

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO HISTORICAL CRITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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The less human beings think of reality in qualitative terms, the more susceptible reality becomes for manipulation. Its objects are neither understood nor respected. (Horkheimer, 1937: 217)

Introduction

The title – Contemporary challenges to historical critical psychology – is a nomen that stands for the omen of the lecture as well as the lecturer. It expresses theoretical commitments that necessarily transgress the theoretical domain and invite to social concerns.

The same theoretical attitude which bears witness to social concerns could possibly legitimate a hint of hope – at least as little as it is necessary to give sense to the speech act I already started.

Historical critical psychology is a construct which signifies my positioning of psychology referring to two kinds of claims. To raise a historical claim means to reflect on socio-historical embeddedness of the process of constituting subject-matter as part of the subject-matter itself - and not merely as its external context. This claim itself is a historical one - i.e. it presupposes certain socio-historical patterns as its constitutive conditions. Thus I understand the historical claim as a reflection on these socio-historical constituting processes.

Critical claim presupposes the historical one, which means that critical claim originally expressed itself as a claim to reconstruct socio-historical embeddedness. This reconstruction requires a critical impetus as it means deconstruction of self-contained naturalizations. From this original critical claim further critical claims could be derived: as revealing the underlying inhibiting structures, as reflection on taken for granted assumptions which universalize particular interests or reduce universal ones. Critical activity “has society itself for its object”. (Horkheimer, 1937, p. 217)

Could the historical and critical claims construct a subject-matter of psychology?

My answer is based on two theories which started developing at the same chronological time - in twenties and thirties of the 20th century. That was the time of “(der) Krisis der Wissenschaften als Ausdruck der radikalen Lebenskrisis des europäischen Menschentums” [“the crisis of the sciences as expression of a radical life crisis of European humanity”], or “(der) Krisis der Wissenschaft als Verlust ihrer Lebensbedeutsamkeit” [“the crisis of the sciences as loss of their life relevance”], as seen by Husserl (1935). Theories I have in mind are Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory and critical theory known as Frankfurt School. Both theories were concerned with the crisis (not only in terms of science) and tried to reply by critical examination of historical constitution of subjectivity as an individuality form. Both theories were committed to Marxian method – Vygotsky claimed : “to approach the study of mind having learned the whole of Marx’s method” (1982, p. 421) or,

as Horkheimer labelled it - "a new dialectical philosophy" (1937).

This is, in my view, what historical critical psychology stands for.

Why challenges to historical critical psychology (HCP)? The challenge presupposes an active understanding of the crisis which is a common diagnosis of our social situations – no matter how different they might seem at first glance or even immune to crisis. But the facts are only one possibility – it is in the spirit of critical theory not to conform to them and to point out other possibilities more conform - not to the facts but to the needs of those who have accomplished the facts.

How to understand contemporary challenges to the tenets of historical critical psychology?

Contemporary challenges are seen in social as well subjectivity changes we are witnessing in the last decades. A kind of changes located in Western high developed countries is articulated as postmodernity. Another label which signifies changes in Eastern European countries is transition.

Due to its claims of socio-historical embeddedness of both the object as well as the subject of knowing HCP has to reflect on these changes. On the other hand, it is reasonable to expect that these changes have impact on HCP itself.

Is it possible to have a HCP of postmodernity? Its historical claim would be fulfilled in reflection on social reality where producing of postmodern texts as autonomous self-contained networks of signifiers is possible or even desirable. Its critical claim would demand a questioning of such meta-textual attitudes and their psycho-social pragmatics. In Vygotskian terms a "zone of proximal development" has to be explored.

What kind of results of such an analysis could be expected? The "zone of proximal development" would certainly transcend the supposedly self-contained postmodernity as well as the zone of prior developments. How to conceive of these transcending developments? Anyway we need a social theory which would be able to conceptualize the plurality of changes among which many tend to dissolve society as a dynamic global self-reproducing system of interpersonal or imagined symbolic exchanges of activities and signs among its members. Society at risk is an urgent hermeneutical as well as practical task we are facing.

Thus I am going to discuss these two patterns of changes which I understand as challenges to historical understanding as well as historical activity. Surprisingly enough these patterns - labelled as postmodernity and transition (which is usually understood as movement toward modernization) - lead to the similar consequences which could be summarized as dissolution of society. This no-place for society or society without a place – asocial utopia – is the place where concerns emerge. And only at this place we can rescue hopes.

I'll also refer to a recent attempt to reply to crisis in psychology – called social constructionism - trying to test its historical critical claims bearing in mind tenets of Vygotsky's psychological theory and demands of Critical theory.

My referring to those two theories is not just for the sake of a historical remembering. It is led by my belief – hopefully based on good reasons and respectful motivating concerns – that those theories have epistemological potentials to face our contemporary challenges in a way that could be theoretically fruitful and socially promising.

I Historical Critical Psychology And Postmodernity

Cultural-Historical Theory

1. Cultural-historical theory and social constructionism

Cultural-historical theory was developed in a unique historical and social context in the years following political and social revolution in Russia. This gives reasons to raise the question about the relation of this theory to that social context.

What kind of resources has that social context offered? In addition to the resources which define every socio-cultural structure, the socio-historical context in question had some specific features: instead of reproducing existing patterns, the aim was conceived of as development of new, or even radically new socio-psychological patterns.

Psychology also took part in these unique creative developments. At that time “perestroika” took a form of rebuilding psychology on the basis of Marxism. (Jaroshevsky, 1977, p. 91) Vygotsky shared this commitment “to approach the study of mind having learned the whole of Marx’s method.” (Vygotsky, /1926/ 1982, p. 421)

Vygotsky explicated his understanding of the development of science as determined by “1) the general social atmosphere of the epoch; 2) general laws of scientific knowledge, and 3) the demands of objective reality.” (Veer and Valsiner, 1991/1993, p. 144; Vygotsky ,1926/1982:I, p. 302 – in Russian). This is the general level on which social-historical context determines theoretical developments. In Vygotsky’s case this is at the same time a part of his metatheoretical reflection – he is aware of the social relatedness of theorizing.

How significant this insight is, could be shown if we compare metatheoretical reflection expressed seventy years later – in the contemporary social constructionism. In a recent book, published under the title *Introduction to Social Constructionism*, Vivien Burr, after defining her task as: “contributing to what might be called ‘the social construction of social constructionism’” (Burr, 1995, p. 10) summarizes her answer to the question “Where did social constructionism come from?” as follows: “Its cultural backdrop is postmodernism, but it has its own intellectual roots in earlier sociological writing and in the concerns of the ‘crisis’ in social psychology. Social constructionism is therefore a movement which has arisen from and is influenced by a variety of disciplines and intellectual traditions.” (Burr, 1995, p. 14)

In her attempt to define social constructionism Burr relies on Kenneth Gergen’s proposal to

group as social constructionist any approach which has at its foundation one or more of the following key assumptions.

1. A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge (...);
2. Historical and cultural specificity (...);
3. Knowledge is sustained by social processes; (...) It is through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated.
4. Knowledge and social action go together(...); But each different construction also brings with it, or invites, a different kind of action from human beings.(...) Descriptions or constructions of the world

therefore sustain some patterns of social action and exclude others.”
(Burr, 1995, pp. 2-5)

There is a striking discrepancy between the fundamental social constructionist tenets and “the social construction of social constructionism” offered by Vivien Burr: social processes and actions are reduced to interactions with theoretical objects (in the form of sociological or postmodern writings). Explanation of the emergence of social constructionism sounds like an explanation of traditional psychologies – which are permanent target of the social constructionist critique.

Surprisingly enough for an endeavour to offer “a social account of science” (Gergen, 1994, p. XVII) the shift from the world to text is seen by Gergen as his taking part in “the major intellectual developments” in the last two decades. In the preface to the second edition of the *Toward Transformation in Social Knowledge* Gergen writes: “Once the link between language and the world is rendered contentious and contingent, the analysis shifts importantly from what is the case about social life, invariably stated in language, to the languages of description and explanation themselves – from the world to text, from the signified to the signifier.” (Gergen, 1994, p. XIII) The insights into the constitutive role of signifier in the defining the signified cannot be disproved. But it is no less important to bear in mind that signifier is about signified, that signifying is an intentional act (in Brentano’s sense). Once the signifier is focused upon, the role of signified is given almost no attention - it has become obliterated in contemporary theorizing.

In Vygotsky’s theory language is one of the main subjects. Concluding his investigation into the relation between thought and language Vygotsky states:

We showed that a generalized reflection of reality is the basic characteristic of words (...) Thought and language which reflect reality in a way different from that of perception are the key to the nature of human consciousness. Words play a central part not only in the development of thought but in the historical growth of consciousness as a whole. (Vygotsky, 1934/1969, p. 153)

Instead of operations of focusing and suppressing – which we find in contemporary theories- it would be epistemologically more fruitful – and practically more promising – to re-establish interactional relation between the signifier and signified. Language is not a copy-representation of “what is the case”, but if it is conceived of as a self-contained system (where signified is just another signifier), it is not possible to understand his pragmatic function which it evidently has. It is of even more importance to recall this relation if we take into account broader social contexts. As Heinz-Günther Vester warned: „Gleichwohl vermögen simulierte Politik und auto-poietisches Theoretisieren über Politik bestimmte Realitäten qua Ignoranz nicht einfach abzuschaffen.“ (Vester, 1993, p.188) [„However, simulated politics and auto-poietic theorizing about politics cannot abolish certain realities just by ignoring them.“ – my translation]

Gergen himself acknowledges „discourse is inherently a by-product of social interchange“ and therefore „a focus on discourse alone (too often the case in post-structuralist writings) is insufficient.“ But even „the function of the sciences within the broader set of patterns constituting cultural life“ (Gergen, 1994, p. XVII) – is not the whole social content of the sciences. It

should be added the function of social system or particular social patterns in making possible, visible or desirable problems, structures, activities, groups, beliefs, values – and suppressing others. Community not only describes a person's identity but constitutes it.

Interactionist origin of knowledge – recognized as one of the tenets of social constructionism – is also one of the main theses in the cultural-historical theory. For Vygotsky

the source of human consciousness and freedom should not be sought in the internal world of the intellect, but in the social history of mankind. (...) The very mechanism underlying higher mental functions is a copy from social interaction; all higher mental functions are internalized social relationships. In their own private sphere, human beings retain the functions of social interaction.“ (Vygotsky, 1931: *Development of Higher Psychological Functions*, in Russian; in English, 1981; quoted after Burkitt, 1991, pp. 137-8, 142-3, 147)

Vygotsky's starting point could be described as externalization of the psyche (as well as of psychology). Externalization means socialization, because „external“ means, as Vygotsky said, „social“.

Interaction is certainly the main concept of Vygotsky's social ontology. How did he conceptualize the interaction? Paradigmatically, interaction occurs between the adult and the child, whereby the adult is a generous provider of tools, especially of symbolic tools or signs. Tools and signs transmit inherited social knowledge, beliefs, values.

It is clear that such conception of interaction cannot be generalized as a universal form sufficient to describe the totality of interactions in a society. Society is built up of different kinds of interactions. Assumptions of benevolence, an active interest in the good of others, an unrestricted access to social heritage and willingness to transmit it and share it with others – these are to a great extent contrafactual assumptions. Therefore, Vygotsky's concept of interaction needs differentiation in order to be able to serve generative function in other realms of social life – beyond the ontogenetic development.

In Vygotsky's theory even the ontogenetic interaction itself is cut off from the ongoing broader social interactions – where, for example, new signs could be produced which conflict with those already appropriated by the adults. Then, every tool and sign has more or less explicit connotations derived from the particular interpretations of the world, especially social reality – this could be a source of conflicts too. A very important mediator in any interaction are emotional patterns which are not included in the formulation of the sociogenetic law of cultural development of the higher mental functions.

These lacks in Vygotsky's theory pose a hermeneutical task. There is a latent text behind Vygotsky's explicated metatheoretical reflections. It is not so difficult to unearth „Menschenbild“ from which Vygotsky derived his assumptions. It is an image of human being as socially bounded, but thanks to this, internally integrated and free, capable of rational self-control. Out of these conditions humans develop as morally good actors. Such a picture of the human being has to be rebuilt and recognized through the unified psychology.

2. Cultural-historical theory and postmodernity

From the so called postmodern point of view Vygotsky's theory, in its whole content, with its methodological claims to the unity, with its commitments to self-controlled rational agency would necessarily belong to the traditional, outdated and in the meantime delegitimized modern meta-narrative. Though, to my best knowledge, postmodern author or text do not refer to Vygotsky, if they had, Vygotsky would be a target of their devastating critique.

But due to its social boundness cultural-historical theory is invited to establish a relation to the changed contemporary socio-cultural context. I will focus on changes which are of special importance to cultural-historical theory. These are changed patterns of interactions and changes in semiotic mediation, described as characteristic of a postmodern situation. As interaction and semiotic mediation are constitutive for cultural psychological development, according to Vygotsky's theory, it is clear that a cultural – historical theory cannot ignore the changes these structures and activities are undergoing in contemporary social life. What is at stake here is a core of development and consequently also of developmental theory.

Simultaneity, plurality of interactions, their rapid turnover (nomadic character), fragmented interaction patterns, isolation from the global and focus on the local, de-rationalization (cleansing from long-term rationale), detachment from the agency of the subject, dissolution, implosion – or even „the end of the social“ (Baudrillard, 1983) – in this way are usually described changes in the social affairs in the last decades. Could cultural-historical theory incorporate these changes and still keep on its commitments? Could cultural-historical theory offer what is missing in the postmodern consciousness - or to say it more radically: could cultural-historical theory overcome postmodernism as a symbolic tool – these are crucial questions concerning the relation between the cultural-historical theory and postmodernity or postmodernism.

Detachment from the rational subject as an epistemic basis of knowledge and from subject as a paradigmatic structure of the social life is the postmodern diagnosis which questions the core structure of modernity. Actually, under modern subject it is understood subject conceived of in socio-psychological terms of liberalism – presupposed self-contained, autonomous individual opposed to society, reproduced through demands of self-control, pursuing of self-interest. It is evident that liberalism (as ideology) is built up on conceptual (and axiological) schemas which argue for the decentration and withdrawal from the social (though a very special socio-historical constellation made possible its emergence and gave it a particular meaning). Thanks to this decentration it was possible to make the next step – to universalize the subject of liberalism as a transhistorical, which means ahistorical structure.

As the individual and society are correlative notions – they are a way of conceptualizing the dynamics going on under conditions of common life, in this case using a dualistic model, liberalism operates with a socially deprived concept of individual subject as well as with a very poor concept of society: a socially unsaturated individual subject is – at the conceptual level – a necessary logical consequence of the unsaturated concept of society.

Exactly these conceptions entered psychology as its implicit assumptions on which edifice of psychological knowledge has been erected. Consciousness as taken for granted is a psychological complement of an

autonomous subject. Such conceptions of consciousness were criticized by Vygotsky who argued that instead of being contrafactually taken for granted, consciousness should be analysed from its origin through developmental stages until its mature forms. Thus Vygotsky dissolved the autonomous consciousness into social interactions – as its origin and content. But he has not abandoned either the concept or the mental structure of consciousness – on the contrary, he pleads for the functions the consciousness in its most developed forms can perform: regulations of other functions, planning of activity, self-control and appropriation of socio-historical heritage. Consciousness in Vygotsky's theory is very saturated with social contents, which means that his concept of society must be also very saturated.

Vygotsky's theory proves that detachment from the presupposed autonomous subject does not necessarily lead to abandonment of the subject. In this particular case it led to the strengthening of its position by making its social genesis available to its consciousness and activity. Vygotsky's solution for the consciousness could be formulated in the statement: Consciousness emerges out of human social life (interaction) through the emergence of control over the external signs forms.

Let me come to another issue of postmodernity. The way postmodernity usually conceptualized changes has meant a detachment from global social structures. Instead of the totality of society, the local context appeared as the proper horizon of postmodern thinking: temporary, local consensus, language game, local meaning (Lyotard, 1979) Thus the local (metaphorical, connotative) meaning – to take the postmodern favorite of language as an example – is cut off from the language as a system which presupposes universal rules as a condition sine qua non of mutual understanding.

In Vygotsky we can find an excellent argumentation proving that communication and generalization are inextricably linked. Even more: communication requires generalization.

Closer study of the development of understanding and communication in childhood, however, has led to the conclusion that real communication requires meaning – i.e. generalization - as much as signs. According to Edward Sapir's penetrating description, the world of experience must be greatly simplified and generalized before it can be translated into symbols. Only in this way does communication become possible, for the individual's experience resides only in his own consciousness and is, strictly speaking, not communicable. To become communicable it must be included in a certain category which, by tacit convention, human society regards as a unit. Thus, true human communication presupposes a generalizing attitude, which is an advanced stage in the development of word meanings. The higher forms of human intercourse are possible only because man's thought reflects conceptualized actuality. (Vygotsky, 1934/1969, pp. 6-7)

Postmodern treatment of the local – consensus, context, meaning – consists of a focus on the local and the conceptual repression of the global, universal. Unwillingness to grasp that background out of which local figures can only appear does not make that background non-existent, but unwillingness influences the attitude (or action) to it. Thus „the end of the social“, as a possible diagnosis (Baudrillard, 1983) of the contemporary affairs means

first of all the end – or exhaustion, whatever the reasons– of the interest in shaping the social according to ideas about the good or just. As the producers of these ideas cannot be but subjects – the end of the social and the death of the subject are two aspects of the same process. As Bourdieu warns: „(...) the existential mood of a whole intellectual generation (...) seeks in narcissistic self-absorption the substitute for the hope of changing the social world or even of understanding it.“ (quoted in Michael, 1991, p. 209)

Vygotsky explicitly linked consciousness to generalisation through the word as a generalized reflection of reality. There is another condition necessary to bring consciousness to mental functions – this is, to use the postmodern term – intertextuality, or in Vygotsky’s words – a system of concepts.

To us it seems obvious that a concept can become subject to consciousness and deliberate control only when it is a part of a system. If consciousness means generalization, generalization in turn means the formation of a superordinate concept that includes the given concept as a particular case. (Vygotsky, 1934/1969, pp. 91-2)

Thus, system of concepts, or broadly speaking, intertextuality, fosters consciousness and consciousness means mastery over internal processes and external signs. Consequently, i.e. in its radical consequences intertextuality presupposes relation to reality. This would be Vygotsky’s reply to postmodern intertextuality which replaces reality.

3. Cultural historical theory – a project to be continued

Cultural-historical theory could be a symbolic tool or scaffolding to establish – once again – missing links to social origin and genesis of postmodern consciousness. Only this would mean a proper Renaissance of Vygotsky’s theory.

My choice of the metaphor of Renaissance to describe the possibility of cultural-historical theory of postmodernity recalls Toulmin’s plea for humanizing modernity, understood as

our need to reappropriate the reasonable and tolerant (but neglected) legacy of humanism. (...) The current task, accordingly, is to find ways of moving on from the received view of Modernity – which set the exact sciences and the humanities apart – to a reformed version, which redeems philosophy and science, by reconnecting them to the humanist half of Modernity. (Toulmin, 1990/1992, p 180)

At the same time I agree with Habermas’ warning: “ (...) instead of giving up modernity and its project as a lost cause, we should learn from the mistakes of those extravagant programs which have tried to negate modernity.” (Habermas, 1980/ 1994, p. 351)

Thus my plea for modernity joins Habermas’ interpretation of modernity in terms of emancipation and equality, and consequently a diagnosis of our time as an unfinished, incomplete modern project.

Critical Theory

In thirties of the 20th century – after dramatical historical events which

shooked the oldest political systems in Europe (February revolution, October revolution, Weimar Republic) and foreboded even more dramatical ones, in the times of the crisis of the European sciences (interpreted by many as an expression of the crisis of humankind) a new socially saturated theoretical conception started developing known under the name Critical theory of society.

Critical theory was developed as an alternative project to traditional theorizing whose origins Horkheimer saw in Descartes's *Discourse on Method* (1637).

The subject is no mathematical point like the ego of bourgeois philosophy: his activity is the construction of the social present. Furthermore, the thinking subject is not the place where knowledge and object coincide, nor consequently the starting point for attaining absolute knowledge. Such an illusion about the thinking subject, under which idealism has lived since Descartes, is ideology in the strict sense, for in the limited freedom of the bourgeois individual puts on the illusory form of perfect freedom and autonomy (...) The acceptance of an essential unchangeableness between subject, theory, and object thus distinguishes the Cartesian conception from every kind of dialectical logic. (Horkheimer, 1937, pp. 221-2)

Horkheimer is evidently committed to the Marxist social theory. Social and historical embeddedness of knowledge is the main epistemological assumption of the Critical theory known as Frankfurt School.

Even the way they see and hear is inseparable from social life-process as it has evolved over the millennia. The facts which our senses present to us are socially preformed in two ways: through the historical character of the object perceived and through the historical character of the perceiving organ. Both are not simply natural; they are shaped by human activity. (Horkheimer, 1937, p. 213)

However, referring to social genesis of subjectivity forms is still a way how to understand and maintain position of the subject for whom critical theorists were very worried fearing his disappearance in mass society. Meantime, postmodernity reconciled to the death of the subject.

More than a half of century ago in *The End of Reason* Horkheimer warned: "The fundamental concepts of civilizations are in a process of rapid decay." (Horkheimer, 1941, p. 26). His diagnosis of that time was - the era of dishonoured reason. As there is a close bond between reason and society - "The collaboration of men in society is the mode of existence which reason urges upon them, and so they do apply their powers and thus confirm their own rationality." (Horkheimer, 1937, p. 216) - the dishonouring reason is a pathway that leads to dishonouring society. Reason is conceived of as each individual's capacity. Therefore,

the universality of reason cannot be anything else than the accord among the interests of all individuals alike, whereas in reality society has been split up into groups with conflicting interests (...) Reason's claim to be absolute presupposes that a true community exists among men. (ibid, p. 30)

Thus in Horkheimer's understanding subject, reason and society are inextricably interwoven. Decline of the reason jeopardize the society as well as the subject. But the relatedness of subject to society does not mean its subjugation to society.

The identification, then, of men of critical mind with their society is marked by tension, and the tension characterizes all the concepts of the critical way of thinking. (...) the critical acceptance of the categories which rule social life contains simultaneously their condemnation. (Horkheimer, 1937, pp. 218-9)

What is then the destiny of reason in times of crisis? In 1941 Horkheimer still holds on a strong position of reason:

What remains of reason in its contemporary decline, however, is not just the perseverance of self-preservation (...) Reason has born a true relation not only to one's own existence but to living as such; this function of transcending self-preservation is concomitant with self-preservation, with obeying and adapting to objective ends. Reason could recognize and denounce the forms of injustice and thus emancipate itself from them. (Horkheimer, 1941, p. 47)

The strong conceptual triangle of subject, reason and society has been the main target of postmodern critique of the modern project . As Horkheimer would have agreed with Vygotsky in many respects had he referred to his theory (unfortunately he has not done that), Vygotsky's defense of the modern structure of the socially mediated subjectivity could be used also as Horkheimer's reply to postmodern attacks. Again, insights of Critical theory could deconstruct postmodernity claims into their social origin and mediation. This is even more important as "the vulnerability of accounts of postmodernism and postmodernity is that they fail to theorize the historical-material conditions that gave rise to them." (Burman, 1996, p. 137). I would make even stronger point claiming that postmodernity cannot theorize its social genesis without changing or even giving up some of its basic attitudes. (Jovanović, 1999)

Thus, facing challenges – and many of them were foreseen by Critical theory: as illusionary autonomization of thinking (now in the form of replacing texts for the reality which made them possible), as fragmentation of the subject (which cannot recognize him-herself as a continuing structure and therefore undergoes further fragmentation in social relations), as blaming rationality and posing bare expressiveness of emotions as a norm, as psychologization and privatization of social issues – we could remember that Critical theory – facing its difficult times - was able to find new ways of thinking - and more than just thinking.

II HISTORICAL CRITICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND TRANSITION

Is it possible to have a HCP of transition? By definition transition presupposes a movement from a stage to another which is expected to be better. In this specific sense it is meant transition from a society organized according to socialist mode of production and reproduction of life to a liberal capitalist organization.

Godelier (1991) gives the following definition of the transition:

The term 'period of transition' is used to denote a special stage in the evolution of a society, where it encounters increasing internal and external difficulties in reproduction of the economic and social relations it is based upon and which lend it its peculiar logic of functioning and forms of development and when, at the same time, new economic and social relations appear which will, faster or slower, with more or less violence, expand and become the conditions of functioning of a new society. (quoted after Gredelj, 1995)

In my view, the discourse of transition witnesses to a new form of colonialisation applied again, of course, from the first world, but now to the once called second world which after its collapse fall down to the third world – the first target of the colonialism. Model of transition is used in a strong normative function – as a model of goals which should be achieved as they are seen as proved elsewhere and worthy of reproduction as fast as possible. In this respect, model contains three necessary (or maybe even sufficient) conditions used in the context of transition societies in its very restrictive sense: fast privatization of the former social or state property (regardless of the social costs), development of market economy (with possibly no state regulation, according to the XIXth century model of the weak state), political pluralism (however, this pluralism should possibly not contain left-wing, socialist or communist parties)

Liberalism of the XIX century is a general framework for the evaluation of content and dynamics of the changes. Though the model itself does not conceptualize psychological presuppositions and consequences of the transition, even less psychological conditions of its accomplishment, it is taken for granted that individual actors are equipped with appropriate firm positive attitudes toward the goals of transition and thus also toward values of liberalism. In this way ideology of liberalism contains a ready-made theory of personality and personality development conceptualized in strong individualistic terms.

This characteristic relates liberalism to psychology which as a science originated in the time of liberalism as ideology and which in its main-stream development reproduces liberalistic models of perceiving and understanding the world and individuals in it. Thus psychology could be a natural ally of liberalism in its new conquests.

An aspect of this biased relation of psychology and liberalism permeates also interpretations of data collected in researches on value orientations or other attitudes relevant to reproduction of an appropriate ideology – psychologists don't hide their preference for liberalism. Thus those subjects who don't fit to the prescribed model become also psychologically stigmatized – as attached to old (wrong) value systems, as incompetent to cope with new problems, as insufficient autonomous while, for example, claiming for moralism or egalitarianism. Normality model is reduced to a few traits defined in terms of "natural" good properties which were, it is assumed, repressed in the times when a failed attempt was made to socialize, i.e. to change these naturally given capacities and preferences.

On the other hand, many problems – not only economical, but indeed also psychological ones caused by transition invite psychology to research its subject-matter – subjective experiences and behavioral patterns of individuals in their social life. There psychology faces a subject-matter which has been obviously constituted in particular social conditions and cannot be

taken for granted as psychology is inclined to do in its prevailing assumptions. This challenge of reality could be a challenge to psychology – if it is able and ready to follow it - til the conditions of its possibility.

Socialist ideology, relying on Marxist theory, insisted on de-naturalization of forms of organizing and self-understanding of society as well as subjectivity forms. It offered a reconstruction of social-historical embeddedness of perceiving, thinking, feeling, acting, of social norms and values, of social structure in general. The socio-historical claim has often marginalized or even repressed the critical one. But this lack cannot blame socio-historical attitude - on the contrary, it is a necessary condition of the critical claim, or critical claim is a further development of the socio-historical one.

In contrast to social epistemology of socialist ideology ideology of liberalism is based on naturalizations of social forms of life and its subjectivity forms. Epistemological socialization in socialism has two counterparts - naturalization and individualization. If at the level of subject-matter of psychology the transition means transition from a model of social genesis to naturalistic and individualistic models of psychic development, a question arises how to conceptualize this transition. In order to be able to conceptualize it, psychology needs to respect two claims which define historical critical psychology.

The critical theory of society, on the other hand, has for its object men as producers of their own historical way of life in its totality. The real situations which are the starting point of science are not regarded simply as data to be verified and to be predicted according to laws of probability. Every datum depends not on nature alone but also on the power man has over it. Objects, the kind of perception, the question asked, and the meaning of the answers all bear witness to human activity and the degree of man's power. (Horkheimer, 1937, p. 222)

In the particular case I have in mind (Yugoslavia)

it appears that we are witnesses to the creation of a society of a discontinued dynamic and stagnant segmentary structure (mechanical solidarity) wherein inter-segmentary exchange will for a long time to come remain a matter of adoption or ostracism by the more privileged, rather than an up-downward mobility based on the "normal" criteria of promotion – education and professionalism. (Gredelj, 1995, p. 230)

Can HCP keep on its tenets when facing a dissolution of society, a remarkable sociocide which has been repeatedly committed in different forms: external threats (including bombing), destruction of institutions - starting with the state - which is also a psychological agency, bearing in mind that its functioning or disfunctioning has also consequences in terms of individual psychological status of its citizens –(see, for example, how Norbert Elias (1969) sees a relation between the formation of the modern centralized state and development of modern structures of behavior – rationalization, repression of immediate emotional expressions, taking into account the perspective of the potential other); breaking laws, disregarding norms, closing any long-term perspective, excluding the perspective of the

others - especially those who are not successful in reproducing the values of new ideology and thus accused for being guilty themselves – are some of the features of phenomenology of transition.

Once Critical theory has spoken about the resigning of the individual. Strikingly enough critical thinkers could not but refer to property as the basis of an autonomous individual:

With the disappearance of independent economic subject, the subject as such disappears. (...) Concern for property under orderly competition and the rule of law has always been constitutive of the ego. Slaves and paupers had no individuality. (Horkheimer, 1941, p. 37)

It should be reminded that these reflections were made in times of enormous concentration of capital which was helpful for totalitarian regimes. But still, in this nostalgic turn the critical theoretician has forgotten his own previous insights into social genesis of even single perceptive act and consequently all forms of life. Retrospectively Horkheimer was ready to acknowledge an emancipatory potential of the bond between individuality and property first experienced and articulated in the Oedipus myth - at the very moment when Oedipus answered sphing's question he possessed kingdom and – women. (according to reports on discussion among members of the Frankfurt school, Horkheimer, 1939/1985, p. 413) These statements deserve a profound analysis. I must confine myself with a remark that they are a symptom which announces a broader nostalgic turn in Horkheimer, which I understand as a theoretical regression to the once abandoned forms of thinking. The Critical theorist has become a traditional one. Maybe the spirit of Critical theory could be saved by saying that its destiny – that it was defeated, beaten by such a strong social reality – confirms its original belief that every cognition is historically and socially determined.

Now we are witnessing an additional peculiar dissolution - dissolution of society – “the end of the social”. What would Critical theory offer as its critical attitude?

Once “new dialectical philosophy, however, has held on to the realization that the free development of individuals depends on the rational constitution of society.” (Horkheimer, 1937, p. 224)

Vygotsky also saw individual and society as intrinsically bound: “Humanity cannot master knowledge of personality and personality itself before it has mastered knowledge of the society and society itself.” (Vygotsky, 1926, quoted after Jaroshevsky, 1977, p. 104)

In the present situation - which is properly described as a crisis (in the original sense of the term as a point where a decision is necessary) - we need more than just a historical understanding of these changes. Critical claim has to point out consequences which jeopardize conditions of human life. As cognition and knowledge emerge in tasks of life itself, these conditions could be a source of contemporary historical critical psychology - i.e. psychology which responds to contemporary challenges by confirming its historical and critical claims - and its commitment to the interests of its subject-matter, i. e. subjects to be and understand themselves as subjects who have rights and needs to live in a world fostering their constructing ways toward themselves and the others as themselves.

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