

The “Fashion-form” of Modern Society and its Relationship to Psychology

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In this work, we present a new way of understanding psychology, which emerges as a result of relating it to the three principles of the theory of fashion of Gilles Lipovetsky: “the principle of the ephemeral,” “the principle of the marginal differentiation of individuals,” and “the principle of seduction.” We relate the first principle to the plurality of the diverse and changing “schools and systems” that have existed throughout the history of psychology. We apply the second to the figure of the psychologist, considered individually, revealing his or her leading role in the generation of the changing plurality of the systems. By means of the third principle, we point up that the diverse psychologies are forms of seduction. We conclude by stating that psychology has the form of fashion and we analyze how this form can help us to better understand it.

Keywords: Lipovetsky, fashion, history of psychology, genealogy of psychology, psychological theories, psychologists

En este trabajo presentamos una nueva forma de entender a la psicología que surge como resultado de poner a ésta en relación con los tres principios de la teoría de la moda de Gilles Lipovetsky: «el principio de lo efímero», «el principio de la diferenciación marginal de los individuos» y «el principio de la seducción». El primero de ellos lo ponemos en relación con la pluralidad de «escuelas y sistemas» diversos y cambiantes que ha habido a largo de la historia de la psicología. El segundo lo aplicamos a la figura del psicólogo individualmente considerado, poniendo de manifiesto su papel protagonista en la generación de esa pluralidad cambiante de sistemas. Mediante el tercero ponemos de relieve que las diversas psicologías son formas de seducción. Concluimos afirmando que la psicología tiene la forma de la moda y analizamos en qué sentido esa forma permite comprenderla mejor.

Palabras clave: Lipovetsky, moda, historia de la psicología, genealogía de la psicología, teorías psicológicas, psicólogos

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This paper proposes that fashion and psychology are closely related. From this perspective, we present a new idea about psychology which can refresh the way of understanding its particular abundance of theoretical and practical alternatives, and its meaning as a social science.

It is well known that fashion is an extensive and unavoidable social phenomenon of modern life. Another characteristically modern social phenomenon is the appearance and expansion on a wide scale of psychology, which is precisely our field of work and research. Fashion and psychology are both part of the long series of interrelated social phenomena that configure the Modern Age, which would also include the appearance of the modern State, the rise of Christian Protestantism, the founding of democratic nations, the development of the free market, the unceasing growth of natural and social sciences, and the technological-industrial revolution, as a consequence of science. The multitude of diverse social phenomena that constitute the Western Modern Age do not occur independently, but rather make up a network of mutual relationships in which they transform and conform the social present of each historical moment of society. In view of this interdependence, our own discipline must logically be related in some way to each, or at least many, of the above-mentioned developments of the Modern Age.

This work attempts to specifically address a possible relationship between fashion and psychology. However, in case the reader is expecting something else, we should clarify that this text is not about the “psychology of fashion,” that is, it is not some kind of theoretical or applied psychological study about fashion-related behavior, such as analysis of the personal or situational variables that determine consumer behavior or following a certain fashion. Along another completely different line of thought, which attempts to understand psychology from a historical-cultural viewpoint, we defend the hypothesis that there is an analogy between the form of fashion and the form of psychology, i.e., we analyze the relationships of their similarity. For this, the main body of the text is organized in three parts. In the first part, we explain Gilles Lipovetsky’s theory of fashion, in the second, we present the historical configuration of psychology from our viewpoint, and in the third, we apply the principles of the theory of fashion to psychology separately, in a detailed analysis of the various points they have in common.

Lipovetsky’s theory of fashion

Gilles Lipovetsky is a contemporary French sociologist and professor in Grenoble (France), who has become renowned for his research in current society, and whose publications combine academic rigor with successful sales and popular acknowledgement. Throughout his work, Lipovetsky, the thinker, does not just make a sociological-descriptive analysis of society (which, however, he does extremely well), or adopt a positivist approach that would lead him to a scientific-natural

focus of sociology. His work is quite different. Due to the variety of materials he handles, their complex theoretical form he gives them, his conception of the individual as the primary driver of society, and his anthropological-social optimism, it is actually a construction of anthropological philosophy. Despite the general interest of Lipovetsky’s work, the scope of this article is limited to his work on the “fashion-form” of modern society insofar as it can shed light on the configuration of the historical genealogy of psychology.

In his book *L’Empire de l’éphémère* (1987), Lipovetsky traces the vectors of a theory of fashion, beginning with a statement with which we fully agree: the prejudice which considers fashion a mere social phenomenon with no relevance to the theoretical analysis of modern society, as if it were a superficial, or passing event, must be overcome. On the contrary, the phenomenon of fashion is essential to understanding today’s individualistic democratic society, because it is an integral and constitutive part of modern western society, and therefore, a central and permanent phenomenon. Fashion is not something trivial, but a phenomenon to be studied with the greatest of interest, because it is specific to western modernity and structures it, so only modern western societies have the shape of fashion, or to use the author’s expression, “fashion-form”.

But, what does fashion consist of? To begin with, according to Lipovetsky, in contrast to the predominance of tradition, the reiteration of past ways of life in premodern societies, fashion, that is, modification and continuous change in ways of life, or, in other words, the veneration of innovation, of the present, in detriment to tradition and to the past, predominates in modern society. Consequently, modern society is a new system of social relations characterized by successive modernities, by the continuous modernization of practices and customs, or their permanent transformation, by the incessant introduction of innovation, of novelty, or precisely, fashion. (Note the common lexical root of the words “modern”, “modification” and “moda”, in Spanish, or “mode”, in French, both meaning fashion, as well as the semantic relationship of all of them to “novelty” and “innovation”.)

However, modern western fashion does not happen spontaneously. It develops gradually, in a process in which this renewal of ways of life becomes increasingly wider and faster. Lipovetsky proposes three historical stages in the progressive implementation of fashion: (I) “the aristocratic stage”, which has its roots in the Early Middle Ages and lasts until the mid-19th century, (II) “the centenarian stage”, which goes from the second half of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century, and (III) “the full stage,” which goes from the second half of the 20th century to our day. Throughout these stages, fashion has gone from affecting only the appearance of the highest social classes (apparel, hairdos, make-up, adornments, manners...) to the present state of full fashion and “hyper-consumption,” which affects practically every subject and aspect of modern life, until it is entirely made up of this characteristic fashion-form.

Lipovetsky also proposes three main principles or defining characteristics of fashion, which are present throughout the three abovementioned historical phases: “The principle of the ephemeral,” “the principle of marginal differentiation of individuals,” and “the principle of seduction”, which are defined further below.

If the abovementioned prejudice about the importance of fashion is overcome, if we agree with Lipovetsky that fashion is a structural phenomenon specific to the Western Modern Age, and considering that psychology has also been said to be a social institution inherent in modern western society which contributes to its shape, then the following question emerges: Are modern fashion-form and psychology related? In order to answer this question, we now examine the two great lines of the structure of psychology.

Historical genealogy of modern psychology

When the word psychology is mentioned, it is generally understood as referring to psychology as a formally instituted discipline or social science. And since it cannot be anything else, we inevitably refer here to psychology in this sense as a psychological social institution. We also acknowledge its two key defining facets: (I) one that is proportionately more devoted to research, theory and applications, as well as to training of specialists in the material, which we call academic psychology; and (II) one proportionately more devoted to direct practical intervention in the various psychological problems—clinical, educational, work, etc.—in diverse social contexts,—such as private life, education, production, etc.—, which we call professional psychology. We say “proportionately” because the two tasks merge and provide feedback to each other so that, in fact, both tasks are carried out in both facets, although, as mentioned, in different proportions. Both kinds of institutional psychology mutually influence each other, to the extent of necessarily merging, because a purely academic psychology without any practical use would have no social significance, just as the highly qualified professional level implied by requiring a specialized university degree to practice the profession of psychologist would also be socially senseless if it added nothing to the merely mundane psychological help that people already give each other. Therefore, the social institution of psychology is always simultaneously or conjointly, academic and professional.

However, psychology is modern, just as fashion is, in the sense that it is typical of modern western society, as it has developed in the last two centuries, in the full Modern Age, and in the same western countries that have been the key players in the Modern Age itself —psychology has partial antecedents at most in other ages that are in some way similar to the Modern Age, such as classical Hellenistic Greece, or classical Imperial Rome, but not in its full form. The fact that the social institution of modern academic-professional psychology developed precisely in the historical-cultural

context of western modern times and no other, leads us to believe that psychology needed a specific culture medium to germinate. From our historical-cultural perspective, academic-professional psychology has, in fact, appeared in a specific social environment whose specificity consists of a plethora of psychological relations among individuals. But note that such psychological relations are not yet academic or professional, but are part of social life itself, and are therefore mundane. Hence, modern academic-professional psychology must be related by historical genealogy to a previous modern mundane psychology from which it emerges.

In addition to their common genealogy, both lines of psychology have their own internal historical genealogy. However, a history or historiography of the genealogical tree of either mundane or specialized psychology is both unnecessary and impossible here, as is a historiography or inventory of fashion. The important point is the relationship of the genesis and subsequent feedback between the two lines of psychology, as well as their differences and similarities. In its multiple domains, such as those mentioned above, modern western society has gradually organized itself around its subjects, who are considered individuals, living in equality before the law and in political and economic freedom. In such a democratic market society, everyone seeks what is best for their individual adaptation to the social environment—their “happiness”—, which means that individual interrelationships begin to predominate. These relationships are psychological insofar as certain private individuals analyze and control other private individuals in the midst of a society with a multitude of possible social alternatives and contrasting ways of life. As this field of mundane psychological relationships advances and reaches a critical mass, a series of perturbations occur in the form of unresolved conflicts in the social patterns or norms for individual living (see Fuentes, 1994). Such perturbations require action able to contain and prevent them. This practical demand for specialized treatment of socially problematic mundane psychological relations is the specific culture medium in which the institution of academic-professional psychology emerges and develops. The new institution is, in fact, specialized in the prevention and restraint of mundane psychological problems, or the unresolved conflicts in individuals’ lives. This task is carried out by means of certain specialized psychological knowledge, which is not, however, unrelated to mundane psychological knowledge. Rather, the psychological knowledge and skills that are already present in mundane psychology are the source that feeds academic-professional psychology, which, through research and formulation of theories and applications, adds to this source of nutrition its concentration, classification, systematization, refinement, and improvement, as well as its conveyance to new social scenarios, or new cases, for the specialized treatment and prevention of psychological problems occurring in mundane relations. So then, academic-professional psychology, while fed by mundane psychology, consists precisely of this specialized task of prevention and restraint

of the perturbations generated in mundane psychology, which in turn, is fed or transformed by these specialized psychological actions, in an undefined cycle of mutual feedback. As observed, while inextricably related, historically-socially generated mundane psychological relationships and the specialized academic and professional psychological institutions organized around them are not identical, nor are they mutually reducible.

But nevertheless, the two psychologies should also have similarity relationships. Our goal is to find a basic key to understanding modern academic-professional psychology on the same scale as the characteristics of mundane psychology, in which modern psychology has its roots. Although we lack space here to analyze it in depth, we should mention that mundane psychological relationships among modern individuals, in addition to the rest of the social phenomena of the Modern Age, are directly related to the social phenomenon of fashion. Mundane psychology between private individuals is, in fact, governed by the principles of the ephemeral, of marginal differentiation of individuals, and of seduction, that is, there is a multiplicity of changing social forms in the life of the individual, at the service of the construction of individuality, which open an interplay of analysis and control relationships among individuals for the specific selection and attraction of whoever may be interested in each case. But then, this fashion-form of mundane psychology cannot be unrelated to the form of academic-professional psychology, because their feedback or mutual influence is only possible if, despite their differences, both psychologies are similar or proportional in their form, in this case the fashion-form. Otherwise the psychological material or content could not flow from one to the other and vice versa.

Let us then use modernity's fashion-form as a relevant key for understanding modern psychology. In the following paragraphs, we briefly explain Lipovetsky's conception of the three principles of fashion above-mentioned and their relationships to our discipline.

The principle of the ephemeral and modern psychology

The principle of the ephemeral

The first aspect of the principle of the ephemeral is that the permanent rule regulating social life predominated by fashion is the incessant renovation of its forms, the continuous switch from one fashion to another, so that none of the fashionable ways of life are current beyond their finite temporality. Given this incessant transformation, the system of fashion has no content of its own, it is not tied to any given object, rather each subject of the scaling fashion is defined by its brevity, by being destined to obsolescence, so that the result is precisely, "the empire of the ephemeral"—as the original title of the book this paper is based on—, in which

each ephemeral fashion is, precisely because it is ephemeral, as dispensable as it is interchangeable, inasmuch as it is possible not to use it, and, in fact, it is destined to go out of use and be replaced by another. Ephemeral ways of life typical of fashion are artificial, banal, and frivolous, which, however, does not exclude constant progress of successive real improvements in the diverse orders of social life, such as esthetic beauty, or the practical functionality of daily utensils.

A second aspect of Lipovetsky's principle of the ephemeral is that this permanent change characteristic of fashion has the format of an uninterrupted chain of innovations, modernizations, or "new experiences" in which there is a continuous proliferation of small variations from preceding ways of life, but sometimes, innovations of a wider scope, qualitative transformations towards another way of life, are introduced. Fashion therefore consists of new variations in a known series, in which the logic of a progressive multiplication of differences over an existing basis rules, such that standardization and creative innovation of each standardized "trend" are combined. The proliferation of ranges, versions, limited series, options from which to choose, the freedom of introducing original variations, the possibilities of recombining the details, etc., are the very materialization of the plasticity that is characteristic of fashion, which is nothing but a pluralistic system in which constantly multiple alternative tendencies cohabit and are quickly and incessantly renewed, leading to a continuous ephemeral present in which the past, as a reference for life, is blurred.

The relationship between the principle of the ephemeral and modern psychology

What can be said about the internal historical genealogy of the social institution of modern academic-professional psychology as given in its historiography? As noted elsewhere (Fuentes, 2002), the history of psychology, whose plethoric development must be acknowledged, has been repeatedly seen by the historians of psychology themselves as divided in an uneven diversity of parallel and successive "schools and systems" that differ not only in the type of problems they investigate, in the practical problems they treat, and how they intervene in them, but also in the very way they conceive their "purpose" and their study "method." This being so, it is not exceptional, but commonplace, for psychology historians to state that psychology is in a permanent state of "crisis", "conflict", and even of disciplinary dispersion, in spite of its being a plethoric, administratively unified (in faculties, professional associations, etc.) institution.

In view of this permanent state, psychology seems to meet the first condition of the principle of the ephemeral, because just as the general system of fashion is not linked to any particular content in vogue, as each fashion is ephemeral insofar as it is dispensable and exchangeable for others, the institution of psychology is not linked to any concrete psychology, but rather to the coexistence and succession of

all of them. Thus, our discipline is installed in an undefined continuous present, because “schools,” “systems,” “currents,” “approaches,” “perspectives,” “strategies, and “models” in the history of psychology are themselves ephemeral to the extent that it is historically clear that all of them become obsolete, just as any other fashionable mundane way of life, and nevertheless the existence of academic-professional psychology remains constant as a positive social institution.

And with regard to the second point of the principle of the ephemeral, which states that fashion is the interplay of simultaneous standardizations and innovations, the systems of psychology are not completely foreign to each other, but are genealogically related, which is clear from their historiography. The diverse theoretical-practical psychological tendencies internally diversify, until they occasionally lead to true “mutations” toward another different school or system. We believe there is a very significant analogy between the proliferation of variations in Lipovetsky’s principle of the ephemeral and this genealogical configuration of the history of academic-professional psychology. According to this principle, fashion is simultaneously a system of homogenization and variation, in which alternative fashions gradually differ from each other because they are variations on previous series, and these are generally of lesser scope or internal to the series, but sometimes of broader scope, or external to the series, generating a new series. This seems to be the form of the historical unfolding of psychology, with its genealogical sequence, as prolific as it is undefined, of multiple internally diversified systems that sometimes become systems that are qualitatively different from previous systems, and which in turn rediversify. Because of this genealogical configuration of the history of the psychological institution, it may be said to be a pluralistic system, in which, as in fashion according to Lipovetsky, multiple cohabitating alternatives are quickly and incessantly renewed.

Having shown that both aspects of the ephemeral are valid for understanding psychology, we can now invert the order of the factors and, using a vocabulary typical of psychology, in this case, behavioral psychology, call the principle of the ephemeral “the principle of the contingent” and so therefore, the empire of the ephemeral typical of fashion and of psychology is “the empire of the contingent,” because both fashion and psychology are, in fact, ephemeral contingencies.

The principle of marginal differentiation of individuals and modern psychology

The principle of marginal differentiation of individuals

Lipovetsky’s second principle of fashion, “the principle of marginal differentiation of individuals”, refers to the individual as the motor of fashion, insofar as it is at the individual’s service for his own construction, and one individual is differentiated from others by adopting continually

transformed fashions. The reason the fashion system exists then, is because of the interplay of differentiation among individuals in a constant process of renewal in which each can affirm his own individual idiosyncrasy by following the uses and customs in vogue that are more or less artificial or better, although with some original variation intended to be unique and, to that extent, differential. Thus, fashion consists of a system of regulation of social life in which individuals imitate the ways, dispensable because they are renewable, of individuals they consider somehow better, but in which, at the same time, they tend to introduce small differences, or marginal differences, although sometimes these are more significant and introduce substantial transformations that underline the idiosyncrasy of autonomous subjectivity itself.

The relationship between the principle of marginal differentiation of individuals and modern psychology

This second principle of fashion provides a clue to who is the key player in generating the ephemeral contingencies of fashion in psychology. Applying the principle of marginal differentiation of individuals to the historical configuration of academic-professional psychology, the motor of continual change in these systems are the psychologists as private individuals, who, by imitating those they take as a reference, drive these changes precisely to differentiate themselves as such in their own academic and professional idiosyncrasy. The second principle of fashion leads us then, to focus on the figure of the psychologist as a private individual, unsurprisingly, given his specific context, which is obviously academic-professional competitiveness. No psychologist is outside of this context, and within it, competitive advantages must be found that allow market niches to be captured. As this is the psychologist’s unavoidable framework of reference, that the continuous generation of innovation, modernization, and fashion in psychology systems should be driven by the academic-professional identities of psychologists as diverse individuals should not be surprising, but entirely to the contrary.

However, that the history of psychology is guided by what could be called “the principle of marginal differentiation of individuals,” does not mean all of them are equally capable of innovating, because, of course, “creating theoretical-practical trends”, or generating systems with true “social impact,” i.e., a significant social following, is not easy in academia or in the profession—in this sense, by the way, the famous social impact factors of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), on which our academic life so much depends, could be interpreted as a statistical tool devoted precisely to measuring the social strength of psychology fashions. Actually, most psychologists manage to differentiate themselves only marginally with small innovations, whereas only a minority of outstanding individuals manage to cause an impact by “creating tendencies,” that is, large-scale metamorphoses in the undefined genealogical succession of academic-professional psychology systems.

And what could be the key to this extraordinary capacity of outstanding psychologists, at least while the success of their fashion-psychology lasts, for “creating new academic-professional trends”? To answer this question, we must first refer to psychology’s “asymmetry” with other human “sciences.” In general, as the human sciences must observe norms or objective socio-cultural forms in their fields of study, they can disregard the subjective formality of individual human subjects, because the socio-cultural forms studied in the human sciences only require generic subjective-individual material for their constitution and continuity, but not concrete individual subjectivities. However, human psychology, asymmetrically, in its task of studying individual subjectivity in its own individual formality, can only work with the objective anthropological norms of socio-cultural forms, and cannot disregard them, because individual subjective human activity is constitutively inserted in the varied objective socio-cultural configurations each individual biography flows through. And if the psychologist cannot disregard the objective socio-cultural context of the subjects he studies and treats, and having observed that in modern society, objective socio-cultural forms have the changing form of fashion, what then is the key to the success of such outstanding differentiated psychologists? It is simply an outstanding intelligence or ability to understand the subjects in their changing socio-cultural context, which requires discriminating and knowing how to adapt their own academic-professional market niche to the dominant fashions at a certain historical moment and in a certain social sector. It is therefore through the differential adaptation of the individual psychologist to objective cultural fashion forms, especially the sharpest of them, that is, those who have that psycho-social intelligence mentioned above, that systems of psychology become genealogically diversified to the rhythm of this differential adaptation.

But then, if each individual psychologist is a source of innovation, it can be deduced that each is a potential source for the transformation of psychology. And such a source, if you stop to think about it, is especially valuable because of its idiosyncratic personal nature, that is, because to some extent, it is unrepeatable. The individual psychologist, as a unique figure, can also contribute in a unique or unrepeatable way to the construction of the fashion-form of specialized psychology. This is because from his (or her) particular personal position, he can contribute his “special touch” to psychology, that is, because he can personalize the way he works thanks to his capacity for inserting himself in the changing specific mundane contexts in which he lives, expanding psychology in that specific direction. If what we say is true, this personal ability of the psychologist for in-depth adaptation of academic professional psychology to mundane psychology is the very source of the richness and efficacy of specialized psychology, as this is how individual psychologists build their differentiated identity at the same time they construct psychology itself.

Moreover, as academic professional psychology is a social institution receiving feedback interwoven with the mundane psychology which feeds it and which at the same

time it also influences, this adaptation of psychology to society through the work of individual psychologists is not merely passive, but active, that is, beyond the simple passive acknowledgement of fashions that already exist in mundane social life, it is the active source of those fashion trends. This shows the redoubled social importance of the individual psychologist going far beyond specialized psychology, because, as mentioned, his work eventually affects the configuration of mundane psychology. And in view of this very real influence of the members of the psychological institution on society, in which each, to the extent of his ability, introduces and actively promotes new ways of social life through his own work, the personal responsibility of each and every individual psychologist in determining the course of our modern society should be emphasized, the more so the more outstanding he is, because of the academic-professional position he holds in it.

The principle of seduction and modern psychology

The principle of seduction

The differentiation of individuals by their use of fashion and their variations in it only makes sense if fashion is a given phenomenon in social relations. Individuals tend to differentiate themselves from others because they are face to face with each other, because in fact, differentiation allows them to relate selectively to others. The interplay of individual differentiation through fashion is therefore a method of calling attention to oneself and seducing or attracting subjects to whom one is in turn attracted. Fashion is thus at the service of individual idiosyncratic relations, because it is through fashion that such individual idiosyncrasies can appear socially open to relationships with each other. This use of fashion to seduce socially has been around ever since fashions in courtly love began, and it has always surrounded leisure related to consuming and enjoying the pleasures of life, so the main goal of any seduction strategy is pleasure and enjoyment with the appropriate subjects. Once related to leisure, the strategy of seduction through fashion can also configure the professional image and even the complete personal image, but the ideal context for developing seductive fashions is in leisure social relations or consumption linked to pleasure, and it has only become possible to place it at the service of the professional image and the complete personality, including one’s own identity, since its appearance in this context. Thus, fashion and seduction are closely related, which leads to behavior detecting the particularities of others and their selective treatment according to their idiosyncratic tastes appearing with fashion, as well as their combined facet, the phenomenon of the detailed construction of one’s own image, in other words, the marginal differentiation of individuals, as explained above, in order to be seen by others in the way that best fulfills their own best interest. The result of the

generalization of this new form of social relations through seductive fashion is that coercion tends to be eliminated from social relations and replaced by seduction, that is, persuasion through attraction, in order to get people to do what one wants without need of threat or imposition.

The relationship between the principle of seduction and modern psychology

In the commercial society in which we live, it is obvious that seduction is essential to success in business of any kind, because the need to compete requires one to be more attractive than the competition. Therefore, all businesses and professionals must seduce customers by promoting an image showing the differential advantages of their products and services. Psychology's various methods also compete with each other for the market, both for colleagues—subjects, courses, books, professional workshops, evaluation tests, etc.—, and for customers—the psychological services themselves, self-help books, popular psychology programs in the media, etc.—, so our discipline cannot remain isolated from the general logic of the usefulness of fashion to commercially seduce. It is then understandable that psychology, both in academia and in the profession, should increasingly resort to business strategies of marketing, which are no more than commercial seduction strategies. In this sense, congresses and periodic monographic meetings could be compared to fashion shows, and specialized scientific journals to fashion magazines and new product catalogues, that is, they are fashion samplers. It might even be said that today's essential psychologist homepages and psychology business and teaching center websites are simply an improvement in traditional advertising, like the professional model's agency "book", which is now almost entirely virtual, just an attractive advertising website.

However, there is something more important in today's academic-professional psychology than the mere instrumental use of commercial seduction tools to increase product and service sales. The changing alternatives of psychology introduced by individual psychologists, regardless of whether they must employ marketing resources to compete, are themselves seduction strategies interwoven with the very mundane seduction strategies. We should not forget that the goal of any psychological intervention, which academic theories and research serve, is to help the client to build up, to a greater or lesser extent, or in one sense or another, his own differential individuality, while helping him to become more attractive and more capable of relating selectively through the use of the form of mundane seduction most appropriate to his own idiosyncrasy and social context. To achieve these specialized

psychological goals, intervention must be tailored to the personal and contextual characteristics of each client; otherwise, there could be a confrontation with him, or he could be led into an undesirable contextual maladjustment, which implies that he must be approached in the way most appropriate to the forms of seduction of his own mundane context. But then, the psychologist's work consists of actually seducing the client, according to his idiosyncrasy, toward his own context, in order to teach him how to seduce better. According to this logic, the variations the psychologist introduces in psychology consist of innovative variations in seduction designed to achieve better seduction of both psychologist and client. And as each system of psychology grows out of the introduction of innovations of greater or lesser scope in the preceding system, each type of psychology that appears is a new seduction strategy whose differential utility is its specific adaptation to the mundane forms of seduction of a given range of personal idiosyncrasies and their corresponding socio-cultural environment. The diverse psychologies are thus revealed as differentiated forms of seduction that can be used and modified according to the need or interest in each case to treat clients successfully¹. It may then be strictly said that concentration, classification, systematization, refinement, improvement, and transfer of mundane psychological knowledge, described as the task of specialized psychology, consist, first and foremost, of taking mundane seduction relationships, which are the basis for constructing personal identity, and specializing that seduction—which does not keep psychologists from including empirical measurement of their results or advantages in their work methods as a form of seduction. In short, as specialized seduction is the very form of all psychological work, the different psychologies are useful occasions for seduction ruled by "the principle of specialized psychological seduction", which, due to their subsequent effect on society contribute to eliminating coercion from mundane social life.

Conclusions

Throughout the preceding sections, we have seen how ephemeral psychological innovation, psychological fashion, is generated by individual differentiation and the seduction strategies the individual psychologists use depending on the specific characteristics of their clients and social context. Once demonstrated that the three principles of fashion govern psychology, it can be stated that specialized modern psychology has the form of fashion, that is, there is an analogy between fashion and psychology. And as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the prejudice that fashion is unimportant must

¹ According to this point of view, the "personalized psychotherapy" proposed by Millon and Grossman (2007) must be positively evaluated. They defend that psychotherapy should, first, integrate the intervention techniques from all the diverse currents of psychology, and second, design a personalized intervention, that is, designed as a function of the particular characteristics of each client. This would seem to be the right idea, because it follows the logic of fashion, that is, it seeks to seduce the client through the specialized paths that are useful to him in remodeling his identity, depending on his particular idiosyncrasies.

be overcome, as must the prejudice that the fashion-form of psychology is insignificant. Entirely to the contrary, fashion is an interpretive code that is valuable because it allows us to view our discipline from a better perspective and shed light on its particular characteristics as a social science.

From the perspective of fashion, we can now better understand the plurality, heterogeneity, and constant change in the systems of psychology, that is, the reason why our discipline is unified institutionally, despite its continuous disciplinary fragmentation and the epistemological disputes that such fragmentation leads to. Beyond theoretical, practical, and epistemological differences, all forms of psychology are valuable to the social institution of psychology because of their differential contextual validity. Thus, each new diversification of psychology, each new psychological fashion, should be considered an advance, an effective specialized improvement, although on the scale of its reference context and range of subjects. Psychology, then, does not stop growing, but grows in many directions at once, as required by the fashion-form of society, and such growth is only accomplished at the cost of diversification, by having many changing tendencies. This is the cause of the intrinsic internal fragmentation of psychology. But then, seeing psychology from the perspective of its fashion-form, another conclusion of epistemological importance can be deduced: the social institution of academic-professional psychology, in contrast to the natural sciences, can never merge into one system, a single paradigm, because if it did, it could not fulfill its role, because the society whose diversified problems psychology attempts to solve remains diversified.²

Now then, just as there must continue to be many different psychologies, there must also be many different psychologists. As noted above, the unique value of each psychological model and its variations depends, in turn, on the unique value of each particular psychologist, as he is the driving force of change in psychology within the specific seduction requirements of his context. Accordingly, the individual psychologist's personality could be understood, in a way, as a "work of art." In a paper compatible with what we have defended in these pages, Pérez-Álvarez and García-Montes (2004) propose, in reference to the personalities of subjects in general, that personality is "a work of art," by which they mean that personality is the ethical and esthetic style that a person gives his life according to his circumstances and social values. This ethical and esthetic style is a life project in which each person progressively builds up his or her personality, but in such a way that the ethical facet of personality—what the person really is or feels he is—gives and receives

feedback from the esthetic facet—the way he presents himself to others. From our perspective, the psychologists' personality could be said to be a "work of art," but a specialized one, that is, a work of art made to match the system of psychology he subscribes to, and very especially, to match the idiosyncratic modifications that each psychologist introduces in them to become more seductive or effective in his work. Thus, the individual psychologist's personality is a careful construction or "work of art" in which his own identity as a psychologist is inseparable from his attractive esthetic presentation to others by means of the differentiated seduction strategies of specialized psychology that each one is capable of undertaking and improving, according to the circumstances in which he carries out his academic-professional activity. This, when all is said and done, is not easy to do well and it is this then which is the great "artistic" merit of he who manages to become a great psychologist.

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² A book has recently come out (González-Pardo & Pérez-Álvarez, 2007) in which certain mental disorders are said to be invented and spread according to the commercial interests of the psychopharmaceutical industry with the complicity of mental health professionals and patients, who use those invented disorders in their own interest. According to our line of reasoning, it may be said that the same logic of fashion that rules psychology could probably be extended to the psychopharmaceutical industry and to psychiatry, so it can be understood why both institutions also change so prolifically.