

## EDITORIAL

The theme of this number of **PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIETY (PINS)** could be said to be related to an investigation of the psychology of the subaltern, and more especially in the southern African context, the racialised other. In many ways the oppressed have never had it so bad. The so-called revolutions of the late 1980s have wreaked more havoc than brought any significant material benefits. As certain hegemonic projects that contained the false unity in nation states have collapsed, the effects have not been the flowering of democratic freedoms and a disciplined and respectful politics of difference. Instead we have witnessed some of the most savage onslaughts against ordinary people in their different struggles for freedom and dignity; from Sarajevo to Boipatong; from Los Angeles to Mogadishu; from Huambo to Baghdad. And yet the politics of the time seems to be a kind of transpolitics, to borrow a term of Baudrillard's, a politics of global and international forces that leaves very little space and hope for the actions of ordinary citizens.

It is in this international context that Robert Young's psychoanalytic investigation of racism opens this edition of **PINS**. Always alert to the "big picture", or the social context in which psychoanalytic ideas take hold, Young takes us through the 500 years of devastation wrought on indigenous peoples in the name of European civilisation. There is not much optimism in Young's historical account of racism, but at least he is right to point to the enormity of the problem. The undermining of racism in South Africa is going to require sustained efforts from all spheres of the society if we are to reconstruct a social order based on non-racial principles and practices. The point that Young makes is that racism is all the more entrenched because it is so normal, so much part of our history and everyday experiences. Talking about the white racists of the American south with whom he grew up he says, "These people, like racists everywhere, acquired their horrid social attitudes by a process of tacit social learning, whereby their infantile psychotic anxieties, feelings all babies have, got channelled into particular channels. I do not think that those rednecks working at the Ford factory [where Young worked temporarily] were mad or psychopathic, any more than I think my racist father and (rather more genteel) racist mother and sister were evil. As

Hannah Arendt has shown us in the case of Adolf Eichmann, it is more banal than that (Arendt, 1963). They were just socialised into the values of that part of the world - just as I was. Otherwise, how could so many young Irishmen, Serbians, Croatians, Kurds, Turks, Germans, Japanese, Russians, Afghans, Conquistadors kill and maim all those men, women and babies? What is horrible about racism is that it is normal in the cultures where it is sedimented".

The important task is to analyse the particular sedimented histories of racism, as a beginning in the process of social reconstruction which is so much the topic of debate and rhetoric in this country. Psychology, and the other social and human studies in South Africa have been dangerously silent on the question of the racist nature of the society, and its impact on the social and inner lives of people. **PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIETY (PINS)** would like to encourage contributions on the psychology, social psychology, and psychoanalysis of racism in the form of research articles, theoretical reviews, debates, short notes, and so on. We can no longer justify the relative silence of the social sciences on one of the major problems of our time: racism and ethnicity.

In the articles by Reeler, and Petersen and Ramsay, we continue our interest in the social articulation of applied psychology. Tony Reeler's article on primary mental health care in southern Africa challenges many of the received wisdoms of radical psychology about the "social causation" of psychopathology. In a detailed review of the African and southern African literature, Reeler questions many of the simplistic arguments about the relationship between the material conditions of poverty and their impact on the incidence and prevalence of mental health problems. Referring to his own empirical work, as well as that of other southern African researchers, he calls for more sensitively constructed research to elicit the complex set of processes involved in the determination and identification of psychopathology.

Inge Petersen and Sheila Ramsay present a fascinating assessment of a community mental project in a shack settlement in Bhambayi (30 kilometres from Durban). It is heartening to see the candour with which Petersen and Ramsay evaluate the enormous difficulties encountered by the project as it tried to offer essential mental health services to a very deprived community. Their analysis cautions us, in a similar way that Reeler does, about a naive conception of community dynamics in our haste to intervene with much needed services. Petersen and Ramsay argue forcefully for mental health projects to be integrally linked to communities' development needs and requirements. Unless mental health is seen in this way, especially in very



deprived communities, the chances of mental health projects succeeding are very remote. The implications that they draw from the lessons of the Bhambayi project are that mental health and development issues, especially in poor and working class areas, are inextricably linked and that for mental health issues to be taken seriously they need to be seen as development issues. While Petersen and Ramsay report on a specific project, and Reeler assesses the research on the social basis of psychopathology, the two articles potentially raise very similar questions and issues about working with the poor, and mental health workers interested in the social plight of deprived communities would do well to study the analyses generated by these authors.

The final article in this number of **PINS** is a brief research report, by Arvin Bhana and Yogan Pillay, on their work with union organisers. In consultation with the union they decided to investigate the stress experienced by organisers in the hope of improving their (the organisers') working conditions. It is not often that working conditions in progressive organisations are investigated. It is as though the commitment to the struggle or the cause is meant to "overcome" the tedium and stress of these jobs; or that it is unprogressive to complain about working conditions in these organisations; or that by definition, democratic organisations would not have stress as part of their working context. However, Bhana and Pillay, using an interpretative methodology, are able to penetrate some of the stresses and problems experienced by union organisers. It has been long time since **PINS** published an article dealing with industrial issues, and we hope that Bhana and Pillay's article encourages further work on the social psychology and the social science of work.

We end this number of **PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIETY** with a range of interesting book reviews. As local publishing in psychology and related areas has recently taken off we can increasingly review books with a South African connection. Four of the six books reviewed here are about South Africa.

**A note to PINS readers.** We are often asked about the accreditation status of **PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIETY**. This is obviously mainly a concern for academics interested in **PINS** who get "rewarded" for publishing in SAPSE-accredited journals, and seemingly, at many universities, "punished" for not doing so. There are many things in life that we get used to for pragmatic and political reasons, heaven forbid that we become accustomed to scholarship being equated with the State's SAPSE (South African Post-Secondary Education) system. Currently **PINS** is not recognised by SAPSE, and according to the Department of Education and Culture's latest communication to universities on the evaluation of research journals, dated 8 March 1993,

**PINS** was not included in the accredited list of journals because it is "not a research journal. Articles are mostly for the practitioner eg case studies, general review on a specific field of knowledge, etc". Furthermore, the Department in its covering letter to the university, not to the journals, states that the "purpose of making known the list, is not to instigate a debate. Please accept the decisions of the reviewers. The rationale of the announcement is actually to provide those interested, with feedback so that in future, where possible, they may act using the given insight as a guide-line". Well it is more than an insight to the editors that **PINS** is a practitioners' journal, in fact it comes as somewhat of a surprise. We would welcome the Department of Education and Culture's reviewers sharing with us who these practitioners might be. So the **South African Medical Journal** better watch out, seeing as its *raison d'être* is to operate as a vehicle of communication for medical practitioners. SAPSE accreditation is not a **PINS** matter. The editors may not put the journal forward, but rather the process is dependent on academic institutions motivating for certain journals' inclusion in, and I presume exclusion from, the SAPSE list. Finally **PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIETY** has always been a referred journal, and will continue to provide a forum for critical debate and rigorous scholarship, regardless of the intellectual tailormaking of the SAPSE system.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS AND SUBSCRIBERS.** In the last number of the journal, **PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIETY 16** (1992), we appealed to readers to become **DONOR SUBSCRIBERS**. With the continual rise in printing and postage costs, independent journals are particularly hard-hit to keep the price of their copy down. Consequently our rates have changed from this issue, **PINS 17**. We encourage our readers to subscribe, and appeal to our current subscribers to become **DONOR SUBSCRIBERS** by contributing as much as they would like to afford beyond the regular subscription rates so as to support the continued publication of what we consider to be an important contribution to psychology and related discussions.

**SPECIAL OFFER.** Back copies of **PINS 10 - 16** will be available at R5.00 each until the end of December 1993. Those interested should send their cheque or postal order for the appropriate amount, indicating clearly which back copies are required, to the **PINS** editorial address.

Grahame Hayes