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CRITICAL SYSTEMS THINKING AND PLURALISM:

A NEW CONSTELLATION

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Ph.D Thesis

The City University

Department of Systems Science

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## Abstract

This thesis explains theoretical issues concerned with paradigm incommensurability and the solutions offered by various critical systems writers. The problems of "imperialism" are outlined together with an analysis of the meta-theoretical views which purport to avoid imperialism. It is suggested that researchers attempting to understand alien or incommensurable paradigms or cultures often succumb to imperialism in its various guises. Three models of methods used by such researchers are described. The last of these, the model of critical appreciation, incorporates two crucial components advocated by Habermas and endorsed by Bernstein: critical self-reflection based upon an analogy of Freud's model of dream-analysis, and an explicit critique of ideology. Methodological guidelines are offered which draw on an analogy of dream-analysis and on historical reconstruction as ideology-critique. It is suggested that any social inquiry must contain elements of "reflexive" (philosophical) and "scientific" (practical) inquiry together with ideology-critique and critical self-reflection in order to bring about the emancipation of individuals and groups. A model of self-society dynamics reveals the need for reflexive inquiry, discourse and action (as exemplified in the critical appreciation process) in any efforts to transform 'self' or 'society'. Consideration turns to the relationship between critical thinking and pluralism. The enriched version of critical appreciation is shown to require an *a priori* commitment to a new, discordant pluralism, which it also suggests in its *modus operandii*. In particular, the 'either/or' problematique presented by many writers is transformed into a 'both/and' juxtapositioning which lends its support to the form of pluralism involving both critical self-reflection and ideology-critique. The fully elaborated model of critical appreciation will finally be shown to fulfil the demands of the commitments of critical systems thinking.

## CHAPTER 1: THE AIMS OF THE THESIS

The main aim of this thesis is to provide some methodological guidelines for researchers who wish to make their work more critically reflexive. An issue connected with this is to deal with the necessity for any critical systems inquiry to be pluralistic. My thesis is a contribution to the growing dialogue about the nature, history, theory and practice of critical systems thinking.

In this introductory chapter I detail the aims which each section of the thesis tackles, together with a brief explanation of those sections. In writing the thesis I have had in mind the struggles that I experienced as a "new to critical systems thinking" reader. Consequently, I have tried wherever possible to explain in clear, straightforward phrases what are otherwise abstract, complex and difficult ideas. This effort has helped me to formulate my own understanding of the critical idea.

## 1.1 The Structure

The thesis has been organised into four separate, yet interlinked sections. Various aims connected with each section will be elaborated when I come back to a more detailed discussion of each section. For now, I intend to provide a short overview which establishes the thread that runs through the entire thesis.

Section 1 sets the scene through a consideration of the emergence of critical systems thinking, and the use of terms like "pluralism", "complementarism", "critique" and "emancipation" by writers in this domain. In particular, I will review a number of "commitments" of critical systems thinking. Consideration of the approaches taken to dealing with difficulties that arise from paradigm incommensurability will lead us into the second section.

Section 2 deals with the same issues as they arose, and were responded to, in other social sciences. Three models of approaches used by

researchers to analyse an alien paradigm/culture are described. The third approach, that of a critical appreciation, is suggested as a means for bringing together theory and practice, whilst also providing for the reunification of the empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic sciences.

Section 3 involves a further elaboration of the critical appreciation model. The aim is to provide methodological guidelines for the potential critical (systems) researcher. Here I draw upon Freud's dream-analysis together with methods of historical reconstruction to enrich the model of critical appreciation. The two processes appear to deal either with the 'self' or with 'society', respectively. A further aim, then, is to clarify the nature of the relationships between self, society, critical self-reflection, ideology-critique and emancipation. Consideration will be given to some problems arising from individual and group differences within this section of the thesis.

Section 4 returns to a consideration of various

problems of pluralism. The critical appreciation approach discussed in the preceding section is shown to contain an inherent assumption about the pluralistic nature of society, and hence must be coupled with a commitment to pluralism which acknowledges the need for dissensus. The means for achieving this commitment will be explored. A further aim is to clarify how the critical systems commitments will be realised through the employment of this enriched critical appreciation model.

In concluding the thesis, I call for a renewed conversation between proponents of antagonistic paradigms, a conversation which can only serve to enrich our understanding of what is different, other or alien, and in doing so will help us to *achieve a better understanding of ourselves.*

Over the following pages I will provide a more detailed discussion of each of the four sections of the thesis. Through this exposition the inter-related aims of the thesis will unfold.

## 1.2 Section 1: Critical Systems Thinking And Pluralism

In order to provide a background against which the discussion of methodological guidelines for critical systems thinking can be appreciated, it is necessary to consider the 'context of emergence' of these ideas.

There are several different approaches that can be taken in trying to understand the emergence of a particular idea at a specific place and point in time. Four views will be elaborated, and an approach suggested for consideration of the history and emergence of critical systems thinking. One difficulty that must be faced in providing a view of the context of emergence is its particular partiality.

Within the domain of systems thinking there are many approaches, methods or perspectives which purport to provide researchers with an understanding of situations that are alien to themselves. However, during the last decade or

more, the systems community has been experiencing something of a "crisis", in part due to the burgeoning plurality of perspectives. This "crisis" has prompted writers to proclaim that 'The Future of OR is Past' (Ackoff, 1979), as well as raising 'the need for a critical approach' (Jackson, 1985a).

This part of the thesis considers the developments that have occurred within systems thinking which have contributed to the current situation. A growing number of writers have added their voices to Jackson's in calling for (and in suggesting) a new, critical systems approach. Many of those suggesting a particular kind of critical systems thinking have drawn upon the work of some early critical theorists, the Frankfurt scholars. In doing so, they have proposed a number of commitments that *ought* to be common to all critical systems research. These can be summarised as commitments to complementarism<sup>1</sup>, to critical and social awareness, and to emancipation of human beings.

The aim of this section, therefore, is to provide an appreciation of the context of emergence and the content of critical systems thinking.

A second aim is to elucidate the connections between the various commitments, although these will not be elaborated fully in this section of the thesis. A more complete discussion of the relationships between the commitments will be undertaken in section four.

These commitments will need to be explained in both practical and theoretical terms. We will ask how these commitments are reflected in practice. Furthermore, how do critical systems approaches deal with the difficulties revealed by the debates concerning paradigm incommensurability and pluralism? A preliminary model of critical appreciation will begin to address these concerns in section two, and will be further elaborated in sections three and four.

It will be argued that many of the themes being played out in the critical systems domain have

also been considered by philosophers of social science and by critical social theorists. This observation provides the motivation to turn to a consideration of the 'answers' which social science more generally might provide for some of the problems identified and the questions raised.

### 1.3 Section 2: Social Science and Meaningful Understanding

In this section I will be exploring several issues connected with the notion of pluralism that have gained prominence within the social sciences. The scene is set through a consideration of how any researcher might begin to describe, explain or understand another paradigm, approach or perspective with which s/he shares little or no common ground. Two dangers have to be avoided in these efforts: the dangers of "imperialism" and of "going native".

Following this, I will be focussing on the problems of paradigm incommensurability and the

means that have been proposed for avoiding this theoretic difficulty. Here I will be exploring the idea that paradigm incommensurability operates in a dynamic way, that from one view point paradigms will be considered commensurate, whilst from another they will be seen as incommensurate. Any position must be understood as paradigmatic in itself, and this has implications for some writers who have sought to delineate various paradigms through a supposedly "value-neutral" framework.

In exploring the dynamics of incommensurability, I will consider the need to "protect" newly emerging paradigms from the imperialistic hegemony of the dominant orthodoxy. If a critical systems approach is to avoid the perils of "imperialism" and "going native", it must avoid the danger of any paradigm being evaluated *simply in its own terms* (extreme relativism) or, alternatively, *simply in the given terms of the evaluating paradigm* (extreme imperialism).

Finally, three models for appreciating alien cultures or paradigms will be proposed: the

objective, subjective and critical appreciation approaches. These will be explored in relation to two traditions within social science - empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic science - and in relation to Habermas's (1972) theory of knowledge-constitutive interests. The argument that is developed sees the critical appreciation method as providing a means for unifying the main traditions of the social sciences and the human cognitive interests that drive us.

The third aim of the thesis is to clarify the issues of paradigm incommensurability and imperialism raised in section one, and to elucidate the means for dealing with theoretical and methodological differences, given the conflicting perspectives that exist within the social sciences.

The critical appreciation model is proposed as a means for doing this. However, this leads us into questions about the activities that contribute to a critical appreciation and about the means for its practical application. It will be argued that

there are certain prerequisites which make the approach "critical". These form the subject matter of section three, and include guidelines about critical self-reflection and ideology-critique as forms of reflexive inquiry.

#### 1.4 Section 3: Enriching the Critical Appreciation Model

This section of the thesis will develop the model of critical appreciation further. Here, we will be considering the methods involved in gaining a critical appreciation of some (social science) problem situation. In particular, consideration will be given to two different aspects of critique that Habermas sees as fundamental to a critical social methodology: critique as self-reflection, and critique as "historical reconstruction" (ideology-critique).

There are a number of areas in which any aspect of the model we elaborate will have an impact. These impacts, and the resulting multi-dimensional

nature of the relationships between science, philosophy, theory and practice will be examined, and modelled diagrammatically. An analogy for a method of critical self-reflection (provided by the dream-analysis method of Freud) will be explored in chapter eight, followed by an analysis of the process for undertaking ideology-critique in chapter nine.

Following this, in chapter ten, consideration will turn to the ways in which the two forms of critique are interconnected. These two processes have sometimes been seen as providing a researcher with an "either/or" choice when dealing with different subject matter. However, a model of self-society dynamics will be presented in chapter ten which clarifies the necessarily *combined* role of critical self-reflection and ideology-critique in providing for the emancipation of individuals and groups.

The fourth aim, then, is to provide clear methodological guidelines for achieving critical and social awareness.

A fifth, connected aim relates to the manner in which these guidelines provide for the emancipation of individuals and groups.

Once the elaboration of these guidelines has been conducted, the prerequisites for a critical appreciation will be in place. However, the problem still remains of how this approach avoids the dangers of imperialism or of 'going native'. The task of showing how the critical appreciation approach can avoid these difficulties by incorporating a commitment to "discordant pluralism" will be undertaken in section four.

#### 1.5 Section 4: Critical Systems Thinking, Critical Appreciation and Discordant Pluralism - A "New Constellation"

In this section we will return to the issues of pluralism and paradigm incommensurability introduced in section two. Four strategies for the development of systems thinking were proposed by Jackson (1987a), following the management theorist

Reed (1985): *isolationism, pragmatism, imperialism, and pluralism*. These strategies will be considered in light of the foregoing discussion of the means for undertaking a critical appreciation. It will be suggested that the *pluralist* strategy is indeed the "better" strategy for critical systems thinking.

However, a question has to be raised about the nature of pluralism as currently advocated by critical systems thinkers. A new, discordant form of pluralism based on Bernstein's *The New Constellation* (1991) will be proposed. It will be shown that this form of pluralism pays tribute to the differences, otherness and alterity of alien paradigms or traditions, but has to be coupled with a critical appreciation in order to answer ethical questions about the rightness or legitimacy of a particular perspective.

The sixth aim of the thesis is to clarify how a critical systems perspective is also a pluralist perspective.

Following this, chapter thirteen will draw together all the features of the discordant pluralist, critical appreciation process elaborated in the preceding chapters and will relate these to the five commitments of critical systems thinking. These features call for a "reframing" of the critical systems commitments, which will be undertaken. It will be demonstrated that the use of both ideology-critique and critical self-reflection, when coupled with discordant pluralism, are capable of providing for all of the (necessarily reframed) critical systems commitments.

The seventh and final aim, therefore, is to clarify how the fully elaborated, discordant pluralist, critical appreciation process satisfies the critical systems commitments.

### 1.6 Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, let's return to a consideration of the aims set out above:

- (1) to provide an appreciation of the context of emergence and the content of critical systems thinking;
- (2) to elucidate the connections between the various critical systems commitments;
- (3) to clarify the issues of imperialism and paradigm incommensurability, and to elucidate some means for dealing with theoretical and methodological differences;
- (4) to provide clear methodological guidelines for achieving critical and social awareness;
- (5) to explain how these provide for the emancipation of individuals and groups;
- (6) to clarify how a critical systems perspective is also a pluralist perspective; and,
- (7) to clarify how the discordant pluralist

critical appreciation process satisfies the critical systems commitments.

Several other themes will be explored along the way, and some issues may pass without detailed consideration, but these are the seven central aims that I will be returning to in my conclusion.

### Notes

1. 'Complementarism' is a term which denotes a perspective that considers that distinct systems approaches can be seen as complementary at a methodological, theoretical and meta-theoretical level. The term was initially used to denote a meta-theoretical position, but it has recently been argued (Jackson, 1991b) that complementarism operates at methodological and theoretical levels, also. Later, I will be arguing that 'complementarism' is a paradigmatic view that, to some extent, denatures the theoretical perspectives captured within it. Although I am using the term 'complementarism' here, early

critical systems writers spoke of the 'pluralist' nature of their perspective. This is the term used by social scientists in describing the multiple approaches available to social scientists. I take the term 'complementarism' from Flood and Jackson (1991a,b) and Jackson (1991a,b), but I will be showing later in the thesis that there is a need to distinguish this form of 'pluralism' from the new discordant pluralism which I advocate.

SECTION ONE

CRITICAL SYSTEMS THINKING AND PLURALISM

CHAPTER 2: CRITICAL SYSTEMS THINKING - A VIEW  
OF ITS EMERGENCE

In this part of the thesis, the scene will be set for the ensuing discussion of critical systems thinking and pluralism. This will be done through a consideration of the emergence of critical systems thinking, and of the use of terms like "pluralism", "complementarism", "critique" and "emancipation" by writers in this domain. In conjunction with this, consideration of the approaches taken to deal with difficulties which arise from paradigm incommensurability will lead us into the second section.

Several different approaches can be used in trying to understand the emergence of a particular idea at a specific place and point in time. Four views will be elaborated, and an approach suggested for consideration of the history and emergence of critical systems thinking. It has to be noted that a difficulty to be confronted is the particular partiality of any view of the context of emergence of a set of ideas. Clearly, the expression of the

history of critical systems thinking given in this chapter is derived from my specific understanding and rationalisation.

In providing this overview I will focus on four distinct areas. To begin with, a brief resume of systems thinking will be given which outlines some of the main debates that have taken place during the last two decades or so. The focus here will be on the situation *prior* to the emergence of a critical systems perspective.

Following this, I will show how these debates laid a basis for calls for a critical systems theory that arose in the early 1980s. The first fully worked out critical systems perspective was that of Werner Ulrich (1983), who drew on the philosophy of the social sciences, and, in particular, on critical social theories, in developing his *Critical Systems Heuristics*.

The third area of focus will therefore be the work of critical social theorists, though coverage here will be limited to a few pertinent observations

about specific aspects that have bearing on the rest of the thesis. The use of critical social theories has arguably given rise to a specific orientation in critical systems thinking, and it is this focus that I turn to in the final section of this chapter.

In returning to the consideration of critical systems thinking, it will be shown that several themes (or, to use Jackson's 1991a,b terminology, "commitments") have been 'imported' from critical social science. However, a number of questions will be raised about the manner in which these ideas have been incorporated into systems thinking. These questions set the agenda for the rest of the thesis.

### 2.1 Approaches to Historical Analysis

In a paper I co-authored with Robert Flood (Flood and Gregory, 1989), we identified four approaches to thinking about the history and progress of (systems) concepts. It was noted that the four

approaches identified were not a complete set, and that other methods might exist or emerge in on-going discourses. The four positions are further elaborated below, without departing from our original intent:

(1) A *linear sequential* approach, where concepts and ideas are seen to develop in a straight-forward, progressive trajectory. History is taken to be linear and knowledge as cumulative. Such accounts typically provide chronological expositions.

(2) A *structuralist* approach, where models are "borrowed" from science to explain the structure and processes of history, and the cumulativeness of knowledge.

(3) A *world-view*, or cognitive approach, which utilises a "psychologistic" model of science. Here it is the world-view that changes, as a result of discrepancies or anomalies, and the change is not necessarily incremental (i.e. a "gestalt" shift may

occur, or an "epistemological break").

(4) A *genealogical* approach, which calls on the notion of discursive formations, or statements, in the form of networks that cut across sentences and other forms of discourse. These discursive formations are dynamic, and shaped by power relations that exist outside of discourse itself (that is, within institutions and other bodies). Such a position seeks to reveal history in all its subtleties, nuances and violence.

Having outlined the four positions, we went on to consider various renditions of the history and development of systems concepts. The analysis revealed that most writers had taken a *mixed approach* (i.e. a combination of two or more of the first three positions) in describing their view of the history of systems thinking. No author had undertaken to provide a 'genealogy', and this situation appears to have remained unchanged at the point of writing.

The world-view approach has been used by Dando and Bennett (1981), who applied Kuhn's model of scientific advance to Operational Research (OR)<sup>1</sup> which, during the 1970s and 1980s, was considered by several prominent members of its community to be in a state of crisis. Indeed, Ackoff (1979) went so far as to state that "the future of OR is past" - a statement which he backed by his effective withdrawal from the OR community.

Dando and Bennett were concerned to show what evidence existed to support the claim that OR was in a crisis, or that extraordinary science<sup>2</sup> was being undertaken by the practitioners of OR. They used two periods at a ten-year interval (that is, 1968 and 1978) and undertook a comparative analysis of the types of OR articles published. They concluded that the Kuhnian model of science, as characterised by "scientific revolutions", could effectively be applied to investigate possible transformations occurring within the OR paradigm. By then comparing articles from 1963, 1968, 1973 and 1978, they argued that

in the 15 years from 1963 to 1978, the  
OR community has shifted from a

widespread feeling of certainty about its role and optimism about its future, to a state in which significant sections are experiencing and expressing considerable uncertainty and pessimism.

(Dando and Bennett, 1981:93)

Whilst Dando and Bennett wholeheartedly supported the world-view approach to the history of science, our research seemed to point up a different opinion amongst systems writers. In our consideration of other "historians" of the systems movement, we were able to see that some researchers had adopted several approaches in their study of the history and progress of systems science. At times, a variety of approaches would be contained within the same analysis.

One example of the combination of perspectives was that of Checkland (1981) who argued that

it is not possible to write objective history. As Popper points out, the least we can do is to write history which is consistent with a particular point of view.

(Checkland, 1981:23)

This seems to indicate a world-view approach, yet Checkland's historical analysis was shown to be augmented by a linear sequential analysis which he

argues is inherent in the history of science.

Besides presenting both a world-view and a linear chronological analysis of the history of science (and systems), Checkland's writings were also considered to lean towards historical structuralism. For Checkland, scientific knowledge is (perceived as) cumulative because each new philosopher builds on knowledge from a variety of previous philosophers (see Checkland, 1981:55). A model of science based on three major characteristics was constructed by Checkland, and it is this model of reductionism, repeatability and refutation that he believes the systems sciences can transcend.

There are others who, like Checkland, have drawn on several of the approaches outlined above. We went on to consider some of the various renditions of the history and development of systems thinking that had been put forward by different writers from the systems community. This predominant usage of a *mixed* approach raised the question of whether there were inherent contradictions in these

analyses. However, our survey neither revealed such contradictions, nor suggested that the multi-faceted approaches taken were in any sense incoherent.

One feature of the different uses of the historical approaches was clear, and this has already been alluded to above. Only in the vaguest of manners was the notion of power introduced, and in no case was Foucault's work on "genealogy"<sup>3</sup> touched upon (see for example, Foucault's "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 1987). Although this was noted as a deficiency in systems thinking, to date no systems historians have attempted to undertake this (potentially enormous) task.

We need not assume that the genealogy approach of Foucault is any "better" than the other approaches that have been utilised: it is different, and would presumably reveal a distinctive rendition of the history and emergence of systems concepts. For the purposes of this thesis it is sufficient to

draw upon the first three approaches, in the mixed manner used by other systems writers, to provide my view of the history and development of systems ideas. Furthermore, I intend to focus only on the specific areas of systems writing that can be understood as giving rise to the possibility for a critical systems approach.

## 2.2 The Development of 'Systems Thinking'

The domain of systems thinkers is interdisciplinary, drawing upon such diverse fields as engineering, sociology, biology, behavioural psychology, mathematics and economics for its subject matter. As well as drawing from these disciplines, systems ideas have contributed to their knowledge and understanding, having

pervaded all fields of science and penetrated into popular thinking, jargon and mass media. Systems thinking plays a dominant role in a wide range of fields....

(von Bertalanffy, 1968:10)

The manner in which this has been achieved remains

to a great extent a hidden given. However, it is possible to find snippets of historiographical comments, relating the usage of systems ideas in other domains, repeated by people within the systems community. We shall be concerned here to review some of the work of those within the systems movement who 'see themselves and are seen by others as the men [sic] uniquely responsible for the pursuit of a set of shared goals, including the training of their successors' (Kuhn, 1970a:177).

Despite the recognition and knowledge of systems approaches by others who are external to the community, the understanding achieved is often either inaccurate, incomplete, or misinformed. We shall be considering a number of the different views put forward by both the friends and enemies of the systems movement. Arguably, the systems community could learn more from its enemies than from its friends (as was made clear in Churchman, 1979). This is a point that we will be returning to in subsequent chapters when consideration is given to the manner in which antagonistic

paradigms can be used to improve understanding.

### 2.2.1 "Hard" Systems Approaches

An early analysis of the work of the systems community was undertaken by Lilienfeld (1978), who, as an external critic, identified six distinct applications of systems ideas from his perusal of literature that had been prepared for a 'lay' audience. These included von Bertalanffy's essentially biological philosophy of General Systems (1950a, 1950b); Wiener's (1948) and Ashby's (1956) related work on cybernetics and "learning/thinking" machines; Shannon and Weaver's (1949) information and communication theories (related to cybernetics); the work of Operations Researchers (e.g., Hall, 1962; Rivett and Ackoff, 1963; or Churchman, Ackoff and Arnoff, 1975); von Neumann and Morgenstern's games theory (1953); and, the systems dynamics approaches of Jay Forrester used for modelling social and global processes (1961, 1969, 1971)<sup>4</sup>.

All of these approaches have tended to be

categorised (retrospectively) as "hard" systems approaches<sup>5</sup>, in the main because they purport to deal with hard, tangible data ("facts") relating to situations in which the goals and means can readily be identified. Additionally, they all rely on quantitative methods for resolving the problems as stated, and take for granted the possibility of maximising or optimising some entity related to the problem. More recently (Dando and Bennett, 1981; Jackson, 1991a) they have been described as being underpinned by either a *functionalist* or *structuralist* social theory.

During the years of the Second World War, these approaches came into their own, with concentrated resource availability, and, of course, a highly motivating purpose for the development of increasingly sophisticated methods and techniques - namely, the desire to "win the war". Following the success of O.R. during the war years, it was believed that the same approaches could be applied within industry, the public sector and society in general. Improvements in computing abilities (augmented to a certain extent by an over-

enthusiastic expectation of the technology) assisted in the success stories that were told. It is this particular domain of application (i.e. organisations/society) that I will be using in the remainder of my analysis of the development of systems thinking.

However, the systems community continued to be influenced by ideas from other sciences. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that by the late 1960s systems thinkers (especially those in the 'management' area of the discipline) had begun to develop different views about their subject area. To a large extent the orientation was still toward applying quantitative methods, although the subjective nature of the object of investigation was recognised. Instead of "maximising" essentially determinate objects (machines, processes, components, materials) the aim turned towards other "variables" - for example, improving the motivation of workers. But the application of quantitative approaches persisted.

The 1970s was a period of re-evaluation for the

systems community, with critics like Ackoff (1979) and Hoos (1976) finding that the application of O.R. or systems analysis to problems of a societal or organisational nature left something to be desired. Ackoff, in particular, felt that the 'predict-and-prepare' paradigm of O.R. was unsuitable as well as being 'irresponsible, unprofessional, and unethical' (Ackoff, 1979:103).

The drive was on to develop a new paradigm which would transcend the problems being experienced by systems practitioners and theorists alike.

#### 2.2.2 "Soft" Systems Approaches

It was around this time that the approaches of the so-called "soft" systems thinkers first began to be used in an organisational setting. The introduction of techniques such as interpretive structural modelling (*ISM*, Warfield, 1976), interactive planning (*IP*, Ackoff, 1974, 1976) and soft systems methodology (*SSM*, Checkland, 1981) all heralded the kind of *gestalt* switch that Dando and Bennett discussed in their 1981 paper<sup>6</sup>. The

dominant force behind this change in perspective can be summarised in Vickers' aphorism: 'Human systems are different' (Vickers, 1983).

The debate which took place during the 1970s between functionalist ("hard") and interpretive ("soft") systems approaches was played out in the main academic journals of the time. For example, the discussion by Dando and Bennett (1981) of the Kuhnian crisis was published by the O.R. journal, *Journal of the Operations Research Society*, as were several developments of the systems engineering approach through Checkland's Soft Systems Methodology (SSM)<sup>7</sup>.

Methodologies which had been based on preceding hard systems approaches now began to lay claim to offering a 'learning process' through which organisational problems could be resolved. Checkland was one of many who developed new approaches based on an analysis of inadequacies of the hard perspectives: his SSM drew explicitly on the earlier Systems Engineering (SE) methodology of Jenkins (1969). It was developed in light of

the inabilities of SE and other hard systems methods to deal with the problematic, human activity systems which resist an optimisation approach.

These new, soft methodologies shared a number of features. They took as their subject matter the values, opinions, and conflicting viewpoints of the human actors in any problem situation. Their view of these actors was one that understood them as behaving in a voluntaristic manner. It was held that the elements of importance in any problem situation were human, or human-related, and that quantitative approaches were wholly inappropriate for these situations. Attitudes, understanding and appreciation became the currency of the soft systems approaches.

However, as Jackson (1982) argues, the emphasis was still on regulation of the status quo, rather than on bringing about radical change. Despite this recognition of the inherently conservative nature of the soft approaches, it was the climate of debate and "irresolvable" difference between

the two early systems paradigms (hard and soft) that provided the setting for the emergence of our third systems perspective, that of the "critical" systems thinkers.

### 2.3 The Emergence of 'Critical Systems Thinking' - An Overview

Discussions between soft systems thinkers and those advocating a critical approach were initially centred on an argument about whether or not social systems are basically conflictual and thus require radical change. This can be seen in the discussion which took place in the *Journal of Applied Systems Analysis* during 1982. Checkland, Ackoff and Churchman all responded, individually and somewhat predictably, to the criticism from Jackson (1982) that the soft approaches were unable to deal with the fundamentally conflictual nature of social systems. From the experience of countless case studies they were unable to support the view that situations of irresolvable conflict are the norm (Ackoff, 1982).

As we will see later, this way of conceptualising the social world as fundamentally coercive or repressive has a significant role to play in critical thinking. It will be argued later that *all* critical theories (whether from the social science or systems domains) adopt some view of situations as basically repressive or coercive<sup>8</sup>. In order for their approaches to be capable of emancipation, critical thinkers have to posit a view of the evolution of society which explains the mechanisms or processes of *alienation* that prevent individuals or groups from satisfying their genuine interests.

### 2.3.1 Methodology or Framework?

This was not the only dispute within the systems domain that facilitated the emergence of a critical systems perspective. The debate between the hard and soft systems approaches had become imperialistic<sup>9</sup>, with M'Pherson (1974) explaining that soft approaches were a subset of the hard, which Checkland (1981) "refuted" by claiming that the hard systems approaches were a subset of soft!

As Jackson (1987a) later explained, both claims amounted to an isolationist form of imperialism which saw only the perspective being advocated as valid.

Ulrich (1981) presented a different position: what was required in the systems domain, according to him, was some *radically different methodologies* which would address underlying systemic difficulties. This early call by Ulrich echoed the growing concern amongst systems practitioners that they were unable to deal adequately with very complex or coercive societal problem situations.

Around the time of the discussion and debate concerning the relative merits of hard and soft systems approaches, it was noted that development in systems thinking was oriented more towards setting out 'a methodology in detail than to compare methodologies' (Jones, 1978:143). However, whether prompted by Jones or for some other reason, it was not long before several writers proposed evaluative frameworks for considering the plurality of systems methodologies and concepts

(e.g., Ackoff, 1971; Jackson and Keys, 1984; Jayaratna, 1986; Jackson, 1987b; Banathy, 1987; Keys, 1988).

The debate about which methodological approach was superior needed arbitration, and this was provided in Jackson and Key's (1984) paper which presented a framework that sought to reveal the assumptions of the many systems methodologies. Essentially, they argued that certain methods could more appropriately be utilised under specific circumstances<sup>10</sup>. These "circumstances" could be identified by various features of the problem-situation being faced relating to the relative complexity of the situation and the nature of the relationships between participants. At the time, Jackson and Keys were only able to provide a framework which described the kinds of problem-situations already being addressed by either hard or soft systems methodologies. The systems community seemed unable to respond to the demands for a methodology for dealing with coercion.

Having outlined the main issues that were challenging systems thinkers in the early 1980s, we can now go on to consider the themes that emerged from the debates.

### 2.3.2 Early Themes in Critical Systems Thinking

By 1982, Jackson had already called for a critical systems approach, but the first thorough-going exposition of a synthesised 'critical' and 'systemic' approach to social inquiry was given in Werner Ulrich's seminal work, *Critical Heuristics of Social Planning* (1983). In this, he undertook the enormous task of developing Kantian thinking for practical application, together with a critical analysis of the work of Habermas and Popper.

Ulrich proposed several basic characteristics for a critical "social planning" method. Firstly, it should contain a 'critical intent against present conceptions of "rational" planning'; secondly, it should utilise 'the systems idea for this purpose'; and thirdly, it should have a 'heuristic

rather than theoretical orientation' (Ulrich, 1983:19). Furthermore, Ulrich argued that

"To be critical" then above all means to become self-reflective in respect to the presuppositions flowing into one's own judgments, both in the search for true knowledge and rational action.

(Ulrich, 1983;20)

Becoming self-reflective, as Ulrich recommends, may amount to no more than an improvement of self-awareness. According to Ulrich, it is through self-awareness that individuals will see the repression and subjugations which underlie their social reality. I will be returning to the role of self-reflection in critical systems thinking in chapter eight.

Ulrich's 'Critical Systems Heuristics' is oriented towards practical action of a critically normative nature; he sought to bridge the gap between theory and *praxis* through the notion that any theory of society must be critically normative (i.e. it should suggest what *ought* to be the case) and hence practically oriented. Suggesting what *ought* to be the case must be based on critical inquiry in the first instance: this means that all those

likely to be affected by a systems design should be involved in the decision-making process, together with the designers themselves. Ulrich's *Heuristics* offers a method for just such a critically normative inquiry.

To some extent, Ulrich (1983) based his approach on the work of the critical social theorist, Jürgen Habermas. Jackson (1985a,b) also made reference to the same corpus of writing. It is not surprising, therefore, that subsequently systems writers wishing to understand what a critical systems perspective involves should return to a consideration of critical social theory.

Habermas is the latest in a line of critical scholars, often referred to as the 'Frankfurt School'. In order to understand the context of much of Habermas's writing, it is worth exploring the work of some of these Frankfurt scholars. This work was described by Burrell and Morgan (1979)<sup>11</sup> as being radical, and anti-organisational. The first of these descriptions might also be applied to the work of critical systems thinkers (e.g.,

see Tsoukas, 1992). We will return to their work after a brief exposition of the work of the Frankfurt scholars.

#### 2.4 Roots in Critical Social Theory

A number of labels, ranging from 'radical', 'revolutionary', 'utopian', 'Marxian', through to 'idealistic', have been applied to the work of many critical social theorists. These labels are, in the main, related to the critical theorists' first chosen paradigm, which was Marx's *Critique of Political Economy* (Connerton, 1976)<sup>12</sup>, though they also reflect a beginning in German Idealism.

Although the establishment of the Frankfurt School during the 1930s is considered by some to be the moment of inception of critical theory - it has been described as 'a creation of the early thirties, [and] was also a discovery of the late sixties' - nevertheless, Connerton (1980) is able to show that 'critical thinking' or 'critique' began as a distinct activity several centuries

before, with the work of critics intent on a concise philology of religious and philosophical texts:

the term [critique] ... was first used ... to describe the art of informed judgment appropriate to the study of ancient texts, whether the Classics or the Bible ... the appeal to critique gradually displaced the criterion of truth from revelation towards clear and rational, or 'critical', thought ....

(Connerton, 1976:15-16).

This clear and rational, critical style of thinking can be traced through the work of several generations of German intellectuals, beginning in the 1840s with Hegel, developing through the founding members of the Frankfurt School during 1930-60, and being consolidated in the 1970s with the work of Habermas. Despite their shared Teutonic origins, the different generations were all influenced by unique historical, situational factors. One indication of the type of impact these factors had, can be seen in the research publications of the Frankfurt School which reflect the reorientation of the members' approach from theory to practice during their period of exile in the United States, which began in the late 1930s.

A prominent historian of the Frankfurt School, Martin Jay, has provided a thorough-going analysis of the work of not only its key members (Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse), but several other emigres to the United States also. Jay's seminal books, *The Dialectical Imagination* (1976) and *Permanent Exiles* (1986), consider the impact that critical theorists had upon American intellectual life, particularly in view of the re-emerged interest in critical theory which accompanied student protests in America during the late 1960s.

Prior to the intellectual migration, a number of important papers were published by the leading members of the School, most notably Horkheimer's 'Traditional and Critical Theory' (1937). In that article, Horkheimer details the differences between what he terms 'traditional' and critical sciences. Briefly, the three areas of difference are in the goals or aim of the two approaches; the cognitive or logical structures of their theories; and in the type of evidence that each requires for determining consistency, accuracy or for validating claims to truth.

The efforts of the early Frankfurt Scholars was directed towards the integration of a reinterpreted Marxist theory and of Freudian psychoanalytic theory. It was not until much later, in a "third phase" of work, that this was to some extent achieved by Marcuse in *Eros and Civilisation* (1962). Marcuse's work represents a third phase in the development of Critical Theory, if we consider the work of the Frankfurt School before and after exile as being phases one and two.

His ideas were aimed at providing a "viable radical politics". Marcuse was, prior to the work of Habermas (1984, 1989), the only Frankfurt scholar who had attempted to describe a society beyond domination, subjugation and repression. Martin Jay argued that 'he has helped give substance and direction to ... those dissatisfied with what they see as the present Hobson's Choice between authoritarian socialism and repressive advanced capitalism' (Jay, 1986:4).

In his reformulation of Marx, the system of social needs is reinterpreted through the assimilation of Freudian theories. Previous phases of work by the Frankfurt scholars had shown a switch of emphasis from analysis of the infra-structure of society to its superstructure; and, a replacement of Marx's critique of the political economy by the broader critique of instrumental rationality, as within Horkheimer's (1937) 'Traditional and Critical Theory'.

A fourth phase can be seen in the work of Jürgen Habermas, the most recent critical theorist, which falls within three interconnected areas and logically extends and develops the earlier critiques. He concentrates on analysis of

the methodology of the social sciences; the connection between the development of the natural sciences and the interest in instrumental control; and the relationship between science, politics and public opinion in advanced capitalist societies.

(Connerton, 1976:13)

These theories reflect a further revision of Marx's critique and of his philosophical anthropology by

drawing on the tradition of hermeneutics.

In considering the role of science in advanced capitalist society, Habermas (1972) proposes a theory of human cognitive interests. We shall return to a more detailed exploration of the three "knowledge-constitutive interests" in chapter six, but it is useful to clarify the relationship between them and the three different types of science that Habermas identifies. For Habermas, the relationship between science and critical social theory has become more complex: whereas Horkheimer had to consider a dialectic between 'traditional and critical science', Habermas must explore the relationships between empirical-analytic, historical-hermeneutic and critical sciences.

Habermas uses hermeneutics to inquire as to whether science and technology should properly be viewed as instruments of political action, or as competitors for power and authority in society. In this analysis of the 'genuine' role of science and technology, he

distinguishes between instrumental and communicative action ... The contrast is between instrumental reason which is interested in the domination of nature, and comprehension which is interested in communication without the desire of domination. The distinction has both practical and theoretical consequences.

(Connerton, 1976:30)

Habermas (1972) considers that the *technical* (or instrumental) interest is most commonly expressed in the work of the empirical-analytic sciences, whilst a *practical* interest (an interest in comprehension) has been the guiding interest of the hermeneutic sciences. The third interest, that of *emancipation*, is the driving force behind critical social science, and, as we shall see later, it is intimately connected with the other two knowledge-constitutive interests. For Habermas, any scientific research involves all three interests, yet it is common for only one interest to dominate. This means that the genuine interests of humans are either not expressed, or, alternatively, they are subjugated in an unequal play-off between competing, conflicting modes of reason.

The illegitimate subjugation of genuine human interests requires the development of a liberating or emancipatory approach. As Connerton (1976) tells us critical theory, as articulated by Habermas, involves 'the idea of self-reflection guided by an emancipatory interest'. It develops 'a critique of ideology and contemporary society' which serves to expose 'the powerful tendencies' within society that work to 'force all rationality into the form of instrumental reason' and to 'suppress practical discourse'. It purports to 'serve to further enlightenment' and to bring about 'a transformation in political agents'.

Bernstein (1986) states that if a critical theory is to have practical consequences (i.e., it will act as the means to achieve some ends), then it must address the very real gap between 'theoretical justification' and 'political or strategic action'. Despite the broad scope of Habermas's critical social theory, this early work by Bernstein expresses the belief that it fails in this important respect.

This is a criticism that has been mooted by other writers: Agnes Heller (1982), for example, strongly criticises Habermas for claiming to be a Marxist yet offering *only* theories about alienation and inequity, whilst not involving himself in political activity. To some extent, Habermas has taken this criticism on board, and has been seen to engage in political activity during the last decade or so (e.g. see Habermas, 1986).

At this stage in my thesis I do not intend to provide a detailed discussion of Habermas's many contributions to critical social theory; indeed, the points mentioned above should suffice to provide the flavour of his approach. Later, in chapter six, I will utilise Habermas' theory of knowledge-constitutive interests to explain the process of critical appreciation. Then, in section three, I will be drawing on Habermas' later work on the evolution of society and communicative action (along with the work of several other writers) to develop a model of ideology-critique.

Let me close this discussion of critical social theory by stressing a few ideas that have been developed by members of the Frankfurt School. Firstly, critical social theorists have been interested in providing a negative critique of traditional science. They regard science as being instrumental in its activities (e.g. Horkheimer, 1937). This view was later extended by Habermas (1972) to become his theory of *knowledge-constitutive interests*, which brings together (through a critical transformation) the empirical-analytic, historical-hermeneutic and critical sciences in a pluralistic nexus.

Secondly, the idea of negative dialectics (Marcuse, 1968) proposes that for every reproductive societal phenomenon there are two dialectically opposed facets, in which the negative offers all that is good: Happiness, Freedom, Reason. These negative features are being subjected to oppressive forces arising from the alienative activities of modern capitalism, and, indeed, may be so deeply repressed that we will be

unable to recover them.

Thirdly, and this links in with both of the previous ideas, critical social theories should serve to emancipate people from the repressive and alienating forces of capitalism, science, technology and modern living. Such emancipation should be brought about through the development of humankind's capacity for critical self-reflection which should be coupled with an ideology-critique. This ought to serve to bring about a transformation of society.

Having laid out the basic themes of critical social theory, let us now see how these have been incorporated into critical systems thinking.

### 2.5 Themes in Critical Systems Thinking

Although mention was made earlier of Ulrich's (1983) role in "importing" ideas from the critical social theorists, I want to turn now to a consideration of the more recent articulations of

critical systems thinking. In *Creative Problem Solving: Total Systems Intervention* (TSI), Flood and Jackson (1991a) have set out the fundamental tenets of their liberating systems philosophy. These include the explicit aim of emancipation and liberation of individuals from subjugating forces, whether these represent contradictions within the society or the individual.

The philosophy underpinning TSI is "critical systems thinking". This is a new development in the systems movement which ... [makes] its stand on three positions. These are "complementarism", "sociological awareness" and the promotion of "human well-being and emancipation".

(Flood & Jackson, 1991a:46-7)

Of course, the comprehension of such commitments calls for a fuller description of them. A number of questions spring to mind in connection with this task of elaborating the commitments. One might ask how the commitments are to be reflected in the practitioner's critical practice? At a theoretical level, one might ask how such commitments deal with the difficulties revealed by the debates concerning pluralism and paradigm incommensurability?<sup>13</sup> It is my intention to

consider these questions later in the thesis, but to begin with I want to turn to Jackson's (1991b) elaboration of the commitments.

Jackson does not wish to limit critical systems thinking to the three commitments delineated in TSI: in order to make the critical systems perspective more coherent, and in order to overcome problems of incommensurability, he wants to extend the set to include a commitment to *critical awareness* and to *complementarism at the theoretical level*. Indeed, he argues that the commitments had already been developed within critical systems thinking:

by about 1990, critical systems thinking had come to rest upon five "commitments" - critical awareness, social awareness, complementarism at the methodological level, complementarism at the theoretical level, and a dedication to human emancipation.

(Jackson, 1991b:132)

To begin to understand how critical systems thinking fulfills these commitments, let's see what each of them means for Jackson.

### 2.5.1 Commitments of Critical Systems Thinking

The first commitment to be considered is that of "critical awareness". In discussing the Frankfurt scholars, it was argued that critical social theory involves 'the idea of self-reflection guided by an emancipatory interest'. As was argued by Ulrich (1983), critical awareness amounts to critical self-reflection.

Jackson points up two quite different roles for the process of gaining "critical awareness":

One important form of *critical awareness* concerns understanding the strengths and weaknesses and the theoretical underpinnings of available systems methods, techniques, and methodologies. ... Another form of critical awareness comes from closely examining the assumptions and values entering into actually existing systems designs or any proposals for a systems design. Critical systems thinking aims to provide the tools for enhancing this type of critical awareness as well ....

(Jackson, 1991b:139)

For Jackson, critical awareness is primarily tied to knowledge and understanding *in general* about methodologies, whilst for critical social

theorists it arises from a process of *particular self-reflection* that each social theorist, social actor, practitioner, or whoever, must undertake themselves in order to achieve critical awareness. I will be coming back to this point in chapter eight of the thesis, when I elaborate a number of methodological guidelines for a process of critical appreciation which involve enhancing an individual's self-reflective capabilities.

At a subsidiary level, Jackson talks about critical awareness of values which feed into any existing or potential systems designs. Such awareness may equate with the critical social theorists' ideology-critique, but Jackson ties it directly to methodology. We will consider the implications of this kind of critical awareness in the next section.

Critical awareness is to be distinguished from *social awareness* which Jackson tells us

should make users of systems methodologies contemplate the consequences of use of the approaches they employ. ... Social awareness also involves recognizing that there are certain organizational and societal

pressures which lead to certain systems theories and methodologies being popular for guiding interventions at particular times.

(Jackson, 1991b:139-40)

Here, practitioners are urged to give 'full consideration to the social consequences of use of different systems methodologies' (Jackson, 1991b: 143). This is a point that has been made by other writers (e.g. Ulrich, 1983). It is also not difficult to see that this is a commitment with which most critical social theorists would concur, and, indeed, have been shown to incorporate into their critiques of science more generally (for examples, see Horkheimer, 1937; or Habermas, 1972, 1974, 1988).

The third commitment Jackson elaborates arises from the means provided (by Jackson and Keys, 1984, and expanded by Jackson, 1987b) for overcoming the methodological debates between isolationists that were witnessed in the 1970s and early 1980s. A framework which enables all systems methodologies to be employed appropriately allows these methodologies to be viewed as complementary:

Critical systems thinking is committed to the *complementary use of systems methodologies in practice*. This requires a methodology (or perhaps a meta-methodology) which respects all of the other features of critical systems thinking and employs these, together with a full understanding of each individual systems approach, to describe procedures which critical systems practitioners can follow in trying to translate their thinking into action in the real world.

(Jackson, 1991b:140)

Jackson sees methodological complementarism as providing a route out of the trap of paradigm incommensurability. With this form of complementarism it is possible that:

at a meta-level, different strands of management science can all be seen as offering complementary support for the anthropologically based cognitive interests of the human species, so the methodologies too can be employed in a complementary fashion.

(Jackson, 1991b:144)

According to Jackson, then, it is Habermas' knowledge-constitutive interests that can provide complementarity between different systems approaches. A question that must arise is how the interests "connect" with systems methodologies.

Jackson has clarified this for us, and we will return to consider his justification for the connectivity later in this chapter.

The fourth commitment is closely allied to the third, in that it provides for complementarity again, though this time at a theoretical level:

*Complementarity at the theoretical level is a necessary accompaniment to complementarity at the level of methodology. This requires an equal commitment to the complementary and informed development of all varieties of systems approaches. ... alternative positions must be respected, and the different theoretical underpinnings, and the methodologies to which they give rise, developed in partnership.*

(Jackson, 1991b:140)

Jackson argues that theoretical complementarity also relies on Habermas' cognitive interests:

*complementarity at the theoretical level rests, ... upon its acceptance of Habermas' arguments for human species-dependent knowledge constitutive interests.*

(Jackson, 1991b:144)

I intend to conflate the two forms of complementarity: if both theoretical and

methodological complementarity rely on Habermas' knowledge-constitutive interests, I would suggest that it is not necessary to differentiate the two levels. Instead, we could say that critical systems thinkers have a commitment to the proper employment of knowledge-constitutive interests at both methodological and theoretical levels. This would imply that the commitment is to the complementary application of the interests *both in theory and in practice*.

The fifth commitment, to emancipation, is one to which Jackson argues all critical systems thinkers should pledge themselves<sup>14</sup>:

critical systems thinking is *dedicated to human emancipation* and seeks to achieve for all individuals the maximum development of their potential. This is to be achieved by raising the quality of work and life in the organizations and societies in which they participate.

(Jackson, 1991b:141)

Again, we can ascertain a connection between critical systems thinking and critical social science in that both contain an interest in emancipation. Furthermore,

Critical systems thinking reveals its *dedication to human emancipation* and

seeks to fulfill this by adequately servicing, with appropriate systems methodologies, each of Habermas' human interests.

(Jackson, 1991b:145)

Clearly, critical systems thinking draws heavily on critical social theory, and especially on Habermas' theory of knowledge-constitutive interests, for its beliefs and commitments. This is a point that we will come back to later in the thesis, when consideration turns to Habermas' various theories and the ways in which they can be interpreted for critical systems thinking.

Jackson concludes his discussion of the five commitments by referring to Schechter (1991), who Jackson cites as having indicated that critical systems thinking has:

brought greater theoretical depth to discussions...; it has put issues of power and human emancipation into action; it has produced a framework for the complementary development of all the different systems approaches; and it has championed a commitment to careful, critical, self-reflective thinking.

(Jackson, 1991b:146-7)

These are indeed powerful statements to make about

a particular perspective. However, the question remains whether these have in fact been met in the work of those who call themselves critical systems thinkers.

Having outlined the five commitments, I now want to go on and consider this question by drawing on the work of a number of critical systems thinkers. To begin with, I intend to "conflate" my account of the commitments to "accord" with the three described by Flood and Jackson (1991a). We shall, therefore, be considering the commitments to: (a) critical and social awareness, (b) complementarism at both methodological and theoretical levels, and (c) emancipation. Later, I will once more distinguish between methods for achieving critical and sociological awareness, and will treat the two forms of complementarism separately, as discussed by Jackson (1991b).

### 2.5.2 Critical and Social Awareness

We have already seen that, for the critical theorists of the Frankfurt school, critique is a

fundamental aspect of any critical theory. Critical awareness of the kind advocated by Jackson also arises from a form of critique, where the methodologies to be employed are "interrogated" to identify their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Jackson does, however, take a different line to that of Habermas (1972, 1974, 1988). The purpose of the process of identification of methodological strengths and weaknesses lies in the ability to thereby 'align' particular methodologies with specific problem situations (see Flood and Jackson, 1991a, for numerous examples of this). For Habermas, the point of employing critique in the "interrogation" of scientific methodologies is to *transcend the limitations and illegitimate usages* of those methodologies.

The difference between the two perspectives is that for Jackson the interrogation can result in using *either* one approach or another, whereas for Habermas it requires the use of *both* empirical-analytic *and* historical-hermeneutic methodologies.

As we will see in chapter six, the result of a critical employment of both approaches will be the realisation of the inherent human interest in emancipation.

For Ulrich (1988), all theories of society must involve the Habermasian form of critique in order to be classified as "critical":

Simply "adding on" critically normative reflection to instrumental and strategic reasoning will not be enough. *Critically normative reflection must not remain extrinsic to systems thinking and systems practice ...*

(Ulrich, 1988:157)

This highlights the need for the process of critical reflection to be an explicit part of the process of critical inquiry, which also incorporates components ("moments") of objective and interpretive inquiry.

Contrary to the Frankfurt School's declared aim to provide a *comprehensive* critical theory of society, Ulrich (1983, 1988) argues that this cannot be achieved. He therefore advocates that the systems practitioner should take a *critically self-reflective* stance in order to understand and

enter into a dialogue with other rationalities, i.e. to enable practical discourse to take place. The *boundaries* of the investigation will be critically revealed through these processes of critical self-reflection and dialogue.

There remains a problem for Ulrich in adopting this view: the problem of the limitations that constrain any inquiry. This is a Kantian difficulty, involving a consideration of the *inherent partiality* of the process of systems inquiry. This partiality has been succinctly described by Midgley (1992c) in a paper ("The Sacred and Profane...") which discusses the process of differentiation employed in all efforts to identify what is central or marginal to an inquiry. Earlier, Ulrich had argued that 'Critical heuristics does not pretend to secure an objective solution to the problem of practical reason; it aims at a merely *critical solution*' (Ulrich, 1988:158, original emphasis).

To return to Jackson's position, it is worth noting that there are several critical systems

writers who support it. For example, John Oliga argued that critique is rightfully exercised in making choices between different methodologies:

In attempting to highlight the three methodological foundations that underwrite different modes of inquiry and practice, a focus on two issues is made. These are their underlying interest, and hence their claims about what counts as scientific (valid) knowledge, and the difficulties they face in those claims. It is upon a critical reflection on such claims and difficulties that a rational choice of a particular methodology in general, and of specific systems methodologies in particular, can be made.

(Oliga, 1988:94)

However, critique does not stop here for Oliga. As we shall see in chapter nine, critical awareness must also involve a critique of ideology. This has been demonstrated in the work of the Frankfurt scholars, and has been argued for in both Flood and Jackson's work. In describing the commitment to critical awareness, Jackson (1991b) discusses the need to critique the values flowing into a particular systems design. This form of critique is closely tied to the means for emancipating individuals, since declaring values can act to "raise the consciousness" of those involved in the

process of critique, thereby helping to "transform their situation".

Ideology-critique may also be understood as a means for achieving social awareness: Jackson (1991b) argues that social awareness involves appreciating the various societal and organisational "pressures" that can lead to particular methodologies dominating a discipline at any given moment in time. Since these pressures may operate "behind the backs" of individuals, a critique of ideology may assist in revealing both the 'likely consequences' of a particular use of systems methodologies and the values flowing into the systems design arising from the inquiry.

Oliga (1990a-c, 1991) has undertaken much useful work discussing the role of ideology in contemporary society, and exposing the various forms of analysis of ideology that are available. In building on Oliga's earlier work on power and ideology in society, Flood (1990c) argues that the pressures created by ideological systems may be used to "empower" those who are being

illegitimately subjugated by the dominant hegemony.

One possible method suggested by Flood (1990a), and endorsed by Woolliston (1990), involves a form of "oppositional" thinking. In analysing Foucault's power-knowledge relations, Flood suggests that the postmodernist form of oppositional thinking offers a means for "liberating" suppressed knowledges which can then be subjected to critique. Through this process, individuals may also be "liberated". In his paper, Flood (1990b) clearly declares a range of meanings for 'liberating systems theory', which are oriented towards the release of subjugated knowledges in order to provide alternatives for people to use. These include:

(1) the liberation of systems theory generally from a "natural" tendency toward self-imposed insularity,

(2) the liberation of systems theory specifically in cases of internal localized subjugations in discourse,

(3) systems theory for liberation and emancipation in response to dominance and subjugation in work and social situations, and in broader terms

(4) the cognitive illumination for the

reader or prospective researcher or practitioner.

(Flood, 1990b:50)

Here we can see that the encouragement of individuals - whether managers, researchers, practitioners or simply citizens - to develop their skills of self-reflection and awareness will provide an environment in which 'dominance and subjugation in work and social situations' will constantly be exposed to criticism and critical analysis.

It is clear that critical awareness requires something beyond the exposition of methodological strengths and weaknesses, even beyond the revelation of values flowing into methodology choice and use. Ideology-critique is a vital part of the process of gaining *both* critical *and* social awareness. We shall come back to a more detailed discussion of this in chapters eight and nine, when some methodological guidelines will be offered.

### 2.5.3 Complementarism

Earlier, I argued that the commitments to methodological and theoretical "complementarism" could be treated under one heading. However, it should be noted that the desire to *distinguish* the two levels of complementarism has a historical basis. Initially, Jackson and Keys (1984) argued for *incommensurability* at a methodological level, since this supported the need for a framework in which methodologies could be related to different problem situations. This had implications for the capacity for commensurability at a theoretic level. It was in response to perceived problems of paradigm incommensurability that critical systems writers began to talk of *pluralism* as providing theoretical coherence to their already articulated position concerning the use of many methodologies (e.g. Jackson, 1987a).

More recently, following Jackson's (1987a) position paper about the need for pluralism in the systems sciences<sup>15</sup>, and his 1990 paper 'going beyond' the "system of systems methodologies"

framework, Flood and Jackson (1991a) have clearly come to view the range of systems methodologies as *complementary*. This has implications for our understanding of the degree of commensurability between different methodologies. Flood and Jackson argue that distinct methodologies can be more appropriately applied to certain kinds of problem situation and it is this which allows them to be used in complementary rather than competing ways.

As we will see later, the notion of 'competing paradigms' (or theories or methodologies) lies behind many of the debates about imperialism. So, by offering us the idea that systems methodologies are complementary, Flood and Jackson are seeking to avoid criticisms of imperialism in their stance. This is still something of an open question, since it is not entirely clear that their complementarist position is 'meta-paradigmatic' - that is, 'above paradigms' (Midgley, 1989b, 1992a). We will return to a deeper consideration of this issue in section two of the thesis.

The move away from using the word "pluralism" to denote the critical systems position is worth further charting, since there are other critical systems writers who have also used both "pluralism" and "complementarism" in describing work in the systems domain (e.g., Oliga, 1988). In his retrospective analysis of the emergence of critical systems thinking, Jackson depicts the link with complementarism or pluralism as resulting from the recognition that management (and systems) scientists were no longer dealing with an homogeneous subject-matter:

Instead of seeing different strands of systems thinking as competing for exactly the same area of concern (as Dando and Bennett do), alternative approaches can be presented as being appropriate to the different types of situation in which management scientists are required to act. Each approach will be useful in certain defined areas and should be used only in appropriate circumstances.

(Jackson, 1991b:134)

He further argues that, on adoption of this perspective, the systems of systems methodologies could be seen to present 'the relationship between different systems methodologies as *being*

*complementary in nature'* (Jackson, 1991b:134).

However, in an earlier paper by Oliga (1988), the "complementarist" label is applied to Checkland's position of seeing "hard" systems approaches as a special case of the "soft". Since Flood (1989a) argued that Checkland's view was imperialistic, this leads us to one of two possible conclusions. Either "complementarism" in general is imperialistic, or Oliga's view that Checkland is a complementarist is flawed. We will return to a more detailed discussion of the relationships between imperialism and complementarism in chapter twelve. Since pluralism was advocated as a means for the non-imperialistic use of a range of diverse systems approaches (see, for example, Jackson, 1987a,b or 1988b), the switch to another term has to raise questions. Why did Flood and Jackson begin to term the meta-theory "complementarist" as opposed to "pluralist"?

The reason must be that the term "pluralism" had been used in at least two different ways. In one context "plurality" had been used to refer to the

range of views held by different participants or participant groups in a problem situation (e.g. Jackson, 1987a; Flood and Jackson, 1991a). Jackson argued that there are

circumstances under which human systems can become truly 'unitary' and when, because of differing appreciative systems, they will cause problems because of their 'pluralist' character.

(Jackson, 1985b:204)

In another context, pluralism has been used to denote a strategy for allowing the 'continued existence of a variety of strands within management science' (Jackson, 1987a), as mentioned earlier. It is this usage of the term that finds most accord with its usage in the social sciences. We can find other early examples of the use of the term 'complementarism' to denote a similar perspective<sup>16</sup> (e.g. Jackson, 1987c; or Oliga, 1988).

Clearly, critical systems approaches have not always been labelled "complementarist". In fact, it is because Flood and Jackson wish to retain "plurality" for denoting one strand of the

participants' dimension in the system of systems methodologies framework that they have gone over to the use of "complementarism" (see Flood and Jackson, 1991a, for example).

For now, since we are considering "complementarism" at a methodological and theoretical level and not "pluralism" at the level of participants, I will retain Flood and Jackson's terminology. In chapter twelve I will be advocating a different vision of pluralism which requires the retention of the term "complementarism" in order to differentiate one type of critical systems thinking from another.

Some people have criticised the adoption of a complementarist perspective (e.g. de Zeeuw, 1992), whilst others prefer to warn more generally of the possible dangers of using such a perspective (see Jackson and Carter, 1991). Also, Oliga (1988) argues that use of the system of systems methodologies could become contingency oriented, rather than critically guided:

Contingency formulations tend to focus almost exclusively upon the contingent

relationships, taking, by default, the variables (or dimensions) themselves as unproblematic, in the sense of *not* questioning how they arose and why they came to be what they are. This failure to problematize the origins of posited contingent dimensions can easily lead to the unfortunate tendency to "naturalize" those dimensions as inevitable and unalterable, thereby reducing the inquiry and problem-solving tasks to one of merely pigeonholing unquestioned methodologies to their appropriate (but unquestioned) system types or problem contexts.

(Olga, 1988:108, original emphasis)

Some writers have tried to answer both this and other criticisms by clarifying the nature of the relationship between pluralism and critical systems thinking (e.g., Jackson, 1990; and Midgley, 1992a,b). The pluralist enterprise is legitimate when guided by critical understanding, according to Midgley:

It is important to bear in mind that pluralists are not saying that "anything goes" or that all methods are equally valid in all situations. The central point is that the various methods are *complementary* because they address different kinds of question, and the legitimacy of using a particular method arises out of our critical understanding of the context of application and the questions being asked.

(Midgley, 1992b:148, my emphasis)

There is evidence of the employment of a complementarist perspective in the writings of another key critical systems thinker, Werner Ulrich. Jackson has shown that this style of thinking underwrites Ulrich's critical systems approach:

Ulrich (1988) similarly uses Habermas' taxonomy of types of action - instrumental, strategic, and communicative - to specify three complementary levels of systems practice, roughly parallel to the requirements of operational (or tactical), strategic, and normative planning. Different systems approaches can then be allocated as appropriate to service operational, strategic, and normative systems management levels.

(Jackson, 1991b:138)

It is clear that critical systems writers have found the need to justify their use of more than one methodological approach, and to give coherence to the fact that there are several (equally legitimate) perspectives within the systems domain. They have turned to complementarism to provide this justification and coherence, whether at a methodological or theoretical level.

However, it is still debatable whether complementarism/pluralism can overcome the arguments made about paradigm incommensurability.

As Midgley recounts:

the main argument against pluralism [is] that the various paradigms from which methods are drawn are based upon different philosophical assumptions, making pluralism philosophically contradictory. I argue that explicit use of a meta-theory avoids these contradictions, although it does establish a new set of paradigmatic assumptions that will no doubt be seen as unacceptable by some isolationists.

(Midgley, 1992b:149)

For Midgley, complementarism can only overcome problems of paradigm incommensurability by being a paradigmatic perspective itself, an observation that has not yet been commented on by other critical systems writers. Instead, Jackson argues that the position taken by critical systems thinkers must be one which is 'above other paradigms' (Jackson, 1990). The problem of incommensurability is not this easily overcome, though:

The main difficulty, as Flood (1989) notes, in accepting that systems methodologies based upon competing

epistemological and ontological presuppositions can be brought together in one "pluralist" or "complementarist" endeavour, is that the arguments in favour of "paradigm incommensurability" are so strong. ... It would seem inconceivable for proponents of paradigm incommensurability that different systems methodologies, based upon irreconcilable theoretical assumptions, could ever be employed together in some complementarist way. There is the insurmountable difficulty of how it is possible to stand above the paradigms and work with them in this manner. ... The preferred vehicle to support critical systems thinking's complementarism at the theoretical level (and, therefore, to give coherence to the system of systems methodologies) is Habermas' theory of human interests.

(Jackson, 1991b:137)

Adopting Habermas' theory of knowledge-constitutive interests makes the position taken by Flood and Jackson paradigmatic (as Midgley, 1992a, argues). It is a point that we have already touched upon, and that we will return to in chapter twelve when we consider the means suggested by Flood and Jackson (1991a) for overcoming the problems of incommensurability between different theoretical positions.

We are now in a position to consider the last

critical systems commitment, which can be related to Habermas' (1972, 1973) description of the third knowledge-constitutive interest. The final commitment to be considered, then, is that of 'emancipation'.

#### 2.5.4 Emancipation

It was suggested earlier, following Jackson (1991b), that all critical systems thinkers should dedicate themselves to the ideal of emancipation in their interventions, whether at a societal or organisational level. I now want to consider how such a dedication can be translated into action (theory and practice) in the context of 'problem-solving' at whatever level of inquiry.

Jackson offers a procedure, which had already been outlined in an earlier (1985a) paper, as a means for emancipatory systems practice.

A truly emancipatory systems approach must be able to reflect upon the material conditions which give rise to particular systems designs; must have a means of deciding which systems designs benefit the powerful and which the oppressed; must seek to understand how social systems function and how they can

be changed and so capable of giving advice to underprivileged groups in this respect (so making them more powerful); and must be able to ensure that the rationalities of oppressed groups express their proper interests and do not emanate from false consciousness, reflecting the ideologies of the powerful.

(Jackson, 1991c:614)

There are several quite distinct requirements incorporated in this "procedure", which arguably need different methods in order to be met. By considering Jackson's criteria for emancipation and the methodological consequences, and comparing these with Habermas' requirements, we may begin to see the 'difference that makes a difference' (Bernstein, 1986) between the two positions.

To begin with, let's consider the requirement that 'material conditions' should be revealed (Jackson, 1991c). This need not involve the same methodological approach as ensuring that individuals' genuine interests are being expressed. 'Material conditions' may be identified through the use of a hard systems methodology, whereas an approach like Strategic Assumption

Surfacing and Testing (*SAST*, Mason and Mitroff, 1981) may be more appropriate for revealing hidden interests.

Since Flood and Jackson (1991a) provide a means for complementary use of methodologies in which choices are made about the appropriateness of a particular methodology to a particular problem situation, the suggestion would appear to be that a single methodology can legitimately be used for emancipating individuals. However, Jackson (1991b) stresses the complex and multi-faceted nature of emancipation which would suggest it requires a multitude of methodologies for its provision. I would argue that it is not possible to say that the problem of emancipation requires one distinctive methodology, since there are many aspects that have to be addressed before emancipation can be achieved. As we shall see in chapter six, Habermas' (1972, 1973) argues for the use of *both* empirical-analytic *and* historical-hermeneutic approaches (which have been transformed through critique) in bringing about the realisation of the human emancipatory

interest.

Now, I want to go back to the criteria laid down by Jackson for emancipation: we have already considered the need for different approaches in analysing material conditions and revealing hidden interests, but there are other facets of emancipation described by Jackson which also require distinctive treatment. For example, Jackson talks about the need to distinguish between 'systems designs [which] benefit the powerful and which the oppressed' (1991c:614). This must involve some moral positioning, and therefore requires a methodology for deciding questions of an ethical nature. The question to be raised here is how can the output of a systems intervention be evaluated to determine whose interests it is serving, the powerful or the oppressed? This question will be considered in section four of the thesis.

We could continue to take Jackson's requirements for emancipation one by one, but I want instead to turn to the "systems of systems methodologies"

which, as we saw earlier, has been related to Habermas' knowledge-constitutive interests. I want to focus on the way in which Flood and Jackson have "tied" the emancipatory interest to "coercive" contexts within their framework. By linking the emancipatory interest to these "coercive" problem contexts, Flood and Jackson have been able to argue that Ulrich's (1983) *Critical Systems Heuristics* 'is an emancipatory, rather than a critical methodology'.

This offers another point of departure from Habermas' (1973) view of the knowledge-constitutive interests, especially as he clearly links the emancipatory interest to critical social science.<sup>17</sup> It would seem that Flood and Jackson want to use the term "critical" to describe their approach, whilst subordinating the interest in emancipation to the same level as the instrumental and practical interests. As we shall see in chapter six, Habermas considers the emancipatory interest as "emerging" from the correct and critical usage of both empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic approaches. Relating this

back to Jackson's criteria for achieving emancipation, this makes quite clear sense, as it puts a variety of methodologies at the researcher's disposal.

The issue of how we are to be pluralistic in our critical systems practice whilst also being emancipatory will be taken up in chapter thirteen, when the relationships between the various critical systems commitments will be discussed in more detail.

## 2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the scene has been set for the discussion that follows of critical systems thinking and pluralism. In considering critical systems thinking, we studied its emergence from a domain dominated by debates between hard and soft systems thinkers. The introduction and use of terms like "pluralism", "complementarism", "critique" and "emancipation" was broached, in the context of critical social theory as well as

critical systems thinking.

It was shown that several themes (or, to use Jackson's 1991a,b, terminology, "commitments") have been 'imported' from critical social science. However, a number of questions were raised about the manner in which these ideas have been incorporated into systems thinking. These questions are summarised below, and set the agenda for the rest of the thesis.

(1) How are critical and sociological awareness to be achieved? How are critical and sociological awareness related to one another?

(2) How is pluralism promoted or utilised within the critical systems approaches? How is paradigm incommensurability resolved? How are different methodologies to be used?

(3) How is "emancipation" brought about in a critical systems intervention? Will emancipation at the level of the individual serve to provide for emancipation in the wider society, and vice

versa?

(4) How are the "commitments" of critical systems thinking to be met? How are these commitments related to one another?

(5) How might alien perspectives become motivated to enter into discourse with one another? What role does communication play in the transformation of self and society?

(6) How do different pluralist approaches deal with dissensus and difference? What pluralist foundation is most appropriate for critical thinking?

It will be these questions that we will return to time and again in our continuing scrutiny of critical systems thinking.

### Notes

1. I am referring to "Operational Research" here

as though it were a sub-system of the more general systems community. However, it should be noted that many members of the Operational Research Society consider the systems community to be an off-shoot of their community, rather than the other way around. The literature reveals that the community of General Systems theorists were developing their status and domain at around the same point in time that Operational Research was gaining credibility as a discipline. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain which group gave birth to the other. I prefer to think of the situation as being one in which the same kinds of discourses were being developed, albeit by different groups of individuals who may or may not have been aware of each others' activities.

2. This term is taken from Kuhn (1970a) and refers to a distinct phase in the progress of science. We will be returning to a more detailed discussion of Kuhn's view of the progress of science in the next section.

3. Foucault's (1987) notion of genealogy

considers both the descent (origin) and emergence of concepts. For Foucault, emergence, especially momentary manifestations, arises because of "domination" at local discursive levels imposed by non-discursive subjugators. Thus, there are "forces" holding together discursive formations. A situation of conflict leads to subjugation and thus to resistance and relations of power. Historical succession of discursive formations becomes a matter of contests and struggles over systems of rules (interpretations). This, Flood and I proposed, is quite typical of competing theoretical and methodological endeavours in systems science.

4. Lilienfeld (1978) criticised each approach for its "programmatic" and "ideological" stance, though it is possible to interpret his position as deriving from the limited literature he critiqued. Since every item was intended for the "uninitiated" public at large, the systems literature perused by Lilienfeld had to serve as something of a "Public Relations" or marketing exercise besides putting across the basic ideas

and approaches.

5. We might exclude General Systems Theory from the group classified as "hard" systems approaches, since it has contained many ideas that verge on interpretivism. For example, it was noted by St-Germain (1981) that von Bertalanffy's work combined both a scientific and philosophical purpose, although the nature of the combination is distinct from that advocated in chapter eight of this thesis. The philosophical part of von Bertalanffy's work was the development of a 'perspectivist' approach which differed significantly from the mechanistic and vitalistic approaches that had held sway before. Von Bertalanffy was also instrumental in advocating a move from a purely deterministic view of human behaviour to a voluntaristic perspective. His contributions to systems thinking in every domain should not be minimalised. The 'open system' theory, notions of emergence, use of the concept of 'wholeness', ideas of regulation, stability, homeostasis, organisation, feedback and so forth were all promoted in one way or another by von

Bertalanffy. Some of these ideas have been adopted by management scientists and operational researchers in dealing with societal and organisational problem situations.

6. Later, Flood and Ulrich (1990) discussed the development of systems thinking and characterised it as having experienced at least two "epistemological breaks" which had altered the face of systems thinking.

7. See for example, Checkland (1983, 1985). The development of the soft systems perspective is highlighted to some degree by the change in name of the original *Journal of Systems Engineering*, which later became the *Journal of Applied Systems Analysis*, a change that roughly matched the timing of the emergence of Checkland's SSM. From about 1978 onwards, *J.A.S.A.* became the "official" vehicle for the promulgation of the soft systems paradigm.

8. This is an over simplification of the position of critical thinkers. As we will see

later, the critical perspective entails a complex explanation of power-relations which means that issues of deliberate and conscious coercion, manipulation, coercion arising from an unconscious utilisation of power/authority, and other unwitting or witting uses of power have to be explored.

9. According to Jackson (1987a), "imperialism" is one of four strategies that can be used for the development of systems thinking. The aim here is to dominate a particular field of science by showing that other (inferior) approaches only deal with a small portion of the kinds of problems that the imperialistic approach can resolve. This debate gave rise to the recognition of the need for a pluralist perspective within the systems domain. We will be considering the four strategies in detail in chapter twelve.

10. For a more detailed discussion of Jackson and Keys's framework, see (amongst many others) Oliga, (1988), Midgley (1989a), or Flood (1989a).

11. We turn in the next section to a more detailed discussion of Burrell and Morgan's analysis of the paradigms of social science. This will highlight some of the difficulties associated with their type of investigation of alien paradigms.

12. I have drawn heavily on two authors, Connerton (1976, 1980) and Jay (1976, 1986) for much of this analysis.

13. Both of these concerns will be dealt with in section four, although section three, in providing methodological guidelines for the critical systems thinker, will also deal with these issues (albeit implicitly).

14. Midgley (1990) argues that emancipation becomes a woolly and ill-defined term if seen as a central commitment. The pivotal commitments for him are the commitments to critical awareness and pluralism, from which everything else, including specific definitions of emancipation, flows.

15. Jackson's 1987a and 1990 papers were not the only triggers for a revised position with regard to methodological incommensurability: as we will see in chapter five, the debate about incommensurability has been raging for at least two decades within the social sciences. Positions are constantly being reviewed and adjusted in light of altering appreciations. The position now held by Flood and Jackson (e.g. 1991a,b) has both more and less to offer than the original position taken by Jackson and Keys (1984) or Jackson (1987a,b). From the position of those advocating a rigid form of incommensurability as protection for 'embryonic paradigms' (e.g. Jackson and Carter, 1991), the revised *complementarist* position would seem illegitimate. Yet as a means for promoting heterogeneity, complementarism offers more than the previous position.

16. I talk of "complementarism" denoting a *similar* perspective to that of "pluralism" more generally rather than saying that it is the same because I believe there are real differences between the two positions. Indeed, I intend to

develop a new version of pluralism, discordant pluralism, which will be distinguished from complementarism. This will form part of the discussion in chapter twelve, by which time a clearer understanding of the use of the term "pluralism" in the social sciences will have been gained. Through this, a better appreciation of the differences between my version of pluralism and that of complementarism will be arrived at.

17. This argument has benefited from the discussions I have had with Gerald Midgley, who has also presented a similar point of view (Midgley, 1992a).

**SECTION TWO**  
**SOCIAL SCIENCE AND MEANINGFUL UNDERSTANDING**

CHAPTER 3: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM OF  
PLURALITY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

We have seen in the last chapter how interest in the systems community has turned during the last decade towards a consideration and an importation of ideas emanating from what might be termed "Continental" philosophers<sup>1</sup>. The main questions for systems practitioners, especially those whose field of intervention is comprised of organisations and communities, have been shown to have emerged from the sheer range of approaches that are available for responding to problems, problematics, messes or problem situations.

Several responses to this plurality of intervention methods have been considered, and the framework proposed by critical systems thinkers Flood and Jackson<sup>2</sup> (1991a) has been suggested as a significant advance on preceding recommendations which, in one way or another, reflected the underlying imperialistic tendencies of those making the recommendation.

In the next three chapters I will be exploring in detail several responses to pluralism that have gained prominence within the social sciences. In chapter four, I will set the scene through a consideration of how any researcher might begin to describe, explain or understand another paradigm, approach or perspective with which s/he shares little or no common ground. An example from anthropology will be utilised to show the different approaches that might be taken. It will be suggested that, although difficulties may arise in communicating between alien paradigms, a process of comparison can be undertaken through which researchers may come to a better understanding of both the alien paradigm and also of their own pre-history/tradition. Two dangers have to be avoided in this: that of "imperialism" and that of "going native".

Following this, I will be focussing on the problems of paradigm incommensurability and the means that have been proposed for avoiding this theoretic difficulty. Here I will be exploring the idea that paradigm incommensurability operates in

a dynamic way, that from some view points paradigms will be considered commensurate, whilst from others they will be seen as incommensurate. Any position must be understood as paradigmatic in itself, and this has implications for some writers who have sought to delineate various paradigms through a (value-neutral) framework.

In exploring the dynamics of incommensurability, I will consider the need to "protect" newly emerging paradigms from the imperialistic hegemony of the dominant orthodoxy. It will be suggested that social scientists who support a pluralist perspective do have both a rigorous philosophical justification for their position and a means for evaluating and choosing between competing paradigms (when it might be that some paradigm is underpinned by an "evil" intent). Such a method should avoid the danger of any paradigm being evaluated *simply in its own terms* (extreme relativism) or solely in *terms of the evaluating paradigm* (extreme imperialism).

The last chapter in this section puts forward

three models for appreciating alien cultures or paradigms: the objective, subjective and critical appreciation methods. These are explored in relation to two traditions within the social sciences - empirical-analytic science and historical-hermeneutic science - and in relation to Habermas's (1972) knowledge-constitutive interests. The argument that is developed sees the critical appreciation method as providing a means for unifying both the main traditions of the social sciences and the human cognitive interests that drive our existence.

Finally, it is argued that such a perspective has four elements which make the approach "critical": an ideology-critique, a critically self-reflective part, an empirical-analytic component and an interpretivistic or historical-hermeneutic aspect. Should any one of these parts be ignored or kept "implicit" in a social inquiry we will fail in our critical endeavour. Furthermore, we risk being made subject to the dominating forces of either the technical or the practical human interest. Only when all four parts are undertaken will the

emergent property of the inquiry be witnessed: its emancipatory capabilities at both the individual and the societal levels.

The next section will go on to discuss critical appreciation in more detail, focussing on the process which involves both critical self-reflection and ideology-critique.

#### Notes

1. I refer, of course, to the interest in the work of Jürgen Habermas and, to a lesser degree, of Michel Foucault. See, for example, Flood (1989a-c, 1990a-c), Fuenmayor (1985, 1990a,b, 1991), Gregory (1990), Jackson (1982, 1983, 1985a,b, 1987a,b, 1989, 1990, 1991a,b), Levy (1991), Midgley (1990a, 1991, 1992a,b), Oliga (1988, 1990a-c, 1991), Ulrich (1983, 1988), and Woolliston (1990, 1991a,b). Other contributors are listed by Oliga (1988 and 1991).

2. This is the framework presented in their book

(1991a), which was based on earlier work by Jackson and Keys (1984), and Jackson (1987b).

#### CHAPTER 4: UNDERSTANDING OTHER PARADIGMS

There is no single paradigm, research program, or orientation that dominates philosophy. The fact is that our situation is pluralistic. But the question becomes how we are to respond to this pluralism.

(Bernstein, 1991:338-339, emphasis in the original)

This chapter opens with a discussion of a theme in the history and philosophy of science - that of the rise and fall of competing and incommensurable paradigms. In connection with this, consideration will be given to what we mean when we use the term "paradigm". The focus then turns to the work of Burrell and Morgan, and in particular to their framework of *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (1979).

The "synchronic" nature of paradigms which they reveal forces us to address certain issues if we accept the pluralism this implies. It will be argued that we must give serious consideration to methods for understanding alien paradigms.

This highlights a number of deficiencies in

Burrell and Morgan's work. In particular, the limitations of their investigation into alien and different paradigms as a purportedly critically self-reflective endeavour will be discussed. This will be undertaken by drawing upon the discipline of anthropology. The foundations laid by this exposition will lead us in to the next chapter where more detailed consideration will be given to the problems of incommensurability.

#### 4.1 Background

Since Thomas Kuhn (1970a) first introduced the idea that science develops through the rise and fall of competing, yet incommensurable, paradigms the literature in the philosophy and history of science has reverberated with discussion both supportive and denegrative. Whilst Kuhn's model was explicitly of the natural sciences, the central themes can be found within arguments presented by social scientists concerning the nature of, for example, *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (Burrell and Morgan,

1979).

Other writers in the domains of the management sciences and organisational studies (e.g. Reed, 1985, and Donaldson, 1985) have presented arguments against the notion of incommensurability and sought to promote a unification of the social sciences based upon acceptance of a particular form of pluralism. Such a position is not without its critics (e.g. Jackson and Carter, 1991) who maintain that paradigm incommensurability and Reed's pluralism/unification of science argument are incompatible and irreconcilable.

The debate has more recently been taken up by writers in the domain of systems science whose focus has been on the potential for a more advanced pluralistic<sup>1</sup> perspective which would provide a meta-paradigmatic view in which the incommensurability of different paradigms would be overcome (Flood, 1990a; Flood and Jackson, 1991a; Jackson, 1991a,b).

A theme of this thesis is that the two opposing

positions can be juxtaposed in a useful manner: that we may talk of a perspective allowing both pluralism and paradigm incommensurability<sup>2</sup>. The argument that will be developed is paradigmatic in itself and reveals the, similarly, paradigmatic<sup>3</sup> nature of the positions which support or deny the possibility (and rightness) of attempting to overcome incommensurability.

These are issues that will be addressed in chapter five. Before we can go on to look at such questions, it would be worthwhile to explore a particular framework that elicits the incommensurability of different paradigms and yet implicitly adopts a pluralist perspective. The framework in question is that of Burrell and Morgan (1979)<sup>4</sup>. In order to undertake a critique of the framework, we need to elucidate our intent when speaking of paradigms.

#### 4.2 What is a 'Paradigm'?

To begin with, it is necessary to clarify what can

be designated a 'paradigm'. Kuhn (1970a) has been criticised for using the term in a variety of different ways (Masterman, 1970), though in his "Reflections on my Critics" (1970b) Kuhn resorts to a more rigorous definition in which paradigms are seen as 'concrete problem solutions, the exemplary objects of an ostension' (1970b:271). However, Kuhn is aware that such a definition will be inadequate for Masterman who recognises a sociological sense of "paradigm".

To accommodate this, Kuhn's definition has to be extended to reveal the many "objects of commitment" that paradigms have. These include:

shared symbolic generalizations, like ' $f=ma$ ', or 'elements combine in constant proportion by weight'; shared models, whether meta-physical, like atomism, or heuristic, like the hydrodynamic model of the electric circuit; shared values, like the emphasis on accuracy of prediction...; and other elements of the sort.

(Kuhn, 1970b:271-272).

Kuhn can be understood as presenting a "world-view" position with regard to paradigms; he explains that not only are paradigms shared by members of a particular scientific community, but

also 'conversely, a scientific community consists of men [sic] who share a paradigm' (1970a:176). This means, for Kuhn, that individuals who have different paradigmatic perspectives must be considered to be operating "in different worlds". The implications of the possibility of a number of different paradigms existing at *any given moment* will be explored in chapter twelve.

It is interesting to note that, in Kuhn's view, the possibilities for combinations of models, methods, tools and problems-to-be-solved which are similar or different is virtually infinite, with new paradigms developing as possibilities are explored in innovative ways. Difficulties arise when scientists holding competing opinions about the most appropriate method, model or tool for resolving a particular problem, or disagreeing about the kind of problem to be solved, have to make a choice between what Kuhn describes as "incommensurable paradigms".

Whilst Kuhn's notion of paradigm was intended to fit with his model of the development of the

natural sciences generally, it is a separable concept that can be utilised to describe a specific approach or theory without involving the dynamics of "normal" and "extraordinary" science<sup>5</sup>. In fact, that is precisely how Burrell and Morgan (1979) have chosen to depict various theories adopted by different proponents within the domains of sociology and organisational analysis.

Although it has been argued that Burrell and Morgan's use of the term "paradigm" is not actually based on Kuhn (Jackson and Carter, 1991), the distinguishing features revealed by them are very similar. For example, Burrell and Morgan show how different methods ('methodologies', to use their terminology), different opinions about the kinds of problems to be tackled (the 'nature of man' and the 'orientation to society'), different models of reality (ontology), and different assumptions about the kind of knowledge it is possible to gain (epistemology), all result in paradigms which share some common aspects whilst differing in others. The two-dimensional framework they provide clearly allows paradigms to share

common features along one dimension whilst remaining distinctive along the other.

As Jackson and Carter indicate, the major difference between Burrell and Morgan's position and that of Kuhn is in the former's revelation that competing and incommensurable paradigms are co-existent (i.e. synchronic), and that, as a consequence, precautions need to be taken to protect "embryonic" paradigms from imperialism by the dominant hegemony. This is a point which needs some consideration, especially as it has implications for the various views of pluralism that have been adopted in the social sciences. In order to reveal the 'differences that make a difference' to the positions of Burrell and Morgan, and Kuhn, let us consider Kuhn's model of the progress of science first.

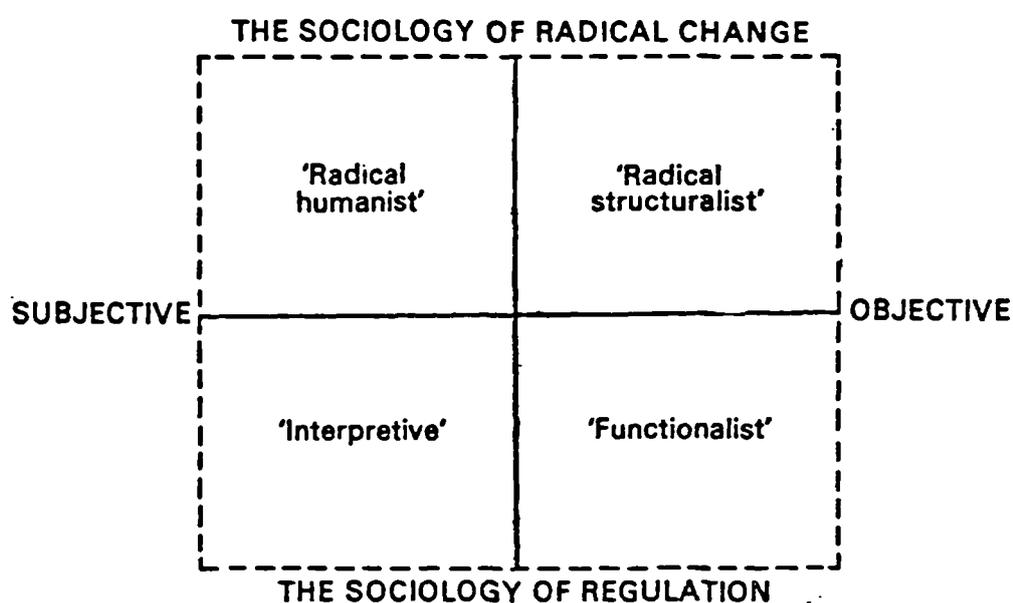
#### 4.3 Contrasting Views of the Progress of Science

The dynamics of scientific endeavor under Kuhn's framework operate to allow competition between

paradigms with ultimate domination by a single paradigm. Taken at face value, this view appears to preclude the possibility of a *plurality* of theories or paradigms. Indeed, Kuhn often makes reference to "two competing paradigms", or "two successive paradigms", giving a clear indication that "revolutions" in science are intended to be imperialistic, allowing a dominant paradigm to subsume what is of value from the preceding, overthrown paradigm. Often this amounts to little more than the translation of concepts from one paradigm into concepts of the dominant paradigm. Through this imperialistic process, which supports a dualism between competing paradigms, the progress of science will be facilitated<sup>6</sup>.

It is not possible to identify such a *leitmotif* in Burrell and Morgan's work. On the contrary, they positively propound the abundance of contemporaneous theories and paradigms which, they argue, can be subsumed within four incommensurable macro-paradigms. Shown in Figure 4.1 overleaf, they are titled *functionalist*, *interpretivist*, *radical structuralist*, and *radical humanist*.

Examples of each may be found in current sociological and organisational analyses. Such analyses are incommensurable in that they are based within distinctive, mutually exclusive paradigms and rely on different theoretical assumptions.



*Figure 4.1 Burrell and Morgan's Framework*  
 (from Burrell and Morgan, 1979:22)

For Burrell and Morgan, science "develops" through the rise and fall of the different paradigms as popular means for explaining the subject matter.

We may not talk of "development" *per se* since paradigms are seen as existing contemporaneously in more or less marginalised states. This image of paradigms in dominant and subordinate but contemporaneous positions is reminiscent of Foucault's networks<sup>7</sup> of knowledges (1980).

Whilst there is a plurality of paradigms, according to Burrell and Morgan, it is possible to achieve an understanding of them by giving each 'an opportunity to speak for itself' (1979:395). They maintain that their efforts have been focussed by a drive to 'explore from within and to draw out the full implications of each [paradigm] for the study of organizations' (1979: 395).

Burrell and Morgan seek to avoid accusations of imperialism (indeed, they are at great pains to escape such a claim), but they nevertheless succumb to an alternative temptation (Bernstein, 1983) - the temptation of "unauthentic exoticism", of "going native". In seeking to provide a non-critical analysis (in the negative, derogatory sense) of each paradigm, in trying to represent

each paradigm in its own terms, they have assumed the possibility of accurately representing an alien culture.

Furthermore, in maintaining the necessity of paradigm incommensurability to protect against domination by a specific paradigm, Burrell and Morgan have failed to be critically reflective about their own paradigmatic position. They have not sought to reveal their own presuppositions, nor undertaken an analysis of the didactic nature of their framework. These are points that I will be elaborating later.

Burrell and Morgan's recourse to a rigorous form of incommensurability has been challenged by other writers (see for example, Reed, 1985, or Donaldson, 1985). According to Burrell and Morgan, such a recourse is the only protection that anti-orthodoxy perspectives have from the imperialistic intentions of orthodox views, a position that is reiterated by Jackson and Carter (1991). It is not my intent to challenge this "protectionist" position. Instead, I want to discuss the nature of

the process required to achieve a framework like that of Burrell and Morgan's in order that insights gained may be applied in a later analysis of critical systems thinking.

#### 4.4 Understanding Alien Cultures or Paradigms

In order to undertake a critique of Burrell and Morgan's framework we can usefully draw analogies from another social science and its various approaches in trying to understand alien and different phenomena. The discipline that I shall be referring to is that of anthropology, and I shall be drawing on Bernstein's (1983, p93-108) discussion of the field-work of a particular anthropologist, Clifford Geertz. My purpose in doing this will become clear as the argument progresses.

So far, two problems associated with the development and understanding of paradigms have been mentioned: the temptations of imperialism (Kuhn), and of going native (Bernstein). In

reviewing the work of Geertz, Bernstein elaborates on these two problems as they arise within ethnography:

The history of anthropology provides plenty of evidence for the two pervasive temptations that we mentioned as problems in understanding alien phenomena: the temptation to impose, read into, or project categories and moral standards that are well entrenched in our own society onto what is being studied, and the dialectical antithesis of this - the temptation to go native, to suppose that we only really understand the Azande, Neur, or Balinese when we think, feel, and act like them.

(Bernstein, 1983:93-94).

The question raised by this exposure concerns the nature of understanding of an alien culture that might be gained through anthropological studies. This question could be posed against those who seek to understand alien paradigms - "What is the nature of the understanding gained through any particular study of what are admittedly foreign and incommensurable paradigms"?

On this first reading, it may not be clear that Burrell and Morgan succumb to either of the two problems experienced within anthropology.

Clarification may be achieved through an exploration of the way in which anthropologists investigate the concepts of an alien culture. According to Bernstein, anthropology provides a model for philosophers dealing with the understanding of alien paradigms:

The reason why anthropology is (or should be) important for philosophers is that it is in this wide-ranging discipline that many of the issues touched upon in discussions of incommensurability come into sharp focus.

(Bernstein, 1983:93)

Geertz (1976) utilises the notion of "experience-near" concepts (those *from* the alien culture) and "experience-distant" concepts (those that are *alien to* the culture) to reveal the practices of anthropologists. It is possible, through the use of these concepts, to make comparisons between a culture under study and that of the researcher. The purpose of such a comparison would be to enhance the kind of knowledge and understanding that might be achieved.

For example, the way in which the concepts of

'person' are embodied within different cultures can be described through the use of experience-distance concepts (those from the researcher's own culture). However, it is possible that the cultures concerned may not use the same concept of a person in thinking about themselves. They may have no notion of 'self'. 'Person', then, is simply a device or vehicle that the anthropologist uses to explain something about the alien culture.

The question remains for Geertz whether our use of any concept is an assertion that we understand the minds of the alien cultures, or the words that they use. This question is one that has troubled other anthropologists: in describing the radical critique of Pierre Bourdieu, Robbins (1991) tells us that

The climax of Bourdieu's account of his development is his contention that he now sees that the traditional difficulty of anthropology in seeking to understand other cultures, in seeking, as he had, to observe a foreign culture without imposing on it the assumptions of the indigenous, observing culture, is nothing other than a particular case of the relationship between knowing and doing, knowers and doers, which obtains within every culture.

(Robbins, 1991:145)

As Geertz reveals, the purpose of distinguishing the different kinds of concepts is to show how researchers can gain understanding through a process in which

the experience-near concepts must be balanced by the appropriate experience-distant concepts, concepts that are not necessarily familiar to the people being studied....

(Bernstein, 1983:94-95)

How such a balancing act may be achieved, what the correct balance is, whether it is possible for a researcher to differentiate between the two kinds of concepts - these are not problems that Bernstein tackles in his 1983 book. It is his latest work, *The New Constellation* (1991), which provides a model for a critical reflection that tackles the kind of tensions alluded to in my review of Geertz. I will be introducing this model in chapter twelve as a basis for a discordant pluralistic critical systems approach.

However, Geertz's model does serve the task of providing insights into the understanding achieved through Burrell and Morgan's framework. For

Geertz, the process of understanding what is alien must always be hermeneutical, involving 'hopping back and forth between the whole ... and the parts', and resembling a search for some hidden secret:

Understanding the form and pressure of ... natives' inner lives is more like grasping a proverb, catching an allusion, seeing a joke, - or, as I have suggested, reading a poem - than it is like achieving communion.

(Geertz, 1976:241)

For Bernstein this process is one of critique in which one's own beliefs and values are challenged, drawing us to 'a better and more critical understanding of our own concept(s)'. Furthermore, we 'come to a deeper understanding of ourselves precisely in and through the study of others' (1983:96).

Such a 'depth hermeneutical' process is not apparent in the work of Burrell and Morgan, although it should be noted that this was not one of the aims of their book. However, it is possible to discern something akin to an hermeneutical process in their (almost) *prescription* of the way in which *others* might gain understanding of alien

paradigms:

in order to understand alternative points of view it is important that a theorist be fully aware of the assumptions upon which his own perspective is based. Such an appreciation involves an intellectual journey which takes him outside the realm of his own familiar domain. It requires that he become aware of the boundaries which define his perspective. It requires that he journey into the unexplored. It requires that he become familiar with paradigms which are not his own. Only then can he look back and appreciate in full measure the precise nature of his starting point.

(Burrell and Morgan, 1979:xi)

Whilst they recognise and describe this essentially hermeneutical process, the preceding discussion reveals the lack of self-reflective critique undertaken in their own work - a case of not "practicing what they preach". Had such an analysis been included, it would have detailed the pluralistic paradigm from which Burrell and Morgan were describing the four macro-paradigms.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter opened with a discussion of the debate surrounding the notions of pluralism and

paradigm incommensurability in the social sciences. In connection with this, some means for achieving understanding of alien cultures or paradigms were explored. This then led into a consideration of the work of Burrell and Morgan in developing their framework of *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis*.

The argument that I have been developing points to a number of deficiencies in Burrell and Morgan's work, especially when considered from the perspective of a critical systems thinker. In particular, I have attempted to highlight the limitations of their kind of investigation into alien and different paradigms. In drawing upon the discipline of anthropology I have tried to show clear analogies with the work of Burrell and Morgan, whilst considering some of the problems that arise in anthropological studies.

This chapter has focused on the paradigmatic nature of Burrell and Morgan's work. In the next chapter I will consider the problems arising from a pluralist view of science which attempts to

integrate a rigorous notion of incommensurability.

Notes.

1. Jackson (1987a) introduced the notion of pluralism into the systems domain, basing his arguments on the work of Reed (1985). This introduction did not view pluralism as a meta-paradigmatic position, nor did it deal with problems of paradigm incommensurability.

2. I have phrased the relationship in this way to avoid slipping into the imperialistic trap of 'either/or'.

3. I am grateful to Gerald Midgley for pointing out this argument which he developed in a number of papers (e.g. Midgley, 1989a,b and 1992a,b).

4. This is a view which Morgan now accepts, but Burrell would reject.

5. Kuhn sees science as developing through two

main phases: the 'normal' stage, when scientists are able to deal with scientific enquiry without any threat from competing models, theories, tools, etc.; and the 'revolutionary' stage in which new ideas, methods, models, etc., compete for domination of the field.

6. It is never clear that scientific revolutions serve any other purpose than the "progression" of science for Kuhn, and this has been the cause for a great deal of criticism of his model. As Bernstein (1983) tells us,

many of Kuhn's critics were quick to argue that Kuhn's image of science was one that made science into an irrational, subjectivistic, relativistic activity where "mob psychology" rules.

(Bernstein, 1983:22).

Whilst the 'unity of science' is not explicitly dealt with by Kuhn, there is an implicit assumption within the model that through the process of imperialistic domination a single unified vision may be achieved.

7. Burrell and Morgan's framework predates the

English translation of Foucault's work and could therefore be considered as somewhat anticipatory. A further observation is that the former work relies on a modern, structuralist vision since it assumes that there are underlying factors which influence how social science is done, whilst Foucault is considered by many to be a post-modern, post-structural thinker.

CHAPTER 5: INCOMMENSURABILITY AND INTER-PARADIGM  
COMMUNICATIONS

We saw in the last chapter how philosophers who wish to understand alien paradigms may encounter difficulties through the imposition of their own concepts (imperialism) or in assuming they can know what the other paradigm knows and does (going native). Such difficulties are compounded when we begin to question the kind of communication that is possible if we accept a rigorous version of the 'incommensurability' thesis.

This chapter focuses on debates surrounding the notion of incommensurability. Some implications for inter-paradigmatic communication which arise from the view we take of paradigm incommensurability will be considered. It is suggested that "paradigm incommensurability" operates in a dynamic way, depending on the perspective being taken. Through such a re-visioning the accusations of imperialism can begin to be addressed.

Finally, in discussing the advanced form of imperialism that some writers claim any pluralist perspective must be, a new form of pluralism will be proposed. This "discordant pluralism" will be considered in more detail in chapter twelve.

### 5.1 Incommensurability

According to Kuhn (1970a), incommensurability arises when scientific opinions vary about the kinds of problems to be tackled, the methods to be used, the purpose of the investigation, and the relationship between the language used and the "world" being described. However, these differences do not mean that incommensurate paradigms cannot be compared and evaluated in many diverse ways.

Critics have depicted Kuhn's incommensurability thesis in a variety of ways, the most common supposing that he believes:

the proponents of incommensurable theories cannot communicate with each other at all; as a result, in a debate over theory-choice there can be no

recourse to *good* reasons; instead theory must be chosen for reasons that are ultimately personal and subjective; some sort of mystical apperception is responsible for the decision actually reached.

(Kuhn, 1970a:198-199, original emphasis)

Other critics focus on re-defining the concept in their own terms (e.g. Feyerabend, 1970; Rorty, 1979; MacIntyre, 1988; Davidson, 1973). Rorty sees the notion of incommensurability as something to be welcomed and supported since it could potentially provide a means for undermining 'the main tradition of modern epistemology - the Cartesian-Lockean-Kantian tradition' (Bernstein, 1991:61). The process that Rorty advocates for challenging the rules of the dominant orthodoxy involves the development of new and incommensurable vocabularies which could cause conflict and dissensus. This 'vocabularies' theme is echoed in the systems science domain by Flood (1988)<sup>1</sup>, who calls for the development of a new and 'substantive soft systems language'.

It has been argued that much of the debate about incommensurability arises from 'a lack of

appreciation of what incommensurability actually means' (Jackson and Carter, 1991:117). This does seem to be the case, especially in light of Bernstein's (1991) extended reiteration of his earlier rebuttal against critics of the concept.

Bernstein elaborates on three versions of commensurability, which he argues it is important to distinguish between - those of 'commensurability, compatibility, and comparability'. Incomparability should not be confused with incommensurability, since the former requires 'a common language in which we can specify incompatible logical relations'. Furthermore, paradigms should not be considered as incompatible - it is simply that no algorithm can be found for a 'point by point' comparison.

Although Kuhn argues that there is no common language between incommensurable paradigms, he does maintain that paradigms may be compared and evaluated. However, Kuhn does not provide a model for this process.

To return briefly to Burrell and Morgan (1979), we can see that the framework they provide represents one means of comparing and evaluating different paradigms within the social sciences.

In the systems sciences, the framework developed by Jackson and Keys (1984), elaborated by Jackson (1987b) and refined by Flood and Jackson (1991a), is also a means for comparing and contrasting paradigms<sup>2</sup>. Later, in chapter twelve, I will suggest an alternative pluralist perspective which allows for communication between alien paradigms which should allow their differences and conflicts to be considered.

For now, and in a sense leading us into the discussion of inter-paradigm communication, let's turn to Jackson and Carter's contention that incommensurability arises from pure language differences. It is their view that the same signifiers may be used in situations where what is signified is subtly different.

## 5.2 Inter-paradigm Communications

In order to evaluate the claims to communicative incommensurability, we can begin by considering the criticisms of Sir Karl Popper. Popper (1970)<sup>3</sup> argues that Kuhn's view of paradigms as incommensurable is flawed, since

even totally different languages (like English and Hopi or Chinese) are not untranslatable, and that there are many Hopis or Chinese who have learnt to master English very well.

(Popper, 1970:56).

Popper goes on to discuss the ways in which different frameworks (paradigms) may also be 'translated' in order to provide an accommodation which is based upon rational argumentation. So, Popper makes recourse to *rational argumentation* as the basis for choosing between incommensurable paradigms. But by making this recourse he fails to see the possibility that individuals holding different positions in a scientific debate may be using the *same signifiers in different ways*.

Kuhn's Postscript to *The Structure of Scientific*

*Revolutions* (1970a) makes clear that there is no recourse

to a neutral language which both [paradigms] use in the same way and which is adequate to the statement of both their theories or even of both those theories' empirical consequences.

(Kuhn, 1970a:201)

For Kuhn the recourse for such individuals lies in the fact that their general neural apparatus will be the same, even if differently 'programmed'. They will share a history - except for the immediate past. Given that 'both their everyday and most of their scientific world and language are shared ... they should be able to find out a great deal about how they differ' (1970a:201).

Let's just pause for a moment and go back over these last few points. I want to emphasise Kuhn's representation of *shared ground*, as it makes clear that the notion of incommensurability is applicable *in certain, definable situations*. At some level, Kuhn's conflicting and incommensurable paradigms share certain features and may thus be perceived as commensurable. We can see this clearly if we look within Burrell and Morgan's

macro-paradigms and consider the relationships between, for example, the approaches of phenomenology, phenomenological sociology and hermeneutics which are all subsumed within the *interpretivist* paradigm.

What it seems Kuhn is discussing here, then, is not *inter-paradigmatic* but rather *intra-paradigmatic* communication since his argument is restricted to the *positivistic* branch of the natural sciences. We might conclude from this that his consideration of incommensurability is also *intra-paradigmatic*, that the scientific revolutions of which he speaks arise *within* a particular paradigm, as well as *between* paradigms (at a different level). This argument is supported if we accept that Kuhn has taken a macro-paradigmatic perspective of the paradigms which he depicts as in competition with one another.

What can Kuhn's observations about the scope for intra-paradigm communication tell us about the possibilities of *inter-paradigm* communication, - e.g., the possibility for communication between

the *interpretivist* and the *functionalist* paradigms of Burrell and Morgan? In part, we were setting the scene in the last chapter by considering how we might come to understand alien cultures. Let me make it quite clear that in attempting to understand an alien culture or paradigm we will at times be faced with paradigms for which there may appear to be *no shared ground whatsoever*.

This problem is not seen as insurmountable for Bernstein.

Acknowledging the radical alterity of "the Other" does not mean that there is no way of understanding the Other, or comparing the I with its Other. Even an asymmetrical relation is still a relation. ... We must cultivate the type of imagination where we are at once sensitive to the sameness of "the Other" with ourselves and the radical alterity that defies and resists reduction of "the Other" to "the Same."

(Bernstein, 1991:74)

What is being argued is that when we take a perspective through which we describe other (incommensurable) paradigms we are adopting a paradigmatic position which both allows inter-paradigm incommensurability and yet sees the "shared history", "the everyday" features that are

common.

### 5.3 The Dynamics of Incommensurability

In effect, this argument is compatible with that proposed by Fuenmayor (1990a) concerning the process of philosophical critique. Fuenmayor describes critique as a process of "stepping backwards":

each "step backwards" constitutes a new stand and, hence, a new perspective. A wider circle of awareness can only be claimed as such if it is seen to be so by the different perspectives involved in the "plane" ... corresponding to different stands produced by the different steps backwards.

(Fuenmayor, 1990a)

Fuenmayor goes on to raise the question of how we might know that each new perspective really represents an enriched vision, a 'wider circle of awareness'. The answer, according to Fuenmayor, would come from providing an opportunity for 'each preceding philosopher to answer to the following one'.

Arguments have already been presented which challenge this essentially imperialistic vision of the progress of philosophy. I do not suggest that Fuenmayor's model is the "right" model for us to adopt in understanding the relationship between new paradigms and older, subsumed ones. Rather, I want to clarify the point that in analysing (an)other paradigm(s), we must already be "stepped back", i.e. adopting another paradigmatic perspective. Whether or not that "stepped back" perspective is imperialistic will be considered further in chapter twelve.

To return to Burrell and Morgan's framework, we can see that it represents such a "stepping backwards" in its consideration of the four macro-paradigms. Furthermore, Burrell and Morgan reveal both the similarities (commensurability) and the differences (incommensurability) of the paradigms. Even the diagonally opposed paradigms share the object of their analysis, i.e. sociological and organisational aspects. As Jackson and Carter (1991) note, proponents of different paradigms within a given field have to know about competing

paradigms in the same field since they utilise the same collective history and texts.

This does not answer the question of *how* the extreme difficulty in communicating concepts and ideas from one (macro-)paradigm to another may be overcome given that each has a different language (in the sense that the same signifiers indicate different signifieds).

#### 5.4 Pluralism and Communication

The problem of inter-paradigm communication is raised by Kuhn (1970b) when he utilises an example of linguistic analysis taken from Quine. Here Kuhn is focussing on the possibility of translation. It is worth reproducing the example in detail, as it has implications for our understanding of incommensurability.

Why is translation, whether between theories or languages, so difficult? Because, as has often been remarked, *languages cut up the world in different ways, and we have no access to a neutral sub-linguistic means of reporting.* Quine points out that, though the linguist engaged in radical translation can

readily discover that his native informant utters 'Gavagai' because he has seen a rabbit, it is more difficult to discover how 'Gavagai' should be translated. Should the linguist render it as 'rabbit', 'rabbit-kind', 'rabbit-part', 'rabbit-occurrence', or by some other phrase he may not even have thought to formulate? I extend the example by supposing that, in the community under examination, rabbits change colour, length of hair, characteristic gait, and so on during the rainy season, and that their appearance then elicits the term 'Bavagai'. Should 'Bavagai' be translated 'wet rabbit', 'shaggy rabbit', 'limping rabbit', all of these together, or should the linguist conclude that the native community has not recognized that 'Bavagai' and 'Gavagai' refer to the same animal?

(Kuhn, 1970b:268, emphasis added)

It is clear from this example that translation from one culture/paradigm to another is not a simple matter; that individuals may be seeing the same thing in different ways, and that in different contexts they will utilise different terms for describing (what are apparently) the same things. The possibility of a single, value-neutral language in which incommensurable cultures or paradigms can be compared, or even described, is thus brought into question.

The comparison of incommensurable paradigms becomes one in which

We can recognize - especially in cases of incommensurability in science - that our arguments and counter-arguments in support of rival paradigm theories may not be conclusive. We can appreciate how much skill, art, and imagination are required to do justice to what is distinctive about different ways of practicing science and how "in some areas" scientists "see different things." In underscoring these features, we are not showing or suggesting that such comparison is irrational but opening up the types and varieties of practical reason involved in making such rational comparisons.

(Bernstein, 1983:92-93)

### 5.5 Pluralism and Imperialism

In his earlier work, Bernstein strives to show, through a discussion of the various positions vis-a-vis incommensurability, that 'the "truth" of the incommensurability thesis is not closure but *openness*' (1983:91, original emphasis). It is through the capacity for comparison, the recognition of difference without the *imposition* of our own values, 'beliefs, categories, and

classifications' that we may arrive at not only an understanding of 'the alien phenomenon that we are studying *but better come to understand ourselves*' (1983:92, emphasis added). Although our own beliefs are not *imposed*, they do need to be *recognised*.

Whilst Bernstein is advocating a "live and let live" approach to paradigm analysis, Jackson and Carter (1991) do not take a similar line. In contrast, they are at pains to ensure that any inter-paradigmatic communication or competition does not lead to *assimilation*. For them, pluralism cannot provide a *guarantee* against assimilation and must therefore be dismissed as a candidate for protecting radical anti-orthodox paradigms from domination by the prevailing hegemony of authoritarian science.

This warning note has been echoed within the systems domain. As Midgley (1989b, 1992a) has shown, pluralism cannot help but be an advanced form of imperialism. In part, this arises from the consensus oriented meta-theoretical perspective

that the leading critical systems writers have taken (see, for example, Flood, 1990a; Flood and Jackson, 1991a; or Jackson, 1991a,b).

The question now must be whether it is possible to develop a pluralist critical systems perspective which can be sufficiently open to what is alien and Other in order to avoid the imperialistic perils of annexation or subsumption of other paradigms. Such a perspective must not seek some "grand synthesis", nor some means of conciliation, rather it should recognise the 'radical alterity' of alien paradigms.

Bernstein provides a model for this new form of pluralism in which the juxtaposing<sup>4</sup> of incommensurable paradigms, rather than their integration, ensures that the identity of each is maintained. It is possible that, through the utilisation of Bernstein's model, a new critical systemic pluralism which escapes the problems of imperialism can be proposed. The means by which this will be achieved are elaborated in chapter twelve.

## 5.6 A New Pluralism

Pluralism has been posited as the means for overcoming paradigm incommensurability and as the route for reconciling theories as disparate as Habermas's and Foucault's perspectives on power-knowledge relations (Flood, 1990a). However, the kind of pluralism that is recommended is one in which a meta-theoretical stance is taken which *transcends* the paradigms to be reconciled. Such a stance can be seen to be imperialistic if it fails to recognise the paradigmatic nature of the position being taken (Midgley, 1989b).

Bernstein (1991) provides a pluralist perspective which differs from the meta-theoretical position described above in that it recognises that

although we cannot (and should not) give up the *promise* and demand for reconciliation - a reconciliation achieved by what Hegel calls "determinate negation," I do not think we can any longer responsibly claim that there is or can be a final reconciliation - an *Aufhebung* in which all differences, otherness, opposition and contradiction are reconciled. There are always unexpected contingent

ruptures that dis-rupt the project of reconciliation. The changing elements of the new constellation resist such reduction. What is "new" about this constellation is the growing awareness of radical instabilities. We have to learn to think and act in the "in-between" interstices of forced reconciliations and radical dispersion.

(Bernstein, 1991:9)

Such a perspective seems to provide a new justification for pluralism, although the form of pluralism described here is rather different to that of Reed, or of Flood and Jackson. We might term this new pluralism "discordant pluralism" since it strives to "promote" certain features of incommensurable paradigms that make them antagonistic to one another.

But we can still ask how such a perspective will provide a means for choosing between paradigms, rather in the way that Kuhn was questioned about the means for choosing between competing theories in his model of scientific revolutions. Jackson and Carter believe that

The main argument against pluralism *per se* can be very briefly stated in the point that there is, under pluralism, no mechanism for judging between

contradictory claims, either in terms of their moral implications or even in terms of their status as knowledge.

(Jackson and Carter, 1991:120)

If pluralism does not provide such a mechanism, then it must succumb to the same process of domination that Kuhn describes for the natural sciences. Such a process is not only imperialistic, but also points to a "middle course" consensus that, quite possibly, is not legitimate. In chapter twelve I will be detailing a means for providing for communication 'between contradictory claims' which at least allows local, historically contingent judgements to be made. This form of "discordant pluralism" provides a foundation for the process of critical appreciation.

### 5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on debates surrounding the notion of incommensurability. Some implications for inter-paradigmatic communication

which arise from the view we take of paradigm incommensurability were considered. It was suggested that there is a process through which paradigms may be viewed as incommensurate or not, depending on the perspective being adopted.

It was argued that if we accept that any comparison of paradigms must be undertaken from a (macro-)paradigmatic perspective, then it is possible to begin to tackle the accusations of imperialism levelled at pluralist perspectives.

Finally, in discussing the advanced form of imperialism that some writers claim any pluralist perspective must be, a new form of discordant pluralism was proposed, which will be elaborated in chapter twelve.

#### Notes.

1. Although Flood calls for a 'substantive soft systems language' in his (1988) paper, it is clear that the purpose is to seek consensus in the use

of systems terms and concepts. For example, Flood argues that

if we can agree on the structure and process ... then why not abandon the word 'system' for what is essential to our understanding, that is 'structure and process'.

(Flood, 1988:46)

Furthermore, the challenge thrown up by the emergence of a new, 'soft' paradigm within systems thinking means that a response is required. Such a response

must be to understand and develop soft systems thinking, in terms of syntax and semantics, by developing new concepts and words, and by clearly stating operational definitions of the words, definitions which precisely pin down the meaning of the concepts.

(Flood, 1988:47)

2. Although the "system of systems methodologies" was originally developed as a means for distinguishing different assumptions underpinning systems methodologies, it was revised to serve as a schema for methodology choice (Jackson, 1987b). More recently (Jackson, 1991a, and Flood and Jackson, 1991a) the authors have moved back towards the original position of saying

that the framework reveals underlying assumptions which serve to differentiate one paradigm from another (Jackson, 1990). Consequently, the framework may be used in the same way that Burrell and Morgan's framework has been.

3. Popper's criticisms were delivered at a conference in 1965, although not published in book form until 1970, by which time Kuhn had revised and extended *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* which was first published a decade earlier.

4. I will be considering Bernstein's model of pluralism in chapter twelve, in which deliberation will be given to the arguments for a juxtapositioning of, as against the integration of, different paradigms. In particular, this argument will be related to the complementarist stance taken by Jackson (1991a,b) and Flood and Jackson (1991a,b), which is explored in the same chapter.

## CHAPTER 6: THREE APPROACHES TO PARADIGM ANALYSIS

We have seen how anthropologists attempt to obtain understanding of alien cultures, and this has been related to efforts to analyse different sociological and organisational paradigms. A critique of Burrell and Morgan's framework has been undertaken, and the problems of paradigm incommensurability, pluralism and imperialism explored. The last chapter closed by introducing the notion of a new vision of pluralism: a "new constellation" (Bernstein, 1991).

Before we move on to consider this model of pluralism in the latter part of the thesis, I wish to elaborate further on the possibility of overcoming incommensurability which may exist between paradigms of the social and systems sciences. In this chapter, therefore, I will be modelling the various methods through which an appreciation of alien cultures or paradigms might be achieved<sup>1</sup>.

Three models<sup>2</sup> will be elaborated, and a critique

of the first two approaches will be undertaken. In addition, the relationship between each approach and Habermas's (1972) knowledge-constitutive interests will be exposed. In order to set the scene for this bringing together, the nature of these human cognitive interests will be discussed before the models are described.

In detailing the three approaches, I will be following Habermas in his belief that:

There are three categories of processes of inquiry for which a specific connection between logical-methodological rules and knowledge-constitutive interests can be demonstrated. This demonstration is the task of a critical philosophy of science that escapes the snares of positivism. The approach of the empirical-analytic sciences incorporates a *technical* cognitive interest; that of the historical-hermeneutic sciences incorporates a *practical* one; and the approach of critically oriented sciences incorporates the *emancipatory* cognitive interest ....

(Habermas, 1972:308)

Although the exposition of the models will be undertaken in a sequential manner, the reader should note that chronologically and spatially the prominence and dominance of each has more closely

resembled Foucault's networks of knowledges (e.g., as discussed in Foucault, 1987). The approaches have co-existed in a *synchronic* rather than a *diachronic* way (Jackson and Carter, 1991). The importance of this point will be dealt with in chapter twelve, where I consider the nature of pluralism and develop the need to move to a 'new constellation' (Bernstein, 1991) in which discordance can be embraced together with complementarity, and in which competing, conflicting paradigmatic claims can be judged.

Of the three approaches that I will illustrate, only the final approach can be considered to be critically reflexive. The "critical appreciation" model utilises aspects of each of the other models, but exhibits a particular emergent property when those features are brought together in the way described. It is this property which allows an analysis involving alien cultures or paradigms to lay claim to being critically reflexive.

The models are described as offering an "objective

appreciation", a "subjective appreciation" and a "critical appreciation" of alien paradigms<sup>3</sup>.

### 6.1 Habermas's 'Knowledge-Constitutive Interests'

In undertaking a critique of the social sciences, Habermas (1972, 1974, 1988) strove to show how the two competing meta-theories of empirical-analysis and historical-hermeneutics might be reconciled to provide a unified social theory. His project also represents 'a major rethinking of the meaning of the unity of theory and practice' (Schroyer, 1973).

Habermas's work can be seen as an accumulative drive towards a comprehensive social theory: in *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (1988)<sup>4,5</sup> he sets out to show, through a discussion of the contrasting methodologies of the natural and social sciences, that *both* are required for a successful social inquiry. This is taken further in *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1972), in which he proposes a social theory of knowledge based on

the unification of causal explanation and interpretive understanding.

These reflect two of man's<sup>6</sup> basic interests in the social life-world : namely the technical (our relation to nature) and the practical interest (our relation to other humans, through communication and language, or 'social practice'). A third interest, the emancipatory interest (an interest in power or authority relations), is the special concern of the critical social sciences, according to Habermas. Furthermore, the three interests are developed within three distinct social media: labour, interaction and power (to do with domination and constraint). Whilst it is recognised that both technical and practical interests are, in a sense, emancipatory (because they are oriented towards empowering humankind in relation to nature and in intersubjective understanding), the need to explicitly consider emancipatory interests arises because of the possible uses to which both technical and practical interests may be put - i.e., for destructive purposes or ideological manipulation.

Whilst many writers treat Habermas's knowledge-constitutive interests as purely *cognitive* interests (indeed, Habermas himself refers to them in this somewhat misleading manner) it is clear that they also represent interests in *acting*. It is through the inter-dependency of the three interests that theory and practice can be seen to come together. However, it is only in the critical sciences, which have an explicit interest in emancipation, that the (re-)unification of theory and practice is achieved. Having said this, it is possible to see that for each cognitive interest the (re-)introduction of critical reflection would lead to *the other two interests becoming constitutive*.

Let me make this point quite clear through an example, taking the technical interest as prime. When we act in order to gain control over some external factors (instrumental action - technical interest), we must also *think* (and communicate to fellow humans) about how to take control (striving for understanding - practical interest), and underlying both the thinking and the acting is an

unspoken *drive for freedom* (transcending power relations - emancipatory interest) which *ought* to be made explicit. A similar argument may be made taking either the practical or emancipatory interest as prime.

It would appear that, as in Giddens' *structuration theory* (1984, 1990b) where we are told how difficult it is to separate processes of structure creation and re-creation by human thinking/acting from structural constraints on creative thinking and/or acting, Habermas's theory bears witness to the immense difficulty in separating *acting* from *knowing*. For Habermas, theory and practice form the two parts of a nexus.

Furthermore, the interests in technical control and practical understanding serve to create, and are created by, society. We can recognise how a need to provide for a material existence would lead to an interest in the domination and control of objects; also, that a need to communicate with one another in order to improve intra-species comprehension, would lead to an interest in

intersubjectively understood symbols. So, human activities in both these domains serve to generate structures which support the capacity for control of objects and the capacity for communication. The third interest, the emancipatory, is based in the human capacity for self-reflection, to be self-determining in deciding the ends to which the technical and practical interests might be put.

Habermas sees the main failing of the social sciences arising from the divorce of instrumental and communicative action (the technical and practical interests respectively), since this results in the (artificial) distancing of (conscious) knowledge from interests. Thus, in the social sciences where the empirical-analytic approaches are divorced from the historical-hermeneutic approaches, we can see how it might be that the emancipatory interest would be completely ignored. In other words, scientists may accumulate knowledge without understanding or reflecting on the purpose or future uses of such knowledge. As a consequence, humans become the slaves of technology, and not the converse.

The method advocated by Habermas for "uncovering" the hidden meaning, for releasing humans from domination by either a technical or a practical interest, is to be found in Freud's theory of psychoanalysis which must be coupled with a critique of ideology. We will return to a more detailed discussion of the reasons for this necessary coupling in chapter ten. For now, it is sufficient to observe that Habermas believes that society at large may be released from repressive ideological<sup>7</sup> forces by a similar critical and self-critical treatment to that used for individual therapeutic purposes.

Having outlined in a cursory manner the three knowledge-constitutive interests, it is now possible to go on and relate these to the three models of appreciation. We will start with what I have called the "objective appreciation" model.

## 6.2 The "Objective Appreciation" Model

This model of scientific inquiry finds its epitome

within the empirical-analytical sciences, and draws upon the natural sciences for its research model. The social world is treated as comprising tangible, hard, immutable social structures.

#### 6.2.1 Objective Appreciation Methods

Researchers who take this approach in trying to learn about an alien tradition or paradigm treat the thing under study as though it is something that is directly knowable (rather like the *functionalists* or *radical structuralists* in Burrell and Morgan's framework). In order to gain an appreciation of the tradition underpinning the particular paradigm being considered, we simply need to observe what occurs: what tools, methods or models are used, and what kinds of problems are tackled.

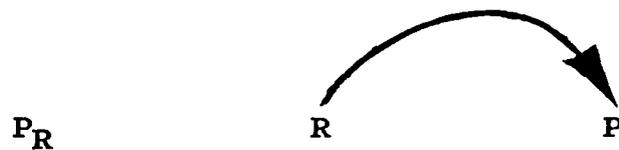
Researchers who adopt this approach believe that a single, universally acceptable explanation of what transpires within the alien tradition is possible, and hence they can rely entirely upon concepts drawn from their own paradigm (Geertz's

experience-distance concepts). Such concepts may be alien to the culture or paradigm being studied, but they are believed to be legitimate tools for explaining/describing it.

Any explanations or predictions provided through this form of analysis may be tested empirically. Typically, researchers in the domain of the empirical-analytic sciences would seek verification or refutation of any theses proposed. According to Oliga (1988), the *positivist* paradigm (although not representing a unified epistemological or methodological position) is the 'most powerful and influential variant' of this approach.

The *objective appreciation* method is represented in the diagram which follows, overleaf. In the diagram, it can be seen that a uni-directional relationship is established between the researcher ("R") and the alien culture or paradigm ("P") under analysis. Furthermore, although the researcher's own paradigm ("P<sub>R</sub>") *influences* the way in which the researcher understands or

interrogates the alien paradigm, this is neither recognised nor acknowledged. That is, there is no interaction with participants of the alien paradigm, and neither is there any form of reflection about the researcher's own paradigm.



**Key:**

- R : Researcher
- P : Alien Paradigm
- P<sub>R</sub> : Researcher's Paradigm
- : Direction of Relation

*Figure 6.1. The Objective Appreciation Model*

6.2.2 Criticisms of Objective Appreciation Methods

This model calls to mind the 'visual metaphor of an observer who *looks on*', and allows our researcher to adopt a 'third-person attitude of someone who simply says how things stand' (Habermas, 1990). Observers here have a somewhat

privileged position through which they can explain *what they observe* without entering into a dialogue with the alien culture. Clearly such a perspective cannot allow for a range of interpretations or understandings of its central concepts: it must take the *independent truth* of its analysis for granted. This is what Habermas (1972) calls its "false objectivism".

Such a perspective does have its role to play in explaining what is or is not the case. As Habermas (1972) tells us, the observations made through this *empirical-analytic* approach 'are supposed to be reliable in providing immediate evidence without the admixture of subjectivity'. Furthermore, such observations enable us to make predictions, although

the *meaning* of such predictions, that is their technical exploitability, is established only by the rules according to which we apply theories to reality.

(Habermas, 1972:308, original emphasis).

Such a perspective also takes the value-neutrality of the observer as a given. The *objective appreciation* model relies on theory neutrality in

addition to this ethical neutrality. These together require that any *objective appreciation* within the social sciences must provide for 'a consensus of interpretations among its practitioners' and that the knowledge generated through this process be granted a 'basis in certainty' (Olga, 1988; see also Jackson and Keys, 1984).

### 6.2.3 Objective Appreciations and the Technical Interest

Such an approach is seen as supporting the *technical* cognitive interest in science. The

Empirical-analytic sciences are constituted by, and hence presuppose, the "technical" interest, which aims at the instrumental control of natural and social processes....

(Olga, 1988:101)

In terms of social systems, this means that any adaptive system used for controlling and dealing with the "environment" will be guided by a technical interest, an interest in instrumental control. Technical rules based on empirical

observation are utilised for "steering" such systems. Such systems Habermas terms *purposive rational action systems*. Any object of investigation by researchers using this approach cannot be regarded as another subject (i.e. one who could share intersubjectively a domain of investigation), since this would involve a relationship of a *dialogic* (communicative) rather than a *monologic* (instrumental) nature.

The main difficulty of the objective appreciation method of analysis is that it is unable to account for its own role in the communicative interactions of any community of humans and the effects of these on the constitution of society. Arguably, patterns of communication should not be subject to the manipulations of the technical interest. Hence, an alternative approach to understanding is required, which can be seen in the *historical-hermeneutic sciences*. Such an approach adopts a *subjective appreciation* mode that will now be discussed.

### 6.3 The "Subjective Appreciation" Model

This model reflects our interest in understanding intersubjective communications. It takes as its stance an 'indirect attitude characteristic of reflection' (Habermas, 1988). Through this model the observer becomes the "participant observer", and the problematic comes to involve understanding of "contexts of meaning" as well as the observation of events. The historical-hermeneutic sciences take their focus to be the communications and interactions of communities and thus epitomise the subjective appreciation mode.

#### 6.3.1 Subjective Appreciation Methods

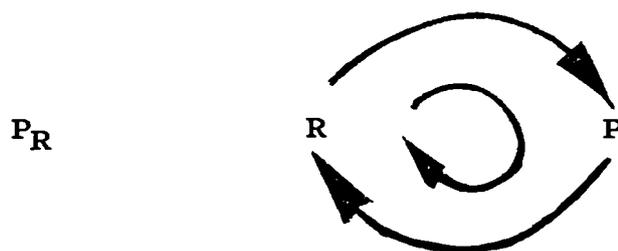
Researchers who believe that paradigms and traditions arise from the interactions of communities tend to hold the opinion that true understanding can only be gained by entering into a dialogue with the community of individuals holding a particular perspective. Observation is supplemented by interpretation. By entering into a two way debate with proponents of a particular

paradigm the researcher can begin to empathise with their position, thus gaining a deeper appreciation of that perspective.

Such a position can be identified with the *interpretivistic* approach of Burrell and Morgan's framework. Within this methodology attention is given to the value and belief systems that inform the participants' positions, although little reflection can be seen on the "participant observer's" own value and belief systems. Using such a perspective, anthropologists would try to describe an alien culture through the use of experience-near concepts (those taken from the alien culture).

The approach is depicted in the diagram shown overleaf. Here, we can see that the researcher ("R") has to call upon both his or her own observations (though these will also be understood as subjective interpretations rather than objective observations), and will engage in discussion with the participants of the alien paradigm ("P"). The researcher still does not

engage in critical reflection about his or her own paradigm ("P<sub>R</sub>"), despite being influenced by it. The cycle of interaction between the researcher and other participants has been described as a dynamic "learning process" (Checkland, 1981).



**Key:**

- R : Researcher
- P : Alien Paradigm
- P<sub>R</sub> : Researcher's Paradigm
- : Direction of Relation
- ↻ : Interaction with Alien Paradigm

*Figure 6.2. The Subjective Appreciation Model*

6.3.2 Criticisms of Subjective Appreciation Methods

Like the objective appreciation methods, the

subjective approach is also open to criticism. Such a perspective does not allow for the possibility that the culture or paradigm under investigation might be so alien as to be totally incomprehensible. The concepts (and world views) being described are those of the individuals from the alien culture which have been communicated to the researcher. It is believed that it is possible to achieve an almost perfect replication (or translation) of these. As Habermas explains:

It appears as though the interpreter transposes himself into the horizon of the world or language from which a text derives its meaning.

(Habermas, 1972:309)

Such a perspective is also flawed: whilst the

positivist self-understanding does not take into account explicitly the connection between measurement operations and feedback control, so it [the historical-hermeneutic approach] eliminates from consideration the interpreter's pre-understanding.

(Habermas, 1972:309)

Furthermore, although the *objective appreciation* view *assumes* consensus, this view *seeks* consensus:

The understanding of meaning is directed in its very structure toward the attainment of possible consensus among

actors in the framework of a self-understanding derived from tradition.

(Habermas, 1972:310)

### 6.3.3 Subjective Appreciation and the Practical Interest

It is this approach that Habermas links with the *practical* cognitive interest, since the historical-hermeneutic sciences take as their subject the intersubjective communicative actions of a community. We can see the 'connection of hermeneutics and its knowledge-constitutive interest in actual life ... in the model case of the foreign-language interpreter' (Habermas, 1972).

A point that is often misapprehended by critics of the hermeneutic tradition is its analysis of the symbols and facts that constitute any communication. Researchers in this domain are not simply interested in an interpretive understanding of "texts", but also in an empirical understanding of the "grammar of ordinary language". Hence any inquiry must proceed through empirical analysis

and conceptualisation. This can be seen in the diagram, Figure 6.2, above.

The purpose of a purely empirical-analytic inquiry (using an objective appreciation method) clearly differs from that of a historical-hermeneutic inquiry (using a subjective appreciation method), although both are 'set off by disturbances of routinised intercourse whether with nature or with other persons' (Habermas, 1972). In the objective appreciation approach, experimentation provides the formalisation of pragmatic rules of technical control. The subjective appreciation approach provides the 'scientific form of the interpretive activities of everyday life' (Habermas, 1972).

However, neither approach provides a means for analysing *the mechanisms of their own actions in constituting the social life-world*. Neither takes as necessary that they reflect 'upon the history of the species comprehended as a self-formative process' (Schroyer, 1973:103). What is required for this is a process of critique, an approach offering a critical appreciation.

#### 6.4 The "Critical Appreciation" Model

This third model takes as its purpose a critical revelation of the objective structures of work and language *together* with an analysis of the normative content of those interests. It is driven by a compulsion to overcome suffering and thus has an interest in emancipation. The approach strives to remove barriers to understanding which are created by distortions in both spheres of human interest: communication (language) and behaviour (work).

##### 6.4.1 Critical Appreciation Methods

Such a position accepts that any representation of an alien culture or paradigm will require "translation" of both concepts and world-views. Furthermore, such translation cannot be undertaken without reflection upon aspects of the researcher's own history, culture and values which influence and mediate his/her ability to fully comprehend the alien paradigm (other). Any

perspective of perspectives will be partial (Fuenmayor, 1990a). Being partial, and recognising the 'always already situated nature' of the researcher, this position must, of necessity, accept the possibility of a plurality of discordant paradigms. There is a recognition that *dissensus* may inform understanding as much as consensus. Paradigms are seen as juxtaposed to each other in a non-imperialistic, pluralistic way. This will be explored further in chapter twelve.

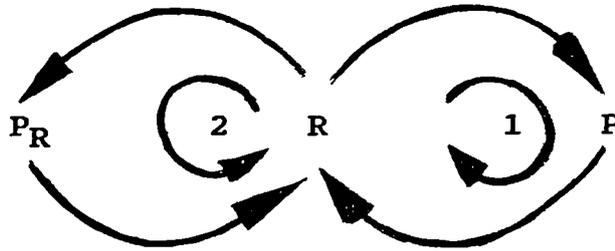
There are four prerequisites for any inquiry to be considered "critical" in Habermas's sense. As was shown earlier, both the empirical-analytic sciences and the historical-hermeneutic sciences may be brought to bear in understanding the self-formative nature of society - in other words, both objective and subjective appreciation methods must be used. These are clearly represented in the right hand side of the diagram shown at Figure 6.3, page 188. The two approaches form what I term the "scientific inquiry" part of a critical appreciation.

The 'other side' (the reflection) of a critical inquiry must involve both an ideology-critique and a self-reflective component. Each of these components draws on the output of the "scientific inquiry", as will be clarified in chapters eight and nine. This part of the investigation involves "interrogation" of the material historical conditions which preceded the current situation and which shaped the understanding of the subjects/actors in the situation, thus using both empirical-analytical and historical-hermeneutic methods. Such an interrogation is directed at *both* the historical preconditions *and* the "data" arising from the scientific process of the inquiry. Arguably, this is the "philosophical" part of the investigation/theory, which I call "reflexive inquiry".

Clearly, a critical appreciation consists of two distinctive cycles: "scientific inquiry" and "reflexive inquiry". Reflexive inquiry concerns the output of the scientific inquiry, the historical preconditions surrounding the object or subject of inquiry, and the assumptions of the

reference community and the researcher him- or herself. We shall return to a more detailed consideration of the various aspects of reflexive inquiry in chapters eight, nine and ten.

The diagram below reveals the reflective nature of the critical appreciation mode of inquiry:



Key:

R : Researcher  
P : Alien Paradigm  
PR : Researcher's Paradigm

→ : Direction of Relation

① : "Scientific Inquiry"

② : "Reflexive Inquiry"

Figure 6.3. The Critical Appreciation Model

As can be seen from the diagram, the two sides of

the critical appreciation model are reflections of each other. Furthermore, the two sides create a "figure of eight" cycle of inquiry that is never ending. Whilst it would appear from our consideration of the two distinctive forms of "reflexive" inquiry (critical self-reflection and ideology-critique) that these can be chosen as seems appropriate by the researcher (an either/or decision), it will be argued in chapter ten that *both* critical self-reflection *and* ideology-critique are required if an inquiry is to result in the emancipation of individuals and groups.

#### 6.4.2 Critical Appreciation and Unification of the Knowledge-Constitutive Interests

The case presented so far makes clear the need for the social sciences to have a unified approach to overcoming the inevitable distortions which prevent both the technical and the practical interests from being used in the service of emancipation. These cognitive interests can only be recognised and understood when they are taken 'as moments in the emancipatory interest in

reason' (Schroyer, 1973).

What model can we find within the social sciences that is sufficiently reflexive to provide a blueprint for critical social inquiry? Habermas sees Freud's psychoanalytic theory as a possibility. He provides a convincing argument for taking Freud's model of ego functions and relating these to the knowledge-constitutive interests:

Reality-testing is based on a cognitive capacity that develops in the behavioral system of instrumental action and in intelligent adaptation to external conditions of life. The technical cognitive interest in expanding the power of technical control over objectified processes corresponds to this operational learning of feedback-controlled behavioral rules. Censorship of instincts, in contrast, presupposes a cognitive capacity that takes form in interaction structures by means of identification and internalization. The practical cognitive interest in securing the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding corresponds to this moral learning of social roles. Finally, the synthesis of id and super-ego, that is the integration of unconscious elements into the ego, takes place through a cognitive capacity that arises in pathological contexts of specifically distorted communication. The emancipatory cognitive interest in the undoing of repression and false consciousness corresponds to this self-reflective learning process.

(Habermas, 1972:347)

Habermas finds no difficulty in translating Freud's approach for individual analysis into an approach for societal analysis, although his position with respect to this has been modified in later publications (e.g., Habermas, 1973, 1979). A more detailed exposition of the reflexive side of the critical inquiry, which has as its emergent property the liberation of communities from repressive forces, will be undertaken in section three of the thesis.

### 6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, consideration has been given to one approach to overcoming paradigm incommensurability within the social sciences: that of Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests. Following a brief explanation of the three cognitive interests, three models for appreciating alien paradigms were considered and the knowledge-constitutive interests were related to these.

It was argued that the final version, the critical appreciation model, provides a means for drawing together the three interests in a correctly constituted totality. This model also represents a pluralistic unification of science and philosophy. It was suggested that there are four methodological components of the critical appreciation model: an empirical-analytic analysis with a historical-hermeneutic inquiry representing the "scientific inquiry" aspects of the investigation, together with ideology-critique and critical self-reflection comprising the "reflexive inquiry" side of the investigation. We will see later how this latter part of an inquiry may be underpinned by methods emulating the empirical-analytic and the historical-hermeneutic sciences.

The "reflexive" components will be considered in more detail in section three, together with a consideration of the way in which these provide for the emancipation of individuals (self) and groups (society).

Notes.

1. In presenting this argument I have drawn heavily on Bernstein's (1983) arguments about the way in which anthropological research might be done, although the diagrammatic representation and its relation to critical thinking are my own work.

2. In describing only three models of appreciation of alien paradigms I am generalising what are extremely complex and multi-faceted approaches. My "reduction" of the enormous range of different philosophical approaches to just these three is rather calculated, as it is my intention to go on later and relate these to the main strands of inquiry within the systems domain. Oliga (1988) provides a blueprint for the three models insofar as he talks about 'three different kinds of knowledge [which] imply different methodological approaches'. These are the methodological positions which I depict as being *objective, subjective and critical appreciations.*

3. The understanding of alien paradigms has previously been shown to be analogous to the understanding of alien cultures. Consequently, I shall be focussing on the use of the three means of appreciation within the social sciences. This does not mean that the approaches are not applicable to the natural sciences, and writers like Apel (1973) and Bohr (1963) make very good cases for the existence of the objective and subjective appreciation modes within natural science research. Additionally, the area of application of such approaches is not restricted to the human domain (i.e. the social and subjective fields). Midgley (1992a,b) has shown how critical systems thinking and the pluralist perspective may be brought to bear on ecological as well as social and individual problematics.

4. I am using the dates of English translations of Habermas's work here, although I also show the dates and titles of the original German publications in my references list.

5. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to

provide a full-scale account of Habermas's project as a whole, which in any case is a task that has been tackled elsewhere (see, for example, McCarthy, 1978). In addition, there are a number of bibliographies of Habermas's work and of work about Habermas, an early version of which can be found in Thompson and Held (1982).

6. In referring to 'man's basic interests', I am using Habermas's terminology and am aware of the sexism implied in this. I have therefore replaced 'man' with 'humankind' or some other, non-sexist, language, whenever possible.

7. I am not suggesting that *all* ideological forces are repressive, as some writers would. Rather, as will be shown in chapter nine, I take the view that there may be *both* repressive *and* emancipatory ideological forces at play within the same context.

**SECTION THREE**  
**ENRICHING THE CRITICAL APPRECIATION MODEL**

CHAPTER 7: CONTRIBUTIONS ENHANCING THE  
CRITICAL APPRECIATION MODEL

We have seen in the last section how the social sciences have wrestled with the idea that there are many different ways for tackling the same problems, i.e. the debate concerning synchronic incommensurable paradigms. The discussion was closed with an offer made by Habermas (1972) for overcoming the dualism between the empirical-analytic and the competing historical-hermeneutic sciences. The proposal was that through a third position, that taken by critical social scientists (in my terms the critical appreciation model) these two contemporaneous approaches could be seen to *supplement* one another.

7.1 Structure of this Section

This section of the thesis will develop the model of critical appreciation further, by elaborating on what I have called the "philosophical" or "reflexive" aspects of the model. In this section,

we will be considering the methods involved in gaining a critical appreciation of any given (social science) problem situation. In particular, consideration will be given to two different aspects of critique that Habermas sees as fundamental to a critical social methodology: critique as self-reflection, and critique as "historical reconstruction" (ideology-critique). It is due to the ability of humans, to reflect upon their history and thereby to alter the course of history-in-its-making, that reflection and critique as both self-reflection and historical reconstruction play such a significant part in Habermas's critical social theory.

It must be remembered that the model being developed is one in which science and philosophy are linked in a nexus, a tight circle of reciprocal learning. This also relates to the nexus between theory and practice which can be achieved through the cycle of critical appreciation. So there are a number of areas in which any aspect of the model we elaborate will have an impact. These impacts, and the resulting

multi-dimensional nature of the relationships between science, philosophy, theory and practice will be examined, and modelled diagrammatically.

The prototypical method for critical self-reflection (provided by the psychoanalytic theory of Freud) will be explored in chapter eight, followed by an analysis of the process for undertaking ideology-critique in chapter nine. These are described as representing the "reflexive inquiry" aspects of any critical social inquiry in contradistinction to the "scientific" part constituted by the empirical-analytic and the historical-hermeneutic methodologies. However, both parts of the theoretical aspects of a critical appreciation approach should guide the procedures of the scientific side, as will be shown later.

It is argued that the reflexive, or philosophical, part of the inquiry is also part of a learning process in which researchers, as participant-observers, and all other stake-holders must engage. Furthermore, both empirical and

interpretive parts of this side of the critical appreciation model will be revealed. Following this, in chapter ten, consideration will turn to the ways in which the two forms of reflexive inquiry combine to provide for the emancipation of both individuals (self) and groups (society). A model of 'self-society dynamics' which addresses the need for changes at both micro and macro levels of inquiry will also be proposed in chapter ten.

The central theme of this section, then, is the expansion and exposition of the already presented model of critical appreciation. This is intended to show how the various facets are inter-related and how each helps to facilitate the move towards a situation of 'free dialogue' in which the distortions, flaws and omissions of history that form part of any given problem-context can be overcome.

CHAPTER 8: PSYCHOANALYSIS AS A MODEL FOR  
CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION

In this chapter, I will be introducing Habermas's model for critical self-reflection: based on Freud's psychoanalytic approach and, in particular, his model of dream-analysis. After explaining how Habermas draws on Freud's work, I will go on to show how dream-analysis can be used as an analogy for critical self-reflection. Through the metaphor of dream interpretation critical self-reflection will be considered as a means for emancipating individuals. Emancipation has already been discussed as a central commitment of critical social science and critical systems thinking, and this chapter sets out to reveal one aspect of the means for achieving (individual) emancipation. The method of critical self-reflection which underpins the psychoanalytic process of dream-analysis will be unveiled as part of this.

I will be drawing mainly on Habermas's earlier works (*Knowledge and Human Interests*, 1972, and *On*

*the Logic of the Social Sciences*, 1988) for this exposition, but the model of psychoanalysis will be shown in subsequent chapters to be a continuing theme for Habermas in his attempts to build a theory for the realisation of a situation of 'free dialogue'. Since Habermas is consistent in providing an ever more elaborated theory of social knowledge, one might ask what the purpose is of his continuing elaboration of the same theme. The answer must be that, as a form of social therapy, Habermas's theory of the evolution and creation of social knowledge is useful for ameliorating the conditions of human existence. It provides a tool of analysis which makes human behaviour intelligible, and hopes, thereby, to begin the radical transformation of society.

Following the consideration of dream-analysis as an analogy for the means for individual emancipation, we will be returning to the model of critical appreciation introduced in chapter six. This model will be further elaborated to show how the method of critical self-reflection underlying the method of dream-analysis serves to enhance any

social investigation, since it insists on critical self-reflection by researchers engaged in social science and also by participants involved in problem-situations under investigation. It will be argued that critical self-reflection is a prerequisite for genuine emancipatory action.

Now, critical self-reflection may be undertaken by a solitary individual, or it may be assisted by entering into dialogue with another person (most typically, an analyst). In this chapter, I shall talk of dream-analysis being facilitated by a second party, the analyst, but this does *not* imply that critical self-reflection *must* involve an other. Dream-analysis here is simply being used as an analogy for critical self-reflection, which I suggest should be a dialogue of the self with the self. This must avoid the dangers of becoming monological and so must draw upon interactions both with the self and with others. Furthermore, by using both empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic methods of "reflexive" and "scientific" inquiry, the individual's self understanding will be enriched.

## 8.1 Background

According to Habermas (1972), the role of the critical social sciences is to facilitate the development of self-reflection and to remove any barriers to the 'self-conscious development of the human species' (Roderick, 1986). Both the arena of human communicative interaction and that of human action are subject to systematic distortions which have to be revealed so that humans can create their own history through 'will and consciousness' (Habermas, 1972). We will return to a consideration of societal barriers and distortions in chapter nine, but for now I intend to focus on a number of questions concerning the means for revealing distortions at an individual level, and the responses provided by Freud's process of dream-analysis.

If the revelation of distortions preventing the creation of 'history' through 'will and consciousness' is the intent of a critical social theory, then a number of questions must be raised.

How can such systematic distortions be revealed? How might human capacity for self-reflection be aided? What model of science can we draw on to devise a method for critical self-reflection? Habermas turns to the psychoanalytic theory of Freud to provide a role model.

Psychoanalysis is relevant to us as the only tangible example of a science incorporating methodical self-reflection. The birth of psychoanalysis opens up the possibility of arriving at the dimension that positivism closed off, and of doing so in a methodological manner that arises out of the logic of inquiry.

(Habermas, 1972:214)

Although Freud's formal model of psychoanalysis draws upon the natural sciences for many of its concepts<sup>1</sup>, his clinical practice provides methodological guidelines for critical self-reflection which have the potential to break free of the empirical-analytic domain. Despite the provision of such guidelines, it should not be assumed that the revelation of distortions, of ideological suppression, is an easy task.

Freud's clinical experience showed that there are

certain areas of the mind (assumptions and presuppositions) which are 'inaccessible to conscious experience at any time in any individual's life' (Nichols, 1972:267, original emphasis). However, this is not to say that critical self-reflection will achieve nothing for the individual. If the totality of the psyche cannot be made conscious, this should not prevent the good psychoanalyst (or whoever) from striving to make a larger portion conscious or, at least, more transparent.

As Nichols goes on to indicate, once it had been observed that some areas of the psyche would always remain inaccessible, 'the aim of the psychoanalytic method had to become increased self-awareness rather than cure, reflection rather than the dissolution of neurosis' (1972:267). In some ways, this transition can be associated with the recognition that many psychological omissions or distortions are of a non-pathological nature<sup>2</sup>. Improved self-awareness would enable all individuals to come to see the repressions and subjugations that have helped to shape their

social reality and its accepted interpretations.

This usage of Freud provides us with an insight to the normative nature of Habermas's work. It is clear that the use of the psychoanalytic method (as an analogy for critical social science) will be to develop methodological guidelines that may help us reveal ideological distortions and manipulations of an individual, group, community, class or society of individuals. The aim of critique is (ultimately) to remove any authority structures which prevent genuine human interests from being satisfied<sup>3</sup>.

Habermas clearly takes as given a society which has evolved in a manner that perverts and thwarts humans in their efforts to satisfy their interests. Such a society is riven with false ideologies; humans living in them are labouring under a false consciousness and have to be shown the errors and perversions that prevent them from leading the "good life". For Habermas,

Psychoanalytic interpretation ... is not directed at meaning structures in the dimension of what is consciously intended. The flaws eliminated by its

critical labour are not accidental. The omissions and distortions that it rectifies have a systematic role and function.

(Habermas, 1972:216)

The 'omissions and distortions' that critical social theory seeks to rectify are societal inequities, situations in which injustice is done. The 'systematic role and function' of such distortions is one of domination - whether of nature or people. Such situations arise not only through conscious human activity, but also from factors about which those involved are unaware. The legitimacy of any domination arising from what Habermas (and others) might classify as a 'flaw' has to be called into question by critical social scientists.

Fay (1987) argues that humans do not only create their social reality, *they are constituted by it*:

They are embodied in that much of what oppresses them is not a function of what they believe, but is instead incarnated directly in them. Moreover, it is because they are embodied that a good deal of social action is circumscribed by the force which plays such a powerful role in their lives. They are also creatures of tradition in the sense that

their identities are constituted out of their cultural inheritances.

(Fay, 1987:8)

The kinds of subjugations and power relations that should be accessed in a critically reflexive inquiry are those that have (illegitimately) served to generate current societal forms and hence are representative of the surface manifestations of deeper schisms in Man's being in relation to the world. These can be revealed through the use of the non-pathological investigative model of psychoanalysis - that of dream analysis. For Habermas, psychoanalysis and dream interpretation in particular

goes beyond the art of hermeneutics insofar as it must grasp not only the meaning of a possibly distorted text, but the *meaning of the text distortion itself*, that is the transformation of a latent dream thought into the manifest dream.

(Habermas, 1972:220).

Further justification for the use of dream-analysis as an analogy for critical self-reflection arises from Freud's use of it to gain critical insight into his own psyche (see 'Freud

on Dreams' in Gregory, 1987). Another reason for Habermas's reliance on Freud's dream-analysis lies in its bringing together of *both* interpretive and empirical-analytic explanations for elements, in material created through unconscious thought processes (for example, dreams, fantasies, Freudian slips, and so on), which otherwise seem to defy explanation.

## 8.2 Dream-Analysis

Habermas (1972) argues that the empirical-analytic sciences and historical-hermeneutic sciences serve only to address the surface manifestations of societal imbalances and subjugations. Using the psychoanalytic analogy, we can relate this "scientific" type of research to an investigation of the area of the dream that Freud terms the "dream facade". The 'facade' is built up through the dreamer's elaboration and rationalisation of what may be a confused and fragmentary remembrance, a repressed latent content.

There are two further layers to any dream, which must be revealed in the process of the dream-analysis:

The next dream layer can be traced back to undischarged "day's residues", that is text fragments from language games of the previous day ... What remains is a depth layer with the symbolic contents that resist the work of interpretation.

(Habermas, 1972:221)

The analyst can learn from these 'real dream symbols', especially through the recognition of the 'resistance that they put up to interpretation' (Habermas, 1972). This resistance is easily recognisable: clients will suddenly remember something which had previously escaped their memory; there will be hesitation, inconsistency, etc. All point to the client's unconscious efforts to disguise or forget a reality that, in some way, is unacceptable.

Psychoanalytic interpretation is concerned with those connections of symbols in which a subject deceives itself about itself. The *depth hermeneutics* that Freud contraposes to Dilthey's philological hermeneutics deals with texts indicating *self-deceptions of the author*. Beside the manifest content (and the associated indirect but intended communications), such texts document the latent content

of a portion of the author's orientations that has become inaccessible to him and alienated from him and yet belongs to him nevertheless. Freud coins the phrase "internal foreign territory" to capture the character of the alienation of something that is still the subject's very own.

(Habermas, 1972:218)

The 'manifest content' of a problem-situation, as of the dream, is the problem-situation at face value. If we take the analogy of dream-analysis seriously, then we can see that any problem-situation's manifest content, like the manifest dream, may be nonsensical, irrational, unreal, difficult to understand and fraught with strange messages and symbols<sup>4</sup>. The 'latent content' can only be recovered through the translation or interpretation of the manifest symbols. The 'dream-work'<sup>5</sup> has acted to transform some latent content into the dream's manifest content, and the analyst has to work to map the manifest content back to the original, latent content.

The task of the researcher is to probe, to raise questions about the surface manifestations, about the truthfulness of these; to question the extent

to which recent history is shaping or distorting the view of what is ("day's residues"); to consider to what extent social norms are filtering the detail of the problem under consideration; and finally to ask questions about the sincerity of the reporter.

By understanding the mechanisms that are used in the 'dream-work', we can begin to use these as conceptual tools for interpretation<sup>6</sup>. Similarly, if we can understand what mechanisms or processes are at work in the creation of the manifest content of any problem-situation, then we can begin the process of uncovering the latent content. 'Interpretation of meaning - as in decoding the content of dreams - is inherent in psychoanalytic therapy' (Giddens, 1990a:126).

Erdelyi (1985) elaborates several of the mechanisms/operations identified by Freud as distorting or creating flaws in any dream report. These include *ensorship* of problematic material; *symbolisation* of certain facets of the dream; "*plastic word representation*" or concrete sensory-

motor images of a hallucinatory nature; *condensation and displacement* whereby ideas are juxtaposed together in indiscriminate ways; and, *secondary revision, or elaboration*, the "normalisation" of the dream content.

It is not difficult to appreciate several similarities between the unconscious 'dream-work' and the (unconscious) actions of humans that serve to create their social realities. For example, as individuals we often ignore aspects of our own behaviour when it is at odds with our deeply held values, yet we may experience a degree of cognitive dissonance as a consequence. In such cases, we may undertake a post-hoc rationalisation in which the dissonant behaviour is justified. This in turn may serve to alter the domain in which we operate in subtle or stark ways.

Those who promote critical self-reflection would wish to use it to point up the mis-apprehensions that the individual holds about his or her situation and about the avenues to be taken in rectifying or changing it. Through critical self-

reflection these mis-apprehensions should be revealed. The danger may be that revelation will lead to a deepening sense of powerlessness instead of an increasing sense of freedom from oppression. Where such analysis involves a third party (the analyst/researcher), he or she will be required to make a judgment about the appropriateness of providing a revelation at any given moment. Such a judgment ought to involve the analyst in critical self-reflection, a point that we will return to in chapter twelve.

### 8.3 Dream-Analysis and Individual Emancipation

The process of coming to an understanding of a 'text' that is in some way alien to oneself, as in dream analysis, is a process of improving self-awareness. As we saw in chapter four, Bernstein (1983) argued that striving to understand an alien culture can help us to come to a better understanding of ourselves. I shall return to a more detailed explanation of this process in chapter ten, but for now I wish to remain with the

idea of individual improvements in self-understanding arising from critical self-reflection. According to Habermas, such an improvement in critical self-awareness could best be aided by an outside interpreter.

As Nichols (1972) indicates, the reorganisation of the elements which comprise the text of any dream, *by another*, must be undertaken as a process of reversal of the operations that created the dream in the first place. Through this process of enlightenment - which involves free association, removal of 'day residues' and the final analysis of the messages which were intended by the dream - 'the analyst's knowledge or interpretation of his patient becomes knowledge *for* the patient, for his consciousness' (Nichols, 1972:264). This is usually accompanied by an improvement in the individual's control over an area of 'intentionality of which he has not previously been aware' (Nichols, 1972:264). It is this last part that represents the success of psychoanalysis as a process for self-reflection. In this process, aspects of the individual's self-formative

processes are brought to consciousness through the focussing of that consciousness on its own distortions, omissions and flaws.

However, it can be argued that social scientists do not have the material of "dreams" to work with - they simply have individuals' representations of a *consciously* appreciated reality. This highlights a given of Habermas's use of psychoanalytic theory which points up his *modernistic* stance: that what occurs at a surface or conscious level is of little importance, whilst the deeper level of unconscious action should be the concern of critical social scientists. However, Erdelyi shows us that Freud's theory of manifest and latent contents relates to *both* conscious *and* unconscious processes: 'Latent contents may be unconscious (as in dreams and [pathological] symptoms) or conscious (as in jokes and art)' (Erdelyi, 1985:146). Clearly, distortions can, and do, occur at both conscious and unconscious levels<sup>7</sup>. This points up the need to be aware of both intended and unintended outcomes of behaviour, whether of a conscious or unconscious nature.

This also highlights the need to be explicit about the purpose of a critically self-reflective methodology: for Habermas the aim is to bring about change in society through the improved self-awareness of individuals, just as psychoanalysts seek to change the behaviour of their clients. The change will be wrought by the improved understanding gained of the circumstances in which we live and in which our lives are shaped: the improved understanding will arise from critical self-reflection as advocated by Habermas.

Emancipation of society (the freedom from domination of one form or another) will be achieved through the enlightenment of individuals, a theme that we will return to in chapter ten. According to Habermas, once humans have been enlightened as to the ways in which their genuine interests are being subjugated, they will be empowered to behave differently and to prevent future subjugations of those interests<sup>8</sup>. Only through enlightenment and empowerment<sup>9</sup> will emancipation be achieved - just as it is in the process of dream interpretation. Such a process

requires the shedding of 'illusions that are central to our very identity' (Fay, 1987:12).

This process will not be an easy one, since it is possible that individuals will experience resistances to the new understanding of their situation being offered by the critical theorist. Indeed, the shedding of illusions can be a painful process, which we might naturally seek to avoid.

As Freud indicates:

Informing the patient of what he does not know because he has repressed it [i.e. revealing other conceptualisations of his position] is only one of the necessary preliminaries to the treatment. If knowledge about the unconscious were as important for the patient as people inexperienced in psychoanalysis imagine, listening to lectures or reading books would be enough to cure him. Such measures, however, have as much influence on the symptoms of nervous illness as a distribution of menu-cards in a time of famine has upon hunger. The analogy goes even further than its immediate application; for informing the patient of his unconscious regularly results in an intensification of the conflict in him and an exacerbation of his troubles.

(Freud, 1967, cited in Habermas, 1972:229-230, note 23)

Clearly, holding a view about how distortions and

illegitimate power-relations arise in societies is insufficient in terms of facilitating the emancipation of individuals from those subjugating forces. Even educating the individual about the processes of subjugation will be inadequate, since this alone cannot guarantee a change in the individual's construal of his or her situation. Furthermore, according to Freud, the enlightenment itself is likely to cause a resistance, a further intensification of the patient's denial of the alternative conceptualisation.

The role of the critical social scientist must be different to that of the psychoanalyst if it is to transcend these difficulties. This is where we begin to recognise that Habermas's work is more than a re-description of Freud's: the incorporation of both negative and positive critiques together with a strengthening of several facets of Freud's psychoanalysis when applied to social situations mean that Habermas transcends the limitations of Freud's theory.

The main deficiency within Freud's work, according

to Habermas, is his "slide back into positivism" on the level of both his metapsychology<sup>10</sup> and his clinical theory. Here Habermas refers to Freud's use of natural science analogies and descriptives, within the areas of his metapsychology and his clinical practice, which are deemed inappropriate due to his subject matter: the subjective (and inter-subjective) experiences of human subjects.

For Habermas recourse for validation of any psychoanalytic theory, whether particular or more general, must always be to the individual or group represented as analysands (those being analysed). Unless the individual accepts an interpretation of his or her life as "truthful", the interpretation can have no validity. For most psychoanalysts this will present problems: it seems to

entail the possibility that some patients *do not* have an Oedipus complex or that some psychotic patients are God, don't exist, or still reside in the womb.

(Nichols, 1972:268)

Of course, we can argue that critical social scientists will deal with a different, and non-

psychotic or non-pathological, client group than that of the practicing psychoanalyst. However, if we accept that these non-psychotic individuals may also be labouring under some false consciousness, some situation of repressed or distorted understanding, then it is possible to recognise that the difficulties experienced by psychoanalysts in getting patients to accept alternative interpretations will be similar to those of the critical social scientist seeking the emancipation of non-psychotic individuals.

However, these observations do not prevent us from rejecting the notion of the analyst-as-sovereign: for a critical analysis to be enlightening, empowering and emancipating it *must* be accepted by the client group as a valid explanation for their current suffering. Fay explains that

the people whom it [the critical social theory] is supposed to liberate will at some stage be willing - indeed ready - to listen and act on its message. But it is highly unlikely that this will be the case unless the level of discontent they are experiencing is really quite high; otherwise, what might be called the 'natural resistance' to fundamental change will act as a counterweight to the desire for change, and will induce these people to accommodate themselves

to the discontent they are suffering.

(Fay, 1987:29)

We have seen in the preceding pages how the method underlying the process of dream interpretation can be used as a model for critical self-reflection involving both a client and a researcher. It has been argued that the psychoanalytic method provides an enlightening, empowering and emancipating experience for the individual. We must now consider how the process of dream analysis as critical self-reflection by client and analyst relates to the model of critical appreciation presented in chapter six.

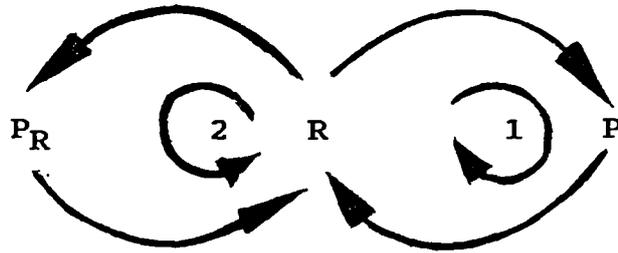
#### 8.4 Psychoanalysis and Critical Appreciation

Earlier, in speaking about our model of critical appreciation, I described the process as one in which an alien paradigm or culture may be analysed. Now, although the notion of individuals in some alien situation which is being subjected to analysis is still retained, I wish to suggest

instead that in our model the critical social scientist may be actively *intervening* in some problem-situation as experienced by another individual.

This problem-situation may be perceived or interpreted through many layers of manifest content: distortions and repressions which the analyst must cut through to get at the latent content. Both "scientific" and "reflexive" aspects of inquiry will need to be undertaken to ensure that a rich understanding is gained. The details of both parts of the inquiry will be discussed in relation to the model and the analogous dream-analysis, but first we should consider the revised model.

In the revised model the letter "P" now denotes the participant's perception of his or her problem-situation, rather than a paradigm. Cycle one therefore becomes a cycle of interaction with the client, rather than with those of an alien culture. These changes are encapsulated in the diagram overleaf, Figure 8.1.



Key:

R : Researcher  
 P : Perceived Problem-Situation  
 P<sub>R</sub> : Researcher's Paradigm

→ : Direction of Relation

① : "Scientific Inquiry"

② : "Reflexive Inquiry"

*Figure 8.1 Critical Appreciation of a Problem-Situation.*

In fostering the methods of dream analysis, I have suggested (in chapter seven above) that this is an analogy for the "reflexive inquiry" aspects of our critical appreciation. The foregoing exposition of the method of dream-analysis also suggests that, in order for an intervention to be regarded as "critical", the researcher must develop, or draw upon, a theory about the means by which the

client has come to be under some misapprehension about his or her role in the creation/reproduction of his or her social world. Furthermore, such a theory must be accepted and adopted by the client in order for it to be emancipatory.

The means by which a critical social scientist derives a theory of "mechanisms of repression or oppression" involves both empirical and hermeneutic activities, and both "reflexive" and "scientific" analyses, since it must be both theoretically and practically sound. In other words, researchers should draw upon their own observations of the client's resistances, various interpretations of the client's observations, and their own critical self-reflection on these observations. Of course, we do not abandon the need for confirmation and acceptance of such observations and interpretations, which would always be referred back to the client in an individual analysis or to the group in a group analysis.

When consideration is given to the resistances put

up by individuals, critical social scientists (or psychoanalysts) must have in mind two particular aims. Firstly, the analyst must seek to provide an *appropriate* account of the events that have led to the current situation, i.e. an interpretation of the *manifest* biographical events of the individual's life. Secondly, the analyst must try to provide a theory (an hypothesis) about the *latent* purpose of those events together with an explanation of the individual's genuine interests.

These parts of a critical reflection can also form the basis for the analyst's own critical self-reflection. Furthermore, Habermas argues that we can extrapolate from the activities of an individual's critical self-reflection to the process of a societal critical inquiry, although he rejects the notion of society as a critically self-reflective entity in favour of the notion of localised communities of communication which never form a totalising, self-knowledgeable mass (Habermas, 1987b).

It is clear that, in undertaking the critically

self-reflexive part of the critical inquiry, researchers must consider how their own assumptions might affect their understanding of the problem situation under investigation. In particular, note must be taken of whether mechanisms attributed with a specific role in some previous intervention are of importance in the current inquiry. The universality of any noted subjugating forces must always be called into question.

Critical reflection will serve to reveal the distortions in the "text" that participants have created; it will also serve to reveal the meaning of the distortion itself, i.e. *why* the participants have acted in a manner which reinforced and maintained the delusions they were labouring under. Communicating alternative conceptualisations of their situation should act to enlighten them, just as the dream-analyst enlightens the dreamer.

So far we have considered the various aspects of a critically reflective inquiry in an abstract way.

This discussion clarifies that critical self-reflection cannot be undertaken in isolation from the "scientific" aspects of a critical appreciation. This is the case since critical self-reflection must occur in a context: the individual cannot reflect upon him or herself without *both* drawing on some empirical observations about him or herself and his or her context, *and* drawing on various other interpretations of those observations. Such observations and interpretations occur within what I have termed the "scientific" domain of the critical appreciation.

Let me elaborate. When I reflect upon my work situation, I begin by restaging, in my mind, particular events that have occurred. I may consider the empirical "facts" of a specific event (who said or did what to whom, when and where), the history of relations between myself and the others involved, my own frame of mind entering into the situation under consideration (my pre-history), the possibility that there may exist alternative interpretations of what took place,

etc. I cannot gain a critically reflective appreciation of my work situation without drawing on the output of what I have termed "scientific" inquiry. Furthermore, I would need to engage in dialogue with others in order to "test" (or "evaluate") the content of my critical appreciation of the particular situation I am reviewing.

Such a dialogue could be guided by questioning about the validity-claims implicit in any communication (Habermas, 1979, 1984, 1989). We shall return to a more detailed discussion of these validity-claims in chapter nine, but for now it is sufficient to observe that they concern the intelligibility, truth, and social and moral justification of what is being said, as well as the sincerity of the speaker. Giddens (1990a) shows that, in the psychoanalytic encounter, what an individual says may not be intelligible; its 'factual content may be in some part false'; what he or she says may be unjustified; and, he or she 'may either consciously or unconsciously attempt to deceive the analyst' (Giddens, 1990a:129).

Clearly, the validity-claims are inherent in a dialogue which is based on a process like that of psychoanalysis.

These questions, then, may be used to interrogate the output of both reflexive and scientific parts of any critical inquiries. We can give shape to these ideas by showing the inter-active parts of reflexive and scientific inquiry in an annotated version of the critical appreciation model, shown below:

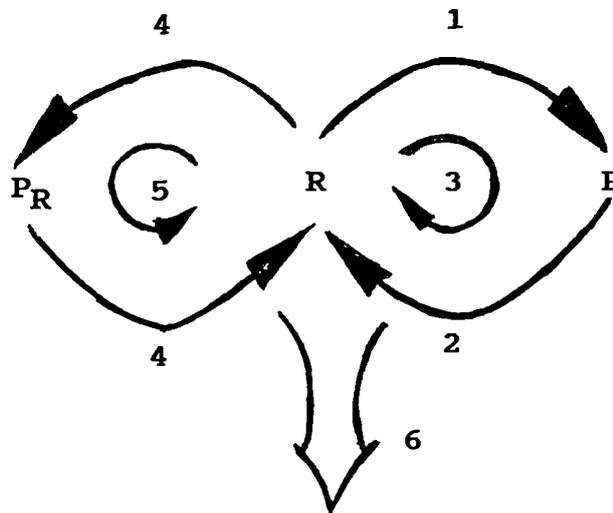


Figure 8.2 *Dream-Analysis as Critical Appreciation*

The numbers in the diagram correspond with the following activities:

(1) third-party observations - collecting empirical data about the problem-situation, especially about the participant's openness and readiness for a critical intervention;

(2) consultation, ascertaining the participant's views about the manifest problem-situation, reaffirming the participant's current dissatisfaction and possibilities for improvement;

(3) free-association about the problem-situation; other psychodynamic methods aimed at enabling participants to gain new insights;

(4) empirical observations and hermeneutic interpretations about the researcher's own paradigm, context, and history;

(5) critical self-reflection about possible sources of distortion or illegitimate power-

relations, and their meanings; also about the researcher's own presuppositions; questions concerning ethics of disclosure, moral issues;

(6) the emerging emancipation of participants through the enlightening process.

These activities are not intended to be carried out in the linear sequential manner described above. Rather, they should be undertaken in an iterative manner. The critical social scientist would have to return time and again to observations of participants in order to assess their reactions and resistances to theories about their problem-situation which would be derived from the cyclical process of critical appreciation. This would help to build up further layers of analysis, and to improve the enlightening process.

Even after several iterations at this level of analysis, we cannot presume that critical appreciation is complete. We cannot undertake this type of critically reflective analysis without

recognising that any individual is part of a group or community which is embedded in a wider community; that they are subject to a range of forces that might not be accounted for in this kind of critical intervention.

What is required now is a means for critiquing the ideological processes at work in the wider society, which will be discussed in chapter nine. Furthermore, in chapter seven, I suggested that the process of critical self-reflection would need to be related to that of ideology-critique in order that the commitments of critical systems thinking could be met. This has not been provided so far, but we will be able to consider it in chapter ten after we have a method for ideology-critique in place.

### **8.5 Conclusion**

We have seen how Freud's psychoanalytic theory, and in particular his method for dream-analysis, are drawn upon by Habermas as a model for critical

self-reflection, which I have sought to elaborate and enrich. The method of critical self-reflection, through the analogy of dream-analysis, was shown to be a potential means for emancipating individuals from unconscious forces preventing them from satisfying their genuine interests.

Furthermore, the method of critical self-reflection was considered as a contributing method for critical appreciation, and the model which was introduced in chapter six was enhanced by its incorporation. However, critical self-reflection cannot proceed effectively without reconstructing the socio-historical context underlying the problem situation. It is this 'reconstruction', or ideology-critique, which forms the subject matter of the next chapter.

### Notes

1. Erdelyi (1985) provides several examples of Freud's reliance on the natural sciences for analogous concepts in his developing science of

psychoanalysis. In particular, Freud's interest in the field of dynamics (in physics) had a major impact on his explanations for many psychodynamic phenomena. The notion of 'resistance' was also "borrowed" from physics, together with several other terms that have continued in usage since.

2. An example of such non-pathological distortions can be found in the common-place "Freudian Slip".

3. This aspect of Habermas's theory is interesting since if all critical theories are intended to support the human cognitive interest in emancipation, and if the ultimate aim of critique is to remove all power-relations and authority structures, then critical theorists must eventually work themselves out of a job.

4. Post-modernists (e.g. Tseëlon, 1991) would say that all there is can be seen in the surface manifestations, that there is no "latent" or "depth" content to be uncovered. For example, in discussing the nature of the self, Tseëlon tells

us that the postmodern understanding of the self is tied to 'a metaphysics of surface: an interplay of images, of signifiers with no underlying signifieds, a text with no "reality" behind it' (1991:4).

5. Freud called the psychological transforming operations of dreams the 'dream-work'. These were a particular class of operations which served to translate the meaningful substratum of the dream material into an apparently meaningless manifest content. As such, Freud could only infer that these operations exist, an inference he was able to draw from his substantial empirical work with patients' dreams.

6. The method used by Freud in analysing and interpreting dreams involved a process called "free association":

As in psychoanalysis proper, the subject is required to relax and allow his (sic) mind to wander freely from elements in the dream to related ideas, recollections, or emotional reactions which they may chance to suggest. By this route, he is gradually led from the dream as recollected, which Freud termed the *manifest content*, to the underlying thoughts and wishes, called by Freud the

*latent content....*

(Gregory, 1987:274, original emphasis)

Of course, in Freud's model of dream analysis the process is one in which the dream material created and described by a client is analysed and re-interpreted by another individual, the psychoanalyst. If we wish to use this method as an *analogy* for critical self-reflection, then a different form of dialogue will need to be established - a dialectic with the self. This dialogical awareness will need to address the mechanisms that have worked to constitute the self as itself. However, as we shall see in chapter ten, although such personal dialogues with one's self are essential, the *purely monological* use of a critical self-reflective method has to be avoided if any individual is to gain a critical awareness that can be related to social systems.

7. I use the term "levels" here advisedly: I do not intend to imply any hierarchical arrangement of conscious and unconscious material in the psyche, but rather to indicate that there are

boundaries around what is conscious, pre-conscious and unconscious. These boundaries may be penetrated from any direction so that material (memories, knowledge, etc.) can pass back and forth, though not at will.

8. Of course "perfect enlightenment" is an ideal state towards which we can aim, but which may not be attainable. "Enlightenment" may be only partial, in which case the probability of preventing all possible future subjugations would be reduced.

9. Methodologies of empowerment are to be distinguished from methodologies of enlightenment. The former may be utilised in situations where no enlightenment has occurred, and, arguably, in these circumstances they may provide mechanisms which serve to perpetuate the *status quo*. Paolo Freire (1972) talks about "the oppressor within the oppressed", a situation in which an individual may be striving for empowerment to gain what his or her oppressor has but which does not enlighten that individual to the true nature of his or her

situation. In such circumstances the attitudes and values of the oppressors become those of the oppressed, in which case the oppressor is embedded within the oppressed.

Similarly, enlightenment may occur without the possibility of empowerment. In these circumstances individuals may experience powerlessness as a result of the enlightening process. Clearly, for a critical theory to be emancipatory it would need to be *both* enlightening *and* empowering.

10. "Metapsychology" is a form of psychoanalytic theorising which has no clinical (i.e. empirical) reference, and consists of theories at the highest level of generalisation.

CHAPTER 9: HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION AS A  
MODEL FOR IDEOLOGY-CRITIQUE

We saw in the last chapter how it is that a critical appreciation method can be reflexive, both about its context of application and about its historical context of emergence<sup>1</sup> at an *individual level*, through the use of a method analogous with Freud's dream-analysis. It was further suggested that the model could be extended to the societal domain in which the individual is embedded, to a critical investigation of the means by which groups of individuals have come to conceive of their social reality in specific ways.

In this chapter we shall be considering this second layer of (societal) critical reflection which encompasses *both* reflexivity about the context of application (present, on-going) *and* reflexivity about the historical context of emergence (past) of the problem-situation. This second level of critique is termed "ideology-critique".

To begin with, consideration will turn to some ways in which the term "ideology" has been used. Following this, a number of ideology-critiques will be perused.

Ideology-critique will be shown to rely upon theories which seek to explain the processes through which false consciousness is generated and maintained, thereby preventing humans from realising their genuine interests. It will be argued that such theories set out to "reconstruct" the historical processes leading to the current situation. A further suggestion is that ideology-critiques seek to provide universal explanations<sup>2</sup> for these processes. However, we will see that ideology-critiques cannot escape from being ideological themselves, and coexistent with other ideology-critiques, thereby failing to provide pure universal theories. Habermas's theory of "communicative action" (1970a,b, 1979, 1984, 1989, 1990) is one such universalistic ideology-critique which avoids the errors of claiming to be a final "meta-narrative" by providing a forum in which various ideological positions may engage in

dialogue.

The various ideology-critiques studied will be shown to contain methodological features that can be transferred to our model of critical appreciation. Ideology-critique represents one part of the entire critical appreciation process. The other parts are "scientific inquiry" and the methods of critical self-reflection (dealt with in chapter eight). An explanation of why all the parts should be brought together in a single, coherent nexus will be covered in chapter ten.

### 9.1 What is Ideology?

Nobody has yet come up with a single adequate definition of ideology....

(Eagleton, 1990:1)

Although Eagleton's view echoes, and is echoed by, many writers (e.g. Naess *et al*, 1956; Birnbaum, 1960; Larrain, 1979; Oliga, 1988, 1989; Laclau, 1990), it is nevertheless possible to chart the ways in which the term has been used. It is also possible to show why some renditions may be more

useful than others. However, it is not my intention here to undertake a detailed exposition of *all* the differing ways in which 'ideology' has been treated in the social sciences. Instead, I intend to follow Eagleton (1990) in much of my discussion of the development of theories of ideology, though I will depart somewhat from his final thesis about ideology in my subsequent discussion of ideology-critique and critical appreciation.

In conducting this exploration of the ways in which 'ideology' has been treated, it is worth keeping in mind the earlier discussion of paradigm incommensurability and imperialism: if we accept the possibility of more than one 'ideology' being coexistent, then we must acknowledge the possibility that these will have some kind of relationship with each other. This opens up the likelihood that there will be conflict between different ideologies, which needs to be addressed.

To begin with, let us consider how the term 'ideology' has been used and developed within the

social sciences.

### 9.1.1 Ideology and the Social Sciences

Eagleton (1990) identifies sixteen separate usages of the term 'ideology'<sup>3</sup>, some of which are mutually exclusive or contradict one another. He goes on to show how these can be reduced to six distinct usages, which are worth detailing at length<sup>4</sup>.

First, ideology might mean 'the general material process of production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life'. This rendition of 'ideology' is so general that it remains 'politically and epistemologically neutral', yet it captures much of what we intend when we speak broadly of 'culture'. This position views ideas as socially determined, yet does not think about the outcome if there are several (competing) socially determined ideas.

A second, alternative conception 'turns on ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which

symbolize the conditions and life-experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class'. Here, 'ideology' resembles what soft systems thinkers have come to term *Weltanschauung* (Checkland, 1981). Eagleton points out that whilst "world-views" might be concerned with matters like the existence of life after death, 'ideology' would extend beyond this to providing prescriptions about more trivial aspects of life which nevertheless impinge upon and influence an individual's world-view. Once again, this position does not anticipate the possibility of competing world-views which may be antagonistic to one another. As noted by Jackson (1982), the "soft systems" thinkers' notion of 'world-views' does not deal with conflict adequately.

The third conception of ideology does begin to address issues concerning conflict and relations between distinctive and differing ideologies: it 'attends to the *promotion* and *legitimation* of the interests of such social groups in the face of opposing interests'. Of course, some interests have little political significance, and would not

therefore be of concern to this perspective. As Eagleton notes, 'The interests in question must have some relevance to the sustaining or challenging of a whole political form of life'.

'Ideology' can also take a fourth meaning, in which the 'emphasis on the promotion and legitimation of sectoral interests [is retained], but [which] confine[s] it to the activities of a dominant social power'. Here there is an implication that the dominant social power uses 'ideology' to *unify* the dominated social classes in ways which serve to perpetuate the *status quo*, but which do not attempt to deceive about the legitimacy of that domination.

Fifth, 'ideology' can mean the 'ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion and dissimulation'. The problem with this definition is that it does not tell us what to call the discourse of a subordinate group which equally seeks legitimation of its beliefs or interests through 'distortion and dissimulation'.

Finally, the sixth meaning of ideology 'retains an emphasis on false or deceptive beliefs but regards such beliefs as arising not from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of society as a whole'.

For Eagleton, this sixth conception of ideology is the most sharply focussed since it identifies the need for changes in our material reality before a 'transformation of our lived relations to reality could be secured'. Although Eagleton (1990) argues that providing individuals with 'true descriptions in place of false ones' will not serve to substantially transform ideology, I intend to demonstrate that ideology cannot be radically transformed 'only by a material change in ... reality itself' (emphasis added).

By providing a description of the mechanisms by which our 'material reality' has been constituted, I intend to highlight the *inter-subjectivity*, or the interpretive nature, of some aspects of that material reality<sup>5</sup>. If we acknowledge that our reality is inter-subjectively and subjectively

understood, and if we accept that individuals may have deeply repressed facets of their interpreted material reality, then we can begin to understand why *both* critical self-reflection and ideology-critique are essential components of a critical appreciation.

This revelation will pave the way for a continuation of the theme of critical appreciation which draws on both empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic methodologies. However, before I move on to a more detailed discussion of the processes of ideology (or society) production, I intend to briefly consider work by systems thinkers in tackling ideological issues. This will serve to show how the difficulties of social theorists in dealing with ideology are, to some extent, replicated in the systems domain.

#### 9.1.2 Ideology and Systems Thinking

Oliga (1989, 1991) has undertaken an extensive review of different conceptions of ideology and related these to the systems domain. In this he

exposes nine distinctive ways in which the term ideology may be used which involve either a 'negative', 'positive', or 'contingent' perspective of the 'cognitive validity' of ideology. For Oliga

A negative view implies that ideology has, in some sense, a distortive character... [whilst a] positive view, on the other hand, implies that ideology is, in some important sense, functional to the very processes of all individual and social life. A contingent view treats the cognitive validity issue as of secondary importance. Ideology is seen predominantly as a common, social phenomena, which envelopes all classes and political parties. ... In and of themselves, ideologies are, in this view, seen as essentially neutral.

(Oliga, 1991:104)

Whilst Oliga highlights a failing of writers who only conceive of ideology as either negative or positive, his justification of the contingent view remains rather cursory. It is difficult, from his analysis, to identify the particular features of any contingent situation that would provide the orientation of an ideology. However, it should be clear from the above quotation that Oliga's summary of various conceptions of ideology has much in common with Eagleton's (1990).

Oliga's exposition provides some useful insights into how systems theorists have (or rather, have not) dealt with ideology in the development of systems methodologies. His main conclusion, that

any genuine attempt at liberating systems theory from ideological shackles must focus upon the historical materialist conception of ideology, which does not compromise the role of the subject of history or that of objective circumstances in which history is made.

(Oliga, 1991:123)

is one which I wish to take up, although I shall not be claiming to "liberate systems theory from ideology". Such a position treats itself as value-neutral, and this position has already been demonstrated as flawed in section two of the thesis. The position is itself ideological, and can therefore only claim to liberate systems theory from *repressive* ideologies (for what point could there be in liberation from *supportive* ideologies?), which suggests Oliga's own reliance on a negative cognitive valuation of ideology.

In that we can understand Oliga as taking a negative position *vis-a-vis* ideology, we can make

a more direct comparison between his work and the work of Eagleton. Oliga follows Eagleton's line in assuming that ideologies are 'false or deceptive beliefs' of groups of individuals which have to be disclosed for what they are. Furthermore, Oliga's reliance on the 'historical materialist' view of ideology is limited in the same way that Eagleton's view is: neither approach recognises the need to alter individual preconceptions *together with* changes to the inter-subjective understandings and objective features of material conditions in order that a deep transformation of ideology may occur<sup>6</sup>.

Now let us move on to discuss an alternative view of ideology within systems thinking. This is one that sees the mechanisms of ideology as "traps". The metaphor of traps has been a popular means for explaining the false consciousness or misapprehensions that individuals have about their situation (e.g. Vickers, 1970; Checkland, 1981; Davies, 1990). As Davies (1990) indicates, the "traps" in which we are "caught" are socially created. In order to achieve emancipation from

those traps, we need to think about the processes through which they have been constructed.

We have developed different traps which are our social constructions, differentiated by our cultural symbolic creations. *We have created them; they are not inevitable products of our evolutionary positions.* If we are to understand how we are trapped by them, then we need to investigate that process by which we create and maintain them rather than just treat them as products of our social life. The trap is not inevitable; to think that it is leads to the ultimate trap. Without this belief critical thinking would be redundant.

(Davies, 1990:385, emphasis added)

Here, Davies can be understood as arguing that ideologies are both subjectively and inter-subjectively created: that there are no objective facets contributing to the reproduction and maintenance of ideologies. Such a position is indicative of Davies's hermeneutic leanings.

If we wish to follow in the line of critical appreciation as laid out in chapter six, we will need to go beyond Davies's conceptualisation in order to critically investigate the creation of "traps", of "false consciousness". This return to a critical appreciation would also be in keeping with Oliga's exhortation to resist compromising

the 'subject of history' or the 'objective circumstances under which history is made'. Whilst not entirely agreeing with Oliga's boundaries between what might be termed the objective and subjective domains, I nevertheless endorse the necessity of both empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic inquiry into ideology.

In detailing the various ways in which systems thinkers have dealt with ideology Oliga (1989) goes to great lengths to show that, although problems of illegitimate or repressive ideologies are not addressed, the vast majority of systems interventions have *supported* one form of ideology or another. Drawing on critiques by figures like Checkland (1972), Ulrich (1981), Morgan (1982), and Jackson (1985a), Oliga is able to demonstrate that two dominant ideologies occur: 'the ideology of value-consensus and harmony of interest, and the ideology of power as a neutral or positive force' (Oliga, 1989:50). According to Oliga, the ideology of consensus can serve to suppress marginal, or subordinate, ideologies which may have a greater claim for legitimacy. This is a

point I shall be returning to in section four.

Oliga shows that neither the soft nor the hard systems approaches can escape from the first form of ideology (of value-consensus), and soft systems methodologies are particularly susceptible to the second ideology, viewing power as a neutral or positive force. In providing an exegesis of ideology in the systems domain, Oliga's hope is to begin the process of critique whereby the dominant ideologies can be challenged and, hopefully, overthrown. My own thesis can be viewed as something of a continuation or a further elaboration of this process.

Having provided a brief résumé of the various ways that social and systems theorists have used 'ideology', I want to explore some explanations offered for the processes by which ideologies are created and sustained. Such accounts serve as ideology-critiques in that they seek to expose the mechanisms within the material structure of society which enable false or deceptive beliefs to be produced and maintained (Eagleton's sixth form

of ideology). Here I will be focussing on three separate accounts, those of Marx (1859, 1961), Habermas (1970a,b, 1979, 1984, 1989, 1990), and Giddens (1990b, 1991). In order to preserve the notion of continuity between Marx and Habermas, I will also provide a short account of Habermas's critique of Marx, which will lead naturally into a discussion of Habermas's own ideology-critique.

## 9.2 Examples of Ideology-Critique

In describing various ideology-critiques, it is fitting that we should begin with the critique of ideology undertaken by Karl Marx, whose work has been drawn upon by many subsequent critics of ideology. I intend to provide only a cursory glimpse at Marxism, which has been dealt with extensively elsewhere<sup>7</sup>.

### 9.2.1 Marx's Ideology-Critique

For Marx, society evolves both because of humankind's drive to control nature (or have

material exchanges with it) and because of the relations that humans have with the means of material exchange. Thus, 'The mode of production determines the social, political, and intellectual life processes in general' (Marx, 1859). According to Marx, the efforts of humankind through labour play a dominant role in transforming both nature and society. He speaks of labour as being a

necessary condition, independent of all forms of society, for the existence of the human race; it is an eternal nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchanges between man and Nature, and therefore no life.

(Marx, 1961, I:42-3)

Marx argues that it is labour alone that can generate the 'surplus value' required to fuel the economic development of society. Without this surplus value, created by the workforce and taken from them by capitalists, the free markets of capitalism would not be able to thrive and continue. The society of Marx's time was one in which there were wide class divisions between workers and capitalists which supported the possibility for class conflict which Marx saw as providing the impetus for a revolution. It was because labour had been prevented from receiving

the benefits arising from their production of surplus value that workers had become alienated. The capitalists (according to Marx) were using their (knowledge- and wealth-)power to create a false consciousness in which it was stressed that the workings of the "free market" were consistent with universal laws governing man and nature.

Marx's theories of ideology are not without their critics, and preeminent amongst these is the German philosopher and critical social theorist, Jürgen Habermas. The concern with ideology, and more specifically with the sociology of knowledge, whilst not neglected by other writers in the intervening years, was revitalised by Habermas's work on *knowledge-constitutive interests* (1972). This has been shown, in chapter six, to provide a theory of the cognitive interests of humanity. As such, it attempts to explain the evolution and power of ideas within a modern society, and thereby deals with the reproduction of ideologies. More recently, Habermas has defined ideology as "systematically distorted communication" (1970a), a new formulation to which we shall return later.

First, let us consider how Habermas's work can be understood as a critique of Marx, and how it has built upon and transcended some of the difficulties with Marx's ideology-critique.

### 9.2.2 Habermas's Critique of Marx

Habermas (1972) argues that Marx fails to achieve a *critical* unification of the forces and relations of production due to the primacy he attributes to the role of labour in producing society. Habermas criticises Marx for retaining a materialist (objectivist) conception of the means for transforming society, whilst drawing on (what Habermas terms) *fundamentally subjectivist* concepts (like domination and ideology) in his empirical writings.

Of course, Marx does attach to his 'critique' of contemporary political economy a double-edged meaning: he arrives at the theory of the 'laws of motion' of capitalism by way of dealing with other economic theories, and he thereby at the same time *unmasks the ideological content* of bourgeois economics. ... this critique of ideology remains without practical consequence unless it is transposed through agitation and enlightenment into the political consciousness of the masses, who, in perceiving their own interests,

resolve to take up the struggle. Ideology critique by itself can at most shake the legitimacy of the orders against which such a transformative practice would have to be directed. The critique of false consciousness is not identical with the overthrow of institutions that are supported by this consciousness - even if Marx does bring together these two moments in his concept of 'critical-practical activity'.

(Habermas, 1982:230, emphasis in the original)

Here, Habermas is making plain that ideology-critique alone cannot transform society without being first 'transposed' into the 'political consciousness of the masses'. Remembering Freud's comments about the resistances that individuals may put up against alternative interpretations (discussed in the previous chapter), it should be apparent that achieving such a 'transposition' is unlikely to be an easy task. Furthermore, Habermas goes on to show that the critique of false consciousness is not enough to bring down institutions that have an illegitimate basis.

If neither ideology critique nor the critique of false consciousness are adequate tools for

transforming society, then the question must be raised as to what might be? Habermas can be understood to be indicating that *both* ideology-critique *and* critical self-reflection are required. We can also understand Habermas as indicating that methodologies of enlightenment will not be capable of producing liberation or emancipation *in and of* themselves, that some mechanisms of empowerment will also be required.

### 9.2.3 Habermas's Ideology-Critique

We have already considered a part of Habermas's wide-ranging work in chapter six with our analysis of his theory of *knowledge-constitutive interests*. We will now turn to some of his more recent work in which he has provided critiques of science and technology as ideology (Habermas, 1974), and of the systems of government in modern Western capitalist states (1976). Both these critiques include elements of his theory of communicative action, which has elaborated, revised and expanded the ideas contained in *Knowledge and Human Interests*. It is his theory of communicative

action (1970a,b, 1979, 1984, 1989, 1990) which we will consider in our discussion of Habermas's work as ideology- critique. I will not be undertaking a detailed exposition of Habermas's entire intellectual output<sup>8</sup>, but will be providing the reader with sufficient detail to give an understanding of the form of his ideology-critique.

Habermas's theory of communicative action represents a shift from a 'production' paradigm to a communications paradigm, though remaining within the mould of "Marxism" more generally. Recently, Habermas has justified the move away from this paradigm through recourse to "historical truths":

What today separates us from Marx are evident historical truths, for example that in the developed capitalist societies there is no identifiable class, no clearly circumscribed social group which could be singled out as the representative of a general interest that has been violated.

(Habermas, 1982:221)

It is because there is 'no identifiable class' which represents a general interest - because society lacks any homogeneity, because society cannot be treated as though it has any totalising

aspects - that Habermas has to make recourse to the single feature that distinguishes human society from all others: the ability of humans to utilise rational communication.

In *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (1979), Habermas takes his earlier critique of Freud's psychoanalysis and transforms it by utilising the notion of "resistance" to explain the process whereby all communication is "systematically distorted". The process through which Habermas views communication as being distorted involves power, domination and the structuring of society through 'tradition'. One such tradition is that of 'science and technology', which, through our *technical* cognitive interest, can be used to "control" nature. Habermas argues that science and technology have a prominent role in creating and maintaining modern societies.

We saw in chapter six that there is a second cognitive interest, the *practical* interest, which represents man's interest in communication, or in

interactions with other humans. It is this second interest which provides the theme for much of Habermas's latest theorising. Habermas's ideology-critique here focuses on the ways in which a particular ideal is thwarted: the "ideal speech situation".

Before describing the ideal speech situation it is necessary to elaborate a second theme of Habermas's communication theory which stresses that, in each act of communication, there are certain (implicit) 'validity claims'. According to Habermas, whenever an individual engages in communicating with another individual (whether written, spoken or non-verbal) the communicator makes claims that what he or she says is:

- (1) *intelligible*, or meaningful;
- (2) *true*, in that the factual assertions contained within whatever is said can be substantiated;
- (3) *justifiable* by reference to norms and conventions; and
- (4) *sincere*, i.e. no deception is intended, there are no hidden agendas.

Giddens (1990a) provides an insightful example of the ways in which each of these 'validity claims' can be understood, which it is worth considering in its totality:

Suppose, in answer to an enquiry from a traveller, a ticket clerk at the railway station says 'That'll be £10 for a cheap day return'. The passenger might not initially know what a 'cheap day return' is, and if so may appear puzzled. In then explaining what the phrase 'cheap day return' means, the clerk is justifying the first claim - that what he or she said was intelligible and meaningful, even though the traveller was first of all perplexed by it. It is implicit in what the clerk says that the factual content of the statement is true - that it actually does cost £10 for the ticket (the second validity-claim). The passenger is also likely to take it for granted that the clerk has the right to make such an authoritative pronouncement about the railway fare (the third validity-claim); and that the clerk sincerely believes what he or she says (the fourth validity-claim). Note, however, that there may be circumstances in which any or all of these last three validity-claims may be contested by the passenger - in which case the clerk would be expected to justify or back up the statement that was made.

(Giddens, 1990a:128-129)

Now, although the last three validity-claims can be *contested*, only the second and third (truth and justification) can be disputed and defended *in discourse*. According to Habermas, the claim to

sincerity can only be borne out through time and experience<sup>9</sup>. Since the claims to truth and justification are open to debate, they must also form the basis for what Habermas terms a "rational consensus" - that is, a consensus derived from rational argumentation in which each participant is able to weigh-up and assess the evidence in front of him or herself.

The "ideal speech situation" arises when there are no barriers preventing participants from entering into such a debate; each participant is capable and willing to assess evidence or arguments put forward by other participants; the evidence available is all possible evidence; and only rational argumentation is brought into play. Hence, such a situation entails the removal of illegitimate forces which are acting to subjugate or repress individuals or knowledges (evidence). It also enables the 'force of the better argument' to prevail, rather than the force of the most powerful individual or group (whatever basis their power has).

Compared to the current reality of modern capitalistic societies, Habermas's theories of the "ideal speech situation" and "rational consensus" appear to be quite fantastic - clearly these are ideals, and ideals which, on the face of it, seem completely unattainable. However, in positing these ideals, Habermas has provided a 'counterfactual' position against which the pitfalls of ideologies which allow "systematically distorted communications" to prevail can be analysed and critiqued. As such, it represents a powerful ideology-critique of non-cooperative communicative activity, which one does not need to look far to find instances of in contemporary life.

We will return to Habermas's validity-claims in chapter thirteen, where it will be suggested that they can be utilised in a procedure guiding both ideology-critique and critical self-reflection. Before we move on to establish some more methodological guidelines, let us consider one last example of an ideology-critique.

#### 9.2.4 Giddens's Ideology-Critique

A third form of ideology-critique which, in the mould of Habermas, focuses on information or communication processes, is that offered by Anthony Giddens (1990b, 1991). Let me begin by briefly summarising Giddens's most recent work, which I will then elaborate upon.

Giddens (1991) conceives of contemporary society as being "reproduced" by "media systems". Current global abstract (or media) systems serve as a wedge between the individual and "authentic experiences"<sup>10</sup>. Institutions act to provide a form of 'ontological security' which enmeshes the individual, thus preventing him or her from becoming more self-aware through any 'media-guided' awareness programmes.

Let me give some more detail to the argument. Giddens (1990b, 1991) shows us that the growth of certain institutions within society (hospitals, asylums, prisons, nature reserves, factories, etc.) has served to make individual existence more

secure, but at the cost of the repression of 'a cluster of basic moral and existential components of human life' (Giddens, 1991:167, emphasis in the original). This is described by Giddens as the 'sequestration of experience' by those institutions.

Put simply, Giddens believes that, in modern industrialised societies, there is a tendency to believe that various institutions provide us with a greater degree of individual freedom than was experienced in previous eras. For Giddens, it is the

Trust in abstract systems [which] is the condition of time-space distancing and of the large areas of security in day-to-day life which modern institutions offer as compared to the traditional world.

(Giddens, 1990b:113)

Giddens's argument suggests that these institutions, through various mediated systems, have repressed and altered or perverted our genuine human interests. We have lost the ability to directly experience situations, life traumas and successes in an authentic manner since modern

institutions provide us with a highly sanitised and protected existence. Although there are benefits for individuals, Giddens sees the costs as being too great *in the long run*. Let's see what this means through some further elaboration.

In Western capitalist societies, when an individual wishes to "experience" nature, he or she can visit a Nature Reserve, a National Trust resort, or go to "the country" (usually by car, to designated areas that are segregated from areas of "wilderness" and habitation). If an individual chooses "parenthood" as part of his or her "lifestyle", there are numerous "experts" who can direct and assist in ensuring that the experience is the best possible. If an individual, having been married for a number of years, decides that he or she wishes for a spell of being "independent" and single, there are agencies and legal experts who can ensure that the separation process is eased.

Giddens sets out a variety of ways in which contemporary institutions have arisen with the aim

of "protecting" individuals. The very fact of the existence of such institutions means that individual decision-making (risk-taking) has become a process of off-setting possibilities, although Giddens argues that this "weighing-up" process very often takes place "behind the backs" of individuals - that is, without the rational, democratic involvement of the individual.

It is not difficult to see why such institutions nevertheless may be viewed as intrinsically "good" - they help to minimise suffering and pain for individuals. However, we must not neglect to note that these institutions help to shape the way that society *is* and the way that individuals are. At the risk of reducing an intricate argument, it is possible to consider a couple of examples to see what the individual and societal outcomes might be as a result of the creation of various institutions which purportedly "help" or protect us. In laying out these examples, I do not intend to imply *direct* causal relationships between the various actions, but rather the systemic, nebulous connectivity that Giddens describes.

For our first example, we can consider our relationship to Nature. It can be argued that we no longer have to be concerned about our natural environment because the Department of the Environment (or some other organisation) is looking after it on our behalf. Individually this means that we need not think about how our continuing use of finite global resources may be damaging the natural environment<sup>11</sup>. At the societal level it means that governments can "put off" decision making with regard to regulating against bad environmental practices, since there is little individual pressure or concern about this issue.

A second area of concern discussed by Giddens is our relationship with the Self: one specific issue he focuses on is our concern for our individual health. Here, it appears that we do not need to take care of our health as the National Health Service will do that for us. So I can quite happily eat half a pound of chocolates, drink seven pints of beer, and smoke forty cigarettes a day despite being aware of the health risks

connected with these activities. At the level of the social totality, healthcare is oriented towards remedying health problems rather than preventing them, with particular groups having the power to influence regulations. Giddens cites the case of the dental professionals whose annual conference is funded by the British Sugar Council - dental professionals advise government with regard to appropriate levies on sweets and other sugar-based products which can cause damage to teeth.

This last example makes clear the point: because there are agencies or institutions at work *behind the backs* of individuals, it is nigh on impossible for any individual to be perfectly appraised of his or her situation. It is not my intention here to suggest that such actions by agencies and institutions are always deliberately deceptive or conspiratorial: in fact, it is the systemic nature of their activities which means that they are opaque to most individuals, that they occur *behind the backs* of individuals. You and I are unaware of the machinations by which the dental

professionals, governmental officials, decision-makers, policy-setters and other institutional members arrive at the decisions which impact upon our individual lives. Yet, we do have access to knowledge created by those self same institutions and which has passed into the common senses of individuals within the society. Here is the paradox: we are aware of the dangers of certain activities, but because these activities are not prohibited, we continue to pursue them in the (perhaps) mistaken view that they cannot be so harmful.

The work of creating or constituting a "safe" social environment has therefore involved the development of institutions which can help us in "bracketing out" both social problems and problematic societal elements - the sick, the insane, the criminal, the dying, the elderly, the disabled<sup>12</sup> - whilst simultaneously creating negative, nebulous effects which individuals cannot be aware of without engaging in some form of critical appreciation.

Midgley (1992c) also deals with the processes whereby certain aspects of life become either "sacred" or "profane". Here he discusses the rituals that maintain this "bracketing out" process in which we differentiate sacred entities or phenomena from those which thus become profane. We can "censor" aspects of life by removing them from our immediate contact or by making them someone else's responsibility. In today's global information society, the media also have a major role to play in acting as censors, determining how we view the world.

The outcome of the rise of modern societies is, then, the return of situations in which humans are dominated by illegitimate forces, for example forces which legitimate a power structure that marginalises and neutralises the interests of certain groups. This is the effect that Giddens terms 'a return of the repressed' (Giddens, 1991:167). The "sting in the tail" is that, by and large, we choose to live our lives within such societies as we are unable (through repression and subjugation) to conceive of any alternatives -

what we have now provides us with a deep ontological security, from which it is difficult to break free.

For Giddens this is not the end of the alienating processes of modern living: he goes on to show that even efforts by individuals to achieve some form of "authentic" living will be thwarted. This occurs because of the tendency for these efforts to be ego-enhancing rather than ego-subjugating<sup>13</sup>. Since individuals are encouraged to draw on their own resources, they become further distanced from their community and thus more at the behest of the faceless organisations which dominate, repress and pervert their genuine interests.

Let me summarise Giddens's argument: modern institutions 'take care' of many facets of our lives. In doing so, they act to sequestrate our genuine experiences thereby creating a *return of the repressed* - not liberation, not emancipation, not empowerment, as we might imagine. Efforts by individuals to re-connect with an "authentic reality" become little more than *status quo*

enhancing or entrenching activities due to the systemic ways in which they feed into and reinforce societal norms and values.

The examples of the means for dominating ourselves and others (in truly illegitimate ways) are extensive. Yet we "moderns" allow these situations to arise: in fact, we demand some of them, without appreciating that they represent not a solution to the problem but a further deepening of it.

Each of the above examples of ideology-critique (Marx, Habermas, Giddens) has features which distinguish it from the others, yet each also shares commonalities with them. We will next consider these similarities and differences before teasing out some methodological guidelines for ideology-critique.

### 9.3 Common Themes of Ideology-Critiques

In order to begin the process of identifying the methods of ideology-critique more generally, we

can consider the contexts of emergence and application of each of the three specific ideology-critiques covered above. In doing this, I will be following Habermas (1974), who explained that

Historical materialism aims at achieving an explanation of social evolution which is so comprehensive that it encompasses the theory's own context of origin and application. ... With this reflection on the context of its origin and this anticipation of the context of its application, the theory understands itself as a necessary catalytic moment in the very complex of social life that it analyzes; and it analyzes this complex as an integral network of coercion, from the viewpoint of its possible transformation.

(Habermas, 1974:2-3)

We will take each critic in the order in which we dealt with them in the preceding section.

### 9.3.1 Contexts of Emergence and Application

The context of emergence (the past) of Marx's ideology-critique was one in which the nascent promise of betterment for all, the *Wealth of Nations* (Smith, 1848), which was expected to arise from the operations of the liberal market economy,

had been stillborn. Marx had witnessed continuing poverty, starvation, disease, slavery, child labour and deprivation at first hand on the streets of wealthy cities. The organisation of productive forces ought to have removed the inequities which he had witnessed, yet the transformation of society promised by Adam Smith had not materialised.

So, the context of application for Marx was one in which some formal explanation was required for the apparent failure of the "perfect" system of the free market economy. It was a context which many writers now argue represented the end of an era in which it was possible to conceive of a *social totality*. Furthermore, Marx viewed that social totality as riven by false ideologies in the form of superstitions, religious dogma, and institutional prejudices which meant that an "objective" form of emancipation was required, a form of revolutionary emancipation which would alter the structure of society. This challenged the earlier, Hegelian view that Enlightenment could only be achieved through an *individual*

process of reflection (Hegel, 1977).

For Marx, critique had to be directed at the ideological forms which generate false consciousness at the level of the social totality through the *anticipation* of a social form which would be free of those illegitimate forces. The theory of society which Marx developed could not, however, break free of a different ideology which prevailed at that time: the ideology of positivistic science. As we saw in Habermas's critique, Marx resorted to objectivist explanations and "universal laws" whilst seeking to explain essentially subjectivist phenomena.

Let us move on to our second ideology-critic. Habermas, whose work was first published in the early 1960s, was a "child of his time", as Marx had been before him. The 1960s was a period in which the renewed positivist hold on science (and especially the social sciences) was being challenged on several fronts by the re-development of hermeneutic approaches. At this time, society was proving to be increasingly dominated by

science and technology, which provided *technical* solutions to problems of an essentially *practical* nature (i.e. to do with moral and communicative issues). This was borne out by the recognition that the political sphere was becoming permeated by a scientific rationality. A second feature of the context in which Habermas's ideology-critique emerged was the 'structural transformation of the public sphere' (Habermas, 1976, first published in 1962) where the 'public sphere' is that domain of social life in which matters of general interest can be settled through debate and discussion. The forum for such debates include coffee-houses, newspapers, and other public meeting places like clubs.

Holub (1991) traces Habermas's work over three and a half decades and places it in the (political) context of the German Federal Republic during that time. The Federal Republic was undergoing many changes, emerging from the initial post-war period of renewal and rebuilding. Nor was it only the infra-structure which was undergoing this symbolic renewal, since there were innumerable social

reforms under way in much of the Western world. Society could no longer be treated as a *totality* since developments in different spheres had served to differentiate those spheres from one another, whilst creating linkages that could not easily be severed.

With political and economic reforms and increasing governmental intervention into economic affairs, the realm of the public sphere was being impinged upon and restrained. With these changes, the possibility of democratic and rational decision-making was severely reduced, whilst the technical decision-making scope of political institutions was enhanced and expanded.

Clearly, the context of emergence of Habermas's ideology-critique was one which was witnessing the rise of science and technology to a dominant position in many different spheres of society. His critique therefore had to be applied to science and technology, whilst anticipating a form of society that could transcend the (false) ideology of "modernity". From the initial critiques of

science, Habermas has moved to critiques of the political and legal spheres, building his theory of an *anticipated* society in which rational discourse would provide the means to challenge the purely technical decision-making of the time. It is possible to see the changing focus of Habermas's work as a reflection of the changing nature of society over the three decades since his first publications.

Similarly, we can witness the change in focus of the work of Anthony Giddens as reporting on the altering situation of British society. His critique of the individualistic ideology of Conservative Britain (detailed above) is to be distinguished from his earlier work which took as its focus *society at large* (e.g. 1979, 1981, 1984, 1985). With *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991), Giddens introduced human nature, the psyche, individual autonomy and personality into his critique of a largely institutionalised society. The context in which Giddens's work can be seen as emerging is, then, one in which the ideology of the Self, and of creating the Self, has come to

play a dominant role. This ideological position is neatly summed up in the words of ex-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher: 'There is no such thing as society'.

Giddens's work appeared at the end of a decade in which the values of 'community' had been increasingly undermined and eroded by rhetoric which called on each individual to take his or her future into his or her own hands and to reap the benefits of the "free market economy". Its context of application is one in which individuals no longer appear to feel part of a larger system; in which individuals have moved considerably away from the socialistic views which had held sway in preceding decades. It is a context which recognises the increasing role of "self-actualisation" in capitalism.

Like Habermas, Giddens considers that science and technology, and especially the technological development of media systems (televisions, newspapers, popular literature), have helped to create a passive society of individuals who are

not "ready" to become politically engaged and are therefore becoming increasingly subjugated by illegitimate forces. One of these subjugating forces is the drive to improve individual "autonomy" and responsibility, which has unforeseen consequences. Giddens offers a resolution to these problems through the introduction of what he terms "life politics" - a system for placing moral questions back on the political agenda. Life politics is to be distinguished from "emancipatory politics" in that it is the anticipated form of politics which should operate in a society of emancipated (autonomous) individuals. For Giddens,

While emancipatory politics is a politics of life chances, life politics is a politics of lifestyle... life politics concerns political issues which flow from processes of self-actualisation in post-traditional contexts, where globalising influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and conversely where processes of self-realisation influence global strategies.

(Giddens, 1991:214)

According to Giddens, the autonomous individual should be able to participate in the life politics

of his or her society. The format this should take is similar to that advocated by Habermas in that Giddens can be understood to be *anticipating* a future state in which individuals would engage in democratic decision-making guided by rational debate.

Having thrown some light on the contexts of emergence and application for each of our three ideology critics, we are now in a better position to draw out their common themes and their differences.

### 9.3.2 Similarities and Differences

For each of the three authors discussed, there is a distinctive *historical* orientation to their work. However, they transcend the limitations of a purely descriptive historicism by elaborating an *anticipated* social form which would transform the ideology of the society which they critique. The anticipated future state is a theoretical society which has been "reconstructed" through the use of the historical critique. Marx's account is limited

to the "productive" sphere, whilst both Habermas and Giddens consider the spheres of communications and politics. Marx and Habermas focus on critiques of society, whilst Giddens turns from a similar critique to a critique of the Self, as (partially) created by and recreating society.

Each of the critics is concerned to provide an analysis and critique of society and social change through *universal* forces, although Giddens adds to this the role of the individual. All three critics have a commitment to emancipation, though each sees this arising through different means: for Marx, it is through revolutionary action by the proletariat; Giddens focuses on both "life politics" and "emancipatory politics"; whilst Habermas posits movement towards the "ideal speech situation" in which "rational discourse" will lead to enlightenment and emancipation.

This brings us to another important distinction: Marx's critique contains an identification of the target-group for whom the ideology-critique has been developed (the *proletariat*) whilst, as Heller

(1982) observes, Habermas *universalises* the addressee of his critical theory by encompassing human reason *per se*. This can cause difficulties since a commitment to Habermas's form of "rational argumentation" is not necessarily synonymous with the individual's wholehearted commitment to "emancipation", which may, through the rational discourse, mean loses (or subjugation) for that individual. Let me provide an example to demonstrate what Heller means. A senior executive of an organisation may accept the rationale underlying the need for fully participatory communicative action aimed at rational decision-making, but if the outcome is that his or her salary is to be cut to enable workers to share more equitably in the organisation's profits, then his or her "commitment" may be shaken.

These are only a few of the similarities and differences that it is possible to identify in a limited exposition of the work of the three wide-ranging authors whose ideology-critiques we considered earlier in this chapter. They are intended to provide a backcloth against which we

can paint a richer picture of the generalisable methodological features of ideology-critique.

In considering these generalisable features, it is worth recalling that they form part of a tight nexus in which certain aspects of the features impinge on one another and push through into the domain of the other. As such, the distinctions I draw between the different features are my own impositions and are not intended to be taken as a reduction of the complex inter-relations.

#### 9.4 Methodological Features of Ideology-Critique

As we have seen, ideology-critique requires an historical setting; we need to understand the specific events that have helped to shape the particular (mis)understandings (ideology, false consciousness) that actors in a problem situation hold. This is similar to the process in which a psychoanalyst comes to understand his or her client's particular case history through the building up of data (empirical-analytic

observations) and of specific (historical-hermeneutic) interpretations that can be taken ('oh, you see his action to mean so-and-so'). Here we need to bear in mind that representations will be distorted:

The first condition of the construction of the historical world is thus the regeneration of mankind's confused and in many ways corrupted memories of itself through critique correlated with interpretation.

(Habermas, 1972:216, Note 5)

Our first methodological feature is the *need for both empirical-analytic data and historical-hermeneutic explanations of the pre-history out of which the current situation has emerged.*

Ideology-critique concerns the answering of questions which ask *why* a particular relation exists, as well as explaining or describing *what* the relation is. It concerns *how* a particular distortion came to have the significance it does. We have seen how each of the ideology-critiques considered above (those of Marx, Habermas, and Giddens) set out to explain both *how* society has

evolved to its current state, and *why* relations are maintained as they are. Clearly, the details of how and why society is as it is presupposes an explanation of *what* the society is like. It also presupposes a degree of liberation from any false consciousness which might be conditioning how society is structured and maintained<sup>14</sup>.

Our second methodological feature, then, is the need to develop some *theoretical* explanation for the how, what and why of the society (or situation) being critiqued. Here, the critic would need to *surmise the latent content of the social reality being subjected to critique by using his or her analytic and interpretative skills and by drawing on and transcending the limitations of previous theoretical explanations.*

In elaborating the third methodological feature it is possible to recognise a continuation of the second feature described above. This illustrates the amorphous nature of the features.

As we have just seen, the second methodological

feature involves a theoretical exploration of the function performed by aspects of the social reality being critiqued. This process of exploring the function of phenomena in creating and maintaining a particular belief-system has another significance, which we will now consider. Going down a particular track, according to Eagleton, will ultimately lead to the dissolution of the false contents of the ideology or belief system:

To travel indefinitely along any one track of ideological meaning is not to encounter an ultimate threshold of articulation but to describe an arc which returns one inexorably to one's starting point. In discovering its demarcations, ideology discovers its self-dissolution; it cannot survive the 'culture shock' consequent on its stumbling into alien territory adjacent to itself.

(Eagleton, 1978:96)

Here Eagleton appears to be suggesting that ideology-critique commences as a form of "immanent" critique, which is consistent with our second methodological feature. However, Eagleton goes further in suggesting that, if pursued far enough, it becomes an "antagonistic" critique of the original ideology. This suggests a distinctive form of ideology-critique which occurs through the

juxtapositioning of ideologies. According to Eagleton,

Its [ideology's] contradictions may be forced from it by its historically determined encounter with another ideology, or ideological sub-ensemble ....

(Eagleton, 1978:96)

Implicit in this is the observation that each ideology-critique emerges from a given context, which highlights the critic's *already situated nature*. In section 1 of the thesis, I presented an argument in which it was shown that any critic of an alien paradigm (and now I add 'ideology') must recognise his or her *already situated nature*. The implication of this is that any ideology-critique must be understood as being undertaken from an alternative ideological position, which may well be antagonistic. Both Habermas (1974) and Eagleton (1978) talk of the process whereby a particular ideology (or tradition) will be "confronted" by another ideology. The heterogeneity of modern society suggests that this process will not involve only two distinctive ideologies, but rather a *plurality* of ideologies. Our third

methodological feature relates, then, to the *inherently pluralistic nature of the ideological domain which thus demands critical self-reflection by the critic to identify his or her own presuppositions* on an on-going basis.

We shall return in chapter twelve to the arguments supporting the recognition of pluralism as the *modus operandii* of critical thinking.

So, ideology-critique is undertaken by juxtaposing two antagonistic ideologies: by bringing them face to face with each other. Here, Habermas's suggestion that ideology-critique must be guided by theoretical assumptions is especially important:

To be sure, the ideology-critical confrontation with the tradition could aim at 'the truth content of philosophical concepts and problems' and achieve an *appropriation of its systematic content* only because critique was guided by *theoretical assumptions*.

(Habermas, 1982:231, original emphasis)

In other words, we need the "reflexive inquiry" parts of our critical appreciation in order to be

practical or to achieve practical consequences. Without the "reflexive inquiry" aspects it would not be possible to reconstruct a new version of history based on the latent content of the present situation. This adds further support to the need for the second and third methodological features outlined above.

It is possible to distinguish a fourth feature of ideology-critiques, to which we will now turn. It seems apparent from the ideology-critiques considered above (those of Marx, Habermas and Giddens) that there is both a correct *moment* and a correct *context* for the emergence of the ideology-critique. An ideology-critique which does not emerge in the appropriate context will fail to achieve its purpose: the emancipation of subjugated people or knowledges from an illegitimate ideology. This represents the fourth methodological feature of ideology-critique - *the need to reflect upon the contextual appropriateness of the ideology-critique.*

A note of caution has to be sounded: as Masson

(1990) warns us, the psychoanalytic process can serve to replace one belief system with another, equally illegitimate, belief system. Hence we require a means for judging whether our new ideology, presupposed and inherent within our ideology-critique, is legitimate. This legitimacy may be locally determined, but has to be related back to a wider community if it is to avoid situations such as the rise of groups like the National Front.

Without pre-empting the argument which will be given in chapter twelve, it is necessary to expand a little on what this means. The validity-claims implicit within an ideology *should* be referred to any group which may be affected by that ideology, whether adversely or not. Here, "referring back" may take the form of entering into a dialogue with the reference group<sup>15</sup>, or it may be a purely conceptual exercise. Habermas posits a "counterfactual" society which seems to suggest the role of the critic as a "judge" since this is a theoretical concept. In practical terms, it is most likely that the "referring back" will occur

as an outcome of the application of the ideology-critique. In other words, by presenting a critique of a particular ideology one can anticipate that the various advocates of alternative ideologies will respond by critically reporting on the new ideological position. In practice, the work of writers like Habermas and Giddens has greatly benefited from the critiques provided to them.

This gives us a fifth methodological feature of ideology-critique: *the referencing back to a wider community of any locally determined theory of illegitimate ideological repression.*

A sixth feature derives from the necessity of *identifying a target-group to whom the ideology-critique is addressed.* In identifying this group, the critic must stipulate not only who they are, but also what their role is to be in altering the current social reality and in bringing about the anticipated future social form:

The theory specifies the conditions under which a self-reflection of the history of the species has become objectively possible. At the same time it names those to whom the theory is addressed, who can with its help gain

*enlightenment about themselves and their emancipatory role in the process of history."*

(Habermas, 1974:2-3, emphasis added)

Here, the critic of ideology must not neglect to note that the target-group is embedded within a wider social domain, and that the systemic nature of social relations require that this broader domain be considered in addition. As Fay argues,

Critical social science assumes that humans are active creatures, that is, creatures who broadly create themselves on the basis of their own self-interpretations.

(Fay, 1987:47)

In stipulating the need to identify a target-group I am stressing the fact that an inversion of a particular illegitimate ideology cannot occur without the involvement of human actors: this is the role of human agency in creating and maintaining a society. To provide an example, feminist critique of a patriarchal society would be a "cause without a rebel" if it had not identified the target group of its critique - those men and women who remain "mystified" (Dews,

1987) about the repressive and illegitimate nature of their lived reality. Unless these people take action as a consequence of being enlightened by the critique, the *status quo* will continue to persist. Clearly, identifying a target-group is an important methodological feature of an ideology-critique.

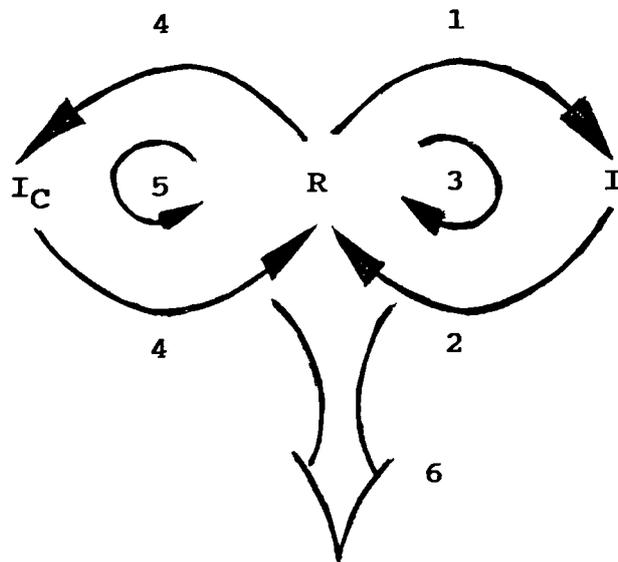
At the risk of bringing the discussion of methodological features to a premature close, we will now turn to the task of situating these methodological features within the model of critical appreciation by "translating" them into methodological guidelines.

### 9.5 Ideology-Critique and Critical Appreciation

We have seen how a number of different ideology-critiques have proceeded by elaborating a theory which explains how the current situation came to be as it is. In order to elaborate their theories the critics had to reflect upon their own context of emergence, to identify features of their

specific situations. It was also argued that this *historical reconstruction* could not be separated from the context in which the theory was to be applied. The following methodological guidelines take into account the tight nexus in which the context of emergence and the context of application create and maintain mutual influences upon one another. The guidelines are intended to recreate the methodological features of ideology-critique identified above.

Following the protocol established in chapter eight in the discussion of dream-analysis as an analogous method for critical self-reflection, it is my intention here to distinguish between activities which may be described as "scientific inquiry" and those that may be described as "reflexive inquiry". In the following exposition, I am replacing earlier references to "paradigms" and "problem-situations" with references to "ideology". In the annotated diagram overleaf, "I" stands for the ideology of the target-group, whilst "I<sub>C</sub>" indicates the ideological position of the critic (as researcher - "R").



*Figure 9.1 Ideology-Critique as Critical Appreciation*

The numbers in the diagram correspond with the following activities:

- (1) *third-party observations* - collecting empirical data about the problem-situation, especially about the target-group's openness and readiness for an ideology-critique, and about the historical conditions leading to the current situation.

(2) consultation, ascertaining the target-group's and others' views about the manifest history of the problem-situation, reaffirming the group's current dissatisfaction and possibilities for improvement.

Clearly, these first two guidelines relate to our first methodological feature - *the need for both empirical-analytic data and historical-hermeneutic explanations of the pre-history out of which the current situation has emerged*. Additionally, since our first guideline requires observations about the "readiness" of the group for an ideology-critique, it implies the *identification of a target-group*, our sixth methodological feature.

(3) reflection on the history of the problem-situation, including free-association and other forms of creativity; other psychodynamic methods aimed at enabling participants and critic to gain new insights; "debate" with other social theorists to gain alternative interpretations.

Here, we are drawing on three of the methodological features. To begin with, there is an element of our fifth feature, *referring back to a wider community*, suggested in this guideline. There is reflection on the contextual appropriateness of the ideology-critique (our fourth feature), and *surmising the latent content through the use of analytic and interpretative skills* (the second feature).

(4) empirical observations and hermeneutic interpretations about the researcher's own ideology, context, and history; incorporation of other researchers' theoretical arguments as appropriate;

which we can link with

(5) reflection on the possible sources of distortion or illegitimate power-relations, and their meanings; also about the researcher's own presuppositions; questions concerning ethics of disclosure and other moral issues; development of a theory about the target-group's false consciousness; development of theories explaining the

mechanisms of societal (re)creation;  
reconstruction of an anticipated state or  
societal form;

As with the first and second guidelines above, we are drawing upon the first methodological feature here - *the need for both empirical-analytic data and historical-hermeneutic explanations of the pre-history out of which the current situation has emerged*. In addition, we are recognising a need encapsulated in the second methodological feature, *the need to transcend the limitations of previous theoretical explanations*. Furthermore, *the pluralistic nature of the ideological domain* (the third methodological feature) is recognised since the critic is asked to reflect upon his or her presuppositions which clearly highlights the multiplicity of possible ideologies.

(6) the emerging emancipation of participants through the enlightening process, and through the action of the target group.

Since this is an emergent property of the process

of the entire ideology-critique, it cannot be directly related to the methodological features. Rather, it is inherent within them. We could argue that this is a methodological feature which comes to light as a result of the application of the ideology-critique. Whether or not the ideology-critique results in emancipation can only be ascertained *retrospectively*, involving some means for evaluating the outcomes of the critical process. However, the ideology-critique can *anticipate* an emancipated future situation.

As with the model of critical self-reflection, it is not intended that these activities be carried out in the linear sequential manner described above. Instead, it is likely that they would be undertaken in an iterative manner. The critic of ideology would need to continuously re-evaluate and amend his or her ideology-critique in light of new evidence or observations which would be facilitated through the cyclical nature of the critical appreciation process.

Even after several iterations at this level of

analysis, we cannot presume that the critical appreciation is complete: critique is a never-ending process. Furthermore, in chapter seven, I suggested that there would need to be some means of understanding the relationships between critical self-reflection and ideology-critique. This forms the subject matter of our next chapter, chapter ten.

#### 9.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered some additional aspects of the model of critical appreciation which were shown to provide an ideology-critique through an *historical reconstruction*. We began by elaborating several ways in which the term "ideology" has been used. Then the ideology-critiques of Marx, Habermas and Giddens were introduced. Through the exploration of these three ideology-critiques it was possible to identify certain similarities and differences, and thereby to arrive at some methodological features of ideology-critique more generally.

One such feature was the focus of each critique on the theoretical "reconstruction" of the historical processes leading to the current (illegitimate) situation. It was stated that, as with paradigms, ideology-critiques are coexistent and cannot escape from being ideological. These and other methodological features assisted our development of methodological guidelines for the model of critical appreciation.

It has been argued that ideologies operate "behind the backs" of individual social actors, and that a critical appreciation process must incorporate an ideology-critique in order to enable those actors to be enlightened about their situation. The process of ideology-critique will enable them to understand their historical embeddedness, and thereby to identify their own means for achieving emancipation. It was argued that ideology-critiques serve to produce new belief systems, new ideologies, and as such must be subjected to an evaluation. This evaluation or "interrogation" is the subject of the next chapter.

Notes.

1. The context of application is the domain in which the process analogous to dream-analysis is being employed. Here reflexion will focus on the participant's openness to a particular interpretation, the participant's articulated values and exhibited behaviour, etc. Additionally, the researcher should reflect on his or her own feelings and actions within the interactive process to ensure that he or she is not introducing biases or interpretations that are not the client's own.

In contrast, reflexion on the historical context of emergence focuses on the antecedent conditions leading to the present articulation of a problem-situation. Here, the aim is to uncover aspects of the participant's history (as well as the researcher's history) in order that current experiences can be properly "situated" or contextualised.

2. In light of our earlier arguments concerning their imperialistic nature, such claims to universality appear to be flawed. Furthermore, it was shown, in section one of the thesis, that universalistic claims are paradigmatic rather than meta-paradigmatic, which means that they must be coexistent with other paradigms. This has implications for our study of ideology-critiques as it will be shown that they also have to take an ideological position in order to provide a critique.

3. The sixteen forms of ideology detailed by Eagleton (1990) are:

- (a) the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life;
- (b) a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class;
- (c) ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power;
- (d) false ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power;
- (e) systematically distorted communication;
- (f) that which offers a position for a subject;
- (g) forms of thought motivated by social interests;
- (h) identity thinking;
- (i) socially necessary illusions;
- (j) the conjuncture of discourse and power;

(k) the medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world;  
(l) action-oriented sets of beliefs;  
(m) the confusion of linguistic and phenomenal reality;  
(n) semiotic closure;  
(o) the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure;  
(p) the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality.

(Eagleton, 1990:1-2)

4. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations in this section are taken from Eagleton (1990) pages 28 to 30.

5. I am, of course, simplifying a much more complicated debate about the nature of objectivity, subjectivity and inter-subjectivity in my treatment of "material reality". Midgley (1992b) discusses these three interconnected "worlds" and the manner in which entities or phenomena are *contextually* regarded as being subjective, objective or inter-subjective.

6. Oliga's (1990a) paper which develops a "Power-Ideology Matrix" includes a suggestion that we can choose between changing material conditions, viewpoints, both or neither. My

argument here is not to be confused with his. I am discussing the need to bring about changes in three domains together: the objective, subjective and inter-subjective. Ideology, I argue, will not be transformed without changes in each of these domains.

7. An extremely large critical literature on Marx exists, containing both positive and negative critiques. For an account of Marx and ideology, Lefebvre (1963, chapter three) is a useful source. For a discussion of the relationship between the work of Marx and that of Habermas, the reader is directed to Agnes Heller's (1982) "Habermas and Marxism". Original sources include the *Communist Manifesto* (Marx, 1969, originally published 1848), *The German Ideology* (with Engels, 1927), and *Capital* (1961). Some discussions concerning emancipation from mainly Marxian or Neo-Marxian perspectives are contained in Nederveen Pieterse's edited volume *Emancipations, Modern and Postmodern* (1992). For discussions of Marx's work by Habermas, the reader could peruse *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1972), *The Philosophical*

*Discourse of Modernity* (1987a), or *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (1988).

8. Holub (1991) notes that

The standard bibliography on Habermas compiled by René Görtzen under the title *Jürgen Habermas: Eine Bibliographie seiner Schriften und der Sekundärliteratur 1952-1981* (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1982) contained over 900 publications on Habermas. A revised version with over 3000 titles is scheduled for publication soon. Joan Nordquist's, *Jürgen Habermas: A Bibliography, Social Theory: A Bibliographic Series, vol. 1* (Santa Cruz, Reference and Research Services, 1986) is also an excellent research tool, particularly for English sources and editions.

(Holub, 1991:190, Footnote 2)

9. My colleague, Gerald Midgley, suggested to me that "sincerity" should (and could) also be debated openly. Whilst agreeing that an argument can be presented for saying that it is possible to dispute and defend sincerity in discourse, I believe that, in the final analysis, there is always the possibility that the individual whose sincerity is being challenged may renege on the "rational consensus" gained through such

discourse. For "truth" and "justification" such whims of character would not come into play once the "rational consensus" had been achieved. My position on this does *not* mean there is any less need to explore individual positions - in fact, I would argue that it is because of the possibility of insincerity, dishonesty or simple misunderstanding that we *ought* to be engaging in "interrogation" of any presented position within all our interventions into human affairs.

10. By "authentic experiences" Giddens means those experiences which have not been shaped or distorted by societal pressures or mechanisms. He conceives of individuals as living out completely alienated or false existences in which they are unable to connect with their "true" selves. It is only if the ideological veil, which lies across each of our consciousnesses, is lifted that we will be enlightened and (hopefully) empowered to enjoy "authentic experiences" - those experiences which reflect the genuine interests and needs of humankind.

11. I took a "straw poll" amongst a group of third year BA students to see who they thought should be responsible for safe-guarding our natural environment. The vast majority of them believed that it was government's responsibility to legislate and that they were not required to act until legislation was passed. Coming at the end of a course on environmental ethics, this was an interesting, if disheartening, response.

12. I am deliberately objectifying groups of subjects - sick, mentally ill, delinquent, terminally ill, elderly and disabled people - to emphasise the powerful means by which these individuals are differentiated in society in order that they can be treated in a detached (objective) manner. They become part of the domain that is "other" to our own domain.

13. Interestingly, Giddens sees the current "vogue" of self-exploration through the use of psychoanalysts, mediums, experiential learning, self-help groups, etc., as representing another mechanism for the perpetuation of "capitalism".

Such self-exploration is always oriented towards *mastery of the self* and as such is ego-building rather than ego-humbling (as would be the case in some of the Eastern philosophies like Buddhism). *Mastery of the self* will provide the individual with a power which can be exercised over others: for example, women who undertake "Assertiveness Training" often do so to provide themselves with an unusual authority - which many men find threatening! This new gained expertise, or skill, acts as a mechanism for further distancing from our authentic natures, and, as such, serves to reinforce the de-personalised system of "capitalism". In this sense, we are witnessing a "return of the repressed" through such non-liberating (false ideology-generating) self-exploration systems. Also, see Dorothy Rowe's (1990) "Introduction" to Masson's (1990) *Against Therapy* in which she details the rapid increase in the number of "counsellors" who undertake the same kind of work as psychotherapists, but who perhaps feel that "psychotherapy" is too pretentious a term to describe what they do. "Counsellors" nevertheless play a role in helping individuals to

"find themselves" and to learn to connect with their authentic feelings and experiences. Rowe wonders whether the increase in the number of "counsellors" will leave anyone to be "counselled".

14. We may suppose that the critic who describes mechanisms of repression will be able to recognise when his or her actions make illegitimate use of those mechanisms of repression. However, I intend to show in chapter ten that, unless we couple critical self-reflection with ideology-critique and ideology-critique with critical self-reflection, there can be no guarantee that the critic will even be aware of his or her illegitimate action.

15. Ulrich (1983) argues that the "ideal speech situation" is too theoretical and requires pragmatism. In his discussion of group processes for debating, he shows how groups can determine the boundaries of communities of interest which include those who may be affected *but not involved* in the decision-making process.

This he describes as "being critical about group boundaries". I am retaining Habermas's more theoretical argument, which I believe can be pragmatized further than Ulrich allows.

CHAPTER 10: CRITICAL AWARENESS, IDEOLOGY-  
CRITIQUE AND SELF-SOCIETY DYNAMICS

We have seen in the last two chapters how our critical appreciation model can be significantly enhanced through the incorporation of methodological guidelines for critical self-reflection and ideology-critique. The fact that they are often treated individually may seem to suggest to the reader that the two forms of critique are intended to be used in quite separate and distinctive domains of inquiry. Indeed, my presentation of them in two separate chapters would seem to imply that this is the case: that one may elect to use *either* an ideology-critique or a critical self-reflection depending on the focus of the inquiry.

However, in contradistinction to those who concentrate on the critique of methodologies (e.g. Flood and Jackson, 1991a; Jackson, 1991a), I intend to demonstrate in this chapter that a critically systemic inquiry must incorporate *both* critical self-reflection *and* ideology-critique as

presented in the preceding chapters. A model will be elaborated which clarifies the relationship between the two types of critique and the role that each plays in transforming society<sup>1</sup> and providing for individual and group emancipation.

A question that will arise from the further development of the model will concern the efficacy of the process in 'enlightening' individuals who have different beliefs and values which support the *status quo* in society. Here, we will be considering how (and why) any individual might become critically reflexive in choosing amongst a plurality of norms and values. Chapter eleven, in considering the means for dealing with pluralism in the realms of values, beliefs, paradigms, ideologies and cultures will extend the model again by incorporating a 'discordant pluralist' perspective. This revised version of critical appreciation will be shown to be capable of dealing with radical differences.

Before we can come on to consider how pluralism is dealt with in the process of critical

A second contention, which I will be returning to later, concerns the manner in which individual action and behaviour serves to (re)produce or (re)create our social world. Here, the assumption is that the structuration of society (Giddens, 1984) is (re)created and maintained by the actions of individuals. I will be arguing that it is due to the *mutual interaction of these processes* (the "creation" of individuals through societal processes and the structuration of society through individual, but collective<sup>2</sup>, action) that the transformation of society, and the emancipation of individuals from subjugating forces, must involve all parts of the critical appreciation process. That is to say that 'scientific inquiry' and 'reflexive inquiry' (which both involve the use of empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic methods), when used as components of *both* critical self-reflection *and* ideology-critique, form the necessary aspects of a critically systemic inquiry<sup>3</sup>.

Such statements require further justification. We

can begin by considering the role that can be ascribed to society in influencing the individual who seeks to alter his or her own biography, his or her own history, his or her "self".

## 10.2 Transformation of the Self

There is a widely held view amongst sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists and other social theorists that individual identities are created through socialisation processes involving interactions between people. Such a position has been noted above where we saw Habermas's contention that individuals sustain their identities through the appropriation of traditions, through membership of social groups and through their participation in socialising activities. This view is often taken further by critical social theorists (e.g. Fay, 1987; Giddens, 1991) who argue that individuals also have the capacity to change who they are, to reconstitute themselves according to a revised narrative, biography or history which can be

projected into the future. Giddens describes such activities as creating the 'trajectory of the self' (1991:70-108).

This accords with the position taken in chapter eight in discussing the work of psychoanalysts in general, and Freud in particular. Understanding of the past only becomes beneficial when the individual is able to realise a different explanation is possible, that a new understanding can be gained which serves to transform future possibilities. In considering self-conceptions here, we are discussing who or what an individual might be or might become.

Brian Fay argues that it is because humans are curious, willful, intelligent and *reflective* that they are capable of learning about their own histories and, through this, becoming free to make different choices about their futures.

It is possible for humans, through a process of education, to become enlightened as to their condition and, on the basis of this enlightenment, to create a new form of life in which their genuine interests are satisfied ... humans have the capacity to learn who they are and to refashion their

existence on the basis of this learning.

(Fay, 1987:12)

Fay's explanation of the individual human capacity for growth and change is nevertheless at odds with those who conceive of the individual as malleable clay, shaped by the forces of society. Such a vision (of the self acting in accord with the demands of the larger whole) appears to be what Mary Douglas (1987) is arguing for when she discusses the scope that each person has for choosing between competing moral positions. She contends that, in trying to deal with global issues which require a moral stance (for example, the ecological crisis, world poverty, the threat of nuclear war, and so on),

individual ratiocination cannot solve such problems. An answer is only seen to be the right one if it sustains *the institutional thinking that is already in the minds of individuals* as they try to decide.

(Douglas, 1987:4, my emphasis)

Douglas's view, derived from Durkheim (1903, 1912) and Fleck (1935), suggests that individual cognition is wholly determined by the institutions

which dominate society. Consider for example one quotation drawn from Fleck's work and used by Douglas to emphasise the impact of institutional thinking:

The individual within the collective is never, or hardly ever, conscious of the prevailing thought style which almost always exerts an absolutely compulsive force upon his thinking, and with which it is not possible to be at variance.

(Fleck, 1935:41, cited in Douglas, 1987:13)

There is no scope here for individual understanding beyond what is determined by institutions: individual will and individual cognition are seen as totally subjugated by global knowledges.

Douglas's position can be challenged by the work of Anthony Giddens who sees the individual as a being who is capable of both influencing and contributing to social action rather than as an entity whose cognition is determined by external factors:

The self is not a passive entity, determined by external forces; in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, *individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that*

*are global in their consequences and implications.*

(Giddens, 1991:2, my emphasis)

Giddens's argument can be distinguished from the perspective advanced by Sandel, another writer whom Douglas draws upon. Whilst Giddens suggests that it is possible for individuals to re-constitute themselves, and thereby alter society, Sandel sees the individual as merely capable of "discovering" his or her purposes in life. Sandel (1982) takes a "strong" view of what constitutes a self which Douglas tells us

requires a complete overhaul of vocabulary and a shift of assumptions. Instead of moral philosophy starting from a notion of the human subject as a sovereign agent for whom free choice is the essential condition, Sandel suggests that the human agent is essentially one who needs to discover (not choose) his ends, and that the community affords the means of self-discovery.

(Douglas, 1987:127)

There is evidence here of a 'softening' of Douglas's hard, deterministic view of individual cognition. Although this argument resonates with Habermas's views on individual moral development, unlike Sandel, we can note that Habermas does not

believe that the community is the only provider of means of self-discovery. Drawing on Kohlberg and Piaget, Habermas (1984, 1989) presents a model of human moral development which he equates with the capacity of societies to become morally "better". Habermas contends that individuals are not limited to a level of moral decision-making which hinges upon that which the wider society is capable of achieving. Instead, he argues that

individuals can develop structures of consciousness which belong to a higher stage than those which are already embodied in the institutions of their society. It is primarily subjects who learn, while societies can take a step forward in the evolutionary learning-process only in a metaphorical sense.

(Habermas, 1986:165)

This interest in individual potentialities and capacities for self-actualisation (learning, transcending the past) is relatively recent. Mary Douglas (1987) cites Mandeville's<sup>4</sup> eighteenth century parable concerning the efforts of the 'independent industrious individual bees' as marking something of a turning point towards a philosophy which justifies individualism. The argument seems to have been that if individualism

could be witnessed in natural systems, then why should it not occur within society? Why should individuals continue to act for the collective good when (apparently) nature demonstrates competitive, individualistic behaviour? We shall return to Douglas's use of Mandeville's parable later<sup>5</sup>.

Whether Mandeville's parable provided the required justification for human individualistic actions which had previously been "held back", or if it simply described actions that were already commonplace using an analogy drawn from nature, we will never know for sure. What we can do instead is to look at reports from contemporary social researchers to try to establish if such individualistic activity still occurs.

In fact, we have already noted that individualism is a dominate political credo within the Western world - recall Margaret Thatcher's comment that "society" does not exist, that the operative unit of our national system is the individual. Arguing from a different political position, Giddens

(1991) nevertheless acknowledges this changing understanding of the degree of influence held by the individual when he tells us that

The idea that each person has a unique character and special potentialities that may or may not be fulfilled is alien to pre-modern culture ... Only with the emergence of modern societies and, more particularly, with the differentiation of the division of labour, did the separate individual become a focus of attention.

(Giddens, 1991:74-75)

Giddens goes on to argue that traditional (pre-modern) societies had clearly marked out phases of human development - that the individual was in no doubt as to how he or she was perceived (i.e. what status he or she was given) by the social group to which he or she belonged. Rituals accompanied the transition from one life phase to another:

in such [traditional] cultures, where things stayed more or less the same from generation to generation on the level of the collectivity, the changed identity was clearly staked out - as when an individual moved from adolescence into adulthood. In the settings of modernity, by contrast, the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change.

(Giddens, 1991:33)

In today's pluralistic modern societies, such clear markers are no longer self-evident. Rituals which traditionally accompanied changing perceptions of who we are and how we fit into the social schema still exist (see, for example, Midgley, 1992c), but these now occur in less transparent settings<sup>6</sup>. The opacity of systems marking human transitions has contributed to the individual need to find out who or what he or she is at any given moment. The factors which obscure such transitions have served to "dislodge" individuals from the collective, fuelling the process of individuation<sup>7</sup> and providing a context in which any individual has to become active in order to create him or herself as a self.

Giddens is by no means the only author who subscribes to a view of the individual as self-created. Fay (1987), for example, suggests that this is a perspective held by all critical social scientists:

Critical social science assumes that humans are active creatures, that is, creatures who broadly create themselves on the basis of their own self-

interpretations.

(Fay, 1987:47)

From a different angle, that of a communitarist, Benhabib (1992) argues that such self-creation occurs always within a social context (an argument that further substantiates our position regarding the *always already situated* nature of any researcher). She suggests that throughout the life-span of an individual social interactions help the self to (re)constitute itself as a self:

The human infant becomes a "self," a being capable of speech and action, only by learning to interact in a human community. The self becomes an individual in that it becomes a "social" being capable of language, interaction and cognition. The identity of the self is constituted by a narrative unity, which integrates what "I" can do, have done and will accomplish with what you expect of "me," interpret my acts and intentions to mean, wish for me in the future, etc.

(Benhabib, 1992:5)

Let me summarise the argument so far in order to draw out the main features of the process whereby an individual is created and maintained as a separate entity. It is clear that each individual

undergoes some form of socialisation, that development of an identity occurs within social settings. Here, we are following in the line of McCarthy (1990) who suggests that

Members of our species become individuals in and through being socialized into networks of reciprocal social relations, so that personal identity is from the start interwoven with relations of mutual recognition.

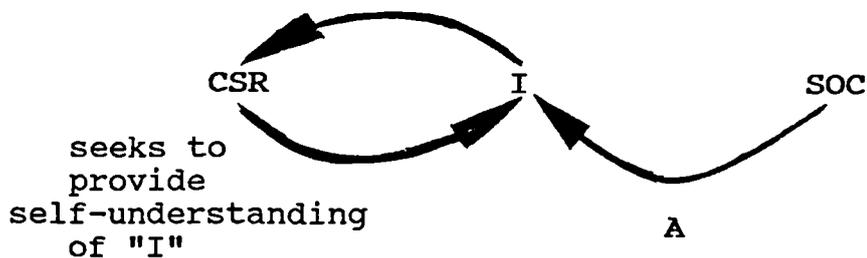
(McCarthy, 1990:x)

Equally, it is clear that individuals have the ability, through reflection, to moderate "who" they are. Recall Giddens's comment that 'the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process' (1991) or Fay's observation that 'it is they who change *themselves* by internalizing new conceptions of self and society' (Fay, 1987:52, original emphasis).

Most social scientists who discuss the processes through which the self is created tend to present an "either/or" argument: *either* the self is a product of socialisation or it is a product of individuation. What is being argued here, though, is that individuals are created *both* through socialisation processes *and* through their

individual ability or capacity to be critically self-creating.

The process of self-creation can be understood through our model of critical self-reflection which provides procedural guidelines for the process of moderating, constructing or altering the individual's identity. This can be linked to socialising processes to demonstrate the inter-connections between individual self-creation and societal forces. This system of (re)creation of the self is illustrated in the diagram, Figure 10.1, below.



Key:

SOC : Society  
I : Individual  
CSR : Critical Self-Reflection  
 : Socialising Processes

Figure 10.1 (Re)Creating the Self

The argument presented so far seems quite straight-forward: if an individual wants to change who or what they are, they can use critical self-reflection to guide the (re)construction of themselves. But the presentation contains a flaw: the danger of such self-reflective creation of the individual lies in the project becoming monological, lacking critical reference to an external context of discourse where the notion of the self can be subjected to critique in a wider environment. The project of the self, when carried out without challenge to the wider norms of society may simply support the *status quo* of a dominant ideology.

We appear to have returned to Mary Douglas's intent in describing the power that institutions hold over individual cognition. The question to be raised now is, how can an individual break free of deep-seated norms and conventions appropriated from tradition and acquired through interaction with others? Furthermore, given an individual critical self-reflection which does "break free"

of societal norms and conventions and rejects the *status quo*, how is this new understanding of the relationship between the individual and society to be carried over into a wider social domain? How can we know whether such a new understanding is morally (normatively) right for (even a part of) the more general population? How can an individual who has gained some novel insight pass on that understanding to others? To turn the questions about somewhat, how does society change? The answers may be found through a consideration of the means for transforming society, to which we now turn.

### 10.3 Transformation of Society

Having provided an argument for the ability of individuals to be self-(re)creating within a context of socialising processes, our task now is to show that society is similarly self-(re)generating but in the context of processes of individuation. Here, we will be looking at how it is that societies manage to maintain some systemic

integrity despite the burgeoning heterogeneity of their constituent parts. In addition we will be addressing the issue of societal change, given the forces which operate to maintain integrity and stability. It will be suggested that ideology-critiques have a role to play in bringing about such changes.

As we saw in chapter nine, ideology-critiques generally set out to explain the processes whereby groups or societies have their interests thwarted or suppressed. For example, it was argued that Marx's critique of the productive sphere has as its aim the inversion of a society in which the material gains of expended labour are divorced from the labour process itself. In contrast, Habermas's ideology-critique suggests that a system of distorted communication has prevented individuals from recognising their deep and genuine interests, whilst Giddens presents a model of society in which the sense of belonging to a community has been lost or subjugated by various individuating processes.

Each critic has as their aim an *explanation* of societal processes. By anticipating a future form for society, each hopes to bring about its transformation. Their critiques provide initiating forces which seek to drive society towards the anticipated state of freedom from oppressive or subjugating phenomena. However, it is only the later critiques of Habermas and Giddens which recognise that society comprises an objective domain of 'what is or could be the case', an intersubjective domain of 'legitimately ordered interpersonal relations' and a subjective domain of 'experiences that can be manifested and to which ... [an individual] ... has privileged access' (Habermas, 1990:25).

In recognising these different aspects of the lifeworld<sup>8</sup>, we can appreciate why it is that an ideology-critique must incorporate structural changes as well as changes which address the processes of interaction between human beings. Let me elaborate. The objective domain would seem to lend itself to structural changes, whilst the domain of interpersonal relations would require a

change effort oriented towards transforming the processes of interaction. However, it also points up the need to understand (and tackle) the role of individual subjectivities within the societal whole<sup>9</sup>. This is a point which we have already addressed in considering the role of critical self-reflection and which we will return to shortly when we consider the connectivities between the two forms of critique. For now, let us continue with the analysis of how societies (or institutions) are to be altered and maintained.

Douglas (1987) suggests that once an institution has become more than a fledgling enterprise it becomes capable of autopoeitic<sup>10</sup> behaviour, in that it strives to reproduce itself through the control of its members:

Any institution then starts to control the memory of its members; it causes them to forget experiences incompatible with its righteous image, and it brings to their minds events which sustain the view of nature that is complementary to itself. It provides the categories of their thought, sets the terms for self-knowledge, and fixes identities.

(Douglas, 1987:112)

This vision of institutions can be contrasted with that of Habermas, whose life's work has been to break down such domination and to bring about the "institutionalisation of democracy" (Dews, 1986; Holub, 1991). In his most recent writings, Habermas talks of the individual who helps to create his or her society:

New forms of social integration, and new productive forces, are due to the institutionalization and exploitation of forms of knowledge which are *individually acquired*, but culturally stored and capable of transmission and so, in the long term, accessible to the collective. However, the process of social implementation only takes place as a consequence of political struggles and social movements, of the outrider-role of innovative marginal groups, and so on.

(Habermas, 1986:165, my emphasis)

According to this view, it is the individual who is responsible for gaining new cognition, new understanding of a particular situation. Once new insights have been gained these can be 'culturally stored and transmitted', but will only be implemented through action by collectives. An example can be found in the way that information about ecological crises was first gleaned by individual scientists, who nevertheless ensured

that the information could be 'culturally stored' (in research journals, etc.) and 'transmitted' (i.e. made available to a wider audience through articles and documentaries in the mass media). Now, we can witness the actions of groups like Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth as the political activity of collectives who are seeking to ensure that the knowledge is institutionalised, or, in other words, is 'socially implemented'.

Habermas's argument suggests that the future state of society need not be what it is now. It is this "openness" of the future to other possibilities that causes other writers to argue for the potentiality of change in the make-up of society:

The 'openness' of things to come expresses the malleability of the social world and the capability of human beings to shape the physical settings of our existence.

(Giddens, 1991:111)

Such a position suggests that the individual is as much an agent in changing and maintaining society as are the institutions which operate at the macrolevel within society. Discussing the work of

Lasch (and others concerned with diagnosing culture and institutions), Giddens suggests that an inadequate account is given of the human agent. His criticisms could equally well be applied to the work of Douglas. Giddens considers that the major flaw of such work is that

it is not valid to argue that, while the micro-settings of action are malleable, larger social systems form an uncontrolled background environment.

(Giddens, 1991:175)

Here, Giddens appears to be suggesting that each individual can exert some form of control over 'larger social systems', that it is possible for individual action to impact upon institutions, and even to change them.

Such an idea seems like commonsense when one considers the role of invention and innovation in altering social ways of life and traditions. Winch (1958) focussed on this when he considered the impact that the act of one boy had on the tradition of football:

Think of the ... way in which the game of football was revolutionized by the Rugby boy who picked up the ball and

ran.

(Winch, 1958:93)

Although this may seem like a trivial example, it nevertheless serves to highlight the manner in which individuals may influence and change their social settings, often through actions which lead to unintended results or consequences.

There is another category of actions that individuals can perform which also have the potential to alter society. These are the intended activities of scientists and technologists who have in mind the purpose of "improving" human existence. Such activities may often have consequences which are equally unforeseen or unintended. Indeed, this is the emphasis of Habermas's (1987b) critique of "Science and Technology as Ideology". By drawing on the work of Kahn and Wiener (1969), Habermas demonstrates that technological innovations (designed by individuals) are increasingly being oriented towards 'techniques of behavioral and personality change'. Should the technologies predicted by Kahn and Wiener<sup>11</sup> eventually be developed, there seems

little doubt that the capacity to affect and alter social settings in radically new ways will indeed be within our grasp.

Clearly, there is scope for the creativity of an individual to have far wider-reaching consequences than might at first seem possible. I want to take this argument a step further by suggesting that it is not only novel, innovative or creative action which can impact on our social setting. Now I am going to argue that our social arena is constituted by our actions, that as individuals we are constantly and actively involved in both producing and reproducing society through problem-solving on a day-to-day basis.

In itself, this position is not new: Sheldon Stryker (1991) makes reference to the *symbolic interactionist* theories of G. H. Mead (1934) and John Dewey (1930), amongst others, who argued that 'society shapes self, which in turn shapes social behavior'. In Stryker's own work he builds an *identity theory* which recognises that

self-society theory focuses on a twin problem: (1) to root the process and

cognitive structure of self in social structure and so understand constraints on the cognitive content and organization of self as well as on self-processes; and (2) to understand the limits of the impact of social structure on the content, organization, and processes of self. The first aspect of this twin problem points to an account of social reproduction - the process by which social structure reproduces itself through its impact on self. The second aspect of the twin problem points to an account of social production - the process by which something new or creative enters social life and (potentially) social structure.

(Stryker, 1991:27)

Stryker's argument, developed in the discipline of social psychology, is remarkably similar to that of Giddens, whose domain is sociology. Compare Stryker's position with that of Giddens, who argues that

Lifestyle choices and life planning are not just 'in', or constituent of, the day-to-day life of social agents, but *form* institutional settings which help to shape their actions. This is one reason why, in circumstances of high modernity, their influence is more or less universal, no matter how objectively limiting the social situations of particular individuals or groups may be.

(Giddens, 1991:85, my emphasis)

Both Stryker and Giddens want to consider the limits of social construction. In the above quotation, by suggesting that individuals may shape the contents of their lives to form life-plans which project into the future, Giddens is giving back a degree of freedom and choice denied to the individual cognition by writers like Douglas. Instead of conceiving of choice as either pre-ordained or delineated by society, Giddens argues that

On the level of the self, a fundamental component of day-to-day activity is simply that of choice. Obviously, no culture eliminates choice altogether in day-to-day affairs, and all traditions are effectively choices among an indefinite range of possible behaviour patterns.

(Giddens, 1991:80)

Giddens allows that individuals can choose amongst "lifestyles" which are internally consistent, but may conflict with one another within the context of the broader society. His position is similar to that taken by Schwalbe (1991) who, in discussing Mead's (1934) view of the emergence of a social and moral self, argues for individual creativity in moral problem-solving which impacts on the

broader society.

Although Schwalbe takes unequal power relations to be the main motivating force for moral problem-solving by individuals, he also sees the moral self as playing a 'mediating role in the reproduction of moral culture', since he or she may act as a 'force for social change'. According to Schwalbe, the moral self has developed a 'propensity to take the perspectives of others'. He or she is able to perceive 'conflicts between values and interests' and thereby to be aware of the need for societal changes. Schwalbe's focus serves

to show the social construction and embeddedness of the individual as a moral actor, and how the self can operate to uncritically reproduce or to *challenge and modify* existing social structures.

(Schwalbe, 1991:298)

Whilst Schwalbe is concerned to show that the moral individual may bring about changes in the values and belief-systems of the wider community through their individual actions, Howard (1991) seeks to demonstrate that the transformation of

society which arises through individual change must be channelled through some form of social movement. Following Turner and Killian (1972), Howard defines a social movement as 'a collectivity acting with some continuity to promote a change or resist a change in society' (Howard, 1991:223).

Such a social movement has a number of characteristics<sup>12</sup> which include an ideology that can be distinguished from the ideology of the general society in which it is embedded. The ideology of the social movement serves as a recruitment mechanism which ties individuals into its network. Howard argues (following Tajfel, 1976) that individuals who undergo identity changes have two courses of action open to them: the first involves the capacity for *social mobility*<sup>13</sup>, whilst the second requires *social change* and arises if the ability to "exit" a particular social group is closed down. The first course of action relies on a perception that the individual may alter their position *through their own action*, whilst the second is based on a

contrasting perception that the only way to alter the social situation is by *joining forces with others* in the same circumstances.

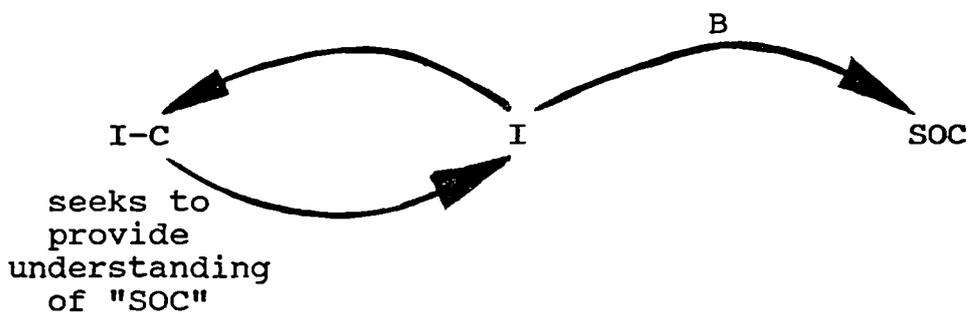
Let's go back for a moment to Mandeville's parable about the independent, industrious, individual bee. We can appreciate that the motive of 'social mobility' might underpin the behaviour of this bee - an individualistic perspective, which sees betterment being attained through efforts of the self. An alternative explanation of the bee's activity could be that it is cooperating with others in 'changing the social situation' - the communitarist view mentioned earlier. What I am suggesting is that our understanding of an individual's actions may take both these perspectives on board, to show that in enhancing the individual's position an action may also contribute to changing (or reinforcing) the social setting. Under some circumstances (which we will return to later) individual change will also be social change.

If we accept Howard's argument that individuals

who perceive no possibility for 'social mobility' will put their efforts into a social movement which seeks to change the prevailing social situation, then we should ask how an individual can select between the numerous collectivities which purport to support specific and distinctive values. This is where the process of ideology-critique, elaborated in chapter nine, could be put to use. By reflecting on the claims of a particular social movement, and comparing these with alternative ideologies, our social actor may choose between competing, conflicting groups representing different value-systems. As Giddens (1991) suggests, the choice of which groups to belong to will generally reflect the individual's chosen identity.

Now, it has been shown above that the actions of an individual can affect society, can have impacts that will serve to produce and reproduce society. Let us consider how the relationship between individual action and societal (re)production might be represented diagrammatically. What we are arguing here is that, through a critique of

ideology, an individual may choose to act in certain ways that will impact on the values and beliefs of the society which, in the normal day-to-day activities of individuals and collectives, is produced and reproduced. Such a process can be seen in the following diagram, Figure 10.2.



Key:

- SOC : Society
- I : Individual
- I-C : Ideology-Critique
- B** → : Individuals' Actions

Figure 10.2 (Re)Creating Society

Once again, it would seem that we have a fairly straight-forward argument in front of us. The argument suggests that society is generally self-maintaining and self-creating, but that

individuals can, through ideology-critique, challenge the norms (value-systems) of the society. Through individual action (e.g. oriented towards social mobility) or collective action (e.g. through social movements) the individual can seek to transform his or her society.

The flaw in this representation is that there is a down-playing of the power that social institutions may exert over the individual. Here, we have moved too far to the extreme of voluntary commitment to social movements to recognise that any individual begins from an 'already situated' position. Quite how the institutional thinking that is 'already in the minds of social actors' (Douglas, 1987) is to be challenged is not clear from our model of the transformation of society.

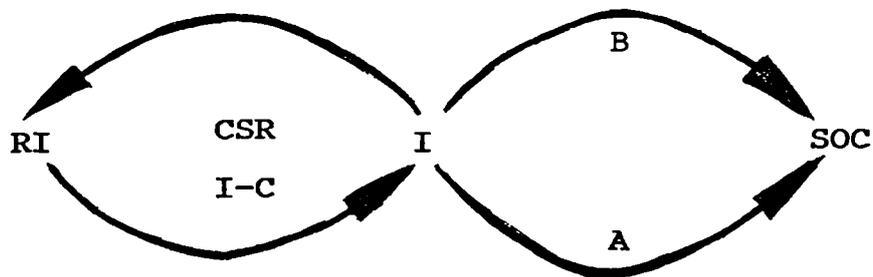
What I now wish to propose is that it is possible, through the conjoining of the two models outlined above (Figures 10.1 and 10.2), to develop a new representation of the process whereby individual and societal emancipation will be achieved. This is the next subject which we will consider.

#### 10.4 Unifying Critical Self-Reflection and Ideology-Critique: Self-Society Dynamics

We have seen, in the above discussion, how it is that the individual may reconstitute him or herself according to a revised understanding of who or what he or she is. Such a reconstruction occurs both within an enabling context of socialising processes and despite other social forces which circumscribe the individual's scope for change. Additionally, we have seen how individual action can contribute to collective action in such a way as to bring about changes that are more far-reaching within society. Such action occurs alongside activity which is of a self-generative nature within the society itself.

Both processes have been modelled diagrammatically and it is possible to bring them together to reveal the complex interactions between self and society which enable each to be co-(re)productive of the other. We can also show the features of reflexive inquiry aimed at providing understanding

of this process of simultaneous (re)production. Such reflexive understanding involves both processes of critical self-reflection and of ideology-critique. The diagram below shows the mutual process of creation and recreation that can be termed "self-society dynamics"<sup>14</sup>. Here, critical self-reflection and ideology-critique are depicted as a cycle of reflexive inquiry (RI) undertaken by an individual (self) who interacts (in the sense of participating in the self-society dynamics) with the society in which he or she is embedded. Once again, we can see the 'figure of eight' never-ending cycle of mutual influence and interaction.



Key:

- SOC : Society
- I : Individual
- RI : Reflexive Inquiry
- CSR : Critical Self-Reflection
- I-C : Ideology-Critique
- $\xrightarrow{A}$  : Socialising Processes
- $\xrightarrow{B}$  : Individuals' Actions

Figure 10.3. Self-Society Dynamics

Now, we have argued above that critical self-reflection which is undertaken by the 'solitary, reflecting moral consciousness' (McCarthy, 1990) becomes monological, and fails to recognise the wider impacts of any moral decision-making. In so doing, the lone critic risks creating a self-identity that could be abhorrent to his or her own social group. Clearly, there is a strong argument for a discursive process of moral decision-making which could resemble Habermas's practical discourse (1990). In this process, individuals would be required to engage in discourse with others whose position they have tried to understand by putting themselves 'in the other's shoes'. As McCarthy indicates,

Habermas's discourse model, by requiring that perspective-taking be general and reciprocal, builds the moment of empathy into the procedure of coming to a reasoned agreement: each must put him- or herself into the place of everyone else in discussing whether a proposed norm is fair at all. And this must be done publicly; arguments played out in the individual consciousness or in the theoretician's mind are no substitute for real discourse.

(McCarthy, 1990:viii-ix)

This notion of 'perspective-taking' and of public debate accords well with the explanation of societal transformation facilitated by ideology-critique which was also presented above. Here, the individual's recourse to social movements comes into play when the power of the individual to alter a particular social setting seems insufficient. Self-awareness (through critical self-reflection) coupled with sociological awareness (through ideology-critique) appears to be the most appropriate means available to today's individual who wishes to deal morally with the pluralistic environment confronting him or her.

Given the limitations of the processes of ideology-critique and critical self-reflection explored earlier, I now want to look at why it is that they ought to be used *together*. I intend to show that individualistic life-planning, which does not incorporate an ideology-critique, can become *status quo* reinforcing rather than challenging. Similarly, I will demonstrate that ideology-critique cannot bring about the required social transformation when used without corresponding critical self-reflection by

individuals.

The argument presented so far has been rather abstract, and requires some practical example of the outcomes likely to arise from the employment of different aspects of the critical appreciation process. In providing an example, I intend to work through the processes of self and society (re)creation in order to justify the need for both critical self-reflection and ideology-critique in emancipating individuals and societies from repressive or subjugating forces.

The example I am going to use is one with which I am familiar as a result of my employment in a number of British organisations, and through my interest in what can be termed 'feminist' issues more generally. In order to consider the example, I am going to provide a narrative which will illustrate the roles of critical self-reflection and ideology-critique. Some of my narrative will be hypothetical, although much of it draws upon actual experiences. I shall *highlight* various aspects of critical appreciation for the reader.

#### 10.4.1 Transforming the Self or Society: an Example

Any woman who has "chosen" to pursue a career within a British organisation might rightfully regard herself as ambitious. It would be her intention to "improve" her situation; she would want to have 'social mobility'. Applying for advancement and being turned down might lead such an individual to question what it is that has prevented her from gaining the promotion. A number of explanations could be put forward: she does not have sufficient experience; she does not have the right qualifications; she was competing with a more able colleague; she did not present her case very well, etc. *The use of empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic methods will assist this questioning, which forms part of the individual's critical self-reflection. This part of the inquiry corresponds with what I earlier termed 'scientific inquiry'.*

Whatever the apparant reason for her rejection, she realises that she can do something about it.

She can change who she is. She may decide to try to remedy some of her obvious short-comings in order to gain the advancement she is seeking. A course in interview techniques, self-presentation, gaining extra qualifications, enhancing her skills at work, and so forth, are all efforts to make her into a different person who fits the mould of the desired position. *Here, reflection on the reasons for rejection leads her to formulate a theoretical explanation which contains within it the potential means for altering the situation. These theorising activities correspond with our 'reflexive inquiry', although only as part of a critical self-reflection.*

What is she to understand if, on gaining extra skills and changing who she is, our female employee finds that she is once more rejected? Looking to herself for an explanation may result in renewed efforts, or it may result in a sense of powerlessness because she does not know what might be done to achieve what she has striven for. *Here we can witness a critical self-reflection which is completely monological, and which fails in its neglect of a critique of the wider social context.*

Now let us take another line of inquiry - one involving the individual in a critique of the prevailing ideology rather than critical self-reflection. Let us imagine that, on receiving notification that she has been turned down for the desired promotion, our female employee discusses this with another member of staff within the same institution. Now she learns that in her particular organisation only 12% of the posts at the level she had applied for are taken by women. Well, she could say, women don't stay long enough to gain this sort of promotion, so I'm not really surprised. But wait (*says our ideology-critic*), don't you know that over 85% of the posts at your current level are taken by women? And a large number of them are better qualified than their male colleagues who are at the next level up? Once again, *using empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic methods, our employee learns about her situation, although this time she is learning about the ideological context in which she is operating. We can understand these activities as corresponding with those in our ideology-critique*

*which we designated 'scientific inquiry'.*

Now, suppose that having heard this (and much more besides), which convinces our female employee that there must be something drastically wrong with "the system", she decides to join a social movement, so looks for one which seems to represent her views about the need for social change. She could get very actively involved in campaigning<sup>15</sup> for improvement in equality of opportunities. She could work hard to convince others that what is happening is unjust. Some people may listen; others will tell her to learn to be more like those who are successful - the men within her organisation. Here, our employee has developed (or adopted) a theory which explains her oppression through a critique of the dominant ideology which she in turn employs (through campaigning) to try to transform the situation of all women. Now we see the use of 'reflexive inquiry' as part of the ideology-critique which informs her actions.

She could try a different tactic: to show that in her particular case the legislation regarding

equality of opportunities was not followed. She might discover that a number of women have succeeded in transforming their situations in similar circumstances. Or (if her's is the first such legal action) she may be advised that her case has particular merits which give a high probability of success if she decides to proceed. She might even be able to get her lawsuit supported, firstly by the social movement she has joined, and secondly by the legal arbitrator. As a consequence, she may gain the position she had been seeking. *Our female employee has noted the legal channels which allow discourses to occur about injustices, and has chosen this form of rational legal discourse to try to alter her situation. Through empirical observations (of previous successes or of the legislation) and through (historical-hermeneutic) interpretations of her particular position, she is able to judge whether or not to take legal action<sup>16</sup>. Such a process would necessitate both 'scientific' and 'reflexive' aspects of inquiry, whether within an ideology-critique or a critical self-reflection.*

Two years later, she might meet with another young

woman who has experienced the same sort of rejection within the same institution. But wait, she says, this cannot be so! We have critiqued the ideology which allowed my rejection to happen, we have shown that it was an illegitimate and non-sanctioned action that prevented me from gaining my promotion. We have campaigned to ensure that this would not happen again. Surely the system can't still be dealing with others in the same way?

Neither our ideology-critic nor our critically self-reflective individual have succeeded in transforming the system which generates and maintains inequality within their particular organisation. This must make anyone who cares about injustice and inequality begin to despair at what can be done.

We need to leave our example now, and return once more to the abstract, theoretical argument in order to learn why it is that both approaches failed in their legitimate endeavours to transform self and society. That is to say, we shall consider why *emancipation* was not an emerging

property<sup>17</sup> of the application of either critical self-reflection or ideology-critique.

#### 10.4.2 Individual and Societal Emancipation: An Emerging Property of Critical Appreciation

We have seen above that, through critical self-reflection, the individual can alter who she is; she can present a different identity which "fits" more closely with what is required by the organisation. We have also seen that, through campaigning or legal action, the individual can affect the way the organisation acts. However, such changes are (often) not internalised by the organisation, nor by its members who have not conducted a critique of their own self-(mis)understandings. In the first case, the organisation may be oblivious to the individual's efforts to change herself<sup>18</sup>, whilst in the second case the fact that there exists legislation to protect equality of opportunities may prevent the organisation from recognising its need to behave differently<sup>19</sup>. In either eventuality, it is clear that the efforts of an individual to provide for her own emancipation fail in the face of systemic

forces which reassert the *status quo*.

What might be done to overcome such systemic forces? Earlier I commented that the campaigning by our female employee met with some acceptance and some derision or negative admonitions by her colleagues. Here, by combining with a social movement that represented the interests of a group of individuals experiencing similar subjugation, our female employee sought both her own specific emancipation and the liberation of women more generally.

Now, in our example, there were some individuals who rejected the critique of their ideology as presented by the campaigner (or ideology-critic). Unless critical self-reflection is undertaken by such individuals, asking what the (proposed or extant) changes mean for them as *individuals*, their collective actions will reinforce the other, older norm which has been (supposedly) challenged and set aside. There are many reasons why an individual will choose to ignore a critique which challenges their understanding of the social world. Dahrendorf (1975) recognised that

individuals would be likely to resist the content of an ideology-critique because of their preconceptions about its likely outcomes.

The liberation of the citizen will not work unless people feel certain that nothing will be taken from them, that a more imaginative notion of full employment will not mean unemployment, that a more flexible approach to women's rights will not mean a return to men's privilege.

(Dahrendorf, 1975:49)

Here we have come up against a problem which was identified at the beginning of this chapter: how is an individual to decide amongst competing, conflicting norms and values? How is he or she to determine what is legitimate and what is not? How might he or she assess what the likely outcome of the application of the revised norm will be? Pushing out the boundaries of influence by campaigning, or bringing the ideology-critique 'to the doorstep' of others, will not *in itself* provide an answer to the problem of individual 'choice' when faced with burgeoning heterogeneity in the realm of validity claims. What it does suggest, however, is a responsibility for all to become critically reflexive in order that

competing claims be given adequate and appropriate consideration. Clearly, individual and group emancipation will only occur in the context of critical appreciation by those in the wider social setting.

However, it is not only a case of individuals giving more thought to the content of any critique. There is also a need for each to be more open in listening to what others have to say about the (shared) social situation. This need arises because often an argument is expressed in terms that are alien to the addressee. We are not suggesting that conflicting positions are totally incommensurable, but that effort must be expended to try to comprehend an argument. For example, simply dismissing the thesis of a logical positivist because one does not understand the notation or terminology used does not mean that the content is invalid. Rather, it speaks of an addressee who has not striven to understand the nuances of an alien language or culture and of a speaker who has not struggled to be comprehensible.

What I am proposing here is not simply that the ideology-critic must always 'translate' their critique into the terms of their opponent, but that the individual who stands in opposition must equally employ all of his or her critical faculties to understand the content of the critique being advanced. This implies that each individual must undertake a thorough process of critical appreciation when confronted by an ideology-critique which challenges his or her values and beliefs. Each individual must be prepared to engage in reciprocal and general 'perspective-taking' in order to ensure that justice is done. Put more simply, there is a requirement for those on the receiving end of a critique to become more open in their listening and for those who are putting forward an argument to be more open to the possibility that others may experience difficulties in understanding what is being said.

Listening and speaking to others about values, beliefs or norms is not the same as choosing between them. Hannah Arendt (1961) explains quite

succinctly why the act of *judging* competing values and norms must always be undertaken in dialogue:

The power of judgment rests on a potential agreement with others, and the thinking process which is active in judging something is not, like the thought process of pure reasoning, a dialogue between me and myself, but finds itself always and primarily, even if I am quite alone in making up my mind, in an anticipated communication with others with whom I know I must finally come to some agreement. And this enlarged way of thinking, which as judgment knows how to transcend its individual limitations, cannot function in strict isolation or solitude; it needs the presence of others "in whose place" it must think, whose perspective it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all.

(Arendt, 1961:220-221)

Here, Arendt stresses the need for each person to try to understand the other's perspective. Implicit in her position is the notion that an individual may adopt one of three perspectives when engaging in moral decision-making. These are (1) the objective stance of the observer, bystander or witness; (2) the intersubjective stance of the addressee; and (3) the subjective stance of the speaker him or herself. These 'speaker perspectives' correspond with those identified by Habermas (1990). Clearly, a

critically reflexive individual must be capable of adopting not only the subjective and objective stances, but must also be able to 'put him- or herself into the place of everyone else in discussing whether a proposed norm is fair at all' (McCarthy, 1990). In this way, the emancipation of both oppressed individuals and groups may become a reality.

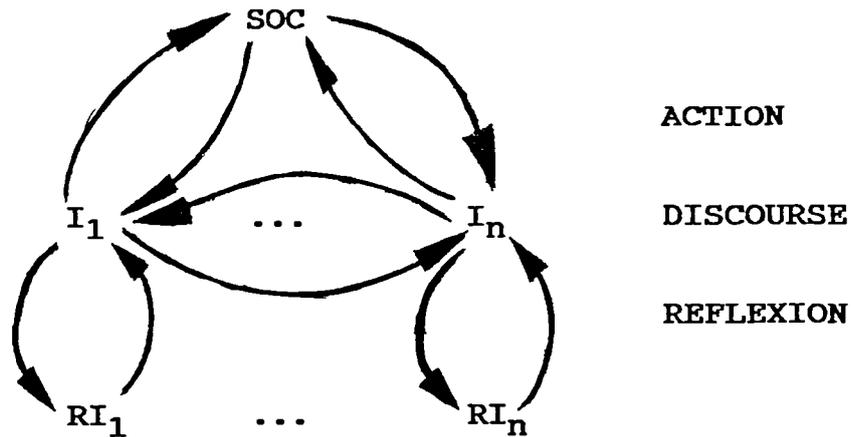
A natural question to raise now is, *why* should any individual take part in this process of mutual perspective-taking? What could motivate him or her to engage in the reflexive inquiry process I have described above? Motivation must derive from the knowledge that participation in such a process will ensure reciprocal engagement (Habermas, 1984, 1989). This means that, by being prepared to participate in reflexive inquiry about womens' rights to equality in organisations, an individual may gain the right to have his or her own issues of subjugation discussed. Any individual opposing the right to equality for women might consider, for instance, that their own desire (to spend more time with their family, on leisure activities, studying, etc.) will only be given the benefit of

a critical appreciation by others if he or she is also prepared to become critically reflexive<sup>20</sup>.

If the anticipated reciprocal perspective-taking is entered into by each person within the social situation being investigated, then we can demonstrate that the actions that each performs (whether communicative or otherwise) will have both social and personal implications. The main outcome (or emerging property) that critical (social and systems) thinkers seek in applying the critical appreciation approach is the emancipation of individuals and groups. We can see that, through discourse, proper consideration of values and norms can occur which should result in some degree of emancipation being achieved. Of course, one cannot predict that a particular norm or value will 'win out' in the end, but the possibility of getting people to talk and think critically about the processes underlying self-society dynamics has its own potency.

Furthermore, by introducing the necessity of an arena for discourse, it is possible to show how theory (emerging from reflection and discourse)

and practice (emerging from discourse and action) are united in the process of critical appreciation. The following diagram demonstrates the relations between reflexive inquiry, discourse and practical action.



Key:

SOC : Society  
 I<sub>1</sub> ... I<sub>n</sub> : Individuals  
 RI<sub>1</sub> ... RI<sub>n</sub> : Reflexive Inquiries

Figure 10.4 Reflexive Inquiry, Discourse and Action

Although the diagram only illustrates discourse between two individuals, it is possible to extend the image to incorporate any number of individuals wishing to participate in reflexive inquiry<sup>21</sup>.

We have demonstrated that critical self-reflection without ideology-critique cannot hope to change the *status quo* of individual subjugation. Similarly, we have seen that ideology-critique, even when linked with action, may not bring about the desired changes (wider emancipation) in the social system without corresponding (and more general) individual self-reflection.

Clearly, the nexus of inter-action through which self and society are (re)created is so tight that any change effort which is focussed in only one of the two areas will be thwarted: the feedback from the 'other' will enable the system to reassert itself. Thus critical self-reflection may change the individual self, but it need not have any deep impact on society. Ideology-critique may challenge the norms of society, even legitimising new norms, but if other oppositional individuals do not critically reflect on what those norms mean for them as *individuals* then the system will continue as it had been prior to the critique. In other words, the illegitimate oppression or injustice will be sustained.

Now, a point which we have not addressed so far relates to the plurality of norms and values that exist and arise in a dynamically changing society. We have already seen that this plurality can lead to problems in the application of a critical appreciation due to conflicting ideas about what may be considered just. So far, my argument may seem to have been suggesting that a systemic application of critical appreciation will *in itself* lead to a resolution of any differences that may be identified. It has not dealt with the possibility that someone opposing an ideology-critique may have a legitimate objection. Brian Fay warns that any critical theorist must be able to distinguish between legitimate or illegitimate challenges:

For if one is unable to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate rejections of one's [critical systems] theory, any rejection of the theory by its audience can then be interpreted as indicating that its rejecters must continue to be manipulated in an instrumentalist manner....

(Fay, 1987:105)

I want to suggest that the problem is more complex than Fay describes. For him, it is a case of a

rejection either being illegitimate or not. Instead, I contend that there may be many instances when two seemingly incommensurable positions will each contain elements that are both legitimate and illegitimate.

For example, a critique which suggests that domination of women is wrong, but which proposes a new system of oppression of men, might be regarded as containing both legitimate and illegitimate elements. Similarly, the oppositional stance which rejects the proposed system of repression for men but which sees no problem in the continuing domination of women also contains elements that are legitimate and that are illegitimate.

Clearly, what is required is a means for juxtaposing the two value-systems so that what is similar in them can be recognised as well as what is different. This is the subject matter of the next chapter, chapter eleven, in which a model of 'discordant pluralism' will be advanced which arguably provides for the bringing together of conflicting, dissensual positions. Additionally, this chapter will consider the proposals which

have been advanced within the critical systems community for resolving the problems which arise from the heterogeneity of paradigms, cultures or viewpoints which exist in contemporary society.

### 10.5 Conclusion

It has been demonstrated in this chapter that a critically systemic inquiry must incorporate *both* critical self-reflection *and* ideology-critique. A model was elaborated which clarified the roles that each form of critique plays in altering the individual and society, and which illustrated the relationship between them.

Now that we have seen the connectivities between critical and sociological awareness (critical self-reflection and ideology-critique), it remains to be shown how this model can deal with radical differences between ideologies, values, beliefs, cultures or paradigms. This is the subject of the next chapter, in which the model of 'discordant pluralism' will be developed. Following this, it will be possible to show, in chapter twelve, that

the discordant pluralist version of the critical appreciation process satisfies all of Jackson's (1991b) critical systems commitments.

### Notes

1. I am using the term 'society' in an extremely loose way to mean any group, institution, culture or nation-state to which individuals belong. My definition can be compared to that of Douglas (1987) who drew upon both Durkheim and Fleck in her description of institutions as social groups. Douglas tells us that for them, the term 'applied to any level of group organization'. My own usage will be as broadly applied.

2. Although this appears to be a contradiction in terms, it is possible to show that despite individual actions being performed without the *intent* that they contribute to collective or more global action, the end result can very often be witnessed in collective action. This is partly because the degree of freedom that any individual has in selecting between lifestyle choices is

quite small and in any event circumscribed by macro choices or events. For example, whenever one uses an automatic cash dispenser outside of one of Britain's many thousands of High Street banks or building societies one is contributing to the (global) economic system. When visiting an out-of-town hypermarket one is arguably contributing to collective action which serves to undermine local economies and destroys neighbourhood facilities. The intent to behave as part of a collective may be absent (or repressed), but the consequences of individual action is undoubtedly global in nature.

The alternatives to using national banking systems are limited: the vast majority of employers insist that employees be paid by electronic transfer into a bank account; lately, Government has attempted to "begin a dialogue" about the payment of pensions through a similar scheme. Short of keeping one's money under the bed (a risky business), the choices are limited. If the Government is successful in legitimating its decision to pay pensions by electronic bank transfers (normalised on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis which reveals substantial savings

by this act), then we may come to witness the death of many small villages in rural areas as an increasing number of people will be forced to go into town to get access to their money. Once in town, the motivation to return to the village shops to spend the pension will be reduced, since the individual will be faced (ostensibly) with a wider range of shops and facilities. Here we can see evidence of the scope for macro decision-making to impact upon individual lifestyles in quite dramatic ways. It may appear (on the surface) that individuals make choices about how they spend or save their money, yet it is macro decisions that determine the need of an individual to use banking services.

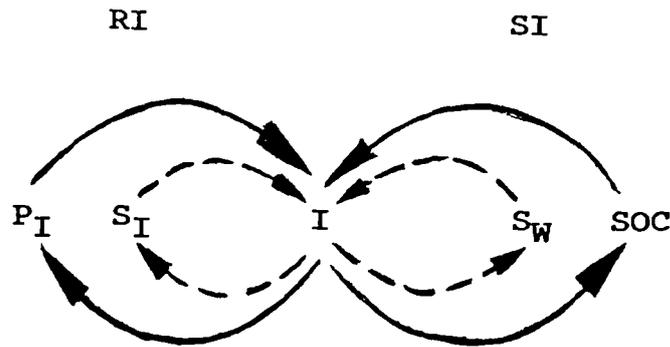
Returning to the argument about the role of the "hypermarket" in restricting individual choice, it could be argued that individuals "choose" to shop at hypermarkets because they provide "everything under one roof", they offer "a wider range of produce", "cheaper goods" because they buy in bulk, etc. Here the argument seems to suggest that individuals have enhanced choice just because they use the hypermarket. All of the statements about

improved choice can be substantiated, but when one recognises that the convenience factor only becomes a consideration when individual lifestyles are being squeezed from other directions, one can see that there are macro forces at play that circumscribe individual choice. So, for example, the push by feminists to gain greater acceptability and potentiality for women in the workplace can be seen as a force which has contributed to a situation in which the traditional house-keeper (shopper) no longer has the time to shop around for the best buys. The "leisure" movement and the individual "fitness" philosophies have played their part in segmenting individual lifestyles to the extent that each person can only set aside a limited amount of time for each specific activity.

From another perspective, we can witness the removal of shops from local neighbourhoods hitting at many underprivileged groups (unemployed people, pensioners, disabled people, single parents, those who are marginalised). One has to wonder how it is possible for decisions to be made which do not appear to be serving the interests of all sectors

of society in an equitable manner? Clearly, such decisions are underwritten by our individual action which supports and endorses them.

3. Chapters eight and nine have shown that the processes of critical self-reflection and ideology-critique each involve the use of both empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic methods. Furthermore, neither critical self-reflection nor ideology-critique can be undertaken without the researcher engaging in both 'scientific' and 'reflexive inquiry' - concepts which relate to the practice and theory of a critical investigation. Hence, we can talk about 'reflexive inquiry' involving both empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic aspects as does 'scientific inquiry'. Since I go on in this chapter to argue that critical appreciation must bring together *both* ideology-critique *and* critical self-reflection, it is necessary to think of the two processes as forming two 'figure of eight' cycles which overlap and interact with one another. The following diagram clarifies the relationships between the various aspects of the fully elaborated critical appreciation model.



Key:

Ideology-critique

Critical self-reflection

RI : Reflexive Inquiry	
SI : Scientific Inquiry	
SOC: Society	S <sub>I</sub> : Internal Self
I : Individual	S <sub>W</sub> : Self in the
P <sub>I</sub> : Individual's Paradigm	World

Figure 10.5 The Process of Critical Appreciation

In the diagram, I depict the critical self-reflection cycle as having two foci - the "self in the world" and the "internal self". This depiction is worthy of some further explanation. What I intend to show here is that any individual who engages in critical self-reflection may undertake a "scientific inquiry" in which he or she asks questions about his or her interactions with others, about him or herself "in the world". Similarly, the individual may reflect on whether

or not that "self in the world" fits a view of who and what he or she wishes to be - the "internal self". Here, reflexive inquiry may reveal contradictions that need to be corrected. A more detailed explanation is given in the main body of the text, pages 357-362, when we consider an example drawn from organisational life.

4. Mary Douglas (1987) does not cite the date of Mandeville's parable, which is taken from a French book for which I could find no English translation. I do not wish to "hazard a guess" at the exact year of Mandeville's writing, but am using Douglas's comment about the "eighteenth century" to position Mandeville's parable. The interested reader is referred to the French source (Dumont, 1983) for further information about Mandeville's work.

5. Douglas (1987) lends credence to a way of understanding the natural behaviour of an insect which is contentious in itself. Robert Axelrod (1990) is one of many authors who write of cooperative behaviour in natural systems: Margulis and Sagan (1987), Lovelock (1979, 1988, 1991), and

Ho (1988, 1989) are among a group of scientists who discuss symbiotic activity in natural communities of different species. Their position can be seen as polemically opposed to the position of writers like Dawkins (1976), Steven Jay Gould (1982), or W. Ford Doolittle (1980, 1981) who all follow a neo-Darwinist line which cites competition amongst species as the arbiter of success (survival) for any living thing. In management science, Argyle (1991) is one of the leading proponents of the "cooperation" thesis, whilst Toffler (1992) is one of many who recognise power struggles (through competitive behaviour) as the dominant ethos. The two positions set out from different starting points: one side argues that a cooperative theme, in which each individual contributes towards the well-being of all others in a totally unselfish manner, underlies all living activity, whilst the other side believe that every living thing is selfish, "out for itself", and will fight "tooth and claw" to obtain what it can, balking at no cost. I am deliberately staking out the extremes, in order to show that the one position resembles pure "communitarism", whilst the other is like pure "individualism".

6. Of course, it is possible to cite evidence of such rituals persisting in modern societies, as for example with the religious ceremony that surrounds the life-time commitment of two individuals to each other. However, many of these rituals are no longer universal (some would argue that they have never been universal) in their character, occurring in opaque settings which by no reckoning provide generalisable experiences.

If we take the ritual described above, that of the "church wedding", we can acknowledge that it marks, in a public way, the decision by two individuals to share a joint future. However, we can also acknowledge that many couples choose *not* to have a religious service marking this occasion, many even foregoing the equivalent civil ceremony. Furthermore, since there are many couples who are precluded from having any public acknowledgement of their commitment to one another yet who still choose to make such a commitment, we can see that the ritual is by no means universal. Yet, individuals do still make commitments to one

another, and these may be marked by other rituals: giving over two drawers and some cupboard space to the co-habiter; resolving to give up going to nightclubs; setting up a joint mortgage or bank account; wearing a ring given by the partner; and so on. The settings in which commitments to "being a couple" occur are not transparent, not easily identifiable, indeed opaque. The rituals which mark out the transition from "being single" to "being a couple" are clearly not generalisable, not universal.

It is partially because of the fragmentation of society, the sheer heterogeneity of the social world, that such rituals become invisible or, in some obscure ways, less significant.

7. By individuation, I mean the process whereby individuals are differentiated from the social masses. This maps on to the fragmentation of society which occurs at the level of individuals because of the plurality of choices open to them in terms of their own self-actualisation.

8. The term "lifeworld" (*Lebenswelt*) is derived

from Husserl and refers to

the irreducible fabric of meanings of everyday life, in which the meanings of specialized, constructed or formalized languages are embedded.

(Shapiro, in Habermas 1987b:viii)

Habermas (1990) argues that the 'symbolic structures' of the social lifeworld are 'reproduced through three processes: cultural tradition, social integration, and socialization'. Furthermore, the lifeworld provides both context and resources for the actor who strives to achieve understanding. The lifeworld is made up of an objective world (of what exists, events, states), a social or intersubjective world (of 'legitimately ordered interactions'), and a subjective world (of personal, lived experiences). An actor may take one of three *world perspectives* which allows him or her to focus on issues of truth, rightness and sincerity. These correspond with three of the four validity claims that were discussed in chapter nine.

At the same time, any actor may adopt one of three *speaker perspectives* which are those of the

speaker (first-person participant), the addressee (second-person participant), or the by-stander (third-person observer). Habermas conceives of these speaker perspectives as being 'intertwined with a system of world perspectives'.

The concept of the 'lifeworld' is thus a complex one, whose further elaboration would be outside of the remit of this thesis.

9. I am simplifying the explanation of *how* the three domains are related to possible means for transforming them. Each of the three domains can be tackled through questions of truth, rightness and sincerity. This provides further justification for the critical appreciation approach, which seeks to change structure, process and individual understanding of any problem situation.

10. The debate concerning the autopoietic behaviour (or not) of organisations is one which has occurred both within the critical social sciences domain (between Luhmann and Habermas) and the systems science domain (between Mingers, 1989 and Robb, 1989). The term 'autopoiesis' (as

applied to cognitive systems by Maturana & Varela, 1980) refers to the ability of an entity to be self-maintaining, self-regulating, self-recreating or self-organising. Although I am over-simplifying the concept, there is sufficient explanation here to see that it accords with the view of institutions proposed by Douglas (1987).

11. Amongst the technological innovations predicted by Kahn and Wiener (1969) were the following:

- 30. new and possibly pervasive techniques for surveillance, monitoring and control of individuals and organizations;
- 33. new and more reliable "educational" and propaganda techniques affecting human behavior - public and private;
- 34. practical use of direct electronic communication with and stimulation of the brain;
- 37. new and relatively effective counterinsurgency techniques;
- 39. new and more varied drugs for control of fatigue, relaxation, alertness, mood, personality, perceptions, and fantasies;
- 41. improved capability to "change" sex;
- 42. other genetic control or influence over the basic constitution of an individual.

(cited in Habermas, 1987:117)

12. Howard (1991) suggests that any social

movement requires the following:

(1) a group of similarly situated individuals who have been defined as different through a social and ideological process of definition; (2) social networks that promote communication among such individuals; (3) objective details such as geographic concentration and identifiable targets; (4) and mechanisms that promote the perception of action as effective, for example, the presence of specific leaders with understandable goals, and the presence of viable alternatives to the present system.

(Howard, 1991:226)

13. If we consider 'social mobility' to indicate the types of changes in lifestyle that Giddens (1991) discusses, rather than movements up (or down) an hierarchical structure, then we might adopt the notion without retaining the negative connotations that it otherwise appears to imply. This will be the conception of social mobility (i.e. of changes in lifestyle) adopted within the remainder of the thesis.

14. It is difficult to trace the origin of the term 'the self-society dynamic', although it is clear that symbolic interactionists (for example, Mead, 1934) were discussing the relationship

between self and society within their work. The term crops up numerous times without further citation in the volume *The Self-Society Dynamic* (Howard & Callero, 1991) which is a collection of edited chapters drawn from participants of the 1988 conference entitled "Self and Society: A Social Cognitive Approach" (as noted in its preface). I prefer to talk of 'self-society dynamics', as I do not wish to be restricted to a single possible relationship between self and society. I suggest instead that there exists a plurality of relationships which requires a number of different dynamics.

15. Campaigning is one form of action that might be pursued by any individual or member of a social movement who seeks to promote change in the wider society. See Midgley (1992d) for a more detailed discussion of the role that campaigning could play in a critical systems approach.

16. On first impression it may seem that legal action is the pursuit of an individual who has undertaken critical self-reflection, but I take the view that this is more likely to occur as a

result of an individual obtaining support from a social movement than otherwise. I do not absolutely preclude the possibility that a lone individual may be motivated sufficiently (and will not feel too powerless or isolated) to engage in litigation. However, having the "moral support" of others who believe that you have been done an injustice does add weight to views one has already formed.

17. I talk about an *emerging* property being the emancipation of individuals and groups as I am concerned with an on-going process in which emancipation is not a final product *per se*. The degree and definition of emancipation achieved will change over time. It is this dynamism which is stressed throughout the thesis and which makes the model of critical appreciation an appropriate *depiction of the never-ending cycle* of critique from which emancipation emerges.

18. An alternative explanation, which my colleague Gerald Midgley pointed out, might be that the organisation will see the individual's efforts but may have another demand to meet which

is more pressing and which conflicts with satisfying the needs of our female employee. For example, the organisation may need to restrict the number of promotions in order to increase its total staffing level.

19. See Forester (1988, pp268-269) for an explanation of how this lack of attention or neglect arises when a supra-system is created to oversee matters of this kind.

20. In considering the 'oppression' of women within work organisations, it is possible to advance an argument that sees this as simply one side of a coin of which the other is the subjugation of men in the same settings. Let me elaborate. If women are being excluded from certain employment, the consequence may be that men will be forced to take those positions, together with all the added responsibilities and negative aspects they hold. Hence, by oppressing women and withholding opportunities for advancement, men are simply sentencing themselves to a tied existence which thwarts their other interests. A 'post-hoc' rationalisation might make

the position seem more desirable to others than it actually is to the person who holds it.

21. Of course, one needs to bear in mind the literature which deals with 'optimum group size' (see, for example, Handy, 1976; or Richardson, 1983) when considering creating such an arena for discourse. A novel way to extend the numbers who can be involved in debate has been suggested by Stafford Beer in his development of what he terms a 'team tensegrity' method (Beer, 1991). Here, the optimality of small group working is maintained whilst the size of the total participating group is increased (through the use of six groups of six, making thirty-six participants). Each individual is tasked with reporting back to his or her focal group and with contributing its group vision to the mixed group.

A similar project, which will consider the bounds of discourse, involves seven groups of seven individuals drawn from seven related organisations (see Gregory and Walsh, 1993 for further details). The methodological guidelines proposed in this thesis are to be applied in the context of this

project which is being undertaken with the Royal  
Sheffield Institute for Blind [People] (R.S.I.B.)  
and Trent Regional Health Authority.

**SECTION FOUR**  
**CRITICAL SYSTEMS THINKING, CRITICAL APPRECIATION**  
**AND DISCORDANT PLURALISM**  
**- A "NEW CONSTELLATION"**

CHAPTER 11: DISCORDANT PLURALISM: THEORETICAL  
FOUNDATIONS FOR A CRITICAL APPRECIATION

In this section, I intend to draw together all the strands of discussion that have been teased out in previous parts of the thesis. These can be summarised as the debates concerning pluralism and imperialism, the nature of critical and social awareness, and the means for providing emancipation for individuals and groups. Let me provide a little elaboration of the preceding sections before going on to provide an outline of the contents of this part of the thesis.

In section two, we looked at how the social sciences have sought to deal with problems relating to the notion of paradigm incommensurability. The discussion centred on whether or not paradigms are incommensurable. The question of whether incommensurability means that inter-paradigm communication is impossible was also raised. It was argued that, *despite* incommensurability, communication between rival

paradigms is possible, but calls for the researcher's critical awareness of his or her own *always already situated* perspective. Finally, a model of critical appreciation, which incorporates aspects of empirical-analytic, historical-hermeneutic and reflexive inquiry, was advanced. It was further argued that the critical appreciation process offers the potential for overcoming problems of imperialism that arise when one adopts a strong incommensurability thesis.

Section three expanded upon the basic model of critical appreciation by incorporating elaborated elements of critical self-reflection and ideology-critique which serve to unite reflexive and scientific forms of inquiry. The section concluded with an explanation of why efforts to transform (emancipate) either an individual (self) or society must incorporate *both* parts of the critical appreciation process. Here it was suggested that groups or individuals with different, conflicting value-systems can be brought together into an arena of discourse in which a discussion of those values and beliefs can

take place. In essence, the model of reflexion, discourse and action, which was elaborated in chapter ten, describes the means by which any individual may come to gain a critically reflexive understanding of a(n alien) culture, discourse, tradition, paradigm or society, whilst at the same time achieving a better understanding of him- or herself. Additionally, the model helps to explain the manner in which those understandings (of self and society) can be translated into actions.

Now, both sections two and three can be viewed as commentaries on the debate between those who insist upon and defend what might be called a 'closed' form of paradigm incommensurability, in which communication between paradigms is seen as impossible (e.g., Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Jackson and Carter, 1991), and those who argue for a more 'open' form of pluralism, in which paradigms can be reconciled through the use of a meta-theory (e.g., Jackson, 1987a, 1988a, 1990, 1991a, 1991b; Flood, 1989a, 1990a, 1990b; Flood and Jackson, 1991a). This debate has tended to be forwarded on the basis of an "either/or"

positioning: *either* we accept paradigm incommensurability, in which case pluralism becomes imperialism, *or* we adopt a pluralist perspective and provide an explanation for the reconciliation of differences between paradigms.

All of these extensions of the critical appreciation approach have served to highlight the endemic plurality of social lifeworlds. However, we have not yet given consideration to the manner in which our approach can actually be used pluralistically, so as to allow for communication between alternative, alien positions. The central theme of this fourth section relates to how discourse between radically different paradigms, perspectives or traditions can be built into a process of critical appreciation. A discordant pluralist perspective will be described in chapter twelve, which, it is argued, can provide a dynamic foundation for critical appreciation.

The position being advanced in this thesis, then, is one which recognises that differences between paradigms may not be reconcilable *and yet*

proponents of many competing paradigms will be capable of communicating with one another in a non-imperialistic manner. In effect, I am suggesting that there is a(t least one) perspective from which it is possible to accept both paradigm incommensurability and pluralism<sup>1</sup>. Here, I am following Bernstein (1991) who argues that the "either/or" debate has very little to recommend it. He suggests that reframing questions in a "both/and" mode could provide for improved communications at the very least.

Following the discussion of discordant pluralism in chapter twelve, it will be possible to return to the commitments of critical systems thinking which were first reviewed in chapter two. We will consider how the discordant pluralist, critical appreciation approach relates to each of the critical systems commitments in chapter thirteen.

Finally, in chapter fourteen, the argument will be concluded through a return to the original aims of the thesis. Here, we will ascertain to what extent the aims have been met.

## Notes

1. Credit must be given to Robert Flood (1990a) here, since he provided the first attempt in the critical systems literature to overcome the 'tensions' that arise as a result of radical differences between paradigms. However, Flood's account makes continuous reference to the need for an 'open and conciliatory' approach, which would seem to suggest that, despite his contrary intentions, he has succumbed to the same difficulty experienced by other complementarists. In effect, Flood (1990a) has advocated a consensus-driven form of pluralism, rather than one which can accommodate dissensus and local differences. Hence, his attempt to bring together the modernist perspective of Habermas and the post-modernist view of Foucault denatures the work of both of them (see chapter twelve for an elaboration of this argument).

CHAPTER 12: DISCORDANT PLURALISM, COMPLEMENTARISM  
AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

In section three, the model of critical appreciation (first proposed in chapter six) was further elaborated to enrich our understanding of the aspects of critical self-reflection and ideology-critique which it incorporates. A number of methodological guidelines were suggested which provide for critical and social awareness. Through the utilisation of the entire process of critical appreciation, these promote the transformation of both individuals and societies. A theory of 'self-society dynamics' was elaborated in chapter ten which facilitated the development of a model of reflexion, discourse and action that caters for the translation of ideas (theories) into action (practice), and *vice versa*.

All of these extensions of the critical appreciation approach have served to highlight the endemic plurality of social lifeworlds. However, we have not yet given consideration to the manner in which our approach can actually be used

pluralistically, so as to allow for communication between alternative, alien positions. The central theme of this chapter relates to how discourse between radically different paradigms, perspectives or traditions can be built into a process of critical appreciation, which on the face of it appears to be a "once and for all time" model of critical thinking. How might such communication be utilised both for learning and for transformation - whether of the proponents of a particular paradigm, the paradigm itself, or the oppositional others and their positions - to ensure that the perspective does not stagnate? I will answer these and other questions concerning "discordant pluralism" in the course of this chapter.

To begin with, we will consider a range of possible 'problem-solving' strategies as suggested by Jackson (1987a) and extended by Flood (1989a). It will be contended that the pluralist strategy (also termed "complementarist"<sup>1</sup>) of Flood and Jackson, which calls for an 'open and conciliatory stance', lacks the ability to provide for

consideration of radically alien perspectives. This is because it is inherently consensus orientated<sup>2</sup>. The complementarist strategy, it will be argued, fails to deal adequately with dissensus and difference. Furthermore, as it does not advocate incorporation of the elements of ideology-critique and critical self-reflection, it does not have the potential for overcoming this constraint<sup>3</sup>.

It will be shown that the complementarist strategy is one amongst several possible pluralist perspectives. An alternative to this consensus oriented form of pluralism will be suggested, which I have termed discordant pluralism. This form of pluralism draws upon Bernstein's (1991) juxtapositioning of radically alien paradigms within a "new constellation". Following this, complementarism and discordant pluralism will be comparatively evaluated to ascertain which provides the most appropriate grounding for the critical appreciation process. We will also consider whether this process, which it will be argued should be grounded on discordant pluralism,

can avoid the difficulties of slipping into imperialism<sup>4</sup>.

In order to detail a model of discordant pluralism which is capable of avoiding the dangers of imperialism, we must first contemplate how pluralism has been grounded in both critical systems thinking and in the social sciences. We will begin by considering the possible 'problem-solving strategies' (Jackson, 1987a) that might be adopted by any critical systems thinker, focussing in the main on the complementarist perspective which developed out of Jackson's initial consideration of 'pluralism' (1987a) and other work (e.g., Jackson and Keys, 1984). The various strategies will be considered as means for supporting the critical appreciation process.

### 12.1 Strategies for Underpinning the Critical Appreciation Process

Building on an earlier account (Reed, 1985) of strategies for organisational analysis, Jackson

(1987a) sees four possibilities for the management sciences - the *isolationist*, *imperialist*, *pragmatist* and *complementarist* positions. In a later account, Flood (1989a) extends these, by detailing different forms of isolationism and imperialism, to provide for 'six scenarios for the future of systems "problem-solving"'. Subsequent to this, Flood and Jackson (1991a,b) have taken one strategy - that of the *complementarist* - to be the *modus operandii* of critical systems thinking.

Let's consider the perspectives as Jackson (1987a) outlines them, and, at the same time, peruse the various developments Flood (1989a) advances. We will begin with the *isolationist* position.

#### 12.1.1 Isolationism

Essentially, *isolationists* recognise that there may be many other positions, but imagine everyone going their own way, with independent developments being based on individual assumptions. No cross-fertilisation between approaches is needed or

sought. Jackson tells us that isolationism

is the implicit position adopted by those who see their own approach ... as being essentially self-sufficient. They believe that there is nothing to learn from other perspectives which appear to them not to be useful or, perhaps, even sensible.

(Jackson, 1987a:460)

Furthermore, the justification for isolationism can be found in Kuhn's (1970) arguments about paradigm incommensurability. Clearly, in a situation in which incommensurability between proponents of different paradigms arises, it will be 'scarcely worthwhile them attempting to communicate with one another' (Jackson, 1987a:461). Researchers would simply 'talk past one another', whilst avoiding all thought of the possible value in alternative perspectives.

Developing Jackson's argument, Flood (1989a) suggests that isolationism might occur at either a theoretical or a methodological level. If the position being adopted is one in which the practitioner (or systems 'problem-solver', to use Flood's terminology) holds deep theoretical convictions which guide methodology choice *within*

the same paradigm, then the practitioner could be described as a *theoretical isolationist*. If, however, the practitioner places further restrictions on their practice and always utilises the same methodology, then the practitioner could be described as a *methodological isolationist*.

The isolationist's position can be seen as inadequate to support a process of critical appreciation, since it ignores the potentially enriching experience of entering into discourse with other, alien perspectives. Isolationists believe that

In these circumstances [of radical incommensurability] attempts to incorporate ideas from alternative tendencies could weaken and, therefore, threaten the preferred position.

(Jackson, 1987a:460)

Those adopting a critical appreciation position would welcome such discourse as strengthening their own self and societal understanding.

### 12.1.2 Imperialism

In contradistinction to the 'closed' outlook of

isolationists, *imperialists* are open to new ideas, concepts, models, methodologies, etc., which they strive to integrate into their specifically favoured approach. This effort is undertaken with a view to "bolstering" the imperialistic perspective.

Now, we have already given a great deal of consideration to imperialist perspectives when we were reviewing the social scientific explanations of them in chapter four of this thesis. Let's see what Jackson has to say about imperialism in relation to the management sciences:

The imperialist strategy assumes that one or other of the strands of management science is fundamentally superior and can provide suitable premises for the development of the discipline, but *is willing to incorporate aspects of other strands if they seem to be useful and to add strength* in terms of the favoured approach. Insights from other tendencies will be integrated into the edifice of the favoured approach as long as they do not threaten its central tenets. Imperialists believe that they can explain the existence of alternative approaches, and analyse the limited sphere of application of these alternatives, in terms of the approach to which they grant hegemony.

(Jackson, 1987a:461, emphasis added)

This view accords with that presented in chapter four, in which the twin dangers of imperialism and of 'going native' were considered. For Jackson, the imperialist perspective assumes that one or another of the various approaches available must be superior, but that scraps of usefulness may be incorporated from other approaches. Any aspect integrated into the favoured method or theory must not threaten or compete with it in any way.

Flood (1989a) extends imperialism further to show that researchers who adopt this position could either attempt to 'annex' features of other approaches, thereby retaining the distinctive characteristics of their own perspective, or to 'subsume' aspects of any competing positions within their own, subtly changing their approach at the same time. In practice, the distinction between the two forms of imperialism is relatively minor, but is nevertheless worth noting, since it has had a role to play in the definition of complementarism, as we shall see later.

Before coming on to consider complementarism (or, indeed, the third, pragmatist strategy), let us investigate whether the imperialist strategy can support our process of critical appreciation. We have seen that, in contradistinction to an individual who adopts a critical appreciation approach, an imperialist would wish to 'integrate' aspects from other perspectives. Individuals who seek to be critically appreciative of alien paradigms or tendencies will want to juxtapose their own viewpoints with those of the alien approach. Imperialism, then, cannot provide an adequate basis for the process of critical appreciation.

Now, there is still a third possibility for us to review, the *pragmatist* strategy.

### 12.1.3 Pragmatism

According to Jackson, a *pragmatist* will use whichever "tool" appears suitable for tackling the particular situation he or she has been made aware of. Here, choice of methodology will be based

purely on personal experience rather than theory (Flood, 1989a). Since any systems practitioner is able to choose which methodology to employ (the argument runs), he or she is obviously able to "jump" between paradigms depending on the problem situation being faced, and the chosen methodology. However, such movements between paradigms are never explicit, and could not be communicated in a rigorous, theoretical way to other practitioners (Midgley, 1989b).

In this thesis it has been argued that any researcher who wishes to be critically appreciative must incorporate elements of 'reflexive inquiry' as well as 'scientific inquiry' into their practice. This requires a process of 'uncovering' the theoretical presuppositions which underpin their own and other perspectives. Reflexive inquiry aids this uncovering which involves communication between different paradigms.

Pragmatists do not undertake reflexive inquiry, preferring instead to simply use whatever works

in practice. They rely on 'trial and error' learning to guide their usage (Flood, 1989a). Pragmatism therefore cannot offer an appropriate grounding for the process of critical appreciation due to its eclecticism. It is this feature of pragmatism that has been rejected by many systems philosophers who have sought more rigorous, rational and theoretically sound means for choosing between methodologies. This brings us around to consideration of the *pluralist* approach which seeks to provide theoretical justification for researchers or practitioners who wish to use a full range of problem-solving methodologies to deal with the wide variety of problem-contexts which face them.

#### 12.1.4 Pluralism

The reader may recall (see footnote 1 of this chapter) that the term 'pluralism' and its derivatives has been superceded in the systems literature by use of the term 'complementarism'. It is this latter terminology that I will use here (unless quotations refer to pluralism) to

distinguish Flood and Jackson's version of pluralism from any others.

We have already seen, in chapter two of the thesis, that Jackson (1991b) takes the commitment to complementarism (at both theoretical and methodological levels) as being amongst the fundamental tenets of critical systems thinking. This is largely because complementarism accepts the continuing existence of various paradigms within its domain, and is able to provide theoretical justification for the possible contemporaneous (synchronic) existence and use of a range of methodologies. The need for this range of diverse and distinct paradigms arises because of the wide variety of problem-contexts that 'problem-solvers' face:

Pluralists argue, therefore, that the development of different strands of management science is related to the existence of a variety of problem-contexts.

(Jackson, 1987a:463)

We also saw in chapter two that within the 'system of systems methodologies' (Jackson and Keys, 1984,

extended by Jackson, 1987b) each systems methodology can be "aligned" with a specific problem-context. This "alignment" is made on the basis of certain presuppositions that are said to be inherent in the methodologies (Jackson, 1991a). In this manner, complementarists seek to deal with the complexity (plurality) of the social problem-solving domain. The 'system of systems methodologies' consequently represents

a powerful 'pluralist' way forward for management science, since it integrates the diverse strands of the discipline, which otherwise tend to go their own 'isolationist' ways.

(Jackson, 1990:665)

Such a perspective has to provide a meta-understanding of those diverse problem-contexts in order to be theoretically coherent:

A meta-theory will develop which can guide theoretical endeavour and can advise analysts, confronted with different problem-situations, which approach is most suitable.

(Jackson, 1987a:462)

Or again,

The 'system of systems methodologies', to realize its proper potential, must operate from 'above' the paradigms, assisting in marshalling the various

systems approaches, whatever their theoretical assumptions, on the basis of a meta-understanding of the nature of organizational problem-solving.

(Jackson, 1990:662)

Earlier, Jackson and Keys (1984) had argued that use of the system of systems methodologies required a 'problem-solver' to be

aware of different paradigms in the social sciences, and he [sic] must be prepared to view the problem context through each of these paradigms.

(Jackson & Keys, 1984:484)

So, we can see that the complementarist perspective (according to Jackson) wants to 'operate from "above" the paradigms', it wishes to 'integrate the various strands'. Such integration should occur in an 'open and conciliatory' way, as, for example, expressed by Flood:

Knowledge-constitutive interests in Habermas' critical theory reflects complementarism, because of its open and conciliatory approach toward competing views.

(Flood, 1990a:35)

This notion of openness and conciliation is central to complementarism.

In addition, we have seen that anyone adopting the complementarist approach must be able not only to 'stand above' all of the other paradigms in order to provide a meta-understanding of them, but also must be able to stand *inside* each of the paradigms, to adopt its particular way of viewing the world (Jackson and Keys, 1984). Critique, then, must be undertaken both immanently<sup>5</sup> and from a meta-perspective.

On the face of it, the complementarist strategy would seem to offer the best possible support for our critical appreciation process. In order to evaluate its potential, let's consider how some other critical systems thinkers have adopted and adapted the 'pluralist' perspective. In doing this, we will uncover some of the many ways in which 'pluralism' has been construed.

We shall begin by looking at how Flood conceives of the complementarist perspective:

*complementarism* is theoretically based. Its most important feature is theoretical commensurability at a meta-level (i.e., drawing upon metareasoning) which associates methodology with

context, and is therefore characterized by methodological incommensurability.

(Flood, 1990a:136, original emphasis)

In this single statement we can gain a powerful insight into the purpose lying behind Flood's expansion of the isolationist and imperialist perspectives. Earlier we saw that he distinguishes between methodological and theoretical isolationism. Recall that theoretical isolationism depends on a practitioner defending his or her theoretical stance against any competing positions, whilst methodological isolationism is more restrictive still in that it defends a single methodology against competition.

Furthermore, Flood wants to distinguish between two forms of imperialism. One simply 'adds on "bits" of other methodologies' (imperialism by annexation) whilst the other adopts what might be called a 'meta-methodology' which dictates when and how other methodologies might be used (imperialism by subsumption). In the latter form of imperialism, the 'parent' methodology is to be used in all contexts.

It would seem that, in order to distinguish the complementarism of *Total Systems Intervention* (Flood and Jackson, 1991a) from either theoretical isolationism or subsumptive imperialism, another, alternative explanation for the 'system of systems methodologies' framework must be advanced. Flood suggests the difference between complementarism and these other strategies by stressing that the complementarist position relies upon theoretical commensurability (in contrast to theoretical isolationism), and (in contradistinction to imperialism by subsumption) methodological incommensurability.

We are beginning to unearth the various forms that pluralism may take. For Flood and Jackson (1991a), complementarism is founded on *both* methodological *and* theoretical pluralism, although these are described as having different bases. Theoretical pluralism involves commensurability between perspectives, whilst methodological pluralism is pivoted on the *incommensurability* of approaches. A third form of pluralism enters the picture when it is noted that one axis of the 'system of systems

methodologies' represents the 'nature of the relationship between participants' in a particular problematic situation (Jackson, 1991a:28), where these may be depicted as 'unitary', 'pluralist', or 'coercive'. Here, 'pluralism' refers to a situation in which

participants have divergent values and beliefs and, to some extent, differing interests and objectives, but a genuine accommodation or compromise can be reached upon which all agree (because their fundamental interests are not irreconcilable)....

(Jackson, 1991a:28)

Clearly, there are a number of forms of pluralism, even within the complementarist stance.

Enough has been said to provide the reader with a general understanding of the characteristics of a complementarist perspective. All that remains to be clarified is the source of the theoretical justification for it. Writing in 1990, Jackson suggested that the 'firmer support' required for the 'system of systems methodologies' in its efforts to bring together competing theoretical presuppositions into 'one pluralist endeavour' could not, at that time, 'be fully met' (Jackson,

1990:666). However, he did suggest that Habermas's knowledge-constitutive interests might provide an answer. Jackson cites his own earlier work (1985a, 1988a) and that of Oliga (1988) and Ulrich (1988) as evidence of the interest that had already been expressed in Habermas's theories. By drawing on these, and more specifically on Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests, Jackson wants to show that 'Flood's concern about paradigm incommensurability can be resolved at the level of human interests' (Jackson, 1990:666).

Although it has been stated that celebrating differences is as important as welcoming similarities when adopting a pluralist position, it has not yet been clarified why this is the case. Those who follow Habermas (1984, 1989) tend to emphasise the need for consensus, which plays down the role of ambiguity and difference in a heterogeneous lifeworld. Bernstein (1991) suggests that

Habermas is certainly aware of the pervasiveness of plurality, heterogeneity, and difference. Those who think his insistence on universal validity claims means he has no understanding of contingency and

plurality are caricaturing him.

(Bernstein, 1991:221)

If we accept that Habermas's 'insistence on universal validity claims' does not preclude the need to understand difference and plurality, then the need for a dynamic, critical appreciation process becomes clearer. With critically reflexive inquiry, any individual can raise questions about the validity of norms, truth statements and the sincerity of others who are entering into discourse. This means that all validity claims can be situated within local, historical contexts in which the relative good or evil of a specific ideology (for example) can be subjected to challenge. Such a challenge would not be imperialistic, but would recognise the 'otherness' of those which it challenges.

It would appear that complementarism does have a great deal to offer a critical appreciation process in terms of a foundation for its use of a number of different methodologies, and for its provision for discourse between a plurality of

perspectives. There are, however, a number of difficulties with complementarism which can be revealed through the use of a metaphor, that of a force-field, which I will borrow from Adorno (cited in Jay, 1984). Later, in describing discordant pluralism, I shall use a second metaphor of Adorno's, that of the "constellation". In this way, the differences and similarities of the two forms of pluralism will be uncovered.

#### 12.1.5 A Critique of Complementarism Using a "Force-field" Metaphor

In order to explain what is intended when reference is made to a force-field<sup>6</sup>, I shall describe it as an area in which there exist points that are either negatively or positively charged. Now, if we were to strive to bring order to the field (to understand its contents), we might do so by passing a current through it ("organising" or "translating" its ideas and concepts) which would alter the charge of the elements within the field, making them conform to the power that has been surged through them.

If we consider the situation within the force-field both prior to and after the energy has been passed through it (before and after its concepts have been "translated" by the researcher), we can see to what extent the maps of the two situations are similar or different. The following diagrams, Figures 12.1a and b below, demonstrate the changes that can be brought about by the imposition of a powerful organising framework. In these diagrams, a disorganised, randomly charged set of elements may be seen in the first force-field (a), whilst the second (b) demonstrates the same elements after they have been charged so that each conforms to a particular organising principle.

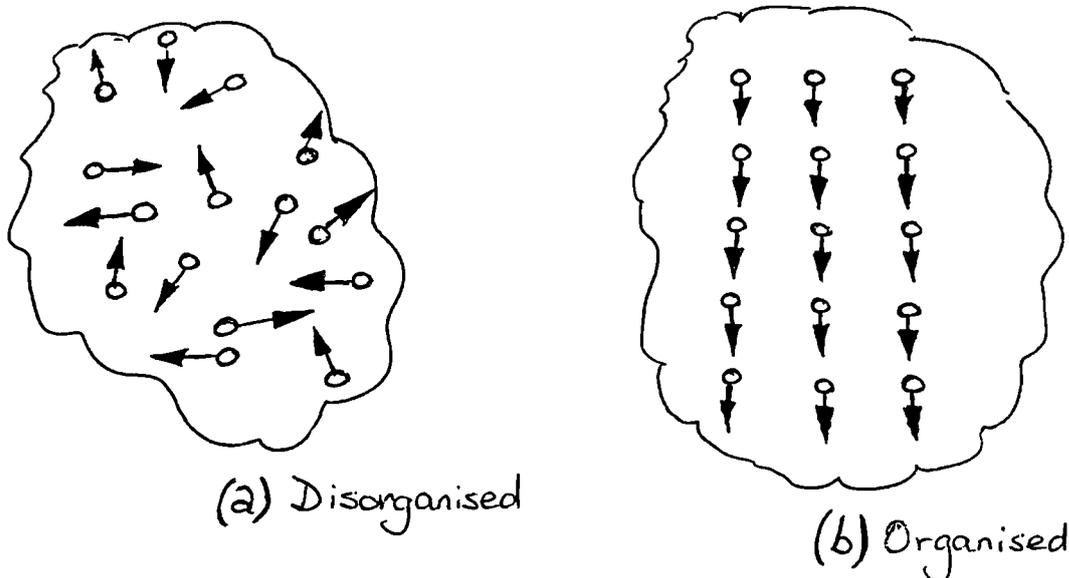


Figure 12.1 Force-field maps

Now, consider what would happen if, instead of passing a current through the force-field, we were to bring it into contact, over a prolonged period of time, with another force-field that was both larger and stronger (more well established). The elements within the stronger field are likely to exert a "pull" over those of the weaker one, ultimately resulting in part or all of it being subsumed (in Flood's terms, 1989a) within the more dominant force-field. Some aspects of one field may be able to resist the pull of the other if its repelling forces are powerful enough to avoid them being "sucked in".

Let us now apply the metaphor of force-fields directly to the process of complementarism as Flood and Jackson (1991a) describe it. Recall that the 'system of systems methodologies' provides a framework in which different methodologies can be aligned with distinctive problem-contexts. It has been suggested above that a force-field exerts a powerful organising influence over others, and this can be likened to the process of 'aligning methodologies' which has been undertaken by Flood

and Jackson (1991a).

Use of the force-field metaphor reveals that the potential to subsume other, embryonic paradigms (Jackson and Carter, 1991) is substantial. We can conceive of different force-fields as representing dominant, weak, or subordinate (etc.) paradigms. However they are viewed, it is apparent that the imperialist "pull" is a force to be reckoned with. It becomes more significant if no effort is made to resist the powerful influence of the mutual attractions between the two positions.

By focusing on the similarities (e.g., within localised contexts, like the systemic-pluralist or mechanical-unitary contexts of the 'system of systems methodologies'), or by considering the ways in which complementarity between methodologies occurs, a perspective may act to "suck in" others that it investigates. In this way, the inquiring approach will alter the other position, subjecting it to an imposed order.

The dangers become more apparent when one realises

that once a(n embryonic) field (paradigm) has come under the influence of another more powerful source of energy, it will be unable to "pull away" from the organising structure that has been imposed upon it. Arguably, this has happened to Ulrich's *Critical Systems Heuristics* (1983), which has been subsumed within the 'simple-coercive' context of the system of systems methodologies (Flood and Jackson, 1991a:53). Furthermore, once this structure has been imposed on a field, the map that is created becomes "frozen", static, unable to change itself through its interaction with others.

This means that, if we take the organising field to be complementarism, the map of methodologies and paradigms that has been presented in the 'system of systems methodologies' lacks the capacity to change itself, to learn about itself (and its social domain) through its interactions with other perspectives. This comment can be supported with reference to the literature: despite claims that the 'system of systems methodologies' is open to continual revision

(e.g., Jackson, 1990a,b, 1991a; Flood and Jackson, 1991a,b), there has only been one substantial change in its structure since 1984 (i.e., Jackson, 1987b).

The problems being faced by complementarists, as highlighted through the force-field analysis, revolve around its imperialistic tendencies and its inability to cope with the rapidly altering domain in which it is located. It cannot learn about itself through discourse with radically different perspectives since it strives to bring these into its own outlook in an open *but* conciliatory manner. It is therefore unable to provide an adequate foundation for our critical appreciation process.

We have spent some time considering the metaphor of the force-field as it can be applied to the complementarist perspective. A natural question to raise now is, how does the discordant pluralist position differ from that of complementarism? How can we understand discordant pluralism? Furthermore, we could ask, how does it compare

with complementarism in its efforts to provide a theoretical basis for the process of critical appreciation?

Before we come on to a direct comparison of complementarism and discordant pluralism, it would be useful to undertake a short exploration of how pluralism has been understood within the social sciences. Through this exploration, certain features of discordant pluralism will be uncovered which provide for the dynamism and learning that are required to underpin the critical appreciation process, which complementarism arguably lacks.

## 12.2 Pluralism and the Social Sciences

We saw in section two that "pluralism", or a burgeoning heterogeneity in both the subject matter and the approaches of workers within the community itself, is the acknowledged situation of the social sciences today. In other words, those who work in the domain of the social sciences cannot deny the plurality of their subject area.

In asking why such terms as "incommensurability", "plurality", "*différance*", or "otherness" have been the subject of debate within the social sciences (and philosophy more generally), Richard Bernstein (1991) draws attention to 'the "problem"' of 'the one and the many' which has puzzled philosophers (both East and West) for generations. Bernstein contends that

philosophers have always been concerned with understanding what underlies and pervades the multiplicity, diversity, and sheer contingency that we encounter in our everyday lives.

(Bernstein, 1991:58)

Given the variety of social lifeworlds, and the heterogeneity of lifestyle choices facing any individual, the question now has to be asked, how are we to respond to that plurality?

One response from within the systems domain, which we have documented, has been the development of the complementarist perspective. More recently, Jackson (1991a) has argued that there are a number of other pluralist perspectives which also utilise frameworks like the 'system of systems

methodologies'. These perspectives all seek to integrate or reconcile a range of approaches within the proposed framework. One such 'pluralist' perspective documented by Jackson (1991a) is that of Burrell and Morgan (1979), which we reviewed in section two.

An alternative pluralist view, proposed here, is that there are some paradigms, traditions, perspectives, value-systems, or cultures that are so antagonistic to one another that there is *no position from which they can be reconciled*. In adopting this perspective, we will be following Bernstein who argues that the positions of, for instance, modernists and post-modernists (e.g., Habermas and Derrida, respectively) are so diverse that they cannot be integrated in a single framework or viewpoint:

There are many aspects and problems in the writings of Habermas and Derrida... [but] we can [and should] read them as an *allegory* of the "modern/postmodern" condition. I reiterate what I said earlier. I do not think there is a theoretical perspective from which we can reconcile their differences, their otherness to each other - nor do I think we should smooth out their "aversions and attractions." The nasty questions that they raise about each other's

"project" need to be relentlessly pursued.

(Bernstein, 1991:225, emphasis in original and added)

Furthermore, we saw in chapter five that

our arguments and counter-arguments in support of rival paradigms may not be conclusive. We can appreciate how much skill, art, and imagination are required to do justice to what is distinctive about different ways of practicing science and how "in some areas" scientists "see different things".

(Bernstein, 1983:92-93)

In order to employ whatever skill, imagination or art that is required to be able to communicate with and consider the other in its best possible light, Bernstein recommends that the researcher treat the paradigms under consideration as *juxtaposed* within a 'constellation' (Adorno, cited in Jay, 1984) in which *both* the aversions *and* the attractions that each has for the other may be exposed. Drawing on this metaphor, Bernstein proposes that any researcher seeking to bring together elements of competing paradigms should avoid a "reconciliation under duress" (Adorno, 1977). In this way, the distinctive identity of each perspective may be held intact.

The approach being recommended involves the analysis of both the negative and positive "pulses" or points of energy contained within each constellation, whilst resisting the desire to invert or amend those aspects of the other position which conflict with one's own. This is what Bernstein (1991) has sought to do in his juxtapositioning of the modern and post-modern perspectives of Habermas and Derrida respectively. Bernstein suggests that 'the nasty questions that they raise about each other's "project" need to be relentlessly pursued' (Bernstein, 1991:225), but this does not imply a final *reconciliation*.

The constellation metaphor, mentioned above, will serve to underpin the discordant pluralist perspective. Let's take a more detailed look at it in order to see how it might help us to reveal how our pluralist perspective avoids the dangers of imperialism and the lack of dynamism revealed by the force-field metaphor and discussed earlier.

### 12.2.1 The "Constellation" Metaphor

By "constellation", I am referring to the stars and planets which comprise a particular view of the night sky. From different locations, at various times of the year, depending upon the weather, one view will be distinguishable from other, local and contingent perspectives.

A loose understanding of how our planetary/solar system functions provides insights into the use of this metaphor in revealing the aversions and attractions that different features of two (or more) juxtaposed constellations contain. The constellation metaphor offers us something more than that of the force-field, since it suggests the dynamic and changing nature of the phenomena under investigation. The force-field has a more "static" feel to it. The first characteristic which differentiates the two metaphors, then, is the degree of dynamism that each exhibits.

A second feature of the constellation which distinguishes it from a force-field is the nature

of the elements that might be found within them. A constellation is comprised of evolving phenomena, many of which are elusive and resist or avoid observation. The phenomena themselves are diverse, having different shapes, sizes, compositions, velocities, and so on. Some may seem more ephemeral than others.

The heterogeneity of any constellation is changing, often involving ruptures and contingent events that cannot be foreseen. Some phenomena recur at different times, in diverse settings. For example, the well-known "Haley's Comet" which comes around again every so many years could provide us with a metaphorical example of an element of 'perennial philosophy' within a particular constellation. The changing, dynamic nature of the constellation is without refutation. Different components have their own domains of attraction and repulsion, their own cycles of activity and inactivity which affect the way in which the constellation is viewed and understood.

A force-field, on the other hand, is much more

homogenous, both in its surface manifestations and in any 'depth analysis'. Once we have ascertained its elements, which will have a high degree of similarity, there are likely to be only minor changes to them. A force-field is a concrete, stable concept, which is why I contend that the constellation metaphor has more to offer us. However, it should be noted that, although the force-field is more homogenous and static, it is nevertheless possible to exert influence over it in order to alter its composition, thus introducing an element of (temporary) dynamism into it. Notwithstanding this, its imperative will always be to reassert itself, or the *status quo*.

If we now apply the constellation metaphor to a process being used to gain understanding of something that is alien or different, we may see more clearly the features that distinguish it from the force-field metaphor. For example, if two individuals, of different scientific traditions, were asked to describe their own "constellations" at any given moment in time, the descriptions might be as distinctive as if we had asked two

people in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres respectively to describe their night skies. Now, if we stand back from these viewpoints (take another perspective), it is possible to see that each person is describing some portion of a larger (interpreted, mediated) whole<sup>7</sup>. However, the content of the ground, the distance, between the two positions is not lost when using a constellation metaphor.

With a force-field analysis, we would also be able to appreciate that each individual is describing 'some portion of a larger whole', but the "distance" between the different perspectives, their aversions and antagonisms, would be lost. By bringing the two force-fields together under another perspective, we lose the understanding of their radical differences to each other. The over-arching nature of the force-field brings the positions together in a conciliation which belies their individuality.

Another distinction emerges when we consider what the mapping would be if we were to ask an

individual to describe the night sky on two separate occasions, perhaps a few months apart, from precisely the same location. The descriptions could potentially be enormously different, with weather, comet cycles, satellite paths, and so on, all playing a part in ensuring that the configuration of the constellation under observation will change. Situational factors would not necessarily affect the map of the force-field, whilst they could more easily impact upon any view of a constellation. The complexity of situational factors affecting "what we see" is far more significant with a constellation than it is with a force-field.

Now, I want to suggest that *any* appreciation of another's position will be subtly altered on each subsequent occasion that it is considered. What I am proposing is that since every effort to engage in conversation with an opponent involves the history of previous debates, the understanding that can be gained will be different each time. Our appreciation of alien perspectives, like any constellation, will be dynamic, and contingent.

Clearly, the "force-field" metaphor is not capable of capturing this dynamism, since descriptions of the same field at different points in time provide a largely unchanged vision of what is under observation.

Having witnessed the ways in which the two metaphors may be applied in practice, it is now possible to summarise the features of a discordant pluralist perspective. This will assist in the comparative evaluation of complementarism and discordant pluralism which will bring this chapter to a close.

### 12.3 Discordant Pluralism

Richard Bernstein's (1991) application of the constellation metaphor to the work of Derrida and Habermas drew upon an earlier review of Adorno's intellectual output undertaken by Martin Jay (1984). Both of these analyses provide insights into how we are to understand the discordant pluralist perspective. Jay, for example, suggests

that Adorno's constellation can be understood as having at least five "bright stars", which include both modernist and post-modernist elements:

- (1) 'Western Marxism';
- (2) 'aesthetic modernism';
- (3) 'mandarin cultural conservatism';
- (4) the 'muted but nonetheless palpable Jewish impulse'; and,
- (5) 'deconstructionism'<sup>8</sup>.

Such a mapping is not a 'once and for all time' picture of the "stars" within Adorno's constellation. On the contrary, Jay advises us that his

work as a whole can best be grasped as an uneasy tension among all of them. ... We must rather, in a way that is more in accord with the deepest impulses of his own approach, understand him as the shifting nodal point in which all intersect.

(Jay, 1984:22-23)

Although Jay refers to Adorno as *being* 'the shifting nodal point', it is possible to translate this into an understanding of any discordant

pluralist perspective in which diverse and radically different positions 'intersect' in a 'shifting nodal point' - a constellation.

This, then, is how we are to understand discordant pluralism: namely, as a position which represents a 'shifting nodal point' in which different, competing and conflicting perspectives may intersect in a tension which lasts only a critical moment. There may be many unresolved ambiguities and tensions in the plane which represents the constellation of that particular *local and historically contingent* pluralist perspective, but these will serve to enrich the understanding of those who participate in the critical appreciation process which brings it forth into being.

The discordant pluralist perspective sees distinctive theoretical positions as *supplementing* one another, rather than competing with one another. This view is carried over into its understanding of the methodologies which any specific theoretical perspective is linked with. In practice this means that methodologies from the

empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic traditions will be seen as capable of assisting each other in providing a rich understanding of the situation being investigated. As we have seen in the methodological guidelines for critical self-reflection and ideology-critique, each perspective has a role to fulfil in providing for both "scientific" and "reflexive inquiry".

This view of *supplementary* theoretical perspectives allows for incommensurability at a theoretical level, thereby avoiding the danger of sliding into imperialism by subsumption. Since it focuses on the differences, the aversions, *as much as* the similarities or attractions between oppositional stances, it is able to set up a tension which repels other constellations. There is a to-ing and fro-ing in the mutual attractions and aversions that theoretical positions have for each other.

Discordant pluralism can be understood, then, as having three main features which have already been highlighted in our consideration of the

constellation metaphor, and which will be further elaborated now. The first of these is its local, contingent, and historically situated nature. Second, discordant pluralism promotes communication with other, radically different and alien perspectives. Here, the emphasis is on communication which can help us 'come to a deeper understanding of ourselves precisely in and through the study of others' (Bernstein, 1983:96). The third feature concerns the use of insights gained through such communication to provide for ethical decision making. This is achieved through the juxtapositioning of oppositional view-points within a constellation that supports *both* one perspective *and* the other. Issues need no longer be framed in an "either/or" manner.

The three characteristics are intertwined with one another, and provide a firm basis for our critical appreciation process. This will be demonstrated as we consider each of the above aspects of discordant pluralism in turn.

### 12.3.1 The Historical, Local and Contingent Nature of Discordant Pluralism

I have argued that our social situation is one of plurality and heterogeneity. This requires some response from individuals, particularly as it exerts pressures on them to make lifestyle choices. Responses need to be guided, and I have argued that an appropriate source of guidance can be found in the critical appreciation process, supported by a dynamic discordant pluralism. Both the critical appreciation process, due to its cyclical nature, and discordant pluralism highlight the need for decisions (choices) to be seen as both locally and historically contingent.

Let me provide an example to clarify what I mean here. During the 1950s, there were a number of policy decisions taken to commission nuclear-power supplies. Today, the ambiguous moral situation regarding side effects of this and other energy-production technologies serves to highlight the ways in which problem-solving decisions may be understood as historically situated. We can also

note that the same decisions would not necessarily have been taken in another location at that time (for example, in a country with a potentially rich supply of hydro-electricity sources<sup>9</sup>).

Clearly, the inherently contingent nature of problems requires a method which can adapt in response to specific contingencies being faced. I have suggested that discordant pluralism offers the degree of dynamism needed, in that the "constellation" of perspectives or methodologies at the disposal of the researcher can 'shift' and alter. Now, although the above discussion focuses on localised decision-making, the contingent nature of problems (and therefore of their resolutions) would appear to call for a discourse to be established with a wider community that is neither locally nor historically constrained. This is needed in order that we avoid the danger of making all decisions purely contingent and therefore *relativistic*. There must be some means for assessing whether particular decisions may have wider consequences of an evil or repressive nature.

Ulrich (1983) suggests that local communities can arrive at policy decisions which are not relativistic by building in a component of inquiry which allows for a critical consideration of the boundaries of both the problem situation and the community itself. He has sought to pragmatise Habermas's references to a *theoretical* wider community, termed the 'counterfactual society' (Habermas, 1984, 1989). Ulrich (1983) suggests that we can move towards this ideal (of discourse with a counterfactual society) by bringing in "witnesses" whose role is to speak on behalf of both themselves and others (for example, future generations) who may be affected but not involved in the systems design process. The critical appreciation process, when based on discordant pluralism, can provide for discourse which is akin to the kind of debate that both Ulrich and Habermas advocate.

What I am suggesting is that it could be unjust to arrive at a purely local and historical decision that might cause harm or subjugate another individual or group. There is a need, therefore,

to establish communication between a local community and the wider society, as well as between different factions within the community. Clearly, both intra- and inter-paradigmatic communication are required.

### 12.3.2. Discordant Pluralism and Communication

A further feature of discordant pluralism, then, is its ability to provide for discourse between two (or more) opposing perspectives, which could each contain elements that are perceived as "legitimate" and that conflict with one another. In such circumstances, it is often the case that no amount of rational argumentation, or even the 'force of the better argument' (Habermas, 1976), can provide a consensus on which all are in agreement.

Now, I am 'not suggesting that "anything goes" or that there is never any way of sorting out better or worse arguments' (Bernstein, 1991:221). There is a need for debate about what are "good" arguments and what are not, and for discussion

about how we can choose between different positions that are conflicting. What the bringing together of discordant pluralism and critical appreciation seems to suggest, however, is that any "consensus" (about what good arguments are, etc.) will always be locally determined and historically contingent, and yet will also be referred to a wider community for critique. What I am suggesting is that such decisions ought to be arrived at through discourse guided by both critical appreciation and discordant pluralism.

The model of self-society dynamics, which was proposed in chapter ten, clarifies the role of reflexive discourse in mediating between individuals (or factions) and the wider society. Discordant pluralism can support the radical differences between alien perspectives by bringing them together in a constellation, a 'juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle' (Jay, 1984:14-15). The resulting discourse is 'not a relativistic chaos of

unrelated factors, but a dialectical model' (Jay, 1984:15) in which issues may be framed in a manner that allows both one perspective and one or many others to present their respective cases. We shall consider this reframing of polemical positions (that nevertheless requires individual ethical judgements) next.

### 12.3.3 Discordant Pluralism and Ethical Judgements

We can clarify how discordant pluralism supports the use of critical appreciation in making ethical judgements by considering an example - the current, on-going debate about abortion<sup>10</sup>. Now, our discordant pluralist would suggest that any individual seeking to determine his or her views on whether abortion should be legal or not ought to listen to arguments being advanced by the proponents of two oppositional positions: the so-called "pro-lifers" and "womens' rights" movements. On the one hand, there are those who claim that, from the moment of conception, life is sacrosanct. On the other hand, there are others who believe that any woman has the right to choose

whether or not to undergo the full experience of child-bearing. Each may draw on emotive arguments to support their case. The problem might be framed in the following way: either we should sanction cruelty to women by denying them the freedom of choice in relation to their own bodies, or we should sanction cruelty to unborn children by denying them the right to life.

Each individual may be forced to choose "either/or" both for themselves and for society more generally. However, the problem will not be resolved if the issue is framed in this way, i.e., as a single "either/or" decision, since it forces individuals to become entrenched in fundamentalist positions. This kind of choice precludes the possibility of further questioning, or of further choices, since it closes down discussion between the two, antagonistic viewpoints. By reframing the question in a way that recognises the legitimacies of each position, further questioning (discourse) may take place. The "both/and" position, which is the stance taken by both discordant pluralists and individuals employing a critical appreciation

process, is a *third* perspective through which the legitimacies of each value-system can be brought together in a critically appreciative discourse.

The "both/and" perspective allows argumentation that concerns the limits (or boundaries) of choice in any given situation under investigation. For example, if abortion is sanctioned (i.e., supporting women's rights), then (recognising the counter-legitimacy of the rights of the unborn child) it is possible to ask at what point in the pregnancy termination may be allowed, and under what specific circumstances. From the other angle, if abortion is not to be sanctioned (that is, supporting the right to life), then (understanding the rights that women have over their bodies) it becomes possible to consider if there could be some special circumstances under which abortion would be allowed, and if so, until what stage in the pregnancy could it be sanctioned? Clearly, this form of supplementary questioning entails some other mechanism than simple confrontation for dealing with the conflicts that arise in striving to mediate between the two positions.

A natural response would be to say that this is what we have right now, with legal arbitration systems to provide adjudication. However, we have already seen, in chapter nine, that contemporary critics like Habermas (1976) and Giddens (1991) contend that institutions like the legal system are unable to deal with local and historical contingencies which reflect individuals' real interests. The rational argumentation provided by such institutions is not "up to the job", because the structure (whether formal or informal) which supports their decision making processes is *itself* in need of revision. Here we are replaying the argument provided in chapter ten, which suggested that both structural and processual changes at micro and macro levels would be required in order for any transformation efforts to be liberating. Bernstein tells us that

Any society must have some procedures for dealing with conflicts that cannot be resolved by argumentation - even when all parties are committed to rational argumentation.

(Bernstein, 1991:221)

The discordant pluralist would propose that in

circumstances like these, when there can clearly be no absolute resolution, no final reconciliation of the two perspectives, no ultimate consensus, one must listen and one must use one's critical faculties to decide in a local, historical manner. In listening and employing a critical appreciation, the debate needs to take place within a forum in which incommensurable stances may be juxtaposed in a shifting constellation of 'changing elements that resist reduction'. Such a constellation may *legitimately* eliminate elements of otherness which have been identified as illegitimate - for example, fascism, apartheid, sexism, and so on. The ways in which we intervene (i.e., to eliminate evil aspects of what is different) must have an orientation which is openly declared for critical appreciation (critique) by others. Being too conciliatory may result in the subsumption of aspects of an alien position which lead to the dominant perspective becoming (or remaining) corrupted<sup>11</sup>.

Having considered some features of the discordant pluralist perspective more generally, it should

now be clear that any particular (discordant) pluralist perspective has to be simply one amongst many. Such a perspective will also be subject to radical shifts and changes in its composition over time. This indicates that there is (and will continue to be in the future) a plurality of pluralist perspectives, some of which will have more to recommend them than others.

It is now possible to undertake a final, comparative evaluation of the complementarist and discordant pluralist stances.

#### 12.4 Comparing Complementarism and Discordant Pluralism

In his development of Jackson's arguments for pluralism in the systems sciences, Flood (1990a) set out to (re)concile the paradigms of Jürgen Habermas (who has been described as a modernist) and Michel Foucault (of the school of French post-modernism) by viewing them as *complementary* positions. Flood's efforts to reconcile the two

radically different perspectives can be compared with the discordant pluralist's approach described above. I shall be arguing that Flood, as a complementarist, succumbs to the dangers of imperialism by subsumption.

Let me begin by summarising Flood's arguments. At the risk of reducing these enormously, I will attempt to draw out the 'critical kernel' (Jackson, 1991). Flood suggests that 'Foucault's critique can release suppressed ideas of discourse', whilst Habermas's knowledge-constitutive interests will be able to deal 'critically with the tensions between rationalities' (ideas of discourse) (Flood, 1990a:48).

The debate between Habermas and Foucault has often been conducted through a third party, as for example in Flood's work, rather than by the authors themselves. By reconstructing their debate (which is, to some extent, the debate that others suggest Habermas and Foucault would have) concerning the nature of concepts as diverse as

history, knowledge and power, Flood wants to show that the two positions *share features*. It is these common aspects that, despite their differences, will enable them to be used within a 'meta-unity' which he terms 'Liberating Systems Theory'.

Cooper and Burrell (1988) point out these variations, noting that Habermas has been vigorous in his criticisms of Foucault and that the groundings [of the two positions] appear to conflict. From another angle [that of complementarism], however, a commonality that turns out to be a linchpin in the following studies, can be found at a meta-level, and is characterized as an open and conciliatory approach to competing views and traditions.

(Flood, 1990a:22-23)

Flood does acknowledge that overcoming the contradictions that emerge from the ways in which the two theoreticians conceive of power is 'extremely difficult'. However, this does not prevent him from striving to achieve

an adequate epistemology that is constructed from the complementarist ideas of Foucault's Interpretive Analytics and Habermas' knowledge-constitutive interests.

(Flood, 1990a:50)

There is indeed a critically appreciative kernel

within Flood's work since he makes many observations which accord with the discordant pluralist perspective being advanced within this thesis. For example, he stresses that 'the only unchanging basic thesis of critical thinking is that it is itself changeable' (Flood, 1990a:50). Furthermore, he cites the 'openness' of the complementarist perspective, although this is usually coupled with comments about its conciliatory nature. We have seen above that such a conciliation is simply *not good enough*. It exerts illegitimate forces over the perspectives being brought together within the force-field, thereby subsuming them in an imperialistic manner. In contrast to discordant pluralists, complementarists are not able and willing 'to listen to others without denying or suppressing the otherness of the other' (Bernstein, 1991:336). The result of this is that Flood's (1990a) attempt to bring together the modernist perspective of Habermas and the post-modernist view of Foucault denatures the work of both of them.

To an extent, the main difference between these

two pluralist positions is captured in their titles: the *complementarist* wishes to use theoretical approaches in complementary ways, whilst the *discordant pluralist* would allow discordant theoretical approaches to *both challenge and supplement* one another. The need for an approach which does not reduce 'the other to the same' becomes clearer when one recognises the potential for illegitimate domination that such a stance could open up. A significant failing of the complementarist perspective is its inability to critically judge the diverse perspectives which they are asked to consider. This is important since,

an uncritical celebration and valorization of plurality, differences, and otherness harbors its own dangers. What is too frequently obscured is the need to make critical discriminations and judgments. Not all forms of otherness and difference are to be celebrated.

(Bernstein, 1991:313)

Now, we have seen that many critical systems thinkers wish to draw upon the "strengths and weaknesses" of a number of different methodologies which are available for problem-solving within

their domain. This need has resulted in the provision of a framework (the 'system of systems methodologies') which arguably allows a variety of methodologies to be used in different problem-contexts. Methodologies and theories are not, therefore, seen as providing supplementary support and critiques of one another. Rather, they are viewed as having specific domains in which they are most appropriately called upon. Communication between the competing perspectives is thus limited to conversation imposed by the parent methodology (*Total Systems Intervention*, Flood and Jackson, 1991a) in which discussion of choices concerning which approach is appropriate ("either/or") constrains and reduces other possibilities.

It is clear, therefore, that the purpose of complementarism is quite distinct from that of the discordant pluralist perspective which has been outlined above. Complementarism seeks 'openness and conciliation', whilst discordant pluralism wishes to facilitate a transformation process through understanding of self and others. The

complementarist legitimates his or her position through immanent critique and through the recognition of limitations, whilst the discordant pluralist's position is legitimated by its critique of *both* similarities *and* differences, in which methodologies are viewed as challenging and supplementing one another.

These comparisons can be more readily understood if presented in a tabular form, as shown below in Table 12.1.

	LEGITIMATION	IMPLICATION	PURPOSE
COMPLEMENTARISM	Immanent legitimacy <u>and</u> limitations	Reason how to "do it" but always remain critical	Conciliation of alien paradigms
PRAGMATISM	Anything goes, everything is legitimate	If it seems good "do it"	Practical, effective outcomes
ISOLATIONISM	Totalising legitimacy	"Do it" this way	Domination of a field of study
DISCORDANT PLURALISM	Legitimates similarities <u>and</u> differences	Seeks to gain critical appreciation	Transformation through understanding of self and others

*Table 12.1 Paradigmatic Positions Compared*  
(adapted from Flood, 1990a:161)

In this table, I am following Flood's (1990a) suggestion that it is possible to detail the legitimations and implications of adopting either an isolationist, a pragmatist, or a complementarist perspective. The modified table incorporates comments about the discordant pluralist perspective.

It has been argued that any pluralist position which seeks to be too conciliatory may fail to learn from the radical differences and otherness of the other. This would seem to suggest that the discordant pluralist perspective has a great deal to commend it, and provides an adequate theoretical foundation for the critical appreciation process.

### 12.5 Conclusion

It has been shown in this chapter that there are several forms of extant pluralism, and the likelihood is that new forms will continue to be developed. A variety of pluralism termed

"discordant pluralism", which is not to be confused with complementarism, offers a distinctive and dynamic basis for our model of critical appreciation. By incorporating the "constellation" metaphor as part of our analysis of what is alien and other, in which the antagonisms and aversions as well as the complementary features of an alien perspective can be analysed, it has been suggested that the critical appreciation model is significantly enriched. It has been shown that discordant pluralism pays tribute to the differences, otherness and alterity of alien paradigms or traditions, but has to be coupled with a critical appreciation in order to answer ethical questions about the rightness or legitimacy of a particular perspective.

The analysis undertaken so far has provided us with a vision of critical thinking that contains methodological guidelines for critical self-reflection and ideology-critique, and which is supported by a theoretical grounding in discordant pluralism. It has been argued that the use of the

fully elaborated process of critical appreciation will provide for the emancipation of individuals and groups. This suggests that the discordant pluralist, critical appreciation process can satisfy all of the commitments of critical systems thinking, an issue that we will consider in the next chapter, chapter thirteen.

### Notes

1. I shall use Flood and Jackson's terminology (complementarism) in the remainder of this account when referring to their version of pluralism, unless 'pluralism' or one of its derivatives has been used in material which is being quoted. I shall retain 'pluralism' for other versions, and particularly for my own brand, discordant pluralism.

2. I do not intend to suggest here that all versions of pluralism are 'inherently consensus oriented'. There are certainly forms of pluralism that are not. However, underlying the meta-theory

of Flood and Jackson's methodology, *Total Systems Intervention* (1991a), there can be detected a "drive for consensus" which distinguishes its particular brand of complementarism from other forms of pluralism. This "drive" arises from the form the meta-theory takes, i.e., it is a framework which aligns 'problem-situations' with 'problem-solving' methodologies.

3. Although the complementarist perspective is part of the commitments of critical systems thinking, which include commitments to 'critical and social awareness', these should not be confused with the guidelines for ideology-critique and critical self-reflection which I have elaborated. Complementarism, even when coupled with 'critical awareness and social awareness', is not equivalent to critical appreciation which incorporates critical self-reflection and ideology-critique. Chapter thirteen of the thesis considers the five commitments and relates them to the fully elaborated, discordant pluralist, critical appreciation process.

4. 'Imperialism' has already been discussed in chapter four. The use of the term in the systems domain will be detailed later in this chapter.

5. "Immanent" critique has been discussed in chapter five, where I drew on a description from Fuenmayor (1990a, 1990b, 1991).

6. "Force-field analysis" is referred to within Organisational Development (see, for example, Burke, 1987), and is a concept which was elaborated by Kurt Lewin (1948, 1951). His use of a 'force-field' metaphor should not be confused with that presented by Adorno, who does not share Lewin's aim of 'problem-solving' in organisations. Lewin's force-field analysis has the purpose of ascertaining what forces are driving for change and what forces are acting to restrain, or prevent, a change from taking place. One may then either reduce the resisting forces or increase the driving forces in order that the required change be carried through. The following diagram, shown overleaf, is typical of those used to facilitate such analysis.

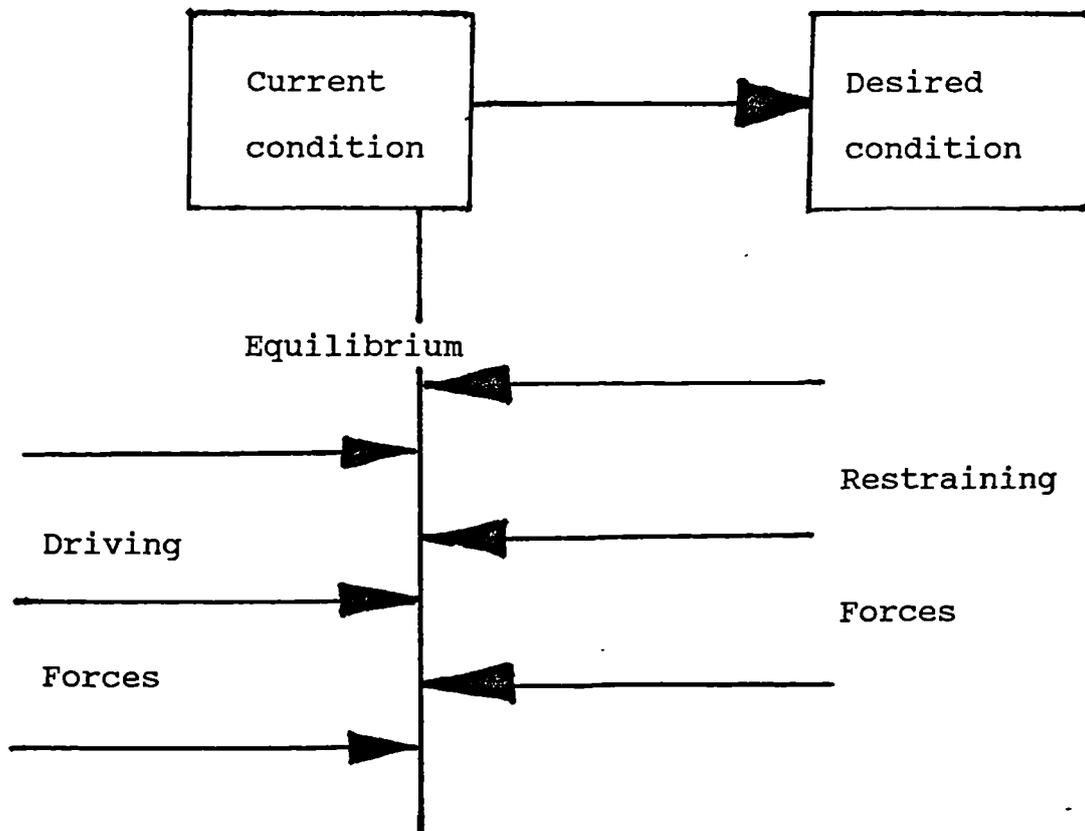


Figure 12.2 Force-field Analysis (adapted from Kast and Rosenzweig, 1986:638)

An interesting side issue here, noted by Burke, is that Lewin (like Adorno) was 'a Jew who escaped Hitler's Germany in the 1930s' (1987:37). A simple conjecture here, that Lewin had access to Adorno's work and modified it for the North American domain he eventually settled in, might provide a line of

inquiry for later work. This could potentially link Organizational Development scholars with critical social theorists and, thereby, with critical systems thinkers.

7. Although the relationships here are those between a third-party observer and the phenomena he or she observes, it is possible to extend the metaphor further and to consider the added complexity that would emerge if the observer were to *interact* with the elements in the constellation.

8. It is not my intention to elaborate on the "stars" of Adorno's constellation, which are, in any event, tangential to the subject of my thesis. The interested reader can consult Jay (1984, pp.14-21) for an elaboration of these.

9. Of course, I am simplifying the situation here. It is likely that decisions of the nature I have been discussing would involve a range of other factors besides whether or not the location is provided with a potentially rich supply of

hydro-electricity, coal, North Sea gas or whatever.

10. I am drawing on an argument from Bernstein (1991) who drew on the abortion issue in discussing Rorty's *liberal irony* (1989). The account given here is elaborated somewhat to demonstrate the extent to which such issues require a "both/and" framing in order that discourse may continue in the face of unresolvable differences (incommensurabilities).

11. Of course, the position I am suggesting here is unashamedly *normative*. It requires that individuals engage in critical appreciation guided by discordant pluralism, and without this commitment (to critical self- and societal awareness) it will fail to achieve the liberation or emancipation that I have claimed it is capable of. Such a failure could occur as a result of the strength of any form of fundamentalism which rejects the call to be critical. If a group of fundamentalists (e.g., National Front supporters) were in a majority, or had some other power base

from which to operate, they could illegitimately subjugate any drive for critical thinking, adopting an isolationist's strategy (to use the terminology of Jackson, 1987a). In being normative, I have tried to account for this possibility by suggesting an *intrinsic* source of motivation to participate in a critical appreciation process. Motivation should be derived from the knowledge that, by listening to others, an individual will also have his or her own concerns addressed (see chapter ten for a more detailed discussion of this). However, it remains to be seen whether fundamentalists will indeed be sufficiently motivated to abandon their 'closed' positions and enter into open discourse.

CHAPTER 13: CRITICAL SYSTEMS COMMITMENTS AND THE  
CRITICAL APPRECIATION PROCESS

This chapter considers the relationships between the critical systems commitments suggested by Jackson (1991b) and the process of critical appreciation<sup>1</sup> elaborated throughout this thesis. Jackson contends that five commitments have already been developed within critical systems thinking (see chapter two for more details):

by about 1990, critical systems thinking had come to rest upon five "commitments" - critical awareness, social awareness, complementarism at the methodological level, complementarism at the theoretical level, and a dedication to human emancipation.

(Jackson, 1991b:132)

Each of these commitments - to 'critical awareness', 'social awareness', 'emancipation', 'complementarism at the methodological level', and 'complementarism at the theoretical level' - will be considered in turn. It has been shown (in chapter two) that Jackson's conceptualisation of the commitments does not fully accord with the spirit of critical social science in that he ties each of them to methodology. Consequently, there

is a need to "reframe" them, to bring them together in a new constellation, which is what this thesis has set out to do. By reframing the commitments, it will be demonstrated that the critical appreciation process can satisfy them all.

We will commence our discussion of each commitment with a brief summary based on the work of Jackson (1991b), and conclude with a reiteration of the need for a new constellation within critical systems thinking and practice.

### 13.1 'Critical Awareness' and Critical Self-Reflection

For Jackson, critical awareness is primarily tied to knowledge and understanding *in general* about methodologies, whilst for critical social theorists it arises from a process of *particular self-reflection* that each social theorist, social actor, practitioner, or whoever, must undertake themselves in order to achieve critical awareness.

We saw in chapter eight that critical self-reflection is analogous to the process of dream-analysis proposed by Freud. In being critically self-reflective, each individual may employ a procedure of testing the validity-claims which are implicit within their communicative action (Habermas, 1979, 1984, 1989). Giddens (1990a) shows how the use of such a procedure "mirrors" the psycho-analytic encounter in which the analyst attempts to get beyond the surface content of what an individual tells him or her:

What the patient says in free association may not be intelligible, either to the patient or, initially, to the analyst. Its factual content may be in some part false (as in fantasies). The patient may make claims in an unjustified way - for example, blaming others for acts for which they could not reasonably be held responsible. Finally, the patient may either consciously or unconsciously attempt to deceive the analyst in order to resist or evade the implications to which the process of analysis is leading. The aim of psychoanalytic therapy can thus be construed as that of making it possible for the patient to escape whatever psychological limitations inhibit the successful justification of validity-claims in day-to-day discourse.

(Giddens, 1990a:129)

This highlights the need for the process of

critical self-reflection to be an explicit part of any critical inquiry, which should also incorporate components (or "moments", to use the terminology of Midgley, 1992b) of objective and interpretive inquiry. A commitment to critical self-reflection, rather than critical awareness, would ensure that each participant contemplates whether: (1) what is being said makes sense, or is intelligible; (2) what is being said is true or false; (3) what is being proposed can be socially and morally justified; and, (4) what is being said is sincerely intended.

Clearly, the process of critical appreciation, in its moment of critical self-reflection, can provide for a commitment to critical self-awareness.

### 13.2 'Social Awareness' and Ideology-Critique

Critical awareness is to be distinguished from *social awareness*, which Jackson (1991b) tells us

should make users of systems  
methodologies contemplate the

consequences of use of the approaches they employ. ... Social awareness also involves recognizing that there are certain organizational and societal pressures which lead to certain systems theories and methodologies being popular for guiding interventions at particular times.

(Jackson, 1991b:139-40)

Here, practitioners are urged to give 'full consideration to the social consequences of use of different systems methodologies' (Jackson, 1991b: 143).

Now, we saw in chapter nine that many ideology critics (Marx, Habermas and Giddens, for instance) try to *anticipate* a future condition of the society they are investigating, and to some extent this accords with Jackson's requirement that practitioners think about the social impacts of their engagement in social problem-solving. However, we also noted that ideology-critiques in general should strive to uncover the processes whereby specific injustices of the contemporary society have been historically created. This involves a process rather like that of critical self-reflection in which the critic can question the intelligibility, the truth content, the moral

or social rightness, and the sincere intentions of actors engaged in recreating the status quo of a particular social group or community under investigation.

Jackson (1991b) discusses the need to critique the values flowing into a particular systems design, which does (to some extent) reflect one of the validity-claims (of moral and social rightness) that I contend should be tested in gaining "social awareness". This form of critique is closely tied to the means for emancipating individuals, since declaring values can act to "raise the consciousness" of those involved in the process of critique, thereby helping to "transform their situation".

Ideology-critique, as elucidated in chapter nine, is also a means for achieving social awareness through which the transformation of a situation may be achieved. Indeed, the process of ideology-critique can arguably reveal more details of the problem context being reviewed than can the "reflection on possible consequences of particular

methodology use" suggested by Jackson (1991b). The form of ideology-critique being advanced in our model of critical appreciation involves not only Jackson's reflection on consequences, but also seeks to unearth any mechanisms serving to create or sustain inequities (or false consciousness) in the social situation being investigated, regardless of whether or not they flow from the use of any particular methodology. Such a process can also guide a practitioner's decision-making with regard to the projects or client groups that he or she accepts as legitimate "targets" for a critical systems intervention. Like critical social science approaches, the guidelines for a critically appreciative ideology-critique have the purpose of revealing any inequities, injustices and subjugations that exist within any situation. As part of such revelation it is possible to anticipate a future society free from such constraints, in which groups of people have been liberated from oppressive ideologies.

Chapter ten of the thesis clarified the roles that both critical awareness and social awareness play

in *emancipating* individuals and groups. It is the commitment to emancipation that we will consider next.

### 13.3 Human Emancipation

It was suggested earlier, following Jackson (1991b), that all critical systems thinkers should dedicate themselves to the ideal of emancipation in their interventions, whether at a societal or organisational level. The third commitment, then, is one to which Jackson argues all critical systems thinkers should pledge themselves:

critical systems thinking is *dedicated to human emancipation* and seeks to achieve for all individuals the maximum development of their potential. This is to be achieved by raising the quality of work and life in the organizations and societies in which they participate.

(Jackson, 1991b:141)

In chapter two we saw that Jackson (1991b) suggests that any methodology which is to provide for human emancipation must be able to help practitioners reflect upon material conditions.

Furthermore, it ought to be able to provide a means for choosing between designs that could 'benefit the powerful' as opposed to those that would help 'the oppressed'. According to Jackson, an emancipatory methodology should enable practitioners to 'understand how social systems function and how they can be changed' whilst ensuring that 'the rationalities of oppressed groups express their proper interests' (Jackson, 1991c:614). As we shall see, these requirements can all be met by the critical appreciation process, as it was developed in chapter ten.

In chapter ten a model of 'self-society dynamics' was presented, which suggested that individual and social emancipation could only be achieved through a process that transforms both individual and group conceptualisations of their social setting, together with a transformation of the individual and group actions that serve to (re)create the social structure. The self-reflective questions (about intelligibility, truth, rightness and sincerity) outlined for a critical self-reflection may once more be utilised to guide consideration

of issues to do with 'material conditions' and different 'value-systems'.

Clearly, any researcher who wishes to provide for the emancipation of individuals or groups must be able to 'see through' any ideological distortions that have helped to create a situation of inequity. The model of self-society dynamics suggests that individuals (and groups) with different value-systems can enter into a discourse, guided by the critical appreciation process, in which the ethical basis of a situation can be considered.

Furthermore, when grounded in the discordant pluralism discussed in chapter twelve, a critical appreciation process can provide a *third-party* perspective from which even radically oppositional viewpoints may be evaluated. The use of the methodological guidelines set out in chapters eight and nine ought, then, to provide for the desired emerging property of *emancipation*.

Our discussion of the commitment to emancipation

has already raised the issue of methodological plurality, in that it has been suggested that both 'material conditions' and different 'value-systems' will need to be considered. It can be implied from this (and this was made explicit in chapter two) that different approaches will be required for each aspect of the critical appreciation process. It is the subject of the range of methodologies and the manner in which they are to be employed that we now turn to.

#### 13.4 Methodological Complementarism and Critical Appreciation

Jackson (1991b) sees "complementarity" of methodologies as providing a route out of the trap of paradigm incommensurability. However, as we saw in chapter twelve, complementarism views different approaches as having their unique contexts and not, therefore, as capable of supplementing one another to provide a truly enriched understanding of the problem being investigated. It is because of this that complementarism cannot escape from

sliding into imperialism.

Now, the model of critical appreciation outlined in chapter six was shown to incorporate both empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic methodologies. These traditions were indeed demonstrated to *supplement* one another in both scientific and reflexive modes of inquiry. Furthermore, the methodological guidelines provided in chapters eight and nine restated the role of different methodologies in supporting each other in providing an enriched understanding of any problem situation. Clearly, the process of critical appreciation is based on methodological *pluralism* in which approaches are used to challenge and support each other.

Additionally, we considered a form of 'discordant pluralism' in chapter twelve, which, it was suggested, could bring diverse methodologies together into a new and dynamic constellation where both their 'aversions and attractions' could be considered, and where contradictions could be utilised to provide different insights in any

process of critical inquiry. Instead of "aligning" methodologies to appropriate problem contexts, the discordant pluralist perspective uses the tensions and aversions between different positions to gain improved self-awareness which provides for the dynamism and learning that any critical approach requires. The discordant pluralist perspective was shown to be better able to provide an adequate grounding for the critical appreciation process.

In suggesting that critical systems thinkers should be committed to methodological pluralism, Jackson (1991b) intended that methodologies be used in an "either/or" framing, rather like that suggested by the 'system of systems methodologies' framework. By proposing a new vision of pluralism, the discordant pluralist perspective, I have sought to provide for the possibility of changes and dynamism that critical thinking requires in order not to become dogmatic in its critical endeavours. Here, the pluralist usage of diverse methodologies involves a "both/and" framing that sees methodologies as supplementing each other's inquiries. The commitment to methodological

pluralism is therefore satisfied, and our understanding of what it means is enhanced in the process.

### 13.5 Theoretical Complementarism and Critical Appreciation

The fifth commitment that we have to consider is closely allied to the fourth in that it also provides for complementarism, although this time it is at a theoretical level:

*Complementarism at the theoretical level is a necessary accompaniment to complementarism at the level of methodology. This requires an equal commitment to the complementary and informed development of all varieties of systems approaches.*

(Jackson, 1991b:140)

Once again, this vision of complementarism as providing a basis for 'transcending' the difficulties of paradigm incommensurability was contested in chapter twelve. There we saw that this pluralist perspective suffers from the danger of slipping into imperialism because of its

efforts to 'conciliate' between radically different perspectives. Furthermore, by linking theoretical positions to respective methodologies, Jackson ties different perspectives to specific problem-contexts within the framework of the 'system of systems methodologies'. In contradistinction, I argued that the discordant pluralist *must* bring such diverse approaches together in a 'shifting nodal point', which is locally and historically contingent, in order that the pluralist perspective itself can remain capable of learning not only about other positions, but also about itself.

In reframing Jackson's (1991b) commitment to theoretical complementarity, which was based on commensurability between different paradigms which each had distinct methodologies associated with them, I suggested that the aversions, tensions and contradictions of radically different positions should not be minimised. Instead, the discordant pluralist perspective was proposed as a new constellation in which otherness and difference could be utilised in any critical inquiry. Through

this reframing, our critical appreciation process is able to fulfil the commitment to theoretical pluralism.

### 13.6 Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that the critical systems commitments of Jackson (1991b) need to be reframed so that they can provide an adequate basis for any process of critical inquiry. The process of critical appreciation, grounded in discordant pluralism, has been shown to be an approach which draws on the critical social sciences to facilitate the reframing of the commitments, thus freeing them from a restricted methodological domain. Furthermore, it has been shown to satisfy the more broadly contextualised commitments. The critical appreciation approach and discordant pluralism, then, serves to provide critical systems thinkers with a 'new constellation' of critical systems commitments.

## Notes

1. I am simply referring to 'critical appreciation' when I mean the fully elaborated version that is underpinned by discordant pluralism. It has been shown, in chapter twelve, that the discordant pluralist perspective can provide an adequate foundation for the process of critical appreciation.

## CHAPTER 14: CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, I intend to reconsider the inter-related aims which were detailed in the introduction to the thesis. These will be studied in light of my arguments contained in sections one to four. These arguments represent work that either consolidates or makes a new contribution to the domain of critical systems thinking.

Before we consider the ways in which the aims have (or have not) been met within the thesis, we should refresh our memories by listing the original aims:

(1) to provide an appreciation of the context of emergence and the content of critical systems thinking;

(2) to elucidate the connections between the various critical systems commitments;

(3) to clarify the issues of imperialism and paradigm incommensurability, and to elucidate

some means for dealing with theoretical and methodological differences;

(4) to provide clear methodological guidelines for achieving critical and sociological awareness;

(5) to explain how these provide for the emancipation of individuals and groups;

(6) to clarify how a critical systems perspective is also a pluralist perspective; and,

(7) to clarify how a discordant pluralist critical appreciation approach finally satisfies the critical systems commitments.

We are now in a position to consider each aim in turn. In doing so, we will be contemplating the extent to which the aim was fulfilled within the thesis. This will highlight the inter-connections between the different aims, which have been addressed in several areas of the thesis.

## 14.1 Critical Systems Thinking - Its Context and Contents

My first aim was to provide an appreciation of the context of emergence and the content of critical systems thinking. Here, I wanted to show how it was that certain specific ideas and themes were able to emerge in the systems domain.

In particular, I wanted to look at how the systems community became prepared for a new theory about systems thinking, and what the central features of that new theory were. It was shown that the *increasing diversity of approaches* available to systems practitioners laid the way for the introduction of a *pluralist* perspective. The debate surrounding the "crisis" of this burgeoning complexity helped to stimulate the introduction of a different perspective.

This diversity of methodologies required some means for making a coherent methodology-choice, which was provided for through the development of

the 'system of systems methodologies' (Jackson and Keys, 1984; Jackson, 1987b, 1990; Flood and Jackson, 1991a). This draws upon *critical* social theory in justifying the bringing together of what are arguably antagonistic approaches.

Critical social theories were being drawn upon by other systems thinkers, who wished to develop a *critically normative* approach to planning (e.g., Ulrich, 1983). The combination of this approach with other ideas oriented towards the ideal of *human emancipation* were shown to have contributed to the concretisation of the *central commitments* of critical systems thinkers. The main themes of critical systems thinking were seen to involve critical and social awareness, pluralism at both methodological and theoretical levels, and emancipation (Jackson, 1991b).

#### 14.2 Critical Systems Commitments - Connections

My second aim was to consider the implications of these "commitments" for critical systems thinkers;

to elucidate the connections between them. The questions to be answered here concerned the implications for practice of adopting commitments to critical and social awareness, theoretical and methodological pluralism, and emancipation.

In exploring the method of dream-analysis, and using this as an analogy for critical self-reflection, we were able to show that critical awareness and individual emancipation (via the *enlightenment offered through critical self-reflection*) are intimately connected.

Our consideration of an approach to ideology-critique highlighted the need to juxtapose contradictory and antagonistic ideologies in order to gain an appreciation of alternative and radically different perspectives. It was argued that this process would serve to *improve our understanding* of social processes and structures (social awareness), and, at the same time, would provide for the emancipation of groups (human emancipation).

Furthermore, in developing a model of self-society dynamics, it was demonstrated that individual and group emancipation could be thwarted *unless* both critical self-reflection and ideology-critique were employed as necessary parts of the process of critical appreciation. The difficulty of providing for individual and group emancipation was shown to arise from the *plurality* of our (practical and theoretical) situation.

### 14.3 Paradigm Incommensurability and Imperialism

My third aim was to clarify the debate surrounding the issues of paradigm incommensurability and imperialism within the systems field. In addition, I intended to delineate some means for dealing with the kinds of theoretical and methodological differences that had contributed to the "crisis" that led to the emergence of critical systems thinking.

By considering the example of anthropology, it was possible to show that both empirical-analytic and

interpretive approaches give rise to problems associated with imperialism and "going native". However, the difficulties of incommensurability can not be neglected: it was argued that only a critical appreciation approach (grounded in discordant pluralism) would be sufficiently open to the possible radical differences that exist within alien paradigms or cultures.

In providing a means to reunify Habermas's (1972) technical and practical cognitive interests, the critical appreciation model was able to provide a means for satisfying the emancipatory interest as well. By bringing the three interests together within the *critical appreciation process*, as opposed to a framework of methodologies, any problems associated with incommensurability or imperialism (at a methodological level) will be overcome.

The discordant pluralist perspective, suggested in chapter twelve, was seen to provide for a new form of theoretical pluralism. It was proposed that, by bringing radically different perspectives together

in a new constellation which could be both locally and historically situated, the discordant pluralist position could avoid the dangers usually faced by other forms of pluralism.

#### 14.4 Methodological Guidelines

The fourth aim has already been discussed to some extent above. The aim was to provide clear methodological guidelines for achieving critical and social awareness. The guidelines arising from consideration of *Freud's dream-analysis* provided the means for achieving critical awareness, whilst the *process of ideology-critique* provided for social awareness. It was further argued that these parts of the critical appreciation approach can only lead to emancipation of individuals and groups when used together as part of the self-society dynamics involving reflection, discourse and action.

It was suggested (in chapters eight and nine) that discourse between different perspectives might

usefully be guided by questions about the truth, social justification, intelligibility and sincerity of any position. Understanding of material conditions, value-systems, intentions and so forth could be facilitated by the use of such questions which seek to reveal any inequities or injustices in a given situation. The proposed methodological guidelines for critical self-reflection and ideology-critique can be summarised as follows:

(1) to undertake third-party observations - collect empirical data about the problem-situation;

(2) to undertake dialogue - through consultation and/or discourse aimed at ascertaining views about the manifest problem-situation;

(3) to reflect and engage in discourse aimed at formulating an (theoretical) explanation of the situation;

(4) to undertake empirical observations and

hermeneutic interpretations about the researcher's own paradigm, context, and history (critical *self-* and *social* awareness); and,

(5) to reflect and engage in discourse concerning rightness issues.

It was argued that the employment of all of these guidelines, which can be underpinned by an examination of the validity-claims implicit in any communication arising from each part, would result in the emancipation of participants. Quite how this emancipation is to be achieved is the subject to which we now turn.

#### 14.5 Critical Systems Thinking and Emancipation

My fifth aim was to explain how these methodological guidelines could provide for the emancipation of humans when applied in practice. Again, we can see that this aim is inter-linked with those already discussed.

It was argued in the thesis that emancipation could not occur unless the *participants* were *motivated* to engage in a critical appreciation process. It was suggested that such motivation could be *intrinsically* derived if individuals came to understand that reciprocal critical appreciation could ultimately provide for their own emancipation. The critical appreciation approach seeks to engage the participants in a dialogue in which they can begin to be critically reflective about the historical preconditions contributing to their situation. Ideology-critique would provide another means for revealing the distortions and illegitimate power-relations that might be permeating their particular *milieu*. The model of discourse, reflection and action described the means that each individual (and group) has at his or her (their) disposal for achieving emancipation.

The model of self-society dynamics elaborated in chapter ten clarified the need for *all* parts of the critical appreciation process to be undertaken so that the emerging property of human (individual

and group) emancipation could be realised.

#### 14.6 Critical Systems Thinking and Pluralism

The sixth aim was to clarify how a critical systems approach is grounded in pluralism. In chapter twelve, an argument was presented which showed that three alternatives (isolationism, imperialism, and pragmatism) to the pluralist strategy could not possibly support a critical systems approach. It was shown that isolationism precludes any acknowledgement of the legitimacy of alternative perspectives; imperialism relies on an illegitimate power-relation and cannot therefore be considered as a critical strategy; whilst pragmatism amounts to eclecticism. Hence only the pluralist strategy can be justifiably termed a critical systems position.

However, the argument was taken further than this, for it was possible to identify two competing versions of pluralism: the first version *prioritises the methodological level* and relates

all theory to it. The second form of pluralism, *discordant pluralism*, utilises the critical appreciation process to make judgments about the comparative validity of competing perspectives, and *values differences in and of themselves*. This vision of ever-new constellations provides for the dynamic development of a critical systems approach which never 'reduces the other to the same'. In avoiding a reduction of differences to similarities, we are calling for critical systems theorists to engage in a renewed discourse with perspectives that are antagonistic, that exhibit aversions to critical systems thinking, and that challenge the very ideas that critical systems practitioners espouse.

#### 14.7 A "New Constellation"

By releasing the critical systems commitments from the methodological tie imposed by Jackson (1991b), I have sought to both enrich and enlarge the domain of critical systems thinking. It was shown that the commitments to critical and social

awareness, methodological and theoretical pluralism, and emancipation are part of a nexus of features that are coherently inter-related within the discordant pluralist critical appreciation process. It is only through the utilisation of all the aspects of a critical appreciation that we will provide for our own (individual and group) emancipation as well as that of others. This calls for a renewed conversation between proponents of antagonistic paradigms which will help critical systems thinkers and practitioners to achieve a better understanding of themselves.

The process of critical appreciation has therefore been shown to provide a *new constellation for critical systems thinking and practice.*

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