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## Human, Moral, and Political Values for an Emancipatory Psychology

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**ABSTRACT:** To develop an emancipatory psychology I propose three sets of complementary human, moral, and political values. Human values inform conceptions of the good life and the good society, whereas moral principles help us resolve conflict among competing values. Political values, in turn, clarify the role of oppression and power structures in the pursuit of emancipation. Following a discussion of these values I examine their application in six scenarios involving psychologists.

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San Salvador, November 16, 1989. U.S.-trained troops of the Salvadoran Army enter the University of Central America and kill six Jesuit brothers, their housekeeper and her teenage daughter. Among the dead is Ignacio Martin Baro, Jesuit Priest, academic, psychologist, and proponent of Liberation Psychology. Martin Baro believed psychology could help the poor and the oppressed overcome tyranny and domination (Martin Baro, 1994). He paid for it with his life. My paper pays tribute to his work.

Emancipation refers to people's abilities to pursue their ends in life without oppressive restrictions. Psychology needs an emancipatory orientation as much as society needs an emancipatory psychology. My objective in this paper is to contribute to the development of an emancipatory

psychology, a psychology concerned with oppression and liberation. The reason for focusing on emancipation is that it is a prerequisite for the good life and the good society (Albert, Cagan, Chomsky, Hahnel, King, Sargent, & Sklar, 1986; Macedo, 1994). An emancipatory psychology seeks to eliminate oppression, deprivation, exploitation and exclusion. It seeks to remove psychological, social, and political barriers to the fulfillment of basic values such as self-determination, caring and compassion and distributive justice (Martin Baro, 1994; Prilleltensky, in press). Oppression exists because dominant groups advance their own interests at the expense of others with less power. Psychology has much to offer to the elimination of oppression (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996).

Good lives and good societies are made up of multiple values, none of which can thrive under conditions of oppression. Ideals such as justice, authenticity and diversity depend on the very ability of people to have voice and choice. Individuals and collectives choose versions of good lives and good societies that suit best their culture and context. There isn't one but many versions of the good life and of good societies (Kane, 1994; Kekes, 1993). But regardless of their specific shape, good lives and good societies require conditions of emancipation. Psychology has much to offer to the project of emancipation (Fox & Prilleltensky, in press).

The fulfillment of a good life, regardless of its particular values, requires a social structure to support it. This is why I invoke the concept of a good society. The good society provides the political, economic and cultural structures for the advancement of the good life; it furnishes the material, moral, and psychological conditions that individuals need to pursue their dreams (Galbraith, 1996; Kane, 1994; Sandel, 1996). Emancipation is a precondition for the pursuit of the good life and the good society. For unless people's idea of the good life is servitude and suffering, they require a certain amount of freedom to pursue their aims. Hence, even before we talk about the particulars of a good life and a good society, we need to ensure that people are afforded the liberty to (a) make their own choices, and (b) pursue them without oppressive restrictions. But conditions of oppression in families, societies and nations around the world prohibit many people from choosing their own ends (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996).

By and large, psychologists have taken prevalent definitions of the good life and the good society for granted (Prilleltensky, 1994). These dominant definitions exclude issues of oppression from their purview because they propound the false notion that here, in North America, there is "liberty for all" (Albert et al., 1986; Macedo, 1994; McLaren & Lank-shear, 1994; Young, 1990). However, despite this general lack of critical

perspective, some psychologists have contributed to the project of emancipation (Bulhan, 1985; Fox & Prilleltensky, in press). Notable contributions have been made by South-American Liberation Psychology (Martin Baro, 1994; Montero, 1992), German Critical Psychology (Teo, 1995; Tolman, 1994), Feminist (Baker Miller, 1986; Wilkinson, in press) and Community Psychology (Prilleltensky & Nelson, in press). But despite serious efforts to build an emancipatory psychology, crucial problems remain. I review some of these problems and offer a set of values to move the project forward. Towards the end of the paper I illustrate how these values can be applied in specific scenarios.

### Obstacles to an Emancipatory Psychology

Psychologists interested in promoting emancipatory theories and practices face many challenges. I have chosen to present five:

*1. Psychologists typically deal with the consequences and not with the roots of oppression.*

Clinicians want to promote the personal liberation of their clients without changing the unjust social structures that led to their oppression in the first place (Pilgrim, 1992; Prilleltensky, 1994). This renders their efforts somewhat ineffectual, for clients return to the oppressive environments that caused their problems. While learning to cope with oppressive conditions is a justifiable objective, in the long run this strategy does nothing to promote the social conditions that good lives require. This is a reactive approach that waits for victims of the system to seek help in times of crises. It does little to prevent problems (Albee, 1986; 1990).

*2. Psychologists typically frame problems of oppression and their solutions in individualistic terms and ignore their social dimension.*

While oppression is felt at the subjective and personal level, its origins and solutions go beyond the individual we wish to help. Analyzing external problems in internal terms can lead to blaming the victim, and seeking personal solutions to social problems is patently wrong (Hall, 1983; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, in press). Moreover, these individualistic practices are neglectful of the healing potentials of communities. Self-help, sense of community, mutual support and collective action have many beneficial effects (McKnight, 1995). The good society cannot be ignored while promoting the good life. Good lives cannot thrive in bad societies.

*3. When psychologists work with communities to promote emancipation they do so in ameliorative as opposed to transformative ways.*

When psychologists venture into communities they promote minor reforms that don't really challenge oppressive structures (Prilleltensky & Nelson, in press). Shifting the focus of attention from individuals to communities is not enough. The work of community psychologists does not have a social change or transformative focus but rather an ameliorative one. No doubt reforms and amelioration are important in the short run, but their lasting impact on the creation of the good society is negligible.

*4. There is a gap between psychologists' knowledge about oppression and their hesitancy to eliminate it.*

We know a great deal about the psychological mechanisms of domination. We know about internalization of feelings of inferiority, learned helplessness, surplus powerlessness, conformity, compliance, obedience to authority, belief in a just world, self-fulfilling prophecies, moral exclusion, passivity of bystanders, legitimizing myths, groupthink, stigmatization, and other psychological mechanisms that account for oppression. Yet we seem reluctant to make emancipation a central focus of attention (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1994).

*5. Psychologists are ill-equipped to deal with the oppressive actions of their clients*

Like power, oppression and emancipation are relative terms. Clients may experience oppression in one sphere of their lives, such as work, but act very oppressively in other spheres, such as home. As Doherty (1995) has recently documented, psychologists are not very clear on how to handle situations of this kind.

Most of these problems derive from too much attention to the good life, and too little to the good society. In terms of values, we give too much regard to self-determination and too little to distributive justice. We cherish personal choice, rights and entitlements but neglect social responsibility. As Saul said in *The Unconscious Civilization*, our culture "leads to a worship of self-interest and a denial of the public good" (1995, p. 187). This is because North American culture "conceives persons as free and independent selves, unencumbered by moral or civic ties" (Sandel, 1996, p. 6). Paradoxically, as Sandel recently put it in *Democracy's Discontent*, "the public philosophy by which we live cannot secure the liberty it promises, because it cannot inspire the sense of community and civic engagement that liberty requires" (1996, p. 6).

Clarity with respect to values is urgently needed. Unfortunately, values clarification is brought to a halt by two opposing forces in psychology. Positivists avoid questions of value altogether because they maintain that

their actions are value-free, while constructionists profess skepticism towards any kind of values. The solution may lie in what Bernstein (1983) called "beyond objectivism and relativism," a third position that allows for the exploration of values and moral commitment. Such an exploration will help us develop an emancipatory psychology.

### Values for an Emancipatory Psychology

After considering the merits and drawbacks of diverse values I've come to believe that we need three complementary sets of values. Emancipation requires human, moral, and political values.

#### Human Values

By human values I refer to ideals and practices required to promote the good life and the good society (Kane, 1994; Kekes, 1993). There isn't a perfect list of human values capable of encompassing the total diversity of goods. There isn't a universal and timeless formula that can determine the adequacy of values regardless of time and place. What we have is work in progress, postulates that change with varying contexts.

I propose five values that can inform the good life and the good society: caring and compassion, self-determination, human diversity, collaboration and democratic participation, and distributive justice (see Prilleltensky, in press). Good lives require self-determination. But in order to have choice, other values are required. Human diversity gives people a voice, while caring, compassion and collaboration ensure that people get along and look after each other. Self-determination also depends on distributive justice, which refers to the fair and equitable allocation of bargaining powers, resources and obligations in society. Without adequate resources self-determination is quite meaningless, for choices presuppose the means to achieve them.

The complementarity of values can be seen clearly in the relationship between care and justice, for caring shows empathy towards those we care for, while justice ensures that we extend compassion to those beyond our immediate circle of care. There cannot be justice in the absence of care, while caring without justice restricts our compassion to those in our immediate circle, neglecting the welfare of other vulnerable people. This is what psychologist Meredith Kimball (1994) called the dialectic of care and justice.

Values derive legitimacy from their applicability. These five values are highly relevant to the work of psychologists and to contemporary social problems. Caring and compassion motivate psychologists to help individu-

als in therapy and in community work. The helping process, in turn, typically begins with the identification of needs and wants, with clients' self-determination. We respect people's choices, appreciate their diversity, and collaborate with them in setting agendas for therapy, research and action. Distributive justice comes into play when people's needs depend on the availability of social goods (cf. Dokecki, 1996). I show later how these values can help us analyze concrete cases involving psychologists.

A myriad of social issues can also be analyzed employing the five values I propose; they feature prominently in class conflicts, freedom of speech, welfare reform, Medicare, unemployment and racial tensions. In all cases there are issues of diversity, self-determination, tensions over the distribution of social resources, and questions of cooperation in the resolution of dilemmas. In Canada, to give but one example, these values are prominent in the struggle of Native people for self-determination. In 1992, during the so-called "Canada rounds," aboriginal people joined Canadian Premiers in an effort to bring Quebec into the constitution and to affirm aboriginal rights for self-determination. One of the objectives was to undo years of inhumane policies and practices that invalidated the diversity of Native people and prevented them from claiming their natural resources. But aboriginal people were not invited to the Canada rounds from the outset, they had to demand participation. The format of the Canada rounds was not inclusive, collaboration with First Nations was not a high priority for the prime ministers. For sure, it was not as high as meeting the demands of Quebec. Bargaining powers were not equally distributed. Some stakeholders, like the province of Quebec, were afforded a louder voice than Native Canadians (Cardinal, 1996).

Close examination of this process shows tensions among several values and groups. At play were the competing claims for self-determination of Native people and French Canadians. Both groups wanted their diversity recognized and valued. Distributive justice issues were manifested in the amount of bargaining power each group had, and in the inequitable allocation of natural resources among Natives and the rest of the country. Collaboration and participation were highly relevant in the process of negotiating inclusion of aboriginal people in the discussions, while higher levels of caring and compassion towards Native people could have averted a great deal of conflict.

This incident is also useful to illustrate the balance required among values. Inviting Natives to join in the discussions, without any commitment on the part of the government to settle land disputes, is not enough to promote Native autonomy. As this struggle demonstrates, conflict among

peoples is bound to occur, it is part of living with diversity. The value of collaboration and democratic participation is needed to negotiate discordant views in peaceful and respectful ways, a central tenet of cultural diversity. Appreciating diversity requires that we learn how to mediate among diverse conceptions of the good life and the good society. To help us resolve conflicts among human values we need another set of principles.

#### *Moral Principles*

Philosopher Robert Kane helps us resolve value conflicts with a set of moral principles. According to Kane, we respect people's choices when we assert that "no point of view (including one's own) should be presumed by its adherents to be right for others who disagree with it" (Kane, 1994, p. 20). This is reminiscent of the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Kane refines this ideal of action into what he calls the Ends Principle: "treat every person in every situation as an end and never as a means (to your or someone else's ends)" (Kane, 1994, p. 21). To treat persons as ends in themselves is to respect their point of view and to allow them to pursue their image of the good life without interference. To treat them as means to our ends is to impose our wishes and desires upon them, "forcing them to do what we want against their will" (Kane, 1994, p. 21).

The Ends Principle reflects our concern for autonomy and diversity. But it is an ideal course of action that is not always possible to follow. There are many situations in which it is impossible to treat all persons as ends. These are situations in which someone is already using others as means by coercing or harming them. Kane gives the example of a man walking down the street and witnessing another attempting to rape a woman. There is something he can do to stop it by either physically intervening or calling for help. This is a clear situation in which not all people involved can be treated as ends. If you stop the rapist you are interfering with his desires. If you do nothing you are letting the victim be treated as a means of the attacker. As Kane indicates, "openness or tolerance to *all* points of view is simply not possible in this case" (1994, p. 21).

To help resolve this conflict Kane introduces the concept of *moral sphere*, which he defines as a space in which "everyone can treat everyone else as an end" (1994, p. 22). This is an ideal state of affairs that helps us guide our behavior, but that is not always attainable. The rapist, for instance, broke the moral sphere by imposing his will on the victim. By thwarting the rapist we treat him as a means but we restore the moral sphere and preserve it in the future.

Given that the Ends Principle cannot always be followed to the letter, it requires revision. Kane's revised Ends Principle dictates that we should "treat every person as an end and not as a means... *whenever possible*. When it is not possible, strive to sustain this ideal to the degree possible, by choosing those actions that will best restore and preserve the moral sphere (in which everyone can be treated as an end)" (p. 26). In times of conflict, then, we do our best to restore the moral sphere.

What are the implications of the moral sphere, the Golden Rule, and the Ends Principle for psychology? The moral sphere is a space where everyone can be treated with respect, as an end and not as a means; and where people can pursue their notion of the good life. The emphasis here is on *everyone*. This implies that we should be concerned not only with the welfare of our immediate clients, for instance, but also with the welfare of others affected by the actions of our clients.

The Ends Principle has a number of important implications for psychologists. First and foremost, it reminds us of the primacy of giving people voice and choice, against our temptation to think that we know what is best for them. Although there will be times when our best judgment of what is good for clients will contradict their own version of what is good for them, we do our best to convey our views with respect. This is a case of caring and compassion opposing self-determination. We oppose clients' plans not because we wish to undermine their decision-making power, but because we think that their choices will hurt them. Out of concern for their ends in the long term we may oppose their actions in the short term. The Ends Principle and the Golden Rule imply that we convey our opinion in such a way that recipients of the message retain the maximum degree of integrity that is possible under the circumstances. The same principle applies when we are in conflict with colleagues, students or employees; when the moral sphere is more likely to break down.

The Ends Principle contributes to emancipation by legitimizing pluralistic versions of the good life. The moral sphere, in turn, brings forth the idea of a space where people can pursue their own versions of the good life. But the application of these notions is not always self-evident. In the case of the rapist, it was clear who was treating who as a means. But there are many situations in which we cannot easily tell whether the moral sphere was broken, and if it was, who broke it. There is a vast grey area which makes these decisions very difficult. Moral breakdowns can occur in either blatant or subtle forms. The rapist's actions were a blatant violation of the moral sphere, but what about social policies that privilege the rich at the

expense of the poor? To help us see the subtle violations embedded in social policies we need to learn about political literacy and political action.

#### *Political Values*

Good lives are contingent upon good societies, and good societies are contingent upon the just distribution of powers (Galbraith, 1996; Miller, 1978). Our lives are affected by the distribution of powers in families, work places, schools, services, and government. The amount of bargaining power we have determines how much self-determination we can enjoy.

Although we can easily identify the source of disempowerment in close relationships, we have a hard time seeing the culprits of disempowerment in social policies. When an abusive husband takes control away from an abused spouse, we have no problems telling who deprives who of essential powers. But when complicated legislation reduces welfare benefits to single mothers, we can't easily tell who is to blame, even though there is a definite human hand writing and signing that legislation. No amount of rhetoric and propaganda can detract from the fact that these decisions benefit the powerful at the expense of the powerless (Barlow & Campbell, 1995; Fox, 1996; Galbraith, 1996; Gil, 1996; Saul, 1995).

The problem is that rhetoric and propaganda do work. A politically illiterate public buys the arguments that the corporate world sells. The corporate world sets the agenda, the media disseminates it, the government executes it, and the public believes it. We lack the political education necessary to see how different interests affect public life. We are under the impression that economic and social policies are set by historical circumstances beyond the control of human actors, when in fact there are very real people setting policies and benefitting from them (Barlow & Campbell, 1995; Macedo, 1994; Saul, 1995).

According to Macedo, schools and the media play a big role in perpetuating political ignorance. They reproduce cultural values that "distort and falsify realities so as to benefit the interest of the power elite" (Macedo, 1994, p. 34). Although much has been written recently about our political naivete, our culture fails to see the perils of political ignorance (Barlow & Campbell, 1995; Macedo, 1994; McLaren & Lankshear, 1994; Sarason, 1996; Saul, 1995; Trend, 1996).

We have to promote human and moral values, not only at the interpersonal level, but also at the community and social levels (Dokecki, 1996). This is out of necessity and out of obligation. Out of necessity because we cannot pursue good lives in isolation, and out of obligation because we must show compassion to those beyond our immediate circle of care. This we

must do to treat everyone as an end. To be able to see and influence the implementation of values at the social level we must become politically literate. We must be able to understand the role that values play beyond the interpersonal level of parent-child, professor-student, criminal-victim, and therapist-client. We need to see how power structures in society either facilitate or inhibit emancipation (McLaren & Lankshear, 1994). We need to see how these structures uphold or break the moral sphere (Kane, 1994).

Political literacy helps to see the connection between psychological stress and power structures (Albee, 1986; Gil, 1996; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, in press; Mirowsky & Ross, 1989; Ratcliffe & Wallack, 1986), while political action helps to move imperfect societies towards more desirable states (McLaren & Lankshear, 1994; Sandel, 1996; Trend, 1996). We should be able to see the breakdown of the moral sphere in unjust policies as much as in cases of rape. And we should strive to stop unjust policies as much as we should try to stop rapists.

### Values in Action: Contexts of Application

To promote an emancipatory psychology we should be able to apply its values. I formulated a series of questions to help us apply the three sets of values.

1. Are we breaking the moral sphere by favoring certain values and certain people at the expense of other values and other people?
2. Does our definition of moral sphere breakdown include both blatant and subtle abuses of power?
3. What can we do to restore the moral sphere, both at the interpersonal and social levels, if people are being treated as means and not as ends?

I will address these questions in six scenarios relevant to our work as psychologists.

#### *Morally Insensitive but Repenting Clients*

In his 1995 book *Soul Searching: Why Psychotherapy Must Promote Moral Responsibility*, Doherty talks about Bruce. Bruce was a forty-year-old man whose wife ended their marriage. Bruce couldn't face the thought of going back to the house to visit his two children. He was in too much pain to face his children and his ex-wife. He began talking about leaving town to start a new life.

Let's explore the human values involved in this situation. As a therapist, you can ask "what and whose values and needs should I promote, and what and whose values and needs do I risk neglecting?" As a therapist,

you also want to show caring and compassion for Bruce. You respect his self-determination. But his intentions are in conflict with the welfare of his children. If Bruce were to abandon his children, they would suffer psychological damage. Doherty was aware that by taking into account only Bruce's needs he might have been neglecting the children's needs. This was an important insight because most therapists "tend all too easily to lose sight of the moral stakeholders who are not present in therapy sessions" (Doherty, 1995, p. 23). Had Bruce and Doherty neglected the needs of the children, they would have broken, however subtly, the moral sphere.

In cases like this, psychologists may reframe clients' actions as based on personal insecurities. Clients' desire for more self-determination does not come from ill intentions but from a psychological need. Once clients obtain relief from fears and insecurities, they can be kind to others and reconsider their inadvertent but harmful actions. When cases unfold this way, everyone is happy: The client is not morally insensitive after all. But not all situations have a happy ending. Let's address a more difficult case.

#### *Morally Insensitive and Unrepenting Clients*

Some employers exploit workers, some parents abuse children, and some partners are violent towards their spouses. Psychologists often find themselves in the middle of these moral violations. One such instance was made public a few years ago by the Toronto Star ("Ex-strikers," 1991). In 1991 the Public Service Alliance of Canada went on strike. After the strike ended, the Canadian government sent to Edmonton a group of psychologists to hold debriefing sessions with workers. Their goal was to pacify workers, dissipate anger towards management, and prevent further industrial unrest. Workers rejected the offer and told the psychologists they were very happy feeling angry and didn't-need-any-help-thank-you-very-much. This is but one instance of psychologists acting as servants of power (Baritz, 1974).

It is obvious in cases of domestic abuse that not everyone is being treated as an end. In such cases psychologists would ask themselves "what can be done to restore the moral sphere?" But interestingly enough, in cases of industrial exploitation, when the breakdown of the moral sphere is less blatant, psychologists often miss this breakdown altogether. To prevent this from happening we should consider both blatant and subtle abuses of power.

Assume, as in the first scenario, that the psychologist brings to the attention of managers, parents, and teachers the harmful consequences of their actions. But unlike the first scenario, in which people were willing to

change, in this one the manager insists on getting more out of workers without proper compensation, the parent is resistant to change, and the teacher continues to blame children for their problems. It appears that these clients are not just morally insensitive, they are oppressive and unwilling to change.

Psychologists with emancipatory values would object to the behavior of these clients. Their behaviors violate the values of caring and compassion, collaboration, and distributive justice. They care about their own self-determination over and above the self-determination of others with less power. They use other people as means to their own ends. Doherty offers helpful advice on how to negotiate these difficult scenarios at the interpersonal and family levels, but he doesn't deal directly with the problem of institutional abuse of power. From an emancipatory perspective, we need to resort to political values. To understand the behavior of exploitive employers we need to grasp the political economy of their actions. To change their actions, we call for political and systemic interventions.

The psychologist confronted with exploitive employers has two fundamental choices. One is to refuse helping in the exploitation of workers, but still try to work with managers. The other is to go along with managers' desires for worker pacification or improved output. In the first case, the psychologist would have a very hard time upholding emancipatory values without having a serious conflict with the client, at which time the psychologist may either be fired or withdraw voluntarily. But in many cases psychologists do not see the political economy of worker exploitation for what it is and go along obliviously with management's objectives.

#### *Vanishing Communities and Bystander Psychologists*

Ed Bennett, a community psychologist and colleague of mine, is currently working with an Old Order Amish community in Southern Ontario to help them preserve their heritage (Bennett, & Kneen, 1995). At stake is nothing less than their right to maintain their unique culture. Municipal by-laws and agricultural regulation are endangering their way of life. Those rules interfere with their way of life and their way of making a living. If you ask Ed Bennett if there is a breakdown of the moral sphere in this case, his answer is a definite yes. He labors to restore the moral sphere at the social and political levels, fighting unfair legislation and organizing the community to preserve its heritage. He uses what he knows about psychology, community development and social change to make progress towards a just society. But most psychologists, even community psychologists, are reluctant to get involved in political struggles. Most of us are

passive bystanders in the face of vanishing communities (Prilleltensky & Nelson, in press).

From an emancipatory perspective, we understand the need for a good society that is able to sustain the good life. This understanding, however, is rarely followed by action. While globalization destroys local communities, and individualism and greed reign supreme (Barlow & Campbell, 1995; Galbraith, 1996; Saul, 1995), we continue to do the same old thing. Researchers and clinicians continue to frame problems in individual terms (Albee, 1990), while community psychologists intervene in ameliorative as opposed to transformative ways (Prilleltensky & Nelson, in press).

To reclaim the search for the good society we must invoke the concepts of moral sphere, political literacy and political action. We should ask ourselves whether our apathetic bystanding does not violate the moral sphere. When the rapist is about to commit his crime, we have no doubts he must be stopped, but when corporations destroy the environment or leave towns with thousands of unemployed citizens we say "it's a business decision" and remain quiet by the side.

#### *The Ultimate Irony*

Victims of oppressive family and social structures come to psychologists for help. Minorities suffer discrimination, abused women endure violence, the poor have no resources and the powerless have no say in their lives. We want to help, we want to be caring and compassionate, we want them to have more influence. They suffer and we see it as our obligation to help them in whatever way we can (Dokecki, 1996). But ironically, by helping individuals adjust to oppressive conditions, we perpetuate the system that victimized them in the first place (Kitzinger, in press). We grease a machine we wish did not exist. We maintain a system we wish was abolished.

Caring and compassion, self-determination and human diversity tell us to help the victim of suffering. We cannot ignore a request for help. We treat people as ends in themselves and not as means in our ideological struggles against capitalism. But despite our best efforts to empower individuals and to help them "work the system" to their advantage, the values of distributive justice and political literacy tell us that by helping the oppressed, without changing the oppressive structures, we maintain the source of the problem. The bind is clear: Suffering individuals no doubt deserve help, but helping them has two adverse consequences. First, the system does not change because we promote adjustment instead of transformation (Gil, 1996; Halleck, 1971; McKnight, 1995). Second, when help

focuses on individuals, we send them back to a mine field. They may learn how to side step some of them, but the mines are just too many to walk safely. Thus the poor go back to poor living quarters and the employee returns to oppressive working conditions. We talk to the single mother about budgeting, saving, parenting and dieting, but she goes back to the same old deprived environment. We have done nothing to change her housing or to improve her health care. Now, perhaps, she won't complain as often. Every time we "save" the one person we also "save" the very system that caused the harm. That is the ultimate irony. This is a paradox that won't be resolved until we realize that good lives cannot thrive in bad societies. For changing lives without changing societies is ultimately self-defeating. We cannot achieve the good society one good life at a time.

#### *If It's Good for America, It Must Be Good*

Psychologists have contributed, directly and indirectly, wittingly and unwittingly, to oppressive domestic and foreign policies. In her 1995 book *The Romance of American Psychology* Ellen Herman documents the involvement of psychologists in formulating disgraceful policies. Although malevolent intent cannot necessarily be ascribed, psychologists helped to shape racist and oppressive policies, at home and abroad. Herman documents psychologists' involvement in project Camelot. This was a project funded by the US Department of Defence in the 1960's. It was designed to use social science to fight national liberation movements around the world. While some psychologists were uncomfortable with the idea of producing knowledge for military purposes, the majority regarded the project as a research opportunity that legitimized their role in public affairs. Many, in fact, were at pain to pronounce their neutrality, even as they endeavored to produce research for the repression of liberation movements.

The point of this story is not to inculcate the behavioral scientists who worked for Camelot, but to show that psychologists are capable of claiming neutrality even as they offer advice on how to dominate other countries. "Camelot's antiseptic language often emphasized the allegedly apolitical character of behavioral science, referring, for example, to 'insurgency prophylaxis' rather than counterrevolution. Even at the height of the Cold War, psychology offered a convenient way to avoid all mention of capitalism, communism, or socialism" (Herman, 1995, pp. 170-171).

It is in cases like this that questions about the moral sphere are absolutely essential. If we learned anything from Camelot it is to ask ourselves whose values we favor, and whether our definition of the moral sphere includes both subtle and blatant abuses of power. One thing is for

sure, what looks neutral to a US psychologist looks very political to the average citizen of developing countries.

### Conclusion

Psychology needs an emancipatory orientation as much as society needs an emancipatory psychology. To promote an emancipatory psychology, I offered three sets of complementary human, moral, and political values. These values are tools and not solutions. They are a compass, not a map. Each concrete case, embedded in a specific context, requires a unique combination of values, a new solution every time (cf. Dokecki, 1996). The scenarios I presented show how these values can help discern dilemmas in therapy, organizational development, community interventions and social policies. In every realm of occupation psychologists have an opportunity to advance or inhibit emancipation.

Martin Baro wrote that

psychology has always been clear about the necessity for personal liberation; that is, people's need to gain control over their own existence... but it has not been very clear about the intimate relationship between the liberation of each person and the liberation of a whole people... Psychology must work for liberation. This involves breaking the chains of personal oppression as much as the chains of social oppression. (1994, p. 27).

American psychology has contributed to repressive as well as emancipatory objectives. As Herman put it, psychology "has served to complicate, and often obscure, the exercise of power in recent U.S. history, but it has also legitimized innovative ideas and actions whose aim has been to...expand the scope of liberty" (1995, p. 15). She went on to say that the public consequences of psychological expertise are "sometimes repressive and deserving of condemnation [and] sometimes inspiring people to move boldly in pursuit of personal freedom and social justice" (p. 15). We haven't developed yet an emancipatory psychology because we favor the good life over and above the good society. We covet self-determination but evade social justice.

Perhaps you feel uncomfortable at the implication that we should adopt political values, or at the realization that we are apathetic bystanders. Perhaps you never thought we were subtly breaking the moral sphere. Perhaps you feel insecure now at what you do as a psychologist. I know I do.



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