

## EDITORIAL

**Psychoanalysis.** Over two years ago now (May 1988) in *Psychology in society* - 10 we announced our intention to devote a whole issue to psychoanalysis, psychodynamic theory and its relation to social theory and practice in South Africa. There has been much interest in our "psychoanalytic issue" over this period, although this interest has not as easily translated into print. Maybe some of the reserve in writing about psychoanalysis stems from an inherent difficulty of sustaining a psychoanalytic culture in this country. With the urgency of political and social struggles forever breathing down our necks, and now with the possibility and promise of a new South Africa before us the concerns of psychoanalysis might seem a little remote if not downright inappropriate. *Psychology in society* has assiduously attempted to present ideas and problems in our society in such a way that the political and the reflective moments have been dialectically embraced. Even more so now, we need to think very hard about our actions, practices and ideas. Psychoanalysis is a complex set of ideas about human experience which also needs to be thought about in its application in South Africa. It is not necessary to justify a concern with people's everyday experience in a society where the capacity of the majority to get on with their lives has been so systematically undermined. We hope that this issue of PINS stimulates some discussion and debate about the possibility of psychoanalysis and psychodynamic theory in making sense of the psychological and emotional side of people's social and political struggles.

Susan van Zyl makes a case for psychoanalysis in understanding certain dimensions of human experience in this country at the moment in her challenge to psychologists and other mental health workers in her insistence, following Freud, that a political role for psychology is based on its ability to distinguish between psychopathology and abnormality. In her article she argues for the superiority of Freudian theory, contra psychology, to think through this essential distinction. Her argument is provocative in its challenge to the many "psychology positions" which see a need for themselves to be politically "relevant", and also in her analysis of psychic development and conflict in South African society. While Susan

van Zyl pitches much of her analysis at a general societal level, Johan van Wyk and Paul Voice take a more specific focus in their article on Afrikaner history. They ask us to think about Afrikaner nationalism from quite a different perspective, namely, a Freudian one. While earlier variants of social psychology have adopted "psychoanalytic interpretations" of social groups, van Wyk and Voice's approach is novel in that it uses Freud's text as a much more radical way to interpret the discourse(s) that constitute Afrikaner identity. By suggesting psychoanalysis as complementary in the explanation of Afrikaner nationalism they present us with the possibility of a non-reductive "political role" for psychoanalysis. It could be said that both Susan van Zyl, and Johan van Wyk and Paul Voice are operating within a certain "strict" Freudian context. They read Freud very closely as text and from this perspective venture forth with their diverse interpretations of social phenomena. In a related way Grahame Hayes' article on Lacan continues this reliance on a close and textual reading of (classical) psychoanalysis. However, Hayes warns against the "application" of psychoanalysis as social theory and finds much lacking in South African attempts that use psychoanalysis, and especially Lacanism, as the unproblematic adjunct in resolving the social/individual dialectic. Hayes' article also provides a critical introduction to the psychoanalytic work of Jacques Lacan.

While the psychoanalytic pieces in this issue tend to focus on theoretical and social analysis of a fairly general kind the article by Ilana Korber concentrates our attention on the all important practical question of a future mental health system. With the possibility of a transformation to a democratic and non-racial social order in this country looming large at the moment it is of central concern that we address matters of policy and practice. *Psychology in society* has for many years published work that has dealt with the issue of mental health practice and indigenous healers - see for example articles in recent issues by Freeman; Kottler; Shefer; and Vogelmann. Korber's article in this issue continues these debates and poses some new and challenging questions for people working in the mental health field. Her article is simultaneously an extensive review of the literature on indigenous healers, and a case for a structured and non-discriminatory relationship with indigenous healers in a future mental health system.

Korber's article is in keeping with the sentiments expressed in the Documents from the Maputo Conference on Health held in Mozambique, 9-16 April 1990. These documents endorse a commitment of progressive



health and welfare organisations in South Africa, together with the African National Congress, to incorporate indigenous healers in a future health system. While the two documents published here do not deal specifically with mental health and/or psychological issues in the transition from apartheid to democracy and non-racialism in South Africa they do offer a context and a political starting point for debate about psychological practices and social services in this period. **Psychology in society** is happy to publish these two documents from the Maputo Conference on Health to ensure that these important declarations from the health and welfare sector get as much exposure as possible.

This issue ends with reviews of four quite diverse and interesting books. With the exception of **Anti-racist science teaching** reviewed by Jean Pease all the other texts extend some of the arguments presented in the articles in this issue. Richards' text **Images of Freud**, reviewed by Gavin Ivey, raises similar questions about the radicality of psychoanalysis that are posed in Susan van Zyl's article. Gerhard Mare's review of **Afrikaner dissidents** is a useful complement to the article by van Wyk and Voice. And finally Fareed Abdullah's critical review of the Chirimuuta's text on AIDS gives a certain salience to the Maputo **Statement on HIV and AIDS**.

Grahame Hayes