

ENHANCING THE SOCIAL ETHICS OF PSYCHOLOGY: TOWARD A PSYCHOLOGY AT THE SERVICE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

When the social preconditions for the existence of the good society and the advancement of human welfare are conspicuously deficient, it is morally incumbent upon psychologists to engage in activities that bring about a state of affairs more conducive to the well-being of the entire population. Yet, in contrast to its considerable efforts to insure proper ethical behaviour toward individual clients, psychology has virtually neglected its moral obligations to society at large. Psychology can no doubt contribute to the advent of social change by making explicit the process by which people come to accept the current social order as the best possible one, and by proposing strategies to counteract this pervasive phenomenon. This article illustrates how well-established psychological research, as well as psychologists such as teachers, practitioners and investigators can play a significant role in the transformation of social structures incapable of promoting human welfare for all sectors of society.

Portrayals of the "good society" by philosophers usually include attributes such as stability, social cohesion, freedom, material prosperity, social harmony, equality, and distributive justice (Olson, 1978). Unfortunately, the regnant social system does not satisfactorily meet some of these essential requirements for the existence of the "good society." This is an argument for which, regrettably, there is abundant evidence. Philosophical (Facione, Scherer & Attig, 1978; D. Miller, 1978; Olson, 1978), political (Edwards, Reich & Weisskopf, 1986; George & Wilding, 1976; Gross, 1980), and psychosocial (Ryan, 1971, 1981; Sennet & Cobb, 1972) treatises can be found to support the claim that if human welfare for the public at large is to be fostered, fundamental changes in the social order must occur.

What is psychology to do vis-à-vis this adverse state of affairs? Hitherto, it has mostly contributed not to the promotion of social change,

but rather to the preservation of the status quo (Anderson & Travis, 1983; Prilleltensky, 1989). Although it would be reasonable to expect that psychology is determined to promote human welfare by engaging in activities to bring about an improvement in the social preconditions for well-being, that expectation has largely not materialized.

This situation is largely due to the rather narrow concept of ethics that psychologists have adopted as their working moral code. Such a model focuses primarily on the obligations towards the individual client at the expense of proactive moral behaviour towards society at large. This bias is reflected, though in differing degrees, both in the American and the Canadian ethical principles for psychologists. In the former there is very little explicit mention of duties towards society (American Psychological Association, 1990). And while the latter devotes an entire section to *Responsibility to Society*, this obligation is considered the least important in value when in conflict with other principles (Canadian Psychological Association, 1986). In comparison to the American code of ethics, *Principle IV: Responsibility to Society* represents a laudable development. Yet, the Canadian code still falls short of properly addressing the social dimension of our ethical duties, for if we continue to regard social change as the least important of our moral values, then our clients may

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continue to face less than optimal conditions without our active support. Serious consideration should be given as to how best to advance Principle IV to the forefront of our priorities.

Although the plea to engage in community action as a way of fulfilling their moral obligations with respect to society goes as far back as Dewey (1900), psychologists have only recently begun to revive that plea. G.W. Albee, one of the most eloquent contemporary psychologists dedicated to the eradication of social injustice, used his 1970 presidential address to the American Psychological Association to ask that "psychology throw its resources into the efforts" (Albee, 1970, p. 1077) to eliminate social ills such as war and racism. Hillerbrand claimed recently that "community discourse... [is] vital to ethical behavior" (1987, p. 117). In a similar vein, Steininger, Newell and Garcia suggested that "psychologists should increasingly question the values base of their activities and openly discuss questions of fairness and justice" (1984, p. 217). Sarason (1982, 1984), who has been a very vocal and ardent supporter of a community-oriented psychology, has been extremely influential in resurrecting what could be called the "social ethics" of the discipline.

In spite of these recent calls for a more community attuned psychological ethics, these pleas do not seem to have been followed by programmatic action. This article is intended to contribute to bridging the gap between the vast literature dealing with moral duties towards the individual and the relatively underdeveloped area of social ethics in psychology. Two noticeable exceptions to the latter are the works by Bermant, Kelman, and Warwick (1978) *The Ethics of Social Intervention*, and Steininger et al. (1984) *Ethical Issues in Psychology*. Both books are helpful in discerning the moral dilemmas to be confronted in community interventions. Yet, both seem to fall short of recommending a proactive plan of action to remedy some of the problematic situations that they so aptly describe.

Conscientization

This preliminary proposal for furthering the social ethics of psychology, under the general term conscientization, entails the concurrent implementation of two tasks: (a) denunciation and (b) annunciation. While the former endeavours to deconstruct ideological messages that distort people's awareness of socio-political

circumstances that shape their lives, the latter seeks to elaborate means of advancing the social ideals conducive to the good life. Both concepts, borrowed from the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, have received considerable attention in educational circles (Bruss & Macedo, 1985; Giroux, 1985; Martin, 1986) but very little in psychology (e.g., Alschuler, 1986).

An approximation to the social ideals thought to be conducive to the good life must be preceded by a lucid perception of the political and economic forces regulating current society. Unless individuals become reasonably aware of the ideological deception of which they are victims, it is unlikely that they will be able to engage in any process of social change. And while consciousness does not, in and of itself, guarantee constructive action, by making explicit the mechanisms of the dominant ideology, psychology can assist in the course of social change.

The function hereby advocated for psychology is best captured in Freire's use of the concept *conscientization* (Freire, 1971, 1975). According to him, conscientization refers to the process whereby people attain an insightful awareness of the socio-economic, political, and cultural circumstances which affect their lives as well as their potential capacity to transform that social reality.

Women's groups have been operating under the propositions of conscientization for over two decades now with encouraging results.

Consciousness-raising (CR) groups have evolved as a way for women to understand the intricate relationship between public, systemic conditions and the individual aspects of their experiences. Through CR "the personal becomes political." In addition to their significant social and political impact, CR groups have served as an important mental health resource for women (Kravetz, 1987, p. 55).

Increased self-esteem, reduction in passivity, and greater understanding of systemic dynamics involved in women's oppression are among the positive effects of these groups (Kirsh, 1987; Kravetz, 1987). Freeman observes that CR groups are "probably the most valuable contribution by the women's liberation movement to the tools for social change" (in Kirsh, 1987, p. 46).

Conscientization attempts to understand how the public gives its tacit consent to the present social system. This phenomenon of consent and conformity, achieved by persuasion rather than

force, is what Gramsci (1971) called cultural hegemony. This concept, which has been the subject of many discussions in recent years (Femia, 1981; Kiros, 1985; Simon, 1982), is well summarized by Boggs:

By hegemony Gramsci meant the permeation throughout civil society...of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs, morality, etc. that is in one way or another supportive of the established order and the class interests that dominate it...To the extent that this prevailing consciousness is internalized by the broad masses, it becomes part of 'common sense' (1976, p. 39).

By challenging this "common sense", conscientization serves as the antithesis to the predominant ideological message. In other words, it challenges the notion that this social order is the best possible one.

As the main object of analysis for conscientization is awareness of the process whereby hegemony is attained, the following questions need to be addressed: How does hegemony work? What are its main components? How is it achieved? What psychological phenomena are involved? To these questions I now turn.

Understanding Hegemony

The process of hegemony seems to be constituted of two main stages. The first entails the *definition* of a situation or a problem in such a way that its solution does not threaten the established order of things in society. The second involves the *inculcation* of these definitions to the public at large. What follows is an elaboration of these stages, after which some ideas of what contributions psychology can make to the process of conscientization will be presented.

Stage I: Definition.

The way a problem is defined pre-determines the means by which it is to be solved. The statement of the problem is, therefore, crucial. In order to attain hegemony, social conditions and problems are defined in such a way that they will not pose a threat to the status quo. Thus, the dominant ideology resorts to two sorts of explanations for social conditions: (a) natural causes; and (b) person-blame. They differ only in that the latter holds people responsible for their own fate, and the former places responsibility on biological factors. These explanations will be referred to as *hegemonic definitions*.

Natural causes refer to the explanation of social phenomena on the basis of biological determinism. This version of ideology justifies power inequalities of class, race, and gender as being genetically originated (Rose, Lewontin, & Kamin, 1984). The biological inevitability associated with these inequalities fosters fatalism, pessimism, and eventual resignation (cf. Alschuler, 1986).

The person-blame definition of social circumstances attributes unequal distribution of wealth, income, and power to personality deficiencies. Laziness is a frequently used example of this kind. Improvement of personal conditions, according to this concept, largely depends on modifications of character. This model views the individual as entirely responsible for his/her fate, and society as a conglomerate of individuals where there are opportunities for everybody to get ahead (Albee, 1981; Ryan, 1971).

Hegemonic definitions strategically preclude systemic accounts of social problems. Systemic reasons are seldom admitted, and when they are, it is primarily as "lip service." The numerous system-preserving effects that can be derived from the above definitions of social problems have been documented by Caplan and Nelson (1973), Rose et al. (1984), and Ryan (1971).

Stage II: Inculcation.

If hegemony is to be established, its definitions must be propagated. I shall refer to this process as inculcation. In analyzing the psychological phenomena involved in that process, psychology can help in discerning why people give their tacit consent to the prevalent ideology. As will be shown, classic psychological paradigms can illuminate mechanisms involved in inculcation.

As Gramsci (1971) pointed out, hegemony is propagated by institutions such as the government, schools, churches, community clubs, families, the media, and the work place. Each of these institutions has its chief hegemony agents: politicians, teachers, parents, ministers, employers, etc; and their primary hegemony targets: students, employees, constituents, etc. While the former have the power to define a situation or problem in his/her interest (usually in terms of person-blame or natural causes), the latter have to be subjected to these definitions. The role of the agents is fulfilled through a number of psychological mechanisms. In isolation, each of the psychological phenomena to be examined would account only for a portion of inculcation, but

their compounded effect is likely to be very powerful in the permeation of hegemonic definitions. Understanding how these operate is a first step in counter-acting some of their undesirable results. The list of mechanisms presented below is by no means exhaustive. Other potential psychological processes involved in inculcation include group pressure and social learning.

Subtle inculcation: The effects of self-fulfilling prophecies.

Self-fulfilling prophecy is the occurrence of certain behavioural phenomena as a result of the mere expectation that such events will take place. When expectations favour a certain individual or population, that person or group are likely to benefit from these predictions (Cooper & Good, 1983; Dusek & Gail, 1983; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Conversely, when the prophecies are negative, the subjects are adversely affected (Babad, Inbar & Rosenthal, 1982; Rosenhan, 1973).

Inasmuch as (a) hegemony agents create expectations (conscious or unconscious) about the behaviour of hegemony targets based on hegemonic definitions, and (b) since it has been shown that expectations are likely to influence the course of events in the direction predicted by such prophecies; then (c) it is probable that hegemony agents as well as targets behave according to, and ratify, the expectations prescribed by the former.

Women (Brittan & Maynard, 1984; Burden & Gottlieb, 1987; Hyde & Rosenberg, 1980), homosexuals, disabled individuals, aboriginal people and other minorities (Archibald, 1978; Brittan & Maynard, 1984; Kallen, 1989; Zuniga, 1988) suffer the harsh consequences of the internalization of negative expectations attached to them in our culture. Similar experiences can be told by the poor (Huber & Form, 1973; Sennet & Cobb, 1972) and the colonized (Fanon, 1965).

Kallen (1989) postulates that the internalization by the powerless of the degrading attributes imposed on them by the powerful contributes to the perpetuation of the self-fulfilling cycle. By accepting "genetic inferiority" or "person-blame" factors as the main cause of their misfortune, the former lose confidence and hope in their ability to prosper. As a result, their attempts to transform discriminating social structures are severely hampered and the majority-dominated social order remains largely unchallenged.

Blatant inculcation: The effects of obedience to authority and shaping of behaviour.

Psychological research shows that people not merely obey authority figures but will even perform acts deemed by them to be immoral simply because they are asked to do so by a person of higher perceived status (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). This is one of the most alarming lessons to be learned from Milgram's studies on obedience (Milgram, 1963).

Milgram's research on obedience to authority may be regarded as the strongest experimental support to Gramsci's concept of hegemony. And as it has been shown, blind obedience occurs not only in the laboratory but in real life as well, where people have killed innocent others in response to an authority command (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989; A. Miller, 1986, chap. 7). Through a successful process of indoctrination the executors come to blame the victims for their own death. The latter are viewed as less than human and therefore deserving of that fate.

If subordinates execute orders to harm and kill defenceless individuals, it can be argued that they would have a much easier time obeying and imposing social rules that do not call for murdering civilians but for merely accepting the dominant ideology. Hence, prejudice, racism and other discriminating practices in society are reproduced.

In addition to obedience, inculcation is greatly facilitated by shaping the behaviour of hegemony targets. This is accomplished through the use of behaviour modification principles. Although behaviourism professes the need for social (as opposed to individual) changes (Bandura, 1969; Skinner, 1976), many use it to uphold the status quo (Geiser, 1976; Holland, 1978). In applying behaviour modification principles hegemony agents "accept the victim-blaming definitions which (actually) serve power and attempt to fix, not environments, but the inner nature of individuals" (Holland, 1977, p. 203). Stolz (1978) illustrates how behaviour modification techniques are used to change the individual and not the environment:

Rebellious school children are taught to follow rules; questions are seldom raised about whether the classroom activities are boring or aversive. Alcoholic persons are punished for drinking or trained to make social responses considered more adaptive; questions are seldom raised about the many pressures for the consumption of alcohol, such as cocktail

parties, attractive advertising, and interpersonal activities for which drinking alcohol is an essential entrance behaviour. Homosexuals are shocked in the presence of photographs of males or given orgasmic retraining; questions are only recently being raised about the societal pressures forcing homosexuals to request redirection of their sexual interest (Stolz, 1978, pp. 48-49).

Based on the popularity and wide acceptance of behaviour modification techniques in settings like schools, hospitals and industries, it may well be argued that this efficacious method of behaviour control is highly instrumental in attaining hegemony.

Resigned inculcation: The effects of learned helplessness.

Learned helplessness may be regarded as a state of passivity developed in response to exposure to repeated failure (Seligman, 1975). As the dominant ideology defines failure in terms of personal inadequacies, and individuals who attribute failure to internal factors tend to develop more learned helplessness than those who blame external circumstances (Mikulincer, 1988), it may well be argued that hegemonic definitions tend to promote learned helplessness.

This picture is not inconceivable. Research on the reasons people give for poverty, for instance, lends support to such an assumption (Huber & Form, 1971; Sennett & Cobb, 1971). In their investigation on the relationship between income and ideology, Huber and Form concluded that "individualistic factors were thought much more important than structural... factors in explaining why people were poor" (1973, p. 101). Similarly, a recent study of unemployed managers in the United States found that although they are the victims of a national economic trend, they blame themselves for not having a job. They readily embrace hegemonic definitions of success and failure and apply them to themselves and others in similar situations (Newman, 1988).

Hence, if person-blame definitions are successfully conveyed, as the research reviewed above suggests, then it is not unlikely that many people do not challenge their personal or societal status quo simply because they have acquired a learned helplessness attitude toward it. This proposition gains further support from observations on the behaviour of some colonized people who, by accepting the colonizers' definitions of their problems (e.g., laziness, genetic inferiority, etc.), ceased to oppose domination (Fanon, 1965).

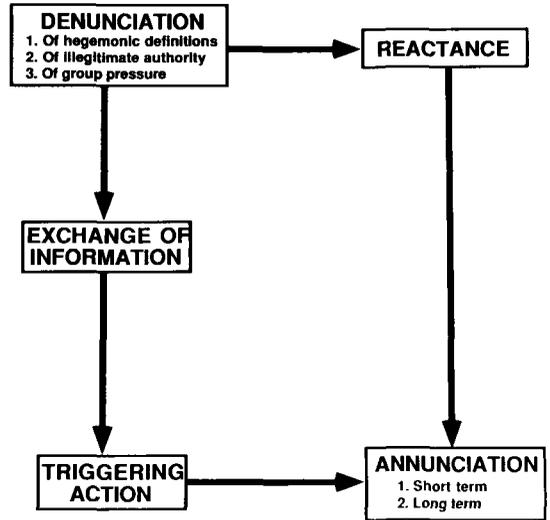


FIGURE 1.
Counter-acting hegemony.

Counter-acting hegemony

Now that the roles of definition and inculcation have been briefly reviewed, the following question may be posed: How can psychology help conscientization? One way psychology can be of assistance is through research on the natural processes of counter-acting hegemony. Some of that research provided the basis for Figure 1, which shows some important steps to be followed.

Denunciation

The first and most crucial stage of this process is denunciation. As previously indicated, denunciation refers to the act of making explicit the mechanisms implicated in preventing an understanding of social problems that may lead to systemic changes. Three such essential mechanisms will be mentioned. The first, hegemonic definitions, can be summarized by saying that they preclude systemic considerations in problem definition. The second, illegitimate authority, refers to the moral stature ascribed to hegemonic agents by virtue of their being regarded experts, or holding positions of power. Power and expertise are not necessarily a source of moral virtue. Yet, it has been found that people tend to change their attitudes on social issues in the direction expressed by individuals whose expertise and qualifications lie in fields unrelated to the issue at hand (McGuire, 1985). The third mechanism to be addressed is group pressure, a potent source of conformity. Walker and Heyns clearly pointed

out that if conformity is to be achieved, the person “need not be aware” (1962, p. 98) of the effects of group pressure. Hence, if reduction of hegemonic conformity is desired, then the person “needs be aware” of these effects.

The denunciation of these three mechanisms may be conducive to three simple realizations:

1. That a certain unsatisfactory condition may not be the result of personal, but rather systemic deficiencies.

2. That people who might have tried to convince one to take personal blame may be wrong.

3. That although groups may pressure one to conform, it is not necessarily beneficial to follow the majority.

Exchange of Information

Exchange of information is the next step in counter-acting hegemony. As Gamson, Fireman and Rytina (1982) report, sharing views with group members about erroneous, unjust or immoral aspects of a situation may prepare the ground for remedial action. This is exemplified in a variation of the Milgram experiment. When 3 subjects, 2 of whom were confederates instructed to rebel against the experimenter who had requested that they deliver the shocks, were in charge of punishing the person for making errors, the remaining actual subject of the investigation tended to rebel as well. Whereas in the baseline condition (only 1 subject) about 63% of the subjects shocked to the limit, only 10% did so when supported by 2 other people (A. Miller, 1986).

Similarly, in the Asch paradigm (1955) the presence of one supporting partner “depleted the majority of much of its power. Its pressure on the dissenting individual was reduced to one-fourth: that is, subjects answered incorrectly only one-fourth as often as under the pressure of unanimous majority” (p. 34).

Exchange of information, then, is important not only in alerting other people about crucial aspects of a situation but also in motivating them to do something about it, i.e., resisting group pressure or rebelling against circumstances perceived as unfair or unjust.

Triggering Action

The next step in counter-acting hegemony is triggering action. Gamson and his associates (1982) contend that it is not enough to exchange information. Groups require the presence of one or more individuals with adequate knowledge and experience on how to activate the rest of the

members. Otherwise, even though a group may perceive a situation as immoral, they will not take action. “Lack of know-how means the critical mobilizing acts are unlikely to occur” (Gamson et al., 1982, p. 146). In other words, the absence of a person with previous political or activist experience of some sort may paralyze a group.

Reactance

Reactance has been defined by Gergen and Gergen as “a negative emotional state that may result when a person’s freedom of choice is reduced” (1981, p. 498). Furthermore, they contend that “reactance can be a source of independence” (Gergen & Gergen, 1981, p. 498). Such a reaction is likely to emerge from the denunciation process. When people realize that hegemonic definitions, for instance, have been designed in large part to constrict their perception of social conditions and consequently their freedom of choice, they may experience reactance. And “the individual who experiences reactance will attempt to reduce it by trying to reclaim the lost freedom” (Gergen & Gergen, 1981, p. 368). Inasmuch as reactance may lead to action to remediate a situation, as some of the research reviewed by Gergen and Gergen (1981) suggest, it is also instrumental in counter-acting hegemony. In Figure 1 it is placed at the same level of denunciation because it is more of a parallel rather than a subsequent stage.

Annunciation

As the figure shows, the vertical and horizontal arrows converge at the annunciation box. In simple terms, this is the stage where the question of what can be done is posed. Short term annunciation pertains to immediate social action designed to improve a specific condition. Long term annunciation refers to the conception of an “utopian” or “ideal” society where human welfare may be maximized. These are by no means easy questions. This, however, should not prevent those dissatisfied with the present state of affairs from trying to provide at least tentative answers.

What of annunciation within the realm of psychology? How can psychology become part of the short and long term annunciation processes? At the short term level of annunciation, suggestions can be divided along the lines of psychologists as practitioners, teachers, and scientists.

As practitioners

Practitioners come in contact with people at all levels of the social ladder. In that capacity they have the opportunity to make the process of hegemony explicit. At the same time, they can make an effort to seriously bear in mind systemic variables affecting the behaviour of their clients; not only in explaining their behaviour but also in suggesting treatment.

The psycho-therapist, social worker or social reformer, concerned only with his own clients and their grievance against society, perhaps takes a view comparable to the private citizen of Venice who concerns himself only with the safety of his own dwelling and his own ability to get about the city. But if the entire republic is slowly being submerged, individual citizens cannot afford to ignore their collective fate because, in the end, they all drown together if nothing is done; and again, as with Venice, what needs to be done is far beyond the powers of any one individual. In such circumstances...the therapist can no longer afford the luxury of ignoring everything that is going on outside the consulting room (Badcock, 1983, pp. 74-75).

As Albee (1981, 1986), Caplan and Nelson (1973), and Sarason (1981a, 1981b, 1982, 1984) have eloquently argued, psychology has not yet overcome its predominant individualistic bias, neither in diagnosis nor in therapy. But psychologists, it should be added, are not the only culprits of such bias. So are most people in the helping professions, including social workers (Leonard, 1975; Mills, 1943; Wilding, 1981; Wineman, 1984).

As educators

As educators, and particularly as educators of teachers, psychologists are presented with the opportunity to challenge their students to question the very definition of problems which constitutes the first step in obtaining hegemony. Freire envisioned this task as a pedagogy of the question. In my view Freire is quite right in his assessment that "educators are using more a pedagogy of answers than one of questions...no matter whether we teach in the primary school, secondary school, or at the university" (Bruss & Macedo, 1985, p. 8). Contrary to a pedagogy of the answer, "which reduces learners to mere receptacles of pre-packaged knowledge" (Bruss & Macedo, 1985, p. 8), Freire's approach stimulates students to doubt, challenge and reject preconceived notions about the social sphere. As

Shor put it, this type of education has the potential "to penetrate the enormous myths that we're all surrounded with and socialized into" (In Martin, 1985, p. 6). Among these myths are the person-blame and "natural" causes definitions of political, cultural, and economic affairs.

But this is not enough. In addition, it is essential to provide people with some tools that will enable them to scrutinize the ideology implicated in the definition of social problems. To begin with, the language in which these definitions are presented is to be examined. In order to do that, it should first be realized that "there is no neutral language or discourse of truth: there are simply different forms of discourse, employed for different purposes" (Hughes, 1986, p. 18). Students will then be in a better position to read a text always "as a constructed *textual world* distinct from the *empirical world*" (Hughes, 1986, p. 18). Hughes' appraisal of the current state of education indicates that "despite the massive amounts of money spent on teaching language...students are not taught the theory and practice of discourse in our schools" (1986, p. 18).

Undermining conformity and mass thinking is another task that psychologists, as teachers, can fulfil. Lessing (1986) has recently envisioned what an educators' message for independent thinking would or should be like:

"You are going to be pressured all through your life to join mass movements, and if you can resist this, you will be, every day, under pressure from various types of groups, often of your closest friends, to conform to them...But you are going to be taught how to examine these mass ideas, these apparently irresistible pressures, taught how to think for yourself, and to choose for yourself (Lessing, 1986, p. 73).

As researchers

As researchers, psychologists can facilitate conscientization by exposing the limitations of individualistic and reductionist research rooted in the Cartesian mode of thinking (Capra, 1982), and by offering alternate paradigms. Bateson (1972) has been influential in furthering a conceptual integration between individual, social, and ecological variables in understanding human behaviour. Along the lines proposed by Bateson, a systemic approach for the study of behaviour in cultural and political contexts has been recently outlined by Sullivan (1984).

The underlying dynamics of hegemonic consent should continue to be explored. Research

by Gamson et al. (1982) and Kelman and Hamilton (1989) provide a sound basis for that. Their analyses help elucidate the processes involved in the acceptance and rejection of unjust social arrangements. Much can be learned about these phenomena from the political developments currently taking place in Eastern Europe.

As professionals

As professionals committed to the promotion of human welfare, all psychologists, I believe, would benefit from undergoing constant self-conscientization. If psychologists are to be a vehicle of conscientization for other people they should be the first ones to subject themselves to this very process. Otherwise, scrutiny of the society of which they are a constituent part will be seriously hindered. Psychologists are not, and cannot, be insulated from inculcation. Yet, it would seem as if we were operating under the premise that we can exclude ourselves from the ubiquitous nature of the hegemonic process (e.g., Larsen, 1986; Prilleltensky, 1989).

Under the heading *Beneficial Activities, Principle IV: Responsibility to Society* of the Canadian code of ethics for psychologists it is recommended that psychologists "participate in the process of critical self-evaluation of the profession's place in society and about the ways the profession might be contributing to or detracting from beneficial societal functioning and changes" (CPA, 1986, p. 17). In my opinion, it would be advantageous to have some built-in mechanisms for self-conscientization in the training of psychologists. One systematic way whereby psychology's functions in either promoting or impeding beneficial societal changes may be evaluated is by courses dealing with

ethics. Such courses, which were very rare in the social sciences a decade and a half ago (Warwick, 1980), provide an opportunity to discuss how the discipline might impact upon the advent of the good society. But this is only one possible route. Workshops, study groups, conferences, etc. are alternative ways.

There still remains the question of long-term annunciation: How do we make progress in delineating the ideal society? Conceiving a social arrangement where the well-being of the population could be advanced is a task psychologists have begun to study, but are not yet well prepared to undertake on their own (Fox, 1985). Such an assignment would be greatly facilitated by collaborating with moral philosophers.

At least two foreseeable barriers would have to be overcome in order to foster this interdisciplinary dialogue. The first has to do with the belief that the psychologist, as scientist, contributes to social betterment by making progress in her/his area of specialty, regardless of how remote this field may be from the social arena. This assumption is rooted in the following syllogism: "social science is science; science contributes to human welfare; therefore social science contributes to human welfare" (Warwick, 1980, p. 31). As argued elsewhere, "unless psychologists extricate themselves from this moral naivete, the advent of annunciation will remain an illusion" (Prilleltensky, 1989, p. 800).

The second source of resistance to be encountered will be psychology's historical quest for independence from philosophy. One can only hope that psychology has reached the necessary level of maturity in which a dialogue with philosophy no longer poses a threat.

RÉSUMÉ

Lorsque les conditions sociales nécessaires à l'existence d'une société bienveillante et à l'avancement du bien-être humain sont manifestement insuffisantes, il incombe aux psychologues la tâche morale de s'engager dans des activités qui favoriseront le bien-être du peuple entier. Toutefois, contrairement aux efforts considérables qu'elle a déployés afin d'assurer un comportement éthique correct envers ses clients individuels, la psychologie a presque oublié ses obligations morales envers la société. Elle peut sans aucun doute contribuer à l'avènement de changements sociaux en rendant explicite le processus par lequel les gens acceptent l'ordre social actuel comme étant le meilleur et en proposant des stratégies qui agiront contre ce phénomène ressenti un peu partout. L'article illustre comment la recherche en psychologie, tout comme le psychologue — à titre d'enseignant, de praticien et de chercheur — peut jouer un rôle important dans la transformation des structures sociales devenues incapables de promouvoir le bien-être humain dans tous les secteurs de la société.

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