

Article :

Elements of a Critical Psychology

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The project of a critical psychology is the attempt to establish a substantive alternate approach based on a critique of the ideologically distorted consciousness and experience of people whose false consciousness is a precondition for their systematic domination by an exploitative social formation.

Although critical social theory is an established tradition, critical psychology, although adopting the goals and philosophy of the latter, does not yet exist as a substantive alternative psychological paradigm. For this reason my paper may be best described as a propadeutic to a thorough formulation of the field as well as a manifesto for any psychology concerned with exposing the strategies and structures of interpersonal domination.

Although critical psychology cannot be a cerebral activity divorced from the concrete everyday deployment of domination in our society, it needs a coherent theoretical framework to provide it with a sound philosophic

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foundation. A number of authors whose work is undoubtedly critical (Heather, 1976; Jacoby, 1975; Lasch, 1977, 1980) have not articulated a rigorous philosophical framework and their contributions thus tend to lack systematic development, methodological rigour and applied relevance. For this reason my paper is concerned with neglected foundational issues rather than a specifically focused critique of our own apartheid society.

THE ORIGINS OF A CRITICAL THEORY OF LATE CAPITALIST SOCIETY

Critical psychology derives from an influential school of neo-Marxist thought called critical theory. Despite the complexity and conceptual density of critical theory its objective is simple to understand: the self-reflective critique of the ideological constraints on the individual and collective self-formative process in the interest of conscious self-determination. As Schroyer (1973) notes:

"The critique of domination, or the reflective critique of socially unnecessary constraints on human freedom, is as old as the Western concept of reason In Plato's famous cave allegory the painful returning to the sun (i.e. beauty, truth) involved a recognition of the mystifications and domination of conventions (nomos) over man's potentialities With the socratic method Plato shows the basic concept of reason as a critique of conventional mystification which releases a changed praxis (action) in the individual's life." (p 15).

While the idea of critique is almost as old as the history of western philosophy, it was Karl Marx's materialist reformulation of Hegel's philosophy under the slogan "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is, to change it.", that inaugurated the specific

critique of capitalist society from which critical social theory derives. Critical theory is thus a form of western Hegelian Marxist critique, centred at first around the Institute of Social Research established in 1923, and later around the work of the German social philosopher, Jurgen Habermas. The institute, with a predominantly Jewish membership, was forced into exile with the Nazi ascendancy. What initiated its formation was the fact that although the objective conditions for revolution existed in post-world war I Europe, a transition from capitalism to communism never occurred. What was missing was the subjective moment, the social-psychological preconditions for revolutionary consciousness, and the Frankfurt School devoted its multidisciplinary energies to an analysis of the bourgeois subjectivity that prevented the transition to a more rational form of social organisation. But critical theory's critique of late capitalist society is matched by its explicit denunciation of those crude interpretations of Marx that dismiss subjectivity as a mere epiphenomenon of social forces, see individual actions as economically determined, and which harbour the polyanna belief that capitalism's contradictions will unfold according to some invariant law of social evolution until a new communist order of milk and honey arises from the ashes of the old bourgeois order. Critical theory furthermore, denounces the tyranny of soviet "socialism" as exemplifying the worst excesses of ideological dogma and rejects the soviet claim to have established a truly communist society. For critical theory dialectical materialism is no icon but rather an indispensable tool of social analysis. Orthodox Marxism suffers from conceptual sclerosis and has congealed into an ahistorical doctrine devoid of explanatory power. The critical imagination cannot afford to be, in Schroyer's words "locked into a sterile faith, guarding the fire of Marx's theory." Much of Marx's

work is obsolete and simply cannot explain the complexity of contemporary capitalist society. But critical theory is expressly neo-Marxist precisely because, just as psychoanalysis cuts through the mystifying veil of surface appearance to illuminate the resistant unconscious meaning beneath, so does Marxist analysis expose the self-deception of bourgeois ideology and illuminate the hidden resistant truth of domination at the heart of our cultural unconscious.

Having sketched a brief outline of the Frankfurt School's genesis, I turn to a description of critical theory's insights and concerns, and how these may be appropriated for the development of an allied critical psychology.

THE DEFINITION OF CRITICAL THEORY

A basic working definition is as follows; Critical theory is an inherently emancipatory discourse whose goal is attained by initiating a process of self-reflection in those subjects whose self-formative capacity is radically truncated by the constraints of ideological forms of consciousness. This compact definition is unpacked and clarified in the following premises.

- (1) Each individual has the apriori need for the development and actualisation of his/her potential for individuated functioning in harmony with other members of the community, and has in potentia, the rational capacity to adjudicate these needs and the means to their realisation.
- (2) Although every society has institutions of social control necessary to secure the stability of that social formation, many social formations embody domination, the enforced unequal distribution of resources and opportunities for individual and collective self-determination.

Domination serves certain hegemonic sectarian socio-economic interests at the expense of other individuals and groups. The traditional form of domination in capitalist societies has been the economic exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie. The South African situation is complicated by the marriage of racial and economic exploitation.

- (4) Ideology is not an external force that compels the individual irrespective of his/her will. Rather, ideology provides a preformed constellation of values and beliefs that literally inform, through the process of socialisation, the person's understanding of self and others. Thompson (1984) says that "to study ideology is primarily to investigate, not a particular type of discourse linked to a particular type of society but rather the ways in which meaning (signification) serves to sustain relations of domination." (p 35).
- (5) The hold of ideology over consciousness is never complete. The contradictions inherent in society leave an opening for development of dissenting consciousness and subversive action that may be furthered toward critical ends.
- (6) Since ideology serves to constrain the self-formative process of the persons so affected the goal of an emancipatory science would be the initiation of self-reflection in the ideologically constrained persons. Critically informed self-reflection results in subjects attaining insight into their once ideologically obscured circumstances of domination. Such insight serves to dissolve the quasi-causal hold of ideology on human agency, thus freeing individuals from rigidified patterns of thought and action and freeing them for new rationally considered socio-political praxis. Ideology critique thus ideally

results in a restoration of the interrupted individual and collective self-formative process.

CRITICAL PSYCHOLOGY IN RELATION TO EMPIRICAL-ANALYTIC AND HERMENEUTICAL PSYCHOLOGY

But surely this import laid on ideology critique is just a shift in emphasis that can be accommodated within the ambit of orthodox psychology? The answer is no because critical science is guided by a completely different anthropologically rooted knowledge - interest that demands an autonomous form of inquiry. The notion of cognitive interests is an attempt by the critical theorist Jurgen Habermas (1968) to radicalise epistemology by seeing different knowledge forms as corresponding to certain fundamental apriori interest categories. These interests are underlying modes through which reality is constituted, disclosed and acted upon, and which have their genesis in the socio-cultural evolution of the human species. These cognitive interests which structure our experience stem from the anthropological fact that any form of social organisation presupposes that the members of any society, possessed of an intersubjective understanding through the communicative medium of shared language, work to produce their means of subsistence within a political framework of institutionalised norms and power relations. The means of social organisation are thus language, work and power. Stemming from the necessity of social organisation are these corresponding knowledge constitutive (cognitive) interests (see Table on the following page).

It is within the anthropologically rooted interest fields of the above that our knowledge of the world is structured. It is these interests that determine the systematic knowledge organisation and goals of the corresponding

SOCIAL ORGANISATION, COGNITIVE INTEREST STRUCTURES
AND CORRESPONDING MODES OF SCIENTIFIC ENQUIRY

Preconditions for Social Organisation	WORK	LANGUAGE	POWER
	Instrumental reproduction of the material conditions of life	Communicative action aimed at shared meanings through the use of intersubjectively understood symbols	Institutionalised normative repression and regulation of human action in the interest of social stability.
Corresponding cognitive interests	TECHNICAL	PRACTICAL	EMANCIPATORY
	Purposive-rational manipulation and control of objectified processes in order to meet material needs	Intersubjective understanding through dialogue to facilitate open communication between members of a speech community	Desire for emancipation from domination (surplus repression) and conditions of systematically distorted communication (ideology)
Ensuing interest constituted knowledge forms	EMPIRICAL ANALYTIC SCIENCES	HISTORICAL- HERMENEUTIC SCIENCES	CRITICAL SOCIAL SCIENCES
	The production of nomological knowledge from controlled experimental observation thus permitting the deduction of empirical generalisations and technical control of material environment	The methodical interpretation or explication of the implicit meaning of human action in order to promote improved intersubjective understanding and communication	The systematic illumination and communication of ideologically obscured relations of domination to the repressed target subjects in order to promote critical self-reflection and liberation from systematically deformed communication

sciences: Empirical-analytic, Historical-Hermeneutic and Critical social sciences. Simply stated, a summary of table one is that by virtue of our shared humanity and need for social organisation we are all guided by an interest in controlling our environment, securing intersubjective understanding through spoken language and in liberating ourselves from unnecessary political constraints on our freedom to choose and act in accord with our best individual and communal interests.

We are now in a position to see why neither of the competing research paradigms in contemporary psychology can claim to encompass an emancipatory interest. The answer is simply that they are founded on specifically different cognitive interests. Orthodox empirical psychology, in its search for law-like generalisations is extending the technical interest beyond the domain of objectified processes to include within its explanatory scope the symbolic realm of human meaning. By seeking general laws of human behaviour and then deductively explaining individual phenomena as instances of those laws, human behaviour can ideally be predicted and controlled by manipulation of the antecedent causal conditions. In opposition to empirical-analytic psychology is the hermeneutic approach, championed most vigorously by existential-phenomenology. The hermeneutic approach, with its emphasis on intentionality, ideographic meaning and existential anthropology, rejects empirical-analytic procedure and approach in favour of the methodical exegesis of the lived meaning of subjective experience. In seeking to understand rather than explain human phenomena hermeneutic science is clearly guided by the practical interest in improved intersubjective comprehension and communication by explicitly articulating the implicit (pre-reflective) meaning of the subject's lived history. Empirical-analytic psychology cannot incorporate an emancipatory interest because it perceives itself as

having the same research-guiding interest as the natural sciences - technical control. The interest in the technical manipulation of causal contingencies is necessarily antithetic to the emancipatory interest in the liberation of persons from the seemingly "natural" laws or causal constraints on their freedom through a process of critical self-reflection. But the subsumption of human behaviour under the empirical-analytic umbrella is not unwitting, it is no epistemological accident or category mistake. Rather, it is the logical consequence of our prevailing technocratic ideology which seeks to manipulate and foster our unreflective capitulation to irrational social relations of repressive authority. The nature of this ideology will be discussed shortly.

At first it would appear that hermeneutic psychology can serve as an emancipatory science since it rejects the technocratic application of the natural scientific framework of prediction and control to the field of intentional human phenomena and, furthermore, embraces the anthropological tenet of historically contingent self-formative freedom. This is not the case, however, Hermeneutic psychology seeks to articulate the implicit subjective meanings within the verbal communications that have, as their horizon, an unspoken historical situatedness in tradition-bound normative structures. This is the well known "hermeneutic circle": A researcher's interpretative understanding of the meaning of a phenomenon is historically embedded within the linguistically-mediated traditional self-understanding of that culture, and is hence finite and context dependent. Because the researcher interprets from and within a pre-given set of values, presuppositions and symbols, s/he can do no more than explicate the implicit psychological meanings informed by that specific cultural tradition. But hermeneutic enquiry tends to ignore the fact that tradition embodies domination

and that linguistic meanings frequently obscure this domination. In positing subjective meaning as the ultimate court of interpretative appeal hermeneutic psychology does not see the ideological framing of subjective experience because this cannot be language by the subject. The explication of the intentional structures of subjective consciousness fails to reach the reality of distorted communication which simply cannot be appropriated by phenomenological procedure. Certain phenomenologists claim to explore the thematic latencies in their subjects' communications by focusing on the discrepancy or hiatus between what the subject says and what s/he means. But this attempt at engaging and disclosing latent meaning cannot go far enough because it is not informed by the critical social theory which locates the systematic self-misunderstanding of persons in the objective power structures of their social relations. Because phenomenology does not thematise power it cannot thematise domination; and because it cannot thematise domination it cannot speak of ideology and thus cannot be truly critical. It fails to consider the ideological framing of the individual experience it seeks to explicate, how this experience is shaped and truncated by social-psychological forces operating outside of immediate awareness. Its structure and function, determined as it is by the practical interest in elucidating shared meaning, does not address the focus of the emancipatory interest.

Critical psychology, however, is specifically informed by the emancipatory cognitive interest and is thereby distinguished from both the empirical-analytic and hermeneutic sciences. This is because in spite of the fact that we are all potentially self-determining volitional agents our own personalities, experience and behaviour frequently confront us in the reified form of alien, thing-like processes beyond our rational control. Such repetitive and rigidified patterns of experience and conduct prevent authentic

self-realisation and stand opposed to our conscious intentions as external causal forces. The empirical-analytic investigation of these causes is thus appropriate at this point. However, a precondition for the influence of quasi-causal forces on the lives of human agents is the subjects' lack of insight into the conditions that delivers volition as a slave to external compulsion. The causal constraints on self-determination do not take the form of the causes operant in nature, they can be dissolved by insight into their origin. For this reason they are best described as quasi-causes. These quasi-causal regularities represent "the partial replacement of manifest compulsion through open force by inner compulsion through the affective force of unconscious mechanisms" (McCarthy p 86). Critical psychology proceeds from the premise that once the insight attendant upon critical reflection is attained the precondition for ideology's effective operation is no longer present and its constraining hold on self-determination is broken. The nomothetic search for causal regularities thus anticipates the moment of critical self-reflection when hermeneutic understanding assumes primacy over causal explanation, the moment when insight transforms causes into meanings and compulsion into free choice. Only when ideologically congealed experience resists the attempts of hermeneutic understanding do we call upon causal explanation, and then only in anticipation of the moment when causal analysis becomes superfluous. Unlike nomothetic psychology which rejects meaning and phenomenological psychology which rejects causation, critical psychology exists as a mixed discourse that combines statements of force (causation) with statements of meaning. Moreover, it does so not out of an eclectic interest in smoothing over the differences between divergent orientations, but rather because the intermediate object domain of ideologically deformed "second nature" demands an approach that

refuses the disjunction between causal explanation and hermeneutic understanding.

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND CRITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Habermas considers psychoanalysis, purged of its "scientific self-misunderstanding", to be the exemplar of a critical science. Psychoanalysis, Habermas contends, "is relevant to us as the only tangible example of a science incorporating methodical self reflection" (Habermas p 214). It provides the prototypical structure for a self-reflective science and thus establishes guidelines for the development of critical social theory.

According to Habermas the neurotic discrepancy between the patient's self-understanding and his/her behaviour, present in and as the phenomenon of repression, necessitates the complementary utilisation of causal explanation and interpretative understanding. The explanatory reconstruction of the patient's life history (based on general developmental laws) initiates a process of self-reflection and the (re)appropriation of lost portions of that history. Insight results in the coincidence of the therapist's explanation and the patient's self-understanding, thus freeing the patient (after the long and painful process of working through) from the power of neurotic causality. This renders superfluous the causal explanatory procedure originally deployed in illuminating the darkness of the patient's neuroses. By means of the analytic procedure external causes are transformed into meaningful reasons.

While the isomorphic relationship often posited between individual psychoanalysis and ideology critique is very problematic, it is nonetheless useful in showing :

"... that this methodological pattern of dialectically mediating communicating understanding by causal explanation is, in fact, the model for a philosophical understanding of all those types of critical social science which have their relation to the practice of life, not in the realm of social engineering but in provoking public self-reflection and in emancipation of men as subjects." (Apel in Held, p 323).

Habermas' appropriation of Freudian psychoanalysis is primarily confined to the latter's methodological value insofar as psychoanalytic procedure, based on the promotion of self-insight, may be transposed from the psychotherapeutic context and extended to a sociotherapeutic critique of capitalist culture. But a second important tradition, more concerned with the substantive content of psychoanalysis than its methodological form, has a unique contribution to make to critical psychology. It is this psychoanalytic psychopathology of culture, initiated by the Frankfurt theorists and recently given new impetus by the incorporation of object relations psychoanalysis into culture critique, that provides a powerful conceptual framework for understanding the construction and destruction of subjectivity in late capitalist society. The focus of this second tradition is embodied in Adorno's statement: "The prebourgeois order does not yet know psychology, the oversocialized one knows it no longer." (1968, p 95). Capitalism, in other words, provided the socio-economic conditions for the emergence of the individual subject, a historically contingent form of personality organization dictated by capital's need for a population of relatively free producers and consumers whose activities and consciousness were no longer determined by the institutions and ideology of feudal authority. Psychology, the scientific study of the individual agent, was thus called into being by the capitalist mode of production. Ironically, the very system that produced the individual subject is the system that is now responsible for the erosion

and disintegration of the subjective freedom it itself created. To the extent that selfhood is being eroded by the increasing intervention of late capitalist bureaucratic administration in everyday life, the discipline of psychology, concerned as it is with the actions of the "autonomous" individual, becomes redundant as individual autonomy becomes an ideological fiction. Herbert Marcuse is perhaps the most important critical theorist to have investigated the ideological deformation of the individual personality within advanced capitalist society. Marcuse traces the historical decline of critical rationality and the dissolution of individuality that occurs when bourgeois man's capacity for self-consciousness and self-determination is negated. Marcuse calls this conformist, unreflective adaptation to existing forms of domination "one-dimensionality". One-dimensionality designates the emergence of a typical form of individual character structure that has lost the power of dissent, the capacity for self-critique and the imaginative ability to envision and actualize radical alternatives to existing oppressive social structures and forms of organization. The following table from Kellner (1984) contrasts the characteristics of authentic individuality with that of one-dimensional man :

<u>AUTHENTIC INDIVIDUALITY</u>	<u>ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN</u>
(1) Heteronomy/social domination of thought and behaviour (a) servitude to social control; (b) conformity, false needs and consciousness.	(1) Autonomy/individual capacity to think, choose and act: (a) freedom from domination; (b) freedom for self-determination, choice, dissent and refusal.
(2) Mimesis: mechanical reproduction of conformist behaviour.	(2) Creative self-activity : growth and development
(3) Unreflective and non-critical acceptance of prevailing needs, ideas and feelings; no sense of one's own needs and potentialities.	(3) Reflection and critical awareness of needs, assumptions and one's unique selfhood.
(4) Powerlessness/conditioned behaviour.	(4) Power and will: ability for creative action.

According to Marcuse the commodification of culture, the embourgeoisement of the proletariat, the identification of reason with technocratic control and the usurpation of parental authority by extra-familial socializing agencies are all contributing factors in the creation of one-dimensional culture. The face of the nuclear family is of particular concern to Marcuse and serves to illustrate his reliance on traditional psychoanalytic theory. Contra Reich and many feminist critics of the family, Marcuse contended that paternal authority and domination, the hallmark of the bourgeois family, was not only the source of psychic repression but also the origin of deeply meaningful identification with parental figures. This identification, attendant upon the satisfactory resolution of the oedipal conflict, typically provides a healthy, secure nucleus of autonomous selfhood and agency. Late capitalism, however, has undermined the role of the family as locus of primary socialization. This role is now performed by state schooling, the mass media and other impersonal welfare state agencies. The disturbing result is that the nascent ego structure of the child is manipulated and its growth arrested by anonymous external forces that undercut the foundations of ego identity and the capacity to resist the prevailing ideology which is no longer diluted by the mediation of a private and personalized family space. Through this and other parallel processes the dissenting individual has become transformed into a wooden puppet whose every motion, need and satisfaction is manipulated by that invisible master, advanced capitalism. The autonomous subject has congealed into a crippled reflex of a crippled social order. Jacoby (1975) has developed this position in a polemical critique of neo- and post-freudian psychology, showing that the humanistic repression of classical psychoanalysis and the obsession of the former with psychological adaptation, wholeness and self-actualization is

ironical testimony to the fragmentation and destruction of the unitary self posited and peddled by the humanists. This fact is disguised and buried beneath the humanistic "jargon of authenticity" which locates the problem not within the objective conditions of capitalist culture, but in deficient subjective value systems, inauthentic roles etc. Humanistic psychology obscures the psychic violence perpetrated on the besieged individual by an oppressive society. It does so by inadvertently veiling the contradiction between psychic health and capitalist culture and is thus thoroughly ideological. Freud, on the contrary, unflinchingly thematized and articulated this contradiction, albeit in ahistorical terms. It is thus to Freud's seemingly conservative theory, argues Jacoby, that we must turn for our most radical insights because:

"...regardless of their own politics, it has been Freud and his followers who, in their stubborn pursuit of the genesis and structure of the individual psyche, have testified to the power of society in and over the individual ... subjectivity is pursued till it issues into the social and historical events that preformed and deformed the subject." (p 79)

Jacoby says nothing that the Frankfurt theorists have not said before, but his incisive and polemical attempt to articulate radical psychology in Freudian categories and to make critical theory accessible to a psychological audience, is a valuable one indeed. But he neither deliniates nor explains the psychological processes whereby capitalist society comes to control psychological life. His uncritical embrace of the Frankfurt School's use of Freud, together with his unconditional rejection of attempts to revise certain conceptually inelegant psychoanalytic formulations, unfortunately makes his work rhetorically strong but conceptually weak.

A much more sophisticated and innovative attempt to explore capitalism's penetration of psychological life has been initiated by socialist historian,

Christopher Lasch (1977, 1980, 1984). While sharing Jacoby's concerns and convictions, Lasch recognizes the theoretical limitations of classical Freudo-Marxist analysis and skillfully employs the concepts of object relations psychoanalysis to overcome the lacunae of traditional Freudianism and illuminate the psychic mechanisms peculiar to the domination of advanced capitalism. Freud effectively identified neurosis as the most prominent psychological disorder at the turn of the century and successfully laid bare its dynamics in terms of the psychic repression issuing from the oedipal conflict endemic to the nuclear family. But, as Lasch cogently argues, the patterns of psychopathology accompanying advanced capitalism no longer conform to the symptoms of classical neurosis and its dynamic of sexual repression. Instead, he contends, contemporary society reproduces its cultural values and ways of organizing experience in a historically specific form of personality organization, the narcissistic personality:

"New social forms require new forms of personality, new modes of socialisation, new ways of organising experience. The concept of narcissism provides us ... with a way of understanding the psychological impact of recent social changes ... It provides us, in other words, with a tolerably accurate portrait of the "liberated" personality of our time, with his charm, his pseudoawareness of his own condition, his promiscuous pansexuality ... his hypochondria, his protective shallowness, his avoidance of dependence, his inability to mourn, his dread of old age and death." (1980, p 50).

Sub-clinical manifestations of the narcissistic personality equip the individual for life in a social environment where bureaucratic intelligence, interpersonal exploitation, technological rationality, anaesthetized affect, introspective self-absorption and consumerist ethics are functional prerequisites for psychic survival in a capitalist wasteland culture.

The narcissistic personality is not the product of oedipal repression but rather of a more primitive psychic defence mechanism called splitting, which precedes the formation of a stable ego structure or embryonic self. While splitting - the process whereby the infant's world is split into dualities of good and bad objects and experiences - is a normal developmental phenomenon of infancy, capitalist society fosters its pathological persistence into adulthood. The implications are enormous and disturbing : capitalist society undercuts the development of an integrated self and instead produces a fragmented psyche which, beneath the brittle facade of illusory autonomy, competence and self-importance, is nothing more than a fragmented aggregate of unmet infantile needs interlaced by untempered fantasies of aggressive destruction and paranoid persecution.

The precise causal connections between capitalist social structure and narcissistic character are too complex to be examined here. Suffice it to say that the increasing bureaucratic rationalization and control of both domestic and market relations, the usurpation of parental roles by capitalist schooling, mass media and the advertising industry, the cult of commodity consumption, exploitative interpersonal relations and a non-political psychotherapeutic sensibility are all contributing factors (unique to advanced capitalism) which will reproduce narcissistic personality traits in each new generation of infants.

Lasch's integration of object relations psychoanalysis into a critique of capitalist society is provocative and exciting. He has established new critical vectors for a psychopathology of culture and has demonstrated that psychoanalysis, in spite of its own conservative self-understanding and focus on experiential inner space, provides the raw material for a radical social critique:

"Psychoanalysis best clarifies the connection between society and the individual, culture and personality, precisely when it confines itself to careful examination of individuals. It tells us most about society when it is least determined to do so." (1970, p 34)

Richards et al (1984) have extended, developed and revised Lasch's seminal ideas and the scene is now set for the emergence of a new generation of critical theory, deeply - though dialectically - indebted to psychoanalysis. Lasch has disclosed the narcissistic mutilation of selfhood in bourgeois culture. The task of critical psychology is to uncover and subject such ideologically distorted character structures to a critique that not only initiates self-reflection but traces the personality deformation to its origin in those oppressive social relations whose irrationality demands the cloak of ideological concealment.

CRITICAL PSYCHOLOGY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY

An objection that readers may raise at this point is that I have failed to delineate between critical psychology and critical social theory, indeed, at times I appear to conflate the two and use them interchangeably. In spite of their shared concerns and conceptual crossfertilization critical social theory and psychology can never be conflated or harmoniously integrated into an encompassing super theory that could grasp the totality of human existence. As Adorno (1967) has said:

"This defines the relation that should obtain between the sciences. Their departmentalisation cannot be corrected by the ideal of the polymath equally at home in sociology and psychology. The cry for the integration of the disciplines is an expression of helplessness, not progress ... The only totality the student of society can presume to know is the antagonistic whole, and if he is to attain totality at all, then only in and through contradiction."

Critical psychology is based on the rejection of the polar extremes of psychologism (the reduction of cultural phenomena to psychological categories) and sociologism (social determinism). To the extent that sociology exclusively embraces the study of supra-individual forces while dismissing psychic structure and agency it becomes sterile and devoid of meaning. But, on the other hand, to the extent that psychology tries to explain social phenomena by appealing simply to individual subjectivity it succumbs to the ideology of subjectivism which obscures the penetration of the individual by the social order. Psychology, in the words of Adorno, "makes a first principle out of a mediated product, the bourgeois individual". There can be no simple causal relation posited between a social macrosphere and the ontogenetic personality formation of the latter's members. A critical psychology would thus have to trace the hierarchy of mediations between oppressive social structures and disturbed subjective meanings without lapsing into reductionism or a functionalist social determinism. The task of critical psychology is to "trace the conduct of the soul in fetters", guided by the telos of emancipatory self-reflection. But unlike individual psychotherapy which typically locates the source of psychopathology in the individual's disturbed life history, critical psychology locates the source of the problem in the history of the society and the solution in public self-reflection and enlightened socio-political praxis. This has important ramifications for psychology's object domain and self-understanding. A psychologist's services are typically employed when there is individual deviation from established social norms of communication and action. But when the pathology is located, not primarily in the individual's deviation, but in the very ideologically framed norms that define the individual's transgression, the firm boundaries that prescribe the

domain of psychology's theory and practice become fluid and uncertain. Critical psychology's refusal to endorse orthodox psychology's ideological dichotomy between the individual and the social situates it in a dialectical relation to and between psychology and sociology, preserving rather than negating the inherent tension. But the critical psychologist is a socio-therapist before a psychotherapist precisely because a psychology which serves as an ideology critique cannot make the product of the mediated individual the first or even, for that matter, the last principle.

Needless to say, the hoary positivist concern with value-neutrality is not an issue here. Critical psychology cannot be value-neutral for it is necessarily guided by the eschatology of discourse free of interpersonal constraint or systematically distorted communication. Critical psychology anticipates the just life and the critical moment is precisely the tension between the present fact of domination and the future possibility of liberation. Value-freedom cannot be a consideration when freedom is our ultimate value. Critical psychology is a partisan of reason against dogma and dissemblance but this fact does certainly not commit it to a particular course of political action further than the promotion of enlightenment. Although critical psychology condemns the psychic mutilation of the individual by the capitalist system it cannot embrace a blueprint for the revolutionary transformation of society based on another ideology. The critical psychologist is not a revolutionary, his/her task is to free the individual for new possibilities of thought and political action - not to dictate what form that action should take. Critical psychology is partisan because truth cannot be tolerant, but nor can it be allowed to congeal into dogma of any sort.

CRITICAL PSYCHOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

My final and perhaps most important point concerns the development of a critical psychology that will address itself to the specific historical circumstances of our own oppressive society. Whereas in more advanced industrial societies domination is primarily exercised through the technocratic ideology that posits technical control and cybernetic self-regulation as the highest goal, the South African situation is very different. Domination here is not subtly exercised through the pseudo-legitimacy of technocratic rationality, but primarily through the brute force of military and police action, banning, detention and racist legislation. The oppressed, moreover, do not have to be educated in the fact of their own repression, as is patently obvious by the events that initiated the declaration of a state of emergency. The concerns of first world critical theory are thus far removed from the immediate concerns of our own historical juncture. Different circumstances demand different strategies and a critical South African psychology requires an indigenous structure and content. The inception of such a psychology is obviously an urgent project and we as South African psychologists cannot decline the challenge.

CONCLUSION

This paper has been more suggestive than explanatory and has not articulated specific areas of research and application. Its objective, rather, was to introduce elements of a theory of a critical psychology and broadly outline the role it has to play in contemporary society. The contours of critical psychology are not as yet clearly defined and a lot of foundational work needs to be done. But if critical psychology is to achieve its

emancipatory objective it needs to penetrate those areas of society where ideology is a necessary precondition for the exercise of domination. Schools, industry, the mass media and the family - in fact any institution where interpersonal exploitation occurs behind a facade of legitimacy - is a target area for the research and communication of critical psychology.

"What is to be done? We who are still half alive, living in the often fibrillating heartland of a senescent capitalism - can we do more than reflect the decay around and within us? Can we do more than sing our sad and bitter songs of illusion and defeat?" (Laing, 1967)

"What we need to know is how it is possible for free beings to create their own slavery ... for only then can they create their own liberation." (Howard, D., 1977).

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TRANSFORMATION

CRITICAL ANALYSES OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN SOCIETY

Transformation is a new South African journal intended to serve as a forum for analysis and debate about this society and the surrounding region. Change seems to be definitely on the South African agenda. "Reform" is the catch-phrase of the day. Its material content will have major political and economic implications for our lives. Whether it will be fundamental, and how far-reaching it will be, is the concern of all those involved in this country.

Attention is intensely focused on the daily rush of events as the balance of forces and the nature of consciousness shifts. However, without clear analyses of objectives and forces impeding or facilitating advances, such struggle is in danger of becoming "all movement and no direction". There is, therefore, a fundamental need to situate these day to day movements and the emerging broader patterns into a current and historical framework for analysis and criticism.

We are aiming to provide a suitable outlet for such thinking. We hope thereby to seize this opportunity to sharpen our understanding of the forces that continue to shape this society and to understand the potential for its transformation.

TRANSFORMATION intends particularly to consider, both historically and currently, the class nature of South African society; political, cultural and ideological domination in all its ramifications; the constitution of the state and its potential for reform; the process of capital accumulation and the economic consequences of crisis; and the political options available to the different classes.

Whilst the journal will cater for work at any level of abstraction or detail, a number of criteria will guide the editors in selection of material for inclusion. Articles should aim for academic rigour but also clarify the political implications of the issues discussed. We are concerned not to compete with other South African journals that may cover related ground but in different ways; this will also govern our selection principles.

TRANSFORMATION will consist of articles, debates and reviews. Subscriptions are for a minimum of four issues. The first issue will be available in April/May. It will include contributions on "The national question in South Africa" by Neville Alexander; "Freedom Charter, internal colonialism and national democracy" by Pete Hudson; "Black personnel managers and the new middle class" by Blade Nzimande; and "slogans and debates in South Africa's political tradition" by Bill Freund.

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