nature. One characteristic of the history of human thought that reveals its subjective character is the creation of myths and beliefs within which theoretical positions remain frozen and dogmatized. Everything in human knowledge is historical, and consequently, concepts are not substances in themselves, but theoretical devices sensitive to different treatments in different historical contexts and within different theoretical systems.

Dewey focused on two interrelated topics, largely omitted in the interpretation of his legacy, which have relevance for the topic of subjectivity as treated in this paper; emotions and imagination and their relevance for the construction of new realities that are different from natural ones.

It has been noted that human experience is made human through the existence of associations and recollections, which are strained through the mesh of imagination so as to suit the demands of the emotion The things most emphasized in imagination as it reshapes experience are things which are absent in reality. (Dewey, 1920, pp. 103–105)

Important features to be considered by any theory of subjectivity are emphasized by the author: the demands of emotions, the place of imagination and its generative character capable of creating different worlds than those represented by immediate “objective” facts. Objectivity is not a quality intrinsic to the object; objectivity, as a human phenomenon, results from a relation with the object, because it is within human relations that objects are symbolically created. Dewey returned to the creative character of human imagination at different points in his writings: “Consciousness so far as it is not dull ache and torpid comfort is a thing of imagination. The extension and transformation of existence generated in imagination may come at last to attend work so as to make it significant and agreeable” (Dewey, 2016, p. 81).

In Dewey’s thought, emotions are not detached from intellect. An important idea advanced by him is the understanding of consciousness as an imaginative system. In our works, subjectivity replaces consciousness in an attempt to overcome a concept that has been characterized for its vagueness and plurality of meanings, and that has also been used in strict individual terms.

A different position is expressed by Davidson, one of the representatives of what could be called the “latest pragmatism”. He concluded:

What remains of the concept of subjectivity? So far as I can see, two features of the subjective as classically conceived remain in place. Thoughts are private, in the obvious but important sense in which property can be private, that is, belong to one person. And knowledge of thoughts is asymmetrical, in that the person who has a thought generally knows he has it in a way in which others cannot. (Davidson, 2001, p. 52)

Davidson highlights two questions that make evident how subjectivity remained imprisoned within a unilateral and static representation, mainly referred to as an intellectual and private representation. However, the angle I have found to separate the legacy of Dewey from authors like Davidson and Rorty, remained unnoticed by Rorty, who stated: “This way, I would attempt to convince Hirsch that his point of view can be reconciled with the kind of pragmatism of Dewey-Wittgenstein-Davidson-Kuhn that I am defending” (Rorty, 2002, p. 119 – my translation from Portuguese).

Marx, as well as Dewey, has been frequently used against subjectivity, opposing social processes and realities to subjective processes. This interpretation was on the basis of the official version of Marxism that prevailed at different moments within Soviet psychology, in which dogmatic and mechanical materialism did not give room for subjective phenomena. Marx, despite overlooking subjectivity at some points in his work, in which individuals were reduced to mere epiphenomena of social and economic forces, also recognized subjectivity, mainly in his early writings. His economic reductionism is notorious in *Capital*, but also in “The German

Ideology”, in which Marx declared: “Social being is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by social being” (Marx & Engels, 1974, p. 49).

I completely agree with Eagleton’s reaction to that statement by Marx: “How can being determine consciousness when consciousness is an integral part of it?” (Eagleton, 2016, p.85). However, whereas the author defines consciousness as part of social being, I imagine social being and consciousness as sharing some quality. Which quality could this be? This is a question that remains unanswered in Eagleton’s work. Nonetheless, the answer to this question could be subjectivity as a new ontological definition of human phenomena, within which the social and consciousness could be understood, not as two separate systems, but as parts of one and the same system that are simultaneously configured to each other as social and individual subjectivity. However, this requires new lenses through which to see subjectivity.

It is interesting that Eagleton’s defense of Marx depicts him as a somatic and anthropological materialist, and not an ontological one. The author states: “Marx, too, is a somatic materialist whose starting point is active, sensuous, practical human life. He is not concerned with ontological materialism, in the sense of asking what the world is made of” (Eagleton, 2016, p. 61). This statement is, in fact, a refutation of a dogma that is extensive among “Marxists” for whom the objectivity of reality is represented as concrete and external to human beings. These Marxist interpretations forget that the material character of existence is not defined by something external to us, but by our own presence. Human worlds are constructed through our activities, labor, science, politics, aesthetics, as well as through many other activities, all of which are avenues in which new human worlds are continuously emerging.

In his “Thesis on Feurbach” Marx stated: “But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations” (Marx, 1976). This statement is addressed against the individual essentialism of the modern philosophy of consciousness and its emphasis on the individual subject. However, taken out of the specific context in which Marx made that statement, it could be understood that it is the “ensemble of social relations”, internalized from outside, that forms the individual human mind. If there is nothing intrinsic to human nature to be identified as its essence, it would be important to define what kind of phenomenon allows an explanation of how human minds emerge from human relations, without replaying those relations. This vacuum requires new theoretical definitions.

In Marx’s time, the topic of the symbolic had still not become a focus within philosophy. In any case, Marx explicitly used subjectivity to differentiate human phenomena from natural ones. In his early writings, he stated:

The supersession of private property is therefore the complete emancipation of all human senses and attributes; but it is this emancipation because these senses and attributes have become human, subjectively as well as objectively. The eye has become a human eye, just as its object has become a social, human object, made by man for man. The senses have therefore become theoreticians in their immediate praxis. (Marx, 1992, p. 389)

One conviction intrinsic to Marx’s work from its very beginning was the belief that human beings will only become human after their emancipation from capitalism, which evidenced that he used subjectivity as a complementary artifact rather than as a theoretical definition. In fact, the same evolution of mankind through its history is an expression of how human creation has simultaneously improved and damaged the conditions of human life throughout history. The emancipation that Marx dreamed of was as utopic as Thomas More’s Utopia and Skinner’s

Walden Two. Any emancipation is emancipation from certain contradictions and injustices, leading to new systems within which new injustices and contradictions will emerge. The point is not the elimination of contradictions and injustices, but how to deal with them by looking for alternatives to reduce them. Subjectivity is a key aspect in understanding this process, because at the subjective level it is impossible to standardize human experiences, so contradictions and injustices are not only those that appear objectively, but also those subjectively created by human beings.

The above quotation from Marx also brought to light the fact that social relations do not exhaust human processes, which he explicitly recognized in the subjective side of human phenomena, despite his vague use of the term. His claim that an 'eye becomes a human eye' is a way to define a new ontology of the human body and processes which is impossible to reduce to the social or to biology. That metaphor expresses a new phenomenon that can only be explained through a theory of subjectivity. A human object made by man for man is, in fact, another way to stress the cultural character of human existence. For Marx, objects are inseparable from social relations.

Subjectivity also appears in Marx's early writings through some of his main concepts. As Eagleton notes:

A number of key Marxist concepts – fetishism, reification, alienation, commodification – mark a problem in this area. In a curious disturbance in the relations between matters and spirit, fetishism, phantasm and abstraction are in Marx's view built into the structure of social reality, and can come to exert an uncanny power over it. We are dealing here with efficacious illusions, not idle fancies. (Eagleton, 2016, p. 64)

Eagleton's quotation is evidence that some of Marx's concepts, simplified by Eagleton as illusions, demand a new ontological definition of human processes, since they cannot be explained by external influences. Illusion remained in that definition an isolated term, and not the expression of one specific human phenomenon main characteristic of which is to be imaginary, which is a reason why illusions are intrinsic to its functioning. This phenomenon is human subjectivity. Eagleton highlights an important point when he recognizes how these illusions "can exert uncanny power over social reality". However, discriminating idle fancies from efficacious illusions seems to be an ideological construction rather than a well-founded definition. History is full of examples of how apparent perverse phantasies become social subjective powers, on behalf of which unbelievable atrocities have been committed.

The recognition of some illusions as efficacious, and the rejection of others as not efficacious, is a dimension that is impossible to apply in qualifying the term, since what determines this "efficacy" is social judgment, which is always relative, and is historically and politically conditioned. The recognition of subjectivity as such is the recognition of that quality of human processes that emerges as motivation in humans themselves. Subjectivity is a generative system, not an adaptive one, which is its main strength as well as its main fragility. The next quotation, from Vygotsky, is an expression of its strength:

They didn't understand [referring to psychologists at the time] that a handicap is not just an impoverished psychological state, but also a source of wealth, not just a weakness but a strength. They thought that the development of a blind child centers on his blindness. The psychology of blindness is essentially the psychology of victory over blindness. (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 57)

Despite subjectivity not appearing in Vygotsky's words, he pointed out its main characteristic; subjectivity allows the transcending of the objective constraints that constantly emerge throughout human life. Subjectivity always represents a way to transcend what is objectively given; it is the way in which experiences are lived.

The omission of subjectivity is responsible for many unsolved contradictions in Marx's work. So, for example, even Eagleton, one of the most serious and creative interpreters of Marx in the West, has pointed out:

Though natural needs are socially mediated, for example, social needs are not naturally based. There is no natural foundation to one's desire to address the United Nations General Assembly dressed in a Winnie the Pooh outfit, however much it may feel that way. There are no false natural needs, but there are plenty of false social ones – the demands for lap dancers, for example, as opposed perhaps to laptops. (Eagleton, 2016, pp. 73–74)

Once again, the author attempts to qualify some human needs as false. Following Eagleton's criteria for judging one need as false, many of the needs through which the world has advanced were defined in their times as false, such as the dreams of a group of young people to create the computer, or Einstein's first speculative constructions; both of these were considered as false at the time. Today, a laptop is not a false need; it is a truly subjectively configured device the use of which has enormous advantages, as well as enormous damaging collateral effects, just like all human creations. This unity of strength and weakness is the best expression of a kind of phenomenon impossible for human reason to control or predict. Subjective phenomena are subjective by their nature, but are as objective as all other human realities.

The concept of need is obsolete in defining human motivation. Its presence in philosophy and psychology is the best expression of the attempt to understand human motivation as an entity, instead of seeing it as a main expression of one human system, subjectivity. Our proposal of subjectivity opens up a new avenue to explain motivation, not as one more psychological function, but as an expression of a complex subjective system.

Human motivations within our proposal are defined by subjective configurations. Subjectivity is a motivational system; once a human performance or activity is subjectively configured it turns into a motivation. However, this motivation is not necessarily favorable to the actions involved in the performance's success, as it can also be oriented to constrain the individual's or group's actions and performances. The ways in which subjective senses relate to race, social condition and the place occupied by a child in their family configured with their school performance could generate either security, wellbeing and pleasure with school activity, or shyness, shame, feelings of fear and insecurity, and lack of self-confidence. Depending on which possible subjective states are dominant, the child's school performances would be different. Each subjective configuration expresses a constellation of historically lived experiences that always appear through subjective senses generated by any new experience.

The concept of subjective configuration allows an understanding of the unity of the multiple, which could only be expressed as a result of the malleability and dynamic character of subjective senses and their configurations. Human motivation is multidimensional, but its different dimensions are expressed in the interweaving of subjective senses, appearing as subjective units in subjective configurations; in their subjective configurations, the multidimensional facts of a single life find subjectively unique and singular expressions.

Subjective senses are embedded, one within another, being impossible to grasp separately, so that, for example, when a racial feature or a disability is experienced as a constraint on our lives, both race and disability appear through the feelings and imaginary productions that characterize the subjective configuration of a given performance. These subjective productions, as well as many others, result from the cosmos of social symbolical constructions within which our lives take place, and can be sources both of multiple constraints and of strength that are far from being results of the immediate positions of others; race, disability, gender, and any other socially constructed attribute, have 'subjective histories' which are inseparable from their current emergence. The feelings of an individual, who considers him/herself as ugly due to one personal attribute, can lead to a lack of sociability as a way to avoid exposure in front of others, which in turn could generate anxiety about exposing him/herself to talking in the classroom. A complex configuration assembles all of the subjective senses through which these apparent different expressions are articulated with each other as part of one and the same subjective unit.

A good example of the above mentioned process is given by M. J. Graham, a black woman and daughter of a Cuban father, who lived in a poor neighborhood in London during her childhood, later becoming a university professor and researcher in the area of social work; reflecting on the course of her own life, she stated:

The university environment was one in which I sometimes felt constrained in my learning experience because I did not have a sense of being part of (or confidence with) the 'in group'. This marginalized experience was wrapped up with my own working-class experience background, ethnicity, gender and mixed family background. At that time I felt displacement (reassuring myself that this was an experiment), as knowledges conveyed in lectures, seminars and other learning circles seemed so distant from my lived experiences, let alone the realities of everyday life. (Julia Graham, 2017, p.17)

That reflection on Graham's own experience is an excellent testimony of how human motivation appears through complex subjective configurations that express different constellations of lived experiences, from which emerge such subjective productions that characterize multiple singular positions in life. The way in which Graham reacted to her feelings and how she was capable of opening new paths in her life that have allowed her excellent reflection since taking up her current professional status, is not the same path that other girls, who shared with Graham her objective attributes of race, gender, and family, advance along during their lives. Subjectivity is generated within social and cultural networks of different experiences, but it does not replace these processes and facts; it represents productions based on them.

The implicit or explicit rationalism that has been dominant in Western philosophy, including the occult in the replacement of the cognitive by the symbolic, but which, in fact, reduces the symbolic to linguistic expressions, to some extent has influenced the lack of attention given to the topics of motivation and emotion in both philosophy and psychology. The limitation of explaining motivation as a unilateral given fact or desire was acutely criticized by M. Ponty and R. Williams.

M. Ponty, a philosopher who advanced the idea of the incarnate subject, as well as the subjective side of human functions and the body, made an interesting reflection concerning the narrow means used by both Marxism and psychoanalysis to explain human drives.

This is not a matter of classifying individuals and societies according to approximating them to the pattern of a classless society or individuals without conflicts: these negative entities are not adequate for thinking about a real society or a real individual. Instead of this, it would be important to understand the functioning of their contradictions, the type of equilibrium which they have somehow managed to reach, and whether this paralyzes them or lets them live. And we would have to understand these things in all respects, taking account of jobs and work, as sexual life is in psychoanalysis, and as far as Marxism is concerned, of relationships in lived experiences as well as variables of economic analysis, of the quality of human relationships as well as production, and of clandestine social roles as well as official regulations. (Merleau Ponty, 1964, pp. 130–131)

M. Ponty highlighted the complexity of human beings and the impossibility of understanding them through unilateral and determinist facts. The above statement can be interpreted as a call to understand individuals and societies in their real, complex and contradictory characters, in such a way that their different processes and expressions could be assembled, making possible the integration of the constellation of social experiences.

R. Williams criticized the Marxist representation of human beings in similar terms:

It is a fact about classical Marxism that it neglected, to its great cost, not only the basic human physical conditions, but also the emotional conditions and situations which make up so large a part of all direct human relationship and practice. Problems of sexuality, including problematic sexuality, are among the more prominent omissions. (Williams, 1978, p.14)

Williams took a step forward in stressing emotional conditions as inseparable from human relationships and practice. Emotions has been precisely a topic that has been kept isolated from human practices and psychological functions throughout the history of psychology. For this reason, it is so important to advance theoretical constructions capable of generating intelligibility on emotions as intrinsic to all human phenomena.

Williams' remark that sexuality is among the more prominent omissions of Marxism is another example of the strength of psychoanalysis in philosophy. Sexuality is threatening as it is the most important human drive intrinsically attached to human emotions. Unlike psychoanalysis, our proposal about subjectivity highlights that sexuality is as complex and subjectively configured as other human motivations.

Ernest Cassirer was, in my opinion, the philosopher who decisively brought the discussion of symbolical forms, processes and realities to the philosophical arena. The generative capacity of mind emerges as a result of the integration of emotions and symbolical processes. Cassirer, as well as Dewey, Williams and Vygotsky, attempted to solve this challenge by integrating intellect, agency, emotions and imagination; however, these concepts remained external to each other.

Cassirer, who advanced the comprehension of our symbolical existence in such an impressive way, was very conservative in his comprehension of emotions and treated them as needs and wishes. Cassirer stated: "Man ceases to be a mere shuttlecock at the mercy of outward impressions and influences; he exercises his own will to direct the course of events according to his needs and wishes" (ibid, p. 19). Recognizing the generative character of man, not as an epiphenomenon of external influences, but as an active agent capable of directing life's events according to his needs and wishes, he attempted to explain the complex creative character of

human beings through relations between concepts, omitting the system within which those concepts are assembled.

It is amazing that he recognized the human mind as general reference, as producer of realities, but was not capable of seeing emotions as intrinsic to the human mind and to the symbolic capacity that he stressed. Once a function is subjectively configured, emotions and other operations are inseparable within a new subjective unit in which operations and emotions are two sides of the same coin. The generative character of the mind is expressed by Cassirer as follows:

Consequently all schemata which science evolves in order to classify, organize, and summarize the phenomena of the real world turn out to be nothing but arbitrary schemes – airy fabrics of the mind, which express not the nature of things, but the nature of mind. (Cassirer, 1953, p. 7)

I completely agree with the philosopher that human symbolical productions (art, myth, language and science) are “forces each of which produces and posits a world of its own” (ibid, p. 8). However, these worlds always contain other worlds in which new practices and knowledge are produced.

The last philosopher to be treated in this selected journey through philosophical thought is Foucault, who represents the main figure used in the crusade against subjectivity from within and from outside psychology.

Foucault, like Dewey, has had some of his constructions overlooked, mainly those from the last period of his work. Foucault, like most French philosophers grouped under the umbrella of post-structuralism, was prolix in his language, using multiple metaphors, and meshing together different historical periods to discuss the central cores of his thinking, a fact that makes it difficult to follow the consistency of his theoretical constructions. Nonetheless, his contributions to advancing new phenomena from new angles were really highly revolutionary and creative. During the last ten years of his work, Foucault advanced topics that were omitted in his previous work, such as resistance, technologies of the subject, subjectivation, and his critique of the hypothesis of sexual repression raised by psychoanalysis, particularly interesting for advancing the topic of subjectivity (Deleuze, 1986; Dosse, 1994; Elden, 2016; Machado, 2017; Rebello, 2005, among others).

Referring to that period of Foucault's work, Deleuze stated: “From the ‘will to know’ Foucault has the increasing feeling of being closed within the relation of power. And as much as this invokes resistance points as opposed to the sources of power, where does this resistance come from? (Deleuze, 2000, pp. 122-123 – my translation from Portuguese). The answer to this question is “from subjectivity”. Subjectivity as production is not subordinated to relations of power; behavior may be subordinate to the power, but subjective configurations of behaviors can contain the seed of subversion. It is not in behavior nor in intentional speech where subjectivity has to be found; it is in their subjective configuration, which never appears explicitly in any intentional action.

From my viewpoint, the more important shift in Foucault's work in that last period was the complex networks of social phenomena within which he began to understand phenomena that, in previous periods, he treated as universal concepts or as binomial formulas, such as the dispositive, power-knowledge, power-discipline, knowledge as a simple discursive effect, or the reduction of complex explanations of human processes to the politics of control. The self as a means of resistance, which became the focus of Foucault's attention in that period, is very

relevant to the advance toward a new theory of subjectivity that is culturally and historically located, and capable of assembling the different processes conceptualized as “dispositives” and “technologies” that appear throughout Foucault’s works within a new kind of system, the movement of which is inseparable from its current forms of organization, constantly challenging and changing them.

Both tendencies, the inclusion of the self and the concept of governmentality, are examples of two of Foucault’s main priorities in his final work, which integrated individuals within complex networks of social practices, within which they are capable of acting with freedom. He stated: “Governmentality implies the relationship of the self to itself, and I intend this concept of “governmentality” to cover the ensemble of practices that constitute, define, organize and instrumentalize that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other” (Foucault, 1994, p. 728).

As a metaphor, the concept of governmentality allows individuals to be seen in their relations with themselves; however, Foucault does not recognize them as creative and generative individuals. Individuals have resulted from the ensemble of practices that constitute them. The concept of subjectivity, as discussed in this paper, has the aim that both individuals and social arenas are equally creative and generative, each being configured within the other at the subjective level.

Foucault’s explicit position, described above, according to which individual behaviors and functions are understood within the ensemble of practices, also appears in his final positions regarding sex:

Governments perceived that they were not dealing simply with subjects, or even with a ‘people’, but with a ‘population’, with its specific phenomena and its peculiar variables: birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, state of health, frequency of illnesses, patterns of diet and habitation. At the heart of this economic and political problem of population was sex.” (Foucault, 1978, p. 35)

Foucault is here anticipating themes he would discuss in detail in subsequent lecture courses, but he also links the regulation of sex to that of race and racism from the course delivered earlier in 1976. (Elden, 2016, p. 48)

Foucault attached sex to the complex network of social politics and institutions, making sex an expression of the social realities and practices within which individuals live. Following this position, the critique put forward by Foucault of the psychoanalytic idea of sexual repression is very interesting:

If sex is so rigorously repressed, this is because it is incompatible with a general and intensive work imperative. At a time when labor capacity was being systematically exploited, how could this capacity be allowed to dissipate itself in pleasurable pursuits, except in those – reduced to a minimum – that enabled it to reproduce itself! Sex and its effects are perhaps not so easily deciphered; on the other hand, their repression, thus reconstructed, is easily analyzed. (Foucault, 1978, p. 6)

Sex is located within a regime of work inseparable from a disciplinary system of social relations within which the space for pleasure is denied. Foucault detached the sexual dynamic from the oedipal conflict narrowly located in parent–child relationships outside of the complex historical plot of social processes, within which the emergence of sexuality takes place. However, in doing this

Foucault maintained his analysis at a sociological level, omitting the multiple and singular paths through which sex appears in individuals as a result of their singular histories and current contexts.

The constructions advanced by Foucault in that final period are non-reducible to discursive practices; the later Foucault opened a window to advance upon a new human ontological definition of human phenomena, which remained as an open challenge in his legacy.

After this transit through the philosophers discussed above, it is possible to assemble ideas that have remained fragmented in their works into a single important core of philosophical thought that might find in subjectivity a stance capable of unfolding into new phenomena in both philosophy and psychology.

The main topics that allow a relation to be defined between the philosophers discussed above and the proposal of subjectivity discussed in this book are the following:

- The way in which emotions and imagination are closely interrelated as characteristic of human phenomena, making fiction and reality, nature and experience, mind, body and world inseparable (Dewey, Merleau, Ponty and Williams). The fictional and inventive character of human realities are on the basis of culture.
- The search for understanding of the way in which simultaneous social and cultural realities become human motivation and actions, having a multilateral nature that is impossible to grasp through any “universal causes or principles” (Merleau, Ponty, Foucault and Cassirer).
- The impossibility of splitting human realities from the human mind and human actions (Cassirer, Dewey, M. Ponty and Marx). The existence of human realities demands they be defined as new ontological domains, different from that named as psyche. Subjectivity represents one avenue for this.
- The emergence of the concept of social subject, first outlined by Marx through the concept of the working class, inaugurated the idea that human phenomena imply social agents and subjects. This idea remained implicit in Marx, but represented an important antecedent for advancing the topics of subject and agency in both individuals and social arenas.
- The need to examine the emergence of sex or other human processes within the social network within which human life is taking place. At this point the later Foucault and Marx have important points of contact, even when their representations of social reality express important differences.

All the topics highlighted above gain visibility and unfold into possible new theoretical, epistemological and methodological paths with the inclusion of subjectivity as a new ontological domain of human phenomena.

4 | WHY BRING SUBJECTIVITY TO PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY?

The new interpretations of the philosophers referred to above open up new space within which the topic of subjectivity could be advanced on a new theoretical basis. The ideas discussed have remained as isolated moments within the complex systems of thought of those philosophers. These ideas and facts express a kind of phenomenon, the main quality of which is to be imaginative productions not reducible to the systems of facts within which they emerged. Subjectivity appears to be an ontological alternative for the explanation of new

human phenomena which is non-reducible to language, discourse, activity or any other concept through which it has been attempted to monopolize human ontology in philosophy and social sciences.

My discussion in this paper draws a picture from within philosophy because this return to subjectivity implies a return to discussion of topics such as theory, ontology, epistemology, all of which have implications in defining human beings, their processes, and their realities, which is, in fact, a philosophical enterprise. Those scientific attempts that imply the foundation of new ontological domains have always opened up new philosophical discussions (Heisenberg, 1995; Planck, 1944; Prigogine, 2004). Maybe the best example of this has been in physics, in which advances throughout history have implied profound changes in the representation of human beings and of the world. The topic of subjectivity is not just one more psychological matter, but a new definition of human phenomena that implies many of the aforementioned changes.

From the epistemological point of view, subjectivity was reduced to the pole of the subject within the dichotomy subject-object and, as such, the subject was represented as a carrier of epistemic equipment through which it appears capable of knowing reality as it is. The linguistic and discursive turns, taken together with Heidegger's rejection of the presence in favor of the process, led to a strong anti-theoretical and anti-epistemological tendency that has strongly influenced all critical positions in psychology addressed toward overcoming the naturalism, empiricism, and individualism that have characterized its history. This path has been supported by the hermeneutic turn proclaimed by Heidegger in opposition to epistemology (Heidegger, 2000).

The study of subjectivity, according to this theoretical proposal, not only represents a new theoretical definition, but it also implies a new epistemology, "Qualitative Epistemology", on which a constructive-interpretative methodological proposal is based (González Rey, 1997, 2000, 2005, 2011; González Rey & Mitjás, 2016, 2017b). Theory, as such, provides a general representation of subjectivity, but nothing can be said a priori on concrete subjective senses and subjective configurations; these are concepts that should be constructed in research and professional practice. This position turns theory into an epistemological definition. Theoretical constructions are an essential stage of the proposed methodological procedure; the methodological process does not represent a set of instruments to be applied. All methodological paths, instruments and moments are taken to be based on the needs that emerge as a result of theoretical constructions during fieldwork. Theory never exhausts its own subject, in this case, subjective senses and subjective configurations. Our epistemological aim is to generate intelligibility on phenomena that have historically been overlooked by philosophy and social sciences as a result of the absence of a general theory of subjectivity.

Multiple areas of life simultaneously appear as subjective senses organized and generated in/by subjective configurations. The concrete lived experiences related to those areas and times, from which different subjective senses and social symbolic constructions emerge for the first time, are unrecognizable in the way they appear in the present. Subjective senses integrate, one within another, forming dynamic chains, from which self-organized and generative subjective configurations emerge, while the history of these subjective senses continuously takes on new expressions at different times. New senses and configurations appear, which can only be deciphered through theoretical models that result from constructive-interpretative paths advanced through a dialogical process of research and practice.

The fact that subjective senses appear embedded, one within another, forming such a movement from which subjective configurations emerge, is beyond consciousness and, as such, beyond any intentional linguistic expressions. The symbolic power that emotions gain as

subjective senses attributes to them a new quality, becoming the most important human symbolical productions that do not themselves appear in linguistic terms. One of the first pieces of research in psychology in which symbolical processes were not defined by speech or linguistic expressions was the study of the social representation of madness (Jodelet, 1989).

The constructive-interpretative methodology designed for the study of subjectivity is not centered on explicit and intentional meanings of speech. It looks for indirect elements, the meanings of which are constructed by the researcher; these meanings are called indicators in our methodological proposal. One indicator, or set of indicators, is the basis from which other indicators emerge, following a theoretical logic that cannot be recognized by direct empirical expressions, whether behavioral, linguistic or emotional. Indicators form a system within which different interrelated hypotheses are constructed. These systems of interrelated hypotheses and ideas are the theoretical models; subjective configurations only appear as a result of this constructive process. The legitimacy of knowledge in this way of doing research is defined because there are no other options that can better explain the theoretical constructions resulting from the research on the basis of the interweaving of indicators, hypotheses and ideas according to which a theoretical model is defended.

Human theories are fictions capable of producing intelligibility about matters that other theories do not allow. Speculation is inseparable from doing science, even when it is not the end of a scientific enterprise. Nonetheless, without speculation, there is no thinking, and science is above all a process of production from thinking.

What is the heuristic value of theoretical models? The overcoming of “empirical science” that results from the study of phenomena that cannot be constructed directly from their empirical expressions requires the emergence of a science based on theoretical models through which the studied subject can only appear partially and indirectly (Heisenberg, 1995). Once a new ontological definition emerges in the scientific domain, new epistemological and methodological definitions are required. The methodological procedures involved in the study of subjective senses and configurations are beyond the scope of this paper. They have been broadly treated elsewhere (González Rey & Mitjans, 2016, 2017a, 2017b).

To reinsert the topic of subjectivity in psychology is important, not only for its epistemological consequences, the discussion of which leads to important philosophical matters, but it is also important for the new topics on human beings and human existence that such a reinsertion allows. The omission of subjectivity has, in turn, led to the omission of the generative character of individuals and social instances, which is capable of generating alternatives to and resistance against the dominant institutional order. Without the emergence of social and individual subjects, social change cannot take place. Subjective senses and configurations are not epiphenomena of those processes within which they emerge; they represent new productions through which the constellation of facts involved in their genesis appear through qualitatively different units, i.e. subjective units. It is only possible to capture this reciprocal and simultaneous integration of individuals and social realities through the continuous interweaving between social and individual subjective configurations; one is present in the other through the subjective senses generated by the other.

Once one subjective configuration emerges, subjective senses related to one experience would no longer depend on the objective and direct attributes of that experience; as carriers of historical trajectories, they apparently have nothing to do with the concrete facts that characterize the experience. Subjective configurations represent an organization within which imagination, feelings, and intellectual and other kinds of operations are configured as dynamic units, within which all of these processes are integrated with each other within a flux of

subjective senses, through which these functions are organized as motivations in themselves (González Rey, 2014). The interweaving between subjective configurations and subjective senses as symbolical/emotional units organized as processes and present in two different levels, social and individual, defines subjectivity as a new ontological domain of human realities.

5 | SUBJECTIVITY AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE ONTOLOGICAL MONOPOLY OF DISCOURSE AND CONVERSATIONS IN SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

The anti-theoretical and anti-epistemological tendency centered on language and discourse found its main expression in psychology in social constructionism. At the height of its power and radical anti-psychological character, all individual psychological processes were omitted. As Harre and Gillet state: “Each reconceptualization helps to draw attention to the fact that the study of the mind is a way of understanding phenomena that arise when different sociocultural discourses are integrated within an identifiable human individual situated in relation to those discourses” (Harre & Gillet, 1994, p. 22). The mind is defined as the integration of discourses within a situated human individual. Nothing new is produced, and individuals come to be understood as an integrative moment of discourses that exist outside of themselves. The replacement of psychological processes and concepts by language, discourse and conversations was the ontological proposal of this movement. The fact of the matter was not its critique but the omissions which it made.

Nonetheless, at the beginning of this movement the subjective was not yet banned. For instance, Squire's (1990) position on subjectivity was as follows:

Social psychology's crisis is, in part, a manifestation of general problems within psychology. Canguilhem (1980) describes psychology as a discipline set up to solve the problems other disciplines encounter with subjectivity, by taking subjectivity as its object. The problematic status of this object, defined largely by its exclusion from other sciences, combined with the unreliability of psychology's methods, and the complex, incomplete and non-predictive nature of psychological theories, cast doubt on psychology's scientificity. The discipline's close association with biology mitigates these difficulties, providing it with a concept of a unitary, consistent subject, and with some parasitic scientific validity. (Squire, 1990, p. 33)

The above quotation highlights some of the problems that led to the exclusion of subjectivity from psychology and other social sciences.

The path taken by the social constructionist movement was also clear in this next statement by Rundle:

Having the relevant thought and becoming prepared to act or not becoming prepared to act are not separate steps, as though, having decided to get up one became prepared to do so only at some later stage: one becomes prepared to act with the relevant decision, realization or memory. However, a separate step is needed if we are to think of the relation between the thought and what follows as causal. (Rundle, 1995, p. 221)

The fusion of action and thinking proposed by the author is a reaction against the consideration of thinking as the cause of the action. The direct relation between thought and action,

as suggested by Rundle, omitted the subject of both the action and the thinking. What these authors never understood is that subjectivity is not behind the action; it exists as the subjective configuration of the action.

It is also possible to identify old-fashioned references to subjectivity in the following statement by Harre: “For some psychologists of this persuasion (*the author is referring to Behaviorism*) the concept of ‘mind’ was empty. For others it was identified with what is private or ‘subjective’” (Harre, 1995, p. 143).

The positions of the philosophers discussed in the first part of this paper were completely ignored in the reduction of mind to an integrative reservoir of discourses. Social constructionism lies completely in the sequence of thinkers formed by Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Gadamer, Derrida, Foucault, and Rorty, while ignoring, as was explained earlier, Foucault’s final positions.

From our theoretical representation, subjectivity never appears through universal and unquestionable principles and concepts. Subjectivity has the same versatility and dynamic as discourse; both move and change within different networks of social relations but, unlike discourse, emotions are intrinsic to the nature of subjectivity. However, subjectivity is historical and, as such, individual and social instances do not move in the same rhythms and are never identical to each other. This relation appears as dialectical and contradictory, even when one is configured within the other on a subjective level, generating the highly dynamic relation between social and individual subjectivity. Thus, subjectivity, as defined in this paper, is far from being a deterministic or metaphysical principle, appearing singularly configured in both individuals and social scenarios within a given culture.

Subjective configurations are extremely complex and sensitive to their own movements and to external influences that are configured in many different ways during ongoing human actions and performances. Subjectivity, by this definition, is inseparable from its agents and subjects, who are subjectively configured and, at the same time, active within networks of communicative acts, within which new subjective senses are generated and new paths are opened up for actions, through which new avenues of subjectivation are possible. Individuals are not diluted in the dialogue, being its driving forces. Individuals and groups, as subjects and agents, were also banned from the theoretical picture of social constructionism; the subjective emptiness of individuals and groups reduced to mere contextual conversations led constructionist authors to consider dialogue as an end in itself. There is no dialogue when the agents in dialogue do not emerge. Subjects and agents are the active expression of subjectivity in process; their actions, decisions and active positionings are in continuous tension with the subjective configuration of any ongoing action or relation.

It is precisely the comprehension of subjectivity as a system of configurations that represents a path toward overcoming the taxonomy of obsolete concepts that both philosophy and psychology have used to explain human motivation and emotions. Centered on discourse, language and dialogue, philosophers and psychologists have overlooked a process without which none of these other processes could have been developed; that process involves the motivated subjects or agents who are interrelated within these processes. For subjectivity, the body and social symbolic constructions are equated as human realities that must be subjectively produced.

Human processes in their diversity and complexity cannot be captured or represented in any complete fashion; theoretical concepts assembled within this proposal of subjectivity, in their active interweaving, are capable of generating intelligibility about new kinds of processes that have been detached from the study of human phenomena.

The theoretical definition of subjectivity as used in this paper (González Rey, 1997, 2002, 2011, 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b; González Rey & Mitjáns Martínez, 2017b; Mitjáns Martínez &

González Rey, 2017) implies a turn toward ontology and epistemology in both philosophy and psychology. Nonetheless, this turn does not appear to treat them as two separated and static topics but, on the contrary, as the integration of theory, epistemology and methodology in research and practice (González Rey & Mitjáns Martínez, 2017b).

6 | SOME FINAL COMMENTS

Subjectivity has been completely detached from philosophy and psychology throughout their histories on the basis of an ahistorical and fossilized definition of it as a legacy of the modern philosophy of the subject. As such, subjectivity has never been reconstructed from a new theoretical perspective that permits it to be understood as having a cultural, historical and social genesis, while also being understood in its generative and imaginative character, making it relatively independent of its genesis and of direct and immediate external influences.

As discussed above, questions and processes related to subjectivity have appeared in some of the more important modern and post-modern philosophers, some of which have been used in order to reject subjectivity. However, the richness of philosophical thought can be interpreted from different theoretical angles, creating paths within them that allow an advance on new theoretical systems, as is the case with subjectivity. This is why, in this paper, we have made a different journey in relation to the philosophers discussed above, who include important topics on which a new approach to subjectivity in philosophy and psychology could be grounded.

The dichotomies between experience and nature on one hand, and between body and sociality on the other hand, the relationships among which have led to much discussion in philosophy, demand an advance toward a new, specifically human, phenomenon, one capable of making a theoretical integration possible between the poles of these dichotomies within a new theoretical framework. The body and social life emerge through different subjective senses and configurations, which configure each other as social and individual subjectivity.

The definition of subjectivity discussed here demands the integration of theory, epistemology and methodology as three inseparable moments. The concepts assembled in this proposal form a system, of which the epicenter is subjective configurations which emerge within the endless movement of subjective senses which, in turn, are inseparable from human actions, performances and relations. That unity between theory, epistemology and practice is given because nothing can be said about the concepts a priori and outside of professional practice and research; these concepts need to be constructed in these processes. From an epistemological point of view, both concepts, subjective senses and subjective configurations, are paths of intelligibility about phenomena that are not accessible through other psychological theories.

Subjectivity, according to this cultural, social and historical definition, is not privative of psychology. Its specific human character must be considered in all the sciences that, in one way or another, address the study of human processes and realities, from medicine to economics, passing through all of the social sciences. It is such a difficult transit from a culture of objectivity to a culture capable of integrating subjectivity and the objective in relation to human phenomena.

Endnote

¹ Ontology is understood here to specify the way in which one phenomenon obtains intelligibility through a theoretical definition capable of posing new questions to science, founding new systems of practices and, in fact, a new language.

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