

Critical Psychology in Brazil: A Sketch of its History between the End of the 20th Century and the Early 21st Century¹

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Abstract

The present paper presents a sketch of the history and development of Critical Psychology in Brazil. The text is divided into three parts. The first presents a brief characterization of Brazilian reality and the development of Brazilian Psychology; (b) the second part analyzes the development of Brazilian Critical Psychology in the last quarter of the 20th century, when proposals for “Alternative Psychology” and “Counter-Psychology” appeared, as well as their subsequent expansions – very differentiated proposals of “Critical Psychology” concerning the theory and the practice of Brazilian Psychology. Finally, in the last part of the text, questions and challenges for “Critical Psychology” are presented, tackling especially: (a) the effective contributions of Brazilian Critical Psychology to the processes of insurgency against the capitalist social order; (b) how certain concepts and theoretical proposals contribute to the denunciation and demystification of existing reality and, thus, enable emancipatory processes. Support: CNPq.

Keywords: Critical Psychology, Marxism, subjectivity, history of psychology.

Introduction

The objective of this article is to present – prematurely – notes on the history of “Critical Psychology”² in Brazil. It intends, specifically, to characterize the existence of three vectors,

¹ I would like to thank for the criticism, comments and analyses done by many reviewers of this paper. Special tanks must be made to Ana Maria Jacó-Vilela and Domenico Uhng Hur, who read carefully the present paper. Athanasios Marvakis helped to improve this paper raising many of its flaws with an incredible patience. Also, I would like to thank Rafaela Paula Marciano, who offered all the necessary resources for the discussions on anti-asylum struggles. Finally, I am grateful for the review made by Tod Sloan, who helped to improve the quality of this translation.

This paper was supported in part by a grant from the National Council of Research, CNPq.

² In this article, Critical Psychology is assumed as an umbrella term that encompasses any proposal seeking to criticize society and Psychology. So, it covers a complex set of ideas and practices that seek to contribute to any emancipatory project and/or elaborate new ways to think about the individual, subjectivity, subject, and other psychological categories or concepts (Hepburn, 2003; Montero, 2009; Papadopoulos, 2002; Parker, 2007; Walkerdine, 2001). However, in some moments of this text, the term “Critical Psychology” will appear between quotation marks, especially when it deals with “Brazilian Critical Psychology”. It happens for a single reason: until the end of the 20th century the term was rarely used in Brazilian Psychology. It is more common to find some of the following definitions: Institutional Analysis, Liberation Psychology, Psychology of the Oppressed, Institutional Psychology, Marxist Psychology, Political Psychology, Socio-historical Psychology, Psycho-sociology, etc. The term “Critical Psychology” is very recent and, still, few adopt it. So, when describing the history of “Critical Psychology” in Brazil, I am using a term that was not often used by those who participated in this history. Moreover, it is necessary to present a question: would the recent appropriation of the term “Critical Psychology” be an expression of development of critical perspectives in Brazilian Psychology or would it be just one more manifestation of that Latin American tendency to reproduce ideas and practices of research centers located in the USA and Europe? It is possible that the use of the term in Brazil expresses both trends, as it comprises an extremely heterogeneous set of psychological ideas and practices.

which marked the development of the distinct critical proposals in Brazilian psychology, in order to highlight some of its main manifestations, and, finally, to present critical notes on some challenges and problems affecting the theory and practice of Brazilian Critical Psychology.

The three vectors, according to the point of view defended here, which marked the development of the distinct critical proposals in Brazilian Psychology are: (a) the existence of some type of engagement of psychologists with oppressed and exploited layers of Brazilian society, as well as with the struggles for denouncing and transforming social conditions of existence that are structurally unfair and produce human suffering; (b) the arrival in Brazil of some of the main traditions of contemporary social theory, aimed at rethinking traditional notions of power, science, subjectivity, society, etc.; (c) the entrance of Psychology in new fields of activity, what made more explicit the insufficiencies of Psychology's traditional theories and practice when these try to answer issues created by new social realities and constraints.

Moreover, the text will defend the thesis that there are two distinct historical contexts that have marked the development of Brazilian "Critical Psychology". The first one covers the period between 1964 and 1989, marked by the existence of the military dictatorship (or bourgeois autocracy) in Brazil. The second period is defined by the consolidation of bourgeois democracy and neoliberal hegemony in Brazilian society.

Thus, the text offers *an introductory characterization of the distinct historical periods that have marked the development of "Critical Psychology" in Brazil and presents some of their main manifestations*. Its objective is not to analyze the historical and theoretical contribution of distinct currents and manifestations of Brazilian "Critical Psychology" systematically, but to present some of its main manifestations, to indicate explanatory hypotheses of its historical roots and to point some contemporary challenges.

As with any other historical study, this work adopts a specific conception of history, marked by assumptions about the relations between human beings, nature and society. The basic assumptions of this work is derived from the Marxist tradition,³ especially from the works of Marx and Lukács.⁴

This creates some difficulties when studying certain manifestations in the history of Brazilian Psychology, since, according to an important historian, Marxism "holds potentialities not yet

³ There isn't just a single theoretical body directly related to Marx's thought, but rather a series of analyses, interpretations, and revisions that have some reference in Marx's thought, but which are fundamentally different from each other. This means that there is not just one Marxism, but several Marxisms; or a Marxist tradition marked by differentiations, divisions, antagonisms, confluences, etc. So, when speaking of a "Marxist tradition" or "Marxism", one speaks of a plural, heterogeneous tradition that is not monolithic or marked by a single trend (Netto, 1983).

⁴ Making a schematic presentation, it can be said that the texts of Marx and Lukács are characterized by: (a) the conception that the sole foundation of history and the human beings is given only by themselves, i.e., the story is not a product of any transcendental force (natural or theological), but of human beings' social practices; (b) the assumption that the societal organization of production and reproduction processes are the "predominant moment" ("*übergreifendes Moment*") of concrete social formations and, therefore, of ideas, theories and ideologies that exist in a given time and space; (c) the affirmation of the relative autonomy of creative and ideal human practices in relation to prevailing forms of social life organization and production; (d) the conception that ideas have a social function and its relation with social totality and with distinct social groupings results in greater or lesser approximation knowledge about real social processes (Antunes, 2005; Henriques, 1978; Lukács, 1968; 1979; Lessa, 2007; Marx, 1844/2005; Netto, 2002; Yamamoto, 1994).

incorporated and fully depleted by the studies on History of Psychology” (Antunes, 2005, p. 106). This means that the present paper, starting from the theoretical-methodological apparatuses produced by Marxism, adopts a specific conception of history, rarely used in the historical studies of Brazilian Psychology.

In this sense, the present sketch of a history of “Critical Psychology” in Brazil assumes that the description of what occurs in a specific complex of ideas and practices – Brazilian Psychology – must be carried out from its insertion into a wider complex: Brazilian capitalist society. Therefore, before presenting the distinct critical currents in Brazilian Psychology, the work presents a description of the development of capitalism in Brazil and some of the most important social-political transformations occurred between 1960s and the early 21st century. The paper is divided into three parts: (a) a characterization of Brazilian reality and the emergence of Psychology in this social formation; (b) presentation of distinct manifestations of Critical Psychology in Brazil; (c) the presentation of some questions and challenges related to the development of Critical Psychology in Brazil.

With the purpose of further clarifying some limits and characteristics of this paper, a warning must be made. It is necessary to emphasize that the study of the history of critical trends in Brazilian Psychology, is still a practically inexistent activity. With honorable exceptions – such as the books of Coimbra (1995) and Yamamoto (1987), the papers included in the compilation organized by Jacó-Vilela, Ferreira and Portugal (2006) or the contribution of Carvalho and Dunker (2005) – the history of Brazilian “Critical Psychology” has hardly been studied.

Thus, present work is a sketch on the history of “Critical Psychology” in Brazil. It represents an attempt to explain the genesis and historical development of certain ideas in a capitalist, unfair, unequal and dependent society. The focus, here, is not on each singular theory, but on the movement of emergence and consolidation of critical trends in Brazilian Psychology. That panoramic vision is impossible without making reference to the movements and processes characterizing Brazilian social formation. Therefore, what does this work aim to present? Not the trees, but the forest. Not specific concepts, but the relation between some proposals of “Critical Psychology”, within a specific social context. It is expected to make explicit the theories, subjects, issues and trends that marked and characterize the present stage of Brazilian “Critical Psychology”.

Brazilian Psychology and Dependent Capitalism

In Brazil, Psychology as a profession is regulated by law No. 4.119 of 1962. This does not mean that before this regulatory law, “psychological ideas” (Massimi, 2006) or professional practices connected to Psychology (Antunes 1999; Bock, 1999; Coimbra, 1995) didn’t exist. In fact, modern Psychology, in Brazil began to develop between the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century (Antunes 1999; Massimi, 2006; Pereira & Pereira Neto, 2003). According to Massimi (2006), Psychology has emerged in the 19th century in Brazil, as an area studied in different educational institutions that offered medical, religious, pedagogical or legal training. Still according to the author, the first laboratories of Experimental Psychology were founded only in the first decades of the 20th century. Thus, the creation of a legal apparatus regulating Psychology in 1962 was only part of a long development process of an autonomous science in Brazil.

Psychology emerged in association with the ruling classes of Brazilian society. In the same way as the Psychology in the USA – in its search to achieve social legitimacy during the early 20th century – joined the dominant layers of American society (Danziger, 1998; Richards, 2010), Brazilian Psychology learned quickly how to choose sides in class struggles.

During the period of development of independent Brazilian Psychology there was a predominance of studies that intended to contribute to the modernization and the “normal” maintenance of Brazilian social order.⁵ At the beginning of the 20th century, Psychology tackled subjects such as the treatment of insanity, the “moral” formation of human beings and the maintenance of “mental hygiene”. Therefore, among the precursors of Psychology, there were doctors, educators and other professionals, who were part of hygienist movement and/or who were importing theories marked by scientific racism conceived of as the “modern” solution to the country’s social issues (Massimi, 2006; Patto, 1991; 2004).

The regulation of Psychology as a profession in 1962 was part of a process marked by important events in different social institutions: Psychology became a compulsory discipline in several University curricula (especially law, medicine and pedagogy); Psychology laboratories were created and institutionalized; specific educational courses for psychologists in universities in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo were created in the 1950s; and disputes began with other professionals over the control of specific segments of the work market (Antunes 1999; Pereira & Pereira Neto, 2003).

Therefore, between the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century, diverse manifestations of Psychology were part “of the pursuit to transform Brazil into a modern occidental nation” (Massimi, 2006, p. 167). Meanwhile, in the second half of the 20th century, especially after the regulation of the profession in 1962, and the military coup of 1964, the new profession did not only look for social legitimacy, but also to show to the operating ruling classes that Psychology was not a threat to the social order. This pursuit can be seen in various ways. Hur (2012) cites, as an example, the creation of representative entities coupled with the State, i.e., born from direct negotiations with representatives of the military government. There is also, still according to Hur (2012), an even more expressive example: in 1975, when diverse social movements were mobilized all over the nation to protest against the brutal murder of the journalist Wladimir Herzog by agents of the military dictatorship, the Union of the Psychologists of the State of São Paulo refused to participate in this struggle.

In the sphere of production of scientific knowledge, there was a very congruent situation. In various forms, Brazilian Psychology promoted conceptions of individual, personality or behavior, which naturalized or justified the extremely unfair social order of the country. Some have argued that this occurred because of the predominance of liberal ideology and the commitment of Brazilian Psychology to the dominant elites (Bernardes, 2007; Bock, 1999). Others have link the growth of intimist, individualistic and depoliticizing approaches to

⁵ An illustrative example of how Psychology has allied with the Brazilian dominant sectors is in one of the several Social Psychology books published during the first half of the 20th century, with the explicit intention to examine ways to combat “communist disease”. In this sense, the book by Sodré (1946) about the “struggle for ‘state power’” can be understood as one of several texts that conceived Psychology as a tool in the process of modernization of the country. The author – a psychiatrist – has written his text in the first half of the 20th century. His main assumption was that only Social Psychology could contribute to the analysis of Brazilian political phenomena. After conducting various analyses on the problem of democracy and communism in Brazil, the author's conclusion is that it is necessary to cultivate a “democratic mentality”, and thus strengthen “resistance to communist revolutionary infiltration” (p. 177) – and Social Psychology could help in this task.

subjectivity with a context in which the exploited layers of our society had suffered several politic defeats, and which, in the last stance, resulted in the advent of the military dictatorship in Brazil (Coimbra, 1995). Some other authors pointed out the necessity of understanding the close relations between the conceptions of man produced in bourgeois societies and the mainstream theses in psychological theories (Patto, 1991; Yamamoto, 1987).

This relation between bourgeois ideology and hegemonic theories in Brazilian Psychology is still marked for an important element: Brazilian Psychology frequently reproduced predominant ideas and practices in the great capitalist centers. This is one of the diverse symptoms of what Martín-Baró has called “misery of Psychology”. According to the author, “the misery of Latin American Psychology is rooted in a history of colonial dependence” (Martín-Baró, 1986/1998, p. 287). If we take this affirmation seriously, then we will understand that the misery of knowledge and practice of Brazilian Psychology is a manifestation of the social processes predominating in *a particular social formation of capitalism*.

Brazil: A Dependent Capitalism

It is important to characterize, in a general approach, the history of the Brazilian social formation: a history of dependence. The picture offered by Antunes (2011) is an interesting synthesis of Brazil:

Sleek country, whose history unfolds slowly, without ruptures nor deep changes, always solving its dilemmas through the compromises produced from the *top*, excluding what concerns the working class and always ready to pursue the *counterrevolution*, Brazil has found in *dependence* and in *underdevelopment* its form of *integration to the outside* and *disintegration inside*. (p. 61)

Dependence (“integration to the outside”) and barbarism (“disintegration inside”) are predominant social processes in Brazil, and this goes for the *entire* history of the country: from colonization to the present. Colonization was no more than a specific form of the process of primitive accumulation of capital in European metropolises, i.e., the “discovery” of Brazil was just one chapter in the history of development of European market (Prado Jr, 1990).

Similarly, dependence can be seen as the condition which marked the development of capitalism in Brazil. Here, there is not a capitalism that resulted from revolutions that overthrew conservative forces, but rather a late modernization process, taken place from the top, in alliance with deeply conservative agrarian layers, and oriented to meet the expansionist needs of the imperialist nations (Chasin, 1977; Coutinho, 1979).

Due to the weak and fragile character of the Brazilian bourgeoisie, the guarantee of domination over the exploited masses took place through the establishment of alliances with the rural and archaic aristocracy of Brazil, as well as with foreign capital. Such an alliance was possible through the establishment of a strong and authoritarian State that consists of modern and archaic factions of the ruling classes, seeking to exclude and make impossible any participation of exploited layers in social transformation processes. In fact, the social changes in Brazil, as a rule, were not social transformations, but rearrangements among different factions of the dominant classes constituting an effective bourgeois autocracy (Fernandes, 1981).

According to Marini (2000), between 1930 and 1964, Brazilian history was marked by Bonapartist regimes, necessary to ensure the unstable balance of opposing forces. The economic crisis of world capitalism, in 1929, created a *sui generis* situation in which the demand for manufactured goods in internal market could no longer be satisfied with imports. This meant that Brazilian economy moved forward from an economic formation based on exports and agricultural activity to an industrialized society. This transformation meant that oligarchic landowners lost their political monopoly, and had to share power with the industrial bourgeoisie. At certain times, this dispute opened space for the struggles and aspirations of peasants and workers, however, those never managed to impose their needs, because, for the Brazilian bourgeoisie, the most important aim was not its contradiction with landlordism (*latifúndio*) or with imperialism, but rather the guarantee of profit.

The military dictatorship was a conservative reaction which tried to ensure the dependent integration of Brazilian economy into the world capitalist system, as well the ruling classes' answer to the threat represented by the worker and peasant's struggles. The military coup of 1964 was: (a) the end of a social dispute period that opened with the emergence of industrialization, and that consolidated the division between, on one hand, the national bourgeoisie, landlords and foreign capital and, on the other, rural and urban workers; (b) the consolidation of the hegemony of the industrial capital among the dominant classes operating in Brazil; (c) part of the adjustment process of Brazilian economic development to the imperatives of the world capitalist system, in which the Brazilian bourgeoisie should be absolutely subordinated to the American imperialist capital (Coutinho, 1979; Marini, 2000). The exclusion of popular sectors, the changes at the top, and the maintenance of an autocratic and profoundly oppressive social order were elements reinforced – not created – by the military dictatorship (Antunes, 2011; Coutinho, 1979; Netto, 2010). After the coup, the emergence of several struggles against the military dictatorship was seen. The reorganization of workers and peasants, during the 1970s and 1980s, was one of the crucial elements for the re-democratization of Brazilian society. But, again, the process was developed in such a way that re-democratization was a change produced from the top – ensuring the maintenance of a social order ruled by capital.

The transition from the end of the military dictatorship to the beginning of “democracy” was thus marked by a process of repositioning of the ruling classes, in face of the social struggles of the working class and a new world situation. In this repositioning, the various factions of the ruling classes in Brazil were unified by the neoliberal program and led by the hegemony of financial capital. This program of neoliberal reforms was initiated by the Fernando Collor government (elected in 1989) and remains up to the present – with governments headed by the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party, PT).

The neoliberal offensive which contains social and economic reforms favoring financial capital, seeking to combat and dismantle the intense mobilizations of the working classes, started in Brazil during the early 1990s (Boito, 2005; Filgueiras, 2006). The different governments of the past twenty years in the country's history – including the governments of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff – were characterized by classic neoliberal prescriptions: dismantling of trade union actions, dismantling social rights (many of which existed only formally), restructuring of production, financial deregulation, fiscal adjustment and precarization of working conditions.

The result was not very surprising: intensification of social inequalities (higher levels of income concentration and social exclusion); neocolonial reversal in the productive sectors marked by an increase in the technological gap; the strengthening of financial dependency; precarization and barbarization of exploited classes; and expansion of cultural dependency (Antunes, 2011; Sampaio Junior, 2007).

Brazilian Psychology and the Cultural Misery of Dependence

From preceding paragraphs, it is important to highlight the idea that the dependence characterizing Brazil also marks cultural, artistic and scientific creations. According to Marini (2000), dependence modifies or rebuilds social relations to ensure the expanded reproduction of dependence, i.e., dependence creates social relationships that generate more dependence. Thus, the deepening of dependence is reflected in the intensification of cultural mimicry and in the trend among the middle and higher classes to reproduce the patterns of consumption and behavior present in the hegemonic centers (Sampaio Junior, 2007).

This does not mean that original and alternative cultural creations do not exist, but such formulations, which tried to escape the limits of bourgeois thought and culture, depend on the rise of social forces that challenge and seek to make an end to dependence. Moments of rebellion, disorder, and social crises are fundamental to the strengthening of trends that run contrary to scientific and artistic conceptions that are instrumental to dependency and to capital. For example, in the period that preceded the military dictatorship, theoretical and practical projects emerged counter to the logic of dependence, which sought to understand the particularity of Brazilian development and contribute to the progressive social transformation of Brazil.⁶ The military dictatorship introduced an “alternative” cultural policy to those theoretical and practical projects engaged with exploited people. While on the economic plane, military dictatorship ensured the submissive integration of Brazil to the world capitalist system, in “the world of culture” the dictatorship imposed a project of “modernization” of Brazilian society with two goals: suppressing critical manifestations against the elitism of Brazilian society and introducing “modern” cultural trends, i.e., cultural trends that would contribute to the crystallization of bourgeois hegemony (Netto, 2010).

This is clearly what has occurred in the field of Psychology. After the military coup, conceptions of subjectivity that reduced psychic phenomena to private, individual, internal affairs were intensified. Pitted against notions related to activity (militancy), psychological categories emphasizing feelings were advocated, i.e., there was “a psychologizing of everyday and social life” (Coimbra, 1995, p. 34). Still supporting this argument, Yamamoto (1987) and Gil (1985) discussed how Brazilian psychologists – acting especially in clinical, educational and organizational areas – have fulfilled the same regulatory adaptive and, therefore, ideological function.

⁶ An illustrative example is the life and the work of Paulo Freire. The first educational experiences of Freire were developed in 1961 and were widely recognized during the Government of João Goulart, the Brazilian President who tried to carry out a “reform program” to change the unjust order. After the diffusion of Freire’s experiences, ideas, and successes – during 40 days Paulo Freire taught reading and writing to more than 300 adult peasants – Goulart proposed a national program to eradicate illiteracy using the methods proposed by Freire. After the military coup, this national literacy program was eliminated; Freire was imprisoned and then exiled (see Freire, 1968/2005; 1979). The specificity of Freire’s thought is that, at the time, he did not reproduce the theoretical trends prevalent in Brazilian education, but tried to elaborate a method that would be able to dialogue with Brazilian peasants’ realities and experiences – the vast majority of the population at the time. When trying to move closer to the reality of the peasants, Paulo Freire elaborates an original and critical thought, both of Brazilian reality as of pedagogical ideas prevalent at the time.

The constitution of Psychology as an autonomous field in Brazil was based upon theoretical approaches prevalent in Europe and in the United States in different fields such as medicine, education and Psychology itself (Antunes, 1999). Uncritical appropriation and reproduction of ideas produced in capitalist centers, with rare exceptions⁷, was the rule that marked the development of ideas in Brazilian Psychology. For example, in the late 1980s, a study by Bastos and Gomide (1989) testified that the three mainstream approaches in Brazilian Psychology were, respectively, Psychoanalysis, Behavior Analysis, and Phenomenological or Existential-humanistic approaches.

Between the 1980s and the present there have been changes. The expansion of Brazilian universities, the entry of Psychology into different work fields (going beyond traditional fields like schools, private clinics, industries and organizations), and the changes in the ideological climate that marked Brazilian society produced a new look to Brazilian Psychology. On one hand, theoretical approaches different from the traditional ones – Psychoanalysis,⁸ Behaviorism, Phenomenological-existential approaches – began to be studied and Psychology professionals now have a more eclectic attitude in relation to theoretical and methodological assumptions. On the other hand, Psychology became more and more involved in different fields of activity than the traditional ones (Bastos, Gomide & Borges-Andrade, 2010).

New concepts, new methodologies, and new practices have emerged in Brazilian Psychology. This did not result in the disappearance of a Psychology that primarily serves the dominant elites and justifies or reinforces unequal and unjust social relations, but did open space for strengthening the manifestations of theories and practices that constitute what can be called “Critical Psychology” (Bock, 1999, 2003; Guzzo, 2007).

Criticism of Mainstream Psychology in Brazil During Military Dictatorship

The following is an attempt to describe how critical perspectives developed within Brazilian Psychology, especially since the 1970s. Dependent capitalism created a science which: reproduced conservative ideas more than sought to understand Brazilian reality; justified an unequal social order more than explained its roots and its perverse consequences on human subjectivity; contributed capital to optimize surplus-value extraction, instead of studying the

⁷ Antunes (1999) cites as an example which escape to the rule, the works of Manoel Bomfim and Ulysses Pernambucano. Jacó-Vilela (2007), Bock and Furtado (2006) also highlight the originality and the singular aspects of Manoel Bomfim ideas related to Psychology.

⁸ It is important to present two notes on Psychoanalysis. It is understood that the stories of Psychoanalysis and Psychology have more differences than convergences, and this makes impossible an identification of psychological theories with psychoanalytic theories. However, this does not mean that the large number of psychologists formed as psychoanalysts in Brazil represents a more Critical Psychology or something similar. Carvalho and Dunker (2005) argue that Psychoanalysis in Brazil produced several critical studies, but it must be added that, often, Brazilian Psychoanalysis was, and is, associated with conservative and individualistic practices. The work of Coimbra (1995) provides a history of Psychoanalysis in Brazil that demonstrates how that happened. Illustrative example is the fact that, in 1980, the Psychoanalytic Society of Rio de Janeiro (SPRJ) had attempted to banish two psychoanalysts – Hélio Pellegrino and Eduardo Mascarenhas - who have exposed the relations of a prominent member of the SPRJ - Amílcar Lobo – with the actions of torture perpetrated by the military regime. Coimbra (1995) shows as, either in São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, during the period of democratization, traditional psychoanalytical institutions fulfilled deeply conservative functions and never proposed to analyze critically the military dictatorship. Hence, connivance with status quo, propensity to individualism, and a practice turned predominantly to wealthy sectors of Brazilian society are not exclusive problems of Psychology, but also constitutive features of Brazilian Psychoanalysis.

class consciousness of the proletariat; and oppressed more than liberated. But Brazilian Psychology has also been a space for contestation, rebellion and pursuit of emancipation. Brazilian Psychology was not a space of mere reproduction, appropriation or production of theories that have ideologically supported dependent capitalism, but a space of criticism – which was firstly manifested in distinct and *regular* discussions about the “crisis” of Psychology (Yamamoto, 1987).

The military coup reinforced the diffusion of individualistic, conservative, and elitist ideas and practices in the field of Psychology. But, at the same time, during military dictatorship, there was a complex reorganization process of civil society strata that were struggling against capital and/or the military rule.⁹ This process also affected Psychology, creating splits, crises and changes. New theoretical and practical approaches emerged (see, among others: Bernardes, 2007; Bock, 1999; Coimbra, 1995; Freitas, 1996a; Lane, 1984a/2001; Yamamoto, 1987), and we also saw political disputes against the leadership of Psychology’s representative associations and unions which aimed to open these organizations to practices more oriented to the needs of popular majorities (Hur, 2009; 2012).

In the field of theory, “Critical Psychology” in Brazil can be traced to the 1970s. This period marks the beginning of the so-called “democratic opening” – a transition process from a bourgeois autocracy to a bourgeois democracy – which was a product of a complex situation: military rule was demoralized; civil society intensified struggles for amnesty and democracy; and the students and workers movements emerged in political struggles.¹⁰

While these changes were occurring in the Brazilian context, at universities, the diffusion of Marxism and other critical theories was occurring. In Psychology, the proposals of institutional analysis, anti-psychiatry or even “leftist” readings of Psychology classics were disseminated (Coimbra, 1995; Carvalho & Dunker, 2005; Yamamoto, 1987). In this context, critiques of Psychology and pursuits of alternatives proliferated.

Yamamoto (1987) states that this “crisis of Psychology” period produced two general trends: “Alternative Psychology” and “Counter-Psychology”. The term “Alternative Psychology”, according to the author, emerged in the 1970s and refers to “everything that escapes from the conventional” (p. 56). Within this trend, there would be a subdivision. On one hand, the differences with the “conventional” was opposed with the development of practices that presented themselves as alternatives, because it changed the “traditional” practices of Psychology, but the underlying assumptions of Mainstream Psychology wasn’t criticized. In this case, we would find biodance, bioenergetics, and human potential movement practices. On the other hand, in a second set of theories and practices, an effective *Alternative Psychology* could be found. This “alt-psy” was questioning the social function of the psychologist and seeking to provide psychological services to the majority of the population. In this case, there were practices carried out by psychologists that would: (a) question the

⁹ Even though military dictatorship is merely a manifestation of bourgeois autocracy in Brazil (Netto, 2010), various sectors which struggled against military regime, did not related this struggle to anti-capitalist issues. This is the main flaw of democratic movements of the period that, in the last stand, opened up space for the neoliberal offensive of the 1990s.

¹⁰ It is not possible to understand the intensification of the struggles against the dictatorship without analyzing the intensification of working-class struggles and the emergency of the “new trade unionism”. “Student movement and the struggle for amnesty and democratization in Brazilian society developed for several years, but gained strength and density through the labor upheavals. It was this majestic cycle of strikes in late 1970s that laid the ground for the launching of a spectacular phase of social struggles in Brazil during the 1980s” (Antunes, 2011, p. 85).

inherent orientation of Brazilian Psychology to elites; and (b) change the spaces of Brazilian Psychology traditional practice (clinics, schools or private industries/organizations) to wider and poorer spaces – as public institutions or directly in poor neighborhoods – with the purposes of offering free psychological services to a predominantly poor population and of building a Psychology that would contribute to social transformation, intervening in popular organizations and conscientization processes.¹¹

Under the label “Counter-Psychology”, Yamamoto (1987) groups the set of studies that developed critical theoretical analyses of Psychology. The author quotes as illustrative expressions of “Counter-Psychology” the works of Campos (1983/2010) and Patto (1984). Campos (1983/2010) discussed the “social function of psychologist” arguing that there is an intrinsic relationship between capitalist society and the way the psychologist contributed to sustain or enhance processes such as: the separation between normal and exceptional; the domination of capital over labor in organizations; the diffusion of liberal ideology in various social institutions. Similarly, Patto (1984) criticized the relationship between psychology and ideology pointing to the “pseudoscience” character of the first, tied to the apparent and immediate dimensions of reality and that, in order to socially legitimize itself, sought to meet the needs of the ruling classes¹².

According to Yamamoto (1987) a constitutive feature of “Counter-Psychology” is not only the critical rejection of Mainstream Psychology, but also the search for the “redemption” of Psychology. Through a theoretical reconstruction of Psychology it would be possible to build critical perspectives in Psychology. Thus, Campos (1983/2010) pointed to the possibility of building a “Psychology that denounces domination” (p. 213). To the author, the economic crisis of Brazilian society in the 1980s, would create the material conditions for the construction of this “Counter-Psychology”, because it would reduce the market space for liberal professionals – which was the main activity of 1980s psychologists – and would drive psychologists towards low-income “classes”. Such a process would reveal the inadequacy of prevailing theoretical models of Brazilian Psychology, and thus, would pave the way to the construction of a Psychology that tackles domination. Similarly, Patto (1984) argued for the possibility of a Critical Psychology through an articulation of Psychology with Psychoanalysis and Marxism.¹³

To seek in Psychoanalysis and Marxism the foundations of a “Critical Psychology” in Brazil, is not something specific to Patto’s work, but a feature that permeated distinct manifestations of critical thought in Brazilian Psychology. The first publications of Brazilian Association of

¹¹ The Institutional Psychology elaborated by Argentinian psychoanalyst Bleger (1984) would fit under the label “*Alternative Psychology*”, since Bleger (1984) articulated psychoanalysis and Marxism to propose a psychoanalysis activity in the institutions. *Institutional analysis* developed in Brazil can be grouped under the label “Alternative Psychology”, but also “Counter-Psychology”, since it aimed not only to produce new interventions, but to tackle Mainstream Psychology ideas. An introduction to institutional analysis in Brazil is found in Baremlitt (1992), while Coimbra (1995) and Rodrigues (2006) have written analyses on the arrival of the ideas of Bleger, Argentinean psychoanalysis and of the ideas of Brazilian institutionalist movement.

¹² In line with this criticism, Patto would argue in another book of great importance to the history of School/Educational Psychology in Brazil: “The science which stops at what is immediately given, generates explanations that are nothing but ideology disguised in knowledge above any suspicion” (Patto, 1991, p. 147).

¹³ The psychoanalysis with which Patto dialogues in her text of 1984 is that one developed by the Argentinean psychoanalysts, which is mentioned in the work of Carvalho and Dunker (2005). The basic Marxist authors with whom Patto has dialogued in her works range from Brazilian theorists in the field of Education – such as the analyses of Freire (1968/2005) about the oppressed – and theorists such as Althusser and, later, Heller (Patto, 1991, 1993). In later texts, it is possible to see the influences of Foucault and Frankfurt School’s theorists (Patto, 2007).

Social Psychology (ABRAPSO) contain various texts that discuss topics such as: the relation between psychoanalysis, Marxism and subjectivity; Marxist and/or Psychoanalytic critiques of social issues and psychosocial processes; redefinitions or theoretical criticism of traditional currents of Psychology; and studies related to the development of a Marxist Psychology (Caniato, 1988; Carvalho, 1988; 1989; Lane, 1986; 1989; Machado, 1987a; Pereira, 1988; Sampaio, 1986; Sandler, 1986; Violante, 1988).

In addition to the publications of ABRAPSO, it is worthwhile to mention the entrance, during the 1970s and 1980s, of the institutionalist movement into Brazil, which can be seen, according to Rodrigues (2006), in the arrival of the ideas and practices of Lapassade and Argentinean psychoanalysts (Bleger, Langer, and others). Those are examples of “Alternative Psychology” or “Counter-Psychology” that was influenced by Marxism and Psychoanalysis. So, in the same way that European Social Psychology sought in Psychoanalysis and Marxism elements to overcome the “crisis of Social Psychology” (Hepburn, 2003), it can be said that the early critics of Brazilian Psychology were influenced by these two traditions. Lane (1984a/2001; 1986; 1987), discussing the development of the crisis of Social Psychology in Brazil, states that the recourse to Marxism and Psychoanalysis was a byproduct of the influence of European Critical Psychology over Brazilian psychologists. However, it was not only that. The influence of Marxism – a theory whose propelling force is the pursuit of the overcoming of capitalism – has grown along with the struggles against military dictatorship and was particularly influenced by the Cuban Revolution¹⁴ (on this topic see Coggiola, 2005; Petras, 1999).

Since the analysis of Yamamoto (1987) – developed in the second half of the 1980s – many changes have taken place in Brazil: it became a “democratic” bourgeois society; the struggles of workers and trade unions suffered major losses and took up more and more defensive positions; the main political tools of Brazilian working-class – as Central Workers Union Confederation (*Central Única dos Trabalhadores*, CUT) and Workers’ Party – have definitely adapted to the neoliberal order (Antunes, 2011; Boito Jr., 2005). In the battle of ideas, Marxism was increasingly criticized and repudiated (Coggiola, 2005; Petras, 1999). Similarly, Brazilian Psychology suffered several transformations. Various educational, research, and practical groups and institutions were consolidated; even those that could be associated with the umbrella term “Critical Psychology”. Yet, critical perspectives in Brazilian Psychology continued to contain propositions that: (a) were directed to the building of a new psychological practice focused on the needs of the majority of the population (“Alternative Psychology”); (b) proposals for critical and theoretical reconstruction of Psychology (“Counter-Psychology”).

However, the term “Counter-Psychology” remains useful only if this name comprises a set of ideas that are critical of Mainstream Psychology. Despite, having found some institutional space, it remains marginal in Psychology training courses at Brazilian universities, and, as a consequence, rarely turns itself into the main theoretical and methodological assumptions guiding professional activities related to Psychology. Nevertheless, today it is possible to find in Brazilian Psychology not only criticisms of Psychology, but theoretical elaborations that

¹⁴ The importance of Cuba for the development of “Critical Psychology” in Brazil must be studied more deeply. At this point, it is just possible to mention that many critical psychologists turned to Cuban intellectuals. What can be noticed by the dissemination of Cuban publications in journals and books in Brazil during the late 1980s (for example: Averasturi, 1986; Calviño, 1987; González Rey, 1986; Sosa, 1986), as well as by the references made by Brazilian psychologists to Cuban Psychology (Bomfim, 1987; Carvalho, 1988; 1989; Guedes, 2007; Machado, 1987b).

try to present themselves as a positive theoretical alternative to currents constituting Mainstream Psychology. Perhaps the difference between “Alternative Psychology” and “Counter-Psychology” does not reveal the current state of critical thought and practice of Brazilian Psychology, and, thus, the term “Critical Psychology” can be adopted to refer both to “Alternative Psychology” and to “Counter-Psychology”. In the two following parts of this text, some of the main ideas and practices of Brazilian Critical Psychology after the 1980s will be described.

Current Critical Psychology: Profession and Social Commitment

Psychological ideas and practices in Brazil have changed in the last quarter of the century and in the early years of the 21st century. Today there is the largest number (not the biggest proportion) of teachers, researchers and professionals in the field of Psychology, who present themselves as “critical”. In its first stages, Brazilian Psychology as a professional practice was predominantly clinical, educational, and elitist (Botomé, 1979/2010; Campos, 1983/2010; Yamamoto, 2003; 2007). As a science, Psychology tended to the production and reproduction of liberal ideologies, and became instrumental to an unequal capitalist society (Bock, 1999; Coimbra, 1995; Patto, 1984; 1991; Yamamoto, 1987).

As a profession, Psychology has diversified: there is still a predominance of clinical practice and liberal professional activity, but there is an apparently irreversible tendency for Psychology to become more and more a wage-earning profession. Today, it is possible to find psychologists employed in jobs located in Governmental and Non-governmental Organizations that are related with social issues like health, education, assistance, poverty, etc. Notably, the new professional profile of Psychology did not mean the emergence of new practices, because, often, there is just a reiteration of traditional practices (Yamamoto, 1996; 2007). Yamamoto (2003) presents three vectors to explain the change in Brazilian Psychology’s professional profile:

- a. Specific contingencies of labor market. The crisis periods of the Brazilian economy have limited the demand for a costly liberal and autonomous professional, accessible only to classes with economic stability.
- b. Expansion of professional practice by the redefinition of the “social welfare” sector during the “transition to democracy”. The democratic transition period was a period of weakening of conservative segments of Brazilian society and the product of a reorganization of the subaltern classes, which resulted in partial achievements of social rights in the late 1980s. This expansion of social rights during the transitional period created new employment for psychologists in health institutions, public schools and social service centers.
- c. Theoretical and ideological debates – which allowed theoretical redefinitions of Psychology. On this last point, Yamamoto (2003, 2007) states that the action of a political movement of psychologists was crucial in order to (1) occupy the unions and professional entities of Psychology,¹⁵ (2) study new possible professional practices, and (3) intensify debates against individualistic and psychologizing conceptions of human nature. This political movement has been represented by the diffusion of the motto “social commitment of psychology” (Yamamoto, 2007).

¹⁵ According to Hur (2009), the period of “democratization” in Psychology representative entities, was characterized by the dispute between the “founders” – group of psychologists who participated in the regulatory process of Professional Psychology, with conservative and corporate positions – and the “opposition” – who advocated a Psychology focused on the needs of the majority of Brazilian population, which sought an approach of Psychology entities with workers’ struggles.

So, on one hand, the thesis elaborated by Campos (1983/2010) in the early 1980s was partially correct: the Brazilian economic crisis resulted in psychologists moving closer to the subaltern classes (which is represented by the increasing number of wage-earning psychologists). But if this move, on the one hand, has the potential to reveal the theoretical and political problems of Mainstream Psychology, on the other, it is not a consequence of ideological convictions, but primarily the economic needs of professionals who are poorer and seek to survive in a more and more constrained labor market.

Social Commitment of Psychology

According to Bock (1999, 2003), reflections on the social commitment of Psychology are driven by a desire to seek new ways of thinking and practicing. On one hand, socially committed psychology seeks to meet social groups who, traditionally, have not had or do not have access to psychological services; on the other, it puts forward “more social” theoretical perspectives in contrast to liberal and “psychological” approaches.¹⁶

In synthesis, social commitment argues for a Psychology not for the elites, but for popular masses that struggle against social injustices and inequalities. To achieve these purposes, Psychology should¹⁷: (a) be conceived as a social intervention, even in the case of more individualized interventions, such as those that are developed in private clinics; (b) understand psychological phenomena as historical and social; (c) conceive social transformation as means for the promotion of health and well-being.

The impact of discussions about the “social commitment” of Psychology was not minor. There are several psychological practices that, after the critical debates of 1970s and 1980s, have significantly changed and, today, they clearly assume the “social commitment” of Psychology. This is the case in diverse areas of Psychology, from traditional ones – such as Educational/School Psychology, Clinical/Health Psychology – to practices that arose during this period, like Community Psychology.

In the field of School/Educational Psychology, most professionals try to overcome criticisms of the conservative role Psychology has played when analyzing so-called “learning disabilities” and the related legitimation of unfair schools in an unequal society. Alternative

¹⁶ In this sense: “We need to understand social relations and production forms of life as factors responsible for the production of psychological world. It is necessary to include the everyday world and the cultural and social world in the production and understanding of psychological world. Psychology needs, in order to overcome its ideological foundations, analyze all the elements that constitute themselves as determinations of the human being, without isolating the psychic world inside the individual, as something natural, universal and self-propelled. Changing these assumptions will make it possible to overcome the ideology present in Psychology and to consolidate a new commitment of psychologists and Psychology with society, a commitment with pursuing the improvement of quality of life; a commitment on behalf of human rights and the end of social inequalities” (Bock, 2003, pp. 27-28).

¹⁷ The use of the verb “should” is not accidental. Not a few times, discussions about “social commitment” appear as debates on the “should-be” of Psychology in an unequal society. It is within this ethical emphasis that one can identify the most problematic point of the discussions of social commitment. The discussion on the “social commitment”, with rare exceptions, ignores the deep analysis and reflection on class societies and the impossibility of justice and equality to the working class while capital rules freely. Any Marxist analysis quickly demonstrates how the recognition of class struggles sets a need to reflect on the specific class interests and not only on the “should-be” of a professional category without identifying *class* positions in social relations. It is curious that, despite the numerous theoretical and political deficiencies of the discussions on social commitment, doesn’t exist a solid set of critical analysis about its main underpinnings. Some exceptions are provided by Yamamoto (2007) and the incipient notes made by Guzzo (2007) and Silva (2011).

proposals are very diverse: interventions attempting to increase civil society participation in the construction of educational policies or to deepen school-community links; interventions in which Psychology attempts to contribute to the construction of the political-pedagogical projects of educational institutions; activities trying to improve Educational professionals training; and, lastly, attempts to provide a “personalized” education for each student (Guzzo, 2007; Guzzo, Mezzalira, Moreira, Tizzei & Silva Neto, 2010; Martinez, 2010).

In Clinical/Health Psychology the main changes are seen in the critiques of clinical, medical, remediable and “blaming the victims” model of traditional clinical practices. Today there are practices whose purpose is prevention and health-promotion guided by the aim of social change. In this sense, the clinical psychologist is not merely seen as a professional, but as an agent who puts forward certain ethical and political positions and acts within a Social Clinic or comprehensive health programs. In this sense, the psychologist advocates public health, defends the principles of the Unified Health System (*Sistema Único de Saúde, SUS*) and acts in a multi-professional perspective with other areas (Dimenstein, 2001; Dutra, 2004; Lacerda Jr. & Guzzo, 2005; Moreira, Romagnolli & Neves, 2007).

Public Policies, Community Psychology, and Anti-asylum Struggles

There are three areas in Brazilian Psychology that are especially relevant to and expressive of the transformations that took place in the last decades. These are key areas for the development of Critical Psychology practices.

Firstly, the *practice of Psychology in the sphere of social and public policies*. For many psychologists, to develop transformative practices means engagement with public policies, since these are especially oriented to the poorest layers of Brazilian society. Thus, the proposal of a Psychology allied with subaltern classes or that seeks to reverse the elitism of our profession, has found in the activities related to public policies one of the main barometers that shows how socially committed Brazilian Psychology actually is (Freitas, 2007; Saadallah, 2007).

The contribution of psychology to public policies in Brazil, according to Saadallah (2007), can occur in a variety of ways and at different times. Contributions may arise in different stages: the formulation, management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies. It may also arise in very different forms: (a) intervention – attending the users of public institutions (Health Centers, Schools, Social Assistance and Reference Centers, Community Centers, and so on.); (b) training – of social actors (community leaders, professionals of public institutions); (c) networking – building of social networks that integrate different professionals and thus prevent fragmentation and isolation of interventions that address social issues; (d) information and communication – use of psychological knowledge to provide information whose purpose is to diagnose problems, map services, recover community history, etc.

Secondly, it is interesting to highlight the development of Community Social Psychology. It was born in the period of reemergence of social struggles. Since the mid-1970s, a group of professionals sought not only to reverse the elitism of the profession, but also to contribute to the strengthening of popular movements against the dictatorship. The concern to develop, somehow, a practice that was clearly committed to the interests of the oppressed and exploited

was remarkable in first experiences of Community Psychology (Freitas, 1996a; Góis, 2003a; 2003b; Lacerda Jr., 2010).¹⁸

Initially, Community Psychology was conceived as a shift in the locus of psychological practice. During the 1970s, trying to respond to criticisms about the elitist character of Psychology, various professionals came out of organizations, schools and private clinics and offered psychological services in popular quarters, hoping to overcome the elitism of the profession by doing Psychology *in* communities (Andery, 1984; Freitas, 1996a).

According to Freitas (1996a), the first communitarian experiences were mostly guided by the urge to develop a socially relevant practice that would respond to the concerns of popular classes. A fine example of this is found in the work led by Góis over the 1980s in Ceará¹⁹. During this period, Góis (2003b) pointed to the need for Psychology to reach out *directly* to the oppressed class, because all the social institutions would be unable to respond to working people's needs, and, thus, the only alternative left to people was self-organization. He believed Psychology could help in this process, but, in order to do that, its practice would have to change: it would be necessary to construct a Psychology that would employ both knowledge and practices to produce individual and group autonomy, social justice, communitarian and political participation²⁰.

In this experience, one can find some of the general features of Community Psychology during the 1980s that, later, was summarized by Lane (1996): emphasis in discussions about prevention, mental health, popular education and consciousness-raising processes; and focus over group processes. It was during the 1980s that Community Psychology was defined as an activity that aims "to develop groups in order to become aware and to be able to exercise self-control in life-situations through cooperative and organized activities" (Lane, 1996, p. 25).

After the 1980s, Community Psychology overcame marginality and conquered certain institutional space. However, this process of institutionalization of community practices created the need to differentiate "Community Psychology" and "Community Social Psychology", because, nowadays, the diffusion of communitarian practices does not necessarily mean that there is an intervention that contributes to emancipatory processes. Thereafter, in more recent texts, "Community Psychology" means any given practice developed by any psychologist in any community. So, "Community Psychology" is a label that includes even individualistic and paternalistic practices.

In turn, "Community Social Psychology", covers a very specific set of ideas and practices. Its main references are Soviet Psychology or Latin American Critical Social Psychology or any theoretical assumption that recognizes historicity of psychological phenomena, as well as the dialectical unity of the individual-society relation. "Community Social Psychology" puts forward practices that do not have rigid boundaries with other areas of knowledge, and is

¹⁸ Brazilian Community Psychology, like other Latin American experiences, in a first moment, lacked any theoretical concern, but was engaged only with the development of a political and transformative practice that could empower social movements and popular struggles. Theoretical concerns emerged later, when started a process of institutionalization of the field at universities (Freitas, 1996a; Montero, 2004).

¹⁹ State located in Brazil Northeastern region, one of the poorest regions of the country.

²⁰ The practices developed by Góis marked the history of Community Psychology in Brazil. Góis was one of the central figures in the construction of the Community Psychology Core of Ceará Federal University, which, until today, develops knowledge and practices in the field of Community Social Psychology. Its main theoretical influences are Historical-cultural Psychology, Activity Theory, Liberation Psychology, and Biodance (Ximenes & Góis, 2010).

carried out in groups seeking to challenge power relations (Brandão, 1999; Freitas, 2007; Lacerda Jr., 2010; Lane, 1996).

Thirdly, it is necessary to emphasize the engagement of Brazilian Psychology with the *anti-asylum struggle*. As in other countries, the asylums were created in order to isolate “crazy people” from “productive society”. This exclusion does not take into account only the question of “normality”, but reproduces gender, race and class inequalities. The asylum as an institution had and has basic characteristics: aims for total and complete surveillance of madness; conceives medical authority as an assurance of achieving a “cure”; fights against “idleness” and advocates work as a form of therapy. In synthesis, control, violence and exclusion are constituent elements of asylums (Amarante, 2007; Lüchmann & Rodrigues, 2007; Ornellas, 1997).

Despite the various disputes and struggles running through history of madness in Brazil, we can say that, in general, the practices and explanations tended to reproduce the prevailing medical knowledge. The struggles against asylums started heating up in the 1960s and 1970s, along with the resurgence of social struggles in Brazil. For this reason, the anti-asylum struggle can be conceived as an effective social movement (Lüchmann, 2007).

The milestone of anti-asylum struggle is the building of the Mental Health Workers Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores de Saúde Mental*, MTSM) – which denounced: the corruption and the commodification of mental health services; the existence of violence and torture practices in asylums; the precarious working conditions in psychiatric hospitals. In a first moment, between late 1970s and early 1980s, MTSM defended the humanization of psychiatric hospitals and asylums. Later, from the second half of the 1980s on, MTSM sectors – influenced by Basaglia’s Democratic Psychiatry, French institutionalist movements, Psychoanalysis, Marxism, specific trends of Anthropology, and Cooper and Laing’s Anti-Psychiatry – no longer defended the simple humanization of psychiatric services, but the end of asylums. This is the period in which the Anti-Asylum Struggle National Movement defended explicitly the motto “for a society without asylums”. The creation of spaces of debate integrating users of mental health services, families and professionals was one of the main features of this movement (Lüchmann & Rodrigues, 2007; Vasconcelos, 2004).

After this period of great social effervescence, divisions arose; institutionalizations happened and partial achievements occurred. Among the main achievements were: (a) legal regulation and public funding of alternative mental health services; (b) the closure of significant numbers of psychiatric hospitals, especially those in which explicit human rights violations were discovered; (c) the development, institutionalization and diffusion of the “Psychosocial Attention Center” (*Centro de Atenção Psicossocial*, CAPS), i.e., an alternative space – though not a complete replacement of asylums – guided by psychosocial interventions and assumptions that rethought the health-disease processes, elaborated a new division of work between mental health professionals, proposed more democratic relations between users of mental health services, and, finally, analysed critically the effects of its actions in therapeutic and ethical terms (Costa-Rosa, 2000; Lüchmann & Rodrigues, 2007; Vasconcelos, 2004).

In the early stages of the anti-asylum struggle, the participation of Brazilian psychologists was reduced,²¹ because Psychology had, at that particular historical context, an almost non-

²¹ This is a result from the fact that the predominant professional model was the one of a liberal professional inserted into private clinics (Yamamoto, 1987; 2003; 2007). Vasconcelos (2004) notes that, in 1980, in 23 health organizations (Health Service Stations) located at Rio de Janeiro, there were 269 psychiatrists and only 6

existent involvement in asylums. It was only after the growth of the participation of psychologists in public organizations, that psychologists began to pay attention to discussions about mental health and the anti-asylum struggle. Since then, Psychology has conquered spaces in the CAPS, but, this does not necessarily mean a rupture with traditional, ahistorical, and individualistic practices – even inside the CAPS. In fact, many professionals practically ignore the discussions, conceptions and formulations defended by militants of the anti-asylum struggle.

Although many Brazilian Psychology professional organizations – as, for instance, the Federal Council of Psychology and the psychologists unions - take a frankly positive position towards anti-asylum struggles and some, like Bock (1999), highlighted the role of some psychologists in them, the reality is that in public health organizations there are still traditional forms of knowledge and practices that have been influenced little by the anti-asylum movement (Sales & Dimenstein, 2009; Vasconcelos, 2004). On the other hand, since the 1990s, a significant set of theoretical systematizations about anti-asylum struggle, alternative practices, and new conceptions on madness, mental health, etc. have been produced (Vasconcelos, 2004).

Despite all the changes in the professional practices of Brazilian Psychology, it is an exaggeration to say that these changes have resulted in a Psychology that is contributing to the construction of a new society or to the disappearance of social inequalities. As Yamamoto (2007) notes, the involvement of psychologists in the sphere of social policies or new organizations really was something new. However, the traditional knowledge and practices disseminated by the shallow training offered by many universities have not disappeared, and are still part of the everyday practices of psychologists who work in new spaces and with new groups (especially the poorest sectors). Even worse, it seems that, often, the role of the psychologist in social policies and in public facilities does not break with the typical answer of contemporary capitalism to social issues: “*disqualified access* to ever-larger portions of the population to basic services in social sector” (Yamamoto, 2007, p. 34).

Facing this problem, those who advocated an overcoming of the clinical, liberal, and elitist professional model have concluded that it is not enough to change the context of psychological activity, but also the theoretical framework, especially individualistic and technocratic concepts (Yamamoto, 1996, 2003).

Current Ideas of Critical Psychology: Theoretical Trends and Social Psychology

Critical theories in Brazilian Psychology can be identified since the first half of the 20th century. During this period, there were papers attempting to rethink psychological theory in order to enhance social reform projects (Sass, 2007). An exemplar is the work of Manoel Bomfim, who examined how the colonizers have expropriated Latin American people, struggled against scientific racism and emphasized the people (not the elites) as a key element for building an effective Brazilian nation²² (Bock & Furtado, 2006; Jacó-Vilela, 2007).

However, the more systematic ideas discussed here started in late 1970s and early 1980s. Since that period, there have been several theoretical texts that have attempted to overcome

psychologists. This situation is completely different today. For example, today Psychology is a constitutive part of the mental health team of every CAPS – main public organization that handles mental health.

²² It is important to note that, while representatives and ideologues of the dominant classes sought to build Brazil as a modern nation, denying and repressing any autonomous action of the “people”, Bomfim points precisely to the political participation of people as a constitutive element of a better nation.

the various crises of Brazilian Psychology through critical theoretical production (Yamamoto, 1987). Several elements may explain this. Although some of them have already been mentioned, it is important to review them and present some others:

a. The context of radicalization connected with popular struggles against the military dictatorship. The reorganization process of the working class against the bourgeois autocracy was a critical element that stirred reflections about how psychology could contribute to processes of social change. Along with this, there was a theoretical approach to Marxism and a rejection of American work (Camino, 1996; Freitas, 1996a; Guareschi, 2007; Yamamoto, 1987; 2003; 2007).

b. The arrival of “opposition” in the professional associations of Psychology. Several members of the opposition were psychologists influenced by Marxist ideas and other critical theories. The opposition, at least in its beginning, criticized corporatism and advocated a dialogue with the various progressive social movements. These mobilizations have contributed to the dissemination of critical proposals in the theoretical sphere (Hur, 2009).

c. The dissemination and creation of organizations and psychoanalytic circles that have broken with *International Psychoanalytical Association* (IPA). Brazilian psychoanalytic societies were, according to Coimbra (1995), spaces marked by a poor theoretical thought, in which the training was marked by a true “pedagogy of submission”. With these ruptures, although many problems of traditional psychoanalytic institutions remained, there were the opening of spaces for more criticism and theoretical alternatives emerged, such as the proposals of Bleger, Pichon-Rivière and other Argentinian psychoanalysts,²³ as well as to the Lacanism and other psychoanalytic readings, which have emphasized group, institutional and cultural analysis (see also Carvalho & Dunker, 2005).

d. The creation of associations and study-intervention groups inspired by institutionalist movement and French philosophers in general. With that, emerged courses, collectives and institutions based upon institutionalist thought, social analysis and Schizoanalysis. The ideas of Lapassade, Lourau, Guattari, Deleuze and Foucault began being discussed, used, and reconsidered in Brazilian context (Coimbra, 1995; Rodrigues, 2006).

e. The diffusion of collective health movements and anti-asylum struggles. The struggles to transform the relation between society and madness did not only result in changes in mental health policies, but have also introduced new conceptions of subjectivity, normality, madness, subject, etc. In general, the anti-asylum movement was influenced by theorists like Foucault, Guattari, Basaglia and Marxism. (Goulart, 2007; Vasconcelos, 2004).

f. The foundation of Brazilian Association of Social Psychology (ABRAPSO). Since the 1970s, several Brazilian psychologists were developing criticism to Brazilian and Latin-American Mainstream Social Psychology (Bomfim, 2003; Lane, 1984a/2001). With the foundation of Brazilian Association of Social Psychology, in the 1980s, there was a huge impulse for critical studies and practices. Brazilian reality, psychosocial issues affecting Latin American popular majorities, the need for political action within university, the construction of a Social Psychology that would overcome the uncritical reproduction of American and European models, were some of the problems that have energized the discussions developed in ABRAPSO (Bomfim, Freitas & Campos, 1992; Lane, 1984a/2001; Lane & Bock, 2003; Molon, 2002).

g. The process of expansion of research activities in Brazilian universities, especially public universities. These created space for various social struggles against military dictatorship and has stimulated the development of critical trends not only in Psychology. Jacó-Vilela (2007) notes that the expansion of graduation and post-graduation courses

²³ According to Coimbra (1995), Argentinians who arrived at Brazil escaping from made possible not only a greater diffusion of group analysis and Bleger’s proposal of “Institutional Psychology”, but also paved the way for the introduction of ideas presented by Guattari and Institutional Analysis.

coincides with the process of diffusion of Social Psychology crisis in Brazil and that, today, most of the Master and Doctoral programs in Brazilian Psychology have an emphasis on Social Psychology.

In general, everything previously mentioned occurred especially between 1970s and 1980s. Processes started in those years have enabled an explosion of critical theoretical work in the 1990s and at the beginning of the 21st century. There is, however, one important difference: in first phase there was a hegemony of Psychoanalysis and Marxism in critical circles of Brazilian Psychology, while the present is marked by an enormous plurality, with work influenced by the most varied currents: French Institutional Analysis, Foucaultian archaeology and genealogy, Lacanian Psychoanalytical and Social Theory, Frankfurt School Critical Theory, Historical-cultural Psychology and Activity Theory, Liberation Psychology, and others.

Carvalho and Dunker (2005) list as major trends of Brazilian Critical Psychology: Psychoanalysis, Social Psychology, Community Social Psychology, Socio-historical Psychology, Institutional Psychology and Educational Psychology. This picture points to some important references of Critical Psychology in Brazil, but does not account for all its diversity and complexity. Neither can the present text offer a detailed look.

Therefore, the discussion herein developed, instead of pointing to specific fields seeks to highlight some of the various manifestations of “Critical Psychology” in Brazil through two perspectives: (a) a first one, that points to the main theoretical currents and its influence in the discussions about the object of psychological theory today; (b) a second one, highlighting the development of critical perspectives in the field of Social Psychology.

Theoretical Currents and Projects of Critical Psychology

It was already stated that Brazilian Critical Psychology contains a huge variety of theoretical ideas – which makes the task of presenting the different theoretical approaches rather complex. At the risk of being reductionist, this presentation groups the various theoretical approaches into two poles: in the first, those “big narratives” that marked the origins of Critical Psychology, like Marxism and Psychoanalysis; in the second, the theories inspired in elaborations resulting from the “linguistic turn” and/or postmodern and poststructuralist critiques. So, one can find propositions that range from Marxism to social constructionist and postmodern trends. Between these two poles are, for example, ideas that combine distinct authors such as Foucault, Moscovici and Marx. Some examples of these two poles follow.

Combining Marxism and Psychoanalysis, one can find those who have tried to draw up a Freud-Marxist synthesis, i.e., that understood Psychoanalysis as a theory of the individual and Marxism as a theory of society. The combination of both would produce a synthesis that would result in something better (Sandler, 1986; Viana, 2002; Violante, 1988; Granúzzio & Ceribelli, 2011). There are also those texts which, from the reading of Marxist psychologists and of Marx and Engels, try to develop implications for Psychology (Carvalho, 1989).

Among the texts of Critical Psychology based on readings of Marx and Freud, in Brazil there are a wide group of researchers who studies the Frankfurt School. These studies were developed especially in Social Psychology, which is understood as an analytically oriented science, studying social processes that facilitate or hinder the formation of the individual, i.e., Social Psychology tries to examine the possibilities of resistance to alienation at the individual level (Crochík, 1996, 2008). Other psychologists of this trend have studied

prejudice, morality, education, ideology, art, violence, Psychoanalysis and subjectivity (Caniato, 2008; Crochík, 2006, 2007; Resende & Chaves, 2010; Soares, 2011; Zanolla, 2010, 2011).

Studies started by the *troika* of Soviet Psychology – Vygotsky, Leontiev and Luria – were especially influential in Brazil, especially among researchers who sought to articulate Marxism with Psychology without turning to Psychoanalysis and those involved in Educational Psychology. The thought of Vygotsky was especially important in Brazilian Psychology, because it was the main source of the empowerment of dialectical and non-reductionist analyses on the social, political and historical constitution of the subject (Bock & Furtado, 2006; Lane, 1984a/2001; Prado Filho, 2009).

The penetration of Vygotsky's ideas in Brazil was extremely important, even though it has often been a product of readings that reduced or eliminated the Marxist ideas in his work. In Critical Psychology one can find texts that problematize the translations of this Soviet Psychologist, as well polemics with authors who try to eliminate the Marxism of Historical-Cultural Psychology (Facci, Baroco & Leonardo, 2009; Tuleski, 2002). Among researchers of Educational Psychology and Development Psychology, the influence of Historical-Cultural Psychology of Vygotsky was especially important. Critiques of the role of schools and social institutions in the constitution of the subject, analyses on emotions, experience and consciousness are some of the major topics studied by those influenced by Vygotsky (Facci, 2009; Toassa, 2011).

In Social Psychology, the works of Vygotsky, Leontiev and Luria were disseminated in the 1980s, and the diffusion of their work was done especially in the studies of Lane (1984a/2001; 1995; Lane & Camargo, 1995). Her pursuit of a “new concept of man” found inspiration in Soviet psychology to propose the centrality of consciousness, activity, emotions, and identity as the main important theoretical categories of a critical and historical Social Psychology (Lane, 1984a/2001; 1995; Lane & Camargo, 1995). Based on the studies of Lane, a group of researchers did studies on categories such as subject, social subjectivity, psyche, activity, consciousness, sense and meaning (Aguiar, 2001; Aguiar, Liebesny, Marchesan & Sanchez, 2009; Furtado, 2001; Furtado & Svartman, 2009; Gonçalves, 2003; Bock & Gonçalves, 2009).

Foucault is another great influence in Critical Psychology. Since late 1980s, there were works inspired by Foucault's ideas (Machado, 1987a; von Smigay, 1989), but it was during 1990s and in the beginning of this century, that Foucault's thesis became more and more present in Critical Psychology. Foucault was taken as a theoretical source that facilitated: on one hand, criticism of positivist, essentialist, and ahistorical conceptions of subject and subjectification; on the other, overcoming limitations of Marxism and Psychoanalysis. An extremely broad range of papers can be found that analyze Foucault's contributions to the study of processes such as experience, subjectivity, politics, power and control (Ferreira Neto, 2006; Guareschi & Huning, 2009; Lemos & Cardoso Junior, 2009; Martins, 2008).

It is interesting to note that it was this critical field that served as a starting point for the elaboration of broad and interesting critical studies on the History of Psychology. Thus, Foucault – along with other French theorists — was a key source of important analyses on how Psychoanalysis and Psychology worked as instruments of domination (Coimbra, 1995; Ferreira, 2006; Figueiredo, 2007; Jacó-Vilela, 2007; Rodrigues, 2006).

Deleuze and Guattari are also central references in Brazilian Critical Psychology. Guattari's visit to Brazil in 1982 (Guattari & Rolnik, 1996) illustrates how important his ideas were in describing processes of subjectification and criticizing contemporaneity, madness, politics and the production of subjectivities in capitalism (Machado & Lavrador, 2001; Mancebo, 2003; Orlandi, 2001; Palombini, 2011).

Social Constructionism in its various subdivisions, as well as Discursive Psychology, has also been present in Brazilian Psychology. Again, in Social Psychology, this theoretical trend appears as one important source of support for critical studies of psychological phenomena in their social dimensions. Studying language or discursive practices, several Brazilian researchers began to look at everyday life and the production of meaning. Thus, Social Constructionism in Brazil appears in studies seeking to offer new accounts about subjectivity, self, and micro-relations of power (Spink, 2000; Guanaes & Japur, 2003; Mello, Silva, Lima & Di Paolo, 2007).

One can notice that studies related to the concept of "subjectivity" express the plurality of theoretical trends mentioned here. Probably, as in other parts of the world, subjectivity emerged as central theoretical issue in several project of Critical Psychology. Usually, subjectivity is the concept used by those who want to underline the complex nature of psychological phenomena and who pursue the overcoming of dichotomous or reductionist theories.

According to Bernardes (2007), the concept of subjectivity in Psychology reflects an ambiguous process. On one hand, the concept expresses the development of a critical idea, which attempts to understand the "social" to transform it. On the other, the concept is a device that expresses a conservative change in contemporary capitalism. The changes that produced "flexible accumulation" and acceleration of the capital circulation process would have a theoretical counterpoint: the defense of a concept that would glorify the existence of fluid and fragmented subjects. In the latter case, subjectivity would not be a theoretical feature that would contribute to emancipatory criticism, but would be a theoretical device that adjusts Psychology to the contemporary and conservative ideological climate prevailing in late capitalism.

Similarly, Mancebo (2003) notes how current transformations of capitalism opened opportunities to fight essentialist and ahistorical notions of a unitary, rational, endowed subject. So, in this sense, subjectivity can help to rethink Psychology, analyze new social processes, and produce new ways of changing social reality. But, Mancebo warns, new forms of subjectification can reflect new ways to ensure the production and reproduction of capital. As one can see, subjectivity has been object of several and polemical debates in Critical Psychology. Two polarized positions can be highlighted: on one side, are those that point out the epistemological centrality of subjectivity to the building of a Psychology that overcomes dichotomous conceptions about the relation between individual-society. Exemplifying this point of view is the work of González Rey, which seeks to demonstrate the potential of subjectivity in rethinking Psychology epistemologically. According to him, the absence of an ontological definition of subjectivity has meant that many of the new theoretical perspectives in Psychology only result in new ways to reduce the relation between subject and object to one of these specific dimensions. Thus, González Rey criticizes biological accounts of subjectivity, but also discursive conceptions that do not allow a complex definition of subjectivity either (González Rey, 2003, 2005). Subjectivity, according to González Rey (2003, 2005), does not result from an inexorable causality between social and subjective

conditions, but it is the result of human interaction and the productions of meaning and sense by the subject.

On the other side of the polarization highlighted before, one can find those studies that problematize contemporary discussions on subjectivity. Resende (2008, 2009), for example, has used the contributions of Psychoanalysis and Marxism to problematize contemporary forms of subjectivity, and to demonstrate that certain classics – as Marx and Freud – still have enormous importance in examining contemporaneity and subjectivity.

It is worth mentioning Vanconcelos' recent and extensive work (2010) that examines the theme of human subjectivity and its articulation with Marxism. The author assumes a critical attitude in relation to Marx and the Marxism and seeks to defend the thesis that Marxist tradition, despite huge contributions to historical and social understanding of subjectivity, has inherent limitations in what concerns the understanding of subjectivity. The contributions of Marxism to the study of human subjectivity and to Psychology would be, according to the author: the strengthening of dialectical and non-reductionist concepts of subjectivity; studies of subjectivity in order to feed transformative social and professional practices; problematization of conservative concepts of mental health and madness; analysis of the subjective side of processes like alienation, domination, and exploitation; criticism of family, sexuality and gender-oppressive processes.

Critical Social Psychology

Many of the early elaborations of Brazilian critical thought have arisen in the field of Social Psychology and this was, indeed, a result of the so-called crisis of Social Psychology in the 1960s and 1970s (Camino, 1996; Lacerda Jr. & Guzzo, 2009; Lane, 1984a/2001; Montero, 1996). Despite many theoretical differences, it is possible to identify a certain line of continuity in some issues permeating the most distinguished works of Brazilian Critical Social Psychology.

Early critical works were mostly influenced by Psychoanalysis and Marxism, while today one can find an immense theoretical and thematic diversity. This plurality appears to be the result of the massive expansion of Brazilian Social Psychology that has as its main features: (a) an association of psychologists – ABRAPSO – which organizes twice-yearly national meetings, bringing together thousands of students, professionals and researchers; (b) the greater number of graduate and postgraduate research programs.

ABRAPSO is an important part of Critical Psychology's history. The early criticisms of Mainstream Social Psychology in Brazil and Latin America began during the conferences of the Interamerican Society of Psychology (SIP) held in Miami in 1976 and in Lima in 1979. The meetings served to discuss the poor contributions of Social Psychology to the issues faced by popular majorities of Latin American countries. So, those involved in these discussions started to create Social Psychology associations at the national level, and to question the representativeness of Latin American Association of Social Psychology (ALAPSO), founded in 1972 and that, in 1979, was chaired by Aroldo Rodrigues, a Brazilian social psychologist who reproduced American Social Psychology uncritically, and whose work was marked by positivist and adaptationist conceptions of man (Lane, 1984/2001; Lane & Bock, 2003; Molon, 2002).

Following the proposals discussed within the scope of the SIP's meetings, the First Conference of Social Psychology in Brazil was held in October 1979. During the meeting, Aroldo Rodriguez left, disagreeing with the discussions and proposals advanced there. One of them was the founding of ABRAPSO – which happened in July 10, 1980, and whose first President was Silvia Lane (Lane & Bock, 2003; Molon, 2002).

Brazilian reality, the problems faced by Latin American popular majorities, the need for political and transformative actions, and the building of a Brazilian Social Psychology that would overcome American and European frameworks were some of the key issues for the newly founded ABRAPSO:

The political intentions of ABRAPSO have always been: the construction of a Critical Social Psychology, focused on national issues, accepting different epistemological currents, if engaged with the social commitment of building a fairer society. (Lane & Bock, 2003, p. 149)

During this period, there was a huge interest in the possible practical contributions of Social Psychology. Professionals, seeking to reduce the prevailing elitism in the professional practices of Psychology, were trying to extend the psychological services to the poorest, to break with paternalistic assistentialism and contribute to popular organization. For this reason, many Social Psychology debates had appeared in Brazil and Latin America associated with discussions on Community (Social) Psychology (Bomfim, Freitas & Campos, 1992; Freitas, 2001; Montero, 2004).

The enormous Brazilian cultural diversity, the expansion of graduate and postgraduate Psychology courses, the different processes produced by political changes that marked Brazil between the 1980s and 1990s, and the fragmentation of social sciences resulted in a huge plurality within Brazilian Critical Social Psychology. Trying to organize this diversity, Spink and Spink propose two axes of continuity in the different propositions, originating from the various practices and ideas of Social Psychology:

The first axis is formed by the various theories about the production of meanings in the everyday life: the cognitive perspective that discusses attitudes and information processing, and those that discuss social representations, ideology, consciousness processes, and everyday discursive practices. The second axis refers to multiple forms of sociability, whether micro-level (affective and loving relationships, emotions), medium-level (processes of socialization, family and institutional relations) or macro-level (our integration into political life, social movements, community relations). In each axis there are differences of opinion about which is the most appropriate theorizing, the most appropriate method, or what the priority is. (Spink & Spink, 2006, pp. 574-575)

Following the classification proposed by Spink and Spink, some of the themes that have marked Brazilian Critical Social Psychology are presented here. First, one can find debates on the subject matter of Social Psychology: criticism of psychologism, dichotomous analyses of the individual-society relation, individualism and other theoretical problems of Mainstream Psychology (Bernardes, 1998; Camino, 1996, 2005; Crochik, 1996, 2008; Guareschi, 2005, 2007; Lane, 1984a/2001, 1987; Mancebo, 2003; Rodrigues, 2006; Spink & Spink, 2006).

Together with epistemological and methodological discussions, analyses and research prevailed on concepts and specific psychosocial processes. These attempted to contribute to a critique of contemporary society. Illustrative examples are works on: consciousness, alienation and ideology (Codo, 2004; Guareschi, 1996; Lane, 1984b/2001; Maia, 2007); participation, politics and social movements (Groff, Maheirie & Prim, 2009; Lacerda Jr. & Guzzo, 2006; Narita, 2005; Prado, 2001; Prado & Costa, 2009; Sandoval, 1989, 2001; Silva, 2003); group processes (Borges, Batista & Vecchia, 2011; Lane, 1984c/2001; Martins, 2003); poverty, exclusion and social inequality (Dantas, 2007; Sawaia, 1999, 2009); human rights (Camino, Mendoza & Ismael, 2009; Coimbra, 2001; Schwede, Barbosa & Schruher, 2008); authority and violence (Lhullier, 1997; Caniato, 2008); media and mass communication (Guareschi, 1991, 2000), prejudice (Crochik, 2006; Nunes & Camino, 2011; Prado & Machado, 2008), identity (Ciampa, 1987; Jacques, 1998; Lima, 2008; Lopes, 2002), everyday life (Arendt, 2008; Spink, 2000) and others.²⁴

It is impossible to perform a detailed analysis of every theoretical trend and research that emerged in Brazilian Social Psychology, but some examples will be mentioned which, although they do not exhaust the theoretical diversity of it, can illustrate the critical nature and engagement of various intellectuals with the study and criticism of Brazilian reality.

A first relevant and illustrative example is the work of Silvia Lane. As already mentioned, the author was important disseminator of Vygotsky, Luria and Leontiev's works in Social Psychology. In addition, she contributed to the dissemination of various European theorists (Serge Moscovici, Georges Politzer, and Lucien Sève) and Latin-Americans (González Rey, Martín-Baró, Montero and others) who articulated Psychology and Marxism or problematized the psychological reductionism of mainstream theories. In this way, the author's work served to: introduce reflection on the need for new categories that make explicit historical and social nature of human beings; discuss contributions of historical materialism to Psychology; redefine categories like activity, consciousness and identity in Social Psychology; underline the adaptationist character of American Social Psychology; and raise the need for a community-oriented Psychology (Lane, 1984a/2001, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1996).

A second example that can be indicated is the set of works developed by Pedrinho Guareschi. He developed, and still does, a huge theoretical activity on subjects as ideology, power, domination, social representations, media, communication and subjectivity (Guareschi, 1991, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2007, 2009). The author discusses ideas of: Zygmunt Bauman, Paulo Freire, Karl Marx, Serge Moscovici, Edward P. Thompson and others. His studies – beyond his clear contribution and intention to problematize certain concepts like power, domination, communication, individual, and others – aim to contribute with processes of conscientization and liberation.

Camino's work (1996, 2005) is oriented towards the same direction of Lane and Guareschi. He sought, since the 1970s, to contribute with the empowerment of social movements through the creation of partnerships with trade unions, and landless or homeless people social movements. In his later works, Camino and his group set as a goal the construction of: "a Social Psychology that was compatible with critical assumptions of man and society, and which, at the same time, would allow the construction of a set of scientific knowledge about subjective processes underlying social relations within a certain society" (Camino, 1996, p.

²⁴ Obviously, the selection of topics and works quoted here is partial and limited. However, at this time, the intention is not to present an exhaustive picture, but one that just illustrates the set of social issues studied by those who can be grouped under the term "Critical Psychology".

20). The author appealed to interdisciplinary reflections on individual and society relations and began studying, in more detail, the contributions of Moscovici and Tajfel, as well as the concepts of social representation and social identity. From there on, Camino and a group of collaborators have been developing research on social movements, political behavior, racism, sexism and homophobia, using what it called a “psychosocial perspective” (Camino, Mendoza & Ismael, 2009; Torres, Lima & Costa, 2005).

Symptomatically, among all fields of Brazilian Psychology, it was in Social Psychology that feminist criticism appeared and gender has been studied. Feminist works on domestic violence, inequalities in education, workplace and family, essentialist conceptions of individual in Psychology and other subjects were addressed by feminist critique in Social Psychology (Maia, 2007; Nuernberg, 2005; Strey, 1998; Prehn & Hüning, 2005). Similarly, it is in Social Psychology that one can find some of the most important studies about race, racism and prejudice. For example, studies on: white supremacy (ideology affirming white privilege) and whiteness (ideology that attaches to blacks the desire to be white and thus achieve white privileges); intolerance and totalitarian ideologies; manifestations of “cordial racism”; and analyses on anti-racism (Camino, Silva, Machado & Pereira, 2001; Carone, 2009; Silva, 2001; Kawahala & Soler, 2010; Schucman, 2010; Souza, 2001, 2005; Vilhena, 2006).

Similarly, it was in Social Psychology that the thought of Martín-Baró – proponent of Liberation Psychology – was mostly disseminated in Brazilian Psychology. Martín-Baró’s work was a strong influence on the works of Brazilian researchers who tried to assimilate his contributions to develop a Social Psychology that engages itself in the production of processes of social liberation and critical analyses of group relations, political conflicts, power, and the social constitution of the individual (Freitas, 1996b; Lacerda Jr., 2007; Lacerda Jr. & Guzzo, 2009; Lane, 1995; Martins, 2003; Ximenes & Góis, 2010). In summary, Brazilian Critical Social Psychology is a fertile ground for the spread of feminist and anti-racist works, as well as various critical studies on capitalist society and related psychosocial processes. Today it is a broad and plural field, although, certainly, it has not overcome marginality within educational training courses that still repeat the receipts gave by the “Holy Trinity” of Brazilian Psychology (Traditional Psychoanalysis, Behaviorism/Cognitivism and “Humanism”).

Challenges for Critical Psychology in Brazil

At this point, after the presentation of a general and incomplete scope of Brazilian Critical Psychology, it is proper to share some considerations on contemporary challenges. From what was described before, it is possible to briefly write that the development of critical thought in Brazilian Psychology was marked by two fundamental processes. First one was the offensive of social struggles that took place throughout the 1970s. Without this social unrest, which challenged the dominant fractions of bourgeoisie operating in Brazil, no one could imagine the emergence of actions, research and studies from Brazilian psychologists trying to build another society and another Psychology. Even if the current political and ideological context is completely different from that one existing between the 1970s and 1980s, the fact is that perspectives founded upon the aspirations and needs of social movements seeking to subvert the social order are still alive in Brazilian Psychology.

The second unfolding in Brazilian history that marked Critical Psychology was the *defeat* of the social struggles against military dictatorship and bourgeois society as a whole. This defeat

resulted in a bourgeois democracy under neoliberal hegemony, in which the dominant pole consists of a block including financial capital, industrial capital and agribusiness sectors. The political representatives of these sectors are ex-workers (as former President Lula da Silva) and ex-guerrilla fighters (like current President Dilma Rousseff). This defeat produced an ambiguous process in Critical Psychology. On one hand, it intensified theoretical and professional accommodation to the status quo. On the other, created an ideological climate in which various theorists and researchers began to look for alternative models and practices, since, according to their understanding, the defeats of the past would be the product of deficiencies of “modern narratives”.

It is within this complex situation that Brazilian Critical Psychology has to think about its future. Some specific challenges and issues can be thought and problematized with the purpose to ensure that “Critical Psychology” doesn’t become just another cog in the factory of the *status quo*.

The first challenge that must be recognized relates to the themes of “social commitment” and public policies. “Social commitment” is especially problematic because, as it was previously noted, it has been one of the main mottos of Brazilian Psychology since the number of “wage-earning” psychologists working with social issues has grown. “Social commitment” debates seem to confuse the tendency of psychologists becoming less and less liberal professionals and more and more wage-earners – an economic change – with the criticism of individualism, social injustices, and capitalism – which would be an ideological change.

So, the growing number of psychologists working with poor people doesn’t mean that we had a rupture with the “traditional commitment of Psychology with the elites”. This kind of celebration forgets that the mere offering of psychological services to the poorest layers of Brazilian society does not mean, *necessarily*, a different role for Psychology. In fact, the psychological services offered to the poor and excluded nowadays is something very close to that old and conservative role of involving “poor people” in a “modern” society. Thus, Psychology professionals working in public services of health, education and social work do not necessarily meet the “should-be” expected and indicated by the theorists of “social commitment of Psychology”.

In the same way, the work with public policies is not necessarily something better. We must remember that public policies are State actions that fragmentize and split “social issues”²⁵ in order to reduce or mask the symptoms of social problems such as poverty, unemployment, etc., but *without solving or tackling the causes*. In this sense, public policies are always seen in the plural and not in the singular. There is no public policy to solve the problem of social inequality, but only specific policies directed to the “sick”, “women”, “children”, etc. (Faleiros, 2004; Netto, 2010).

Again, the involvement of Psychology with public policies does not necessarily mean the development of a more critical or transformative social intervention. Psychologists working with public policies may only mean that Psychology is legitimizing the offering of precarious services to the poorest population (Yamamoto, 2003).

²⁵ The concerns with “social issues” had arisen to analyze the pauperism of the working class in capitalist society. The specificity of the widespread poverty in the early capitalist societies arose from the fact that, for the first time in the history of humankind, poverty was produced by the same social relations that it made possible to overcome poverty. In this sense, social issues are caused by the exploitation of labor by capital (Netto, 2010).

Are Brazilian Psychologists effectively contributing to social change when they focus public policies? Will discussions of “social commitment” really contribute to the development of a Psychology that *effectively* helps to put an end to “social inequalities” (Bock, 2003, p. 28)? Or are the debates about “social commitment” and “public policies” just substitutive features that adjust Critical Psychology to the conservative ideological climate created by more than 20 years of neoliberal hegemony? In other words, is “social commitment” just another ideological manifestation that feeds illusions through reforms inside the capitalist system and that, in a messianic way, exaggerates the role of the psychologist in the transformation process of the capitalist society? How much do the debates on “social commitment” obscure the problem of the “social class” determination in the development of a specific profession?

A second problem that can be pointed out is the watering-down of the criticisms made by intellectuals who, previously, pointed to the need of the destruction of bourgeois society and its structures of domination. This process is possibly related to the delicate problem of the institutionalization of Critical Psychology (or of critical groups within Brazilian Psychology).

An illustrative example is the differentiation between “Community Social Psychology” and “Community Psychology”, already mentioned. Community Psychology emerged after many professionals pursuing to produce a Psychology for the poorest population. But, in a later period, after the institutionalization of Community Psychology practices, several theorists began to point out the need to differentiate a specific branch – “Community Social Psychology” – which is different from “Community Psychology”. That branch aims not only a practice oriented to poorest layers, but also a transformation in academic and professional education, as well as on theoretical foundations that guide the practice of Psychology.

Freitas (2007), for instance, believes that contemporary Community Social Psychology must deal with five specific challenges, if it wants to contribute to liberation processes: (a) humanized rebuilding of social networks; (b) recovery of collective projects that goes beyond individual dimensions and immediate conditions; (c) creation of communitarian and solidarity projects in everyday life; (d) promotion of an education that advocates building of public policies; (e) overcoming of partial and local realities through the establishment of links with global transformation projects. In this manner, Freitas (2007) is trying to keep alive the critical spirit that drove the development of Community Psychology practices in Brazil between the 1970s and 1980s.

The institutionalization problem can also be noticed in other two examples. Firstly, the political changes that affected the “opposition” that until nowadays operates in the professional organizations of Brazilian Psychology. As already stated, according to Hur (2009, 2012), the political victories of the “opposition” contributed to politicizing the debates within psychology and to the unfolding of debates related to how Psychology could be linked with issues and struggles of working class. However, according to the author, since the 1990s, “left” groups have been marked by splits, personal conflicts, and divisions. There was also a growing and intensification of corporate concerns – which can be noticed in the main priorities of the current “representatives” of Federal Council of Psychology: holding large congresses, media campaigns, and the definition of a corporative motto (“to take care of the profession”) as its main slogan. Thus, it can be said that opposition groups, upon becoming institutionalized, have changed their political nature: “instead of conceiving the institution as a mean to realize a political program, to occupy the institution became the end, regardless of similarities or differences in relation to political project” (Hur, 2012, p. 84).

Institutionalization also marked ABRAPSO. Initially, the association served as an oasis for those who were trying to survive in the desert of conservatism of Brazilian Psychology. To open up spaces for critical debates about old and new ideas and practices of Brazilian Psychology, to engage with struggles and movements against inequalities and social injustices, and to contribute with emancipation processes were important elements in ABRAPSO's history (Lane & Bock, 2003; Molon, 2002).

These virtues of ABRAPSO have not disappeared, but, while the association became bigger and started to being more related to academic needs, something changed: the recent national meetings of ABRAPSO had space for discussion of "Critical Psychology", but these are just a small piece of huge "shopping malls" where one can find any kind of discussion about anything that one can learn and practice in Psychology. In this sense, one can ask: has the growth of ABRAPSO resulted in the decline of the ideals which were related to its creation? In terms of critical theory, the debates about subjectivity and new theoretical currents that influence Brazilian Critical Psychology are something to be problematized. There are potentialities and dangers in adopting the category subjectivity and the "new" philosophical currents. In fact, Mainstream Psychology always fluctuated between, on one side, mechanistic and abstract objectivism, and, in the other side, the cult of an abstract subjectivity. Mechanical objectivism is a product of true (positivist and neopositivist) science and objectivity (reduced to empirical data). Meanwhile the cults of abstract subjectivity produce more and more refined categories and battle objectivity as the main problem that prevents the understanding of "complexity" of human life or subjectivity.

The proposals of Critical Psychology and theoretical conceptions which, presently, are talking about subjectivity try to overcome the forementioned limitations. From these attempts, important answers have sprung. Non-reductionist assumptions about individual-society dialectics, critiques of the role of science and despotic practices in research and practice of Psychology, and critical analyses of new phenomena and transformations of contemporary society are some examples of that. At the same time, many of these works are marked by skepticism, rejection of general categories or "grand narratives" and, sometimes, by the rejection of classical thinkers. In the worst case, the reaffirmation of subjectivity seems to be just an attempt to redundantly restate the obvious, as in the following case: "the Subjective Dimension of Reality is correlated with the Subject's Subjective Configuration and denotes how subjectivity configures itself socially" (Furtado, 2001, p. 92).

Studying subjectivity is surely one of the possible contributions Critical Psychology can make. But how can this be done from cornerstones that are completely distinct from those that permeate Mainstream Psychology, new individualisms, and new irrationalism? In a certain sense, the ambiguity (a concept that can be a device for critical thought and, at the same time, a device for domination) of subjectivity debates that Bernardes (2007) highlighted is the main concern of this exposition about how subjectivity can be part of a problem, instead of a solution, for contemporary challenges of Brazilian Critical Psychology: are the contemporary debates on subjectivity a possibility for renewing social sciences and overcoming reductionist, ahistorical, and individualistic perspectives, or are they a scientific manifestation of an ideology that seeks to define subjectivity – in its most individualized and privatized manifestations – as the only source of intelligibility and recognition of social reality?

Pointing this ambiguity does not mean that the various contemporary theorizations about subjectivity result in glorification of the status quo. On the contrary, many times subjectivity

is present in studies, researches, and practices that are criticizing current social order and traditional science.

The answers to some of the questions presented in the last paragraphs are yet to be constructed. A deeper balance in Brazilian Critical Psychology still needs to be achieved. However, this text can close with a small assumption. One of the ways of overcoming the problems and contradictions previously mentioned is the engagement of psychologists with one of the fundamental sources of the development of critical thought in Brazil: social insurgence. Engagement with the activity of transforming the world undertaken by movements of rebellion and insurgency against inequalities and social injustice is always a guarantee of effective Critical Psychology. In other words, it is argued that one of the ways to prevent the conversion of Critical Psychology into just an academic commodity feeding the academic market or, in the worst case, a device supporting and deploying conservative practices, is engagement in actions that seek to create new concepts and new ways of being. Without this engagement with the aspirations of the working class and various social movements and upheavals, Critical Psychology could become merely an exquisite relative of Mainstream Psychology.

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