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Psychology Through Critical Auto-Ethnography: Instituting Education

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In this paper I examine the discipline of psychology as a form of educational practice, exploring the student experience, the world of psychological research, how psychology is taught, how alternative critical movements have emerged inside the discipline, and the role of psychology in coercive management practices. This is an opportunity for critical reflection on how psychology actually operates as an academic discipline, what teaching in higher education and immersion in research communities around the world looks like, and institutional crises which psychology provokes.

KEYWORDS
auto-ethnography, education, paradigms, science, qualitative, discourse

1 | INTRODUCTION

I was trained as a psychologist and I taught psychology for many years. I was educated in psychological methods of investigation, and then I educated others. I tried to resist what I had been taught, and I tried to find a way to enable others to question what they were being told. I am going to describe what the problem is, and then look at three alternatives, alternatives that have emerged in recent years inside psychology itself. But in order to appreciate the power that psychology holds over our lives, and increasingly so, we need to take a step back and also look at the educational institutions that house it. I want to show you how what psychology is, is bound up with the changing nature of those institutions. Psychology itself is a form of management that fits hand in glove with contemporary management practices. We will come to that, to management, but first, education.

The discipline of psychology is suffused with education. Ideas about what education is and how it should be conducted permeate psychology. Psychology is about education in two respects.

1.1 | Content

First, the discipline is built on a particular constellation of ideas about the importance of education to the human subject. These ideas are, as we know, contradictory, as contradictory as the discipline of psychology itself. Descriptions and studies of the human being as being some kind of brute matter that needs to be subject to some kind of behavioural conditioning in order to learn jostle alongside notions that education is more about an appeal to innate rational cognitive processes, processes that lift the human being as something beyond, above animal nature.

These behavioural and cognitive notions operate in uneasy alliance in undergraduate psychology degrees with a focus on motivation and emotion, on the importance of affect to how we behave and think, and with the process of categorising kinds of people so that we know what learning styles are appropriate to different personality structures, and, at its worst, to different levels of intelligence. Personality and intelligence assessment, as well as behavioural and cognitive evaluation is claimed, of course, to be the expertise of the psychologist. So, that's the content of psychology, content which is bound up with culturally-circumscribed ideas about what education is about, ideas which then feed back into popular discourse about education, warranting certain kinds of practice in the classroom.

1.2 | Form

The second respect in which psychology is about education concerns the form of the discipline. That is, psychology from its inception toward the end of the nineteenth century not only absorbs and regurgitates ideas about education from the surrounding culture, that's the content of the discipline as an academic enterprise, that's what it teaches students of psychology and what it teaches teachers, it also, and this is crucial, operates as a form of education itself. Psychology doesn't only tell us what education is, but the discipline educates us, it operates as a form of practice that institutes a certain model of education, encouraging us to believe in it so that it works. In this sense, psychology today is, at the same time as being a form of research about the human being, a form of education.

Psychology tells us what we are and what we can be; it specifies what it is possible for us to change and what the limits of that change are. Again, as with the content, there are contradictions. Different kinds of psychologists are at work in different kinds of practice, so that they may emphasise behavioural, cognitive or affective aspects of our nature. Most psychologists, most of the time, focus on individuals, and here the form of the practice mirrors the content of psychology.

Yes, it is true that some psychologists will attend to groups or systems, but they then often treat those domains of intervention as if they too were, at root, psychological. That is, the reductionism of psychology does not only mean that they reduce explanation to the level of the individual, but that they reduce explanation to the level of psychology as such, something they have expertise in. They are then accorded the power to reconfigure different domains of activity as if they were psychological.

1.3 | Method

What ties the content and the form of psychology as a kind of knowledge and expertise about education together? The answer does not lie in the diverse models of the individual that you find in the psychology textbooks. It lies in its method (Rose, 1985). Its method is a form of practice that is then elaborated in undergraduate courses and

professional training programmes as key, necessary, ineliminable content of psychology. You won't get very far in a psychology programme without learning about methods of investigation, methods of investigation that have at their heart the laboratory experiment.

This experimental method holds psychology together, defines it as a discipline, and gives it a status that psychologists jealously cling to, the status of a science. That is why the prediction and control of what is observed in the laboratory – prediction and control which is hedged around with hypotheses which the experiment is set up to test – are usually referred to by psychologists as being its scientific method.

Actually, historically, the first studies in psychology, those which the textbooks tell us took place in Wilhelm Wundt's laboratory in Leipzig in 1879, focused on meaning, and the roles of experimenter and subject changed from time to time (Danziger, 1990). Wilhelm Wundt, the founder of modern psychology, was more interested in collective processes which he described as 'folk psychology'. The content of his ideas about psychology were descriptive, cultural. But, the so-called laboratory-experimental 'scientific method' was grounded in a form of investigation before it became instituted as part of the content of psychology. The first psychologists as we would recognise them today were to be found in the personnel departments of the emerging corporations, most significantly in the Ford motor works in Detroit.

That was the context in which prediction and control made sense, prediction and control that was to become the core of the work of Frederick Taylor and then 'Taylorism', a form of factory production in which behaviour is broken up into little pieces, timed and then reassembled so that the worker could then be inserted back into it as a more efficient part of the production process. That would not work, by the way, if the worker was not then re-educated, if they did not learn that they needed to rely on the knowledge and expertise that had been given back to them instead of the knowledge and expertise that they themselves had brought to the process. That is, the knowledge and expertise that people have is taken from them and then, in the name of more efficient predication and control, used to govern what they do. This is what is called 'deskilling'. Instead of learning from people's creative activity at work, people are made to learn what they already knew, but now as creative activity from which they have been separated, alienated.

So you see how the basis of scientific method in the discipline of psychology begins first of all as a form of practice, and only later becomes part of the content of the discipline. We are learning all the time, but psychology tells what learning is. It educates us in its own particular way about what we once already knew (Shotter, 2011).

2 | PARADIGM

If we take psychology at its word for a moment, take its claim to be a science seriously, then we then need to ask what paradigm of investigation it relies on, to reflect on its laboratory-experimental method as a kind of paradigm. Sciences, as the historian and philosopher Thomas Kuhn pointed out in his ground-breaking book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* are governed, during periods of 'normal science' by a particular governing framework, assumptions about the nature of the object of study and the best way to study it (Kuhn, 1962). That framework is the 'scientific paradigm', a paradigm within which a number of anomalous observations are made to fit. Until, that is, during a scientific revolution, during which all those observations that did not fit are reworked, reinterpreted in a new paradigm. The new paradigm makes sense of what did not fit, is more encompassing.

2.1 | Science

For example, in astronomical science, the Copernican revolution dislodged the old scientific paradigm in which it was assumed that all of the planets revolved around the earth, the earth as the centre of the universe and the human being as the centre of creation. New methods of investigation, Galileo and his telescopes being a key new observational instrument, opened the way to a new paradigm in which we could make sense of all the anomalies in the existing data, so that we could see that in fact the earth orbited around the sun. There are a number of aspects of this paradigm shift that are worth noting.

First, it is all too easy now to write off the previous paradigm as being unscientific. Perhaps it was, but that is something that we only see in hindsight, and that should lead us to be a little more humble about the claims we make about our supposedly more scientific paradigm. Second, Galileo had to persuade researchers that what they saw through his telescopes was worth looking at, and he used a number of rhetorical devices, writing in Italian rather than Latin to appeal to a broader audience for example. The new paradigm is more scientific, maybe, but it is bound up with a number of different rather unscientific practices (Feyerabend, 1978).

2.2 | Revolution

This brings us to the first of the alternatives to mainstream laboratory-experimental investigation in psychology. Here is the argument that laboratory-experimental method is held together by a kind of paradigm in which human beings are treated as if they are objects whose behaviour can be predicted and controlled. Yes, it is a particular paradigm, but, as the historian and philosopher Rom Harré argued in the early 1970s, it is not really scientific at all. It needs to be challenged and replaced during a scientific revolution with a new paradigm in which, for scientific purposes, he said, people should be treated as if they are human beings (Harré & Secord, 1972). This was the argument that powered a significant shift in research from quantitative research to qualitative research in psychology.

This new paradigm argument for qualitative methods in psychology argued that quantification in the old paradigm was not merely dehumanising, but unscientific. This new paradigm could make sense of the reflexive activity of human beings in laboratory experiments in which subjects did not behave as if they were objects, but, rather, guessed what the hypothesis of the experimenter was and either tried to confirm it, if they were in a good mood, or sabotage it if they were not. New paradigm qualitative research does not treat that reflexive creative capacity of human beings as a problem, as it is for the experimenter, but as a resource. Attention shifted to the way that people make meaning in little social worlds they inhabit, whether that is in the laboratory or in the classroom. What roles do people play out and what rules do they follow, and, if you want to find out, why not ask them?

This new paradigm included detailed observation but in such a way as to attend to the roles and rules operating in social life. That, the new paradigm argued, was where you will find psychology, and this is how you can study it scientifically if you are staying true to science that has a more accurate conception of its object of study. It enabled a link to be forged with other social sciences, and the development of a form of ethnography in which we learn from what people know, and make learning part of the process of investigation (Banister et al., 1994).

In the process, students learning about psychology were also able to resonate with what they were studying instead of pretending to take a neutral fake-scientific distance from the world and those they referred to as their 'subjects' in their experiments. This new paradigm, something I learnt about in the second year of my psychology undergraduate degree, was what kept me in psychology, for good or ill, and made me think it was worth staying the course and exploring where we could take research.

3 | DISCOURSE

That first alternative to what Rom Harré and his followers saw as the old failed pre-scientific paradigm in psychology is sometime characterised as the 'turn to language' in the discipline. It opened the way to the second alternative I want to briefly describe now, the 'turn to discourse'.

One of the lessons of the new paradigm debates was rather inadvertent, it was that, even though Harré wanted to bring about a paradigm revolution and make psychology genuinely scientific, and saw qualitative research as the key methodological resource to do that, there was something bigger at play in the arguments in the social sciences. You could put it like this; it is not possible to have science in one discipline. That's what I mean when I say that one of the lessons was rather inadvertent.

The qualitative research debates entailed an opening to ideas from other disciplines, including sociology, of course, but also geography, social geography, and history. That is what let in the notion of 'discourse' and enabled researchers to think of what they were doing inside psychology as intimately connected with what was happening outside it. In the process, and this is the most important step, I think, they began to locate themselves as subjects inside the very process they were studying.

3.1 | Object

The turn to discourse entailed a significant double shift. First aspect is the emergence of 'discourse' as an object of study. Human beings make discourse, yes, that is what the new paradigm argued, but they make discourse in conditions that are not of their own choosing. Language, structured as discourse – sets of statements organised in such a way as to give shape to the objects of which we speak – precedes us, and we work in the tracks of discourse that has already shaped the world we describe, the world we inhabit, and the different kinds of social roles we are able to take up, in short the kind of subjects we become. The study of discourse is the study of the structured symbolic resources that people use to make sense of who they are.

One of the most influential books was by Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell called *Discourse and Social Psychology* (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), but the consequences went way beyond social psychology. Discourse analytic studies blossomed, appearing in many psychology departments, and in the process many of the phenomena that psychology described where 'respecified' as objects of discourse; to speak of 'mental illness', for example, is to utilise a particular kind of discourse to speak about distress.

3.2 | Reflect

The second aspect of the double shift that we saw in the turn to discourse was a social-historical twist on the reflexivity that was highlighted by the turn to language. That is, the turn to discourse not only led us to focus our research on the way people reproduced and transformed discourse in everyday life as they talked and wrote about themselves and talked and wrote about the things that psychologists thought they had discovered, it also led us to reflect on the discipline of psychology itself. We turned the research gaze around so that we examined the discourses that structured the discipline. Psychology as a discipline is a set of discourses about the human subject, its behaviour, internal cognitive processes, emotions, development and the way it learns. The array of different conceptions of education that I mentioned earlier is specified in discourse.

That is why we set up the Discourse Unit in 1990. It was one of a number of different discourse research groups. You could see this reflexive embedding of the researcher in the discipline as the 'auto' aspect of the partic-

ular kind of ethnographic perspective that discourse analysis makes possible. Some discourse analysts were keen to develop their own approach to language as part of the discipline of psychology, for it to be taken seriously as a theoretically and empirically rigorous form of qualitative research. Some of us, however, saw the stakes of this second alternative emerging inside the discipline as higher. The stakes were not only about how to make psychology more scientific – that was the way of the new paradigm. It was not only about how to study the way that people spoke or wrote about themselves, that was the way of much discourse analysis, but also about the institutional character of psychology as such. This calls for what we might now call an 'auto-ethnographic' approach that writes the researcher into what they are doing, a kind of reflexivity that is not only about how they feel but about tracing the contours of the institutions in which they work, reflecting on how research questions are framed and what the researcher is being invited to do to other people outside the discipline.

4 | CRITICAL

This brings us to the third alternative, an emerging cluster of theoretical resources that was eventually crystallised under the name 'critical psychology'. We need to take care, however, for this term 'critical psychology' is a slippery one, misleading. And if we do not take care, we will also, in the process, throw away the gains we have made through the journey we have taken through the new paradigm qualitative research arguments and the turn to discourse. Critical psychology is, in some hands, a sub-discipline, subordinate to the discipline that houses it. It even, for some researchers, invites us to build better models of the individual subject, carrying on the work of the psychologists we hoped to challenge and displace.

What I mean by 'critical psychology' is the continuing process of internal critique, a study of the emergence of psychology as a discipline and of what it does to us. The frame for this, though I would not go so far as to call it a 'paradigm', was set by a path-breaking book co-authored by Julian Henriques, Wendy Hollway, Cathy Urwin, Valerie Walkerdine and Couze Venn which was called *Changing the Subject*, the subtitle of which was *Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (Henriques et al., 1984). That book put to work a potent combination of four political-theoretical resources, and here, of course, we are edging on the terrain of politics. This critical psychology made it clear that psychology was a political matter. Psychology is bound up with disciplinary technologies which not only offer us a reduced picture of the individual, that is the content of psychology, but also enforce good behaviour on those whom it aims to adapt to society as good citizens, that is the form of psychology.

The four resources Changing the Subject mobilised were Marxism through which we conceptualise the human being as an ensemble of social relations, feminism through which we are able to open up the personal-political aspect of psychological research, post-structuralism through which we attend to the intimate relation between discourse and power, and psychoanalysis which, for all of its problems, speaks of those aspects of subjectivity that psychologists attempt and fail to comprehend and master.

4.1 | Subjectivity

Psychoanalysis, which Erica Burman (2017) once characterised as the 'repressed other of psychology', that which the discipline of psychology cannot bear to think about, and so repeatedly shuts out, is symptomatic of a deeper issue, a problematic that the book Changing the Subject helped us to tackle. That problematic is what now we call the 'psy complex'. When we speak of psychology today, when we speak about it critically, we refer to it as part of a broader apparatus of social regulation, one which specifies and enforces certain limited kinds of subjectivity.

The psy complex includes the academic psychology departments, research groups, courses in psychology and every combination of psychology and other cognate discipline, such as education. It includes the forums through which people are educated about their own psychology in social work and medicine. And it also comprises the institutions, whether those are schools or prisons or advice columns of magazines, in which psychology is put to work, in which people are invited, encouraged or required to think of themselves as psychological beings, the kind of psychological beings that psychologists would like to talk to and work upon. The psy complex is the dense network of theories and practices about subjectivity through which people are reduced to their 'psychology'.

Now, this is where the auto-ethnographic aspect of research inside psychology goes critical, because we need to conceptualise not only how psychology disciplines people – that is an aspect we emphasise when we refer to the discipline of psychology – but also how psychology invites people to willingly speak about themselves in psychological terms. Psychology works because it reflects and reproduces the forms of institution in which people are already reduced to what they are as separate individuals treated as if they are objects in so many domains of their life. It feels like it works to so many people, and it feels like it works to the psychologists because people are configured in such a way as to want to speak about their innermost selves, their psychological selves, to the professionals, to psychologists of different kinds.

This is what I mean when I say that psychoanalysis, one of the four critical resources, is symptomatic of the problem. I like psychoanalysis, I must admit, but there is no getting away from the problem, that psychoanalysis is part of the problem, so often operating as part of the psy complex. Just as most psychologists, most of the time, want to shut out psychoanalysis, so they also would like, most of the time, to either shut out, or limit or harness qualitative research, make it work as part of psychology instead of against it.

4.2 | Research

That indeed is what we confronted with in critical psychology as a critical auto-ethnographic study of the discipline and, simultaneously, as a critical auto-ethnographic study of what we are doing inside it, what we have become when we still try to play the game, whether that is as an academic or professional psychologist.

When we set up the Discourse Unit we embraced the four theoretical resources, but researchers who worked with us were able to pick and choose which resource or resources were most useful for them, and to bring in other resources, whether that was post-colonial critique or queer theory. I guess you could say that the form of the research process was more important than the specific content of each of the theories, which is why we emphasised the critical reflexive elements of research. In order to most effectively challenge mainstream psychology and its obsession with prediction and control within its fake-science laboratory-experimental paradigm, we also needed to take seriously the way in which qualitative research as such was not enough.

The new paradigm promoted qualitative research, which was important, useful, but it too easily, despite itself, fell into the trap of making it seem as if all you had to do was treat people like human beings. The trap being that the image of human beings that psychology cultivated included humanistic models in which people were supposedly completely free to speak, and should speak about themselves in order to be free. This is a discourse about the human subject that qualitative research often unwittingly and uncritically endorses. The turn to critical psychology emphasised not only that these various discourses were embedded in power relations but that psychology as a discipline operated as part of the psy complex in which people were not only regulated but also configured to be willing participants in their own subjection to this investigative apparatus.

5 | MANAGEMENT

I have hinted a number of times so far at the nature of the problem we face, but we can bring it into sharp relief now by taking a step back and looking at the nature of this psy complex as a form of management. I must admit I used to laugh at colleagues who were working in the field of 'critical management studies', and they used to return the compliment when they made caustic references to 'critical psychology'. They had the last laugh when I jumped ship for a few years from psychology into a school of management, and the surprise, which should not have been a surprise given the interdisciplinary ethos of our work in the Discourse Unit, was that the shape of debates there was uncannily similar to those we had been engaging in. They drew attention to elements that helped make sense of what I had been experiencing in a psychology department in a place that had been undergoing something of a transformation into a neoliberal managerial institution, one in which the psy complex was perfectly at home.

The crux of the problematic I am concerned with here, of the psy complex and contemporary neoliberal management practices, precisely lies in that phrase from the subtitle of the book Changing the Subject, that is 'psychology, social regulation and subjectivity'. I will describe it in rather abstract terms here, simply to make clear what the connection is between psychology, management and education. I go into it in more detail, fleshed out with an auto-biographical narrative in my book *Psychology and Critical Auto-Ethnography* (Parker, 2020).

5.1 | Neoliberalism

By 'neoliberal' I mean the current form of governmentality by which contemporary capitalism manages crises of legitimacy – the opening up of contradictions and the development of social movements that insist that another world is possible – by returning us to some kind of baseline zero-degree political-economic strategies. Capitalism that emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century powered by the first industrial revolution, including in Manchester, was structured according to the precepts of classical liberal economics.

Psychology, not accidentally, developed coterminously with the development of capitalism. The capitalist world was ideologically configured as a market-place in which goods, commodities, were bought and sold and in which labour-power was also bought and sold as a commodity, as if, and only as if the ground-rules were governed by free willing contract. Workers were free to sell their labour-power, and the choice not to, and for their families to starve, was nonetheless viewed as a choice as if on a level playing field. 'Liberal' here refers to the fiction of individual responsibility and good citizenship, with the capitalist state operating as if it were no more than the guarantor and overseer of a natural and immutable hidden hand of the market, underlying condition of the social order.

Neoliberalism today comprises three key characteristics, three key characteristics that also provide the seed-ground for the psy complex to augment its own power to regulate subjectivity. The three key characteristics are as follows.

First, there is the intensification of responsibility of the individual, reduction of focus to the level of the individual subject as competitive resilient entrepreneur of the self. This is the world in which indeed it is as if there is no such thing as society, only individual men and women and families.

Second, there is a stripping away of welfare-support, the progressive hard fought for aspects of state provision that operated, at the very least, as a safety net. This is the world of intense unremitting austerity in which government may, at times, call on charity or the 'big society', food banks and suchlike, to patch over the worst distress.

The third, often overlooked aspect of neoliberalism, is that while the state welfare-functions are reduced, its repressive functions are increased. This is the world of the first nation-wide experiment in neoliberal economics, that

of Chile in 1973 under the US-supported dictatorship of Pinochet in which the trades unions and political opposition is crushed. This is a global phenomenon, as is psychology (De Vos, 2012).

Now, there is an aspect to this contemporary neoliberalism, that which makes it 'new', which is very different from the context of the nineteenth century first industrial revolution. Mechanisation based on water and steam-power has been superseded by a second industrial revolution in the early twentieth century ushered in by qualitatively-improved manufacturing techniques, electrification and rail transport, and a third industrial revolution after the Second World War driven by semiconductor and advanced communication technology of which the internet is its fullest flower. That third industrial revolution intensifies a process of globalisation that began with capitalism. Among the various attempts to grasp what is new about it are analyses of what has been called 'late capitalism' (Mandel, 1974). This late-stage or late capitalism that emerged after the Second World War is what calls upon neoliberal forms of governmentality to manage working populations, and to manage dissent.

These political-economic transformations in capitalism as a fully globalised system, all the more so since the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989 and the transformation of China into a state-bureaucratic hyper-capitalist component of the world economy, also, and this is where the discipline of psychology becomes part of the equation, see the rise of the service sector and the re-emergence of women into a visible and necessary part of the workforce. Not only is the economy transformed in the wake of the third industrial revolution, but work itself is transformed. Alienation, exhaustion and distress, already potent during the first and second industrial revolutions among the workforce, are also transformed, they mutate into something easily recognisable by psychologists. This is not surprising, for psychology itself has accompanied us on this journey, as we will see in a moment.

5.2 | Labour

One of the most interesting series of studies and theoretical elaborations of this transformation of work is by the feminist sociologist Arlie Hochschild, and those studies into the changing nature of work in the service sector, and with the service sector then providing the template for management of other kinds of work process, are invaluable underpinning of recent analyses of 'social reproduction', the gendered work that underpins the reproduction and development of the economy.

Arlie Hochschild (1983) showed, from early studies of airline stewardesses, how exploitation in the service sector draws on what she calls 'emotional labour' in which 'deep acting' of concern for the wellbeing of the customer also exploits stereotypically feminine characteristics. Intuitive, caring support is harnessed to the needs of the workplace, and then male managers learn these abilities, usually succeeding in retaining their position as the top managers, leaving women in the position of middle managers, those tasked with exercising 'emotional labour' in the managerial process. This is the feminisation of work.

I said that psychology accompanies us on this journey, but it is more than that. In the process, intuitive, caring support functions are reconfigured as the stuff of psychology as such, and psychology is the preeminent discipline accorded expertise in governing what seems to be most intensely deeply 'psychological' in us.

Psychology as a discipline of behavioural management back in the Detroit car factories became psychology proper when it was able to work itself into the division of labour, specifically into the separation of intellectual from manual labour so important even in first-stage capitalism. This is where psychology was able to show its worth as a series of theories about so-called cognitive processes as well as theories of behavioural reinforcement. Intellectual labour became psychology's domain of expertise, but it is with the separation of intellectual labour into instrumental cognitive rational processes – stereotypically masculine – from intuitive, affective, emotional relational processes, stereotypically feminine, that our 'science' of the mind is able to go beyond mere prediction and control into the

ostensibly deepest parts of the self. It began as a discipline back in 1879, and now it goes into the parts of the self that other disciplines cannot reach.

Take just one element of this managerial process that we will all be familiar with, the demand that each lecturer give a course that is not only informative but also entertaining, that is not only able to equip the student to pass the assessment but also engaging enough to give rise to a positive assessment by the student positioned as a consumer in the National Student Survey. This is one way in which the 'student experience' is configured as a form of psychology.

Notice here how 'emotional labour' becomes part of the educational process, in such a way that what the student learns is not only about psychology, if they are taking a psychology course, but also about their own psychology as such. And if they are not taking a psychology course, but a course in education, say, then they also even so learn something about psychology, about what it is to be a psychological subject. This is education in action, but not in a good way, and it is gendered at a deep level, for women who are often positioned at particular middle managerial levels, and for men. This institutes education (Trifonas, 2000).

6 | DISCUSSION

Where does that leave the three alternatives to mainstream psychology that I reviewed earlier? What it shows is that each alternative risks operating not so much as an alternative but as a loyal psychological ally of the host discipline, complicit in it.

First, the new paradigm revolution which inaugurated some of the most interesting developments in qualitative research; it failed. You only have to look at psychology departments today to see that the laboratory-experimental paradigm is still dominant, and qualitative research plays second fiddle to quantitative research, with much qualitative research hamstrung by quality 'criteria' which are hostile to it. Rom Harré, who died late last year, argued to the end that qualitative research was more scientific, but failed to convince psychologists that the very 'science' they imagined the natural sciences to be following was quite mistaken. What qualitative research does succeed in doing, let's be brutally honest about it, is give cover to mainstream psychology, a soft appealing side to complement and add in a bit of meaning to the meaningless correlations from experimental studies. And in the process, it does exactly what emotional labour in management practice does, give a humanising veneer to exploitative institutions.

Second, the turn to discourse has also, in many of its forms, operated as a loyal methodological servant of its host discipline, and worse than that. It has both promised to focus only on what people who are not psychologists say about what they are doing, keeping the research gaze firmly on outsiders, and it has often reduced analysis to the empirically-visible transcripts of conversation. Only what is said is treated as important. The more ostensibly radical forms of discourse analysis that emphasise indeterminacy of meaning, meanwhile, have uncoupled their relativist accounts of different kinds of 'discourse' from power, and so the institutional context in which psychology operates is also let off the hook. Here, there really is a risk of sliding into postmodern relativism as the 'cultural logic' of late capitalism (Jameson, 1984).

Third, 'critical psychology' faces a choice, between wanting to be accepted as a sub-discipline, with some interesting things to say about the social construction of subjectivity, or stepping back, as I have tried to do here, to operate as a form of critical auto-ethnography in which it keeps focused on what the discipline of psychology is doing to us, and, crucially, on how that psychology operates as a helpmeet to current neoliberal forms of management. These are neoliberal forms of management in which psychology offers not only theories about what education is but also operates as a form of education. Sorry this is a grim punch-line, but this is not education as enlightenment, but

education as a form of control, one in which we learn our place, and, at a deep emotional level, learn who we must be.

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