Introduction

Psychology and Psychologies: which Epistemology?

Marco Fenici[*]
fenici@unisi.it

According to its etymology, psychology is the discipline that investigates the psyche. However, the meaning of the term 'psyche' is not constant across time. Sometimes it has indicated a kind of vital breath, sometimes the soul, and sometimes the series of mental functions. Analogously, psychology has identified its object, its method and the goals of its analysis differently over time. The problem of the unity of psychology arose a relatively few decades after the birth of the science (Driesch 1925; Bühler 1927), and persists to the present day (see, for example, Royce 1970; Staats 1983; Sternberg 2004; Henriques 2004, 2005). The psyche is the object of enquiry in very different scientific disciplines, from neuroscience and neuropsychiatry to behaviourist and cognitive psychology, to historical-existential and psychodynamic therapies. Each of these disciplines studies the mind on a different level of analysis: neurophysiological, functional or narrative. The fragmentation of the object of psychology is mirrored in the variable popular perception of the psychologist: sometimes the psychologist is the neuroscientist, sometimes the psychiatrist, sometimes the psychoanalyst, sometimes the theoretical psychologist or sometimes the psychotherapist whose training may well come from outside of the discipline.

Therefore the issue of pluralism in psychology is unavoidable. Various research paradigms and schools produce knowledge of a different and not immediately compatible kind. This is problematic: the physical sciences, on the contrary, present, at least in principle, cumulative knowledge. The question about the unity of psychology requires us to attend to the kind of pluralism we see in the field. Is this a pluralism of levels of description of the object of psychology, or of methods of enquiry? Or is the pluralism deeper, indicating the existence of different objects of study? If psychology is a human science, and if human nature is an open (at the same time biological, social and cultural) phenomenon, a pluralist account in psychology may be appropriate in virtue of the absence of any possible reduction of the human being to mere natural fact.

The present issue of *Humana.Mente* intends to investigate the problem of the unity of psychology with reference to these questions. These questions presuppose an autonomous domain of the philosophy of psychology within the philosophy of science. Since philosophy of science is also referred to as epistemology – indeed, according to a "continental" rather than Anglophone terminology - we may consequently label such a domain with the name of *epistemology of psychology*. Thus, the epistemology of psychology may be defined as that part of applied epistemology which studies the scientific status of the psychological disciplines.[1]

The choice of the name *epistemology of psychology* distinguishes the epistemology of psychology from two related disciplines, namely, classical philosophy of mind and the more recent philosophy of psychology. In fact, it might be argued that the epistemology of psychology is only a part of the philosophy of mind. The argument might proceed as follows: (i) philosophy is traditionally divided into ontology, epistemology and moral philosophy; (ii) the

[*] Ph.D. student in Philosophy and Cognitive Science, University of Siena, Italy

[1] Referring to psychology as a plurality is mandatory in this case since the unity of psychology might be only a possible outcome of the investigation within epistemology of psychology, therefore cannot be assumed a priori.

same distinction can also be maintained with respect to philosophy of mind, which should therefore analyse ontological, epistemological and moral issues connected to the concept of mind;[2] (iii) the mind is the object of investigation of psychology; (iv) the epistemology of psychology is concerned with the epistemological questions of psychology, that is, with the epistemological questions concerning the object of study of psychology; therefore, (iv) epistemology of psychology is concerned with the epistemological issues of the concept of mind, which is just a part of the philosophy of mind.

The argument is sound, but irrelevant, for both historical and theoretical reasons. Broadly speaking, philosophy of mind studies the nature of the mind and its relation to the body. In the last decades of the XXth century, such a general object of enquiry has been refined and investigated through the observation that there is a wide range of terms by means of which we characterise people's minds - e.g., "belief," "desire," "intention," "hope," "fear," only to mention a few. Those terms are related to each other in complex ways, and they form a domain of knowledge that has been called *folk*, or *common sense* psychology. One of the main topics of debate within philosophy of mind has concerned how to relate the well-defined concepts of folk psychology to scientific psychology.[3] Disregarding the particular position one might favour within the debate, its participants have assumed that the central problem concerns how the well-defined concepts of folk psychology are related to the concepts of the mind provided by natural sciences. That is, the participants to the debate concentrated more on the ontological status of the mental with respect to the physical world than on epistemological questions about how we can ground our knowledge of the mental. Therefore, an important part of the philosophy of mind is not concerned with the same issues that the epistemology of psychology addresses.

Issues about how to ground psychological knowledge on a firm basis have nonetheless been raised in the philosophy of mind since its origin until nowadays. Just as a few examples, consider Descartes' discussion about the intuition of clear and distinct ideas, the debate between theory and simulation theorists about the attribution of mental states to the others, or the contemporary interest in first-person authority. Hence, one might still argue that the epistemology of psychology should fall within this part of the philosophy of mind concerned with epistemological issues about the mind. However, note that in this context the mental is again considered a fairly well-established domain to be investigated by philosophers. What makes this possible is the appeal to a kind of psychological knowledge that is often more or less clearly introspective in its nature; alternatively, psychological knowledge is strongly connected to its linguistic vehicle – i.e., propositional attitudes – so that the epistemological analysis about the mind is assimilated to the investigation of our linguistic practices about mental terms. In any case, it has been implicitly assumed that we do possess a definite concept of the mind, which is shaped by common sense.

---

[2] I am in debt to Richard Kitchener for this proposal regarding the analysis of the philosophy of psychology.

[3] On the one hand, some scholars have argued that folk psychology identifies a basic and autonomous domain, which at the same time cannot be translated in different terms without distorting its nature, and it is essential to provide a complete description of what is in the world. On the other hand, it has been claimed that folk psychology is not autonomous from scientific psychology. Such a thesis has been held by claiming either that the language of folk psychology can be reduced to the language of natural science, or even that it cannot. In the latter case, naturalistic accounts of folk psychology split between those that still accept the pragmatic utility of the mental vocabulary and the more extremists suggesting that it will in the end be eliminated.

However, it is questionable whether common sense provides well-defined concepts of the mental. Indeed, as studies in cultural anthropology and comparative literature show, the understanding of the mind in the common sense framework is historically and culturally dependent. According to Lillard (1998), for instance, the concepts of folk psychology vary with respect to several dimensions across cultures. As another example, Jaynes (1977) analysed the language in the *Iliad* and found that the concepts of mind and consciousness as Homer's heroes express them are radically different from those used nowadays. Furthermore, the common sense vocabulary predates scientific discoveries, and its ontology changes according to the changes in the shared view of reality. With respect to the case of psychology, for example, Freud's psychoanalysis, which was developed to scientifically investigate the origins of hysteria, later became so popular that originally psychoanalytic terms are nowadays part of our common way to characterize the mind. Therefore, it seems that mental concepts undergo gradual change in space and time. Thus, although philosophy of mind exploits a conception of the mental without specifying the limits of its theoretical framework, we should doubt that mental concepts are univocally defined within the common sense.

In talking about the mental, it is very important always to specify the theoretical or methodological framework presupposed by our discourse, for these frameworks define the object of investigation. Thus, the epistemology of psychology addresses the foundation of psychological knowledge by contextualising any analysis with respect to the particular discipline from which it emerges. This does not, of course, mean that we must in such discourse accept every psychological discipline as authoritative: that burden of the proof must be born by each discipline.

For the reasons expressed above, it seems reductive to talk about the epistemology of psychology as a particular chapter of the philosophy of mind. Pursuit of the epistemology of psychology assumes the plurality of psychological disciplines and that the definition of the proper object of psychology - the mind - creates the problem of the unity of psychology. The ontological questions regarding the nature of the mind and mental concepts are strictly connected to the epistemological question about the status of the concepts of psychology as they appear in the psychological disciplines.

I want also to contrast the epistemology of psychology with respect to the emerging field known as the philosophy of psychology. Authors employing this term are numerous; they generally share an interest in explaining the properties of the mental through a naturalistic account of the human psyche, provided by the cognitive sciences. Hence, the philosophy of psychology is "an approach which focuses on problems which are raised for *philosophy* by the results and methods of psychology" (Botterill and Carruthers, p. ix), and it is concerned "with mind and cognition" (Wilson 2005), or "with the nature and mechanisms of cognition, rather than with the metaphysics and epistemology of the mind" (Bermúdez 2005, p. 15).[4]

Despite the similarity in the names, the epistemology and the philosophy of psychology differ considerably in their scope. Indeed, the authors who introduced the latter restrict the term *psychology* either to *cognitive* psychology, or more in general to that set of disciplines – such as the very cognitive psychology, as well as neuroscience, computer science, cognitive anthropology, and psycholinguistics – that form the field of cognitive sciences. The epistemology of psychology aims at a wider target, since, at least *prima facie*, every psychological discipline, from neuroscience and neuropsychiatry to behaviourist and cognitive psychology, to historical-existential and psychodynamic therapies falls within its scope.

A second important distinction between the epistemology and the philosophy of psychology is that the former, and not the latter is committed to an epistemological enquiry.

[4] See also Block (1980), O' Donohue and Kitchener (1996), Thagard (2007), Symons and Calvo (2009).

Indeed, the philosophy of psychology presupposes a naturalistic account according to which a correct and complete explanation of the human mind will come from cognitive sciences. Therefore, in the philosophy of psychology there is a natural inclination to naturalized epistemology (Quine 1969), in which empirical enquiry about how we reason substitutes for epistemological questions about the limits and the constraints on human knowledge.

This substitution is to ignore rather than to solve the problems concerning the warrant of human knowledge of the mind. Moreover, it presupposes a kind of scientific eliminativism about the mental, which portends danger for the very existence of the philosophy of psychology. In fact, naturalized epistemology seems to reduce the philosophy of psychology to a critique of empirical methodology in cognitive science. In that case, the psychologist, the neuroscientist or the linguist who reflectively consider the methods of their discipline and reason about the possible interpretation of their experiments, would to do the same work that the philosopher of psychology. This fact is highlighted by Carlo Gabbani:

> A serious difficulty both for a genuine philosophy of psychology and for genuine explanations of our conscious experience would be created by the conjunction of a fully naturalized epistemology with the so called eliminative revisionism. […] In the case of such a 'monolithic' version of this option (that is in the case where science replaces the personal-level account or produce an unfair 'co-evolution' of it), I think we would have a situation in which the philosophy of psychology would result in being no more than the more general chapter of experimental psychology, without a peculiar identity and autonomous problems. (Gabbani, 2006, pp. 5-6)

The epistemology of psychology runs no such risk because of its greater generality. Indeed, as noted above, its existence is granted by the pluralism of psychological disciplines. Nonetheless, to pursue this inquiry is to acknowledge that cognitive science takes the psychology of individuals broadly as how it was defined at the end of the XXth century in Western culture. Therefore, even though the view of the human mind given by the cognitive sciences is the result of an accurate scientific enquiry, it is still the outcome of a contingent historical situation. This suggests that the philosophy of psychology should pay close attention to the many foundational assumptions in the cognitive sciences that are presupposed but unexpressed.

This discussion of the distinction between the philosophy both of mind and psychology, on the one hand, and the epistemology of psychology, on the other, might be summed up in the motto: *there is no philosophy of psychology without a philosophy of mind, and there is no philosophy of mind without considering ontological, epistemological, methodological and moral issues of the concept of mind*. A philosophy of psychology may be built only by considering all these kinds of questions. In fact, the epistemology of psychology considers the whole range of psychological disciplines because they, as a plurality, address these questions. And recognizing further dimensions in the definition of the object of the psychology forces one to make explicit its fundamental assumptions and to evaluate the alternatives.

I turn now to the problems raised by the epistemology of psychology. As a branch of epistemology, it raises theoretical issues both in general and applied epistemology. The problems of applied epistemology concern the definition of the object, and of the goals, of psychology. Should psychology seek universal invariants in the psyche, apart from the differences in the historical-cultural context, in the ethnic group, in the genre and in the age? Or is psychology rather a science of the individual, aiming at particular characteristics that might vary over time and culture? In regard to the goals of psychology, the debate is about the opposition between the theoretical and the practice-therapeutic nature of psychological knowledge. Many scientific accounts of the mind have therapeutic implications; and every

therapeutic practice presupposes, at least implicitly, a theoretical framework for its analysis. The connection between these two aspects and the need to distinguish normal development and psychic well-being from pathology entail that even theoretical psychology raises deep ethical questions.

For what concerns general epistemology, the pluralism of psychology seems to require an epistemological model different from that appropriate to the other natural sciences (Civita 2003). Such a model should account for the sense of both synchronic and diachronic change in psychology. Hence, it has to allow the evaluation and the comparison between different accounts, at the same time preventing the statement of insuperable antinomies based on different methodologies (Marhaba 1976). But it should also explain the sense in which the scientific enterprise increases the explanatory reach of psychological research. On a more abstract level, an epistemological model should make explicit the set of criteria against which the success of a paradigm is to be assessed. Here again psychology is a special case. The intimacy of psychology with our lives locates the ethics of science at the centre of our concerns when we consider psychology. Finally, the epistemological enquiry in psychology may be the starting point for the development of new, more general epistemological models which may also be applicable to other scientific disciplines.

The contents of this issue of *Humana.Mente* reflect the nature of the epistemology of psychology. In *Epistemic Preliminaries: Normative Priorities and Neuropsychological Kinds*, Jennifer Mundale opens the inquiry by identifying two important problems for the epistemology of psychology. In the first part of this essay, she points out that our theories about human psychology concern objects of different domains: justified beliefs (epistemic norms), mental health (clinical norms), heuristic strategies of thinking (cognitive norms), right actions (ethical norms), and so on. Therefore, "there is surely the likelihood, if not inevitability, that normative conflicts will arise, and it is puzzling to know how to resolve them" (p. 3). This poses the problem of how to judge, and of how to resolve, conflicts; and that introduces the further problem of fixing the framework with respect to which one adjudicates conflicts. In the second part of the essay, Mundale notes that many philosophical arguments (e.g., multiple realisability and multiple functionality arguments) rely on unexamined taxonomic assumptions about the psychological and neuroscientific domains. Therefore, "in the absence of some preliminary classificatory considerations, arguments that depend upon them are nothing more than programmatic guesses" (p. 4). Mundale opposes to such arguments the accurate work that is being conducted in neuroscience to empirically correlate "neural activations and psychological function, flashing out the nomological bridges between the two disciplines" (p. 7). Although research in this field is but to get to the end, the issue of creating a proper taxonomy for physical states, as well as the problem of correlating physical to mental types, are reasonably empirical matters, therefore, to be investigated with the best scientific tools we have at our disposal.

In discussing the first problem, Mundale seems concerned to show how physical levels are autonomous and do not immediately need to surrender to higher levels of explanation in the case of a conflict. However, her argument reaches further. As she notes, "if conflict is inevitable among those [e.g., clinical and ethical] assumptions, the criticism is more telling if placed within the defense of one's larger, normative hierarchies or coordination" (p. 4). That is, comparison between conflicting norms cannot be solved without situating it in the wider context of human (epistemic) rationality.[5] This is what the epistemology of psychology demands.

[5] Mundale explicitly points out that: "If we approach normative conflict, does this interpretation not commit us, at the outset, to the precedence of traditional, epistemological norms? Perhaps even to

Indeed, the epistemologist of psychology does not propose particular solutions to the conflict of norms, but rather proposes that, when a conflict arises, appealing neither to empirical results nor to a priori understanding of mind and subjectivity is sufficient unless the criteria of resolution of the conflict are spelled out. And the problem for psychology is that the definition of those criteria is a part of its object of investigation. Therefore, the problems that Mundale indicates are not "conceptually prior to the satisfactory treatment of various issues in the epistemology of psychology" (p. 1). Indeed, those problems precisely detect the domain of the epistemology of psychology.

The next group of essays is concerned with issues about the epistemology of psychology in cognitive sciences. In *Scientific Psychology: Should We Bury It or Praise It?*, Howard Gardner claims that William James' aspiration for an integrated view of psychology has been abandoned. Indeed, many fields that were once branches of psychology have already been assimilated by other sciences: for example, psychophysics has been assimilated by computer engineering, and comparative psychology has by now entered ethology. Furthermore, in the last years other parts of psychology are gaining the status of independent sciences. This is the case of neuroscience as well as cognitive science. Finally, other fields of psychology, such as social psychology, developmental psychology, and clinical psychology, which "are less 'at risk' of immediate absorption" (p. 16) by a scientific discipline, are nonetheless separating from psychology "to find their way into a general cultural discipline - including sociology, anthropology, and social psychology" (p. 16).

Despite this fragmented view, Gardner's evaluation is anything but pessimistic. Indeed, he argues, psychology achieved important insights in the past; it still contributes to other scientific domains of research; and finally it keeps a core of central notions that are strictly specific of its analysis, and that will hardly be "cannibalized" by other sciences. Gardner refers here to what he calls the "person-centered quartet" formed by the concepts of personality, self, will, and consciousness, which, although they "are clearly central in any delineation of the field" (p. 17), also cause embarrassment to psychologists. He argues that "the study of self or personality is at once a problem of psychology and the home ground of literature" (p. 18). Although he does not suggest a specific form of collaboration between the two disciplines, he acknowledges that psychology is strongly committed to a set of constructs (i) that are resistant to a direct materialist reduction, (ii) that are at the core of human nature, and (iii) that suggest the narrative nature of human life.

Matthew Broome and Lisa Bortolotti agree. In *Mental Illness as Mental: in Defence of Psychological Realism*, they defend psychological realism about the entities (e.g., mental disorders) used in psychiatric explanation against instrumental, eliminative and reductionist views. They support this theoretical claim with two empirical examples, which connect the practice of psychiatry with philosophical investigation and show that psychiatric explanation cannot get along without a genuinely mental level of explanation. In particular, with respect to delusions, Broome and Bortolotti apply Moran's (2001) concept of authorship to show that "the conception of delusions as mental disorders or pathological beliefs relies on the analysis of the reason-relations between the subject's beliefs and on attributions of self-knowledge and rationality" (p. 35). In the case of personality disorders, they report emerging literature according to which neuropsychological deficits "may be linked to the onset of psychosis and perhaps an increasing reliance on external vehicles of cognition" (p. 37). They note that this view about personality disorders matches well with the philosophical thesis of externalism of

---

recognize potential normative conflict as a subject worthy of attention is to privilege epistemic norms" (pp. 3-4).

the vehicle of mental content. Therefore, they conclude that "for biological psychiatry to have any validity, and to be anything more than neuroscience, the main object of study needs to remain the person. The normal and the abnormal themselves are not properties of the brain" (p. 38). That is, there is a normative dimension of the mind that is both relevant for the personality and impossible to reduce to the non-normative.

Bruce Thyer's article, *Epistemology: a Behavior Analytic Perspective*, clarifies the epistemological position of behavioural analysis by highlighting both its limits and strengths. Behaviourism, he argues, is limited because it restricts itself to "the analysis of behavior-environment interactions" (p. 47), where behaviour is investigated by focusing on single-cases, and it has to be intended as "everything that a person does, overt behavior as well as everything that occurs within the skin, phenomena such as feelings, thoughts, dreams, hallucinations, etc." (p. 49).[6] Furthermore, he argues, behaviourism does not address philosophical questions concerning the nature of knowledge and absolute truth, leaving "large segments of the metaphysical domains of philosophy excluded from serious consideration" (p. 59). Instead, behaviourism provides practical solutions to those questions. It is, he suggests, simply concerned with the aim to "develop satisfactory natural or physicalist explanations for supposedly non-material phenomena" (p. 51). Therefore, it assumes a pragmatic attitude to assess the validity of its results: "to the extent one can effectively predict and control behavior, one has arrived at a limited but truthful understanding of functional relationships" (p. 60). Furthermore, he argues, it dismisses every ontological commitment, such as physicalism, by relying on an economy principle for rational explanations and for the postulation of theoretical entities. Therefore, he concludes, behaviourism is a *non-reductionistic* science since it does not require reducing behavioural explanations to more basic physical levels.

Thyer defends a methodological against an ontological view of behaviourism. But a tension remains between an instrumentalist and pragmatist view of behaviourism, on the one hand, and a more radical eliminative view on the other. That is, it is hard to resolve the merely programmatic aim of substituting physicalist for mental explanations with the view that the traditional questions about knowledge and truth are "seen as unresolvable, and thereby dismissed from serious consideration as pseudoproblems" (p. 60).[7] If behaviourism is not concerned with ontology, it has nothing to do with these issues. Otherwise, to the extent that behavioural explanations are sufficient for the purpose of explanation of sensible cases, behaviourism really advances an ontological position.

Thyer's paper marks a shift in the issue from modern to post-modern psychology. In *Generalizing Through Conditional Analysis: Systemic Causality in the World of Eternal Becoming*, Zach Beckstead, Kenneth R. Cabell, and Jaan Valsiner criticise modern psychology, which subordinates the uniqueness of the situation of every subject to the scientific need of discovering general laws. They argue instead that the model of scientific laws that psychology borrows from natural science is too narrow to account for the complexity of human behaviour because it considers variables independently. Instead, the authors claim that a new conception of causality is needed to reconcile the particular and the general aspects of human behaviour. They find a clue to this conception in Kurt Lewin's work. Lewin stressed that the concrete situation and notions of interdependency and interrelationships are fundamentally constitutive of objects. Using his field theory, Lewin analysed human behaviour as a function of both the person and the environment. Beckstead and colleagues take Lewin's example to

[6] Thyer notes that the received view of Skinner's behaviourism as concerned only with overt behaviour is "an unfortunately widespread misconception" (p. 49).

[7] A similar commitment to ontological claims is also visible, for example, in Moore's (2008) quoted synthesis of behaviourism (pp. 59-60).

argue for a dynamic model of human behaviour, according to which "phenomena are qualitatively organized by the whole system they are embedded within" (p. 72), and generalization is based on the use of systemically dependent rather than separate variables. Therefore, they introduce the concepts of systemic causality and catalysis. In particular, "catalysis is the study the conditions that operate within open, intransitive, and dynamic systems that enable a particular outcome to be produced - *while preserving the functioning of the producing system*" (p. 73). According to their analysis, change in psychological and social phenomena may be explained by referring to *catalysts* - i.e., contextual factors that usually work to regulate and maintain the relationships of parts within the system. The authors conclude by claiming that their "conditional analysis provides fruitful grounds of not only the rare and frequent phenomena, but understanding the particular, the qualitative whole, and the relationships within a general framework" (p. 79).

The next two articles investigate constructivist epistemology and existential psychotherapies. In *The Issue of the Unity and Specificity of Psychology from the Viewpoint of a Constructivist Epistemology*, Gabriele Chiari analyses the subject of the unity of psychology in the light of his proposed reading of constructivism. As Chiari notes, the absence of one shared system of reference for psychological theories makes the epistemological status of psychology clearly different from that of the physical sciences. Moreover, he argues, because this situation was taken to be problematic, psychologists have often tried to solve the problem of the diversity within their discipline either by defending the unity of psychology or by reducing psychology to the neuroscience. Against such a view, Chiari suggests that the pluralism in psychology might "represents a richness rather than a limit of it" (p. 82) and supports his thesis by sketching a path through the wide field of constructivist psychologies.

In the service of this view, Chiari refers to Kelly's (1955) constructive alternativism, to Agazzi's (1976) objectualist epistemology, and to Maturana's (1987) ontology of the observer. All these approaches share the view "that every scientific discipline cuts out its objects by looking at things from a certain point of view and investigating them according to certain methods" (p. 88) so that the truth of the statements of a theory must always be referred to the domain of the theory. It follows that, according to these approaches, "the question on the 'absolute' truth of a single proposition or a theory derives from mistaking 'things' for 'objects' [which are internal to the theory]" (p. 88). Consequently the project of the unification of psychology is "unfeasible", that is, impossible. The same can be said about the project of the reduction of psychology. Indeed, he argues, the assumption of a constructivist perspective denies the possibility to soundly asserting the ontological reduction of the object of a theory to another one. Rather, constructivist epistemology envisages ontologically more neutral theses, such as emergentist materialism.

Louis Hoffman's article, *Knowing and the Unknown: An Existential Epistemology in a Postmodern Context*, investigates the possibility and the extent of the integration of psychotherapies in the framework of existential psychology. Hoffman notes that research on the efficacy of therapy has led us to reassess the importance of the particular method used in psychotherapy. Indeed, "providing a plausible explanation for the client's problems and using this as a foundation for the therapeutic work is more important than the particular techniques used" (p. 100). Such a consideration has "the potential to change the field of psychotherapy and bring a revitalized ethical approach to therapeutic practice" (p. 107) because it urges psychologists towards the integration of different techniques. In fact, the many similarities between existential psychology and postmodern philosophy provide an ideal foundation for psychotherapy integration. According to Hoffman, "the primary benefit of integration may be in the flexibility or adaptability" (p. 104). That is, by avoiding a pragmatic eclectic approach

according to which every technique is good if it works, the therapist must be able to assess "which therapy is the best fit for which clients" (p. 106) and "to adapt to their client's specific needs and style in order to be effective" (p. 106). This brings the ethical concern that therapists "should begin the therapist process […] trying to identify if the client is the right fit for their approach to therapy" (p. 106).

Nicolò Terminio analyses the epistemological standpoint of Lacanian psychoanalysis in *Epistemologia dello studio del caso clinico: note sul metodo della psicoanalisi* [Epistemology of the study of a clinical case: methods and principles of the psychoanalytical model]. Terminio begins with the assumption that the insistence on singular cases and the ethical constraints of the therapy prevents psychoanalysis from satisfying "the request for controllability proper of the research methods of the so-called 'hard' sciences" (p. 112, my translation). In fact, the symptoms in the patients are messages encoded in a way that is known only to them, while psychoanalysts must decode and reconstruct the meaning of these symptoms based on their personal training. This requires psychoanalysts to make "strategic" abductive inferences, which cannot be experimentally guaranteed. Given that there exists a "methodological uneasiness" between the generalizations of the science and their application in the clinical praxis, the psychoanalyst must skillfully interpret symptoms in a way that is conducive to healing, rather than to the production of knowledge. Nonetheless, Terminio maintains that psychoanalysis can to assume a critical stance towards *experimental* methods, while keeping at the same time "the necessity of an *empirical* anchorage for any discussion about the clinical dimension" (p. 122, my translation). Hence, he refers Reichenbach's (1951) distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification, and he shows that, although the clinical experience cannot fall within the latter, it can still fall within the former.

This collection ends with an article about an emerging discipline, i.e., ethnopsychiatry, that reflects a critical answer to the questions raised by the epistemology of psychology. In *Psicologie, etnopsichiatria, sistemi di cura* [Psychologies, ethnopsychiatry, and healing systems], Piero Coppo and Stefania Consigliere claim that the crises of the Western science in the XXth century should lead us to abandon the old-fashioned positivist idea of knowledge as a universally valid description of nature. Nowadays, they argue, we must acknowledge that all systems of knowledge and know-how originate in specific historical conditions and have equal epistemological dignity. Psychology, they argue, cannot ignore this new epistemological context: it needs a radical shift to recognise both the pluralism of psychological approaches within its Western borders and the existence of other systems of knowledge and know-how with their own internal coherence in other cultures. Within such a framework, psychiatry must be open to a "radical encounter" (Pasqualotto 2005) with other cultures, where "opinions and preconceptions […] are discussed and wiped out" (p. 127, my translation). In this enterprise we risk misunderstanding other cultures, or mistranslating their concepts into those drawn from our own conceptual framework, therefore to betray them. Indeed, given the relativity of every system of knowledge to its own culture, they argue, the development of the theoretical tools necessary to the confrontation between different cultures cannot be guarantee by *any* general framework. The methodology adequate to this problem is that of the ethnopsychiatrists, who act "on the field" and confront their conceptual framework by applying it while living in other cultures. Only in this way can one respect different therapeutic practices and acknowledge their internal coherence.

The collection of essays gathered in this volume explores in several directions the many issues raised by the epistemology of psychology. The different directions in which the authors take the discussion reflect their somewhat different assumptions, and demonstrate that unity even of purpose in this field is not easy to attain. Nonetheless, some common themes emerge: (i) a particular attention to the epistemological issues, not just to the methodology, in

analysing psychology as a science is possible and valuable; (ii) the pluralism of psychology can be accepted, and does not demand reconciliation; (iii) the normative concept of person for the development of psychology as a science is non-negotiable; and finally (iv) rationality both grounds the norms for adjudicating conflicts between different theories and is essential to the definition of human life. Only by considering these issues together can one expect to provide a complete picture of psychology as the science of the mind.

Of course, due to the vastness of the field, the views proposed are but a preliminary sketch, and the final picture is yet to emerge. But it is a coherent sketch, and it suggests how one might proceed to fill in the details of what promises to be a coherent picture. I hope that this volume will have set the stage for a promising field of investigation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Jay Garfield and Hilary Kornblith for their insightful comments on an earlier version of this manuscript.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agazzi, E., (1976). *Criteri epistemologici fondamentali delle discipline psicologiche*. In G. Siri (Ed.), *Problemi epistemologici della psicologia*. Milano: Pensiero e Vita, pp. 3-35.

Bermúdez, J. L., (2005). *Philosophy of Psychology: A Contemporary Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Block, N., (Ed.), (1980). *Readings in the Philosophy of Psychology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Botterill, G., Carruthers, P., (1999). *The Philosophy of Psychology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bühler, K., (1927). *Die Krise der Psychologie*, Fisher: Jena.

Civita, A., (2003). *Filosofia della psicologia*. In N. Vassallo (Ed.), *Filosofie delle scienze*. Einaudi: Torino.

Driesch, H. A. E., (1925). *The Crisis in Psychology*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Gabbani, C., (Ed.), (2006). *Symposium on Philosophy of Psychology: A Contemporary Introduction by José Luis Bermúdez*. *SWIF Philosophy of Mind Review*, 5(3), http://lgxserver.uniba.it/mind/swifpmr /0520063.pdf.

Henriques, G. R., (Ed.), (2004). *Defining Psychology: Articles and Commentaries on a New Unified Theory* (Part 1). *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, [Special issue], 60(12).

Henriques, G. R., (Ed.), (2005). *Defining psychology: Articles and Commentaries on a New Unified Theory* (Part 2). *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, [Special issue], 61(1).

Jaynes, J., (1977). *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*. Oxford, UK: Houghton Mifflin.

Kelly, G. A., (1955). *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*. New York, NY: Norton.

O' Donohue, W., Kitchener, R. F., (Eds.), (1996). *The Philosophy of Psychology*. Rockleigh, NJ: Allyn and Bacon.

Lillard, A. S., (1998). *Ethnopsychologies: Cultural variations in theory of mind*. *Psychological Bulletin*, 123, pp. 3-30.

Marhaba, S., (1976). *Antinomie epistemologiche nella psicologia contemporanea*. Firenze: Giunti Barbèra.

Maturana, H. R., (1987). *The biological foundations of self-consciousness and the physical domain of existence*. In E. R. Caianiello (Ed.), *Physics of cognitive processes*. Singapore: World Scientific, pp. 324-379.

Moran, R., (2001). *Authority and Estrangement: an Essay on Self-knowledge*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Pasqualotto G., (2005). *Dalla prospettiva della filosofia comparata all'orizzonte della filosofia interculturale*. *Simplegadi*, 10(26), pp. 3-27.

Quine, W. V. O., (1969). *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Reichenbach, H., (1951). *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Royce, J. R., (Ed.), (1970). *Toward unification in psychology*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Staats, A. W., (1983). *Psychology's crisis of disunity: Philosophy and method for a unified science*. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.

Sternberg, R. J., (Ed.), (2004). *Unity in Psychology: Possibility or Pipedream?*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Symons, J., Calvo, P., (Eds.), (2009). *Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Psychology*. London, UK: Routledge.

Thagard, P., (Ed.), (2007). *Philosophy of Psychology and Cognitive Science*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Wilson, R. A., (2005). *Philosophy of Psychology*. In S. Sarkar (Ed.), *The Philosophy of Science: An Encyclopedia*. London, UK: Routledge.