

Subjectivity in Analytical Psychology research: an ethical perspective

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Abstract

Research in Analytical Psychology is anchored in the subjectivity paradigm. The proposed reflection addresses the process of knowledge construction according to the epistemological perspective that considers the concomitant transformation of the researcher and the object investigated. The adopted path starts from the notion of personal equation, whereby Jung considered different types and ways of knowing that are inherent to psychological research and practice. This reflection rests upon post-Jungian authors who proposed a parallel between the production of scientific knowledge and the individuation process, acknowledging that research and knowledge production are linked

to an ethical perspective that takes into consideration the researcher's subjectivity. Research in Analytical Psychology must be based on the premise of responding to the development in favor of wholeness and human dignity, with ethics as a central factor in the research process, essential to the present-day. ■

Keywords
Research, analytical psychology, subjectivity, personal equation, ethics.



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Does anyone know the borders of their soul, so they can say – I am myself?

But I know that what I feel, I feel it myself. When someone else has this body, do they have what I have in it? No. They have another sensation.

Do we have anything? If we don't know what we are, how do we know what we have?

If from what you eat, you said, 'I own this', I would understand you. Because without a doubt what you eat, you include it in yourself, you make it your own, you feel it entering you and penetrating you. But you don't talk about 'possession' about what you eat. What do you call it to possess?

(PESSOA, 2018, p. 300)

Non-knowledge accompanies the researcher throughout the development of scientific research; knowledge takes place by leaps and bounds, each acquisition constitutes an achievement, sometimes overturned next. Research involves the researcher's awareness that there is a gap between language and experience, an abyss between what is said and described and what escapes the ability to describe. This gap is par excellence the space for the creation and development of research with soul.

The researcher anchored in the positivist paradigm of objectification and explanation, can sometimes feel that he/she has the domain and complete understanding about the investigated object, even thinking that he/she possess it. However, it is worth asking, as Fernando Pessoa (2018, p. 300) inquired in poetic language: "Do we have anything? If we don't know what we are, how do we know what we have?". In scientific language, this notion is translated into the ideas of the prominent thinker of the philosophy of science Karl Popper, who highlighted that the scientific discovery (the *new*) contributes to the

construction of knowledge in two ways: one of them, when it explains new phenomena, and the other, when it recognizes what it cannot yet explain. Thus, the finding of not-knowledge is equally important to knowing in the process of building scientific knowledge (POPPER, 1974 apud BYINGTON, 2019).

The revolution of consciousness that accompanied the modern world has allowed us to modulate a differentiated scientific perspective which takes into consideration the subjectivity, allying to the rigorous scientific attitude the philosophy and the exploration of the irrational and the unknown (WAHBA, 2019). It is in this field that Analytical Psychology as a scientific-clinical activity is inserted, constituting a field of knowledge that is both product and producer of subjectivity.

The process of knowledge construction is marked, on the one hand, by the addition to the scientific and social field of a new product that allows the expansion of learning about a specific phenomenon and, on the other, by a process of transformation and self-knowledge of the researcher itself, which faces contents (personal and collective) hitherto unknown or vaguely known, but never before confronted. Wahba (2019, p. 6) points out that "research is to ask: who we are, how and where we are, how we affect others and how we are affected by them, what we dream and aspire to, where we go and how we do it", it is about the creation of "a new form of sensitivity to understand our insertion in the world, the relationships with others, the fabric of interiority".

The aim of this article is to reflect on doing research and the construction of knowledge in the scope of Analytical Psychology, highlighting the process of concomitant transformation of the researcher and the scientific and social field in which the research is inserted. This is necessarily imbued with an ethical perspective regarding

doing in the field of psychology, understanding, as mentioned by Romanyshyn (2007), that the researcher is at the service of the unfinished work of the soul of the research, of those for whom the research is intended and his/her own soul that is created and transformed when researching.

1. The personal equation in the Jungian research paradigm

The Jungian research paradigm, according to which knowledge and self-knowledge are inseparable, was enunciated by Jung when participating in debates about the scope and meaning of psychology as a science — basically a science of subjectivity that seeks parameters for the achievement of objectivity only possible to a certain extent. The researcher is inevitably immersed in a personal equation, endowed with a peculiar look directed at the object to be known. In the work *Psychological Types*, Jung seeks to answer the dilemma of the universal and the individual in science, describing the multiplicity of apprehension of psychological phenomena according to the different types and ways of knowing (SHAMDASANI, 2005).

Jung (2011a, par. 421) recognized the difficulty of establishing the complex psychology in the field of natural sciences, because when trying to comprehend the unconscious processes “establishing, observing and classifying real facts, describing causal and functional relationships”, a tangle of reflections extended beyond the limits of the natural sciences, encompassing the domains of philosophy, theology, the science of comparative religions and the history of the human spirit. The psychological observation of the phenomenon itself, the starting point, receives these influences – the context – as well as it derives from the researcher’s experience and personality, which constitutes the personal equation. Jung also points out that the psyche, object of study, is both an object and a subject of knowledge.

The psyche observes itself and can only translate the psychic into another psychic.

[...] Psychology has no other means to refer to, except in itself. It can only portray itself and can only describe itself. (JUNG, 2011a, par. 421)

The researcher’s uniqueness – even if one works in groups or is linked to them – transforms him/her into a craftsman and model; he/she takes place and transforms himself/herself synchronously with the researched phenomenon. The production of scientific knowledge is shaped by the search process, inherent to what is meant by the individuation process – which implies the broadening of consciousness –, as highlighted by Penna (2004; 2014), as there are successive and continuous interactive dynamics between consciousness and the unconscious during the acquisition of knowledge.

The author states that according to the epistemology and method of Analytical Psychology, the construction of knowledge occurs through the expansion of consciousness, in a gradual and constant process of integration of aspects of the unconscious and the world in consciousness, a movement that aims to integrate the individual to the human community and to himself/herself. According to Penna (2014, p. 78), in the Jungian perspective the possibility of knowledge “is potentially infinite from the point of view of the unknown to be known”, however, consciousness is limited by two borders, on one hand by the unconscious and, on the other, by the world.

The processes of individuation – the author continues – and of knowledge production are, therefore, inserted in the transitory threshold of conscious-unconscious, individual-society, subject-object, self-other relations. It must be understood that the other configures the external world, but also the unconscious or partially conscious interiority (the other “internal”), and the ego moves on the thresholds of these polarities. Thus, the validity of scientific knowledge is imbued with what makes sense in a given context and, in the scope of Analytical Psychology, of what has value and function as a symbol for the individual and/or for the community in which it operates.

Byington (2019) considers that the essential condition for the exercise of science is the attitude of the conscience to relate the ego and the other in a dialectical and creative way. In his theory called Jungian Symbolic Psychology, this attitude develops as the conscience structures itself, going through the archetypal cycles that govern this development, which he recognized as basic patterns of consciousness' functioning: matriarchal, patriarchal, otherness and cosmic. The scientific attitude would coincide with the third cycle, the otherness, since it is predominantly in this stage that the conscience would overcome the narcissism inherent to the parental cycles, being able to relate the ego and the other, as well as the objects with each other, with creative vigor.

2. Research as a process and space for creation

Therefore, research can be understood as a possibility or "space" for individuation, inferred by Stein (2006, p. 143) as a driver of a psychological attitude that allows a broader, inclusive and integrated consciousness. This space is not literal and embraces the psyche and the world "as two sides of the same coin". It would be the locus of transition and flexibility for opening the creativity and emergence of the new.

Stein metaphorically referred to the god Hermes to represent the psychological function of fluidity between conscious and unconscious, inside and outside, known and unknown. According to this author, Hermes can symbolize the psychic tendency towards differentiation, the definition of spaces and the delimitation of borders, not demarcating rigidity, but a state of permeability that, although fluid, is delimited and differentiated. As in the process of individuation, the psychological attitude of fluidity is opposed to fixation. With the movements of separation (discrimination) and union (synthesis), the researcher delimits, but does not appropriate, coagulates what he/she discovers and transmits in scientific language, ready to flow towards new knowledge.

Similarly, Romanyshyn (2007) describes the researcher's attitude as someone who inhabits his/her research as a householder, not as a permanent resident, but as a pilgrim.

[...] that is, as one who comes and goes, one who knows, then, that the 'homes' that we build for soul from our ideas are temporary shelters, which, although only for the moment, are for the moment, enough. (p. 11)

Neumann (1959), who in his renowned work was dedicated to exploring the theme of the development of consciousness and creativity, emphasizes in the creative individual the acute capacity to sustain the tension between separation and synthesis, maintaining a certain fluidity and permeability, which applies to the researcher before the task of his/her *opus*.

Therefore, the transformation of the known object and the knowing subject is proposed, operating the transcendent function, a notion that Jung (2011a) operationalized to describe this process of transformation and readjustment of the psychological attitude towards wholeness through confrontation and approximation of opposites of consciousness and the unconscious, that is, the perceptible, the known and the unknown to be revealed. This approximation is possible through symbols, which are the best representation of something that has not yet been fully understood by consciousness (JUNG, 2011a).

Discrimination as an essential process for the development of consciousness and scientific knowledge was addressed by Byington (2019) when elaborating the notion of symbolic science. For the author, in the face of new situations, the ego goes through states of less discrimination, from which it develops as it acquires knowledge. Thus, the author relates the position of non-knowledge with the ego's indifferenciation in the process of transformation and development of consciousness, postulating that, through symbolic operation, objective and subjective complement each other.

3. Ethical responsibility in Analytical Psychology research

Every expansion of consciousness, according to Jung, confronts us with an ethical responsibility: what to do with the knowledge acquired about oneself and the world. Freedom of action is faced with decisions on how to apply the discovery, and this is an imperative for every researcher, particularly poignant when it comes to the psyche of individuals and communities. An immediate example is the terrible consequences for the segregation of groups belonging to different ethnic groups when it was stipulated that there would be intelligences morphologically constituted by races. Unfortunately, examples of this extension abound when the ethical premise is concealed.

According to Barreto (2009, p. 93), the “moral factor” is at the core of Jung’s psychological and therapeutic conception, constituting one of his “indispensable foundations”. To this idea can be added that the moral factor underlies the episteme of Jungian scientific theory and method, also constituting an indispensable notion for research in this field. Jung (2011b, par. 423) referred to the integration of unconscious contents in consciousness as the main operation of Analytical Psychology, which represents a “change of principles”, since it eliminates the supremacy of the ego consciousness confronting it with contents of the collective unconscious. Thus, psychology is faced with the ethical/moral problem regarding the acquired knowledge, which will affect the understanding of the world and the effects on it. Jung emphasizes the notion of dignity of the psyche, which requires the researcher to be able to take into account the irrational that is less visible or accepted, but powerfully active.

Despite this premise, Penna (2014) recognizes, resuming the statement by Jung (2013) himself, that in the current scientific scenario there is a concentration of power in human rationality conferring a certain idolatry on science and its progress, as if it happened in a separate way from the development of the human community to which it should be destined. Barreto (2009, p. 93) corrob-

orates this idea and affirms that the current civilizational climate is marked by an “unprecedented ethical crisis, which presents its credentials in the form of dominant moral relativism, and which shapes human space in an indelible way”.

Byington (2019) had already emphasized the abstention from the ethical factor of consciousness and the production of scientific knowledge when objectivity and subjectivity, self and other, are artificially separated and highlights that the researcher has the responsibility to be guided by an attitude that corresponds both to the individual and the collective desires. Failing to do so results in the scenario we are faced with today: an immense acquisition of knowledge – such as the mastery of different technologies –, succeeding indifferent to the destiny of the human community that grows in hunger and misery, devastation and ecological imbalance, progressive use of psychotropic, food poisoning, progressive depletion of reserves and contamination of the atmosphere, among other side products of the pathological dissociation from research and the moral responsibility of employing acquired knowledge.

Perhaps the ethical issue is one of the greatest challenges imposed on the researcher, who, in the process of doing research within the scope of Analytical Psychology, is urged to position himself/herself in front of the other and himself/herself. The result of a subjective research is, therefore, the work (*opus*) that adds to the social and collective reality new elements capable of transforming it and expanding the body of knowledge about it. But, above all, research with a soul is the work that transforms the researcher himself/herself that transforms and is transformed, in the endless dynamics of acquiring and learning in a dispossessed way.

4. Final considerations

Research and knowledge production in the human and social sciences are linked to an ethical perspective of the researcher who, through study, observations and experiments based on well-defined epistemological principles, seek to

meet the demands of his/her time and context, aiming to find, as highlights Wahba (2019, p. 6), “solutions for the community and individual well-being”. Research in Analytical Psychology would be located at the intersection of the individual and universal, the personal and the collective. An ethical research perspective, therefore, refers to the consideration of the limitation of knowledge itself, its applicability and the recognition of the limits of the self and the other.

The researcher is constituted by the meanings of his/her culture, while simultaneously producing it, conferring, per se, one of the most poignant ethical dilemmas of psychological science that he/she faces. Here, it is worth

mentioning the place of science today, whose urgency must consider the deregulation of unilateral and pernicious growths that get sick and deviate from what can be understood as development in favor of the wholeness and human dignity of all individuals.

Finally, the research developed in the field of Analytical Psychology proposes the surrender of the researcher, recognizing himself/herself as an integral part of the reality he/she investigates, as we know the world and the living reality through the images that we subjectively form about it – *esse in anima*. ■

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Resumo

Subjetividade na pesquisa em psicologia analítica: uma perspectiva ética

A pesquisa em psicologia analítica está ancorada no paradigma da subjetividade. A reflexão proposta aborda o processo de construção do conhecimento de acordo com a perspectiva epistemológica que considera a transformação concomitante do pesquisador e do objeto investigado. O percurso adotado parte da noção de equação pessoal, por meio da qual Jung considerou diferentes tipos e modos de conhecer que são inerentes à prática e investigação psicológica. Recorre-se nesta reflexão a autores

pós-junguianos que propuseram um paralelo entre a produção do conhecimento científico e o processo de individuação, reconhecendo que a pesquisa e a produção do conhecimento estão atreladas a uma perspectiva ética que considera a subjetividade do pesquisador. A pesquisa em psicologia analítica há de se pautar na premissa de responder ao desenvolvimento em prol da completude e da dignidade humana, inserindo-se a ética como fator central no processo de pesquisar, essencial à atualidade. ■

Palavras-chave: Pesquisa, psicologia analítica, subjetividade, equação pessoal, ética.

Resumen

Subjetividad en la investigación en psicología analítica: una perspectiva ética

La investigación en psicología analítica está anclada en el paradigma de la subjetividad. La reflexión propuesta aborda el proceso de construcción de conocimiento de acuerdo con la perspectiva epistemológica que considera la transformación concomitante del investigador y el objeto que investiga. El camino adoptado parte de la noción de ecuación personal, a través de la cual Jung consideró diferentes tipos y formas de conocimiento inherentes a la práctica y a la investigación psicológica. Esta reflexión utiliza au-

tores post-junguianos que proponen un paralelo entre la producción de conocimiento científico y el proceso de individuación, reconociendo que la investigación y la producción de conocimiento están vinculadas a una perspectiva ética que considera la subjetividad del investigador. La investigación en psicología analítica debe basarse en la premisa de responder al desarrollo en favor de la integridad y la dignidad humana, con la ética como factor central en el proceso de investigación, imprescindible en la actualidad. ■

Palabras clave: Investigación, psicología analítica, subjetividad, ecuación personal, ética.

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