

Review of: "An Ontological Turn for Psychology in the age of the Machine and Global Warming"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This review is meant to be a small contribution aimed at declining Louise Sundararajan's suggestions in a direction in which I think it is possible to articulate an impasse not only in the psychological field, but also to give psychotherapy "*better insights*".

As a clinician and psychotherapist with a psychological-social approach, I can only be very sensitive to the logic of "decolonization" on which Louise Sundararajan's article is based.

The concept is self-evident and recalls the fundamental anthropological and political contribution of Wa Thiong'o (1986) according to which decolonization is a process that must be applied to the indigenous language and mind, conditioned by globalization and by the policies of cultural homologation.

In my opinion the strong element proposed by the author is that an "indigenous psychology" (IP) starts from the assumption that the mind must be studied contextually to its habitat.

On the contrary, a general psychology would tend to pass off as universal, a mind belonging to the habitat of the researcher and experimenter.

After all, it is a matter of the denunciation of a psychological imperialism at the root of globalization processes.

When the author speaks of ontologization, I think she means a process of dogmatic standardization that belies multiculturalist demagogy. This is what she summarizes in the phrase "*different ontologies not only entail different world/realities that we inhabit, but also have real consequences for our planet*".

I think the topic is of absolute urgency for a revision of the dominant epistemological model of research in psychology and, consequently, to radically review the position of the psychotherapist in the post-human era.

We can read two main themes that describe this specific field of work:

- the first concerns psychology in the machine age;
- the second, which I translate into somewhat more philosophical terms, is that of the resulting opposition between strong and weak models in the field of psychotherapy.

The two axes are consequential, in that the premise of an ontologization, as reduction of any element to "object", is part of the epistemological model of science as "*objective knowledge in the physical world*", which leads to an "*easy manipulation*

or *assemblage*" of the objects themselves.

This Weltanschauung also falls on the ground of psychotherapy when it takes up the ideology of specialistic technicality, avoiding to address the analysis of the specific factors of the cultures to which patients belong. Even in the psychoanalytic field, which distances itself from objectivist technicality, authors such as Evans Holmes (2016) denounce the lack of attention to cultural trauma, "*in a world still rife with cultural traumã*."

Sandararajan highlights an irreconcilable polarity: the "technicality of numerical calculation" vs the "ability to think". We should add a third critical element: negligence in penetrating the complexity of the human being.

The tyranny of the algorithm can be well synthesized, in relation to the topics of this article, with an observation by Benasayag (2019), referred to the claim that a teenager from central London and one from the Bolivian plateau are both grappling with a digital device at the same time and for the same purposes.

It's not just a problem of psychology. In fact, synthetic biology affirms that it is possible to create life *out of nothing*, on other molecular and clinical bases, as everything is information, as the father of cybernetics Claude Shannon (1948) would say. It is just an example of data ontologization. If everything is reduced to data, information can travel on any medium. This "methodological reductionism", however, as we can say with Benasayag (2017), does not take into account the singularity of the living and its specific interaction with the environment that models information.

We can no longer close our eyes as clinicians and even less as psychotherapists, to the fact that, especially in the last twenty years, the advent of the Internet has radically changed all the parameters of Western society.

The existence in the clinical field of a certain sensitivity in understanding how much it has necessarily reconfigured the phenomenology of malaise is already rarer. (Scognamiglio, 2021).

Sundararajan's article also suggests us to reflect on the fact that *e-democracy* has become an ecological threat particularly towards cultures which, until now, have had to, if not been able to, resist the consequent globalizing forcing (Scognamiglio, 2018).

One point to be investigated, starting from these theses, could be to better understand how IP can be used by the Western mind. Is it possible for the West not only to acquire an IP in relation to other cultures, but also to use it primarily within its own habitat? Or should we think that IP remains a tool of exclusive prerogative of the populations that have undergone the Western colonization?

Basically, does the "big brother", the "divine algorithm", have any interest in ensuring that there are still agent subjectivities, adherent by identity to their culture of belonging?

Back to the point of psychotherapy, this concept of ontology of the subject is extremely valid. Every encounter with an individual from a psychotherapeutic point of view involves what the author calls an ontological turn. It means taking seriously the reality of the other as such in its specific diversity.

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