Psychology and the Status Quo

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Abstract: There is little doubt that psychology has left its imprint on 20th century society. There should also be little doubt that socioeconomic, cultural, and political trends have shaped the methods and content of the discipline to a large extent. However, an alleged immunity to ideological influences within the profession has obstructed an in-depth examination of the interaction between social forces and psychology. The penetration of the prevalent ideology in the realm of psychological knowledge often results not only in an uncritical acceptance of the status quo but also in an active endorsement of it. Desiderata for a psychology at the service of social change are considered.

Is psychology promoting human welfare, as suggested by both the American (American Psychological Association [APA], 1981) and Canadian (Canadian Psychological Association, 1986) codes of ethics for psychologists, or is it perhaps hindering the betterment of social conditions by guarding the interests of the status quo? Despite a recent marked increase in the volume of literature dealing with the intrusion of sociopolitical factors into psychology, these questions remain largely unaddressed (Albee, 1986; Billig, 1979, 1982; Braginsky, 1985; Braginsky & Braginsky, 1974; Buss, 1975, Butcher, 1983; Chorover, 1985; Deese, 1985; Fox, 1985; Gergen, 1973, 1985; Guareschi, 1982; Halleck, 1971; Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984; Howard, 1985; Ibanez Gracia, 1983; Ingleby, 1972, 1974, 1981; Jacoby, 1975; Jones, 1986; Larsen, 1986; Nahem, 1981; Roffe, 1986; Samelson, 1986; Sampson, 1977, 1978, 1981, 1983; Sarason, 1981a, 1981b; Sullivan, 1984). In view of the importance attributed to psychology's position in a wide variety of social and human affairs, an inquiry into its ideological functions is warranted (Kipnis, 1987; Koch & Leary, 1985; Sarason, 1986).

Psychology in Modern Society

Psychology and society are involved in a network of mutual influences that contribute to shape each other. Society predisposes science to adopt a specific set of *epistemic* (i.e., "values employed by scientists to choose among competing theoretical explanations" [Howard, 1985, p. 257]) and *nonepistemic* values (i.e., sociocultural and political beliefs) congruent with its predominant ideology (e.g., Wilson, 1977). This process is conducted through direct institutional regulations and in a more indirect fashion through the dicta of the dominant *weltanschauung* (Sarason, 1981a, 1984). Within the realm of psychology, prevalent moral and cultural beliefs are reflected both at the theoretical and applied levels (Gergen, 1973; Howard,

1985; Robinson, 1985; Sampson, 1977, 1978, 1981, 1983). Spence (1985) has given official recognition to this postulate in her presidential address to the American Psychological Association in 1985:

Contemporary analysts recognize that, whatever their intentions, scientists are the products of their society and time, and their construction of social reality is shaped by the world view and values of the culture in which they were reared. These belief systems can influence all phases of the research in which scientists engage, from choice of problem to interpretation of results (p. 1285).

Sarason, who dealt extensively in his *Psychology Misdirected* (1981a) with the socialization of psychologists, contended that psychologists are, by and large, successfully conditioned not to deviate from the intellectual order prescribed by the contemporary ideological atmosphere. Furthermore, he demonstrated how theoretical innovations in the field were frequently promoted by the recent establishment of new social policies. In Sarason's opinion (1981a), not only do psychologists rarely challenge the existing social beliefs, but they also actively endorse and facilitate the reproduction of those beliefs.

Although psychology can be conceptualized as a rather minor subsystem within the larger social system, it will be argued that its ability to influence the latter is not inconsequential. Psychology is intermingled in social life in countless forms.

Our services and advice are now sought and accepted in practically all fields of human activity. Newspapers describe the activities and opinions of psychologists on marriage, love, child rearing, and other aspects of day-to-day life. In the fields of marketing, personnel, training, selection, and more, executives rely on the advice and opinions of consulting psychologists. To state it bluntly, psychologists have considerable power to influence the opinions and behavior of the public. (Kipnis, 1987, p. 30)

In the words of Koch (1980), "throughout this century (and before), psychology *has* been under gracious dissemination—whether in school, bar, office, or bedroom; whether by book, magazine, electronic propagation, or word of mouth—to a voracious consumership" (p. 33).

Haverman (1957) has studied the influence of psychology on our lives and has arrived at the conclusion that the present era ought to be declared the "age of psychology." Koch and Leary (1985) have also defined the present times as "the psychological century" (p. 33).

It would seem reasonable to conclude that the dissemination of psychological knowledge and expertise makes a difference in people's ideas about themselves and

about society. Theoretically, psychology can influence society in two opposite directions: (a) It can reaffirm or reinforce existing policies and consequently ratify the status quo, or (b) it can criticize the social order and thus foster changes. Practically, the former significantly outweighs the latter.

Ideology and Psychology

Ideology can be conceptualized as the weltanschauung and social beliefs of a community, developed with the purpose of justifying and promoting their economic and sociopolitical interests (e.g., Mannheim, 1936; A. Ryan, 1970; Sampson, 1983; Therborn, 1980; Wilson, 1977). Every ruling group of an organized community requires the existence of cultural mechanisms designed to ensure, or at least facilitate, the perpetuation of its position. A variety of strategies are employed by these groups to persuade the public that the present social arrangement is not only the most desirable but also the only possible civilized one. It should not surprise us to learn that the repertoire of stratagems these groups use to secure their position of privilege does not exclude deception and disguise as valuable resources. These mechanisms, "used by those in power to conceal their real interests and advantages" (Sampson, 1981, p. 731), are usually referred to as ideological. These ideological messages "so deeply penetrate the consciousness of a culture that people unquestioningly accept their premises without further thought" (Sampson, 1983, pp. 128–129). The ideology of modern society regards psychological science as one of its more precious instruments (e.g., Sampson, 1983; Woolfolk & Richardson, 1984). Two main reasons account for ideology's appreciation of psychology. Whereas the first resides within the very *structure* of psychology, the second is of a more subtle and *circumstantial* nature. At the structural level, a pervasive dichotomy between the individual and society is observed in psychology (e.g., Ingleby, 1972, 1981; Sarason, 1981a, 1981b; Wexler, 1983). The immediate ideological benefit derived from such a dichotomy is that the individual is studied as an asocial and ahistorical being whose life vicissitudes are artificially disconnected from the wider sociopolitical context. Consequently, solutions for human predicaments are to be found, almost exclusively, within the self, leaving the social order conveniently unaffected (Albee, 1981; Fox, 1985; W. Ryan, 1971). In this context, Bevan argued in his 1982 presidential address to the American Psychological Association that

One of the most powerful intellectual tides of this century is a general propensity, by psychologist and nonpsychologist alike, to think of all human issues in psychological terms. It is a temptation that often leads to *oversimplification* [italics added], but it is a temptation that is hard to resist. (1982, pp. 1305–1306)

Psychology's circumstantial support to the reigning ideology can be identified in concrete governmental policies and in the advancement of heralded cultural beliefs. Activities carried out in the name of psychological science have been used to rationalize social policies whose purposes were not always "to promote human welfare." The testing movement (Kamin, 1974; Sarason, 1981a; Sedgwick, 1974) and social Darwinism (Albee, 1986; W. Ryan, 1971; Shields, 1975; Thielman, 1985) are salient examples of psychology at the service of political thought. Psychology's promulgation of prevalent values such as individualism (e.g., Sampson, 1977; Spence, 1985), male supremacy (Nahem, 1981; Shields, 1975), political conformity (Jacoby, 1975), and the ability of technology to solve human predicaments (e.g., Skinner, 1972; Woolfolk & Richardson, 1984) is also instrumental in upholding the predominant ideology.

Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that most social scientists belong to a social class whose political and economic interests are usually in accordance with those of the dominant sectors (Sarason, 1981a; Sullivan, 1984). Although we do not intend to reduce the scientific endeavors of psychologists to only legitimating the status quo and their professional practice to a class weapon, as some Marxists seem to do (e.g., Nahem, 1981; see also A. Ryan, 1970), it is perceived that the potential impact of their class background on their practice has been seriously underestimated (Brown, 1936). Their assistance in perpetuating the current state of affairs does not derive, in my opinion, from a conscious effort to serve themselves by deceiving the population as to the nature of power relations in society. It derives mainly from a very efficient socialization that taught them not to question, to any threatening degree, the existing social system (Chorover, 1985; Sarason, 1981a, 1981b). At the same time, it could be argued that it is this very lack of intent that makes it more insidious. Sarason (1981a) described the socialization of psychologists as follows:

As a group, they have undergone a socialization process. We may call the process education or training: a long series of rites that make them eligible for certain roles in certain places. It is a process in which self, others, and the nature of society get defined. It is, of course, a continuation of a process that begins at birth. They do not come to "higher" education without their society already being in them. The more prolonged, systematic, and effective the socialization, the less self-conscious people are about the different factors and forces that shaped them. *To be socialized means that one has absorbed and accommodated to predetermined conceptions of the way things are and ought to be* [italics added]. One may resist and resent the process but if one wants to occupy a certain place and role in society (e.g., lawyer, physician, psychologist) one has to traverse successfully the rites of passage. The socialization may be partial but its effects are never absent. For most people the process is far more than partial; it is so successful that for all practical purposes

there is no questioning, no self-consciousness, about the forces that shaped them and their conception of society. The lack of this type of self-consciousness is no less a source of bias in the psychologist than the distortion-producing motivations that he possesses like everyone else. (p. 148)

Value-Neutral Psychology: Its Ideological Uses

The persistent refusal of psychologists to elaborate on the role of values in their discipline has been one of the most influential factors interfering with an understanding of psychology in a social context (Deese, 1985; Toulmin & Leary, 1985). However, as the urgency to acknowledge value dilemmas became apparent, the resistance to consider such issues lessened. This trend has led Robinson (1985) to state that "where the social sciences once defensively insisted they were value-neutral, they now tend to present themselves as unavoidably value-loaded" (p. 142). Also indicative of this changing attitude toward values in science is Howard's (1985) assertion that "although philosophers of science still debate the role of values in scientific research, the controversy is no longer about *whether* values influence scientific practice, but rather about *how* values are embedded in and shape scientific practice" (p. 255).

According to Krasner and Houts (1984), most behavioral scientists endorse values such as social Darwinism (vs. social altruism), conservatism (vs. liberalism), and a value-neutral as opposed to value-laden view of science. This last finding furnishes further support to our leading assumption that psychologists have persistently claimed that their scientific endeavors are immune to nonepistemic values. The notion of a "value-neutral psychology" is pivotal in our investigation for it lends itself to various ideological uses. First and foremost, it has the power to portray psychology as depoliticized, and this image can be used to promulgate the regnant ideology. Psychology "has shown a clear bias in supporting the interests of the powerful and the status quo, many times in the name of *scientific objectivity*" [italics added] (Steininger, Newell, & Garcia, 1984, pp. 216–217). By portraying itself as a strictly "objective" endeavor, many of psychology's *prescriptive* biases are erroneously interpreted as merely *descriptive* assertions about human behavior. "Value commitments are almost inevitable by products of social existence, and as participants in society we can scarcely dissociate ourselves from these values in pursuing professional ends" (Gergen, 1973, p. 312). Consequently, it is highly unlikely that we, as psychologists, merely describe what appears to be, without at the same time subtly prescribing what we regard as desirable. Our definition of "desirable," however, is usually in conformity with that of the ideological apparatuses whose main function is to effect a successful socialization (Sarason, 1981a).

In addition, the value-neutral idea predisposes the public to accept psychology's assertions uncritically and to regard them as apolitical truisms rather than sociohistorically conditioned statements. Although there is ample evidence indicating that this notion has been widely used for ideological purposes (see, for example, Billig, 1979; Larsen, 1986; W. Ryan, 1971; Sampson, 1983), its popularity cannot be solely attributed to sociopolitical interest but also to the hegemony of the positivistic–empiricist scientific paradigm (Sampson, 1978; Toulmin & Leary, 1985). The initial epistemic value ascribed to the concept of "value-neutral psychology" by positivism can be thought to have opened the door for its use as an ideological nonepistemic value. Whatever the precise degree of influence that ideological interests might have exerted on the development of positivism, it should be clear that once established, the notion of "value-neutral psychology" has been used to advance ideological objectives.

The essence of "value-neutral" theories at the service of ideology can be best captured in the title of Ryan's (1971) seminal book *Blaming the Victim*. I am not referring to a single theory here but rather a basic assumption on which many psychological explanations are constructed—namely, an *acontextual* view of the individual. In this approach, the analysis of human behavior is conducted without a satisfactory consideration of the social and historical circumstances. When this approach is applied to the analysis of maladaptive behavior, it often results in what Albee (1981) has termed the *defect* model. According to this model, the majority of unfavorable experiences in a person's life are attributed to faulty mechanisms *within* himself or herself. An extensive lexicon of person-blaming concepts can be said to support the defect model, including "maladaptive coping mechanisms," "weak-ego," "maladjusted personality," and "character disorder." This language is not at all surprising given that "American psychology has been quintessentially a psychology of the individual organism" (Sarason, 1981b, p. 827). Hence, therapeutic efforts are almost exclusively directed toward changing the individual and not the socioeconomic situation (Albee, 1981; W. Ryan, 1971; Sarason, 1981a, 1981b; Wineman, 1984).

Psychology at the Service of the Status Quo: Some Illustrative Examples

Psychology is not a unified science (Koch & Leary, 1985), and as a consequence, different systems in the discipline portray the individual and society in a different fashion. Although separate and relatively independent from each other, those psychological postulates share some structural elements (e.g., the dichotomy of the individual and society and nonepistemic value-neutral aspirations) that create the predisposition for psychologists to view the present state of affairs in society with an uncritical attitude.

The Behavioral Perspective

Pioneers of behaviorism have invested considerable effort in attempting to create a physics-like science of psychology. Such an attempt was primarily designed to enhance the credibility of psychology in the scientific community by complying with the dominant zeitgeist. According to Toulmin and Leary (1985), Watson's "resolution was to make psychology as close to experimental physics as he

knew how, banishing all subjective appeals to introspectable data and focusing exclusively on public, observable reactions to arbitrary stimuli" (p. 601). Although Skinner has differed from Watson on other issues, he has been equally fervent in his pursuit of a physics model for the science of human behavior. In his book, *Verbal Behavior*, Skinner indicated that "there is a promising possibility that meanings will be kept outside the skin. In this sense, they are as observable as any part of physics" (1957, p. 8).

Behaviorism tends to foster a reactive, machine-like image of the human being. The individual is viewed mostly as a physical entity responding to external stimulation. His or her actions and movements are the objects of study, and measurement is the main concern within this framework. Control and prediction of behavior have been considered the parameters of a successful psychological science (Deese, 1972).

It is not difficult to draw some parallels between this terminology and the semantics of the technological era. In a society where technology has been many times uncritically used as a synonym of progress (Ellul, 1964), psychology was bound to acquire not only its procedures but also its weltanschauung. An unfortunate side effect of this innovative weltanschauung was the notion that technology would provide the necessary tools to answer moral and ethical questions. This conceptual confusion is epitomized in Skinner's (1972) book, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. Skinner suggested solving ethical concerns by means of a technology of behavior. This could assist in designing a desired type of human being, but it cannot determine what kind of image is to be created.

Woolfolk and Richardson (1984) contended that behavior therapy—a direct derivation of behaviorism—is consonant with the ideology of modernity, of which the glorification of technology is an indispensable feature. The conforming message behind the technological ideology is that problems of inequity and social injustice could be solved through the development of newer techniques of social engineering and more efficient managerial strategies. By masking social and moral conflicts with the appearance of being mere technical inconveniences, the individual is led to believe that in principle the present state of affairs in society is satisfying, and only technicalities stand between suffering and the attainment of a happier life. Fundamental issues pertaining to the moral and ethical values preserved by the ruling institutions are eluded by offering solutions to social riddles in terms of efficiency, reorganization, better management, and technical progress. Questions of essence are distorted into questions of form. The substitution of technical for ethical concerns diverts attention from inquiries that might eventually question the present state of affairs in society.

Some authors might argue that the conservative outlook attributed to behaviorism in this article is inconsistent with its premises. Behaviorism emphasizes the modification of environmental conditions in helping the individual and could therefore be considered a progressive theory. A significant differentiation should be made between the alteration of the focal and immediate external conditions and more encompassing, socially oriented modifications (Fiske, 1981). Behaviorism has almost exclusively concentrated on reorganization at the microlevel.

The Organic Perspective

The origin of functionalism in modern psychology could be traced to the concept of adaptation initially proposed by Darwin (Deese, 1985; Notterman, 1985). Functionalism in psychology studies "mental processes of sense perception, emotion, volition, and thought as functions of the biological organism in its adaptational effort to influence and to control its environment" (Sullivan, 1984, p. 12). Of particular interest to us is the classification of individuals as adaptive or maladaptive, which in conjunction with the development of eugenics helped to promote the notion that maladapted persons are the sole product of a less able organism and/or a genetic handicap. This notion was, and is, widely held not only among psychologists but also among psychiatrists and influential social thinkers (Albee, 1986; Hofstadter, 1955; Thielman, 1985). The clear conforming message in that theory was, and still is, that human suffering is predominantly the result of a deficient organism. From this viewpoint, environmental factors such as poor nutrition, detrimental living conditions, and unemployment are thought to be "caused" by the inability of those people to help themselves. To the extent that functionalism in psychology assisted in the dissemination of this theory, it collaborated with the ruling ideology in disguising social injustice as a biological or psychological inferiority (Albee, 1986).

Albee (1986) cogently argued that as long as psychologists and social policy legislators believe in the unmodifiability of intelligence and hold the view that criminal tendencies are due to genetic defects, early compensatory education and primary prevention programs will never be adequately implemented.

Although individual differences do exist, this variability is only partially attributable to a genetic component (Billig, 1979; Kamin, 1974). Economic and social factors, which play a significant role in the mental and physical well-being of the population (Arthur, 1971; Cereseto & Waitzkin, 1986), have been seriously neglected because of the prevailing social Darwinism and functionalism in psychology.

The Humanist Perspective

It has been argued that humanistic psychology gained many of its supporters because of its reaction to Freudian (e.g., Buhler, 1962) and Skinnerian determinism (e.g., Rogers, 1961). The humanistic approach clearly emphasizes the human potential for personal change and growth. This school believes in the capability of the psychological organism to liberate itself from circumstantial barriers and to overcome external constraints. Humanistic psychology succeeded in returning to the person some basic trust and belief in freedom of choice. However, in its battle against determinism it overlooked some environmental variables that exercise considerable influence on human

personality and behavior. In its eagerness to show how flexible and adaptive the human "soul" is, it did not pay enough attention to socioeconomic problems and ecological determinants of human suffering and the need for reform.

Rogers, a pioneer and leading figure in humanistic psychology, fostered the idea that personal problems are basically of an internal or endogenous nature (Rogers, 1961). Sarason (1981b) was right in asserting that Rogers's *Counseling and Psychotherapy* "defined the problems of people in terms of an individual psychology: Problems were personal or narrowly interpersonal and for all practical purposes independent of the nature and structure of the social order" (p. 830). Although Rogers did not deny the existence of acute social problems and their reflection on the mental health of the population (Rogers, 1986), his elucidation of their origin was erroneous in that problems of social order were reduced to the lack of exposure of individuals to a growth-promoting climate. Accordingly, "if life or therapy gives us favorable conditions for continuing our psychological growth" (Rogers, 1967, p. 21), the individual will develop "the qualities which would cause him to value those experiences which would make for the survival and enhancement of the human race. He would be a worthy participant and guide in the process of human evolution" (Rogers, 1967, p. 20). The fundamental mistake committed by Rogers was to believe that society is run as a therapeutic session or an encounter group where feelings of equality and community arise as part of the healing process. Commenting on the lack of sociopolitical awareness shown by humanists and their persistent involvement with the "self," Jacoby (1975) went as far as asserting that "the reality of violence and destruction, of psychically and physically damaged people, is not merely glossed over, but buried beneath the lingo of self, meaning, authenticity, personality" (pp. 56–57). Social, economic, and political predicaments require solutions of a social, economic, or political nature. Psychology might occasionally facilitate understanding between persons and groups, but it is definitely not the only, or even the preferred, tool for the attainment of a better society.

Although its political innocence has been the subject of discontent within the humanist movement and social critiques are emerging (Greening, 1986), the individualistic approach seems to have long dominated humanistic psychology. Whether humanistic psychologists intentionally support the predominant individualistic ideology is a debatable question. What is hardly debatable is that by diverting attention from social problems and presenting them as a matter of individual "psychological immaturity" humanistic psychologists in effect are supporting those interested in prolonging the existing state of affairs in society.

The Cognitive Perspective

As in the case of humanistic psychology, the cognitive perspective adheres to subjective and individualistic reductions of reality. Its objects of study are the internal processes by which the individual filters and manipulates physical and/or psychological stimulation. By focusing almost exclusively on internal processes, the cognitive psychologist is exposed to the risk of losing sight of sociohistorical variables that may influence our way of thinking and operating in society. Behavior is not the sole product of thinking but also of external conditions. "The individualist approach reduces reality to the acts of the individual's constitution; objects of reality are seen as products of individual cognitive operations rather than as products of social and historical constitution" (Sampson, 1981, p. 731). The primacy attributed to the knower's ideas and perceptions of reality is often at the expense of an equally important scrutiny of material conditions in society.

Sampson (1981) argued that cognitive psychology's concern with the transformation and flexibility of mental processes is likely to reduce interest in the pursuit of actual changes in the objective world. "In substituting thought for action, mental transformations for real world transformations, cognitivism veils the objective sources and bases of social life and relegates individual potency to the inner world of mental gymnastics" (Sampson, 1981, p. 735). Sampson's cogent analysis indicates that the status quo is reinforced when people are led to believe, intentionally or unintentionally, that inner changes are more important than external modifications in their reality. Cognitivism plays a very active role in the dissemination of this notion.

Psychology at the Service of Social Change: Desiderata

In portraying the "good society," philosophers usually make reference to attributes such as social cohesion, stability, social harmony, freedom, distributive justice, and material prosperity (Olson, 1978). Clearly, the approximation to these ideals necessitates a lucid perception of the social forces shaping our society. Unfortunately, such understanding is impeded by the distortion radiated by ideological apparatuses. Stratagems employed by the power elite to obfuscate the unjust nature of the social structure render the powerless politically disoriented and, by and large, paralyzed. Consequently, no serious threat is posed to the status quo.

Unless individuals are aware of the ideological deception of which they are victims, they are unlikely to engage in productive change-promoting activities. Although awareness does not necessarily guarantee constructive action, it is certainly a condition *sine qua non.* Psychology is probably the most appropriate science to develop that awareness. In exposing the mechanisms of the prevalent ideology, psychology can make a meaningful contribution to the course of social change. This project would have to be complemented by deliberations on what constitutes the "good society" that is most likely to promote human welfare. Otherwise, psychologists will merely engage in denunciation without annunciation. Both of these functions will be briefly discussed.

Conscientization

The concept of *conscientization,* as utilized by Freire (1975), describes best the task proposed for psychology. Conscientization refers to the process whereby people achieve an illuminating awareness both of the socioeconomic and cultural circumstances that shape their lives and their capacity to transform that reality. Freire (1975) pointed out that "conscientization is first of all the effort to enlighten men about the obstacles preventing them from a clear perception of reality. In this role, conscientization effects the ejection of cultural myths which confuse the people's awareness" (p. 51). In essence, it is both the antidote and antithesis to the ideological message.

If psychology is to become a vehicle of conscientization for the public at large, it must be the first one to subject itself to this very process. Only then will psychologists be in a position to scrutinize the cultural hegemony of which they are a constituent part. This plea concurs with the following advice given by Judge Bazelon (1982) to an APA audience: "Unveil *your* values. Unveil *our* values. In combining those two tasks, you will be setting an enviable standard of social responsibility" (pp. 120–121).

A formal framework for the disclosure of the discipline's nonepistemic values could be elaborated upon the principles of the sociology of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Mannheim, 1936). This field of inquiry, which has not been given the attention it merits by psychologists, has the potential to elucidate the "penetration of the social process into the intellectual sphere" (Mannheim, 1936, p. 268). The teaching of the *sociology of psychological knowledge* (Buss, 1975) would constitute an important first step in demythologizing psychology's value-neutral demeanor.

People's acceptance of the prevalent ideology, even when it does not reflect their interests, can be a legitimate topic of psychological investigation. Insights from research in the areas of conformity, introjection of norms and expectations, and obedience can be helpful not only in explaining why people accept this ideology but also in inoculating them against the potentially pernicious impact of such doctrine (cf. Lessing, 1986).

It is encouraging to observe that women's groups have already started to capitalize on the propositions of conscientization. The literature indicates that in their attempts to analyze and modify male-oriented cultural practices, women participating in consciousness-raising groups both advance their social interests and experience beneficial psychological changes such as increased autonomy and self-esteem (Hyde & Rosenberg, 1980).

Annunciation

Borrowing yet another concept from Freire (1975), I shall refer to *annunciation* as the act of conceiving a just social arrangement in which the well-being of the population is fostered. In my view, psychologists ought to engage in annunciation, for without an ideal to replace the present social system the contribution of psychology to social change will be halted at the stage of conscientization. Before we are in a position to "give psychology away" for the promotion of human welfare, as Miller (1969) put it, we must be able to delineate the "good society" that will likely advance the well-being of its members.

Unlike the task of conscientization, which can be independently performed by psychology, the present assignment cannot be completed without assistance from ethics. Although, as Olson (1978) correctly pointed out, " 'ethics' suggests primarily a moral code, or a body of rules of right conduct" (p. 3), it should be clearly stated that "moral philosophers also deal with...the good society" (p. 3). Unfortunately, psychologists have paid very little attention to the latter.

Symptomatic of American social science's indifference to the utopian society is that courses on ethics, which were very rare before the mid-1970s, focus almost exclusively on standards of right conduct and neglect to address the "good society" (e.g., Warwick, 1980). Furthermore, for a long time social scientists thought that their ethical duties toward society were fulfilled by adhering to the following syllogism: "Social science is science; science contributes to human welfare; therefore social science contributes to human welfare" (Warwick, 1980, p. 31). This syllogism, predicated on a number of unsubstantiated assumptions, promoted a highly simplistic view of the relation between science and social welfare.

Unless psychologists extricate themselves from their moral and political naiveté, the advent of annunciation will remain an illusion.

Probably the major obstacle to be encountered by the promoters of annunciation in our discipline will be the historical quest for independence from philosophy. One can only hope that the gradual introduction of the teaching of ethics reflects a level of maturity in which psychology is no longer threatened by a dialogue with philosophy.

Conclusion

The penetration of the reigning ideology in the realm of psychological knowledge is largely determined by the socialization of psychologists. This, in conjuction with psychology's apparent inability to self-reflect on its nonepistemic biases, has permitted its utilization for the advancement of ideological purposes. Psychology is instrumental in maintaining the societal status quo by (a) endorsing and reflecting dominant social values, (b) disseminating those values in the persuasive form of so-called value-free scientific statements, and (c) providing an asocial image of the human being, which in turn portrays the individual as essentially independent from sociohistorical circumstances. Consequently, the recipient of psychological knowledge or services is likely to believe that these theories are primarily a reflection of "truth" or "objectivity" and are not affected by the psychologists' set of nonepistemic values. Furthermore, the psychological client is likely to underestimate the impact of adverse social conditions on her or his life, thereby reducing the

probabilities that she or he would engage in activities in defiance of the status quo.

Considering the popularity of psychological theories in the public forum and the large number of children and adults consuming some type of psychological service, it is not difficult to realize the substantial impact the conforming message of psychology might have on society as a whole. At best, it may be preventing changes that could enhance the well-being of the population. At worst, it may be silently endorsing unjust social practices.

If, in fact, psychologists are supporting an undesirable social system by furnishing it with ideological ammunition, what should be done about it? Constructive action must be preceded by reflection. Therefore, a commitment to social change must begin with conscientization and annunciation. Following an educational process in which psychologists would become aware of the sociocultural determinants of their professional endeavors and justificatory functions, the discipline will be in a position to facilitate social change by uncovering the cultural and psychological mechanisms involved in the reproduction of the social system. Of equal importance is the need to admit our limitations and allow moral philosophers to assist us in discerning what constitutes the good society.

Whether these or any other projects concerned with fostering social changes ever will be undertaken, let alone implemented, is largely an ethical question. In the past, social scientists could have eluded this question by claiming impartiality on social issues, but at present, when the incursion of ideology into our ranks is becoming so evident, such an excuse can hardly be accepted. As a result, the moral dilemma of whether to engage in social transformation or ratification has become inescapable. To the disappointment of many, this is the type of dilemma science cannot solve. What the science of human behavior can do, however, is to contribute to the attainment of what is ethically just (e.g., Dewey, 1900). Enormous as this enterprise may be, it is not impossible. Its undertaking should not be hindered by lack of appropriate methodology, as psychologists are very astute in meeting these needs; it can only be obstructed by the refusal of our discipline to acknowledge the ubiquity of ideological inculcation.

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