



Papeles del Psicólogo

ISSN: 0214-7823

ISSN: 1886-1415

papeles@correo.cop.es

Consejo General de Colegios Oficiales de Psicólogos
España

Ramos Torio, Rosa
Science and Psychotherapy
Papeles del Psicólogo, vol. 41, no. 3, 2020, September-, pp. 161-162
Consejo General de Colegios Oficiales de Psicólogos
España

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SCIENCE AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

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How is the question 'what is science' demarcated? Is psychology a science, and if so, what kind of science? How does the professional activity of psychology relate to the science of psychology? Is the professional activity a scientific activity as well? In this issue, the authors address these and other related questions, analyzing the gaps that remain in psychology. They explore the difficulties that psychology faces in determining and evaluating the mechanisms and variables effective for therapeutic activity.

The authors also offer an analysis of the ethical and deontological criteria that lie at the basis of the profession. Finally, the issue *Science and Profession* investigates the theoretical difficulties that confront our profession in demarcating the line between science and pseudoscience.

In his chapter "The demarcation problem. Science, psychology, and psychotherapy", José Ramón Fernández-Hermida starts by considering the ongoing difficulties in demarcating psychology as a plural science that operates in a tension between the natural and human sciences. This plurality that characterizes psychology and psychotherapy is precisely what determine the difficulties in situating them within the scientific field. Fernández-Hermida analyses the challenges faced by the constituency of both approaches and proposes possible criteria to establish their boundaries.

Marino Pérez Álvarez offers the notion of 'scientific embroilment' as a critical concept for thinking about two states of confusion presented by psychotherapy. First, he explores how psychotherapeutic diversity does not imply a disparity in the efficiency of results, dividing his observations into three levels: the ontological, the anthropological, and the psychological. Pérez Álvarez's second 'embroilment' consists of the epistemological difficulty in delimiting the line that separates science from pseudoscience, highlighting the ontological echoes that are at the root of the problems of epistemological demarcation. Finally, the author examines why and when a life problem becomes a psychological disorder. According to Pérez Álvarez, a psychological disorder, as a clinical category, lacks markers or psychometric tests that determine the moment in which the relevant problem constitutes a disorder. From Pérez Álvarez's perspective, the disorder could be defined as "a life situation in which life has turned against one (...) and thus has upset the way of one's being in the world, testing one's capabilities to the limit under certain circumstances".

In "Science as a means to the development of psychology", Ana Estévez analyzes the development that psychology, as a discipline, has undergone through its history. The author examines the key issues in the debate over whether or not psychology is a science, while also considering the consequences of this debate, which has sometimes resulted in questions regarding psychology's value with regard to other scientific disciplines. Psychology's object of

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study is one of the central elements for understanding the challenges that the discipline encountered for its recognition as a science. At the same time, science presents a means for developing the study of psychology, helping the discipline to grow within a solid conceptual and empirical base, improving through research, and achieving social recognition via its contribution to the demands of society.

Miguel Ángel Vallejo Pareja, leads us through a reflection on the placebo effect and its significance for understanding key aspects of treatments, offering in his text a dialogue on what the placebo effect provides for the efficacy of treatments. Vallejo opens the question about the variables that intervene in psychotherapy and that transcend a technique, that is, those 'variables' present in the subjects themselves, their previous experiences, and their beliefs. But the author also points out the limits of the placebo effect and stresses the importance of the client lacking a certain balance in order for it to be effective. Vallejo concludes by arguing that the placebo effect can be considered a regular part of treatment, if confidence, warmth, and empathy are achieved to maximize the placebo effect, by training professionals in the use of these skills, and opting to use open placebos.

Guillermo Mattioli focuses his analysis on the effectiveness of psychotherapeutic practice and states that psychotherapy is not a science, but an application of psychology. The author understands that psychotherapies differ from medications in their performance and emphasizes the therapeutic relationship, which contributes substantially to the outcome of therapy regardless of the type of treatment applied. Mattioli raises questions such as what is the relationship between good or bad science, on the one hand, and good or bad psychotherapy, on the other? Can one be a good scientist and a bad psychotherapist? The author argues that psychotherapy is inevitably linked to the values presented by the therapist, thus informing both the types of change that the therapist him-

or herself desires and the values presented by the patients. For Mattioli, there are no bad psychotherapies, only bad practices. Psychotherapy lies between technique and ethics, between the psychological help procedures and the values that permeate both the patient's and the therapist's symptomatic conflicts. The important matter is to "welcome the other as another, to listen carefully so that the patient can speak better".

In "Science and professional practice in clinical psychology. Psychotherapies and pseudo-therapies in search of scientific evidence", Juan Antonio Moriana discusses the problems that some of the specialties of psychology, such as clinical psychology, find in applying the scientific method and transferring the results of experimental research to a professional context. Moriana explains how "the idea that everything works" (the Dodo bird verdict) has contributed to pseudo-therapeutic treatments multiplying, confusing the general public, unleashing harmful effects, and depriving them of adequate treatments for their problems. Why psychological treatments work and what processes explain clinical change are key questions, even if difficult to answer. Moriana urges the scientific community to promote an international consensus in order to establish common criteria of evaluation to help determine which psychological therapies have beneficial effects and which lack sufficient evidence of their efficacy. He argues that creating a list of those therapies that present benefits and good functioning would be a better proposal than making a list of pseudo-therapies. Finally, the author reflects on what should be the objectives of treatments and how we can measure the results. He suggests that the integrationist position with science as a shared ground could support both models based on the common factors theory and those focused on specific techniques, with the aim for both to adopt the scientific method as a vehicle for testing their proposals and turning them into evidence.