

BENJAMIN RUSH BULLETIN



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*For the study of the Psychological and Behavioral Sciences
from the viewpoint of dialectical-historical materialism.*

With this issue, we begin a new format. Since the revival of our Society in 1977, the goal we have had in mind was a return to and a continuation of the old Benjamin Rush Bulletin of 1949-50.

This format is more appropriate to our purposes than a newsletter. We have tended more and more to publish reviews and criticisms which deserve more permanence than is likely to be accorded a newsletter. We anticipate that these issues will be treasured and, like the older Bulletins, will one day become collector's items. And, just as a worthy content deserves a more permanent form, so we hope that this new format will encourage more authors to expend the time and effort which significant articles require.

The cost is only somewhat greater than that of the newsletter. We hope it will prove well worth it.

F.B.

Editorial Comment

BRB IS BACK

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness . . ." This classic phrase by Karl Marx appeared on the flyleaf of the original Benjamin Rush Bulletin published in February 1949. After four provocative, stimulating issues, it ceased publication in June 1950.

In the years between the first Benjamin Rush Society (1944-1952) and the reconstituted Society (1976-) our "*social being*" has gone through many changes: the McCarthy period, the Korean and VietNam wars with their anti-war movements, Black liberation, national liberation, women's liberation, Watergate, explorations in space, the growth of mysticism, cultism, creationism, the drug culture, assassinations, pornography, inflation and unemployment, the proliferation of nuclear weapons. . . .

During this time roughly forty different "schools of thought" have sprung up in the fields of psychology and psychiatry—from "Primal Scream" to Existentialism, a turn to "EST" or to the East. The consciousness of the people is assaulted from all sides, with fragmented, fadist and oft-times fraudulent theories and practices about mental health.

The Benjamin Rush Society is dedicated to "*the study of historical and dialectical materialism applied to the psychological and related sciences.*" For the past three years our Newsletter has tried to reflect this approach. The Bulletin will continue in this tradition. We hope to be a forum for a rational, scientific understanding of the complex problems of consciousness and unconsciousness, mental illness and mental health in a changing world.

We welcome comments, contributions and criticism.

I.C.

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Sidney J. Gluck, managing editor

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Critical Review of Leont'ev
by Antal Borbely*

ACTIVITY, CONSCIOUSNESS AND PERSONALITY,
by A. N. Leont'ev. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New
Jersey, 1978, 186 pages. Translated from the Russian by
Marie J. Hall.

This is the last book written by the eminent Soviet psychologist Alexej Nikolaiewitsch Leont'ev, who died January 21, 1979.

In the introduction Leont'ev writes that "the most important thing in this book is the attempt to comprehend psychologically the categories that are most important for constructing an indisputable psychological system as a concrete science of the origin, function, and structure of the psychological reflection of reality that the life of the individual mediates. These are the category of subjective activity, the category of consciousness of man, and the category of personality" (p. 6). After reviewing briefly "the unfounded claims of the major western European and American trends that they would effect a long awaited theoretical revolution in psychology" (p.1), he rejects behaviorism, gestalt psychology, and Freudism as pretentious bourgeois psychological schools. He goes on to explain that Soviet scientists countered this methodological pluralism with a unified Marxist-Leninist methodology that allowed a penetration into the real nature of the psyche, the consciousness of man. He mentions Vygotski, Uznadze and Rubinshtein as belonging to the great pioneers of Soviet psychology. The first two chapters, "Marxism and Psychological Science," and "Psychic Reflection," are of an introductory nature, analyzing the concept of reflection and the total contribution that Marxism has made to scientific psychology. Chapters III, IV and V deal with the central concept in this book: the problem of activity. The chapters are entitled "The Problem of Activity and Psychology," "Activity and Consciousness," and "Activity and Personality." After concluding remarks Leont'ev adds in a supplement a chapter on psychological questions on the con-

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sciousness of learning, a newly edited version of a previously published paper. In this review I will not be able to consider the supplement.

Activity

Leont'ev emphasized that activity was understood in Soviet psychology in essentially two different ways: some considered subjective activity as a condition of psychic reflection and its expression, whereas he would like to consider it as a process containing in itself those internal impelling contradictions, dichotomies and transformations that give birth to the psyche. He feels that his position requires a reconstruction of the whole conceptual apparatus of psychology, which to a large degree will be a matter for the future. Leont'ev refers to Marx's thesis on Feuerbach, in which the principal inadequacy of everything that preceded materialism was pointed out. Marx believed that reality was taken by Feuerbach only in the form of an object, in the form of contemplation, and not as human activity, not subjectively. He points out that before Marx cognition was considered only as the result of the effect of objects on the recognizing subject, as if on a sense organ, and not as a product of the development of his activity in an objective world. Leont'ev says, "The reflection of reality arises and develops in the process of the development of real ties of cognitive people with the human world surrounding them; it is defined by these ties and, in its turn, has an effect on their development."

Whatever shortcomings Leont'ev may have—and I shall mention some of them later—he makes some very important criticisms of current theory. For example, he says that "in most of the foreign investigations, the activity of thought is presented from the point of view of its adaptive function, and not as one of the forms through which man comprehends reality and changes it."

He differentiates between thought activity and practical activity, and demands that practical activity be accorded primacy over thought activity. He offers a profound criticism of idealistic currents in contemporary psychology in which "everything appears upside down: symbolic thought operations resulting from the development of cognitive activity of man seems to give rise to his thought" (p. 27). He cautiously criticizes the onesided interpretation of Lenin's theory of

reflection which "considers sensory images in human consciousness as prints, photographs of an independently existing reality" (p. 33).¹ He says that "the other side consists of the fact that psychic reflection, as distinct from mirror and other forms of passive reflection, is subjective, and this means that it is not passive, not dead, but active, that into its definition enters human life and practice, and that it is characterized by the movement of a constant flow, objective into subjective." This, he says, is related to the partiality² of the subject. "Psychology has for a long time described and studied the dependence of perception, representation, and thought on 'what is necessary to man'—on his needs, motives, settings, emotions. It is very important here to stress that such partiality is itself objectively determined and is expressed not in the inadequacies of the image but in that it allows an active penetration into reality. In other words, subjectivity at the level of sensory reflection must be understood not as its subjectivism but rather as its subjectness, that is, its belonging to an acting subject" (p. 33).

In the third chapter, "The Problem of Activity and psychology," Leont'ev describes at great length how all previous psychology has basically a binomial formula: action in the object leads to change in the ongoing condition of the subject. In distinction to this, Leont'ev suggests a trinomial formula which includes a middle link: the activity of the subject (including conditions, goals and means of that activity). He says, "We will take either a position that consciousness is determined by the surrounding objects and phenomena, or the position that consciousness is determined by the social existence of people, which, in the determination of Marx and Engels, is nothing more than the real forces of their life" (p. 50). In connection with this he quotes Marx: "In production the personality is objectivized; in needs the thing is subjectivized (Karl Marx and F. Engels, *Works*, Vol. 46, Part 1, p. 25)." A little later he explains, "In other words activity is not a reaction and not a totality of reactions, but a system that

1. For a modern discussion of Lenin's theory of reflection, see Seve and Lebica (1974).

2. The word "partiality" in translation is not altogether clear. It seems to refer to 'individual preference.' It would be interesting to explore the relationship of Leont'ev's use of 'partiality' to the established marxist concept of class-related partanship.

has structure, its own internal transitions and transformations, its own development" (p. 50). He claims that "introducing the category of activity into psychology changes the whole conceptual system of psychological knowledge" (p. 50). In a very profound way he expands these thoughts and reaches the conclusion that social conditions carry in themselves motives and goals, that society produces the activity of the individuals forming it.

Two Forms of Meaning

In a very important sub-paragraph of Chapter IV, "Activity and Consciousness," subtitled "Meaning as a Problem of Psychological Consciousness," Leont'ev says that "meanings are the most important form of human consciousness." Important in the present discussion about Lacan, Leont'ev points out that although language appears to be the carrier of meaning, linguistic meanings hide socially developed methods of action in the process of which people change and perceive objective reality. He differentiates between a supra-individual socio-historically formed meaning and an individual form of meaning functioning in the process of activity and consciousness: "Meanings lead a double life." This second form of meaning Leont'ev calls "personal sense." The cleavage between these two forms of meaning is a reflection of the objective, alienating forces of class society. "As distinct from meaning, personal sense, like the sensory fabric of consciousness, does not have its own 'supra-individual,' 'non-psychological' existence. If in the consciousness of the subject external sensitivity connects meanings with the reality of the objective world, then the personal sense connects them with the reality of his own life in this world, with its motives. Personal sense also creates the partiality of human consciousness" (pp. 92-93).

Because Leont'ev's theoretical postulates remain divorced from the concrete practice of exploring individual consciousness, one will look in vain for any indication of how Leont'ev would connect the concrete manifestations of the human psyche like conflicts, symptoms, memories, parapraxes, desires, amnesias and dreams to a concrete individual's life experience. The few times Leont'ev deals at all with Freud and his followers, his statements betray insuffi-

cient familiarity with the subject matter.' "It is interesting to note that authors who have set themselves a goal of seeing 'beyond' consciousness and who are spreading teaching about the non-conscious sphere of the psyche preserve the same understanding of consciousness as a 'messenger of the organization of psychic processes' (Freud). Like other representatives of depth psychology, Freud brings the problem of consciousness out of the sphere of psychology proper. Of course, the principal instance representing consciousness, 'superego,' is essentially metapsychic." It is hard to decide whether such a confused statement is due to the often very sloppy English translation, or to what extent it stems from the author's ignorance about Freud's propositions. It is unclear for this reviewer where Freud speaks of consciousness as a "messenger of the organization of psychic processes" and nowhere does Freud speak of the superego as the principal instance representing consciousness. It remains unclear what Leont'ev means with "Metapsychic." Freud's definition of metapsychology would have nothing to do with what I guess Leont'ev wanted to express in his statement, namely, that the superego appears to him as being essentially metaphysical.

The real explanation of consciousness, according to Leont'ev, has to be found in the social conditions and mode of man's activity, in short, in his work activity. While no Marxist would disagree with such a statement, the glaring omission of any reference to the psychoanalytic explorations of the child's mind based on his or her active interaction with important childhood figures and play activity remains puzzling. Leont'ev seems to sense himself the necessity for concrete investigation when he says, "The problem which confronts scientific psychology even today is that it not be limited by general dialectic, materialistic positions on the essence of human thought, but that it define both positions concretely in

1. In his whole book there is no reference to the special ways Freudian psychoanalysis explored the concrete psychological realities of individuals on the basis of a transferential relationship as documented in thousands of books and journals like THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PSYCHOANALYSIS (1980, 60 volumes), THE PSYCHOANALYTIC QUARTERLY (1980, 49 volumes), THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOANALYTIC ASSOCIATION (1980, 28 volumes).

conformity with the actual questions involved in the study of the forces of development of man's thought activity, different forms of his activity, mutual transitions between them, and the influence on it of new social conditions and phenomena such as rapid scientific, technical progress, redistribution, and changes of means and forms of communication, etc." As mentioned above, unfortunately this postulate retains in Leont'ev's book only declamatory value. Rich clinical findings regarding unconscious processes as furnished by the psychoanalytic method are completely bypassed by Leont'ev. With this position Leont'ev cannot be considered representative of more modern currents within Soviet psychology as exemplified by hundreds of interesting contributions to the problem of unconscious mechanisms made by Soviet linguists, philosophers and psychiatrists at the Symposium on the Unconscious in Tbilisi, 1979.¹

Regarding the problem of the individual's partiality, while agreeing with many of Leont'ev's statements, one is baffled by his overlooking that Freud's work represents the first scientific investigation of the individual's partiality, namely his being subjected in his actions and consciousness to his known or unknown needs and motives as formed under the influence of previous activity.

The Individual In Society

Leont'ev correctly states that the basis for cognitive processes is not the individual practice of the subject, but the totality of human practice. He said, "For this reason not only thought but also man's perception, to a very large degree, surpass in their riches the relative poverty of his personal experience" (p. 39). Unfortunately, Leont'ev does not provide sufficient conceptualizations stemming from this important insight. He tends to focus conceptually on activity to such an extent that global socio-historic contradictions (global class contradictions, newly arising contradictions in Socialist societies) are treated in a too cursory fashion. Individual activity appears in Leont'ev's theory not only as the origin of the individual's psyche but also as the most essential force in society and history. Reminiscent of theories of the Frankfurt

1. See also the pre-Symposium papers of Prangishvili, Sherozia, Bassin (1978).

School (J. Habermas, 1968), human interaction appears as the most fundamental force in history. While it is beyond doubt that philosophically Leont'ev would reject the theories of the Frankfurt School, conceptually he did not integrate sufficiently the differential laws governing individual and collective forms of subjectivity and their hierarchical mediations. This cautionary remark on Leont'ev's philosophical position regarding a consequent historical dialectical materialist approach to psychology was not shared by other Marxist reviewers of this book, i.e., Tolman (1980) and Rauh (1980).

Leont'ev's basic view that activity creates needs rather than innate needs creating activity is one of his most important statements and demands a thorough reconsideration, albeit not a rejection, of some basic psychoanalytic hypotheses; e.g. rather than to see the individual's various activities as vicissitudes of his innate libido, one could describe the successive libidinal organizations, notwithstanding the acknowledgement of innate endowment, as vicissitudes of the individual's activity as experienced on the basis of actual interaction as well as conjectures and fantasies. Elements for such a reassessment have been recently furnished by classical psychoanalysts like Loewald (1971) and Brenner (1980).

While Leont'ev states, "Of course this does not mean at all that their (the individuals') activity only personifies the relationships of society and its culture" (p. 51), he does not explain in detail how individuals within the same society, with similar upbringing and similar activity could be so different in their mental structure. He differentiates between two forms of transfer: the transfer from the object to the forces of activity, and the transfer from activity to its subjective product. To these two forms of transfer at the pole of the subject correspond analogous forms of transfer at the pole of the object. He makes an interesting distinction between two different forms of needs: on the one hand, need as activator of appropriate biological functions; and, on the other hand, need as directing and regulating activity. He differentiates between external objective activity and internal activity, internal psychic processes. He criticizes all psychological research dealing only with the latter. Exploring the relationships between external and internal activity, Leont'ev refers to Vygotskii, who described the equipped (instrumental) structure of human activity and its incorporation into the system of interrelation-

ships with other people. "Equipment¹ mediates activity connecting man not only with the world of things but also with other people. Owing to this, his activity draws into itself the experience of humanity" (p. 60). Leont'ev goes on to say, "Consciousness is co-knowing, but only in that sense that individual consciousness may exist only in the presence of social consciousness and of language, that is its real substrate. In the process of material production, people also produce language, and this serves not only as a means of information but also as a carrier of the socially developed meanings fixed in it."

As Leont'ev enters into further exploration of the structure of activity, one can easily develop a sense of frustration in view of unclear and seemingly arbitrary distinctions and relationships not leading to any appreciable enlightenment or cohesive theory.

The Two Factor Theory

Leont'ev attacks modern concepts of a two-factor theory of the formation of personality: heredity and environment. As representatives of such theories Leont'ev mentions Freud, Adler, Jung and their modern followers. "Thus in particular, there appeared a representation developed by Freud of the relations of the conscious and the unconscious that characterize personality. The 'libido' isolated by him represents not only a bioenergetic source of activity, but the especial instance in personality—'it' (id), an opposing 'I' (ego), and a 'super-I' (superego); genetic and functional connections between these instances, realized by means of special mechanisms (displacements, censoring, symbolization, sublimation), also form the structure of personality" (p. 102). He says, "It is absolutely apparent that these views not only do not surmount but, on the contrary, sharpen the theory of two factors turning around the idea of their convergence." A little later Leont'ev adds in a footnote, "The principal incompatibility of bourgeois psychological theory of personality with Marxism is thoroughly explained by L. Seve (see his book, *Marxism and the Theory of Personality*, 1972)" (p. 105). He does not quote Seve's opinion published in the same book

1. "Equipment" refers to the instruments and tools, physical and symbolic, which are inseparable from human activity.

that at this time there does not exist a theory of personality on the basis of historical materialism. (p. 18) With regret we have to conclude that Leont'ev did not realize that Freud's ego and superego concept is intimately related to the individual's activity, not only in its functional aspects but in its very genesis. Both ego and superego have been described by Freud as formed through the individual's life experience and life activity. And while it is true that Freud described id, ego and superego as frequently opposing each other, it is equally true that he saw the integrative functioning of these different layers of personality as constituting the essence of normal personality development. It has to be admitted that such integrative work was described by Freud as a psychological phenomenon in the traditional sense which did not explicitly include activity. On the other hand, by viewing thinking as "trial-action" and action as the crucial event allowing for self differentiation, Freud's statements are much closer to Leont'ev's findings than the latter leads the reader to believe. What was said about the id, ego and superego has to be repeated for the question of the antagonism between consciousness and unconsciousness. Freud described many times consciousness confronting the unconscious, yet even more frequently he pointed out one's influence on the other and the personality's functioning as integrating conscious and unconscious motivations. When Leont'ev said that "here there is no need to enter into a criticism of Freudism . . ." one cannot but disagree. It was as if Marx had not entered into a criticism of Hegel with the rationalization that Hegel was in many ways an idealist.

The lack of constructive criticism of Freudism and the lack of a convincing and fruitful Marxist personality theory seem directly related. Instead of a constructive, transcending criticism of Freud, we observe here, as in many other instances, a distortion of Freud's research into a caricature which, in a second step, is then shown to be ridiculous. Such attempts are usually carried subjectively by a high combative spirit, but objectively lead to a retardation of the necessary constructive criticism of Freud. Nevertheless, in spite of all its limitations, this book has to be seen as a stimulating contribution to the ongoing work of establishing a Marxist theory of personality.

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PERSONALITY THEORY: SOME PHILOSOPHIC ISSUES

by

Arthur David Robbins, PhD.

The function of personality theory is to provide a framework for understanding human behavior. Although the expression "personality theory" is of relatively recent vintage—probably about a half century old—investigations into human behavior are as old as civilization. In the past such investigations were undertaken by philosophers, historians, novelists, poets and playwrights. Today, we typically turn to psychologists and psychiatrists for answers to the human enigma. Although, in principle, these professionals appear to have accepted the combined burden and honor which has been bestowed upon them, in fact, many practitioners have not arrived at a carefully worked out and internally consistent theory of human behavior, nor are they aware of the extent to which implicit theoretical assumptions inform their daily practice. Consider the following questions: "What is the nature of man"? "What is the nature of causality as it applies to human behavior and human development over the life

span"? "What is the relationship between ontology and epistemology, theory and practice"? "Is evolution a continuous process, or are there discontinuous leaps"? These are abstract theoretical questions which certainly should be of no concern to the practicing psychotherapist. Or so it would appear. In fact, these questions and the answers to them are an implicit and intrinsic part of the therapist's daily activities. By the way in which he treats his patients, the therapist is proceeding on the basis of implied assumptions as to man's nature. If he emphasizes childhood experience over contemporary living or vice versa he is making an implicit statement about the nature of causality in human affairs. If he has a carefully worked out theory of personality, or if he focuses most of his attention on therapeutic techniques, he is operating on the basis of implied assumptions about the relationships between ontology and epistemology, theory and practice. The very denial that such questions are of importance is in itself a philosophic stand, one for which there is a long and well established tradition in American history.

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Whatever it is that the therapist tries to change in a particular person will depend on what he thinks people are and should be. What he thinks people are and should be is simply an expression of his theory of personality. Thus, though personality theory and the practice of psychotherapy are independent disciplines, they are also interrelated and complementary. Personality theory deals with the nature of what is in the realm of individual human behavior. As such it is a branch of ontology. Psychotherapy is a method for bringing about change in human behavior. In addition, it is the means by which knowledge is gained about particular individuals and a data base is established for developing a theory about people in general. As such psychotherapy is a branch of epistemology. If we assume that ontology determines epistemology—that the process of getting to know something is a function of what is to be known—then it is true that psychotherapy is determined by the underlying theory of personality. Once the therapist has defined personality in the broadest sense—once he has his working hypothesis—then everything he does in his practice follows from his definition.

For example, let us consider the case of Howard M. He is a young man in his mid-twenties who has recently married. He

comes to therapy because of the difficulty he has in establishing close relationships and being productive on the job. A good deal of his problem concerns his relationship with his wife, an aspect of his life which he chooses not to discuss. He insists in not sharing the spotlight with his wife during therapy sessions, even if this means accepting the blame for everything that goes wrong at home. In so doing, Howard has implicitly advanced a philosophy of human nature, or a theory of personality, to wit, that each individual is a self-contained entity to be understood in isolation from other like beings. His therapist happens to believe the contrary—that man's nature is an interpersonal affair. If he is right and if he allows Howard to have his way, then he is nurturing Howard's pathology and treating a fiction, something that doesn't exist—an isolated self-contained individual. So it is that psychotherapy, philosophy and personality theory support and complement each other. To try and deny their interdependence is to try and deny reality.

Reductionism

Any theory of personality can be analyzed within the context of two competing and mutually exclusive views concerning the nature of causality in human behavior. One of these positions—hereafter

referred to as reductionism—has its basis in the doctrine of external relations. The individual is viewed as a pre-constituted entity which is subsequently brought into interaction with the external world. Implicit in this viewpoint is the belief that although the individual interacts with his surroundings, he is in some sense an independent, self-contained, self-sustaining entity. As such he can be understood on his own terms independently of external circumstances. He has an existence which is external to the relations into which he enters. His basic nature is assumed in one way or another to be contained within him in a biological sense, to inhere within the physical limits of his corporeal being. This results in some important assumptions concerning man's psychological equipment. The forces which generate ontogenesis—the coming into being of a particular individual, psychologically speaking—the basis of causality for any given behavior, as well as the overall focus of study, are all assumed to be located somewhere inside the person's head or "mind," and to be biological in nature. In some theories, the "mind" or "mental life" is broken down into elements, or atomized, with the interaction among the elements being used as a basis for explaining human growth and behavior.

Reductionists believe that there is a continuous line of development between animal and man, nature and society. According to Darwin's reductionist view, "nature makes no jumps." Evolution is one continuous flow in which what follows can be seen as derivative of what has preceded, and explained in terms of it. This position tends to explain the present in terms of the past, to deny or to minimize the significance of change as meaning the emergence of something new. Man is seen as being in a continuous line of development with lower members of the animal kingdom. He is understood in terms of his resemblances to—habits, reflexes, instincts, neurophysiological and biochemical similarities—rather than his differences from, his evolutionary predecessors. Man is simply another organism adapting to his environment. As a consequence of the belief that man and animal are determined by the same laws, it is assumed that the same fatalistic doctrine of the survival of the fittest, which prevails among animals in nature, is characteristic as well of human beings living in society. The animal and the irrational in man are emphasized to the disadvantage of his humanity and reason.

Non-Reductionism

Non-reductionism represents

a position as to man's nature which is diametrically opposed—point for point—to reductionism. Non-reductionism has its basis in the doctrine of internal relations. From this perspective, the individual is considered an integral and inseparable part of his surrounding conditions—which are social in nature. Removed from his social milieu, he loses his essential humanity. To know him is to know his world and his place in it. The individual and his interconnections are intrinsically and inherently inseparable. The individual is not a self-contained entity. On the contrary, he takes on his very existence from the world around him. His basic nature is not inside of him, but starts out side of him. He is to be understood in social terms, in terms of factors external to his corporeal being. The individual acquires his basic nature in the course of living. He is not born with it. He is brought into being by surrounding external forces. It is not a question of being modified by these forces or of having to adjust to them, but of actually being created by them. Non-reductionism maintains that there are gaps or leaps in the evolutionary process: higher forms of life and behavior are not reducible to, understandable in terms of, lower forms. Human nature is to be understood on the basis of that which is uniquely human: society, language,

culture. Society and nature are seen as two different entities requiring differing conceptual frameworks and laws. Individual development is explained as a function of the larger social whole. Seeing nature and society as distinct entities, non-reductionists frequently operate on the assumption that man has control over his destiny. This destiny is determined not by man's animal origin but by the material conditions and social values which are exclusively human. The process of life is one of mastery not adaptation.

The question arises as to which of these two mutually exclusive viewpoints—reductionism and non-reductionism—suits the needs of a given theory of personality. In order to answer this question it is necessary to define the domain of inquiry. If we decide to define personality in terms of interpersonal relations and individual productivity, then it follows that we must choose a theory of evolution which provides us with a framework for describing and explaining these phenomena. It is doubtful that there is any biological theory of human behavior which is equipped to explain why one man stays married to the same woman for fifty years, all the time progressing steadily in his chosen career, while another never marries, has minimal contact with the opposite sex, and has no

chosen field of endeavor or means of economic support. Consequently, our theory of evolution is of necessity non-reductionist or social in nature.

Self-Contradictory Theories

Having made a basic philosophical choice, it is important to emphasize that a given theory of personality can support one and only one conceptual framework, or theory of evolution. This is true because a theory is a single set of propositions which are self-consistent. A theory which contains more than one set of propositions is two theories in one. If one part of the theory is consistent with reductionist thinking and the other with non-reductionist thinking, then the theory is self-contradictory as well. For, assuming that we are attempting to understand

human behavior in terms of interpersonal relations and individual productivity, then it makes no sense to maintain both halves of the following dichotomies: 1) the individual is a self-contained entity vs. the individual is intrinsically bound up in his interpersonal relations; 2) human nature is biological vs. human nature is social; 3) personality is a function of factors that are inside the individual's head vs. personality is a function of factors that are outside of the individual's head; 4) the individual is born with his personality vs. the individual acquires his personality in the process of living. Reductionism and non-reductionism represent two different standpoints, or perspectives, from which to undertake a study of personality. To try and assimilate the

SOCIAL ACTION WORKSHOP

Following a talk on Political Action and Mental Health Professionals by Doug Robbins and a lively discussion, about a dozen B.R. members signed up for a new workshop which will monitor the impact of Reagan policies upon mental health and psychiatric treatment.

The workshop itself will define the scope of its interest, but it will certainly include the direct psychological consequences of deteriorating social programs along with the encouragement of atavistic ideologies in psychology, biology and the social sciences. The feeling was that, without abandoning our primary concern with the ideological struggle in the behavioral sciences, we must also in this period, contribute whatever expertise we may possess to direct political struggles.

two is like trying to simultaneously imagine oneself inside a house, looking out, and outside a house looking in. To quote Thomas Paine, "The two beliefs cannot be held together in the same mind, and he who thinks he believes both has thought but little of either."

Despite the contradiction inherent in any attempt to create one theory out of two different views of human nature, such attempts tend to be the rule rather than the exception. Hence, to accept any body of writing in the field of personality at face value as representing "the truth" and as being consistent with its own implicit philosophical assumptions, can only lead to confusion and error. For there are few if any pure reductionists or pure non-reductionists. Thus, what is of value in a piece of writing must be extracted from it by a pro-

cess of critical analysis, and reconstituted within a pre-established conceptual framework for its validity to be determined. The argument being offered here is that to truly understand, appreciate and utilize a given body of thought, it is necessary to find the unity in it, by putting it there. This is the synthetic, creative aspect of critical analysis. It is not simply a question of labeling the different parts of a theory, of attempting to resolve irreconcilable contradictions, or of establishing false unity and consistency. Rather it is a question of opting for one of several potentially conflicting alternative viewpoints as being truly representative of the author in question and using this as a corner stone in building a non-contradictory conceptual framework for understanding his output.

PSYCHODDITIES

ALBANY (UPI)—Of the 792 nursing homes operating in the State of New York, 34 are run by convicted felons, state health officials said yesterday.

Dr. Michael McGarvey, who heads the Office of Health Systems Management, said that the felons were permitted to operate the homes because there was nothing else that could immediately be done with the patients.

He said the operating licenses could be taken away from the operators, but that trying to stop them from running the homes was a long process.

A department spokesman said among the felonies were Medicaid fraud, patient abuse and inadequate health care.

Letters to the Editor

1-17-81

Francis Bartlett, Editor,
Benjamin Rush Newsletter

Dear Editor:

I read with great interest the Nov. '80 "Benj. Rush Newsletter", including the review of "The Mind Stealers" authored by Samuel Chavkin.

To add to the information already given in this book about the behavior control program of the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the repressive and punitive nature of such programs, I suggest the following material:

"Hell In A Very Small Space" by Berrigan, Rev. Leon White, also journalists, and prisoners at the Federal Prison at Marion Ill., which chronicles the Marion Federal Prison's Long-Term Control Unit and its use of behavior control and human experimentation. (\$1.50 plus postage).

"Cruel and Unusual" (punishment), a leaflet giving briefly the facts about techniques used to break prisoners and stop their attempts to fight deteriorating prison conditions through indefinite solitary confinement, sensory deprivation, forced druggings, and other punitive measures. Campaign actions against the use of the Control Units are listed.

"Breaking Men's Minds" by Eddie Griffin, a former control unit prisoner (50¢ plus postage).

This material can be obtained from the Natl. Committee to Support the Marion Brothers, 4556a Oakland, St. Louis, Mo. 63110.

At a time when there may be more political prisoners and also more punitive sentences against any offenders, concern should be even greater about these drastic measures which are being used against prisoners who show any constructive leadership or who give indications of resistance.

According to former Marion warden, Ralph Aron, "The purpose of the Marion Control Unit is to control revolutionary attitudes in the prison system and in society at large." Unfortunately, this behavior control system is spreading to other Federal prisons and also to State prisons.

In light of this knowledge, action is called for.

Sincerely,

Ruth Wilson, NYC

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MORRIS COLMAN

(1898-1981)

WITH UTMOST SADNESS WE REPORT THE PASSING OF MORRIS COLMAN, A DEDICATED MEMBER OF THE BENJAMIN RUSH SOCIETY.

A DEVOTED HUSBAND, FATHER, SCHOLAR, TEACHER AND POLITICAL ACTIVIST, HE RECENTLY WROTE, "MARXISM, PSYCHOLOGY, AND SCIENCE IN GENERAL, HAVE BEEN MY CHIEF PERSONAL INTEREST AND SUBJECT OF STUDY FOR NEARLY FIFTY YEARS." HE TAUGHT AT THE EARLY WORKERS SCHOOL AND WAS A STAFF WRITER OF THE DAILY WORKER, THE PREDECESSOR TO TODAY'S DAILY WORLD. HIS LATEST CONTRIBUTION (1978) WAS A PROVOCATIVE OCCASIONAL PAPER FOR THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR MARXIST STUDIES (AIMS), ENTITLED "CONSCIOUSNESS, LANGUAGE AND COGNITION."

IN A SHORT "SPIRITUAL BIO" HE WROTE ON HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY, REFLECTING ON HIS PERSONAL STRUGGLES IN HEALTH AND ILLNESS, HE CONCLUDED, "ONE THING I KNOW IS THAT HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATIONS, AND THE GREATEST ONE OF ALL, THE PLANNED TRANSITION FROM CLASS RULE TO CLASSLESS COOPERATION, CAN ONLY PROCEED STORMILY OVER LONG PERIODS, WITH ERRORS AND TRAGEDY MIXED WITH ACHIEVEMENTS; THAT THERE ARE NO OTHER SOLUTIONS TO MANKIND'S MISERY THAN TO ESTABLISH THE ECONOMIC, LEGAL, AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS FOR UNIVERSAL EQUALITY, AND THAT IF YOU ARE SERIOUS YOU PERSEVERE DESPITE ALL SETBACKS."

WE SHALL MISS HIM.

Organizational Notes

Since the beginning of the New Year, the B.R. Society has held regular monthly meetings:

JANUARY . . . Jaime Inclan, PhD. The Puerto Rican Family.

FEBRUARY . Cross-Cultural Psychiatry, a Critical Review by Drs. Leo Berman, Irving Crain, & Clara Rabinowitz, Eleanor Crain, Jean Berman.

MARCH Philosophy and Personality Development, Arthur Robbins, PhD. (see this issue)

APRIL Political Action and Mental Health professionals, Douglas Robbins, PhD.

MAY Marxism and Feminism, Leith Mullings, PhD., Social Anthropologist.

Meetings will resume in September. Topics & speakers to be announced.