

The Structure of Behavior as Unity of Psychology According to Mariano Yela

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Abstract

Background: As Mariano Yela is one of the most eminent Spanish psychologists, the centenary of his birth is a good occasion to revisit his work. Despite being best known for his contributions to psychometrics, Yela has also made important contributions to theoretical psychology, with particular interest in the question of its unity-diversity. **Method:** Some of his most important theoretical works, presented in various contexts, were reviewed. **Results:** One conception of psychology and one concern are emphasized throughout his work. The conception of psychology is based on behavior as meaningful action. The concern is to see any possible unity in the diversity of psychology. **Conclusions:** The structure of behavior defined by subject, situation and action emerge as the basis on which the unity of psychology could be established. If anything, unity of diversity. Some implications are discussed.

Keywords: Behavior; subject; situation; subjective experience; “I am I and my circumstance”.

Resumen

La Estructura del Comportamiento Como Unidad de la Psicología, Según Mariano Yela. Antecedentes: siendo Mariano Yela uno de los más eminentes psicológicos españoles, el centenario de su nacimiento es una buena ocasión para visitar su obra. A pesar de ser más conocido por sus aportaciones a la psicometría, Yela ha hecho también importantes contribuciones a la psicología teórica, con particular interés en la cuestión de su unidad-diversidad. **Método:** se han revisado algunas de sus más importantes trabajos teóricos, expuestos en diversos contextos. **Resultados:** una concepción de la psicología y una preocupación destaca a lo largo de su obra. La concepción de la psicología se basa en la conducta como acción significativa. La preocupación es ver la posible unidad de la diversidad de la psicología. **Conclusiones:** la estructura del comportamiento definida por el sujeto, la situación y la acción emerge como la base sobre la que se podría establecer la unidad de la psicología. Si acaso, unidad de la diversidad. Se discuten algunas implicaciones.

Palabras clave: conducta; sujeto; situación; experiencia subjetiva; “yo soy yo y mi circunstancia”.

Like the great psychologists who can be counted on one's fingers, Mariano Yela contains the two souls of psychology, as he himself might have said when he states that at least “two souls” inhabit psychology, and attempts to see whether they can be joined (Yela, 1991/1996). The two souls refer to empirical-experimental-statistical psychology and humanist-phenomenological-behavioral psychology. For Yela, the first, for which he is best known, is molded in psychometry as an academic discipline and applied in his particular case to intelligence. But Yela also cultivated the second in his conception of psychology, based on the “structure of behavior” (Yela, 1974), for which he is less well known, and its vindication is even more necessary today. While psychometry has been greatly developed and is a common asset of psychology, the conceptual development of psychology as a unified science remains distant, if not becoming even more distant, or perhaps there is unity in its diversity, and it remains to be seen how.

The question of psychology's unity-diversity seems consubstantial to its history and reason for being. As Yela himself reminds us, when in 1874, Franz Brentano proposed “establishing a *psychology*” instead of *psychologies*, as he wrote in his prologue to *Psychology from an Empirical Viewpoint* (Brentano, 2020, p. 16), his first attempt to construct a scientific psychology, like Wilhem Wundt's system, contained two internal tensions which seem not to have left psychology yet (Yela, 1991/1996). In fact, psychology was born split in two with Wundt. On one hand, experimental psychology, with the emblematic date of the first laboratory in 1879 as a natural science studying simple phenomena, and on the other, the psychology of peoples as a cultural science that studies complex historical/social phenomena, which was Wundt's major dedication, as summarized in his *Elements of Psychology of Peoples* in 1912 (Wundt, 1990). This division has not kept psychology from being, as Yela says, a science with a plethora of great developments and social implantations, while at the same, time frustrating. Frustrating because, “The more precise a study is, the more limited and trivial its results are, and the opposite, the more important the subject is, the more doubtful and controversial its theory, technique or interpretation of results.” (Yela, 1991/1996, p. 328). Psychology on the way to 150 years since Wundt and 30 since Yela, in the decade of 2020, is still overflowing, frustrating

and divided: a giant with feet of clay searching for a foundation (Zagaría et al., 2020) or in this case, unity in diversity (Yela, 1987; 1991/1996). After going around in so many circles in search of its unity, psychology as conceived by Yela would seem to merit consideration. Yela's conception is not just anything, but is grounded in his American and European scientific and philosophical education, and does not omit that Spanish vantage point from the shoulders of Ortega y Gasset (Yela, 1983/1996). A scientific and philosophical education is fundamental because the greatest problems in psychology are philosophical, theoretical and conceptual more than scientific or empirical. If the problems were scientific and empirical, with the thousands of psychology researchers and thousands and thousands of results produced every month, we would assuredly not be as we always are, or even more disunited than ever. But psychologists nowadays do not study philosophy, and it would have to be seen what, according to their curriculum, a specialized scientific professional is. Nor is theory cultivated in psychology, unless they are local theories on the level of research niches. Then, a long visit, like Yela's in the United States (Chicago, with Thurstone, Cronbach and others) and in Europe (Louvain, with Michotte, Katz and others) in the mid-20th century, those "wild years" of psychology, when theories and methods were being consolidated, gives a unique perspective that he would not have had, even if he had been extremely studious, in only one of those places (Yela, 1983/1996). Furthermore, Ortega was the referent to whose philosophy Yela was undeniably devoted (Yela, 1983; 1987). The philosophy of Ortega is fundamental in points of philosophy on which psychology is usually silent, as discussed below.

This article proposes to distill Yela's conception of psychology as expressed in a variety of works, often concerning the question of its unity and diversity. Its implications are discussed in the context of current psychology, thirty years later.

To start talking about psychology, behavior

Mainstream psychology defines psychology as the science of the mind and behavior (Zagaría et al., 2020). The mind and behavior are certainly ineludible terms in psychology. However, when put together in a definition (mind *and* behavior) they are separated as distinct entities sewn together by the conjunction "and". At first, it leads us to understand that the mind is not behavior, but something separate, typically, unobservable, located inside one, depository of meaning and intentionality of observable behavior itself. Behavior would be external execution with sense (meaning and intentionality) residing in the mind. Behavior thus has more of a methodological status as a method of access, inference and confirmation of mental processes than really thematic, as the theme and purpose of psychology. After all, mainstream psychology is a version of "methodological behaviorism" according to Skinner's famous distinction between "radical behaviorism", radical precisely because it takes behavior as a theme of psychology in its "own right" (Skinner says) not a method for studying something else whether mind or brain (Skinner, 1945).

If the mind were assimilated in the brain, it would then have the binomial brain-behavior, behavior again being the executive counterpart of supposed internal agencies located in the brain. The handy, "executive function", epitomizes this conception, which as much as it may seem neuroscientific, is still a version of the homunculus or ghost in the machine: Cartesian dualism

revived. Faced with presumed internal agencies (mind, brain), the organism is taken as a whole subject, individual or person *situated* in the world. After all, behavior is performed by the organism or individual as a whole, not any of its internal subcomponents, modules, processes or mechanisms.

Behavior, subject, situation

The truth is that psychology is not easy to define. Even though the reference to behavior cannot be left out, more terms always seem necessary. According to Yela, behavior based on behaviorism is the touchstone of psychology as science. Yela says:

It seems to me that all the current psychological currents, to the extent that they attempt to contribute to the elaboration of a positive science, admit that, whatever may be the source of their data and hypotheses, and whatever their resources and fields of verification, the final and irreplaceable touchstone, in the last term, has to be the behavior of the human being as the repeatedly observable public activity of the subject (Yela, 1980/1996, p. 181).

In view of all of the above, more terms than just behavior, such as mind, stimulus, world, subject and self or awareness, are necessary. As José Luis Pinillos used to say, for example, in the epilogue of *Principios de psicología [Principles of Psychology]*, behavior is someone's (Pinillos, 1975, p. 694). The someone of behavior is a *subject*, in some *situation*. Subject and situation are the terms that delimit the structure of behavior. Although behavior already implies subject and situation, it is really the subject as a whole that behaves in some way in a given situation, not an organ or mechanism in relation to an isolated stimulus or bytes of information. Only for explanatory reasons can the subject be separated from the situation, each mutually assuming the other in anything said about either.

The subject is, above all a body-subject with the particularity of taking itself, both body and behavior, as the object. In his essay entitled *Yo y mi cuerpo [My body and I]*, Yela calls this metabeavior (Yela, 1994/1996a). The I, is the biographic body, more than biological body, with a personal history and a sense of life. It is a fact, says Yela, "...that man not only responds; he can, and in some way has to consider his response, meet it and respond to it and for it. This is what metabeavior consists of. Not in an action separate from and beyond behavior, but in the creation and execution of a behavior based on behavior itself." (Yela, 1994/1996a, p. 369). As Yela continues, "...man is, in the end, 'someone', who has to decide and interpret 'who he is and has been and is going to be.' Always within certain *limits*. But those limits are, in turn, questionable and problematic. That is why they become *horizons*." (p. 370).

The notion of situation, on the other hand, beyond the triviality of being in a place (How could it be anything else?) means a whole reconceptualization and alternative to the notion of mind as something internal. According to this conception, the mind would be outside, and *inside* a situation, in-the-world, not the world inside one. The human being exists and lives *in* the world. To exist means to be-outside where *exit* and existential come from. Not in vain, *to-be-in-the-world* is the emblem of the existential approach.

The notion of situation also has a wider scope than the notion of stimulus, which seems circumscribed to a stimulus-response relationship. As Yela says, the stimulus to which one responds is really a situation. "It is a *situation* because a living organism is *situated* in it. The living being, in the course of ontogenetic

development and depending on biological and cognositive possibilities, needs and motives, experiences and learning, discovers and configures an environment, and, in the case of man, a world interpreted through culture, which is meaningfully articulated in goal-objects and means-objects” (Yela, 1991/1996, p. 339). Yela gives two classic examples of this. One is the famous experiment performed by Solomon Asch in 1956, in which he asked subjects to estimate the length of three relatively different longitudinal lines. It was shown that their answers depended more on the situation than on the lines themselves, which includes the influence of previous estimates (in “cahoots”) and the more or less conformist disposition of the participants. The other is the study by Hadley Cantril after Orson Welles’ famous 1938 radio broadcast, “The Invasion from Mars”, how many listeners who believed it saw different things, for example, that people were fleeing if they thought there were more cars than on other days, or that they still did not know if everything seemed the same. Subjects respond to the situation configured with what is given according to the context and their own disposition, experience, motivation, expectations, projects, pretensions, desire and attitudes (Yela, 1974, pp. 84-86).

The notion of situation, understood as gestalt configuration or “unity of interdependence,” says Yela, between “stimulus” (situation) and subject (always *situated*), ends up overcoming the internal/external dichotomy, in as much as it is, and continues to be, a practically indispensable expression. In the end, the psychological part would not be inside or outside, but would be the continuous dynamic relationship (behavioral) between the subject and the world (Pérez-Álvarez, 2021). The scientific and professional study of this complex relationship requires analysis, classification and description of patterns, objectivation which easily runs the risk of reification or essentialization as traits, factors, latent variables or mental disorders that were in there, objectified within one as things in themselves. This objectifying tendency, scandalous in the clinic, requires an intellectual and methodological effort to resist. Effort, because the objectifying tendency is the default thought, not thinking, which often requires rethinking what was received, that is, epistemological vigilance. As examples of the notion of situation itself, psychological disorders would be neither inside or outside of one, but rather one who is *within* life situations that have turned into loops (Pérez-Álvarez, 2021) and the symptom networks, where they would not be seen as manifestations of latent variables or underlying causes, but as forming part of the networks of related events (Borsboom, 2017; Fonseca-Pedrero, 2018).

Subject and situation would thus be the terms that best complement the notion of behavior, even when implicit in it, more than mind with its mentalist connotations. The idea of mind, in any case hard to obviate, would be situated in the subject’s behavioral relationship with situations (I-circumstances; being-in-the-world).

I am I and my circumstance as non-dualistic alternative

With respect to situating psychology in the subject’s relationships with the world, a phenomenological-existential philosophy as represented by Ortega is fundamental. How the subject-world relationship is understood is a philosophical question more than scientific and empirical. Any fact has room for one theory or another. What makes the difference are philosophical conceptions, often implicit and never innocuous, that mark the difference (Pérez-Álvarez, 2021). And the default philosophy is no other than

Cartesian dualism: the “official doctrine” of the mind, as expressed by Gilbert Ryle in his classic 1949 work *The Concept of Mind* (Ryle, 2005)

According to Ryle, the mind would result from a category error consisting of naming it as a separate thing and locating it in a place other than the one defined by the things and actions themselves defining an activity. As if someone after visiting the buildings in a university were to ask where the university is, or after watching a football game, where the team’s spirit is. Certainly, “Team spirit is not the same as dribbling, or kicking, but neither is it so different that it can be said that the goalie first catches and then shows team spirit or that the center forward is, at any given moment, either kicking or showing *esprit de corps*” (Ryle, 2005, p. 31). After all, the mind is out there like the counterpart of behavior. Although dualist philosophy does not seem to impede the plethora of psychology, neither does it facilitate its conceptual progress.

The alternative to Cartesian dualism and to the mentalist conception of psychology is found in phenomenology and existentialism based on Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Ortega, all of them amply cited by Yela. In particular, Ortega and Merleau-Ponty offer developments in phenomenology of special importance for psychology, as in fact they are presented by Yela. Thus, Yela takes from Ortega the emblematic formula of his philosophy *I am I and my circumstance*, predecessor of, and to a good extent equivalent to, Heideggerian *Being-in-the-world*. This means taking things in the world as radical reality and oneself *being* with them such that the subject and the world mutually constitute each other. We are not talking about that handy term, interaction, as if the subject and the world existed by themselves and then got together and interacted, as psychology is usually satisfied enough with. This is what Yela says:

The radical and absolutely indubitable reality is not the things without me, nor I without the things, nor is it the consciousness of. It is I dealing with things; it is I already living. It is human life, in which, at the same time, “I” and “my circumstances” are given. Neither is prior, both are fundamental: “Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia, y si no la salvo a ella no me salvo yo” (I am I and my circumstance, and if I do not save my circumstance I do not save myself. By the way, this key statement from the philosophy of Ortega [Yela continues] may be seen, from a psychological point of view, as the formulation *avant la lettre* of Skinner’s program: if I do not control my environment, I do not control myself (Yela, 1987, p. 261).

It is not a matter of I-thinker, but of I-executive, another concept taken from Ortega. As Yela says, By 1913, the year of Watson’s manifesto, Ortega had begun to develop his phenomenology of living behavioral action (Yela himself reminds us), that is, “actual behavior as subjectively meaningful action, physically executed in the world” (Yela, 1987, p. 261).

The Ortegian formula, *I am I and my circumstance*, as well as the Heideggerian *Being-in-the-world*, are the greatest philosophical alternatives to Cartesian dualism, of great interest in psychology. It could be said of these formulas that the conjunction *and* in “I am I and my circumstance” and the preposition *in* in “being-in-the-world” are like the behavioral subject-situation nexus. It would not deal with a mind-and-behavior-type stitching, but mutually constitutive articulation, where the mind ceases to be something internal to become a behavioral relationship and the world ceases to be something external to become the medium in which it exists and in which life unfolds.

It is important to highlight the double side of behavior: the subject and the world. On the subject side, it refers to behavior (always someone's) as a meaningful action as "meaningfully subjective action, physically executed in the world," as Yela says. It might be said that the mind is in behavior, *is* behavior, by definition meaningful, with a sense for the subject given the circumstances. If it were not meaningful, it would not be psychological behavior, but only biological, such as a *tic* in the eyelid compared to a *wink* (Pérez-Álvarez, 2021). On the world side, world refers to the correlative meaning and functionality of situations in relation to the subjects. It would be the behavioral properties of the human world in the sense of "geography or behavioral field" as differentiated from the physical field, according to the distinction made by Gestalt psychology cited by Yela (Yela, 1974, p. 82). This includes the *affordances* or availabilities of Gibson, another author widely cited by Yela. The notion of the behavioral field rounds out the correlative notion of behavioral subject. From being in some place, that is where the mind would be, as meaningful activity.

Behavior may be seen, as Yela conceives it, in relation to Skinner's operant behavior (Pérez-Álvarez, 2018a). Ortega's executive-self may also be seen as an operant-self (Pérez-Álvarez & Sass, 2008). In particular, Skinner's operant behavior involves intentionality. As Skinner says in *About Behaviorism* in 1974, "... operant behavior is the very field of purpose and intention. By its very nature, it is directed at the future: a person acts so that something will happen, and the order is temporal" (Skinner, 1987, p. 54).

However, Yela is not a behavioralist. Nor is he not. As the quote above, in which Yela recognizes behavior as a contribution to psychological behaviorism, continues: I do not believe it too much of a risk to assume that most psychologists today would describe, one way or another, the old line by Woodworth (1924, p. 264): 'If I am asked if I am a behavioralist, I would have to say that I do not know and do not care. If I am, it is because I believe in several of the projects that behaviorists propose. If I am not, in part, it is because I also believe in other projects which behaviorists seem to sidestep'" (Yela, 1980/1996, p. 182).

According to its phenomenological-behavioral approach, Yela's structure of behavior has the same lineage as Merleau-Ponty's 1942 work, *La structure du comportement* [*The structure of comportment*], also often cited by Yela. In some way, the term "comportment" is preferable to behavior, which is loaded with spurious meanings as the counterpart of the mind and executive function (Pérez-Álvarez, 2018a; 2028b). As already discussed elsewhere:

The notion of 'comportment' refers to the entire corporal, affective, cognitive and operational articulation of the subject with the world, where comportment involves intentionality, know-how and comprehension (not the external execution of internal intentions and cognitions) [...]. The gestalt, holistic, non-mechanicist and not analytically rending character of this conception should be emphasized, which is why Merleau-Ponty talks about the 'structure of comportment', just as Mariano Yela also speaks of the 'structure of behavior' in the same line (Yela, 1974). Behavior, or here, comportment, constitutes a structure or dynamic pattern which includes the organism and the medium, the subject and the situation (Pérez-Álvarez, 2018a, p. 168).

More particularly, Yela says, "The structure of behavior is the unit of interdependence of stimulus, subject and action" (Yela, 1974, p. 95). "Action depends on the particular way of being

of the subject – personality – and the situation as the subject experiences, perceives and interprets it. The action falls on the stimulating situation it responds to and modifies, adapting to it and transforming it. The action likewise reverts on the subject himself, who expresses himself and is shaped through it. Man makes himself through action: he behaves the way he is and goes on being the way he behaves" (Yela, 1974, p. 95).

It is interesting to relate this conception of psychology of Yela to how Pinillos defines psychology. Pinillos says:

The subject of psychology is that activity by which organisms exist in their respective media, responding to their stimuli and operating on them, in a purposeful, partly conscious way (Pinillos, 1975, p. 692).

Given this coincidence of perhaps the two most eminent contemporary Spanish psychologists, we might wonder what happened to psychology in Spain. Perhaps it would have to be answered that these clear and distinct definitions were to a great extent in vain, as Spanish psychology seems immersed in mainstream psychology as the study of mind and behavior. This underuse is partly due to our eminent psychologists being more occupied with modernizing and updating Spanish psychology than in developing their own conceptions of it, without doubt more grounded than the psychology with the American stamp on it, everything said and done. While Pinillos did not get the chance to write a book announced at the end of his *Principles of Psychology* on "The history and method of psychology" where he would probably have developed his more personal conception, Yela was better known for one of the two souls of psychology that inhabited him, leaving aside studies of such doubtless value and as current as some of those used here.

Discussion

This article proposed a distillation of the psychological conception of Yela concerning the question of the unity-diversity of psychology. His conception may be described around the structure of conduct as unity of interdependence of the situation, the subject and the action. The situation and the subject as the delimitation of behavior are not redundant. On the contrary, they situate behavior beyond its conventional use as an instrument of the mind and response to stimuli. Instead of the mind there is the subject and instead of the stimulus there is the situation, more comprehensive concepts. It is a phenomenological-existential conception in the lineage of Merleau-Ponty, beyond the typical cognitive-behavioral mechanicist conception.

Touching on the question of unity, Yela himself is skeptical. "Even admitting to everything said, psychology is still a *divided and uneven science*." Is future unification possible?" Yela asks. "I think so," he answers, "Although I am not sure it can be achieved," and adds, "It has to be admitted that the unification of psychology has a certain *utopian* nature [...] in the sense that an external *fiat* cannot be achieved [...]. Only if the efforts of free research converge on the same conception of the psychological subject and method can that unity be invented and discovered or approached, perhaps asymptotically," (Yela, 1991/1996, p. 344). If Yela already said in 1987 that "The current context favors a policy of separation and fragmentation due, among other things, to a system of incentives that reinforce disunity," (Yela, 1987, p. 268), how much more so could it be said today in view of the new conceptions that have arisen and research niches that have proliferated.

Consider three “innovations” in psychology so far in the 21st century, such as positive psychology, neuroscience and evolutionary psychology, all of them different from each other and even absurd in relation to the abovementioned structure of comportment. Thus, positive psychology concentrates on happiness and wellbeing, neuroscience on the neuronal correlations of psychological activities, and evolutionary psychology on the genetic predispositions for the behavior of individuals, society and culture. However, the resurgence of some psychological traditions left a little on the side could be emphasized. With their pluses and minuses, they are in the line of the structure of comportment – subject, situation, action – discussed above (Pérez-Álvarez, 2018a). They are the new science of mind and behavior 4e (*embodied, embedded, enacted, extended*), contextual behavioral science (with Skinnerian roots), ecological psychology (based on Gibson), cultural psychology (in the tradition of Wundt and Vigotski) and existential psychology. Even when this variety reveals once more the diversity of psychology, in this case an attempt is made to suggest its relative unity beyond the mind and the brain (Pérez-Álvarez, 2018a).

Psychology based on the structure of comportment (or behavior) has important practical implications. In addition to those already mentioned above concerning the situation and symptom-networks as an alternative to the notion of disease, now the subjective meaning of behavior is emphasized as data in their own right for any psychological study deserving of the name. “That is why there are, and I think there always will be and must be,” says Yela, “biographic, historical, cultural and humanistic psychologies that attempt to form coherent systems for understanding the subjective meaning of human behavior” (Yela, 1991/1996, p. 334). This poses what Yela recognizes as “The problem of scientific method in psychology”: how to coordinate the study of subjective experience and public observation. The problem resides in how to articulate “...the interpretation of the personal sense of human actions and the empirical or experimental confirmation of the implications observable in the behavior which can be observed of that interpretation” (Yela, 1994/1996b, p. 361). Yela is advocating here methodological plurality, as long as it is methodical with psychometric properties that enable objectivation of the subjectivity. Passing the word now to Pinillos, “The objective study of subjective activity precisely understood is not at all as impracticable as an empirical epistemology has been suggesting” (Pinillos, 1975, p. 696).

It is therefore a perspective interested in the subjective experience claimed by both Yela and Pinillos. Although not yet part of psychology education standards, the interest in the systematic study of subjective experience is opening its way. Let us just make four comments here. Thus, for example, a new form of “introspection” is being developed in which individuals are trained in capturing and reconstructing experiences according to reliability and validity criteria (Bitbol & Petitmengin, 2013). Semi-structured interviews with a phenomenological basis enable the world experienced to be explored under different clinical conditions (Pérez-Álvarez & García-Montes, 2018). One’s position with respect to one’s own experiences and “symptoms”, what Yela calls metabehavior, forms part of a phenomenological-hermeneutic method of therapeutic interview (Stanghellini & Mancini, 2017). And, so, clinical judgment has continued to be fundamental at the same time as the actuarial method since Paul Meehl established his realities in 1954 (Meehl, 2013). If, as Edward Thorndike said:

All that exists, exists in some amount and can be measured, it is also true that not everything that can be measured counts, nor can everything that counts be measured (as William B. Cameron said in this case).

Another practical contribution, although it may not seem like it, concerns derivation of an alternative metaphor to the interior/exterior metaphor as a psychological model (mind/behavior). The metaphors can be most practical without our even knowing it, since they are not mere rhetorical figures. More than that, metaphors can also structure the way we think and live. We live metaphors, more than merely using them. Many metaphors are ontological, derived from the physical structure of the world and our position in it such as up and down, hard/soft, open/closed or inside/outside (Lakoff & Johnson, 2017). This means that they are not arbitrary, but impose themselves on our experience. Instead of that handy metaphor of the mind inside (inner world) and behavior outside (the outer world) taking the skin as the borderline, a sphere is proposed, for lack of anything better. The sphere includes the biographic totality: the past, the trajectory, personal projects, circumstances that can favor or impede the course of life and the horizon that opens up more or less clear and distant. Still talking about inside and outside, of course, but now not the mind inside one (where is it really?), but *inside* one’s biography: trajectory, circumstances, future perspectives.

The sphere of life one is inside of – in any case always changing – involves a concave side which one alone faces, and a convex side which others see. While others can come to understand one from outside, perhaps even better than oneself, one still has a private redoubt in the last extreme inaccessible to others and even to oneself. The concave/convex limit of the sphere can be seen as a limitation of objective knowledge, but also as a stronghold and right against transparency. If all human beings were perfect and happy, they would all be the same.

The metaphor of the sphere is in agreement with Yela’s proposal following Ortega. “The study of life and its anomalies,” says Yela, “in turn, requires examination of the perspective of life from inside, according to the vital reason of personal projects, which enables their effective human reality and sense to be captured, and examination of the perspective from outside, the one offered from a point of view that Ortega sometimes calls *behaviorist*” (Yela, 1983, p. 239). We have here the articulation of methods mentioned. Although Yela was not a clinician, he captures the nature of human anomalies better than clinicians whose professional deformation may lead them to seek internal breakdowns without perceiving the biography. As Yela says, “Anomalies are those of biographic life. They are not, in themselves, automatic and anonymous defects from such and such causes. Whatever the causes and effects, the anomaly does not consist of them, but of the deviation undergone in the biographic life of man.” “The study of anomalies,” Yela continues, “claims, in turn, the biographic interpretation and scientific enquiry into circumstance; the hermeneutics of projects and study of means and mechanisms that make them succeed or fail” (Yela, 1983, p. 239).

This article has its limitations, in part due to the limit placed on length. Concepts have been mobilized, sometimes little more than mentioned, that would require greater development and ontological and epistemological basis, something which, however, could be found elsewhere (Pérez-Álvarez, 2018b; 2021). Naturally, the work of Yela cannot be “distilled” in a few words, more than for commemorative reasons, as it is full of wisdom, details and

references, not without diplomacy. In any case, this article does not excuse one from reading Yela, but rather, is an invitation.

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