PERSONALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND ABNORMAL BEHAVIOUR

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The growing interest of Psychology in emotional abilities obliges us to base Personality on the perception and expression of emotions. Mira's work is described as the appropriate starting point for developing a psychology of Personality that not only takes inter-individual differences into account, but also conceives them as founded on intra-individual differences. Mira describes the relationship between the somatic and psychic components that constitute the person, in accordance with human development, by means of three concepts: monism, functionalism and interactionism. Finally, this theory is compared with some other current theories in Psychology, and it is concluded that Mira's theory of Personality is made up of three components: Temperament, Perceived Situation and Character, which provides us with a concept of Personality applicable to the development of a human being not from an essential perspective but from a functional one.
Keywords: Character, Conation, Emotion, Micro-history, Temperament.

El creciente interés de la Psicología por las habilidades emocionales obliga a fundamentar la Personalidad en la percepción y la expresión de las emociones. La obra de Mira sobre la personalidad se describe como el punto de partida para el desarrollo de una psicología de la personalidad que no sólo considera las diferencias interindividuales, sino que sustenta las mismas en las diferencias intraindividuales. Mira describe la relación entre lo somático y lo psíquico que constituyen la persona, según el desarrollo evolutivo, en base a tres conceptos: Monismo, funcionalismo e interaccionismo. Finalmente, se compara esta teoría con las diferentes teorías actualmente en boga en Psicología y se concluye que la teoría de la Personalidad de Mira, se basa en tres componentes: Temperamento, Situación percibida y Carácter que nos acercan a un concepto de Personalidad aplicable a un ser humano evolutivo desde una perspectiva no esencialista, sino funcional.
Palabras clave: Carácter, Conación, Emoción, Micro-historia personal, Temperamento.

-It often happens that someone tells me "when you see ditch turn left", while the person speaking clearly gestures to the right with their hand. Being a man of letters has a disadvantage: you trust people's words. He said "turn left", when the truth was in the gesture-.

(J. M. Espinàs, 2007)

INTRODUCTION

It is common today, both in the media and among politicians and other social agents, to hear psychologists referred to as "managers of the emotions", and indeed, nobody doubts the invaluable role of the psychologist in the face of catastrophes, be they natural or the result of terrorist activity.

Moreover, there is widespread general interest in people's private lives and their most intimate details –we need look no further than programmes such as "Big Brother" and the levels of viewing figures they achieve.

Politicians themselves are increasingly wont to offer their private lives to public opinion, seemingly in an effort to present themselves as equals with the rest of the population as regards the way they deal with the ethical or moral problems of everyday life. Thus, we see how Nicolas Sarkozy, for example, lays bare his private life on becoming President of France, apparently assuming that such a gesture projects an image of the open, progressive, decisive and courageous person his country needs to go forward, breaking with the supposed hypocrisy of his predecessors.

The question that interests political commentators is whether such apparent decisiveness in the management of one's own emotional problems will or will not be reflected in the management of economic and social problems, and in decision-making about infrastructure and energy matters, such as that of the Very High Tension (MAT) line between France and Spain.

All of this contributes to the opinion that we are experiencing a crisis of rationalism and a boom of the

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emotional, which despite implying greater superficiality in social analyses, provides the compensation of greater sincerity in social behaviour. This new situation not only affects psychologists in general, but indeed has a bearing on some in particular, a good example being those who worked in Hillary Clinton's team for her presidential nomination campaign, advising her on how to appear more human, more "womanly" – supposedly suggestive of more transparency in her emotional life – in her public engagements.

What we are witnessing, then, is a revival of the psychology of the perception of emotions (Michotte, 1950) and of the expression of the emotions (Allport, 1963), which obliges a reappraisal of the Psychology of the Personality.

The points on which we shall base this reappraisal of the conceptualization and assessment of the Personality are:

a) Personalogy: Static and dynamic vision of Personality.
b) Anthropological principles of Personality
c) Factors and variables of normal and abnormal behaviour
d) Unidimensional theories of Personality
e) Bi-dimensional theories of Personality
f) Conation as the basis of character
g) Dimensions of the dynamic of the Personality
h) Expressive versus adaptive behaviour

a) Personalogy: Static and dynamic vision of Personality

First of all, the Personality is identified, by the social agents referred to above, with "personalogy", in the sense that the Personality denotes what is personal about us, and refers to a unitary vision of the human being, to the person as an individual. This holistic conception of the human being attempts to overcome the division between the somatic and the psychic, but for Mira (1932) this synthesis should be made without merging these two aspects into a single, global, more general one, and therefore with less specific knowledge in relation to these concepts.

Contextualizing the concept of Personality within "personalogy", implies distinguishing between, on the one hand, a static notion of Personality, that is, independent of the development and evolution of the individual human being, which involves a particular anthropological conception of it, and on the other, a dynamic notion of the Personality, concerned with the stages of an individual's development.

b) Anthropological principles of Personality

The anthropological principles that constitute the static notion of human Personality we propose are: 1) *monism*, 2) *functionalism* and 3) *interactionism.*

1) Monism

Mira (1932) is conscious of the fact that an appeal to the functional unity of the human being does not rule out the metaphysical problem of body-soul dualism. We therefore turn to Lledó, who calls on Epicurus to describe the concept of monism. Thus, we read, "An explanation of our relationship with the world and our intelligence of what is real that fails to take due account of the senses (perceptions), as the first frontier of knowledge, is for Epicurus simply a flimsy dream" (Lledó, 1984).

It is established, then, that not only is all knowledge limited by the sensory organs of the body, but it is only through them that it can be acquired; this indeed is the basis of the theory of knowledge proposed by Turró (1923), in his work *Els origens del conèixement: La Fam* ("The origins of knowledge: Hunger"), produced by the Physiological Institute of Catalonia, where Mira would later be a student under Pi i Sunyer.

"If indeed intellectual information is reduced to "the here and now", and there is a rejection of any form of transcendence related to man, then a new anthropology must be constructed, resting on new foundations. The body is, then the central focus of "being here" and must form the basis of this anthropology" (Lledó, 1984). This is the philosophy that is most coherent with Mira's anthropological monist conception.

Knowledge is the result of our taking account of changes in our organism that inform us about the state of both our environment and ourselves. The muscular changes we make in order to focus our view of an object are what indicate to us our distance from it.

2) Functionalism

Mira (1932) turns to the concept of "functional point of view" to build a bridge between the physical and the mental in the human being. According to this concept, it is the organism as a whole that creates the response. Mira maintains that the fact of continuing to study each one of these aspects separately does not imply a dualism between mental and physical manifestations, but rather provides analytical knowledge of the "functional synergy" with which each individual person is equipped.

This is a synthetic vision that describes the integration of

the diverse organic activities: humoural and nervous, within the various psychic activities: emotional and intellectual. Thus, humoural activity, determined by the hormones and "neurotropic" substances –known today as neurotransmitters– influences the different mood states, on slowing or accelerating nervous conduction, acting on the synapses and affecting the emotional state.

Nervous activity, on the other hand, supports intellectual activity, through the conversion of sensory motor information into nervous information and its transformation into mental content such as perception, memory, imagination, association of ideas or judgement, which lead to decision-making and to the construction and maintenance of the motor response or movement, via voluntary motor reactions.

Mira's anthropological functionalism can be found today in the work of authors such as Kagan. According to him (Kagan, 2005), the elements of Personality should not be abstract concepts, since the use of abstract constructs as properties of each person does not ensure their use as functions; rather, it leads to their being considered in an essentialist fashion, so that there is a tendency not to study their change when there is variation in the context in which they occur. Psychoticism, anxiety, extraversion, etc., become ambiguous concepts when they are considered without taking into account the person, the person's history and the situation in which the person expresses them.

3) Interactionism

Mira (1932) expresses it as follows: "not only do the environment and heredity influence the individual at a given moment, but the individual, in turn, influences these two factors". In this sentence we have the conception of a human being that is not passive vis-à-vis its internal and external context, but is rather an active agent, modifying and constructing itself as a result of this interaction.

The anthropological interactionism of Mira has nothing to do with the interactionism of Endler and Magnusson (1976), which we consider simplistic given its basis in the belief of the pre-existence of a significant reality independent of the human being who perceives it, which has led to such naïve simplifications as that of believing that reality is stressful, difficult, healthy, and so on. It is the culture, and consequently the person, that confers meaning on reality, and his or her reality. Thus, the same reality may be stressful for one person and not for another, since one has given it this meaning and the other has not.

Interactionism is important not only because it highlights the fact that the person is not a passive subject, on elaborating information, but also because it describes how people become different as a result of the interaction between their heredity and their environment.

c) Factors and variables of normal and abnormal behaviour

The factors and variables, necessary and sufficient, for describing normal and abnormal behaviour, as an individual response, are I) *hereditary*, II) *acquired*, and III) *mixed* in nature. It is very important to stress that despite all these factors having an endogenous or exogenous origin, they constitute the person as a whole, and consequently are present in that person. According to Mira, the factors on which personal, individual reactions are based, and which are especially related to criminal behaviour, are:

I.- Hereditary, of endogenous nature and differentiated according to: 1) bodily constitution, 2) temperament, and 3) intelligence as an ability.

II.- Acquired, or of an exogenous nature, and whose components are: 4) previous experience of analogous situations, present in the person's long-term memory, 5) the range of internal and external circumstances immediately anterior to the observable response, present in short-term memory, 6) the current external situation, or that which triggers the sensory response, as it is present in the person, 7) the average type of (collective) social reaction acquired by the person, and 8) the form of perception of the situation, depending on one's education, interests, and so on, which leads one to an interpretation of it.

III.- Mixed, resulting from the interaction between the endogenous and exogenous factors present in the person, and which make up: 9) the character.

The Personality, as the basis of personal, individual reaction has, then, for Mira, nine components that provide a necessary and sufficient explanation of human behaviour in general, and criminal behaviour in particular. Each one of these components is present in one or other of the theories of Personality developed from the 1930s onwards, based on three types of dimension considered necessary for a thorough comprehension of the Personality: Biological, Cultural and Mixed.

d) Uni-dimensional theories of Personality

These theories take into account only one of the three

types of dimension necessary for the complete explanation of Personality. H. J. Eysenck (1947) describes Personality by means of four systems, which concur with 4 of the 9 proposed by Mira: bodily constitution, temperament, intelligence and conation. Three of these Personality components correspond to the endogenous dimension proposed by Mira, and indeed the fourth as well, since, for Eysenck, conation is simply another name for human volitional behaviour, necessary for explaining the step from an idea to execution. Therefore, Eysenck's theory of Personality is unidimensional, since it is constituted solely by the endogenous mechanisms necessary for explaining how it interacts with the environment, through his concept of "diathesis"; the environment itself, is not included in this model of Personality, not even as personal experience.

The Personality concept became reduced, on the one hand, to just temperament, and on the other, to just previously acquired experience. As we have seen, this gave rise in the first case to the biology-based factorial models, such as those of Gray and Zuckerman – which actually contributed to the resurgence of strictly temperamental models like those of Buss and Plomin – and the lexical factorial models, such as those of Cattell and McCrae and Costa, and even the monothetic models of Clinical Psychology, like that of Millon; in the second case there emerged the Situationist and Behaviourist perspectives on Personality (Mischel & Epstein), which sparked an increase in the study of coping strategies, social skills and personal styles.

e) Bi-dimensional theories.

There are other theories of Personality that discriminate between two components of it, of different natures, that is, *temperament* and *character*. These are the theories of Cloninger and Washington (1996) and of Lluís-Font (2005).

For Cloninger "avoidance of harm", "novelty-seeking", "reinforcement dependence" and "persistence" are features of temperament, whilst "self-direction", "competitiveness" and "self-transcendence" are components of character. Cloninger uses the concept of character as a necessary component of the Personality, on considering that temperament merely describes bio-physiological dispositions, and that character gives us our socio-cultural dispositions.

According to Cloninger, the difference between one Personality component and the other resides in the fact that temperament describes the basis of observable behaviours, in all living beings, necessary for their survival, defence, relations and reproduction, while character would underpin behaviours specific to human beings, given that it reflects their intentionality, their *will*.

In Lluís-Font's conception, Personality is made up of two dimensions, one which he calls temperament and the other which he calls character. In this model we can identify three components of temperament: "anxiety", which corresponds to the Neuroticism of Eysenck's model, "hostility", which corresponds to Eysenck's Psychoticism, and "extraversion", which would be Eysenck's Introversion-Extraversion; at the same time, there would be two components based on character – one of "self-control" and the other of intelligence, which Lluís-Font calls "intellect", to distinguish it from intelligence as an ability.

In the "Systems Net Theory" proposed by Lluís-Font, it is necessary to make explicit the nature of the vertical and horizontal systems of which it is made up. From a Psychology of processes, two broad processes have been established, clearly differentiated between stimulus and response. The first has come to be called the *impression process*, and the second, the *execution process* (Hintzman, 1978). Horizontal systems, proposed by Lluís-Font, refer to impression processes, that is, to the two ways in which human beings can obtain information, one that deals with material elements by means of signals and the other that deals with symbolic elements through signs. Applying Tous' (1986) theory to the difference between temperament and character, proposed by Lluís-Font, we can assert that temperament deals with information by means of signals, so that it is present not only in the human being but in all mammals, at least; on the other hand, character only deals with information by means of signs, so that it is found solely in humans. Vertical systems refer, in a highly detailed way, to the three great response systems of the human being, which are affective, mental and motor, as well as the bodily bio-physiological system. These vertical systems describe execution processes, involving response selection, decision-making and motor control, according to each impression process. Thus, for example, the form of perceiving characteristic of neuroticism is present in both the emotional response and the cognoscitive response, as well as in gesture and posture.

The most relevant contribution of the Systems Net Theory consists in shifting the emphasis in the response, on

considering the features of Personality, to focus the attention on perception, and thus enable a theory of Personality, intended only for a Psychology of execution, to be extended to a Psychology of processes. Extraversion, or any other feature of the Personality, confers information not only from the different possible forms of execution, but also from the different possible forms of perception.

Another interesting contribution of the Systems Net Theory lies in the fact that it overcomes what Stern called "monosymptomatic psychodiagnosis", on proposing the assessment of the different Personality dimensions through different systems of individual response, in line with the following requirement from Stern himself: "before making any inference related to Personality it is advisable to study it, according to the different means of expression" (Stern, 1932).

Thus, an interpretation of Personality models based on two components of it with different natures – bio-physiological for temperament and sociocultural for character – would consist in considering that some characteristics of each person, such as Personality elements like "Extraversion-Introversion", "reinforcement dependence", "Neuroticism", "avoidance of harm", "Psychoticism", "novelty-seeking" or "persistence", denote different strategies for interacting with the environment and acquiring an "impression" based on the signals present in it.

The individual characteristics of Personality, such as "self-direction" or "self-control", "competitiveness", "self-transcendence" or "intellect", correspond to different systems for the processing of symbolic information, since the impression processes associated with each one of them depend on cultural meaning.

f) Conation as the foundation of character

The character, according to Mira, is more important than all the other factors for the description of the Personality. This assertion is based on two considerations.

1.- On the one hand, the consideration of the character as the manifestation of the conative Personality factor. For Mira, conation has the same meaning as that given conferred on it by Anglophone psychologists, whereby it would serve to denote a *pre-action*, since it describes the step from a feeling to an act of behaviour.

From when a person desires something to when he or she obtains or achieves it, there occur a series of somatic changes, in the motor centres that control the effector pathways of the nervous system, detectable in the smooth and striated muscle bundles, which turn into *in-tensions* or internal tensions that determine a somatic and mental (or attitudinal) posture.

This attitude creates the conditions for the elaboration of a plan of action or intention, observable through the instigation of motor activity implicit, preliminary or preparatory to the projected final behaviour. All such predisposition for behaviour is motor, and is sometimes manifested, regardless of the final behaviour for which it is generated, by a smile or a shiver that depends on no stimulus, but is simply the expression of its existence.

2.- If we consider character as merely the result of the interaction between endogenous and exogenous factors, this conception of character will serve only to describe the person's external or directly observable behaviour, so that, for Mira, without the definition of character as conation, we would be left without an explanation of all that behaviour which remains "within, or rather behind, our forehead" as a detained action process, and which constitutes the person's internal behaviour or disposition.

For Mira, the apparent senselessness of the discrepancy between the normal way of acting and the "accidental" form of acting that can lead a person to becoming a criminal would be explained by an imbalance between the behavioural tendencies generated by endogenous factors and their integration (or not) in the face of current exogenous factors.

Mira considers that hereditary, or endogenous behavioural tendencies are observable through the task carried out with the non-dominant hand, by means of his myokinetic exploration method (Mira, 1951), and that the result, adaptive or otherwise, of such behavioural tendencies can be observed through the task performed with the dominant hand, also by means of his myokinetic exploration method, since it is this hand that expresses acquired behaviour.

Character, in Mira's conception, refers to the result of the interaction between temperament and the environment. This interaction reflects the conative component of Personality, in the same way as temperament reflects the dispositional component of it. Mira defines conation as a *pre-action* that takes place when people relate a feeling with the explicit behavioural acts appropriate for the "satisfaction" of that feeling.

Conation would be constituted by *in-tensions* that manifest themselves as barely perceptible changes in the

motor system for preparing the response appropriate to our intention. Through experimentation it is possible to observe these very slight changes in the effector pathways of the nervous system and their effect on the smooth and striated muscles. For Mira, the interaction between endogenous (or hereditary) factors and exogenous factors (related to the current situation) in the person takes place through conation, the basis of the character conferring volition.

g) Dimensions of the dynamic of the Personality

The dynamic notion of Personality, i.e., that referring to its developmental stages in the individual, is of particular interest, given its necessity for dealing with the concept of abnormal behaviour, as related to Personality.

There is currently no theory of Personality that distinguishes three Personality components, like Mira's theory, based on Temperament, Biography and Character. If only for the simple analogy of their structures, it recalls the Freudian model of *id*, *super-ego* and *ego*. Character, on being considered by Mira as a change the person undergoes as a result of interaction with one's environment, becomes the mechanism of individual development, making Mira's model a human developmental model of Personality, with validity for describing the person as a being in development. Consequently, we consider that none of the Personality theories provides a necessary and sufficient explanation of a developmental human being, as Mira's theory does.

For Mira, the concept of the dynamic of Personality is based on the notion of three positions vis-à-vis reality that entail abnormal behaviour; normal behaviour is defined as that resulting from the appropriate use of the three positions which in themselves generate lack of behavioural versatility, and in turn, scarce personal, individual autonomy. Possibly, each one of these positions is more characteristic of a particular age, but they also depend on each culture, so that they cannot be generalized. Furthermore, although there is isolated prevalence data, the positions cannot be attributed to one gender or the other, since, in addition to the interaction with cultural factors, an interaction with sexual biological factors must be taken into account

Mira calls these three positions a) subjective – autistic, b) mixed: subjective – objective, and c) objective – ingenuous. In the first of these we can observe (a) a tendency towards one's own internal world that would reflect high introversion, forming the basis of schizoid and obsessive-compulsive disorders and negativism. In the second (b) we find an alternating tendency between the internal and external worlds that would reflect high levels of Machiavellianism, resulting in paranoia, histrionism and antisocial behaviour. The third (c) involves a tendency towards the external world that would reflect an ingenuous objectivism (realism), generating high impulsiveness, the foundation of borderline, cycloid and epileptoid, and schizotypal personalities.

Given that Personality, from a static point of view, is made up, according to Mira, of three components: Temperament – what is inherited; Biography – what is acquired from a particular environment; and Character – the dynamic result of the interaction between temperament and situation, we consider that Mira takes *character* as the basis for his approach to the development of the Personality, character being defined here as conation, among the endogenous (needs) and exogenous (desires) elements that make up the person.

Thus, the subjective-autistic position would correspond to a predominance of endogenous elements to the detriment of exogenous elements, which would be manifested in both impression processes (subjectivism) and execution processes (autism).

Similarly, the objective–ingenuous position would reflect a predominance of exogenous elements over endogenous ones, manifested in objectivism in impression processes and ingenuousness in execution processes.

Finally, the mixed position involves subjective impression processes that alternate with objective impression processes, resulting in execution processes that can be alternately autistic or ingenuous. In this position, both endogenous elements and exogenous elements give content to perception. In this case there is no integration between temperament and the situation, as though the two ran parallel. Execution processes depend, then, on the predominant impression process.

h) Expressive behaviour versus adaptive behaviour

Personality as the result of a temperament, a biography (experience) and a character manifests itself as the expressive component that confers individuality on the adaptive component of behaviour. Allport (1958), in his foreword to the English edition of *Myokinetic Psychodiagnosis* (M.K.P.), points out the difficulty of separating the expressive aspects of movement from the adaptive aspects, and that Professor Mira's Myokinetic

Diagnosis method (Mira, 1951) is ingenious, in that it succeeds in completely avoiding this lack of discrimination, and providing us with information only on the expressive component of behaviour.

In the same work, Allport explains the scarce development of expressive methods in the USA, compared to the progress of projective methods, partly by a lack of theories guiding empirical research, partly by the risk of slipping into the quack-psychology fields of physiognomy and graphology, and partly by the difficulty of carrying out empirical studies in this area.

Allport (1963), on describing two different aspects of behaviour, argued that the expressive aspect of behaviour is the vehicle of emotional skills and the adaptive aspect is the vehicle of social skills. For this author, all human beings have both types in their behavioural repertoire.

We prefer to argue that in all individual behaviour it is possible to analyze its expressive component and its adaptive component, since, according to Allport himself, there are three different notions of expression, not all of which describe it as the manifestation of the person's nature in their behaviour.

Thus, we have the concept of expression in animals and humans, presented by Darwin, as a manifestation of their experience of emotions. This form of understanding expression leads to the observation of simply emotional behaviours, without adaptive content.

We also understand as expression the level of communication of information manifested through all behaviour, be it oral or written, based on dance or music, or of other kinds. In this case, expression consists in the intention we confer on others' behaviour.

Finally, we have the meaning of expression as a manifestation of the individual and idiosyncratic temperament of each person, which constitutes one more type of message, transmitted through all the person's behaviours.

The adaptive component of behaviour reflects all that has been learned, so that it may be common to different people. Adaptive behaviour is acquired through vicarious learning, is always a response to goals external to the person, and is perfected or damaged as a function of practice.

Although we might speak only of expressive behaviour on referring to the emotions, we cannot consider behaviour without taking into account that it contains both the expressive component and the adaptive component. The expressive component of behaviour is, as we have said, of both a communicative and a personal nature, so that it is more permanent or stable than the expression of an emotion. Therefore, we consider the expressive component of behaviour to be the basic element for the study of Personality, both normal and abnormal.

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