Critical Theory and Psychology[*]

Critical theorists such as Max Horkheimer (Horkheimer, 1932), Jürgen Habermas (McCarthy, 1978) and Axel Honneth (Honneth, 1996) have agreed on the need to appropriate a theory of psychology to underpin their social-theoretical analysis of capitalist society, in particular, a social psychology and a developmental psychology. But as Nancy Fraser has remarked:

> When claims for recognition are premised on a psychological theory of 'the intersubjective conditions for undistorted identity-formation', as in Honneth's model, they are made vulnerable to the vicissitudes of that theory; their moral bindingness evaporates in case the theory turns out to be false. (Fraser, 2003)

The danger of falsification from outside its own domain of research threatens not only a theory of justice, but a critical *social* theory as well. In choosing such thinkers as Freud, Piaget, Kohlberg, Hartmann, Winnicott and Mead, and then sticking to these thinkers despite decades of progress in psychological research, this is exactly what has happened.

The situation is the more serious because some of the thinkers who have been used in the past have not reciprocally appropriated the philosophical sources of critical theory, especially Marx or Hegel. Critical theory is therefore doubly disabled in that it contains elements which escape critique due to inaccessible empirical content, as well as unexamined ideological premises.

I argue that Critical Theory ought to instead seek empirical psychological support in CHAT (Cultural Historical Activity Theory, a.k.a Cultural Psychology). The reservation which has to be made here is that more recent developments in Cultural Psychology have suffered from an exaggerated focus on cognition, child development and education at the expense of insight into serious individual pathologies and non-rational aspects of the psyche which are the focus in Freud and company. A move towards the appropriation of Cultural Psychology by Critical Theory therefore also entails an interest in efforts to contribute to the development of Cultural Psychology. A continued, critical appropriation of Winnicott's insights especially may help heal this deficit. Thinkers such as Wundt, Dewey, Mead, Peirce, Kohlberg, Piaget, Erikson to a degree, and others have already been incorporated into the development of Cultural Psychology, and in my opinion do not require separate consideration. Currents of philosophy such as Symbolic Interactionism and Ego Psychology I prefer to appropriate *via* cultural psychology where possible, i.e., we should be guided by the judgments of cultural psychologists sympathetic to Critical Theory. While Cultural Psychology is a mostly closed book to Critical Theorists, the reverse is not the case - many cultural psychologists are familiar with critical theory.

The History of Cultural Psychology

The story of Cultural Psychology begins in 1924. A year before, the prominent Russian psychologist, Kornilov, had claimed to have applied Marxism to psychology and at the First Soviet Congress on Psychoneurology, proclaimed his version of Behaviourism the official Soviet psychology. Remember that at this time Behaviourism was the dominant psychology in the U.S., and Ivan Pavlov was the young Soviet Union's greatest natural scientific star. Behaviourism also neatly fitted the need of the rising Soviet bureaucracy for expertise in social control.

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[*] Published on the web in June 2006.

At the Second Congress a year later, an unknown student called Lev Vygotsky stepped to the rostrum, denounced Kornilov's behaviourism and won the day. Vygotsky's school was suppressed after his death in 1934, and remained a minority current, surviving by the skin of its teeth to the present day. Behaviourism was restored to its dominant status and remains to this day the dominant current of psychology in Russia.

Vygotsky, a student of linguistics, sociology, psychology and philosophy, was already acquainted with Lukács and had read Marx's 1844 Manuscripts and *Capital* as well as being widely read in philosophy, literature and literary criticism. He was joined by a young Jewish doctor, Alexander Luria, and a student of Kornilov's, Alexei Leontyev, and these three led a school of experimental and theoretical psychology in Russia which now extends across four generations to the present day.

Luria abandoned psychology for neuroscience as a survival strategy during Stalin's purges and founded neuropsychology, world-renowned for his work with brain-damaged war veterans. They were not allowed to travel however and their psychological work was not made available for publication overseas and remained unknown outside the USSR until 1958.

Vygotsky's first work, written for his PhD, was the *Psychology of Art* (Vygotsky 1925). In 1926, Vygotsky was commissioned to write a manual for Soviet teachers (Vygotsky 1926), thus beginning the involvement with educational psychology. In 1929, the group conducted a wide-ranging review in the *Crisis of Psychology* (Vygotsky 1927a) and it is from this work that their distinctive approach to psychology can be dated.

From this time until the present, their practical work has been focused on the education of disabled people (especially the deaf-blind) and disadvantaged children in Soviet orphanages, but covers the entire range, including extensive laboratory work, anthropological expeditions to Soviet Central Asia in the 1920s and the treatment of brain injuries in the 1940s.

After the visit of Michael Cole to the Soviet Union in 1962, and the steady flow of translations from the Russian which followed, a following for Cultural Psychology grew up in the US especially, with Britain, Finland and Brazil also being notable centres. Currently it has adherents across the globe. In Australia, Cultural Psychology is a strong current in educational and child psychology.

Vygotsky's last work, *Thinking and Speech* (Vygotsky 1934), is the most widely known classic, in which Vygotsky describes the independent roots of thinking and speaking and their intersection at a certain stage in the development of the child. The 'unit of analysis' for this investigation Vygotsky designated as 'word meaning'. Alexei Leontyev later developed a variant of the theory in which the 'unit of analysis' were *activities* (Leontyev 1978). To some, this constituted a fundamental cleavage in the school, but such an interpretation is far from obligatory. Rather, I see that Leontyev made a generalisation from Vygotsky's work that is particularly useful in solving a certain range of problems. The concept of 'unit of analysis'[1] (Vygotsky 1929a, chapter 1) remains a focal point of debate within the School however. In the 1960s, the Soviet school also gave birth to a current of Soviet philosophy, represented above all by Evald Ilyenkov (Ilyenkov 1960 & 1974), but there are a range of others such as Mikhailov (Mikhailov 1976) and Lektorsky (Lektorsky 1980).

It is difficult to describe and understand the relation between the Vygotsky School and the official politics and philosophy of the Soviet Union. Overall, they were loyal Soviet citizens who were well aware of the social and political problem that had arisen in their country, and did what was necessary to continue with their work, generally keeping their heads down. By the 1960s however, the School was explicitly though surreptitiously hostile to the regime while remaining committed to Marxism in

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[1] "Unit of analysis' is the concrete simple something, in the Hegelian sense, which is universal for a science. For Marx's *Capital*, the 'unit of analysis' was the commodity. There is also disputation over the definition of 'activity', some leaning to, effectively, 'praxis' others more towards a naturalistic or Fichtean definition.

philosophy and communism in politics. Ilyenkov committed suicide in 1974 apparently out of despair for the future of his country.

The kind of criticism of Marxist dogmatism and orthodoxy which is discernible in Vygotsky's work of the 1920s became politically untenable after 1928, and the School clothed itself in the garb of natural science on one hand and later philosophy on the other. When their work was exported to the US, an environment where the use of Marxism in science was discounted, it lost touch with its Marxist foundations to some extent. On the other hand, in the US, the theory reintegrated itself in to the burgeoning social movements already subjecting scientific consensus to cultural criticism.

Some of the Americans are Marxists, but many have appropriated the theory minus its communist ethical and philosophical foundations. This has facilitated the wide dissemination of the theory, but weakened its theoretical coherence. Even in Russia today, it develops independently of a normative connection to the wider body of Marxist literature. At the same time, as it developed, like any discipline, there has been a growing fragmentation of theory.

The social conditions of life in the pre-1991 Soviet Union has left its mark nonetheless on the theory as developed in Russia, with a distinctly 'modernist' flavour. The different social pressures of developing the science in the West has however led to positive developments as the school is firmly located in 'progressive' layers of educators and workers in the social service sector, in the heart of the imperialist centre. These conditions have, I believe, allowed the theory to shed much of its unwitting constriction by Soviet Marxist orthodoxy, appropriating much of the criticism which Marxism has encountered in the West over the past 50 years.

The moniker "Cultural Psychology" indicates the variant of the theory led by Mike Cole. The variant produced by Alexei Leontyev is known as "Activity Theory". The broader school is generally known as "Cultural Historical Activity Theory" (CHAT), the "historical" denoting a trace of the modernist notion of historical progress. Some would agree with me that "Cultural Psychology" suffers from un undue focus on child development and cognitive aspects of psychology, and supplement "cultural psychology," as a definite and coherent theory of psychology and human development, with a currently unavoidable critical eclecticism. Merlin Donald's "Evolutionary Psychology" (Donald 1991) (not to be confused with the pseudo-science currently travelling under the same name) rests on a distinct body of empirical work in archaeology, palaeontology and neuropsychology as opposed to child development and pedagogy on which cultural psychology has chiefly developed. Donald's work can be regarded as a part of Cultural Psychology.

Vygotsky's Critique of Piaget

Vygotsky built his theory of the cognitive development of children partly in a critique of Piaget (Vygotsky 1934, chapter 2). Twenty-five years would elapse before Piaget would see this critique, and would claim that Vygotsky anticipated his later development (Piaget 1962). The fact remains however that much of Vygotsky's critique stands up today.

The central question was: does learning lead development or does development lead learning? (Elkonin 1978) As is well-known, according to Piaget, the child undergoes a biologically-driven process of development through a series of cognitive stages, and the child can only learn particular skills or operations within a scope determined by their stage of neurological development. Once a given stage of development has been achieved, neurological development opens up new possibilities, and the behaviours characteristic of the former stage die away. The problem with this is that the child's brain would appear to have the cognitive requirements of the society into which they are to grow up already posited within it. Piaget notes that if the conditions for certain skills to develop are not present, these skills will not be acquired, so the culture is reduced a kind of filter applied to an autonomously driven process of unfolding.

On the contrary, according to Vygotsky, with assistance provided by the child's carers, guided by the expectations the carers have for the child according to their own experiences in the relevant culture, the child learns to do things which they are unable to do autonomously. The child learns to complete a newly-learnt task autonomously by internalising the artefacts that adults have offered to assist in the task. Later then, newly-acquired skills may become generalised as they are utilised in different activities taken on by the child autonomously (for example in play, or as the result of further interventions). This *generalisation* of the newly acquired cognitive functions constitutes a *development* in the child. In the absence of successful learning, the relevant biological process of development may be stalled. The conditions of a child's upbringing will leave their mark on the physiology of the mature brain. The path of development is therefore determined by culturally structured interactions with adults and the child's autonomous experimentation with the cognitive resources provided by the culture. Learning leads development.

An example of the difference is found in the interpretation of "egocentric speech." (Luria 1930) Children initially say the words for things in the process of gaining assistance from adults (this is not really yet 'communicative speech' but rather 'instrumental speech', a vocal component of the relevant practice); they continue to vocalise even when they are handling things unaided, as if 'talking to themselves' - and they do not talk to their peers, even if they are playing together. Piaget said that egocentric speech was speech in the process of "fading away" as the child moved to a new stage. On the contrary, for Vygotsky, egocentric speech is a necessary part of mastering the action with which it is associated, and far from "dying away" it becomes *internalised* as "inner speech," in just the same way as we learn to read aloud, then to read silently to ourselves before being able finally to do without even inner speech. This is an archetypal example of how cultural artefacts, (here spoken words) used initially to coordinate activity with other people, are later used to coordinate our own activity internally.

It is easy to see from this why Piaget's theory led to a culturally specific series of developmental stages which failed to understand why children raised in different cultures went through entirely different paths of development. Also, Piaget's theory leads to a false approach to understanding development as it focuses exclusively on what a child is capable of doing autonomously, rather than what they are capable of doing within the cooperative social environment upon which normal development depends. The typical 'scientific' experimental situation, in which the experimental object (i.e., the child, treated as an object of experimentation) is *denied* assistance is contrary to the set-up in which the child, as an emerging subject, normally learns; and in which the parent also learns, incidentally.

Piaget shared with Freud the assumption that development is driven by autonomous processes and drives originating deep within the individual. While all such theories should be treated with suspicion, cultural psychology does not deny the existence of autonomous processes of development and basic drives within the individual organism. We are born not with a *tabula rasa*, but with a very limited set of drives which are 'interpreted' in culturally specific ways according to the kind of interactions the child enjoys as he/she develops.

Vygotsky's Critique of Behaviourism
Vygotsky launched his career with a high profile attack on behaviourism, but he had enormous respect for Pavlov, and critically appropriated Pavlov's methods.

The chief thing is that the behaviourists took as their basic model of action: S → R, i.e., stimulus → reaction, discounting consciousness. Human behaviour can never be comprehended in this way because stimulus and response are mediated by consciousness. An experimental procedure is needed to examine the mediating object. This work began by offering experimental subjects various objects

which could be used as aids in cognitive tasks and observing how the use of these aids could improve performance (and change the S → R matrix) (Vygotsky 1929, Vygotsky 1931, chapter 10, Sakharov 1928) and be *internalised* in cognitive tests. The transition from observable use of artefacts to internal processes utilising ideal images of the objects provides viable experimental access to consciousness. (One is reminded of Freud's use of the 'slip of the tongue' as an insight into the subconscious.)

Further, so long as an experimenter *passively observes* S → R, access to consciousness is blocked. In order to explore consciousness, it is necessary to intervene in the reaction and offer assistance to the experimental subject. This after all replicates the normal condition of human development. Knowledge of consciousness can then be built on the basis of the collaboration between the experimenter and the subject in the construction of new abilities. Understanding the process of internalisation allows the experimenter to trace the construction of consciousness from their beginning in the use of meaningful material objects.

Perhaps Habermas had something like this in mind when he wrote, in defense of his approach to the notion of the subject within "the paradigm of mutual understanding":

> As soon as linguistically generated intersubjectivity gains primacy, … ego stands within an interpersonal relationship that allows him to relate to himself as a participant in an interaction from the perspective of an alter. And indeed this reflection, undertaken from the perspective of the participant, escapes the kind of objectification inevitable from the reflexively applied perspective of the observer. Everything gets frozen into an object under the gaze of the third person, whether directed inwardly or outwardly. The first person, who turns back upon himself in a performative attitude from the angle of vision of the second person, can *recapitulate* the acts it just carried out. In place of reflectively objectified knowledge - the knowledge proper to self-consciousness - we have recapitulating reconstruction of knowledge already employed. (Habermas 1987, XI)

I will return to the question of Habermas's *intersubjectivity* later, but Habermas is in agreement with Cultural Psychology here in insisting that the subject can only be understood *as a subject* and *in relation to another subject*, not as an object in relation to an observer. He goes on to point out, correctly, that such an approach affords the possibility of "reconstructing" the subject and removing the dualism of transcendental and empirical assumptions; what shape would be taken by the empirical investigation of transcendental objects?

Acquisition of Scientific Concepts

In his work on the acquisition of 'scientific concepts' Vygotsky looked at the learning process of adolescents when they first come across scientific concepts (such as 'capitalism') which are inaccessible to the body of knowledge they have acquired in day-to-day life (Vygotsky 1931, chapter 10 and Vygotsky 1934). These studies bring into sharp relief the idea that learning takes place through the intersection of a 'bottom up' kind of knowledge, built on the child's experiences in controlling their own body, managing personal relationships and manipulating objects, and a 'top down' kind of knowledge, which can only be acquired through interaction with social and cultural institutions through the use of concepts. Vygotsky traces the *form* of knowledge as it is found in the infant through a series of stages which do not attain the level of true concepts until adolescence. Even though the child is to all appearances talking about the same thing as the adult, it is only at a certain stage that the child may learn the difference between an arbitrary set of objects, and the *concept* which constitutes the set of objects. Vygotsky (Vygotsky 1934, chapter 5) traces 10 stages in the development of a child's thinking from "trial-and-error" to true concepts. The ability to form true concepts depends on the

ability of the child to acquire an understanding of the universals which underlie the concepts used in a culture.

Culture Psychology, Social Theory and History

Cultural Psychology is not a theory of history though. In general, Cultural Psychology presumes as given some set of practices, languages, beliefs, concepts, means of production, child-rearing and educational institutions, etc., etc., constituting a culture. Although it *touches on* the issue of how culture is *appropriated* rather than simply *acquired* by individuals (I wouldn't put it more strongly than that, and this is part of the legacy), I am not aware of any attempt to extend its ideas to a theory of history or a sociology. Those who have an interest in the topic generally assume that that role is fulfilled by a Marxist theory of history, or simply regard it as belonging to a different discipline.

Collaborative Learning

The leading application of Cultural Psychology, especially in Australia, is the notion of "collaborative learning." This conception of teaching and learning is a development of Cultural Psychology's view of the relation between the teacher and the learner, as well as the relation between the experimental subject and the scientist. That is, this relation is normally one of *collaboration* around some shared project. Unsurprisingly, this notion of "collaborative learning" has been widely appropriated and corrupted by the educational bureaucracies. (The bureaucracies are happy to encourage "team work," but marginalise the notion of *critique*, which is central to any genuine conception of collaborative learning.)

In discussing the problematic model of the doctor-patient relation, as known to Psychoanalysis, Habermas thought that this model is not an appropriate and ethical model for historical development and political enlightenment.

> The generalisation of the physician-patient model to the political practice of large groups thus runs the risk of encouraging an uncontrolled exercise of force on the part of self-appointed elites who dogmatically claim a privileged insight into the truth. (McCarthy 1978, p. 205-7)

In fact, perhaps one of the reasons for the longevity of Psychoanalysis is its capacity to hand over to a patient and the public in general, concepts which they can use for self-analysis. In general, the "talking cure" favoured by Psychoanalysis has somewhat of a flavour of self-emancipation. However, for Cultural Psychology, the leading role of the subject is paramount. In this sense Cultural Psychology stands at the opposite pole from Behaviourism; it is very much about *self*-emancipation.

Appropriation of Object Relations Theory

Although the whole pragmatic tradition has more or less been incorporated into Cultural Psychology, whose philosophical foundations are closely connected with its own, there has been no extended effort within Cultural Psychology to appropriate the work of David Winnicott. This is a serious omission because Winnicott's theory is eminently compatible with Cultural Psychology. Cultural psychology hinges around the use of *artefacts*[2] in mediating a subject's control of their own behaviour; Object Relations Theory hinges around the mediation of *parts of the mother's body* and affective

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[2] There remains some controversy about the meaning of "artefact," and the corresponding definition of "activity." For the Russians, it is crucial that "activity" is coextensive with "life," whereas Mike Cole takes a more pragmatic approach focusing on human activity. It is important however that "artefact" be understood as both material and ideal, and here Mike Cole stands on the same solid ground as Hegel, Marx and Peirce. All attempts to section off symbols as "ideals" from tools and other material objects are bound to lead to confusion.

relations with other people and (secondarily) treasured objects in the development of the subject's character and affective abilities. There is some symmetry then, between the use of *artefacts*, or the use 'objects', whose meaning for the subject hinges on innate drives, rather than culturally produced meanings.

The problem is of course that Winnicott's theory rests on the underlying theoretical framework of Psychoanalysis, which is inherently foreign to Cultural Psychology, resting as it does on the unfolding of innate, biologically programmed drives, the scientific evidence for which is frequently slight. There is also the problem that Object Relations Theory is built on a relatively narrow empirical base within the psychoanalytic profession.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that a generalisation of the notion of "artefact" to include meaningful objects, not just objects whose meaning is constructed socially, and some focused work on the emotional aspects of learning and the application of the methods which have been applied to cognitive development to emotional and personality development could be encompassed within the existing conceptual framework of Cultural Psychology. In CHAT-speak, an appropriate unit of analysis is required in order to theorise emotional and cognitive development in a single theory. Cultural psychology is already trying to come to grips with the significance of the 'emotional hit' that is always associated with breakthroughs in learning and development. My own view is that the appropriate unit of analysis is the *subject*.

Winnicott can shed light on the formation of character and personality in a way which still escapes Cultural Psychology but is indifference to the development of the intellect. In *Human Nature*, he states:

> intellect depends fundamentally on brain tissue endowment. (Winnicott 1988, p. 12)

and thereafter discounts any concern with intellectual development, regarding it, in the absence of brain injury or disease, as a matter of indifference to human happiness and therefore of no interest. Cultural Psychology tends to take the complementary approach, taking it for granted that, in the absence of abuse or disease, character will develop satisfactorily so long intellectual development is satisfactory. (This observation is somewhat harsh; included under 'intellectual development' would be the acquisition of an objective and healthy perception of oneself, moral development, skill in handling social relations, etc., just as much as handling artefacts, etc. Nevertheless, Cultural Psychology still relies a lot on eclecticism in dealing with matters of emotional and character development however.)

Further, Winnicott's findings are *culturally relative*, just like Piaget's. In some cultures children do *not* go through the stereotypical process of successful separation from their mother which is described in *Play and Reality*, but, for example, are cared for by a different woman every day around the tribe, with no ill effects. (Cole 2004)

"Natural Philosophy"

When Honneth (Honneth 1996) summarises Winnicott and Mead, we have a reasonable story for the development of personality in infancy, which should be the case, as this is Winnicott's actual object of study, and an interesting insight into the role of interpersonal interactions in the formation of a mature self-consciousness. But when Honneth moves to the social and political sphere Winnicott and Mead are of no use at all, since their observations belong to different domains of action. There is no basis for 'philosophically' extending Winnicott's empirical psychological work with children to adults and social movements, independently of empirical psychological research with adults and social movements. But Honneth is not in a position to do this. All we have is that the general 'philosophical schema' which Honneth proposes for social development works for infant development and interpersonal relations as well. In fact, we have a *leap* from individual psychology to social action with

no bridge. We have a generalisation whose content is actually different in its specific application in different domains.

Horkheimer warned against this kind of generalisation:

> As soon as a concept is thought out in isolation, it has a firm meaning; if, however, it goes into a complex intellectual construction, it acquires in this whole a particular function. (Horkheimer 1934, p. 236)

The point about cultural psychology is that is a theory with a very substantial empirical base in *how* individuals appropriate or fail to appropriate or challenge the culture in which they participate. The question of bridging a gap between the individual and the social does not arise for cultural psychology because that gap is precisely its home territory - it *is* the bridge.

Surely this is what Habermas was calling for. Citing Thomas McCarthy:

> For Habermas, sociology is always at the same time social psychology.
> 'A sociology that accepts meaning as a basic concept cannot abstract the social system from structures of personality; it is always also social psychology. The system of institutions must be grasped in terms of the imposed repression of needs and of the scope for possible individualisation, just as personality structures must be grasped in determinations of the institutional framework and of role qualifications.'(Habermas)
> In short, the reproduction of society is based on the reproduction of competent members of society, and the form of individual identity are intimately connected with the form of social integration. (McCarty 1978, p. 354)

The 'Philosophical' Appropriation of Psychology

In Habermas's appropriation of Piaget and Honneth's appropriation of Winnicott and Mead, the reasoning seems to include the following idea: here is a theory which has empirical foundation in psychology; I can generalise this theory so that its object is not an individual human being, but a social formation of some kind; once instantiated in this new domain, we have a theory of history or social movements, or whatever, which is plausible because it is symmetrical with an empirically verified theory of psychology.

This move is unjustifiable. Scientific theories can provide a source of inspiration, but they cannot provide validity outside their own domain of research. (Vygotsky 1927, chapter 8) It is "natural philosophy."

In the case of efforts to appropriate Piaget, all we have is questionable evidence[3] for a series of pre-programmed stages of cognitive development in very young children. The only use they have for social and historical development is as possible *metaphors*.

For example, according to Thomas McCarthy:

> Habermas's explication of the key notions of a developmental logic and of levels or stages of learning are adapted from the Piaget tradition in cognitive psychology. The idea underlying ontogenetic studies of this type is that the various abilities of the adult subject are the result of an integration of maturational and learning processes. ... Social evolution can then be thought

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[3] Piaget's stages of development have acquired the status of universal standards. It is not so much the definition of the stages themselves as the theory of how children progress through these stages which is disputed, and in this respect there is widespread agreement that Piaget's theory is inadequate. (Cole & Cole 2004)

of as a bidimensional learning process, the stages of which can be described structurally according to a developmental logic. ...

Habermas's explication of the key notion of a developmental logic and of levels or stages of learning are adapted from the Piaget tradition in cognitive psychology." (*The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*, p. 246-7)

Nice idea, but the fact is that psychological development does not replicate the stages of cultural development, just as ontogenetic development does not replicate phylogenetic development or vice versa.

The "biogenetic hypothesis"

Piaget's own efforts to introduce these stages into historical development[4] failed totally. The "biogenetic hypothesis" posits the identity of stages of development in these different domains.

The fundamental hypothesis of genetic epistemology is that there is a parallelism between the progress made in the logical and rational organisation of knowledge and the corresponding formative psychological processes. (Piaget, 1968)

This simply doesn't hold up. Each line of development has to be theorised in its own right, including the *interconnection* between development on the biological, social and personal planes.

Ontogenetic development rests on the fact that an infant is a completely helpless organism utterly reliant on the support and direction of its carers, whereas the adults of both our hominid ancestors (if phylogenetic development is mooted) and our tribal predecessors were supremely competent individuals capable of surviving in the wild alone and unaided, and could reproduce their entire culture from their own resources. In other words, two structurally distinct processes of development are posed, each of which can be understood only by different methods, and exhibit at a basic level a quite different "logic." Consequently, absolutely *no* conclusions can be drawn from the structure of ontogenetic development for the structure of cultural-historical development, other than those based on the *actual relations* between the two processes, as opposed to transposition of ideas from one domain to the other.

So when Thomas McCarthy says:

... social evolution can be comprehended as a *learning process*, not in the sense of behaviouristic psychology ... but in the sense of cognitive developmental psychology [i.e., Piaget - *AB*]. Central to this approach is the notion of a *developmental logic* that incorporates a distinction between formally characterised levels of learning and the learning processes that are possible at each level. (McCarthy 1978, 246)

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[4] See for example (Piaget 1968 or marx.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/piaget.htm) where Piaget claims that the foundations of Cantor's set theory is understood by both young children and tribal people. This was of course news to that generation of victims of the "New Mathematics" built on the basis of Piaget's ideas about mathematical knowledge.

"Cantor developed [set] theory on the basis of a very fundamental operation, that of one-to-one correspondence. ... Cantor did not invent it, in the sense that one invents a radically new construction. He found it in his own thinking; it had already been a part of his mental equipment long before he even turned to mathematics, because the most elementary sort of sociological or psychological observation reveals that one-to-one correspondence is a primitive operation. In all sorts of early societies it is the basis for economic exchange, and in small children we find its roots even before the level of concrete operations. ... It is one very striking instance in which a knowledge of the psychological foundations of a notion has implications for the epistemological understanding of this notion. In studying the development of the notion of number in children we can see whether or not it is based simply on the notion of classes of equivalent classes or whether some other operation is also involved." (Piaget 1968, Ch 1)

we have succeeded in combining the appropriation of a questionable, culturally bound psychology by means of a logically unjustifiable metaphor also borrowed from Piaget.

The conception of history as a kind of learning process is not ruled out of course. Only there is no basis for grounding such a conception in Piagetian cognitive psychology, or for that matter on a better theory of cognitive development by means of metaphor. However, it seems self-evident that a theory of cognitive psychology which dealt with the relationship between social knowledge (cultural artefacts, child-rearing practices, technology, languages, institutions, etc.) and the learning processes of the individuals who act out these processes, would be well placed to ground such a concept without recourse to metaphor.

Frankfurt School's appropriation of Freud

The Frankfurt School felt the need for a grounding in empirical psychology from the beginning and it was Freud that the first and second generations turned to. Here it is not so much a question of the scientific credentials of Psychoanalysis, but rather the vast mass of theorising which has been made within the Freudian paradigm and integrated within Critical Theory, which is simply a fact. Further, it seems that whatever we make of the Freudian legacy, there still remains no comprehensive replacement for it.

I do however think that it is time to move on. Winnicott provides a clue about a possible route towards a new ground. However, Critical Theorists are not in a position to do the empirical work that would be required for a new theory of the development of character and personality, and we must needs be eclectic at this time.

Perhaps if we can be successful with what is at hand at the moment, the way forward for a Critical Theory which understands what really drives people, will become clearer.

Theories of Justice

Personally, I think that a theory of justice cannot provide the key insights on its own. This is because what people see as just and unjust depends on how people identify themselves and their conception of the Good. Justice has the capacity to *mediate* between rival conceptions of the good life, but it cannot comprehend the formation of those rival conceptions themselves.

The move towards adopting a theory of justice as the key element of a critical theory is perhaps a turn away from the possibility of doing anything more than *mediating between* mutually exclusive and permanent cultural and political divisions. But surely this is too hasty?

Further, conceptions of justice rely on underlying conceptions of identity and self-consciousness. Without a theory of self-consciousness, no theory of justice can provide a basis for critical theory. Cultural Psychology has a role to play here.

Max Horkheimer

The Frankfurt School was founded around a single question:

> the question of the connection between the economic life of society, the psychical development of individuals, and the changes in the realm of culture. (Horkheimer 1993, p. 11)

To this end, Horkheimer proposed an interdisciplinary research program which would include survey methods adapted from American social research.

> the question today is to organise investigations stimulated by contemporary philosophical problems in which philosophers, sociologists, economists, historians, and psychologists are

brought together in permanent collaboration to undertake in common that which can be carried out individually in the laboratory in other fields. (Horkheimer 1993, p. 9)

According to Martin Jay:

Social philosophy, as Horkheimer saw it, would not be a single *Wissenschaft* (science) in search of immutable truth. Rather, it was to be understood as a materialist theory enriched and supplemented by empirical work, in the same way that natural philosophy was dialectically related to individual scientific disciplines. The Institut would therefore continue to diversify its energies without losing sight of its interdisciplinary, synthetic goals. (Jay 1973)

I question the attribution of this notion of critical theory as a "natural philosophy" to Horkheimer, and the observation quoted above (Horkheimer 1934, p. 236) indicates that his idea of collaboration was quite different. Circumstances prevented the project of bringing such a range of specialists into a single collaborative effort, so Critical Theory has developed through the appropriation of specialist empirical research conducted elsewhere. This arrangement is inevitable, but psychologists are just as able to appropriate the work of Critical Theorists as the reverse.

Horkheimer defined the question more specifically this way:

which connections can be demonstrated between the economic role of a specific social group in a specific era in specific countries, the transformation of the psychic structure of its individual members, and the ideas and institutions as a whole that influence them and that they created? (Horkheimer 1931, p. 12)

Outlining a variety of tasks that require psychological research, Horkheimer remarks:

The economic appears as the comprehensive and primary category, but recognising its conditionedness, investigating the mediating processes themselves, and thus also grasping the results depend upon psychological work. (Horkheimer 1932, p. 125)

and further that:

 Historical transformations are drenched with the mental and the intellectual; individuals in their groups and within various conditioned social antagonisms are mental entities, and history thus needs psychology (Horkheimer 1932, p. 127)

Turning to the aims of Critical Theory, Horkheimer defined criticism this way:

By criticism, we mean that intellectual, and eventually practical effort which is not satisfied to accept the prevailing ideas, actions, and social conditions unthinkingly and from mere habit; effort which aims to coordinate the individual sides of social life with each other and with general ideas and aims of the epoch, to deduce them genetically, to distinguish the appearance from the essence, to examine the foundations of things, in short to really know them. (Horkheimer 1939, p. 270)

Clearly, a psychology which regards the human psyche as fundamentally ahistorical cannot contribute to this task, other than as an object of critique.

Psychology no longer has to do with human beings as such. Rather, it must differentiate within each epoch the total spiritual powers available within individuals - the strivings at the root of their physical and intellectual efforts, and the spiritual factors that enrich the social and individual life process - from those relatively static psychic characteristics of individuals, groups, classes, races, and nations that are determined by the overall social structure: in short, from their character. (Horkheimer 1932, p. 119)

Which is surely nothing less than a call for a Cultural Psychology.
Horkeheimer speculated on questions which psychology could illuminate.

There exists neither a mass soul nor a mass consciousness. The vulgar concept of the 'mass' seems to have been shaped by observations of crowds during tumultuous events. While human beings may react stereotypically when they are part of such accidental groups, comprehension of these reactions is to be sought in the psyche of the individuals constituting them, which is itself determined by the fate of the social group of which they are members. A differentiated group psychology - that is, enquiry into those instinctual mechanisms common to members of the important groups in the production process - takes the place of mass psychology. Above all, this group psychology must investigate the extent to which the function of the individual in the production process is determined by the individual's fate in a certain kind of family, by the effect of the socialisation at this point in social space, but also by the way in which the individual's own labour in the economy shapes the forms of character and consciousness. It is necessary to investigate the genesis of psychic mechanisms that make it possible to keep latent the tensions between social classes that lead to conflicts on the basis of social conflicts. (Horkheimer 1932, p. 121)

Horkheimer did not see this task simply in sketching abstract general profiles of the consciousness of individuals in the various social groups, but rather very much understood the need to go to the difference between a movement "in itself" and a movement "for itself." Is such a task one for psychology? Horkheimer reflected on this problem:

Psychology has observed that ... In the absence of such organisation the leader of an uprising can never completely command his people, while in contrast the general can almost always do so. But this approach which takes the relationship between leader and mass as a special problem, remains in need of psychological sophistication. (citing Freud here) The concept of '*habitude*' to which French research ascribes an important function in the treatment of social-psychological questions, superbly describes the result of the process of socialisation: the strength of psychological dispositions that lead to social action demanded of individuals. But this must be pursued more deeply in order to understand the origin of this outcome, its preproduction, and its continuous adaptation to changing social processes. This is only possible on the basis of insights gained from the analysis of individuals. (Horkheimer 1932, p. 122)

Jürgen Habermas

In his theory of communicative action, Habermas takes a step towards the standpoint of Cultural Psychology, but stops short, somewhat closer to the standpoint of George Herbert Mead. For example:

When ego carries out a speech act an alter takes up a position with regard to it, the two parties enter into an interpersonal relationship. The latter is structured by the system of reciprocally

interlocked perspectives among speakers, hearers, and non-participants, who happen to be present at the time. (Habermas 1987, p. 296-7)

He cites "genetic structuralism", i.e., Piaget, as a source here, but I think wrongly, though the accompanying claim is valid.

As can be shown in connection with Jean Piaget's genetic structuralism, reconstructive and empirical assumptions can be brought together in one and the same theory. In this way, the spell of an unresolved back-and-forth between two aspects of self-thematisation that are as inevitable as they are incompatible is broken. Consequently, *we do not need hybrid theories* any more to close the gap between the transcendental and the empirical. (my italic, Habermas 1987, p. 298)

Cultural Evolution and Phylogeny

There has been a longstanding belief that cultural evolution *succeeded* a completed process of biological evolution in the creation of the modern human being. As shown by Merlin Donald (Donald 1991) this is simply not the case: the human species itself is the product of the co-evolution of hominids and the cultural environment they created.

This is in contrast to Habermas's view:

Societal learning is based on individual learning. Habermas suggests that the relevant learning mechanisms belong to the basic equipment of the human organism. ... In the theory of social evolution, learning mechanisms play a role vaguely analogous to that played by mutations in the theory of biological evolution: they produce an evolutionarily relevant variety. Whereas individual learning processes - since they do not affect the genetic constitution of the organism - are unimportant for biological evolution, the results being at the socio-cultural level can be passed on as part of the tradition. In this sense, cultural tradition serves as a medium for preservation and handing on variety-producing innovations. (McCarthy 1978)

The dividing lines are not so neat. Cultural Psychologists accept, though, Habermas's emphasis that the results of social learning are by no means necessarily adaptive in the longer term, but expresses the relation this way:

First, it is possible to consider an artefact to be the cause of a fitness-increasing outcome when it is in fact fitness-decreasing. Such errors can come about because artefact-mediated cultural practices that are initially fitness-increasing may have long-term negative consequences ...
Second, I believe it is an error to assume that the fact of cultural mediation implies the total independence of human development from phylogenetic constraints. ... over millions of years of phylogenetic history, creatures in the line to *Homo sapiens* elaborated their artefact-mediated interactions with the physical and social environment even as the biological properties of these artefact-using creatures were undergoing organic evolution. (Cole 1996, p. 165)

Public and Mass

The original idea outlined by Habermas in his doctoral thesis posited a conception of the public sphere which contrasted the conception of "mass" and "public" (to use the terms Habermas borrowed from C Wright Mills:

... a critical authority in connection with the normative mandate that the exercise of political and social power be subject to publicity *or* as the object to be molded in connection with a staged display of, and manipulative propagation of, publicity in the service of persons and institutions, consumer goods, and programs. (Habermas 1989, p. 236)

went to the problem of subjectivity. Habermas's formulatied this problem in terms of relations between individuals, the state and the organisations which mediate that exchange:

The degree to which an opinion is a public opinion is measured by the following standard: the degree to which it emerges from the intra-organisational public sphere constituted by the public of the organisation's members and how much the intra-organisational public sphere communicates with an external one formed in the publicist interchange, via the mass media, between societal organisations and state institutions. (Habermas 1989, p. 248)

This poses the problem in terms which resonate with Activity Theory in particular. But Habermas instead takes up the paradigm of "communication." Attractive as this approach would seem, it may lead the enquiry astray.

Subject and Lifeworld

Habermas seeks a pragmatic interpretation of the Hegelian concept of the Subject:

Hence, the theory of communicative action can reconstruct Hegel's concept of the ethical concept of life (independently of premises of the philosophy of consciousness). (Habermas 1987, p. 316)

For Habermas, the lifeworld constitutes a *resource* or *background* to communicative action:

the rational potential of speech is interwoven with the **resources** of any particular given lifeworld. To the extent that the lifeworld fulfils the resource function, it has the character of an intuitive, unshakeably certain, and holistic knowledge, which cannot be made problematic at will ... This amalgam of background assumptions, solidarities, and skills bred through socialisation constitutes a conservative counterweight against the risk of dissent inherent in processes of reaching understanding that work through validity claims. (Habermas 1987, p. 326)

But the formulation closing this lecture is again close to the standpoint of Cultural Psychology, by referring to the role of the lifeworld in *mediating* communicative action:

As a resource from which interaction participants support utterances capable of reaching consensus, the lifeworld constitutes an equivalent for what the philosophy of the subject had ascribed to consciousness in general as synthetic accomplishments. ... *concrete* forms of life replace transcendental consciousness in its function of creating unity. In culturally embodied self-understandings, intuitively present group solidarities, and the competencies of socialised individuals that are brought into play as know-how, the reason expressed in communicative action is *mediated* with the traditions, social practices, and body-centred complexes of experience that coalesce into *particular* totalities. These particular forms of life, which only emerge in the plural, are certainly not connected with each other only through a web of family resemblances; they exhibit structures common to lifeworlds in general. But these universal

structures are only stamped on particular forms of life through the medium of action oriented to mutual understanding by which they have to be reproduced. (Habermas 1987, p. 326)

But the fundamental setting-off point is wrong. In countering Foucault's and others attempt to dissolve the subject into the structure, rather than taking the position of Marx and Hegel which conceives the individual, the lifeworld and the society in unity, Habermas *accepts* the individual-as-subject and sets of from the notion of *communicative* action. That is, he posits initially subjects which *then* "communicate" with one another, in order to arrive at "mutual understanding."

> Participants draw from this *lifeworld* not just consensual patterns of interpretation (the *background* knowledge from which propositional contents are fed), but also normatively reliable patterns of social relations (the tacitly presupposed solidarities on which illocutionary acts are based) and the competencies acquired in socialisation processes (the *background* of the speaker's intentions). (Habermas 1987, p. 314)

Furthermore, Habermas misses an important aspect of the emancipatory potential inherent in this relation of the individual to their lifeworld.

> interaction participants no longer appear as originators, who master situations with the help of accountable actions, but as *products* of the traditions in which they stand, of the solidarity groups to which they belong, and of the socialisation processes within which they grow up. This is to say that the lifeworld reproduces itself to the extent that these three functions, which transcend the perspectives of the actors, are fulfilled: the propagation of cultural traditions, the integration of groups by norms and values, and the socialisation of succeeding generations. (Habermas 1987, p. 299)

A concrete consideration of the process of "growing up" in a lifeworld must unpack the notion of "socialisation" to disclose the fact that individuals must *re-invent*, appropriate and to a greater of lesser extent, challenge, reconstruct and transform the lifeworld. Such a notion is self-evidently beyond the horizon of "genetic structuralism." Look at what 13-year-old girls are doing with texting these day: this is certainly "using the resources of the lifeworld," but it cannot be adequately described as a process of "socialisation."

What is missed by the intersubjective standpoint, whether in Mead or Habermas, or in any of the philosophical systems derived from the Kojèvean "master-servant dialectic" is that intersubjectivity is always a *mediated* process. This notion cannot be adequately grasped with the notions of "resource" and "background." In the most atomistic conception of intersubjectivity, what is missed is the *hexis* (cf '*habitude*') and the culturally determined needs, expectations and competencies of each party to the interaction, and the fact that cultural artefacts are not just drawn upon by either subject to *express themselves* but are *used*, but in the process of being used, as 'carriers' of subjectivity, *intercede* between the subjects as a third party. Such a conception cannot be made sense of without utilising a more decentred conception of the subject.

It is difficult to elaborate on this point without either entering into detail on the psychological matters, or going into the Hegelian concept of the Subject. It is not a question of an individual subject on one side and a collective or social subject on the other. Cultural Psychology provides some insight into how this difficult conception can be implemented within a scientific theory, but it is not easily summarised. Like Hegel, we must begin by letting go of the idea of making the fundamental division of reality that between the ideal and the material. Concomitant with this is the letting go of the

individualistic concept of the subject and a letting go of the idea of language as basically a signalling or *communication* system.

According to Merlin Donald (Donald 1991), human beings evolved from our hominid predecessors for about two-and-a-half million years, during which culture was the key component of the ecological niche, before speech emerged half-a-million years ago. Language is important, but it is just a part of the entirety of material culture.

Further, while Habermas takes "communication" as one of three "functions" of language, each constitutes a form of expression by one subject to another, i.e., *all* are essentially communicative. However, Vygotsky's developmental analysis of language demonstrates that communication is neither the original nor the essential function of language; language *becomes* communicative. (Vygotsky 1934)

One way of approaching this problem is the idea that before people can communicate (in the broadest sense), a common language is not even strictly necessary, but what *is* required is something to talk about. More precisely, there must be some common project in which they either collaborate or struggle against one another in, or probably, both.

By the time of writing *Inclusion of the Other*, Habermas is hard-pushed to identify his disagreements with John Rawls.

> The following scenario does not depict an 'original position' but an ideal-typical development that could have taken place under real conditions. ...
> In the absence of a substantive agreement on particular norms, the participants must now rely on the 'neutral' fact that each of them participates in *some* communicative form of life which is structured by linguistically mediated understanding. Since communicative processes and forms of life have certain structural features in common, they could ask themselves whether these features harbour normative contents that could provide a basis for shared orientations. (Habermas 1998, p. 39)

One gets the image in this book, of a group of debaters whose only common interest is the negotiation of rules of debate. The point is that it is not "having something in common" which constitutes the basis for mutual recognition, but *participation in some form of collaboration*, even if that is only competing for a shared resource.

Habermas is right in indicating the necessity to generalise the notion of social action from its exclusive focus on labour.

> In the theory of communicative action, the feedback process by which lifeworld and everyday communicative practice are intertwined takes over the mediating role that Marx and Western Marxism had reserved to social practice. (Habermas 1987, p. 316)

The point is not just to add everyday communicative action to the labour process, but rather to *generalise* the notion of social practice to include the entirety of practices by means of which people produce and reproduce their lives. In this sense it is wrong to privilege language and intersubjective communication in the way that Habermas does.

In the Introduction to *Theory and Practice* Habermas claims:

> It is certainly meaningful to conceive social systems as entities which solve objectively posed problems by means of supra-subjective learning processes. (Habermas, 1974, p. 12)

I think Habermas is correct here. But if learning is deemed to be a process based on the unfolding of a genetically determined program, the understanding of history becomes entirely mystical. Either

that or we must make a complete break between "supra-subjective learning" and real, human learning. Clearly, institutions "contain" knowledge and "learn" in a way that is distinct from the way human beings know and learn, but it hard to see how a theory of individual learning can leave untouched the way in which knowledge resides in social relations or how a theory of "supra-subjective learning" can bypass the process by which the individuals performing the learning process themselves learn. It seems to me that there is a clear opening here for Cultural Psychology.

Axel Honneth

Honneth claims in his Struggle for Recognition:

> I attempt to develop, on the basis of Hegel's model of a 'struggle for recognition', the foundations for a social theory with a normative content. ... The systematic reconstruction of the Hegelian line of argumentation ... leads to a distinction between three forms of recognition. (Honneth 1996, p. 1)

That is, we are to have a *general notion* which has three forms, each of which are to be substantiated in quite different domains of social action: infancy, personal development and political action. It is my contention that this project constitutes a kind of 'natural philosophy' against which Horkheimer warned (though Martin Jay seems to think that "natural philosophy" is exactly what Horkheimer wanted).

Further, I contend that while claiming to use Hegel's model as a basis, he abandoned the Hegelian model of subject which alone made it possible for Hegel's notion of the struggle for recognition to have such a wide scope without recourse to "natural philosophy."

In order to achieve what Honneth intended it would be necessary to firstly take account of the Hegelian notion of the Subject, albeit stripped of its idealist conception, something which is found in both Horkheimer and Habermas to a degree, *and* concretely unify the domains of personal and social action in a notion of recognition. He does neither.

Broadly, what Honneth does in "The Struggle for Recognition" is to demonstrate that a notion of recognition fits Winnicott's description of the process of personal development which an infant goes through in gaining independence from the support of its mother, and then showing that the same general notion, also fits Mead's concept of the development of self-consciousness through the development of successful interpersonal relations with other people, and then further proposes that the same notion of recognition can be shown to describe the successful formation of a citizen through the gaining of key elements of social status in society. Thus, he shows, his notion of recognition has a global scope, describing the requirements for and the process of successful personal development at the three key *levels* of social action.

But this is fails to substantiate a true concept of recognition for what we have is an abstract comparison of a general philosophical notion with three more or less defensible notions in different domains of research. Whether or not one accepts a thesis that these three processes follow the same "logic" (along the lines of the biogenetic hypothesis) is neither here nor there. The logic has been demonstrated (or not, according to how you see the evidence) in three different formulations, and the abstract similarity of the three processes is of use only for the compulsive systematiser.

What is *actually* required is a notion which *unifies* the three "levels" of social existence *concretely*. Hegel was able to approach such an aim, within the severe limitations imposed by the limited state of positive knowledge in these domains in his time, because the notion of recognition and the notion of subject he was using was abstracted from the entire field, and specifically brought together in a single notion, the moments of individual, particular and universal. But this notion of subjectivity has been lost in Honneth. Honneth's return to the early Hegel is a very appropriate move, but he does not

appropriate enough from that move, only further abstract general forms. What is necessary, in my view, is to recover the Hegelian notion of subject, which is the basis for the conception of the person and the society in a single idea of recognition.

For this latter task, the only psychology we can draw upon is Cultural Psychology.

Cultural Psychology does not itself provide a theory of the development of social movements and labour struggles, let alone the formation of a mode of distribution. However, it can inform the questions of psychology raised for example with the question of what motivates individuals to participate in social movements or labour struggles, the kind of questions enumerated by Horkheimer.

What Honneth does however, is to treat social movements and labour struggles as phenomena of "mass psychology" in failing to distinguish between a mass of people sharing a common psychological condition (lack of recognition) and an organised group of people making a collective claim (e.g. recognition) and sharing a common conception of the good - the difference between a movement "in itself" and a movement "for itself."

Perhaps in a world where workers all have individual contracts, it would make sense, but not in a world where collective social action is the norm.

Honneth's appropriation of Winnicott

If Honneth's notion of recognition is to be valid for social movements then we ought to be able to use Winnicott's Object Relations Theory as a metaphor by way of an Hegelian subject. So, how would this sit with the development of an 'infant' social movement? What we should have is that the infant social movement, totally dependent for its survival on the parent, launches an *attack* on the very object of its desire. At the same time, the parent subject is absorbed in its care for the infant social movement. By withdrawing from the attack without ceasing to sustain the infant social movement, both the parent subject and the infant social movement realise their autonomy. So far as I can see this description 'works' for a narrow class of institutional devolution, and little else.

Of course, Honneth does not have in mind the Hegelian subject, so the fact that this metaphor fails does him no harm. For Honneth, social movements are not subjects, but just arbitrary sets of individuals, each struggling for self-realisation. So recognition as explicated by Honneth remains a concept of *individual psychology*. Insofar as his appropriation of Winnicott's description of the conditions for successful progression through infancy is concerned, it sheds no light on historical development at all, over and above what it already had in Winnicott's hands.

Honneth's appropriation of Mead

Mead, who engaged in some brilliant speculation but so far as I know never did any empirical work in psychology at all, is a relatively minor historical figure on broadly the same landscape on which cultural psychology operates. Mead never published his work, but his students collected his lecture notes and other unpublished work and published them; they went on to found a school of social psychology called "Symbolic Interactionism," a tendency which continues to this day, but remains marginal and limited to the USA. It can be regarded as one of the contributing currents to Cultural Psychology as it exists in the US. Mead goes as far as the interpersonal, but he does not really come to grips with the relationship of the psyche to the cultural and historical development of society; he is concerned, we could say, with the 'social' but not the 'societal'. This failure was a major contributing factor to the decline in Symbolic Interactionism in the 1960s.

If you are going to appropriate Mead's speculations in the 1930s, then it is hard to understand why you would overlook a fully developed school of empirical psychology, with theoretical foundations far broader, but inclusive of Mead, and continuous up to the present day, unless one is simply trying to avoid the taint of Marxism. Mead is good, but it's like taking an old penny out of treasure chest.

Mead's schema is easily generalised to 'inter-subjective' relations in the general 'philosophical' sense of the Hegelian subject. This move is possible because Hegel's dialectic of recognition was the source of Mead's original speculation, and all Honneth was doing in generalising Mead's I-Me dialectic is taking it back to the source. But surely it is better to start with Hegel, in that case, without introducing Mead as an intermediary. Given the source in Hegel, rather than interpersonal psychology, the appropriation requires a generalisation of the notion of subject which Honneth eschews.

Mead's psychology remains almost exclusively within the domain of the interpersonal. Given the precedent in critical theory provided by Habermas, this does indeed make him ripe for appropriation, but it is a psychology in the same ahistorical space of individuals meeting each other in a cultural and historical vacuum.

Conclusion

Critical Theory today lacks an adequate conception of the subject. In particular it lacks an empirical psychology adequate to its tasks.

The lacuna created by the lack of an adequate developmental social psychology is covered over by metaphor and "Natural Philosophy," and the use of the paradigm of "communication" borrowed from sociology.

As a result of lacking an adequate conception of the Subject, the appropriation of Hegel falls short of what Hegel has to offer, as the subject falls into a dualism of society and individual. Failure to resolve this deficit by means of metaphor, "natural philosophy" and abstract generalisation leaves Critical Theory in a position of making unjustified leaps between the domains of individual and social consciousness.

An appropriation of Cultural Psychology, a body of science with a substantial base in empirical research with theoretical roots shared with those of Critical Theory, would open the way to a critical conception of the subject.

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