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The Problem of Reality in Psychology: Revisiting the Reality Concept in Oswald Külpe

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Abstract In this work, I discuss the concept of reality developed by Oswald Külpe and the tensions that he demonstrates in the context of current psychological research. The relevance of the author for the origin of psychology and how its approaches are current in contemporary psychology is discussed. Through the review of his work *Contribution to the history of the concept of reality*, I conclude that the notions of reality that govern contemporary research in psychology maintain old tensions on the epistemic basis of knowledge and our object of study. In this sense, I propose that returning to old reflections, as in the case of Külpe and the concept of reality, constitutes a fundamental aspect to guide future research in our discipline.

Keywords Reality · Truth · Oswald Külpe · Thought · Introspection

Well, if everything speaks for an hypothesis and nothing against it,
is it then certainly true? One may designate it as such.

But does it certainly agree with reality, with the facts?

With this question, you are already going round in a circle.

To be sure, there is justification; but justification comes to an end.

(Wittgenstein 1963, §190–191)

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Introduction

Oswald Külpe was a famous German psychologist and noted for his influence in the beginning of scientific psychology. He was a student of Wilhem Wundt in Leipzig and then moved to the University of Würzburg where he founded a laboratory of experimental psychology in 1896—similar to the one of Wundt in Leipzig and Lipps in Munich—consolidating what until today in our discipline it is known as the School of Würzburg. From an early age, he became interested in the experimental study of deep phenomena of consciousness, such as thought.

Külpe (1912) in *the experimental study of thought*—work that is part of the book on the modern psychology of thought (*Über die moderne Psychologie des Denkens*)—develops a reformulation of Wundt's work on the study of consciousness and psychological processes. This work is why Külpe is recognized in contemporary psychology, although in current research, it is hardly considered.

His work related to the study of thought had great influence in rethinking the introspective method. Unlike Wundt, Külpe did believe that thought could be studied with experimental methods. In his experiments, he defended the idea that thought should be explained beyond an associationist perspective. Human thought, from a Külpeian perspective, was more complex than a simple association of ideas (Ogden 2011). Through his laboratory procedures, he came to pose the famous theory of thought with images and without images, observing the possibility of thinking with iconic symbols and with verbal symbols as independent thought forms.

The study of the physiological phenomena and their respective correlation with the psychological activities of the beginnings of psychology with Wundt (1886) were displaced by the application of introspection to the experimental method thanks to the studies of Külpe (1909). Külpe presented introspection as a means of investigation and showed that it is possible to study superior psychic processes in an empirical way. From the perspective of Külpe (1909), the method of introspection constitutes the main instrument for the study of human nature; otherwise, psychology would be purely physiological, and it would study the isolated structures and functions of consciousness, as stipulated by Wundt (1886) in his early work. Külpe, then, criticizing the proposals of his mentor in Leipzig, proposes that introspection must become a true scientific instrument; that is, from his point of view, introspection must be systematic and controlled.

Külpe (1909) and the Würzburg School developed a phenomenology of psychic life for the investigation of higher psychological processes. Some of the studies carried out by this group consisted of presenting a word to a subject in the laboratory and asking the subject to freely associate the ideas that this concept elicits. Other procedures consisted in asking the participants to associate a word with others of a different category, subsequently questioning the mental processes performed for that task. On other occasions the Würzburg group presented the subject a situation of judgment or dilemma and then asked the participant for a complete report about the processes that occurred to resolve them (Mora 2008, Ogden 2011).

One of the fundamental characteristics of the Würzburg group was not to accept the elementalist, reductionist, and associationist positions of the Leipzig School with which the cognitive processes were studied; they also disagreed with Wundt that thought could not be studied through introspection (Mora 2008). From the perspective of Külpe (1909), introspection should be the method par excellence for the study of psychological experience.

Danziger (1980) makes an exhaustive comparison between the experimental method of Wundt and the method proposed by Külpe and that allows to differentiate the experimental introspection, as practiced by Wundt in Leipzig and the phenomenological introspection as it has been called the Külpe method in Würzburg.

A first difference is that phenomenological introspection is more permissive than Wundt's experimental introspection with respect to retrospection. The School of Würzburg admitted the retrospective method as a complement in the study of mental processes. That is, the developed procedures integrated the retrospective and prospective method in the study of the phenomena of consciousness, being the observations of laboratories made with procedures that involved real-time and a posteriori reports. On the other hand, phenomenological introspection shows interest in data of a subjective nature, unlike Wundt, who worked mainly with objective data such as reaction time, the number of errors committed when remembering, and the measurement of physiological indices. From Danziger's perspective: "the subjects also described complex decision processes that clearly involved the effects of expectation and suggestion, as well as individual differences" (Danziger 1980, p 251). In phenomenological introspection, the researcher has a prominent role, since during the experiment, he actively asks questions in an attempt to help the subject to provide information about what was going on in his mind while solving a problem (Danziger 1980), while in experimental introspection, the experimenter played a modest role (presents stimuli and records responses). This means that at the Würzburg school, the researcher acted as a facilitator of the participant's introspective exercise, so that in this way he could better monitor his mental processes.

The experimental study of the thought of Külpe (1909) constitutes the main recognition of his work in psychology as a discipline. However, his work on the epistemic bases of research has been forgotten. In 1912, Oswald Külpe develops an understanding of the concept of reality and shows the existing tensions regarding this notion at the beginning of the development of the discipline. His work on reality constitutes a fundamental pillar for the understanding of his experimental proposal in the study of cognition and the reformulation he made to Wundt's work. The positions in that work developed remain intact even in current research in psychology and still need a deep reflection in which psychology should take a position.

The work on the concept of reality of Külpe (1912) remains forgotten in psychology, although it is a requirement to understand his work and his contribution to the field of psychology. Revisiting Külpe's reflection on the notion of reality is a fundamental requirement to think and rethink the state of current research in psychology and what should be the future guidelines for the development of research procedures.

From this perspective, in this paper, we try to return to the concept of reality of Oswald Külpe to understand the contribution he makes to the experimental study of human consciousness and psychology in general. Only through a review and deep reflection on his work of reality, it is possible to understand the epistemological foundation that gives rise to his famous work of 1909 titled *On the modern psychology of thought* (Über die moderne Psychologie des Denkens). The objective that was tried to reach in this work was to review the central aspects of the text *contribution to the history of the concept of reality* of Oswald Külpe and to develop a metatheoretical analysis of his proposal. Through this reflection, it is intended to rescue a classic text of the origins of the discipline and make visible the validity of its content in order to reflect on the development, tensions, and problems of research in psychology, and on what could be the future guidelines of research into phenomena related to human experience.

The Külpe's Contribution to the History of the Concept of Reality

In 1912, Oswald Külpe, very famous Wundt's student, wrote about the reality phenomenon in psychology. This work, less read than others, show the tensions of the origin of psychology. Külpe (1912) says in his work about reality concept:

An historical discussion of the development of the Concept of Reality should be prefaced by an explanation of the concept itself. Under the Concept of Reality are included those objects whose determination is arrived at by the several empirical sciences and their supplementary metaphysics, this determination being regarded as independent of the cognizing subject. When, for example, natural science speaks of electrons as carriers of electric charges, or of elements in chemical compounds, or of cells as the bases of biological growth; when it speaks of minerals and heavenly bodies, or plants and animals, it is concerned with objects which are as little identical with our concept of them as they are with the content of our sense perception. Psychology has also just such objects in mind, when it speaks of sensations and ideas, of feeling and attention, of thought and will, and it makes an essential distinction between our conception of these processes and the processes themselves. Further, the humanistic sciences, which latterly it has been the fashion to characterize as sciences of fact, aim to treat language and art, religion and law, historical persons and events, as self-dependent objects, having their own spontaneous and immanent determinations. Finally, one need only mention the metaphysical concepts of a monad or an idea, a world-will or a *causa sui*, and the fact becomes clear that in these cases there is something postulated, whose being and becoming are quite independent of all thinking and cognizing. We designate the process of postulating and defining such objects as realization (*Realisierung*), and the objects themselves we call real or realities. These are not experiences of consciousness, although they are attained by the elaboration of experiential data. Neither are they ideal objects, such as are produced by abstraction from a given reality, or by the combination in thought or fancy of elements of reality. Realities are rather objects that are independent of our apprehension and knowledge, independent of our sensation, representation or thought, independent of our postulation and definition. They are not created by us as ideal objects are, quite as little are they given in bare experience, as facts of consciousness; they are merely grasped by us, and enjoy their own being and becoming, their own independent laws of activity. Their limits are given in pure experience and in pure reason. Both of these participate in the knowledge of reality. They can be thought of, only in so far as abstraction from empirical elements is necessary in their determination. But, on the other hand, they can be grasped only when regard is had for the actually given. Furthermore, there is need of particular criteria of reality, A. e., need of specific grounds for the postulation of reality. What causes us to separate certain elements from the immediate reality of consciousness with its unclarified facts and to regard them as objectively real, while we segregate other elements from this reality and regard them as subjective admixture? To this question the various (real) sciences reply by setting up different criteria. The science of nature regard as the primary mark of nature-reality its independence of the psycho-physical organism. Psychology sees the chief criterion of psychological reality in the independence of the cognizing subject from the apprehended content of consciousness. In addition to this, where one is concerned with the knowledge of psychological life other than one's own, psychology employs as criterion the interpretation of expression and of its trustworthiness in representing actual conditions in another psyche. These two criteria are applicable also to the humanistic sciences. In addition to these, other grounds are employed for the determination of the real. If, for example, it is maintained in the case of physical reality, that it is irrefutably established by the sense of touch, we then have an empirical criterion for the quality of the reality. If, on the other hand, freedom from contradiction (as in the case of the Eleatics or Bradley) is regarded

as the fundamental principle in determining the real, then we have a rational criterion. If, however, the real natural object is regarded as cause of the content of perception, then we have a mixed criterion, a criterion composed of experiential and rational factors. In speaking of primary criteria for the realization, we have made reference to other supplementary criteria. Realization has several stages. One of the first stages consists in the determination of the real, as it is in any way met with in consciousness, although confused with subjective admixtures. The (real) sciences, however, cannot stop with this. They either proceed to the assumption of substances or bearers of real phenomena, or they extend the concept of the given through the assumption of the not-given, that attaches to possible experience. All of these supplementations rest upon deductions, and so there is need of criteria for these, in so far as they bring about trustworthy and indispensable additions to the system of realities, in the construction of which all of these sciences are employed. The problem of epistemology consists in the investigation of the principles by which the real sciences are guided. A critical history of the concept of reality can be developed down to our time almost exclusively in connection with the history of philosophy. There is no need of proving this in the case of metaphysics, which has always counted as a specifically philosophical discipline. For psychology, which has only recently taken on the character of an independent science, there is just as little need of proof. In natural science and humanistic science, discussions of the problem of the reality of the external world or of historical fact have played only a small role. In these sciences, one has for the most part taken the appropriate and practical point of view that one may and must assume these forms of reality, and has followed this procedure, without examining or testing the grounds for the postulate (Külpe 1912, p. 1–3).

(...) The last phase in the evolution of the reality-concept is introduced by the tremendous efflorescence of the natural and humanistic sciences, as well as by the development of inductive metaphysics in the nineteenth century. The splendid successes of the special sciences in the determination of reality had the necessary effect of shattering the philosophical position regarding the reality-problem. Psychology was so insecure in the determination of its realities that it saw its means of rescue in association with the more highly developed natural sciences. The humanistic sciences, particularly history, secured through the development of critical methods in the investigation of sources, a valuable and practical criterion for distinguishing between authentic and unauthentic opinions, adequate and inadequate testimony. Fechner promulgated the idea of an inductive metaphysic, which should supplement and comprehend the special sciences, without superseding them and without attempting to penetrate into the nature of the real, apart from their assistance. This new conception of metaphysics relieves it of the obligation to formulate and justify a particular procedure for the determination of reality. For this reason, Epistemology and Logic now become inquiries into the methods, fundamental concepts, and basic principles of the special sciences. John Stuart Mill in his admirable *Logic*, adds to the discussion of the natural sciences a detailed estimate of the humanistic disciplines. The Neo Kantians, as also Comte, find in the mathematical natural sciences the ideal of all scientific knowledge. Besides this, the significance of values receives its due recognition. The peculiar methods of the real sciences and of the sciences of value did not, however, receive here adequate attention. The fault is partly with the working efficiency of Kant's a priori epistemology and partly with the renaissance of subjective procedure (conscientiaistische Gedankendngge), even among representatives of the several physical sciences. The theory of the real sciences has

become a pressing question of Epistemology. In this way Kant's theory of the formal sciences must be supplemented. The solution of the problem will settle and ought to settle the unfruitful controversy which idealism and realism still feel obliged to carry on regarding the possibility and meaning of the postulate of reality. The problem presents an extensive and fruitful field of inquiry, in which opposing tendencies are active and ought to find ground for compromise. The truth remains, as we have pointed out, that in all sciences of fact, psychology and the humanistic disciplines included, reality is postulated and determined. The investigation of this process, its forms, grounds and results constitute for the philosopher of immanence a significant task (Külpe 1912, p. 9–10).

Meta-theoretical Reflection on Reality Concept of Oswald Külpe

In this excerpt from Oswald Külpe's classic text on the concept of reality, a subject-object separation is seen in empiricist understanding, leaving reality outside the cognitive subject. This understanding—alludes to Külpe—would be characteristic of an empirical, scientific, and objectivist notion of reality, therefore, characteristic of the natural sciences. Apparently, some traditions in psychology would share this understanding of reality as, for example, research in mainstream psychology.

Other traditions in the discipline have understood reality as self-dependent, according to Külpe's nomenclature. These two traditions maintain a tension in the understanding of reality, and this tension constitutes the foundation of current research: on the one hand, the object of reality as independent of thought, that is, reality as a separate entity from consciousness and, on the other, reality as co-determined by thought and consciousness.

The previous tension, clearly identified by Külpe, is related to what Cornejo (2005) has called the scientific and comprehensive culture of psychology, as two different understandings that determine the way to approach, intervene, and investigate our object of study.

From the scientific perspective—own of the natural sciences—the objects of reality have their own laws. The encounter between the esthetic object (cultural and contextual) and human consciousness, which constitutes a unique, total and holistic experience, is then understood as a reality apprehended by consciousness, or else, as an experience co-constructed between the object of reality and consciousness; that is, the encounter between reality confused with human consciousness. This distinction has constituted a difference between the natural sciences and psychology, as well as within psychology, specifically between the current scientist—mainstream research—and the cultural historical socioconstructivist perspective.

Külpe (1912) emphasizes the scarce place in psychology in the discussion about reality. For, apparently, some traditions of psychology borrow the notion of reality from the natural sciences, while others adhere to the notion of the social sciences and other philosophical traditions.

As explicit Külpe (1909) in another of his works, not all psychological processes are conscious and representational, which was a premise highly contrary to Wundt. As seen in his work on the modern psychology of thought, for Külpe (1909) and the school of Würzburg, introspection was possible and the form of analysis in the memory offered the same security and ease as the observation of external objects. According to this school, there was a non-intuitive element of thinking and non-intuitive elements of consciousness.

In this work of the year 1909, Külpe presents elements that are only possible to understand when reviewing his work on the reality of 1912, which shows the tension and the lack of definition of psychology with respect to the concept of reality, which allow us to understand with greater depth the separation between Külpe and Wundt.

However, this first reflection, which is not fully visible in the work of Külpe (1912), is that a complete approach to the concept of reality is inevitably associated with the possibility of establishing possible access to a position of truth. The delimitation of the concept of truth in the history of science presents the same tension as the concept of reality developed by Külpe (1912). On the part of the natural sciences, there is a certain sense of stability and control, being able to establish a definition of reality, as a phenomenon of a character alien to the human being, disembodied, as a mere observable phenomenon, independent of metaphysical perception or emergency, which has its basis in the subjectivity of the “individual who experiences.”

In the approach to the question about reality then, the development of an ontological analysis cannot be exempt, that is, an approach to phenomena that occur in the realm of lived experience, which cannot be explained, considering the impossibility of empirical determination of the phenomenon of experience. This is what Dilthey (1977) has called the sciences of the spirit, as opposed to an objectivist perspective that can only be explained from empirical grounds. Following the approaches of Hume (2001), a relationship can be established between the concept of reality and the concept of certainty. The question of reality within psychology is basically also the question of certainty: on the one hand, an external certainty, “out there,” which we should try to know, and on the other, a certainty (impossibility of it) that results from the impact of natural objects on our consciousness, that is, the “impressions” regarding something particular to the natural world. From this second perspective, we cannot affirm reality as something collective, in terms of the individuality associated with the impression itself as a discriminative and determining phenomenon of truths, in that we cannot properly speak of something we have not “experienced” before; for this reason, reality can be perceived as something in continuous construction and indetermination, close to Heidegger’s (1997) approaches associated with the incarnated being, which can be perceived as a being in permanent construction.

In this same line, for Heidegger (1997), Dasein cannot be the possessor of a certain reality, in that the project proper of this being impregnated in the world is a historical being with the possibility of describing a suffered reality, such as it is clearly stated in his Seminars by Zollikon (Heidegger 2009), when defining the possible explanation of a tear, which from empirical science can be interpreted as a synonym of sadness or some particular emotion—which is right as soon as the emergence of said tear is spatially connected with the emotion at a certain moment. However, as time passes as a flow in continuous movement, that tear, if delivered or positioned as an observable object, is no longer a symbol of a feeling and is rather associated with a simple drop of liquid and no longer represents a feeling. This new situation, then, would represent an action suffered, considering then to Dasein and its definition of reality, a project in production, but not in determination.

From a phenomenological view, it would be possible to perceive the human being as an elementary subject, which transcends a deterministic definition of his own essence, rather in constant struggle against the determination of truth. This “truth” is perceived as an impossibility and, in this sense, only a linguistics turn propitiates possibilities of understanding this being in continuous construction, possessor of “suffered historical realities,” which constitute a permanent present that will soon cease to be. These ideas inevitably lead us to deepen the work of Wittgenstein.

The Truth and Certainty in Wittgenstein

From an analytical perspective, reality can be reached from the identification of a common concept or language that allows an approach to a collective logic that allows a shared existence of a phenomenon in the world. In the *Logical-Philosophical Tractatus*, Wittgenstein (1921) develops an approximation to logical reality, in which language must be associated with truth propositions. These truth propositions are raised solely and exclusively in relation to phenomena that correlate with the objects of the natural world.

The task of extracting a logical determination from reality, as a direct correlation between what is expressed and what exists in the world, has its finiteness in the emergence of the second stage of Wittgenstein. In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1953) presents that the reality and the truth are only determined in a position of use more than of a direct correlation with the states and things of the natural world. This sense, from the perspective of Wittgenstein (1953), is the use of language that determines the limits of my perception of the world. This means that the impossibility of generating a particular reality is lodged in the rules established in its *Sprachspiel*—game of language—which disables the possibility of a single reality. Rather, language games respond to the interaction of the individual with a given social unit with which a common psychological context is shared. This allows us to understand reality as a reality for someone in a specific physical, psychological, and discursive context. In this sense, Wittgenstein (1953) states that, while the meanings that explain a reality can be perceived and understood by a certain group, the experience associated with a certain word cannot be shared by a community, which translates into a undeniable indeterminacy of truth/reality, as the impossibility of experiencing a shared reality, being the experience a perceptive determination from the individual subjective interpretation.

Finally, Wittgenstein (1963) in *On the Certainty*—what has been called a third period of Wittgenstein—speaks to us about the search for truth, belief, and the possibility of doubt. For Wittgenstein (1963)—in his last period—the belief constitutes an attitude towards the proposition and the doubt then presupposes a possibility of certainty. This is a reality inside a language game.

Doubt—from Wittgenstein's perspective—implies assuming the possibility of a certainty or, in other words, the belief of certainty begins when doubt ends.

From the Wittgenstein's work, it is possible to appreciate the development of the concept of truth, in our opinion, linked and directly related to the concept of reality of Külpe. The truth undergoes a change throughout the work of Wittgenstein that evidences the tensions and dialectics identified by Külpe and that accompany much of the development of psychology as a discipline: from absolute possibility of truth to the subjectivization of it, from the valuation of objects and things of the world, and to an assessment of the capacity of consciousness to communicate a reality.

The understanding of certainty and truth is linked to the idea of reality. In the first stage of the work of Wittgenstein, the existence of a supposition of the truth is appraised, but in the philosophical investigations and on the certainty, it is observed as the thought of Wittgenstein takes a turn towards the complexity of the phenomenon, putting in doubt from of its language games, truth and certainty, and therefore, reality. From this perspective, in the investigation of modern psychology, the same tensions presented in important philosophical works are observed and then systematized by Külpe (1912) in his work on reality.

The logic of hypothesis testing in mainstream research takes place within a language game, which comprises a reality/truth of human processes that must be observed and discovered. The

existence of hypotheses in modern psychology is evidence of the belief of certainty and its tireless search. This perspective lacks an understanding of the human being as a historical subject, in movement. On the other hand, the search for ideographic understanding of experience evidences the belief in the historicism of consciousness. Here cultural psychology is an important contribution, regarding the notion of time and meaning as a fundamental aspect in the study of the phenomena of consciousness. Cultural psychology comprises human experience as in permanent development towards an uncertain future (Valsiner 2014). The current of consciousness, in the sense of James (1890), does not stop. This has strengthened and introduced into contemporary psychology the notion of historicism of the phenomena of consciousness, with a past permanently moving away, a future approaching, and a present in permanent evolution. This notion of the human being as historical subject puts into tension the notion of static, unique, accurate reality. It is likely that here lies the main difference between the postulates of Külpe (1909) on the study of cognitive processes and the first stage of Wundt (1886) and the theoretical and experimental separations between both.

We can affirm then, as Külpe emphasized more than 100 years ago, that no progress has been made in the discussion of reality in psychology, and we continue to observe in contemporary research approaches that attempt to capture phenomena of human consciousness as observable, static, objectivable, and independent of the subject that experience, while, on the other hand, phenomena in movements, a historical and cultural awareness, understandable in the first person, and dependent on the subject that experiences. This task of reflection does not constitute an effort for the determination of psychological science through the determination of the reality/truth of our object of study, but at least an attempt to advance in the understanding of ancient discussions and deepen the knowledge of the phenomena related to consciousness.

Conclusion

In this work, we have revisited the concept of reality proposed by Oswald Külpe at the beginning of the discipline. As it is possible to appreciate in the ideas developed in this document, the notion of reality in psychology suffers from multiple tensions between a historical, cultural, temporal, and subjective notion and another static, a-temporal, localist, and objectivist notion. A clear difference of this tension on the concept of reality is seen in the absence of temporality in neuroscience research and the prevailing interest of a localism of psychological functions. While, on the other hand, in the romantic tradition, phenomenology and cultural psychology are observed, the emphasis on the transformation of the human being as a process in movement and permanent development, from a first person perspective.

This tension accounts for the current clear division in modern research in psychology: mainstream research and comprehensive sciences or spirit sciences.

Historicism as a psychological movement, so clearly observed in the work of Vygotsky (1934) and all the contributions of socio-cultural psychology (Valsiner and Vander Veer 2000, Valsiner 2014, among others), probably originates in the work of Goethe. The impact of the *metamorphosis of plants* and *the theory of colors* produced a division of the study of human phenomena in relation to modern science (Cornejo 2015). Goethe adopted a genetic understanding of nature and suggested that the study of natural phenomena should focus on the process of constant formation and evolution. Only the study of the transformation process,

says Goethe, allows my consciousness to construct an image of the object as an integrated and holistic whole. It is the uninterrupted activity of training and development that allows us to understand the phenomena as a whole (Cornejo 2015).

Through reflection developed here, it is possible to understand Külpe's distancing from the first premises of Wundt. From the position of Külpe (1909), the experimental study of psychic life must be carried out through introspection as a fundamental strategy that collects the impact of reality on consciousness and its historicism, as an ongoing process. Wundt (1886), in his first period, emphasized objective measurements as static results, sub-dimensioning the process of transition and development of psychological functions. Külpe (1909) rescues this aspect not contemplated in the work of Wundt, developing his famous phenomenological introspection, mixing retrospective and prospective strategies, and valuing the introspection of the participant and the active role of the researcher in capturing the psychological processes of the subjects.

It is important to highlight the role of the research subject in the context of the first experiments in Leipzig and Würzburg. At that time, the subject who investigated was the experimenter himself, considered reliable due to his education and academic training. However, when the research subject that is introduced to experimental psychology is naive, novice, or anonymous, everything is different. In contemporary research, large research teams made up of different academic levels and research training are observed, so it is important to consider the role of the one who executes phenomenological introspection. To apply the old Würzburg experiments in today's laboratories, we require training in the research task.

The postulates of Külpe and his study of thought have subsequently impacted on the development of contemporary psychology. The emphasis on introspection aimed at deciphering the internal processes of mental structures and cognitive functioning, influencing the development of constructivist psychology. From these findings and their applications to the field of education, we managed to establish that human beings are not passive receivers of information but, on the contrary, actively build their knowledge and abilities through interaction with the environment and the reorganization of their own mental structures (De Corte 2016). On the other hand, introspectionism as a movement developed in Würzburg persists and its influence has reached other areas of psychology, such as the Gestalt psychology and psychoanalysis. In psychoanalysis, introspection becomes the main technique of clinical practice as a method of investigating the unconscious. In this sense, the monitoring of one's own mental processes or self-observation of one's subjective experience has had repercussions in different fields of our discipline being used in different clinical practices, education, and research on cognitive development.

The final proposal of this paper is that the fervor of introspectionism of the early twentieth century must enter experimental psychology to re-edit the classic experiments in the history of psychology, but now with new questions to guide the current discussion and future research.

These reflections, made from the dialog between two works by Oswald Külpe—*On a Modern Psychology of Thought* and *Contributions to the Concept of Reality*—allow us to understand this sense, that the study of the reality of consciousness must include an understanding of historical subject, and as demonstrated by Külpe, not to fear the experimentation of psychological processes with reports of the participant himself, because it is the only way to know in depth the unfolding of psychological phenomena.

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