

EDITORIAL

The African renaissance is upon us, and whether one reads it as ideas or attempts at economic revival, one cannot escape the reality which has been created within its purview. There are many responses to the idea of an African renaissance being put forward by the ANC government, and especially as espoused by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki. The responses vary from uncritical championing of everything African, with too little debate about what the notion of "African" might designate, to suggestions that the African renaissance is merely a thinly disguised affirmative action programme. In some quarters the African renaissance is viewed as synonymous with Afrocentrism, and implicitly, if not explicitly, an attack on everything Eurocentric. On the other hand, it is seen by some as an attempt to encourage and entrench democratic governments on the continent that will at last try to alleviate the economic hardships suffered by millions of their citizens. In short, the idea of the African renaissance can either be seen in reactionary terms as racist, or as an invitation to participate in the debate and creation of a non-racial, democratic society.

It is not surprising, given South Africa's brutal history of racism and social division, that the contrasting views of the African renaissance are already hardened! Whether intended or not, the African renaissance idea, holds much promise in the instability of what it connotes: "African", at least geographically pertaining to Africa; and "renaissance", at least historically associated with Europe. Grasping the social contradictions that make-up late 20th century *capitalist* South Africa, rather than trying to gloss over profound historical and structural difficulties facing the new society, might take us further in building a truly *African* society, *anew*. It seems that any optimism associated with the African renaissance "project" will be proportional to the extent that the notion is not foreclosed, not already ossified in its definitional referents, but open to serious, playful, and diverse attempts at interpretation.

The current political and economic realities of the DRC and Mozambique for example, to mention just two African countries, suggest that the African renaissance will be measured in terms of its ability to solve real, concrete problems facing many countries on this continent. This is not to undervalue the role of ideas. After all politics is the struggle over people's hearts and *minds*, and as every politician well knows, "knowledge is power". This partly explains why the access to and control over the knowledge production process is so fraught and contested. Some of these issues about knowledge, power, control, and justice were raised in **PINS 22** (1997) by Shefer *et al* in their challenge to authorship and authority in South African psychology. While not a direct response to their article, Andy Dawes, in this issue of **PINS**, critically engages the issue of the "Africanisation of psychology" in both its political and epistemological dimensions. Dawes refuses the easier option of attributing blame to the power-knowledge nexus of Eurocentric psychological thought, and instead discusses the *historicity* of psychological theories together with the complexity of their application in practice in local conditions. These are complex issues, and Dawes's article raises more

questions than providing seemingly clear answers or solutions. The debate about "psychology in Africa" is just beginning and **PINS** would like to encourage contributions on this topical and important issue. It is worth reminding ourselves that the discussions about psychology in Africa, or psychology in the African renaissance, isn't only about "Africanisation", however understood, but should also take into account the relatively neglected axes of *gender*, and *class*. It is not just that Eurocentric ideas have been problematic in their African settings, but that bourgeois (psychological) theories have always struggled to offer much to working class communities (even in Europe and America).

The politics of knowledge was also clearly evident at the *Change: Psychoanalytic perspectives* conference in Cape Town in April this year. Gavin Ivey in his report on this conference makes mention of the tension between those concerned with the "imposition" of psychoanalytic culture in the South African context, and those who see little problem with either the appropriateness or adaptability of psychoanalysis to local conditions. On the surface psychoanalysis might appear even more Eurocentric and esoteric in its concerns than even psychology, and with seemingly little to offer in local settings. This would be an overly hasty assessment as we only have to think about the radical ends to which psychoanalytic ideas were put by Frantz Fanon in the 1950s. The question is not whether psychoanalysis, or any other European, Anglo-American or non-African theory, is able to be applied in local contexts, but rather what theoretical tools - local and foreign - we need to develop adequate analyses of our own social and psychological circumstances and problems?

On a more empirical note, this issue of **PINS** publishes two papers that deal with some of the experiential dimensions of living in South Africa. In the first, Pravani Naidoo utilises discourse analysis to elucidate the everyday lived-experience of divorced mothers as single-parents. She analyses these mothers' experiences through the tensions and contradictions evident in the competing themes of demands versus responsibility, self-nurturance versus self-actualisation, and the legitimisation of single-parent status. Naidoo's qualitative study can also be read as a social psychological study of the microcosm of many of South Africa's social ills: single-parenthood; *women* as single-parents; gender and family life; gender, family life and culture, where culture can mean religion (eg Hinduism), and / or ethnicity (the five Indian women of this study); and not to forget women and interpersonal violence. It is in the second "empirical" article, by Andrew Favell, that the issue of violence against women or intimates is raised. Favell's article is empirical to the extent that he discusses the *politics* of violence in the context of clinical, or rather, therapeutic work. Favell avoids the reductionism of suggesting that violence is either social or individual, and instead he "privileges the conception of violence as a *political* process that organises, shapes and arranges both intimate as well as social relationships" (emphases added). This is an important shift as it locates agency and responsibility for violence against intimates, in short, for *being violent*.

Trevor Lubbe, in his debate with Amanda Kottler (**PINS** 22, 1997), raises two issues about psychotherapy trainings and their discrimination against homosexuals. Firstly, is the problem purported to lie with certain psychoanalytic perspectives, or common to *all* psychotherapy courses where selection criteria are used? And secondly, how should gender and sexuality be implicated in the selection process, if at all? **PINS** would like to encourage further responses in this debate and especially on the question of sexuality,

sexual orientation, and gender in the selection and training of candidates in psychotherapy programmes.

The 1997 edited collection, **Culture, power and difference: Discourse analysis in South Africa**, is critically reviewed by Peter du Preez, who amongst other things accuses discourse analysis of a lack of originality in its account of "truth" and difference. Du Preez also suggests that discourse analysis compromises the possibility of objectivity in research practices. He is challenged by two (of the four) editors - Amanda Kottler, and Ian Parker - in separate responses, where they in turn accuse him of misunderstanding the basic project of discourse analysis, and especially the importance of its critique of empiricism in psychology.

PINS 23 also includes a range of other interesting book reviews by Arvin Bhana, Jill Bradbury, Peter Henzi, Carey-Ann Jackson, David Spurrett & Duncan Lahner, Martin Terre Blanche, and Colin Tredoux.

We conclude this issue of **PINS** with an *Index* from **PINS 1** (1983) to **PINS 22** (1997). **PINS** will now regularly publish an index in an updated (from **PINS 22**) and cumulative form.

The previously advertised special issue on *HIV / AIDS* is now being collated and will be available as **PINS 24** (1998), and posted to subscribers in January 1999.

Another special issue of **PINS** is planned for the end of 1999, and that is on the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. The deadline for submissions is **30 June 1999**, and the editor of this issue is Lindy Wilbraham, Department of Psychology, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 6140. See advert in this issue for more complete details.

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