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The Inclusive Therapeutic Method: Ethical Intertwinings

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Abstract

This article proposes an inclusive therapeutic method by which the *self* recognizes itself in its relation to itself, with the other, with the world and with the body. These dimensions make up its existential integrity. When one of these dimensions compromise itself, all the others compromise themselves as well. Thus, in order to achieve an inclusive equilibrium, therapeutic treatment needs to reestablish the dimensions of the *self*. This treatment will seek a possible trigger for the *self* to be able to live spatiotemporally. To make this possible, ethics and therapy intertwine themselves. In other words, the conception of ethics intertwines itself with existential integrity.

Keywords: inclusive therapy, inclusive equilibrium, existential integrity, ethics

Introduction

The proposal of an inclusive therapeutic method will foster an integrity of the *self* by including the dimensions of the *self* in the therapeutic process. The dimensions of the *self* will involve the *self*, the other, the body, and the world. These dimensions make up its existential integrity. When one of these dimensions compromise itself, all the others compromise themselves as well. Thus, in order to achieve an inclusive equilibrium, namely, to provide conditions for human beings to find possibilities to lead their lives, therapeutic treatment needs to reestablish the dimensions of the *self*. The inclusive equilibrium takes place through the reestablishment of something that weakened or broke one of the dimensions of

the *self*. This means that the *self* is capable of relating with itself, with the other, with its body and with the world.

In order to elucidate this reestablishment or weakening/break of the dimensions of the *self*, we will use the metaphor of the *wires*. Somehow, we connect ourselves through wires that make up our *self*. These wires connect our *self* to its own self-relation, to the body, to the other, and to the world. When these wires weaken or break, we left ourselves without the link that enables an inclusive equilibrium. This inclusive equilibrium occurs when we live within our existential integrity as human beings, being able to deal with adversity, problems and trauma. We can say that when the human being has existential integrity, she is equally able to realize herself in her own existence.

When a single wire that connects one of the dimensions of the *self*, which makes up its existential integrity, breaks or weakens, all the other wires weaken or break together. Henceforth, the *self* loses its inclusive equilibrium, to wit, it loses the ability to organize *itself* passively and actively, being unable to interpret its life in a balanced way and with integrity.

Now, if we are able, from therapeutic aid, to reestablish one of these wires again, we can strengthen or even reconnect the *self* to its existential integrity, namely, all the other wires will jointly reestablish themselves to its existential basis. But how can we act therapeutically to achieve such a reestablishment of the *self*, making it recognize itself again as a being capable and transformative agent of its own history?

The inclusive therapeutic method is intertwined with ethics by the fact that we live in the world, where we interact with other people. This means that we need a supportive social structure to lead our lives in integrity. Thus, therapy becomes inclusive to the extent that it finds space-time possibilities of ethical realization. In this regard, the way we respond to the dimensions of the *self*, which constitute existential integrity, will lead us to an existential responsibility. In this context, this article will encourage a responsive attitude that glimpses our responsibility towards existential integrity. Therefore, it will endeavor to propose

that every human being who responds to the *life-world* has existential responsibility and this necessarily leads us to a more just world because such justice provides integrity.

1. The self-relation of the self

Foucault reminds us in his book *The hermeneutics of the subject* that for the Greeks/Romans to know yourself (*gnothi seauton*) was not separated from *the care of oneself* (*epimeleia heauton*) (Foucault 2005, 2-4; French 2001, 2-3). In his reading, this period extends through the Socratic-Platonic moment to the Hellenistic-Roman moment. With Christian culture, the *care of oneself* will come to understand itself as a selfish act, and with modernity, there will be a definite separation between *knowing yourself* and *caring of oneself*. In this sense, Foucault raises a question: Why have we throughout history set aside *the care of oneself* to privilege the *knowing yourself*?

For Foucault, in the modern period there was an abandonment of spirituality in its relationship with knowledge. This spirituality characterizes itself by the search, practice and experience through which the subject performs the necessary transformations in herself in order to have access to the truth. Foucault regards spirituality as the pursuits, practices and exercises, taken as purifications, ascetic practices, renunciations, conversion of the gaze, modifications of existence, etc. The abandonment of this spirituality Foucault will call the Cartesian moment (Foucault 2005, 14; French 2001, 15). Henceforth, the pursuit of knowledge is by the very activity of knowledge itself.

In the first Socratic-Platonic moment between the fourth and fifth century BC, according to Foucault, the *epimeleia heautoun* arises in philosophical relations, particularly in the *Apology of Socrates*. This book chronicles the passage from the Alcibiades position of greatness, wealth, traditional family to his desire to rule the city-state. Yet he had not prepared sufficiently to undertake such a task. Thus, Socrates says that one cannot govern others well in rational actions if there is no care for oneself.

In the first and second century BC, for Foucault, it is no longer about what Socrates said to Alcibiades: if you want to rule others, take *care of yourself*. Now it is said: take *care of yourself* and that is all. The philosopher is the one who helps the construction of the subject's relationship with herself, the one who mediates the change from *stultitia* to *sapientia* (Foucault 2005, 135; French 2001, 130), as if she were a doctor who heals and treats a patient. Another important element studied by Foucault is that the *care of oneself* is no longer a transitional element that leads to something else, the welfare of the city-state, or others; it emerges more from a self-sufficient end of the *self*. Consequently, the *self* is the ultimate and only goal of *care of oneself*. For the author, a *techne tou biou* (Foucault 2005, 177-178; French 2001, 171) is given, that is, an art, a reflective method for conducting life, and a technique of life. One identifies here an art of existence with the *care of oneself*. The question that then arises will be, how can I be transformed, converted (*metanoia*) to be able to have access to the truth?

These moments, identified by Foucault, show that it is necessary *to take care of oneself* and, for this, we need to take time to devote to the *self*. Time required being ready for life's events. This time of *self*-preparation is aided by someone who instructs us. If this process of immanent knowledge and care is not sufficiently well accomplished, the *self* will not be in a position to govern anyone, nor will it be able to face the difficulties that life presents. Through this appropriate historical analysis made by Foucault, a question arises: but how do we find the right technique for the *self* to prepare itself for life?

In the wake of Foucault, the inclusive therapeutic method will present several forms so that one can find a way of *knowing yourself*, of *caring of oneself* and to prepare oneself for life. Therefore, the therapeutic process will seek to find a trigger for the *self* to reestablish the wires that have weakened or broken themselves, causing problems in the composition of existential integrity.

The word trigger will be helpful in the sense of liberating the *self* from what causes its imbalance, making it

impossible for it to live with integrity. By these terms, the trigger is a liberation that enables the reestablishment of existential integrity. What can cause this triggering can be a technique, a situation, a spirituality, a contact, a scenario, a practice, anything that causes the *self* to return to its integrity. It is not about choosing anything, but knowing which of these possibilities would the best help in therapy. Thus, in the therapeutic process, it is necessary to talk with the patient, to know their beliefs, their history, and through dialogue, come together to what could make the *self* return to a shared meaning.

Concerning the self-relation of the *self*, one could find means that could trigger its self-esteem, well-being, the will to live, creativity, the critical spirit, and so on. Nevertheless, what could trigger these factors? Various things, such as music, theater, dance, art, work, spirituality, sport, reading, in short, a number of factors that would help the *self* to care for oneself. The choice of a trigger should be discussed between the patient and the therapist so that the patient can choose according to its own possibilities. The choice would engage the patient's empathy to the object of the trigger.

The patient would have an attitude of *taking care of oneself* through something that could reestablish contact with oneself. However, of freeing itself from the repressive bolts that have been forming throughout its history and which causes the *self* to be in a state of imbalance. Thus, for example, phobias, hatred, exacerbated selfishness, depression, acute pride, preconceptions, feelings that cause emotional upheavals, could be overcome through triggering practices, i.e., liberation and reestablishment of the *self*, so that the individual can prepare for the challenges that life presents to her.

In Brazil, there are several cases where, through playful or practical triggers, i.e. projects related to sports, art, music, waste recycling and many other manual practices, many people freed themselves from drugs, from street violence, from deep depression. Thus, they can reestablish their self-esteem; learn to cherish their neighbors in their differences, and to seek not isolation but interest in other people. These triggers cause the *self* to reconstruct its attitude

towards the *life-world*. For example, if someone has problems with her self-esteem, she will certainly have problems in her relationships with others. She will have difficulty exploring spatiality and she will have a world accessibility problem with her body.

With therapeutic help, the individual will be able to reestablish the broken or weakened wire, seeking, through dialogue, a suitable trigger so that she can regain her internal coherence.

The reestablishment of the self-relation of the *self* accomplishes itself when all the dimensions of the *self* are in integrity with one another. Thus, in order to be well it is also necessary to change the lifestyle. Alfred Adler, who worked and conducted research with Freud, points out that it is not just that we change the emotions that cause problems affecting our well-being. They will remedy themselves if the individual changes her lifestyle (Adler 1952, 47). In these terms, the author argues that the treatment of a symptom or a singular expression should correct itself in our entire lifestyle. Adler states that lifestyles are the subject of psychology and the material for research (Adler 1952, 48).

Of course, it is necessary to have internal coherence and to do that, spend time with oneself. For example, we need to be alone with ourselves, reflect on our beliefs, our problems, our joys, but we always have to stylize it in our lives. We need to be alone at certain times, as many times as we need to reflect on our lives, our relationships, our well-being, and our realization as human beings. These moments are fundamental to consolidate meanings, to know and take care of oneself.

Hannah Arendt already stressed thinking as a solitary activity, although not isolated, because when we think we are always in company, even if it is our own (Arendt 1978, (Part I) 185). Arendt will call solitude that human situation in which the individual keeps company with herself. This dualism between the world and me, between me and myself is presented by Arendt by the two-in-one (*eme emauto*) in Socrates, that is, of my dialogue with myself, in which I am simultaneously one and I am plural. Socrates seeks internal coherence, seeking to be consistent with himself (Arendt 1978,

(Part I) 186). For Socrates, while loving the public market, he must return home, where he will be alone, in solitude, in order to meet the other (Arendt 1978, (Part I) 190).

Although we seek to defend the human being in her existential integrity and how she needs to be considered through the dimensions that make up this dimensionality, it is necessary to visualize each part of the *self*, because all have an original presence that help us strengthen the whole of the *self*. Thus, the self-relation of the *self* has its own original presence that dialogues with the integrality of the *self*, intertwining its identity. By these terms, we will all have the experience of being alone at some point, and we need to enjoy this being alone to create consistency with ourselves.

Both the first part of the summary of the law (*love your neighbor as yourself*) and Ricoeur's proposal for self-esteem foster the need for self-esteem (Ricouer 1990, 211). Nevertheless, how to deal with ourselves, our problems, our traumas? Many people cannot solve or find an internal consistency alone. They need the other. In this case, the therapist comes to participate in the process of internal cohesion in order to help the individual to find internal coherence.

In psychotherapy, the process of regaining *self-esteem*, *self-coherence*, and *self-consciousness* is often a gradual journey that involves exploring emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.

Self-esteem refers to the value and worth someone attributes to themselves. Low *self-esteem* can stem from negative self-perceptions, past failures, or criticism. Psychotherapy often helps individuals rebuild *self-esteem* through validation, self-compassion, and reframing negative beliefs. For example: a client with low *self-esteem* might constantly criticize herself for past mistakes. A therapist may use *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)* (Beck, 2011) to challenge these negative self-judgments. For instance, if the client says, *"I'm not good enough"*, the therapist might ask, *"What evidence do you have that you are not good enough?"* The therapist could help the client identify positive qualities,

past successes, and strengths, slowly shifting her perspective to see herself more positively.

Self-coherence is the ability to maintain a consistent sense of *self*, even in the face of challenges. It involves integration of different aspects of the *self* into a unified whole. Therapy can support this by exploring conflicting emotions or identities and working toward reconciling them. As an example: a client who feels torn between her roles as a parent, a professional, and an individual might struggle with *self-coherence*. They might feel like different parts of her identity conflict with each other, leading to confusion or anxiety. A therapist might use *narrative therapy* (White & Epston, 1990) to help the client see how these different roles can coexist and contribute to a richer sense of *self*. The therapist might guide the client in integrating these roles into a more harmonious, coherent narrative, highlighting how each role brings value to her life. Another example is when someone feels disconnected from her true values because of external pressures (e.g., work demands or societal expectations). The therapist might help the client clarify their core values and reconnect with them, which enhances *self-coherence*.

Self-consciousness involves an awareness of oneself and one's thoughts, emotions, and actions. In therapy, this often means developing mindfulness or self-reflection to foster deeper insight and emotional regulation. A person who tends to react impulsively to stress might have low self-consciousness about her emotions and reactions. In therapy, they may practice *mindfulness techniques* (Williams et al. 2007) to become more aware of their internal states in real-time. For example, the therapist might guide the client through exercises that encourage pausing before reacting, observing thoughts without judgment, and noticing physical sensations related to emotions. Over time, the client becomes more attuned to her emotional triggers and can respond more thoughtfully instead of reacting automatically. For someone who struggles with self-consciousness in social situations (e.g., feeling excessively anxious about how she is perceived by others), a therapist might explore the roots of these feelings and work on building self-acceptance. The therapist may use

exposure therapy (Foa et al. 2007) to gradually help the client face feared social situations, which allows them to build a more realistic and compassionate awareness of themselves.

Therapy not only aims to support the individual in navigating daily life but also serves to address moments of loneliness, guiding individuals toward self-awareness and self-care. Through this process, the individual can discover her ability (*Ich kann*) (Husserl 1952, 345) and the possibility to deliberate, cultivating the necessary *self-esteem* to be more prepared for interactions with others and their environment. As the other is integral to the dimension that constitutes the *self,* a fundamental question arises: how can one live ethically to achieve integrity in her existence as beings who share the same world?

2. The otherness of the self

The other that is a problem, but also a solution, the one we hate and love, also gives us the possibility of externalizing feelings, emotions, sadness, joy, hatred and love. The other will always be a challenge that calls us to life or plot our death. The other is in front of us (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 483), insistent, whether we like it or not, she demands answers.

The presence of the other should be a factor of esteem, sharing, healing and not hate or disgust. This reversal of feelings occurs because the other is not viewed with esteem but as a means for us (Kant 2011, 85) to achieve an end of particular interest, or other selfish inclination. In this fashion, the other is not seen as another *self*, that is, that needs existential integrity like anyone else. The relationship between the many selves should be therapeutic, to wit, of sharing, of complicity of meaning.

The other is both a problem and a solution, a figure we love and hate, yet one that enables us to externalize feelings—joy, sadness, hatred, and affection. Always present before us (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 483), the other demands a response, whether we welcome it or resist it. The presence of another should foster esteem, sharing, and healing rather than aversion or disgust. However, this dynamic is often inverted when the other is instrumentalized, treated as a means to an

end rather than recognized as a self with the same existential integrity (Kant 2011, 85). True intersubjectivity calls for a relationship of therapeutic engagement, one of shared meaning and complicity rather than alienation.

Yet, in many cases, individuals struggle to form meaningful connections, leading to isolation and interpersonal deficits. This chronic disconnection, characterized by social withdrawal, loneliness, and impaired social skills, becomes the focus of Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) when patients do not present with acute relational crises such as grief or role disputes (Weissman et al. 2018, 73). Rather than facing explicit interpersonal conflicts, they suffer from an absence of social bonds, which exacerbates depressive symptoms (ibid., 74).

At its core, IPT seeks to reestablish the presence of the other as a force for healing rather than alienation. Therapy works toward alleviating isolation by strengthening existing relationships, fostering new social bonds, and enhancing interpersonal confidence (ibid., 76). This process unfolds through an exploration of past relationships, emotional experiences, and current interactions—including the therapeutic alliance itself (ibid.). Patients engage in role-playing exercises to navigate social interactions, reconnect with past acquaintances, and gradually integrate into social environments. Since failure in social tasks can reinforce self-blame, IPT avoids rigid homework assignments that might increase the risk of treatment dropout (ibid., 77). Instead, therapy validates emotional struggles, reinforces successful encounters, and encourages incremental steps toward interpersonal engagement (ibid.).

Case studies illustrate how this therapeutic reorientation unfolds. Diane, a 23-year-old woman, experienced profound social discomfort, particularly around men, after leaving the structured setting of college. Therapy guided her through an examination of past relationships, role-playing interactions, and gradual social exposure, ultimately leading to improved self-confidence and diminished depressive symptoms (Weissman et al., 2018, 78). Similarly, Bill, a 41-year-old lawyer, faced barriers to emotional intimacy despite

professional success. Through therapy, he recognized patterns of communication shaped by early experiences with his mother, leading to greater self-awareness and improved relational competence (ibid., 79). Interpersonal deficits highlight the fundamental paradox of human relationships: the other, who can be both a source of alienation and of healing, is indispensable to our existence. IPT operates within this tension, seeking to shift the experience of the other from one of absence to one of meaningful presence. However, given the chronic nature of social isolation, some individuals may require alternative or complementary interventions. The success of IPT often hinges on its ability to validate experiences, mitigate self-blame, and gradually reintroduce the other as a necessary companion in the process of healing.

However, a fundamental issue arises: the pursuit of healthy interpersonal relationships may be rendered ineffective if the broader social structure is fundamentally flawed. According to John Rawls, society should recognize principles of justice that entail advantages in a well-organized society for the formation of a collective *self* (Rawls 1971, 255) whose good is in reflective equilibrium (Rawls 1971, 20) with such principles. These principles establish themselves through rational reflection (Rawls 1971, 11) by which equity, freedom, and equal opportunity would benefit all. Rawls was concerned that these principles rest not only on pure abstraction, but also on that they objective themselves in social life, where everyone worked for the mutual benefit and rational stability of justice. Thus, if people reflected on issues of inequality, they would see how much they are detrimental to a collectivity and, consequently, to each individual; but if they aimed their actions and interests at seeking greater opportunities, they would realize the enormous advantages it would bring to themselves and to all (ibid., 60-61).

One thing to note in Rawls is that the question of a well-organized society and the advantages of justice are indispensable factors for the well-being of all. For the human being to have a healthy life, society needs to be healthy. Of course, these factors are not decisive, because there are people with an ability to lead their lives in such a way that they can

face great adversity. However, imagine the person who has no job and is in great economic difficulty, who sees her family in need, her children not having access to education, health, leisure, and so on. Going further, imagine places that live in extreme poverty, high levels of violence, abuse of all sorts, without access to anything we can understand that can afford the least dignity for people. How to be healthy in a sick environment? Living in an environment where the other is a death threat is desperate for the formation of the integrity of any human being. This situation of social inequality can crumble the integrity of the *self* and shatter its dignity.

From the moment the other is a threat, something is wrong in our beliefs or in society. Adler already stressed how important it was to prepare the individual to cooperate (Adler 1952, 9) by helping others. For the author, this would bring numerous benefits to society; including society itself should provide conditions for more opportunities for all. This would reduce crime and other social injustices (ibid., 237).

If we have problems in our relationships with other people, or those problems come from social issues, we will probably have problems in our interaction with the environment and our body may even be involved in all sorts of dangers due to the injustices.

The wire that breaks with another person inhibits our actions of solidarity and corrupts the pursuit of social self-realization. According to Axel Honneth, in order to have a state of solidarity, it assumes itself that each individual is in a position to esteem each other (Honneth 1995, 128-129). In this regard, Honneth sees in asymmetrical relations a prerequisite for self-realization and social fulfillment. In this respect, esteeming each other asymmetrically means seeing each other in the light of values that allow each other's skills and traits to appear significantly in social praxis. For the author, individuals would seek recognition, since one cannot love without the participation of the other, have rights without the other, nor be a human being without the other. The struggle for mutual recognition, without losing essential traces of our individuality, builds the foundations of self-realization, thus forming a hypothetical endpoint of the good life (Honneth

1995, 168-169). In a way, self-realization is social realization. Thus, only when people recognize themselves as having affective needs, as subjects who have rights, who have singularities and abilities, contributing to ordinary life, through a shared horizon of values, can them then understand themselves as realized individuals (Junglos 2019, 38).

The ideas and proposals of the good, of good life, impregnate themselves with idealisms that are religious, moral, political, and economic. The proposal of an inclusive therapeutic method attaches itself to such a conception of good, but to an embodied ontology that already, in its existential integrity, makes the *self* an *accomplice of meaning* (Junglos 2014, 179-194). Accordingly, a proposal of the good, or the good life, which harms the existential integrity of the human being, comes only from heteronomous sources. In other words, from forged ideas, created in order to protect, feed the interests of particular groups and all sorts of determinisms. Therefore, our proposal for inclusive therapy will not stick to advantages, principles, or cooperation (Rawls and Adler), but it will see that justice must be therapeutic, that human beings must find space and time to realize themselves in a social self-realization. We would say that the idea of the good, of good life, must be in *inclusive equilibrium* with existential integrity, that is, from an embodied ontology, of which the subject, the other, the world, the body can respond to the appeals that claims its differences, which claims to participate, which claims its recognized rights.

Justice must be therapeutic to be inclusive, aiming at existential integrity. From then on, any conception of *doxa* that is lacking in an embodied ontology, that is, that represents an ontological deficit in its integrity, is doomed to its own ideologies. If, by chance, it has relations to an inclusive proposal, it is only by chance, it is only in conformity due to a coincidence; its source is heteronomous, of one dimension, and does not correspond to integrity.

Perhaps we should ask, are our religion, our ethics, our morality, and our politics in inclusive equilibrium with existential integrity? In other words, do our beliefs consider the excluded, the suffering, the wanting to be recognized, the

sick body, and the insane and polluted world? If not, it is just a truth that comes from outside and that hurts the human being in her existence.

The human being responds to her surroundings, to people, to herself, wants to live through integrity and, to that end, becomes a responsive being. Waldenfels argues that we are responsive beings *per se*, and as such, we need to justify our responses. For the author, even not answering is already an answer (Waldenfels 2000, 336). In this sense, a responsiveness demands our attitude. However, we should not act in favor of collective integrity because of the advantages or because of any particular interest, nor because of immutable principles, whether they derive themselves from human nature or coming heteronomously. Our understanding of inclusiveness emanates from the very integrity that esteems the other in her differences (Honneth), aims at the internal coherence of the human being, emanates from the structures that allow one to realize herself in space and time, that is, that a human being can find place and have the time necessary for its self-realization in society.

Responsibility does not confine itself to our individual duties and obligations. It has to do with the integrity of our experience; specifically, it has to do with our responsive attitude toward it. From this perspective, inclusive responsibility does not guide itself by rules assumed in a heteronomous way, nor by immutable principles, but through social self-realization. The appeal to advantages is very restricted, as we can see advantages while we are under their benefits. However, sometimes the struggle for public justice, for public recognition is made of blood, tears and terrible losses. Many of the achievements of those who struggled to gain space and time for social self-realization have done so for future generations. Hans Jonas, Heidegger's student and friend of Hannah Arendt, already pointed out that our responsibility should not only lie with the past, or with a present, but with the future of our planet and the people who will inhabit it (Jonas 1979, 88-108). Talking about the planet, the world we live in, how does it help in the constitution of our existential integrity?

3. The worldliness of the self

Human beings do not live outside the world and even if they did, they would live through another world, but never without a world. It is in this world that all of our experiences occur. In such terms, and in the wake of Husserl, we live in the *life-world* through which all our experiences realize themselves. It is through the *life-world* that the sciences derive their epistemic objectivity, but it is through their own dynamics that the sciences transform their dogmatism. The *life-world* is not a concept, but the opposite, a horizon, a ground, a gift, a foundation, a pre-given (Steinbock 1995, 87-116). In Husserl's own words: "The world is the open universe, the horizon of the termini, the universal field of what exists in which all praxis is presupposed and continually enriched by its results (Husserl 1976, 146)".

The Stoic doctrine of the Hellenistic period, already saw a certain ordered pedagogical vision in the world, that is, the world was the place where we would learn about our ethics, our reason and our soul. Nature was the source that gave us the optimum of what we would need to know. Thus, for the Stoics the purpose of human life would be to live in conformity with nature (White 2016, 139). In a way, phenomenology, with Husserl's early efforts, seeks to make the human being again consider the world as a pole, as a substratum of knowledge. However, Husserl goes beyond Stoicism, he seeks to see, also, in the world itself, in this substratum, through this pole, the constitutive source of meaning. This is because, for Husserl, the world is a substrate not only through its nature, but also through all lived experiences, and he coined the term *life-world* in order to express it. In other words, for the Stoics, nature is there, ahead of us, it is necessary just to copy it, learn from it. For Husserl, nature, or the world, is the place of experience, of the constitution of meaning (Husserl 1976, 187). Nevertheless, in Husserl, although meaning implicates itself within the world, the subject is the only one who can endow meaning (Husserl 1976, 175). Husserl moves from stoic determinism to the constitutive life that carry itself out jointly with the world.

In the wake of Husserl, Heidegger will also regard the human being as the sole endower of meaning. Thus, although *being-in-the-world* (*Dasein*) is a hermeneutic being and seeks to be authentic, constituting itself through the world, it is ultimately the only one that can give meaning (Heidegger 2010, §24, 107–110). In such wise, the meaning of things in the world is given by the way *being-in-the-world* handles them (Heidegger 2010, §12 53), uses them. Before any theoretical basis, the meaning of things in the world involves dealing with things in their manuality. In Husserl and Heidegger, there is no solipsistic being, that is, there is no isolated human being without a world, since the world is a condition of possibility for the person. Nevertheless, the human being is the only one capable of giving meaning.

Merleau-Ponty goes beyond the constitution of meaning *in* and *with* in Heidegger and the implicit constitution in Husserl, thus radicalizing the constitution of meaning, now involving a complicity of meaning. By way of explanation, now human beings are not the only endowers of meaning; there is no sense living in the world, therefore, without sharing, without intertwining; the perspective is that meaning is made in an incarnate form. The world also gives meaning, has its own significant originality.

We are beings who inhabit here, who constitute experiences here, who participate here, who meet other people, who feed here, who breathe here, but this does not give us any privilege, it only increases the responsibility for creating a time and a space of inclusion, where creation can find the necessary equilibrium for its realization. We cannot take a piece of this world, isolate ourselves, and say that here I give the orders. No one lives without contact with other people, not in a healthy way, or without a world that lacks integrity, that is, where a *self* finds itself crumbled. Our responsibility is to build a world where creation can take place, where society works for a future in which we can continue to dwell, build experiences, meet people, feed, and breathe.

Therapeutic responsibility is one that enables us to gain existential integrity. Of course, it is clear that this inclusive therapeutic proposal involves politics, ethics, that is,

a proposal for society. Hannah Arendt already emphasized that the redemption of the will cannot be mental, it redeem itself in action (Arendt 1978, 89). Accordingly, there is not integrity in a society that makes an asymmetrical inclusion policy unfeasible, that does not recognize the rights of those on the sidelines. In the book *Inclusive Hermeneutics*, we read:

Inclusive hermeneutics does not see justice as an obligation but as an achievement of humanity itself in its intertwining with the *life-world*. In this sense, as long as there are those who sleep on the dying streets without a home, those who die in hospitals without access to treatment. Who are beaten to death by their sexual orientation, who receive a stray bullet while enjoying a space that should be common to all, who has her body abused, who has her life enslaved, who has her creativity suppressed, and who has her life diminished without being able to live it. Therefore, as long as there are those who are excluded, we cannot be proud of any right, but only say that we enjoy privileges that everyone should have (Junglos 2019, 224).

Martín-Baró (1998) critiques mainstream psychology for its complicity in maintaining social structures that perpetuate oppression. He argues that traditional psychological theories often fail to account for the socio-historical determinants of human character, instead universalizing psychological constructs without considering their contextual variability. This omission results in psychological frameworks that reinforce the *status quo* by attributing individual traits to innate or fixed characteristics rather than recognizing their formation within specific socio-political conditions. As an alternative, Martín-Baró proposes a *liberation psychology* that critically examines the ideological underpinnings of psychological science, reorienting it toward addressing structural injustices and serving the needs of marginalized populations (Martín-Baró 1998, 43).

Central to Martín-Baró's argument is the conceptualization of character as a socio-historical construct rather than an isolated psychological entity. Drawing from etymology and critical theory, he defines character as a structured set of dispositions that regulate an individual's

interaction with their environment, shaped through historical and cultural determinants (Martín-Baró 1998, 42). Rejecting both biological determinism and purely social constructivist approaches, he posits that character emerges from the dialectical relationship between individuals and their socio-political conditions (ibid., 44). Moreover, he examines the role of key social institutions—including the family, education, and moral systems—in shaping psychological traits that reinforce passivity, dependence, individualism, and hypocrisy, all of which serve to sustain existing hierarchies (ibid., 65-70). By uncritically adopting typologies that obscure these socio-historical dynamics, psychology risks becoming an ideological tool rather than a means of emancipation.

Martín-Baró (1998) ultimately calls for a psychology that moves beyond its traditional theoretical constraints and engages in a praxis-oriented approach aimed at social transformation. He argues that psychological research and practice must be grounded in the lived realities of oppressed communities, fostering critical consciousness rather than passively reinforcing dominant ideologies (ibid., 54-55). *Liberation psychology*, in this sense, challenges reductionist and depoliticized models by advocating for an emancipatory framework that empowers individuals to resist oppression and reclaim agency over their psychological and social conditions. Through this perspective, psychology ceases to be a neutral discipline and instead becomes a tool for collective liberation, actively contributing to the dismantling of structural inequalities.

Our redeemed actions, or attitudes, which realize themselves through the activity of the mind, must be in equilibrium with this existential integrity, with the clear intention of creating a society that is a space and time of realization. Therapeutic responsibility is through our response to existential integrity, that is, how we respond and justify it. This responsibility to the *life-world*, in its existential integrity, summons us to a future that truly finds this space and time we long for. And the other dimension of the *self*, the body, which gives us access to the world, how does it constitute our integrity?

4. The Corporeality of the self

In his work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty attests that the body is our general means of having a world (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 147). Thus, my own body (*Leib*) is always mine or others, an immediate experience and an access to experience, while the physical body (*Körper*) is a body, presenting itself to external observation and dealing with outsiders (Waldenfels 1980, 37). The body itself is not only our general means of having a world; it is at the same time our anchoring in a world (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 146). Through our own body, we have a world and belong to a world. The body itself is within the world as the heart is in the organism (ibid., 209).

Influenced by the perspectives provided by this phenomenological tradition, Thomas Fuchs considers subjectivity as essentially embodied, that is, the body is not merely the content of the object of consciousness, but, as a lived body, becomes the constitutive basis of the subject itself. Hence, we experience all our feelings, thoughts, perceptions and actions as subjective corporeal beings and at the same time as physical beings (Fuchs 2018, 77). Even for Arendt, when, by thought, we transcend the world of appearances, it does not mean that we come out of appearances, but that we can free ourselves from dogmatic appearances assumed by a social group, enabling political implications that can be redeemed by our actions.

For Fuchs, we cannot say that we are, as a living organism, autarchic, but, differently, we can say that we are a self-organized (Fuchs 2018, 84) living system that is always in dependence on the environment. The very metabolism of a living organism is its primary connection to the environment (ibid., 89), by which it necessarily interacts through a life-enhancing ecosystem of exchange. Several factors attest to this dependence, from biotic to abiotic factors. The living organism, in this respect, is in constant exchange with the environment.

This idea of the interdependent relationship between body and environment is echoed in Gallagher's framework of

intermodal perception, which posits that sensory modalities are intrinsically interconnected from birth. This challenges traditional empiricist views that perceive perception as an experience-dependent construct developing through isolated sensory inputs. Instead, Gallagher (2006) argues that perception is fundamentally embodied and intermodal, with sensory modalities such as vision, touch, and hearing dynamically interacting to shape perceptual experience from the earliest stages of life. In this view, newborns, as demonstrated by their ability to recognize their mother's voice and imitate movements, exhibit early integration of sensory cues (Gallagher, 2006, 171). These findings suggest that sensory modalities do not operate in isolation but function within an integrated perceptual system, reinforcing the embodied nature of perception.

In this context, the intermodal nature of perception has significant implications for rehabilitation strategies. Traditional rehabilitation models often emphasize isolated sensory training, but clinical cases suggest that an integrative approach leveraging multisensory input yields better outcomes. Patients recovering from sensory deficits benefit from therapies that enhance intermodal connections, such as tactile-auditory training for the hearing impaired or visual-motor exercises for individuals with restored vision.

Fuchs, in his studies on the nature of the brain, attests that the brain is not an isolated organ that produces its own world within the skull and, on that basis, sends signals to the body. On the contrary, it is a body of regulation and apprehension for the whole organism. For the author, the body is the true actor in the field: its homeostasis and its relationship with the environment are crucial for the formation of an incarnate subjectivity. There is an interaction, between the individual and the organism, which connect and influence each other in constant circular feedback loops (Fuchs 2018, 124).

In Fuchs' view, the brain incorporates itself into the body and links to the environment through its various interactions, mainly as sensorimotor. For the author, because of its high degree of plasticity, the brain can incorporate the

organism's learning history from its earliest intrauterine stages of life; developing epigenetically into an organ that is complementarily structured in relation to the environment in which the individual finds herself (Fuchs 2018, 139). In this fashion, all our experiences, perceptions, and interactions with the environment continually change our neural structures throughout our lives. This plasticity is adaptive to the environment and carries the learning history, so that the individual can interact in an original way with her environment.

If we were going to use Hannah Arendt's stage metaphor, we would say that all individuals live their lives within this world as if they were on a stage. The stage is common to all who are alive, but it appears different for each species (Arendt 1978, Part I) 21). We have our own originality, because our experiences form our own lifestyle; we live in interaction, we feel, express and build different perspectives. The structure of our organism is common to the other organisms of our species, we step on the same planet, but we will never be determined in our experiences, because there is an internal / external dialogue that takes place in complicity, constituting and transforming meaning. Nevertheless, we carry a blame because of our unauthenticity, that is, we can never completely avoid the *publicness of the they* (Heidegger 2010, § 27 125), or get rid of appearances (Arendt).

Merleau-Ponty notes that this reality is present in our own body, since it has always had a traditional perception, namely a style of perception, due to its own pre-personal, cultural and historical existence. Therefore, when we come across an object, or person within the world, we already have a preconception about the encounter, before any linguistic conceptualization we can make. In the following ways, a pure encounter (Buber 1970, 63), as Martin Buber intended, devoid of any experience, does not fit the perceptual structure of the human being. However, the originality of the event that encompasses, for example, the encounter may displace our preconceptions and pretensions. There is an original presence at the meeting. However, not without style, without culture, without the tradition of those whom we meet. Merleau-Ponty

expresses the relational body, consciousness and world in the following words:

> Consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body. A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its 'world', and to move one's body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call, which is made upon it independently of any representation. (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 140).

There is no one body, then consciousness and after that a world in the constitution of the *self*; they intertwine mutually, share meaning. The *self* constitutes itself in this existential integrity. The human being neither is in front of her body, nor behind; is the body itself. In Merleau-Ponty's words: "I am my body (*Je suis mon corps*) (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 151)". This intertwining between body and consciousness is clear in the Merleau-Ponty expression *reflexive body* (ibid., 210), which, in turn, anchors itself in the world.

As it is through the body that we are anchored in this world, its imprisonment, or anything affected by it that impairs the access to experience, inhibiting or making the integrity of the *self*-unfeasible, equally affects its other dimensions. In such wise, I cannot constitute internal coherence if the marks of injustices are present on my body, or if they restrain it from to realize itself spatially.

As inclusive therapy provokes an attitude of integrity, the body becomes essential in therapeutic practices. Along these lines, the body with its marks, with its style, with its expression builds its own identity. Here it is not just about medicating the body, but directing it to its integrity, that is, seeking triggers that enable the body to interact with itself, with the other and with the world.

Fuchs reports a case of a 38-year-old patient from Heidelberg Clinical Center, where he coordinates a group of researchers (Fuchs 2006, 116). This patient was anancastic, scrupulous and had difficulty making decisions. It was proposed that he learn to ride a bicycle, for the first time in his life, and it turned out that, such late learning made him able to connect with a floating surface while maintaining balance.

The research pointed out that he was able to transfer this equilibrium situation to other areas of life and to overcome its constant oscillations. For Fuchs, a neurosis is thus not only a disorder of mental balance, but also a disorder of natural mobility and the ability to be open to certain situations.

The body, equally, leads us to meet the other in this world. Through it that we have the forms of interaction that restore the integrity of the *self*. The body is the first to come on the scene and the last to leave the scene. In therapeutic practices, it is the agent of healing possibilities, for it is through it that we are medicated, it is through it that our attitudes are redeem themselves and it is through it that we realize ourselves in space and time; it will always be on the scene until the curtains close and the lights go out.

5. Final considerations

This work clearly proposes the idea of an existential integrity that makes up what we call the *self*. This existential integrity may compromise itself, requiring an inclusive therapeutic method that will once again integrate the weakened or broken wires that comprise it. These wires connect us to each part of the *self*, to wit, to the self-relation of the *self*, to the other, to the world, and to the own body. When these wires weaken or broken themselves, therapeutic help needs itself to restore the integrity of the *self*. Thus, we seek to demonstrate that this therapeutic aid need not confine itself to a single proposal, but it carries out through a dialogue that takes place between patient and therapist. In this dialogue, we will look for a trigger that will connect the weakened or broken wire of the *self*, restoring its existential integrity. Therefore, the choice of a trigger should discuss itself between the patient and the therapist so that the patient can choose according to its own possibilities. The choice would engage the patient's empathy to the object of the trigger.

However, how can we integrate the weakened or broken wires if the society we live into is unfair? The inclusive therapeutic method reveals its intertwining with ethics, that is, how to achieve existential integrity if we do not have what to eat, what to drink, education, health, accessibility, and so

on. In other words, if we do not have the slightest dignity? The inclusive therapeutic method seeks the integrity of the *self* and does not aim for a well-organized society in which people cooperate when they see advantages (Rawls and Adler).

The inclusive therapeutic method has an idea of ontologically embodied good, that is, based on the parameters of existential integrity. Thus, the idea of good does not come specifically from a religion, from an institution in general or from the law, but from the very integrity of the *self* that is existential, that is, it is intertwined in the self-relation of the *self*, to the other, to the world and to the own body. Thus, it would be necessary to know whether religions, laws or institutions in general do not suppress this *self,* whether they exclude others, whether they do not care for nature or do not provide accessibility for everyone.

The dimensions of the *self* that make up the integrity of the *self*, need to be in inclusive equilibrium so that if one of them weakens or breaks all the others compromise themselves as well. As we live into a world with and through our own body, with and through our subjectivity and with and through other people, such dimensions intertwine themselves; calling us to an existential responsibility. In this way, inclusive therapeutic treatment fosters responsibility towards the *life-world*, that is, we need to respond therapeutically to the integrity of the *self*. In other words, we need to create space and time of realization for humanity now and in the future (Jonas). Every human being who responds to the *life-world* has existential responsibility and this necessarily leads us to ethics, politics and institutions in society.

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