

PhilPsyCh - Research Network in the History and Philosophy of Psy Knowledge and Human Sciences: Presentation, Activity, and Perspectives

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Abstract

This scientific news presents PhilPsyCh - Research network in the history and philosophy of psy knowledge and human sciences, its activities and perspectives. PhilPsyCh is a Brazilian interinstitutional research laboratory, whose activities are based on interdisciplinary investigations, which seek, through the articulation between philosophy, psy knowledge, and the human sciences, to promote and advance the field of the Brazilian Philosophy of psychoanalysis and the epistemology of the human sciences in general.

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1. Presentation

*PhilPsyCh*¹ began its activities in 2022, bringing together, monthly, in an online format, researchers from three Brazilian Universities: Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF), and Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUCPR). It is an interinstitutional research network composed of three research laboratories: *Subjectivity, Philosophy, and Psychoanalysis Research*

¹ Throughout the text, it will be used the acronym *PhilPsyCh* in Portuguese, as it is the identity of such *network* in Brazil.

Group (UFMS), Center for Studies in History and Philosophy of Human Sciences (UFJF), and Research Group on Philosophy of Psychoanalysis (PUCPR). These three laboratories are linked to research professors and undergraduate and postgraduate students (master's and doctorate) in Philosophy and Psychology. Precisely, *PhilPsyCh* brings together researchers and students from five degree courses (Philosophy and Psychology, from UFMS; Philosophy and Psychology, from UFJF; and Philosophy, from PUCPR), and from four postgraduate programs (master's degree in Psychology, from UFMS; master's degrees and doctorates in Psychology and Philosophy, from UFJF; and master's and doctorate in Philosophy, from PUCPR).

Although its formal beginning was in 2022, the *PhilPsyCh Network* represents the consolidation of a process of theoretical approximation and scientific collaboration that has taken place, at least since 2016, through events, scientific meetings, panels, and other academic activities, in which the three research laboratories mentioned above began to participate jointly, and with increasing frequency. Firstly, what brought these researchers together was, notably, the theoretical interest in the philosophical field of research on psychoanalysis (a field that in Brazil has a certain tradition of studies, and which is very particularly called *Philosophy of psychoanalysis*). Secondly, the broad methodological convergence that accompanied the researchers' theoretical interest soon was established as a fundamental link of rapprochement.

In fact, in different and sometimes adverse ways – given the diversity of theoretical and thematic references of the researchers –, the common interest in the same set of questions – whose centrality can be summarily related to the old “matter of method” – became clearer. That is, the enormous variety of themes and problems present in the theoretical interest of these researchers in the *Philosophy of psychoanalysis* found a significant and central convergence in certain

common concerns of an essentially methodological nature.

These concerns are expressed explicitly in the *PhilPsyCh* formulation. *Phil* evokes the interdisciplinary *methodological articulation* between *history and philosophy*, whose application is oriented towards the double object of research: *psy knowledge* (Psy) and *human sciences* (Ch – in Portuguese, *ciências humanas*). In other words, it is a *research network* that seeks to interrogate, from a *methodological, historical, and philosophical point of view*, the particular field of *psy knowledge* and the general field of *human sciences*.

If these are the general lines that constitute the *PhilPsyCh Network*, what are, in precise terms, the theoretical circumscriptions that delimit its research activity? That is, what does it represent and what is the *methodological point of view* from which it starts? Which theoretical references guide the *historical-philosophical* interdisciplinary articulation? And, finally, which *psy knowledge* and *human sciences* are dealt with?

The *methodological point of view* represents not only 1) the mutual theoretical concerns of researchers: core of convergence, but mainly 2) the nature of the *Network's* methodological approach: epistemological approach, and 3) the shared identification of a fundamental problem: how to understand the *psy knowledge* and the *human sciences*, in the precise context of a methodology epistemologically informed by the relationship between history and philosophy, without falling, at the same time, into the traps of historicism (relativism) and idealism (dogmatism)? It is in this sense that the *PhilPsyCh Network* sees in the “matter of method” (*methodological point of view*) the precise core of its problem: thinking, through an epistemological analysis, of a *historical-philosophical* type, the *epistemology of psy knowledge* and *human sciences*.

The theoretical references that guide this *historical-philosophical*

epistemological analysis inhabit the broad scope of the history of philosophy and human sciences, notably using modern thought and, with greater emphasis, contemporary thought. The list of authors and traditions is as long and diverse as that of researchers linked to the *Network*: it goes from Descartes, Sade, and the French materialists, through Kant, Schopenhauer, Darwin, Nietzsche, and Freud, reaching Heidegger, Ricœur, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, Canguilhem, Habermas and Bauman, among others. There is also a notable effort to increasingly include Anglo-Saxon and Brazilian traditions in this list of references. In this context, it is easy to imagine, based on the authors and traditions mentioned, the enormous number and variety of research themes/problems that arise from this. Such an epistemological diversity of references, themes, and problems does not represent a scientific difficulty because it finds in the specific scope of the *Network* the appropriate theoretical and methodological circumscriptions – investigative lines – that order and direct it, namely: a) the theme of the philosophical reception of psychoanalysis (history and method); b) the theme of the history of psychoanalysis (historical context and scientific references, especially medicine and biology); c) the question of the historiographical methodology applied to the context of texts, concepts, and institutions (textual, conceptual, and institutional history), and d) the general problem of the epistemology of the human sciences (from the angle of the history of ideas, structuralism, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, historical epistemology, and recent contributions from the philosophy of science).

As for *psy knowledge* and *human sciences* that are objects of the *PhilPsyCh Network*, there is an evident predominance of philosophy, on the one hand, and psychoanalysis, on the other. This is because the *Network* originated from the common philosophical interest of its researchers, firstly in psychoanalysis, and from there, in the sciences that surround it, mainly, but not exclusively, the human sciences. There

is naturally an interest in expanding the set of these two areas, that is, bringing to the field of *psy knowledge* other references from psychology, in addition to psychiatry and the contributions of neurosciences, for example; and for the field of *human sciences*, anthropology, archeology, the contributions of the new social sciences, among others.

2. Activity

The *PhilPsyCh Network*, although recent in its institutional organization, has acted very actively and productively. If we take into account the series of activities and publications that, intensified since 2016, led to its constitution in 2022, it is possible to see the *Network's* issues gradually imposing themselves as themes of greater relevance and vigor, and being articulated in an increasingly systematized way.

In fact, the themes turned into research problems and gradually became prominent objects of specific analyses and debates within the Brazilian field of *Philosophy of psychoanalysis*: events, interinstitutional research projects, and scientific publications – thematic dossiers and scientific articles –, including international ones, are the most evident expressions of the strong vitality and level of systematization from which the *PhilPsyCh Network* originated.

Regarding the events, the following stand out: i) the annual *Seminars of the Subjectivity, Philosophy, and Psychoanalysis Research Group* (UFMS), which, especially since its second edition in 2016, has uninterruptedly dedicated its programming to the topic; ii) the two activities held in 2017 at the *Université Paris Diderot (Paris VII)*: *Atelier Contributions de la philosophie brésilienne de la psychanalyse* and the *Journée Philosophie et psychanalyse: interlocutions franco-brésiliennes*; iii) the *Jornadas de história da psicanálise* (in English, *Journeys of the history of psychoanalysis*) (PUCPR), an event that began in 2019, and will hold its fifth edition in 2023, which is also committed to the topic;

and iv) the two *PhilPsyCh International Congresses*, held in 2022 and 2023.

Equally important was the interinstitutional research project, *A recepção filosófica da psicanálise: história, tradições e doutrinas* (in English, *The Philosophical Reception of Psychoanalysis: history, traditions, and doctrines*) (2019-2023). This project, created by Richard Simanke, in 2018, was the prototype of the *PhilPsyCh Network* as, from a formal point of view, it brought together for the first time around a research program the same researchers and institutions (UFMS, UFJF, PUCPR) that would form the *Network* four years later.

Regarding scientific publications, the following contributions are especially significant: Bocca (2018), *A recepção filosófica brasileira da psicanálise: um caso de descolonização* (in English, *The Brazilian philosophical reception of psychoanalysis: a case of decolonization*); Padovan (2020), *Introdução à análise empírico-conceitual como método de investigação em história da psicanálise* (in English, *Introduction to the empirical-conceptual analysis as a research method in the history of psychoanalysis*); Simanke (2020), *Considérations préliminaires à propos d'une méthode historico-philosophique pour la recherche conceptuelle en psychanalyse: une réflexion à partir de l'expérience brésilienne* (in English, *Preliminary considerations about a historical-philosophical method for conceptual research in psychoanalysis: a reflection based on the Brazilian experience*). Freitas Pinto (2021), *Por uma história e método da recepção filosófica da psicanálise: esboço de um programa de pesquisa* (in English, *For a history and method of the philosophical reception of psychoanalysis: outline of a research program*). Also, the double edition of the thematic dossier, *História e método da recepção filosófica da psicanálise* (in English, *History and method of the philosophical reception of psychoanalysis*), organized by the same researchers from the *PhilPsyCh Network*, published in 2021 by Eleuthería – Revista do Curso

de Filosofia da UFMS, and, finally, the two publications related to the activities of the *PhilPsyCh Network* in the year 2022 – the book *Estudos de história e filosofia dos saberes psi e das ciências humanas* (in English, *Studies of history and philosophy of psy knowledge and human sciences*) (Freitas Pinto, Germer, Padovan 2023), which partially brings together content from the *scientific meetings*, and the thematic dossier, result of the *I PhilPsyCh International Congress*, in the preparation phase, to be published soon.

Finally, in addition to the events, the interinstitutional project, and the publications, another important characteristic of the *Network's* activities concerns its fruitful and productive institutional relationship with other researchers and research laboratories. Since the beginning of its activities, in 2022, *PhilPsyCh* has expanded and consolidated international scientific collaborations, notably with researchers from Argentina and Italy.

The collaboration between the *PhilPsyCh Network* and *LAPEF – Laboratorio di Psicoanalisi, Ermeneutica, Fenomenologia* (UniCA) is especially significant. The increasingly frequent mutual participation of members of the two laboratories in their respective events and publications – for example, the 2022 events, *Seminario LAPEF: Interpretazione tra coscienza, storia, saperi* and *I PhilPsyCh International Congress*, and the publications (Simanke 2020; Busacchi, Martini 2021; Busacchi 2022) –, and finally, the project, in full discussion, for institutional deepening and formalization between both. All of this demonstrates a very fruitful and productive theoretical and scientific collaboration between *PhilPsyCh* and *LAPEF*².

Thus, through events, projects, publications, and international

² About the collaboration between *PhilPsyCh* and *LAPEF*, besides this *Scientific News*, the following works should be added: Simanke; Caropreso and Padovan; Cabanat in this *Critical Hermeneutics* dossier, and also the publications by Busacchi and Martini in the dossier relating to the *I PhilPsyCh International Congress*, in the preparation phase, to be published soon.

exchanges, the *PhilPsyCh Network* has been actively working to maintain, expand, and deepen its field of activity.

3. Perspectives

From the point of view of future perspectives, the *PhilPsyCh Network* hopes, firstly, to consolidate the work it has already been carrying out, without losing sight of its greatest quality: the epistemological diversity. In fact, its greatest quality is also its greatest challenge, since relating the diversity of an epistemological program that aims to investigate the *history and philosophy of psy knowledge and human sciences* in a single and large research agenda is, at the same time, a triumph and a risk. A triumph because it involves the radical assumption that only epistemological plurality can advance human knowledge, be it scientific, philosophical, etc., and a risk because this assumption cannot serve as a subterfuge to justify any kind of epistemological relativism, which would put in check the very idea of “knowledge”, “science”, etc.

Hence the reason why it will be necessary, secondly, to deepen the understanding of this *epistemological diversity* to delimit more clearly the *methodological point of view* that constitutes it and the use of the *theoretical references* that guide it, so that both – the method and the diverse theories – converge not only towards the mere expansion of the list of *psy knowledge and human sciences* that make up the *Network*, but mainly towards a new understanding of this *knowledge* and these *sciences*.

It is for this purpose that, increasingly, *epistemological diversity* must correspond to *institutional diversity*, that is, the *PhilPsyCh Network* must, thirdly, continue and intensify its national and international scientific collaboration efforts, notably by linking up with laboratories of research from other countries in South and North America and Europe, seeking to always remain open to new references, to the process of external submission of the results of their work and

to the constant critical review of their theoretical positions.

If research in *human sciences*, in the area of *psy knowledge* and particularly *philosophical research*, finds itself worldwide at a time of enormous challenges – theoretical, methodological, and institutional –, *PhilPsyCh* wishes to be a *research network* that can contribute to a better understanding of these challenges, and perhaps even solving some of them.

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