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## **The Significance of Psychoanalysis for the Social Sciences**

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I will divide my paper into four parts. First I'll talk about the fundamental relationship between psychoanalysis and social science and its fate from 1920 to 1960. After that I will deal with new developments and approaches that are more or less influenced or based upon former theoretical efforts. Then I will remark on the current relationship between psychoanalysis and social sciences. Finally I will present some thoughts to a critical psychoanalytic-social psychological diagnosis of contemporary late modern society.

### I.

Psychoanalysis has had an important influence on the social sciences during the 20th century. A prerequisite for this development was a certain sociological connectivity, even more, implication of psychoanalysis:

This implication contains an interactionistic psychology of drives, development and personality. Psychoanalysis makes a contribution to social and group psychology (war, religion, culture) and to the analysis of literature and art. It is the only school of psychology that draws up a complete, dynamic picture of personality. So it is suitable to illuminate the inner world of the actor and to enrich and to enlarge theories of subjectivity, identity and socialization.

Psychoanalysis presents itself with these characteristics to a historically irritated and disappointed critical social science that was searching for motives for the stagnation and absence of emancipatory progress during the twenties of the previous century. The Frankfurt School of Sociology (characterised by Fromm, Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse) tried to explore the typical psychic structures of modern capitalistic society in Germany with the aid of Freud's psychoanalysis. It came to believe, that an authoritarian character exists in that country. This character transmits, so the assumption, the expectations of weakening, decline and exploitation of the individual to the next generation via the "family as agency of socialisation". This approach was

developed into a sociopsychological analysis of the national socialist “rupture of civilization”. Taking up Freud’s group psychology, the submission and “collective narcissism” (Horkheimer/Adorno) of the Germans could be understood and the projective character of anti-semitic prejudice could be analysed. In the post-fascist era the members of the Frankfurt School took different directions as far as the meaning of psychoanalysis is concerned. Fromm created a psychoanalytic humanism. He turned away from the psychoanalytic theory of drives and developed a social psychology of human relations in capitalism. Adorno took a more resigned position. With the death of the individual he regarded the task of psychoanalytic social psychology as terminated. Horkheimer at least fears that psychoanalysis will lose its significance for human science (Horkheimer 1948, cited by Dahmer 1980, p. 679) Marcuse, on the other hand, radicalised psychoanalytic social psychology by changing it into a historic materialistic theory of drives. In this way he discovered new perspectives for the subject in the capitalistic society.

In the first half of the twentieth century another great sociologist, Talcott Parsons, made an attempt in the USA to create an integrated structural-functional theory of action also by employing psychoanalytic ideas. For his concepts of the individual actor, of socialization, of deviance and of control especially Freud’s emphasis on incest taboo and his concept of superego played an important role. This approach was broadly criticised for giving priority to maintaining the social order and for not considering the radicality of Freud’s theory of drives enough. Instead, the criticism continues, he took up the ideas of the American psychoanalytic ego psychology (Heinz Hartmann). According to the critics, the need dispositions of the psychic system correspond exactly to the roles found in the social system. Habermas’ “theorem of repression” was directed toward this assumption. It emphasizes the difference between these two systems and the enmity of role-demands and desires. From my point of view, however, an important achievement of the Parsonian theory was the demonstration of the convergence of Mead and Freud.

## II.

These two theoretical traditions regained their influence in Germany after the era of national socialism and provided for a new awakening of sociological interest in

psychoanalysis. Especially the second generation of the critical theory pursued this discussion. It essentially led to the following results:

1. A critical theory of the subject that brought forth a new mediation of psychoanalysis and social science through the theory of forms of interaction.
2. A methodological assessment of psychoanalysis as depth hermeneutics from which followed a new approach of psychoanalytic social research.

1. The critical theory of the subject (Alfred Lorenzer, Klaus Horn) was built upon former critical theory (Adorno, Marcuse). Psychoanalysis was its fundament and it was considered to be a partner with equal rights to the critical theory of society, not only an “assistant science” (Horkheimer 1932 ). “Psychoanalysis as social science” (s. Lorenzer 1971) marked an approach that conceptualised psychoanalysis as a theory of socialization and interaction, without giving up the idea of a resistant subject and of drives. In this sense Lorenzer developed the “theory of forms of interaction” which grasped the construction of personality by interaction in the course of socialization. Thus critical theory of the subject was a step further in comparison to older critical theory. The concept of subjectivity became deeper and more substantial. Especially in the work of Horkheimer and Adorno it had been first of all social philosophical and only in a general way/sense sociopsychological. Now the concept of subjectivity was put in concrete terms from birth on. And it held the tension between society, interaction and internal nature. One cornerstone of this new approach was an opening for the ideas of American pragmatism (Mead) and the linguistic turn in general, which was characteristic for the second generation of critical theory (Habermas 1968a). Using this fundament created by his colleague, Horn made contributions to a critical political psychology.

2. For the first time the epistemological relevance of the psychoanalytic method was appreciated. It consists in methodic self-reflection of the subject of cognition, as Habermas (1968) demonstrated. This self-reflection is made possible by psychoanalytic dialogue. The psychoanalyst opens himself for the transferences of the analytic patient and uses them (in cooperation with his own countertransferences) to discover unconscious conflicts. Lorenzer aptly characterizes this process as reconstruction of destroyed sensual and linguistic symbols. This method of obtaining knowledge of the unconscious could be transferred to the area of social and cultural research. If the difference to the clinical situation is taken into consideration (There is

no patient in the area of social research, and consequently it does not deal with therapy.) the use of countertransference by social or cultural scientists can serve to survey the unconscious content and the unconscious effect of texts, movies, art and architecture. This method has come to be known as “depth hermeneutic cultural analysis” (Lorenzer 1986). Since the last decade of 20th century it was continued by H.-D. König and led to a series of studies about movies, television programs and political texts.

### III.

I would like to mention other newer modes of reception of psychoanalysis in the social and cultural studies, without being able to discuss them in detail. For example J. Butler has supported psychoanalytic assumptions and also ideas in her studies on the subject and on gender. Other authors (J. Benjamin) discussed the female psychological development in a new way, by focusing on psychoanalytic approaches of Klein, Winnicott, etc. In addition there is a lot of work in political psychology using psychoanalysis. Especially Lacan’s approach was the starting point of critical reflections on society and culture, for example, Žižek.

But I will refer mainly to large parts of the current German discussion. They are shaped by two principal directions. On the one hand are the intersubjective sceptics. They deny or give up the claim to psychoanalytical developmental psychology, reduce it to micrological case studies or they claim it only within the frontiers of psychoanalytical developmental psychology in its object-relational and empirical infant psychological varieties. On the other hand stand those, who (not immunizing themselves against these innovations) don’t write of classical theory of drives and keep to a critical theory of socialisation and subjectivity as well as psychoanalytical depth hermeneutic social research, what is derived from that.

The difference between the two camps is concerned with the problem of constructing a stable theoretical and methodological fundament for interdisciplinary cooperation between psychoanalysis and social sciences. R. Reiche for example, a sociologist, who in younger years was a leader of the student movement in Germany and later on became a practising psychoanalyst, concludes, that the efforts, to integrate/mediate psychoanalysis and sociology, have failed and should not be continued. A. Honneth

emphatically prefers an intersubjective interpretation of psychoanalysis to bring it into contact with social sciences. Far away from disputing this, the other formation of authors insists on the perspective of drives and subjectivity in the tradition of the members of the first generation of critical theory, Adorno and Marcuse, and following more (Busch, König, Prokop, Schmid Noerr, Görlich) or less (Brede, Heim, Schneider, Krovoza) the suggestions of Lorenzer and Horn.

I think, that there is enough correspondence between these positions to come to an integration. My suggestion is to form an alliance between the approach of drives and subjectivity (Adorno, Marcuse) on the one hand and the approach of language and intersubjectivity (Habermas) on the other hand. (Busch 2001a) The advantage of this alliance would be to overcome the mutual weaknesses: the lack of an intersubjective and lingual perspective of the older critical theory and the anaemia of a lingual pragmatism free of/without libido. I believe to consider the critical theory of the subject as a theory of interaction forms, by A. Lorenzer, is suitable. It combines the dimensions of inner nature, bodily and sensual subjectivity and of sensual and symbolic interaction. In my opinion this is a chance to continue critical psychoanalytical social psychology in the 21 th century.

#### IV.

Finally social sciences at last intend to analyse the given society, to diagnose its conditions, its structure, its problems and possible developments in the future. This is also true of psychoanalytic social psychology. Its contribution to social sciences is to survey the state and structure of subjectivity, taking into account of course interactional und intersubjective aspects.

Former attempts of the first generation of Frankfort school as the construction of “social character” were criticised as too mechanical. Social conditions (the family as agency of socialization) form the development of the individual, but there is no idea/theory of describing the other way round, to conceptualize (and not only to postulate) autonomous subjectivity. Therefore the critical theory of the subject means a step forward. It is decisive not to use clinical terms as is done in the treatment of psychopathology. Freud’s works on religion and culture can partly serve as a model.

Thus, my own outline of an actual psychoanalytic- social psychological diagnosis of the present is based on Freud's concept of "culture and its discontents" (1930). I claim that it is mainly aggression, destructivity and guilt, and not so much sexuality, that constitute it. The concept is not out-dated because of the sexual freedom of the later 20 th century as a lot of contemporary authors (Bauman...) maintain. Freud's essay, confronting its readers with the fact of world-wide destructive military capacity, culminates in worrying about the future of mankind. This problem has developed (and increased) since Freud's time. Military destructive capacity has remained and is accompanied today by civil destructiveness threatening ecology. Correspondingly, discontent today exists in duplicate. The task of the contemporary subject is to handle this double discontent and it is normally overtaxed by this burdening. The conditions of the fatherless society (Mitscherlich, Marcuse), repressive de-sublimation (Marcuse) and god complex (Richter) provide for a lack of ego strength and for inauthenticity. In everyday life the subject reacts by projections and dissociations and/or narcissistic phantasies of omnipotence. In terms of the critical theory of the subject it interacts in a non-symbolic, clichéd matter. The ideological language of neoliberalism and technology become dominant because they are answered by regressive, symptomatic parts of inner structure.

Currently there is a prominent diagnosis of a French sociologist, A. Ehrenberg, that deals with the enormous increase of depression in the recent decades and is entitled "the exhausted self". My criticism of this approach is, as in numerous previous cases of "applied psychoanalysis", that psychopathological terminology is transferred to the area of social sciences. I therefore have suggested to distinguish between depression as a psychopathology and melancholy as a way of life. If you diagnose a whole society as depressive you get into the dilemma of pathologizing all members and will not be able to find a way which leads to change. For who is the therapist of this society? I claim that melancholy is a normal familiar feeling at all times. Currently it is connected with the double discontent that I mentioned before.

For my purposes I prefer a different current theory of the self, represented by A. Giddens. His analysis of the late modern self, informed and influenced by psychoanalysis, is not shortened to the point of being clinical. In addition to directing our attention to the damage of late modern subjects, his theory also directs our

attention to the positive development opportunities (“pure relationship”, “life politics”). My thinking goes along with his approach in this regard, because melancholy can be understood as a critical ability to mature to deal with the discontent. Melancholy is a sophisticated mood in which the individual is confronted with his suffering in society. On the whole a subject must be equipped with a number of other features: “constitutional intolerance of war” (Freud 1933) and against ecological destructivity, “fear of the world” (Richter), competence in dissociation, “libidinal morality” (Marcuse), capacity for articulation of symbolic forms of interaction that match his own way of life.

It may be correct to speak about the “obsolescence of psychoanalysis” (Marcuse 1965). I hope, however, to have demonstrated that the socio-psychological contributions of psychoanalysis can play an important role in giving the late modern subject support and orientation today and in the future as well.

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