Critical Social Theory and Psychotherapy: An Analysis of the Moral Ethos of Contemporary Psychotherapeutic Theory and Practice

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature..

In memory of my father Richard Donovan (1920-2009)

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Abstract

This study explores the moral ethos of contemporary psychotherapy as represented in the psychoanalytic and systemic therapeutic traditions. It examines current moral/ethical debate in the field and presents a detailed critique of the individualistic normative orientation of this debate; its peripheral status within the discourse of psychotherapy; its restrictive focus on professional micro ethics; and the eschewing of engagement with wider macro level moral themes and concerns. The disjuncture between this individualistic moral ethos and the vigorously relational thrust of wider developments in psychotherapeutic theory and technique is highlighted. An argument is made for the reformulation of moral/ethical debate in terms that take account of these relational developments, which might in turn serve as a catalyst for the realization of what is arguably their progressive and democratizing potential. The failure of hermeneutical, post-structuralist and postmodernist influences in recent decades to move this debate forward and the entrenched modernist/postmodernist divide within psychotherapeutic discourse are also explored.

Underlying the limitations of current moral/ethical debate is the restricted paradigm of individual consciousness within which this debate unfolds and which it appears unable to transcend. In this study the critical social theory of Jűrgen Habermas serves as a touchstone for exploring potential for movement from the paradigm of consciousness to that of communication as a framework for moral/ethical deliberation. It is argued that key trends within psychotherapy are already straining towards a communicative ethical orientation which is implicit in current practice and that the theoretical vacuum around this subject is impeding recognition of its full potential. Alongside Habermasian theory, Axel Honneth's theory of recognition and Anthony Giddens's social theoretical perspective on psychotherapy offer key points of reference for the dialogue between critical social theory and psychotherapy which this study seeks to promote.

Drawing on the work of Habermas and Honneth, it is argued that the underlying moral "grammar" of the psychotherapeutic encounter may be framed in terms of the struggle for understanding and agreement and the struggle for recognition. The theme of reflexivity emerges as an important organizing framework for this discussion and as a bridge for dialogue between psychotherapy and social theory. It is proposed that we can helpfully think of significant discursive moments in the therapeutic encounter as islands of heightened reflexivity in which the full communicative power of language is potentially unleashed. The study concludes with a view of psychotherapy as a reflexive resource and potential carrier of communicative reason helping people to develop and enhance cognitive and emotional capacities that may in turn help them participate in spheres of discursive communication and move towards genuinely communicative use of language.

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Part III

Towards a Communicative Ethical Framework for Psychotherapy

Introduction

What good is served by psychotherapy? As an empirical question this is one that greatly preoccupies contemporary psychotherapeutic discourse, yet as a moral/ethical question it has a distinctly more peripheral status in current debates. Traditionally, questions relating to the normative orientation of psychotherapy have remained within the framework of the various institutional divides in the field and have tended to become fused with issues of therapeutic approach and technique and with issues of difference between the therapeutic traditions. One example is the historical polarization between behavioural and intra-psychic functioning as the preferred locus for change, a difference institutionally represented in the traditional distinction between behavioural therapy (Hersen, 2005; Woolfolk and Richardson, 1984) versus psychoanalytically oriented therapy.[1] Historically a strong separation has also been maintained between family/systemic psychotherapy and psychoanalysis with a corresponding polarization of emphasis on family interaction processes versus intrapsychic functioning as the locus for change.[2]

From an outsider perspective the psychotherapeutic field will most likely appear fragmented and confusing with a variety of competing schools and traditions all asserting the uniqueness of their approach and methodology. But in a climate where

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[1] "Psychotherapy" is used throughout this study as a generic term covering all "talking therapies" and counselling approaches that address psychological difficulty (Gabbard et al., 2007). A technical distinction between psychotherapy and counselling is sometimes made in relation to differences in intensity and duration of treatment but in a general sense these terms are interchangeable. "Psychotherapy" includes psychoanalysis and family/systemic psychotherapy, which are the focus of this study, but it also includes a range of other therapies, for example, humanistic integrative therapy (Schneider et al., 2001) and cognitive behavioural therapy (Chapter 7, p.171-2) which will not be explored here.

[2] Within the UK psychoanalytic tradition, "psychoanalysis" is often used in a technical sense to describe long term treatments involving four or five analytic sessions weekly, whereas "psychoanalytic psychotherapy", "psychodynamic counselling" or "psychodynamic psychotherapy" describe treatments entailing less frequent weekly contact. These terms can be a focus for immense rivalry and nuanced distinctions in the therapy world. In this study "psychoanalysis" is used in a more general and encompassing sense to describe therapeutic approaches that are grounded in the tradition established by Sigmund Freud and which emphasise working with unconscious processes.

In the UK, "family" and "systemic" therapy are interchangeable terms. The term "systemic" was originally associated with an influential school of family therapy known as the Milan Group (Campbell and Draper, 1985) but has evolved into a generic description of family therapy. Whilst family/systemic therapy has its roots in practice with the family system, this approach is increasingly used in interventions with individuals, couples and organisations and the description of this work as "systemic" is understandably favoured when the unit of intervention is other than the family.

empirical research is heavily promoted, traditional oppositional certainties are challenged by lack of substantial empirical evidence for omnipotent claims. Existing research also underlines the efficacy of generic therapeutic factors notably the quality of the therapeutic relationship or alliance, in helpful therapeutic outcomes across the different therapies (Asay and Lambert, 1999; Miller et al., 1995). Research findings further suggest that in clinical practice the interventions offered by experienced clinicians across the various therapeutic divides may not be as dissimilar as each competing tradition might imply in their theoretical stance (Bateman, 2000). In this climate more modest claims and ideas not surprisingly come to the fore around the key question "what works for whom" (Fonagy et al., 2002; Roth and Fonagy, 2005). Attention gets focussed on shared ground between the therapies; on shared conceptions of good outcomes; and significantly, on more integrative ways of working across the traditional divides. A focus on behavioural change need not exclude an interest in underlying intrapsychic change and one may promote the other in a circular fashion. A focus on changing family interaction processes need not exclude an interest in the individual psyche.

Whilst it is important not to overstate integrative developments or to trivialize difference between specialist therapeutic orientations, it is also vital for the future development of psychotherapy that we harness the creativity and possibilities for enhanced practice inherent in tentative moves towards integrative ways of thinking and working. It is important to do so in order to increase the effectiveness of psychotherapy generally and in particular to extend its reach to client groups who are less easily helped within current therapeutic paradigms.[3] One striking example of this more integrative ethos is the re-evaluation of the historical opposition between family/systemic and psychoanalytic approaches initiated by family therapy theorists in recent times (Flaskas, 1996, 1997; Flaskas and Pocock, 2009; Larner, 2000).[4] What follows is a contribution to this particular debate and one that seeks to take it further by offering a philosophical

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[3] The psychoanalytic model of mentalization developed by Fonagy and Target (1996, 1998, 2003) which is explored in this study, is associated with this integrative ethos and with efforts to extend the reach of psychoanalytically oriented therapy to client groups who are considered especially challenging to treat, including those with a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder (Bateman and Fonagy, 2004). See Bateman (2000) for discussion of the integrative dimension of treatment programmes for personality disorder that combine elements of cognitive behavioural and psychoanalytic therapy.

[4] The author of this study has also contributed a number of articles to this debate (Donovan, 2002, 2003b, 2005, 2007, 2009).

analysis that addresses the moral/ethical orientation of contemporary practice in both therapies. It is informed by the critical theoretical perspective of Jŭrgen Habermas and that of an allied theorist within the tradition of critical social theory, Axel Honneth.[5] It is also informed by key debates in which Habermas engaged with other leading philosophers of the twentieth century, Michel Foucault and Hans-Georg Gadamer whose perspectives, unlike that of Habermas, have permeated psychotherapeutic discourse to some degree. Their influence is evident in postmodernist and hermeneutical strands of thinking within psychotherapy which have emerged in recent decades and which will be explored in this study.

What good is served by psychotherapy? In contemporary psychotherapeutic discourse this question quickly leads in the direction of evidence-based clinical practice and empirical outcome research. But here the underlying moral/ethical dimensions of the question also present themselves immediately even if they are routinely ignored. Therapeutic goals, irrespective of who is defining them or how vaguely they are defined, are infused with normative assumptions about what constitutes mental health, optimal psychic functioning, and optimal family functioning. In their extensive review of therapeutic outcomes in the child mental health field, Fonagy et al. (2002) consider it necessary to emphasize at the outset that empirical evidence is not absolute and needs to be considered within a relativist frame. They note that "psychotherapy researchers are particularly conscious of the danger of imposing ethnically rooted cultural biases on definitions of "needing treatment" or a "good outcome" (p. 4). They use the example of the achievement of selfhood through the separation-individuation process which is central to psychoanalytic thinking and to Western culture generally but not to other cultural contexts. Varma (1988) notes that in Indian culture there is a greater degree of mutual interdependence and considers it questionable to what extent Western psychotherapy with its high emphasis on autonomy and individual responsibility can be seen as appropriate for members of such a society. Evaluating what constitutes a good outcome in psychotherapy is intricately linked with wider evaluations of what constitutes good and right living and what constitutes a good society. Answers to the question "what good is served by psychotherapy?" are inextricably connected with wider conceptions of "goodness", the territory of moral/ethical and political debate,

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[5] References for Habermas, Honneth, Foucault and Gadamer are cited in Part 11 of this study.

even if this is obscured by a focus on method and technique and the lingering influence of a positivist outlook which has looked on the model of the natural sciences as the most appropriate for all scientific enquiry and engagement including that of psychotherapy.

This study explores the moral/ethical ethos of contemporary psychotherapy, both explicit and implicit, as it is represented in the systemic and psychoanalytic traditions. It examines contemporary debate on this subject and criticizes its restriction. One of the key arguments of the study is that the current debate remains locked into the paradigm of individual consciousness in its consideration of moral/ethical themes and locked into ways of thinking that reinforce the individualist frame. It is argued that engaging with wider developments in social and philosophical theory can help transcend the limitations of this individualist orientation. Within twentieth century philosophy, the realization that we are always already embedded in language, gave rise to the paradigmatic shift from a philosophy centred on individual consciousness as in the writings of Descartes, to one that privileges intersubjectivity and language. This linguistic turn as it is represented in the work of Habermas is a key focus. Specifically I will consider how he encapsulates the linguistic transformation in a theory of communicative action and communicative ethics. My aim will be to demonstrate that his theory sheds helpful light on key concerns within the therapy field particularly relating to morality and ethics and that it potentially offers a philosophical framework in which we might begin to conceptualize the moral/ethical orientation of contemporary therapeutic engagement.

Within psychotherapeutic discourse it is also the case that the latter decades of the twentieth century have witnessed a major shift in focus from individual to relational themes and concerns. Nowhere is this more apparent than in psychoanalysis, where the deeply relational object relations tradition now prevails having transcended Freud's earlier instinct based formulations.[6] Family therapy is similarly driven by a relational ethos and has its origins in a strongly held opposition to the individualistic ethos of classical psychoanalysis in which most of the founding family therapists had already trained. In essence I will argue that this paradigm shift, which vigorously embraces relational themes also moves psychotherapy unequivocally beyond the parameters of

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[6] Object relations theory is explored in Chapter 1 with specific reference to the work of two psychoanalysts, Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott.

current moral/ethical debate in the field, which implicitly remains locked into an earlier paradigm of individual consciousness and an associated restrictive focus on professional micro ethical concerns such as client confidentiality. The resulting disjuncture or time lag between ethical formulations and other developments in the field serves only to reinforce the peripheral status of ethics in psychotherapeutic discourse generally. One of the key motivating factors for this study is the view that the current problematic status of ethics matters enormously in terms of its implications for the future development of psychotherapy. The disjuncture between ethical considerations and wider theoretical debate means that both domains are mutually impoverished and deprived of potentially creative input.

As a preliminary step to initiating dialogue between critical social theory and psychotherapy it is necessary to consider the very different meanings of the terms "morality" and "ethics" as used in each discourse. Within psychotherapy two different levels of meaning are evident. At one level, what we might call the official level, these terms are applied interchangeably with reference to considerations of good and right living and questions of value and here there is no standard distinction between the terms that can be identified (Tjeltveit, 1999). However as I shall discuss in Chapter 2, at the level of personal preference, it becomes apparent that "morality" is much less favoured than "ethics" and much less likely to be used in the psychotherapeutic literature. This situation most probably arises because of the negative connotation that attaches itself to "morality", in particular an association with "moralistic" and with the idea of a narrow and rigid imposition of ethical standards (ibid.). There is little doubt that this situation also reflects the positivist ethos that persists in psychotherapy, in the context of which "ethics" is seen as more circumscribed and "scientific", as reflected for example in Palmer Barnes and Murdin's (2001) observation that "morals are usually seen as the system adopted by the individual whereas ethics is the science of morality and duty" (pp.1-2). It needs to be acknowledged that the latter definition of ethics is also consistent with wider usage and with the Oxford dictionary definition which encompasses the idea of ethics as representing a field of moral science.[7] Within the discourse of critical social theory, Habermas (1990, [1996]2002) offers a very different perspective on the distinction between morality and ethics, which has its roots in the

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[7] Sykes (1982) *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*.

Kantian philosophical tradition. Here, to borrow Honneth's words, morality is understood as the "universalist attitude in which one respects all subjects equally as ends in themselves" whereas "ethical life refers to the settled ethos of a particular life world" ([1992]1995, p. 172). Habermas offers a "discourse theory of morality" grounded in the paradigm of communication in which questions of justice or rightness in the Kantian sense are at the forefront. In its emphasis on a universalist stance on questions of morality this perspective is the complete opposite of that which pertains within psychotherapy where questions of morality are reduced to personal "morals" and debate on the subject is reduced to a restrictive engagement with issues relating to professional micro ethics.

All of this does not make for an easy alignment of terminology in any attempt to promote dialogue between psychotherapy and critical social theory but it also focuses attention succinctly on the issues involved. Taking account of this situation I have made the pragmatic decision to adopt the psychotherapeutic stance of using the terms "moral" and "ethical" interchangeably including the admittedly cumbersome "moral/ethical" on occasions by way of challenging the persistent avoidance of the term "moral" in the psychotherapy literature. At the same time one of the fundamental aims of the study is to challenge the reduction of morality to private morals and the eschewing of a wider and more expansive engagement with moral/ethical themes that relate to good and right living at the personal, familial and societal levels. On occasions I refer to this as the macro level of moral/ethical debate to underline difference from the current psychotherapeutic preoccupation with micro ethical concerns. Here it should also be underlined that in using the term "moral ethos" in the title of this study and " moral question" in the title of Chapter 2, I am implicitly challenging the negative connotation associated with this term and underlining the need to put the "moral" back into moral/ethical debate in psychotherapy, that is morality in its universalist sense as pertaining to macro level questions of justice and fairness that apply at personal, familial, societal levels and beyond.

Lack of creative engagement with moral/ethical themes leaves psychotherapy seriously ill equipped to respond to the substantial and often conflicting demands and expectations to which it is subjected in our times. On the one-hand demand for psychotherapy has never been greater. On the other hand it is pilloried for its lack of

scientific credentials and in particular its lack of a comprehensive empirical evidence base for claims to clinical effectiveness. In public sector psychotherapy clinics, waiting lists for treatment are often impossibly long and the pressure to see ever more clients with limited resources is enormous. The emphasis is on delivering short- term interventions with a strong focus on alleviating symptoms of distress and on measuring outcomes accordingly. It is a way of working that fits very comfortably with the medical model or metaphor of diagnosis, treatment and "cure" but fits very uncomfortably with many psychotherapists' own experience of having trained to deliver longer term interventions with a more exploratory, analytical or depth psychological ethos where symptomatic relief sits within a much wider orientation towards developmental change (Sanders and Tudor, 2000; Tudor and Hargaden, 2002).

Expectations of psychotherapy, notably from professional colleagues in allied disciplines are high, often unrealistically so. In child and adolescent mental health services, for example, psychotherapy is frequently requested by other professionals for families living in conditions of acute material and social deprivation which these professionals, who are already involved, can do little to ameliorate. Yet whilst these conditions remain unchanged they may impact significantly on peoples' well being but also on their capacity to avail of whatever psychotherapy might potentially have to offer. Here the problematic issue is not the methodological challenge of adapting therapeutic technique to the needs of those who are severely disadvantaged materially and which is notably elaborated in the family therapy practice of Salvador Minuchin (1967, 1974). The key issue here is that psychotherapy is not an alternative to addressing material need and in situations where the latter is to the fore, it is not uncommon for psychotherapists to find themselves resorting to an advocacy role in order to try and mobilize other essential services whilst waiting lists for their own service grow ever longer. Some argue that historically one of the reasons psychotherapy has been accepted into the mainstream is precisely because it has tended to neglect social contexts in favour of intrapsychic and individualistic factors.[8] Viewed from this perspective psychotherapy appears as a conservative force promoting adjustment and accommodation to the social and political status quo. Some ask whether psychotherapy is becoming the religion of our times and given the fervour with which the different

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[8] For an overview of the critique of psychological reductionism in psychotherapy see Chapter 7 pp. 164-70.

schools have traditionally held their beliefs and disapproval of competing approaches it is not difficult to see why the religious metaphor might arise (Najeeb, 2002, 2007). In the case of psychoanalysis in particular the past decades have witnessed the emergence of a powerful and vociferous critique along these lines typified in the writings of Frederick Crews (1993, 1998), a former Freudian literary critic who charges Freud with the creation of a pseudo- science resting on epistemological quicksand.

Against this background of conflicting demands, pressures and attacks, some within the psychotherapy field plead for greater engagement with social and political themes and greater recognition of the social origins of psychological distress (Frosh, 1999; Samuels, 1993, 2001) But it is generally unclear what form this recognition might take and in particular what impact it might have on the shape of psychotherapy. Furthermore such appeals tend to be underpinned by normative/political assumptions whose own validity is taken as self evident. Whilst appeals of this nature are acknowledged as worthy of attention, they are rarely taken up in any active clinical sense by the majority of psychotherapists who cling to the security of their professional status and professional discourse. Here moral/ethical debate shrinks into a preoccupation with codes of ethics in which micro ethical clinical themes loom large. Arguably one of the reasons why this happens is that it is unclear what the alternatives are in any practical sense. Psychotherapists are neither revolutionaries nor political activists and it is unlikely they ever will be. By and large they are people with a deep interest in the intimate dramas of personal and family life who, against the odds, preserve a space for thinking in circumstances that often make this extremely difficult. They are unlikely to be sympathetic to critiques suggesting that they need to move outside this space to engage with more overtly political concerns and organization. Underlying this study is the belief that any satisfactory engagement with moral/ethical themes in psychotherapy needs to focus on this personal and intimate space as our starting point. It is within this space that we need to begin the task of reformulating and broadening the parameters of moral/ethical debate in psychotherapy. We need to begin with what psychotherapists actually do and not with what we might wish them to do instead. Arguably in so doing one is more likely to elicit a sympathetic response from practicing psychotherapists. We need to begin with what is creative and progressive in moral/ethical terms within psychotherapy as it is currently practiced and use this as a foundation for further development and change.

This study is written from the perspective of a practicing psychotherapist in the field of child and adolescent mental health, with dual training in psychodynamic and systemic therapeutic orientations and with extensive personal experience of the challenges and demands facing psychotherapists in public and voluntary sector practice, having worked for many years at the Anna Freud Centre,[9] which is located in the voluntary sector, and having also worked in the child and adolescent mental health service of the UK National Health Service. The nature of demands on these services and the related fire-fighting, crisis-oriented quality of much of the work, are such that they impact enormously on morale and within this context there is a real danger of losing touch with wider questions concerning the meaning and value of psychotherapy and its place in society. Paradoxically in this environment the need to address such questions has never been greater if psychotherapy is to avoid losing its way in a morass of conflicting demands and pressures. This study is also motivated by the belief that the current emphasis on seeking answers to questions concerning the value of psychotherapy through the medium of empirical outcome research needs to be counterbalanced by and securely anchored in a philosophical debate regarding the moral/ethical orientation of psychotherapy. Without this explicit debate psychotherapy is dangerously exposed to implicit factional interests from within and outside the field whose primary motivating concerns may be incongruent with the future creative development of psychotherapy.

Whilst Habermas' philosophical contribution serves as an anchor for much of the thinking informing this study, his writings are formulated at a level of abstraction, which makes direct linkage with the immediacy of psychotherapeutic concerns problematic. As well as using the ideas of an allied critical theorist Axel Honneth ([1992]1995, [2000]2007), I also refer to the work of Anthony Giddens (1991, 1992) and Martha Nussbaum (2000). Both theorists offer further insights on themes that are central to Habermas' work and at the same time offer a bridge for thinking about links with psychotherapy. I am drawing on these related social theoretical perspectives in order to flesh out my argument regarding the relevance of a communicative ethics for psychotherapy, in a way that might render it relevant to the practice based concerns of

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[9] The Anna Freud Centre was established by Sigmund Freud's daughter Anna in 1947 in Hampstead, London, some years after their arrival from Austria prior to the outbreak of war. Anna Freud was one of the founders of child psychoanalysis and the objectives of the centre which she established were to help children in emotional distress and provide training and research in this area of mental health practice.

the psychotherapist. In this way I am also hoping to underline the richness of thinking within philosophy and social theory from which psychotherapy mostly cuts itself off either through lack of engagement or through simplistic and uncritical applications of philosophical and sociological thinking in a way that isolates such thinking from the rich and complex debates to which it belongs. Throughout this study I am proposing a complementarity between the orientation of Habermasian thinking and his reformulation of ethics in terms of a discourse ethics on the one hand and developments in the world of psychotherapy on the otherhand. In essence the latter revolve around the idea of construing personal problems in relational/communicative terms together with the constant push towards opening up communication and reflecting processes within the therapeutic encounter. Such ideas arguably fit well with Habermas' ideas about systematic distortions in communication and his idea of discourse as reflecting an ethical ideal of relatively unconstrained communication. Whilst Habermas ([1968]1978) engaged initially with classical Freudian psychoanalysis as a possible paradigm for critical theory in his early work he subsequently lost interest in the psychoanalytic paradigm and therefore Axel Honneth's later engagement with psychoanalytic object relations thinking as part of his ethical theory will be an important anchor for discussion.

Whilst Habermas has engaged in a vigorous debate with post-structuralist, postmodernist and hermeneutical thinking, important aspects of which well be explored in Part 11 of this study, it is also the case that Habermas is not simply opposed to these traditions and has taken much from them in reformulating his own theory along the way, not least the recognition that his initial conception of reason as self reflection was too closely tied to an idea of solipsistic subjectivity and that reflection needed to be relocated in contexts of intersubjectivity. What separates him from postmodernist and hermeneutical perspectives is his salvaging of a moment of universalist ethical certainty in his theory of communicative ethics. The fact that he does so in a highly formal and abstract fashion raises questions about the significance of his theory in a practical sense (White, 1988) but it is also the case that Habermas' work can be supplemented without contradiction by analyses that are more closely tied to practical and historical concerns including those of Honneth and Giddens which I consider in this study. Notwithstanding its limitation, the great contribution of Habermasian thinking is his reworking of the Kantian moral principle of universalisation in terms of the conditions of

communication. He argues that we start from a situation of intersubjectivity, and that it is only within this intersubjectivity that moral phenomena and moral problems arise. This situation of intersubjectivity implies certain unavoidable presuppositions of communication, namely that in order to communicate we share an ideal of agreement between equal partners towards which we strive in discourse. It is no longer the universalization of isolated subjects seeking to prescribe to all as in the Kantian categorical imperative. It is a discursive test amongst partners in communication of what could be agreed by all to be a universal norm.

In this way Habermas moves towards a formulation of ethics that is consistent with the shift in contemporary thinking from consciousness to language. What he achieves, which is crucial from the perspective of this study, is to create possibilities for a different kind of engagement with ethical themes that takes account of other fundamental changes in how we think about ourselves and our world particularly relating to our immersion in language and in processes of communication. It should be emphazised here that I do not wish to raise any expectation of a formulaic application of Habermasian thinking to psychotherapeutic practice. This is an unhelpful and inappropriate expectation of theory that sometimes permeates psychotherapeutic discourse. Throughout this study my aim is rather to engage in a critical dialogue with Habermasian and related social theory from the standpoint of psychotherapy and to connect with existing strands of dialogue between social theory and psychotherapy as part of that process.

In essence my argument is that key trends and developments in psychotherapy already point towards a communicative ethical orientation implicit in current practice. I am arguing that these developments are straining towards a formulation of ethics as more clearly rooted in communicative processes and that the theoretical vacuum around this subject may be impeding recognition of their full potential. In Part 1, the focus is on the object relations tradition within British psychoanalysis, and the related theory of mentalization or reflective functioning (Fonagy and Target, 1996, 1998, 2003) that both point in this direction. I will also consider key elements in contemporary, postmodernist influenced, systemic psychotherapy notably the reflecting team approach, which reveals a similar communicative ethical ethos. In Part 11 the focus shifts to social theory and its potential contribution to debate around morality and ethics in psychotherapy. I begin by

outlining Habermas' theory of communicative ethics before elaborating two key debates in which he engaged with Gadamer and with Foucault. Here my main concern is not only to distinguish Habermas' position from each of these perspectives. I am also arguing that his critique of Gadamerian and Foucauldian thinking respectively sheds helpful light on why their application, in what is very loosely defined as the postmodernist paradigm within psychotherapy, is extremely problematic and why this paradigm has noticeably failed to move the debate about morality and ethics forward. In this context I will also consider the "ethical turn" in postmodernist thinking in recent decades with specific reference to the work of Zygmunt Bauman (1993, 1997) whose thinking has infiltrated psychotherapeutic discourse to some extent. Part 11 concludes with a return to critical social theory to consider the work of Axel Honneth where the struggle for understanding and agreement in Habermas' communicative ethics is supplemented by a theoretical perspective on the struggle for recognition within Honneth's work. This paves the way for Part 111 in which the central argument is that the "moral grammar" of the psychotherapeutic encounter may be framed in terms of the struggle for understanding and agreement and the struggle for recognition and that both can helpfully be anchored in Habermasian thinking around a communicative ethics.

Notwithstanding its limitations and incompletion, the value of Habermas' contribution is in offering an overarching philosophical framework for scientific enquiry and engagement in which morality and ethics are firmly anchored. In Part 111, I explore the implications for how we might conceptualize psychotherapeutic practice and our ethical engagement therein. The theme of reflexivity will serve as an organizing framework for this discussion, that is, reflexivity as it is formulated in social theory and as understood in contemporary psychotherapy. It will be suggested that a common denominator in formulations of reflexivity across both discourses is the idea of flexible thinking and talking processes that can easily move between different levels of meaning and communication. The idea of psychotherapy as a reflexive resource in our society and the task of the psychotherapist as one of helping to increase reflexive capacities will serve as a bridge for dialogue between social theory and psychotherapy. I will argue for an idea of psychotherapy as a potential carrier of communicative reason helping people develop and enhance cognitive and emotional capacities that will in turn help them enter into and participate in spheres of discursive or reflexive communication. Using conceptual frameworks from social theory mentioned above, I will underline the

communicative ethical orientation of developments in psychotherapy. These relate to what, in Anthony Giddens's (1992) language, we might describe as the democratisation of personal life or the democratisation of intimacy. Thinking about our work in these terms may bring us closer to an understanding of the implicit moral/ethical orientation of current practice in ways that may also help us maximise and build on its potential including its potential to help people towards genuinely communicative use of language.

Part I

Current trends in psychoanalytic and systemic psychotherapy: the moral question

Introduction

In 1895 Freud first published Studies on Hysteria with his colleague Josef Breuer in which he sets out his initial thoughts on a method of treating neurosis that would soon be named psychoanalysis. Breurer's celebrated patient "Anna O" whose case history is described in Studies on Hysteria had already named the method used by Breuer, her "talking cure". Over a hundred years later psychoanalysis has matured into a discipline whose intellectual and cultural influence is both wide ranging and profound. It has also spawned an approach to the therapeutic treatment of psychological disorder which is the dominant tradition in most countries in the Western world and the debt owed to psychoanalysis by all subsequent developments in "talking therapies" is immense even if, as Kramer (1997) points out, this is not always readily acknowledged. In the years since psychoanalysis first took shape much has also changed within the psychoanalytic tradition. Freud's "talking cure" has evolved into what could, more accurately be described as the communication cure in which the relationship between analyst and patient is central and in which minute details of conscious and unconscious communication in the transference/countertransference relationship between analyst and patient are at the heart of the work. Object-relations theory which now exerts enormous influence in the psychoanalytic field has moved psychoanalysis beyond Freud's model of instinctual economy with its emphasis on biological instincts and drives towards a model that emphasizes relations between subjects. Steuerman (2000) notes that this paradigm shift means that "for some purists, psychoanalysis has lost its bearings, as it deals less with sexuality and more with what would normally be termed moral concerns, namely envy and gratitude, guilt and reparation, autonomy and responsibility" (p.18). It is precisely this shift towards moral concerns in psychoanalysis that is of interest here, together with complementary and parallel developments in family/systemic psychotherapy.

In Part I, my primary objective is that of mapping the therapeutic territory which will serve as a reference point throughout the study and given the key position of the object relations tradition in contemporary British psychoanalysis, any attempt to map the field must of necessity address this tradition.[1] Chapter 1 considers the origins of psychoanalysis and looks at object relations thinking as represented in the work of Melanie Klein [2] and Donald Winnicott (1953, [1958]1992, 1964, 1965, 1971, 1988, 1992). It also considers the related psychoanalytic theory of mentalisation or reflective functioning which is of more recent origin but with close affiliations to object relations thinking (Fonagy and Target, 1996, 1998, 2003). My reason for including this model is that it concentrates attention on psychological difficulties at the severe end of the spectrum, that is, difficulties that would most likely have been excluded from psychoanalytic treatment in earlier times. It therefore represents a progressive development and one that contains useful pointers for the future development and democratization of access to psychotherapy. It also encompasses an integrative dialogue with other disciplines notably developmental psychology and given this integrative ethos it acts as a useful bridge for thinking about potential areas of commonality between psychoanalysis and other therapeutic approaches including family/systemic psychotherapy.

The areas of psychoanalytic and systemic thinking that I address in Part 1 reflect my prioritization of clinical practice based concerns. My interest is in theoretical perspectives that currently influence those engaged in clinical practice in the UK to a significant degree. Theorists writing from a different starting point, geographical or otherwise, including those connecting with psychoanalytic ideas from the standpoint of social theory will have other priorities and may elect to draw on other sources of inspiration including those which have greater influence within the academic discourse around psychoanalysis as distinct from the clinical version.[3] Thus, for example, the writings of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan ([1953]1977) [4] and those of post-

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[1] Fonagy and Target (2003) observe that the only geographical exceptions to the dominance of object relations thinking are a number of French speaking countries notably France and French Canada. Here especially but also in some parts of Latin America, Lacanian thinking has had a significant influence (see footnote 4 below).

[2] Klein, M (1975b) *The writings of Melanie Klein*, 4 Vols. Vol. 1: *Love guilt and reparation and other works, 1921-1945*; Vol. 11: *The psychoanalysis of children*; Vol.111: *Envy and Gratitude and other works 1946-1963*; Vol. 1V: *Narrative of a child analysis*, London, Hogarth Press.

Lacanian theorists such as Cixous (1980), Irigaray (1985) and Kristeva (1986) undoubtedly wield substantial influence in the academy but their impact on psychoanalytic clinical theory and practice in the UK is much less evident compared to the object relations theory. In focusing specifically on influential areas of thinking that connect with clinical practice my primary objective is to begin excavating their implicit ethical orientation and in so doing to broaden the terms of moral/ethical debate which remains steadfastly focused on micro ethical themes closely tied up with professional codes of ethics. Chapter 1 underlines the strong relational ethos of contemporary psychoanalysis and the implicit concern with moral/ethical themes. Chapter 2 brings these themes explicitly into focus, considering the difficulties and restrictions in the way the subject of morality and ethics is articulated both historically and in the contemporary discourse. Chapter 3 focuses on the postmodernist influenced paradigm shift in psychotherapy with particular reference to family/systemic psychotherapy and considers the ongoing difficulty in articulating moral/ethical themes which persists in this framework.

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[3] Samuels (1993) observes that the gulf between academic discourse in relation to depth psychology on the one hand and its clinical version on the other hand is especially pronounced in the UK and North America.

[4] Jacques Lacan was a French psychoanalyst who urged what he called "a return to Freud" whilst rejecting the biological aspects of Freudian theory. Instead he offers a metaphoric reformulation of the latter in which the unconscious is seen as structured like a language. In effect he sees language as constitutive of unconscious processes. In considering the constitution of subjectivity he does not view it as a process of individuation but rather sees the "subject" as constituted by language and culture which he refers to as the symbolic order. Lacanian thinking is a complex and intricate system of thought that is most commonly associated with post-structuralist and postmodernist perspectives in psychotherapy and will be considered briefly in that context in Chapter 2 (pp. 54-63). However because of its lack of substantial influence within psychoanalytic clinical discourse in the UK, it will not be considered in depth in this study.

Chapter 1

Psychoanalytic thinking and practice: the object relations perspective

The origins of psychoanalysis

There is little doubt that the overall cultural and intellectual impact of Freudian theory[1] during the past century has been extensive and profound, notwithstanding trenchant attacks in recent decades which, amongst other things, question its scientific status and therapeutic benefits (Grűnbaum,1984; Crews, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1998). Fonagy and Target (2003) reflect that obituaries of Freudian theory have by no means been confined to recent decades, citing the emphatic prediction of the demise of psychoanalysis by an early advocate of behaviourism, John Watson, in 1930.[2] What followed was in fact a golden age for psychoanalytic ideas. On Elliott's (1999) account, one reason for the enduring appeal of Freudian theory is, quite simply, that Freud "was a great thinker. His work embodies and points beyond the contradictions of his time…..Freud holds a pivotal place in the fabrication of the modernist epoch" (p. xiii). Addressing the contemporary context, Fonagy and Target (2003) also point out that the situation regarding empirical evidence in support of Freudian theory is not quite as overwhelming bleak as some critics, notably Frederick Crews, might imply but they accept that recent criticisms hold some validity and that much of Freudian theory is now out of date, can appear mechanistic, untenable from an evolutionary perspective, overly preoccupied with sexuality and also politically incorrect. Yet they go on to reflect that,

> puzzlingly, despite its obvious flaws, Freud's theory has remained amongst the most influential theories of personality in clinical practice. The key is perhaps to be found in the intuitive appeal of psychoanalytic ideas: they provide many clinicians with a framework within which to view aspects of their clients' behavior which would otherwise appear incomprehensible. Until another theory emerges that addresses the same range of experiences it is likely that a large number of clinicians will continue to treat Freud's ideas seriously despite the lack of scientific evidence. (pp. 49-50)

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[1] Freud, S. (1953- 1974) *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, London, Hogarth.
[2] Fonagy and Target (2003, p. 7) cite Watson, J.B. (1930) *Behaviorism* (rev. edn) New York, Norton.

Early in his career, having decided to investigate nervous diseases in the context of his medical practice, Freud famously undertook a period of study with the neurologist Charcot at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris. This experience proved formative in changing his focus from that of research on the brain, to an exploration of the human mind (Fonagy and Target, 2003; Schwartz, 2003). Under the intellectual leadership of Charcot, the phenomenon of hysteria, which was studied within the domain of neuropathology, had become a key focus for research. Following his return to Vienna, Freud's first significant psychoanalytic proposals also focused on hysteria, a condition where the patient experiences apparently severe physical symptoms of pain, paralysis and so on in the absence of any obvious organic cause. He was impressed by the approach of a Viennese colleague Joseph Breuer, in talking to his patients about their symptoms and in the use of hypnosis to explore the emotions connected with the initial appearance of these symptoms. Charcot had also practiced hypnosis and Freud now began to use this technique in his clinical work. However he soon grew disenchanted with the results and with the problem of inducing hypnotic states in many patients who were resistant to this approach.[3]

Freud began to experiment with new methods of addressing his patients' difficulties, which would later include free association and dream interpretation and which enabled his patients to talk more freely about their problems. Whilst his relationship with Breuer became strained as this work evolved, the latter's case of "Anna O" described in Studies on Hysteria (1895) heralded the beginning of the therapeutic approach that would become known as the "analytic hour" and "talking cure". Together with Breuer, Freud began to transform the informal talking and listening undertaken by physicians of that era into a therapeutic treatment based on a more formal model of talking and listening to patients' concerns on a long term basis. They were, in Schwartz's (2003) words, "the first to permit the human subject to speak for him/herself….for the first time a space had been created where the meanings of subjective experience could be purposefully sought until they could be found" (p. 54). They demonstrated that the symptoms of hysteria had psychological meaning and could not be explained simply in terms of difficulties or degeneration of the nervous system. Not surprisingly their humane methods gained popularity amongst those who could afford the treatment given the

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[3] See Chapter 4 (p. 92) for discussion of Habermas' engagement with this aspect of Freud's work.

cruel and desperate treatment strategies for hysteria and other conditions sometimes adopted at that time, ranging from teeth extraction to female castration (ibid., pp. 56-7).

Initially Freud's (1895) model of neurosis was based on the assumption that hysterics had previously experienced some major emotional trauma which had become repressed due to being unacceptable to the conscious mind. The emotions relating to the repressed trauma continued to press for discharge into consciousness and in Freud's view symptoms were the result of a breakthrough of this repressed affect into consciousness. The meaning of the symptoms could be uncovered by linking them to the forgotten trauma and Freud also believed that the latter could generally be traced back to childhood experiences including those of sexual seduction. His therapy which initially included hypnosis, focused on helping his patients to release pent-up emotional energy by bringing the forgotten trauma back into consciousness. For Freud the existence of repressed trauma pointed to the existence of parts of the mind that could be described as the unconscious and which were not immediately open to exploration either by the subject him/herself or by another person. Much of his later work would focus on understanding differences between the mode of functioning of unconscious processes and those of conscious regions of the mind. Here it is important to acknowledge that Freud's key advance was not so much the discovery of the unconscious, the idea of which was already part of the culture of that time, but in devising methods for its systematic study and in showing it to be part of the psychic make up of all human beings (Schwartz, 2000).

As Freud's theory evolved he formed the view that memories of childhood sexual trauma were not necessarily accurate recollections of actual events but were suggestive of fantasies relating to unconscious wishes (Freud, 1905b).[4] His attention switched from external explanations of psychological disorder to inborn drives and biological tension states which triggered ideas that in turn pressed for discharge against the resistance of the conscious mind. Disguised wish fulfilments could be represented in dreams and could also be expressed for example in so called slips of the tongue. At the centre of Freud's evolving theory was a view of human life as determined by biological urges or

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[4] Masson (1984) famously attacked Freud for what he perceives as the latter's abandonment of this "seduction theory of neurosis". However as Fonagy and Target (2003) observe, Freud did not "suppress" this theory so much as amend it to correspond with his evolving understanding of infantile sexuality.

instincts which the individual needed to master in order to comply with the demands of society. He termed these biological urges "sexual" although here the term is being used in a broad sense to indicate physical pleasure. He also identified different stages of development of these biological urges that were distinguished on the basis of the different zones of the body in and through which the sexual instinct manifested itself and which included the oral, anal and phallic stages. At the phallic stage which is the setting for the most crucial sexual conflict in Freud's theory of human development, the three to four year old child becomes more interested in the genital region and conflict arises in the shape of the Oedipus complex as the child develops an unconscious wish to possess the parent of the opposite sex and to eliminate the same sexed parent. In very general terms the shift in Freudian theory from a perspective that emphasized childhood trauma towards a model anchored in drive theory meant that the focus of therapy also shifted from uncovering forgotten trauma to a focus on integrating into consciousness various unconscious wishes whose repression was seen as the source of suffering and neurosis. In a further stage of development Freud (1923) reworked his overarching conceptual framework substantially and settled on a model that hypothesized three structures within the human mind; the id which was entirely unconscious and the reservoir of sexual and aggressive drives; the superego as the psychic representation of parental authority figures which holds the ideals taken from parents and from society and which is the source of guilt; and finally the ego which was seen as mediating between the competing demands of the id, the superego and external reality.

Amongst those developments that coalesced to shape the "talking cure", Freud's recognition of transference phenomena was a key development that has remained at the heart of psychoanalytic treatment ever since. In essence the concept of transference refers to the tendency which people have to repeat in their relationship with the analyst - or with other important people in their lives - the patterns of relationship, fantasy and conflict that they experienced with key figures in their childhood, notably their parents. In Freud's words, transferences are " new editions or facsimiles of the impulses and fantasies that are aroused and made conscious during the progress of the analysis; but they have this peculiarity….that they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician" (1905a, p.116 quoted in Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988, p. 457). Freud's own awareness of this phenomenon and it's implications for the analytic situation came gradually and once again Breuer's case of "Anna O" proved instructive. In his work

with this patient Breuer had come to recognize that her symptoms were associated with forgotten memories many of which related to her intense relationship with her father whom she had nursed through a terminal illness. In the later stages of her treatment with Breuer, she developed passionate feelings for him which appear to have caused him great alarm and concern regarding the impact on his marriage and his position as a respected physician within Viennese society. It would appear that the treatment of "Anna O" was terminated abruptly and as Schwartz (2003) observes, the fact that this treatment was only partially successful seems closely connected to lack of recognition "that the therapist/patient relationship is an integral part of the treatment which needs to be resolved for the treatment to succeed" (p. 51).

Against the background of the "Anna O" case, Malan (1979) regards it as indicative of Freud's courage that he persisted in making sense of the phenomenon of transference which he initially perceived exclusively as an obstacle to treatment. Only later did he recognize the immense scope which it offered for analyzing the patient by offering a context in which past conflicts were revived in the immediacy of the therapeutic relationship. Since Freud's time, as psychoanalytic treatment has come to be formulated more and more in terms of the therapeutic relationship, the question of how the transference is managed and addressed remains at the heart of psychoanalytic debates as does the related issue of the countertransference which encompasses thinking about the therapist's unconscious reactions to the patient's transference. Within the object relations psychoanalytic tradition which will shortly be discussed, some analysts influenced by the Kleinian orientation, work predominantly with the patient's feelings and fantasies about the analyst with much less attention to life outside the consulting room and may adopt a vigorously interpretative technical style. Others, including those influenced by the Winnicottian object relations orientation or the more recently formulated model of mentalization, both of which will also be discussed below, are likely to adopt a more cautious approach to interpreting unconscious material relating to the transference particularly in the early stages of the work because of their belief that this kind of intervention is developmentally unhelpful or premature for some client groups including those with limited reflective capacity. The latter constitutes a major clinical challenge particularly as more people with more severe levels of psychological difficulty come within the orbit of psychotherapy and it is an important thread of discussion throughout this study.

Given the rich and expansive nature of Freudian theory it is not surprising that it has offered a huge reservoir of sometimes conflicting perspectives for later generations of psychoanalytic thinkers to explore and upon which to elaborate. However throughout the various revisions of his own work undertaken by Freud, a constant thread is the emphasis on the centrality of the instinctual drives to human development and on the psyche as having a fundamentally biological nature. Furthermore as Fonagy and Target (2003) point out, in the classical Freudian perspective there is a "silent assumption" (p. 21) that the stages of drive development are of greater importance than actual events within the environment in which a child is developing. One of the most profound changes within post Freudian elaborations of the psychoanalytic perspective is the reappraisal of this assumption and a corresponding increase in emphasis on the social and relational context of human development. This includes much greater attention to the significance of early childhood experience; the significance of the actual behaviour of the parents towards the child; and the role of attachment and dependency in early infancy which concentrates attention on the mother /infant relationship. Nowhere are these developments more apparent than in the emergence of object relations thinking which has gained a position of prominence in contemporary psychoanalytic discourse and which in the UK context has largely superseded the classical Freudian perspective at the level of clinical practice.

The object relations psychoanalytic perspective

Object relations theory is a dense and complex theoretical and clinical perspective and one that is central to an understanding of contemporary psychoanalysis. It can be seen as representing a departure from, but also a development of themes in classical Freudian theory. It continues to manifest tensions that were inherent in classical psychoanalysis concerning its scientific status in that it proposes a complex theory of early development that lacks comprehensive empirical validation. It retains the Freudian idea of analytic objectivity or neutrality and emphasizes the important developmental aspects of the provision of an objective/external perspective in the analytic work. As in classical analysis the relationship between analyst and patient is also highly asymmetrical and the analytic style may be vigorously interpretative. In the object relations orientation interpretations are closely linked to the flow of communication in the

transference/countertransference relationship. In effect a complex dialectical interplay therefore exists between the "objectivity" of the analyst and his/her subjective experience of the analysand. Any attempt to explore the ethics of analytic engagement must therefore take account of this complex dialectical interplay of subjectivity and objectivity in the analytic encounter. In effect this is what Habermas ([1968]1978) began to do in his early work where he used classical psychoanalysis as an epistemological paradigm for critical science. However with his move to formulate a communicative ethics he lost interest in the psychoanalytic paradigm and recognition of potential commonality between subsequent developments in psychoanalysis and in Habermas' ongoing work was lost.

Given the dominance of object relations thinking in contemporary psychoanalysis in the UK most psychoanalytic theorists have tended to aspire to this category and it therefore represents a broad church which can make definition difficult. For purposes of this study I am following Fonagy and Target (2003) in adopting the pragmatic definition offered by the American psychoanalyst, Kernberg (1976) which defines the tradition as referring to the Kleinian School and the British School of Independent Psychoanalysts as well as other theorists who integrate the ideas of these two schools into their perspectives. The term "object-relations" brings to centre stage the relational dimension of intrapsychic life by concentrating on the object of the instinct, namely the breast, penis, mother, father and so on. Arguably it might be more appropriately termed "subject-relations theory" but this in turn would mislead if it were to imply the idea of whole subjects relating to each other.[5] Rather, what are being addressed are the different and sometimes conflicting conscious and unconscious aspects of subjects and the relationships that are established between them.

Object-relations theory is rooted in the thinking of Melanie Klein (1975b) and her reworking of Freudian psychoanalytic theory. Klein began her work in the 1920s and retained much of Freud's emphasis on the instinctual basis of development. However she challenged his theory of the structure of the personality when she noted that infants relate to their objects much earlier than Freud considered the case (Scharff and Scharff, 1987). The Freudian view of the new born baby as a narcissistic entity, governed by

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[5] See brief discussion of relational psychoanalysis, Chapter 2 (pp. 59-63) for alternative perspective on the use of the term "object" in psychoanalysis.

instinctual impulses, is challenged by Kleinian and later objects relations perspectives, which view the baby as an active partner from birth, capable of relating to his/her carer. Whilst this thinking emerged in the absence of any formal empirical research paradigm, Scharff and Scharff also underline that in recent times it has been validated by infant observation research which confirms the psychological competence of the baby as an initiator and partner in human relationships (ibid., p. 56). It is this recognition that lies at the heart of the object relations perspective and which, during the past quarter of a century in particular, has resulted in a marked shift of interest towards relational themes including those concerning the therapeutic relationship.

Klein began her work with young children and assumed that it was possible to analyze them in line with the same rigorous principles of Freudian psychoanalysis as used with adults. She did so by approaching the child's play as a language and interpreted it as a way of expressing their psychic conflicts (Segal, 1988). What she discovered in the course of her clinical work led her to radicalize Freud's theory. Her observations confirmed his theory of infantile sexuality but she also observed phenomena that were less expected. In classical theory the Oedipus complex was thought to start at three or four years of age in the genital phase of development. However Klein observed oedipal phantasies and anxieties in much younger children and furthermore that pre-genital as well as genital trends seemed to be involved in these phantasies.[6] She also observed that these pre-genital trends seemed to play an important part in oedipal anxieties. She concluded that a more primitive pre-oedipal situation could be identified and that the older child's object relationships extended well into the past, as far back as relationships to part-objects such as the breast or penis. These part-object relationships preceded the relationship to the parents as whole people.

In her work, Klein also noted that the child's internal image of the object tended to be more ferocious and punitive than the actual parents appeared to be and she concluded that internal objects are by no means a replica of the external world but rather are characterized by unconscious phantasy. When the baby first turns to the breast for feeding, Kleinian theory proposes that a rich unconscious world also begins to unfold. In her clinical work and her theoretical formulations, Klein followed the complex

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[6] In Kleinian theory phantasy is spelled with a "ph" to emphasize that she is talking about unconscious psychological processes and to underscore difference from conscious fantasy.

interplay between the child's phantasies and his/her actual experience and the gradual process by which the child develops a more realistic relation to external objects. For Klein the infant is exposed from the start to anxiety stirred up by what she regards as the innate polarity of the instincts, that is, the conflict between the life instinct and the death instinct.[7] The infant is also exposed to the impact of external reality, which is both anxiety provoking but also life-enhancing and is from the outset struggling with feelings of aggression arising from dependence and frailty. Kleinian theory proposes that the immature ego of the infant faced with the anxiety of the death instinct responds partly by converting it into aggression and partly by projecting that aspect of itself which contains the death instinct into the external object, the breast. This is then felt to be bad and threatening to the ego and gives rise to feelings of persecution. Fear of the death instinct is thus transformed into fear of a persecutor. At the same time a relationship is established with an ideal object as the life instinct is activated and libido is projected outwards. Thus from very early in life the immature ego has a relationship to two objects, having split the primary object, the breast into an ideal object and a persecutory object. Dominated by omnipotent narcissism, the baby wants to have the breast for itself at all times and this triggers great rage and great frustration, which has the potential to spoil the good experience of the breast when it becomes available. The first hunger and the instinctual striving to satisfy it are accompanied by the phantasy of an object that is capable of satisfying it but the hungry screaming baby may also phantasize that he/she is attacking the breast. The baby then becomes scared of possible retaliation from this bad object which may damage the good breast and good experience and this requires further splitting of the object, a defence which typifies the paranoid- schizoid psychic position as proposed by Klein ([1946]1986).

What Klein endeavours to describe is the primitive world of mental representations of the instincts as they arise in the context of the earliest relationships. These representations are very tied up with the infant's bodily ways of relating to the world.

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[7] One of the more controversial aspects of Kleinian theory is her uncritical acceptance of Freud's idea of the death instinct which is "held to represent the fundamental tendency of every living being to return to the inorganic state" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988, p. 97). Klein saw the death instinct as representing a deeply significant psychological phenomenon present from birth and she saw destructiveness as the result of the death instinct. In Rustin's (1991) words, Kleinian theory "offers a distinctively uncompromising view of human destructiveness and the continuing and unavoidable problem in human lives of coping with this. The omnipresence of envy is perhaps the distinguishing doctrine of Kleinian work as well as one of the main sources of others' reservations towards it" (p. 21).

The baby sucks in a pleasurable way but also bites. It takes in but also expels food. In this stage of development the psyche is relating to part rather than whole objects. In the Kleinian framework young children are constantly trying to split their objects and their feelings. They are constantly trying to retain good feelings and introject good objects whilst expelling bad objects and projecting bad feelings. Their aim is to acquire and keep inside the ideal object seen as life giving and to expel and keep out the persecutory object and those parts of the self, containing the death instinct. In the paranoid-schizoid position the main anxiety is that the persecutory object will get inside, overwhelm and annihilate the ideal object and the self. Through her observation of these intricate processes in her clinical work she began to formulate her theory of how the very young child constructs a rich and complex inner world.

If conditions for development are favourable, Kleinian theory suggests that the infant will increasingly feel that the ideal object and libidinal impulses are stronger than the persecutory object and the aggressive impulses. The infant will be less driven to project the latter outwards and the power attributed to the bad, persecutory object will decrease. Tolerance of the death instinct increases and paranoid fears lessen. As integrative processes become more stable a new phase of development comes into play, the depressive position (Klein, [1935]1975a). The infant now recognizes the whole object and relates to this object as such. Recognizing the parents as whole people has wide implications. It means recognizing that good and bad experiences do not proceed from separate objects but from the same person who is the source of both good and bad feelings. It also means recognizing the parents as individuals with their own lives and relationships. Whereas in the paranoid- schizoid position the main anxiety is of being destroyed by the bad object, now the main anxiety is that the infant's own destructive impulses will destroy the object that is also loved and upon whom he/she feels totally dependent. In the depressive position capacity for concern for the other now begins to emerge as the other is seen as a whole person with thoughts and feelings and not as a part-object devoid of human feelings. The infant now realizes his/her capacity to both love and hate the parent and this opens up the experience of guilt about hostility towards the loved object and anguish about separateness, exclusion and difference. The pain of the depressive position is thus enormous and can lead to defences that include omnipotence, denial and denigration of the other. Against this, the capacity for concern for the other is what defines the depressive position and reaching this position is for

Klein the central achievement of the child's development. It might also be said that Klein's formulation of the depressive position is the central achievement of her relationally oriented developmental theory.

Undoubtedly the complexity of what Klein was attempting to formulate means that her vocabulary sometimes falls short of her objective. In trying to develop a language that would give meaning to the internal world of the infant, her descriptions can sometimes sound far-fetched. Furthermore her speculations can appear "adultmorphic" in the sense of attributing to infants what might be regarded as adult levels of knowledge, feelings and so on. At the time when she was writing there was little research to back up her formulations but after thirty years of infant research some of what might appear to be extravagant claims about infancy are now more imaginable (Fonagy and Target, 2003, p. 132) It is also important to acknowledge that she was developing psychoanalytic insights in areas that were previously untouched by Freudian theory. In Steuerman's (2000) words: "Freud shocked his generation by claiming that children had sexual desires that shaped the meaning of their communication. Klein shocked the world by claiming that the infant had sexual and aggressive tendencies that expressed themselves in a meaningful way" (p. 65, her emphasis).

The impact of Kleinian thinking on contemporary clinical practice is difficult to exaggerate. For Klein, "the essence of the talking cure is in the quality of human relationship between the patient and others, not in the childhood reconstruction of how the person came to be the way he or she is" (Kapur and Campbell, 2004, p. 16). Kleinian thinking focused attention much more powerfully on the here and now of the relationship between analyst and patient and on the complex communications both conscious and unconscious that flow between them in the context of the transference/ countertransference relationship. Whilst Freudian theory drew attention to the transference, there was now much greater recognition of the importance of countertransference feelings evoked in the analyst by the patient. This recognition was intricately linked with Klein's formulations regarding the earliest stages of development. In her framework the infant's feeding experience for example gains a new significance in that what is being fed is not just the physical need but also the capacity of the infant to form a communicative relationship and to integrate love and hate. The good enough carer provides not just physical nourishment but also a space where

feelings of hate and aggression can overtime be absorbed and symbolized in a communicative relationship. It is this understanding of very early communicative processes between carer and infant that forms the theoretical backdrop for clinical engagement with communicative processes between analyst and patient, both conscious and unconscious, as they unfold and become the focus for psychoanalytic interpretation. Laplanche and Pontalis (1988) suggest that the task of the analyst is:

> to allow oneself to be guided, in the actual *interpretation*, by one's own counter-transference reactions, which in this perspective are often not distinguished from emotions felt. The approach is based on the tenet that resonance 'from unconscious to unconscious' constitutes the only authentically psycho-analytic form of communication. (p. 93, their emphasis)

Here they articulate the deeply relational psychoanalytic process of opening up communication and reflecting processes that typifies Kleinian infused contemporary practice.

Beyond the consulting room Kleinian theory also resonates powerfully for theorists interested in the intricate links between psychic and social phenomena. What seems most relevant here is firstly the Kleinian view of human nature as deeply social from the start and secondly the delineation by Klein of positions that denote specific constellations of object-relations, feelings, and impulses. In the Kleinian framework individuality is the emergent result of a prolonged experience of dependency and concern for the other arises from the earliest lack of differentiation between self and other. Central to the Kleinian view of this process are the aforementioned positions, the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive respectively. Alford (1989) suggests that these can be linked to two different conceptions of morality. In the more primitive "talion" morality, every act of aggression - phantasized or not - is returned in kind, a way of thinking and interacting that is characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position. In the depressive position, the person is more able to identify with the pain of the other, leading to what Alford calls a "reparative" morality.

Kleinian thinking has been used in a variety of ways by theorists who wish to enhance their understanding of social processes. Rustin (1991), for example, explores the links between racist states of mind and the primitive splitting and projection that characterizes paranoid-schizoid functioning. Kapur and Campbell (2004) draw heavily on Kleinian

theory in making sense of "the troubled mind of Northern Ireland" and the dehumanization of societal processes both during and in the aftermath of the "Troubles" there. Closer to the immediate focus of this study, Steuerman (2000) uses Klein's theory and in particular the Kleinian emphasis on the pervasiveness of destructive impulses, to critique the work of both Habermas and Lyotard (1984, 1988) and to expose the limitations of their respective rationalist and irrationalist positions. But this is by no means a one-way process of influence. A key argument of this study is that social theory also has a great deal to offer psychoanalytic understanding of the links between psychic and social phenomena. I return to these themes in Part 111, where my concern is more explicitly that of a dialogue between psychotherapy and social theory. Here the focus remains on psychoanalytic discourse and, in particular, some key developments following Klein's initial formulation of the object relations perspective.

The Independent School of British psychoanalysis

Whilst Klein radicalized Freud's theory, she maintained his emphasis on the instinctual basis of development. This contrasts with Fairbairn (1954, 1963) a Scottish psychoanalyst and one of the early object relations theorists who, unlike Klein, did not see the infant as the sole determinant of how the mother is perceived (Scharff and Scharff, 1987, p. 48). He saw the quality of mothering as a significant determinant of how this process unfolds. He did not see aggression as the result of the death instinct but as a result of frustration in being cared for. In Fairbairn's view, the fundamental human drive was not the gratification of instinctual impulses but the need to be in relationship and to be loved and validated therein. Recognition of this need and its conceptualization has had a profound influence on all subsequent developments within psychoanalytic discourse and in the wider psychotherapeutic field. At birth the infant seeks attachment to his/her carer and is then acutely vulnerable to the latter's responses. Aggression is understood as a reaction to frustration in reality and anxiety is related to issues of separation from the maternal object. These and related themes, all of which take careful account of the actual quality of the early relational environment contributing to the infant's experience, are explored and developed in what has come to be known as the Independent tradition within British psychoanalysis.

The Independent School of object relations thinking is separate from the British Psychoanalytical Society's Kleinian School.[8] It represents the work of a number of individual analysts and, unlike the other psychoanalytic schools, does not have an easily identifiable founding member. Consequently it lacks some of the theoretical coherence of the Kleinian stance. Alongside Fairbairn, other well known early writers within this tradition included Balint (1959, 1968), and Winnicott (1953, 1965, 1971). In recent decades, analysts writing within this tradition include Bollas (1987, 1989) and Casement (1985, 1990). In the present context what is most significant is the overall contribution of the Independent group to the relational thrust of contemporary psychoanalytic discourse whilst individual differences of emphasis within the tradition are of less significance. Overall it may be said that the Independent group has made a very substantial contribution to the consideration of earliest child development and in particular to the effects of the early relational environment in facilitating or disrupting the child's move from dependence to mature independence. The work of Donald Winnicott has had an especially profound impact in this regard both within and beyond psychoanalysis. In this study an additional source of interest in the work of Winnicott is its adoption by Axel Honneth (1995) in his social theory of recognition. In considering Winnicott's work as an example of object relations thinking in the Independent tradition, I am doing so as part of my wider overview of the relational ethos that underpins psychoanalytic discourse, whilst simultaneously paving the way for later discussion of Honneth's critical social theory and the influence of Winnicottian object relations thinking therein.[9]

Winnicott was a paediatrician as well as a psychoanalyst and most of his influential psychoanalytic concepts, including the "holding environment" and "transitional object", stem from his experience in the child mental health field. He began his psychoanalytic training in 1923 and in the course of his early work it became apparent to him that classical Freudian theory and practice had significant limitations. He was unhappy with the notion prevalent at that time that psychoanalytic treatment was most suited to relatively sophisticated individuals suffering from neurotic anxieties that were traced

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[8] Following the arrival of Sigmund Freud and his daughter Anna in London from Austria in 1938, conflict developed between the ideas of Klein and those of the continental analysts who had migrated to London. Following extensive debates the British Psychoanalytical Society split into three separate divisions: Kleinian, Freudian and Independent. These divisions continue to remain in place.
[9] See Chapter 6 pp. 150-2.

back to instinctual life at the four to five year stage in the child's relationship to both parents. For Winnicott (1965), the case histories which he encountered in his work showed him that many older children who became disturbed already showed difficulties in their emotional development in early infancy. For a time Winnicott became a pupil of Klein but unlike her, he was unable to accept Freud's concept of the death instinct as an explanation for destructiveness. He could not believe that we are born with the seeds of our own destruction within us. For Winnicott the focus was on the instincts and the impulses to which they give rise, as sources of spontaneity and creativity. His theoretical position emerged from his attempts to understand the conditions of good enough fit between the interactions of mother and baby that could contribute to the latter's healthy development and conversely, the difficulties in mother - baby interactions that might contribute to later psychological difficulties. The unequivocally relational thrust of his theory is evident in his famous comment that "there is no such thing as a baby" by which he meant that if you set out to describe a baby, you will find you are describing a baby and someone else, since a baby cannot exist alone but is part of a relationship (Winnicott, 1964, p. 88). Every human life begins with a phase of absolute dependence and merger and much of Winnicottian theory is concerned with understanding the interactional processes whereby mother and child emerge from this state of undifferentiated intersubjectivity and learn to love, recognize and relate to each other as separate, independent people.

For Winnicott the mother's role in the initial stage of dependence and symbiosis, is understood in terms of the concept of "holding". In Winnicottian terms the "holding environment" is both a psychological and physical space in which the baby is emotionally and physically held and protected without knowing this. Through the mother's "good enough" holding response the baby develops an initial sense of self and a basic feeling of security and trust. The good enough mother begins with an almost complete adaptation to her baby's needs and thus allows the baby the opportunity for the illusion that the breast is part of the baby: "Omnipotence is nearly a fact of experience…..the mother places the actual breast just there where the infant is ready to create, and at the right moment" (1971, p. 11). The baby takes milk from a breast that is part of the baby. Crucially, through this experience of omnipotence, the baby begins life by existing as opposed to reacting, by being creative as opposed to being compliant. The mother whose "holding" is not good enough cannot sense her infant's needs

sufficiently and cannot allow for the infant's omnipotent expression. She fails to meet the infant's "spontaneous gesture" which Winnicott (1965) regards as the source of the potential "true self". Instead the mother substitutes her own gestures which require the baby's compliance and out of this emerges the earliest stages of what he terms "false self" development and relating.

In Winnicottian thinking the true self refers to the instinctive core of the personality and the capacity to recognize and enact spontaneous needs for self-expression. It is thus associated with aliveness and spontaneity and is at the heart of authenticity. In false self relating on the other hand, the infant and later the adult seeks constantly to anticipate the demands of the other in order to maintain the relationship. The true self can only evolve in the presence of an unobtrusive other and for Winnicott this means that healthy relatedness evolves from the developmentally important experience of being alone in the presence of a reliable other. Here Fonagy and Target (2003, p. 142)) note the congruence between Winnicott's view and Hegel's ([1807]1977) assertion that the self in formation loses itself in the other but also supersedes the other since in the other it sees its own self. Honneth (1995), whose work is infused with Hegelian philosophy, also finds in Winnicottian psychoanalytic thinking a rich source of understanding of the intersubjectively constituted nature of the relation- to- self, which Honneth calls "basic self- confidence".

Winnicott (1953) observes that as development proceeds, the good enough mother adapts less and less to the infant's omnipotence, which begins to recede as the infant's spontaneous self connects more with the outside world. This very early space of relating and separating is understood as a "transitional" space and it is here that the meaning of transitional phenomena including the first "not me" possession, can be located. This first possession, which might be a favourite blanket with which the young child develops an affectively charged relationship, represents a transitional space between a state of being merged with mother and one of relating to her as a separate being. The physical object represents both the infant and the mother. It is transitional in terms of facilitating the move from omnipotent relating towards a way of relating to the object as part of external reality. For Winnicott transitional space is where symbolization begins to occur and where meaningful relating and love can develop and grow. Winnicott also observes that the child relates to the transitional object not only with symbiotic

tenderness but also with rage and aggressive attacks. He postulates that in surviving these destructive attacks, objects are placed outside the area of omnipotent control of the infant. The object comes to be seen as autonomous with a life of its own. This also applies to the child's relationship with the mother who, by surviving the child's attacks without retaliation, places herself outside the child's omnipotent control and helps the child recognize his/her dependence on the loving care, which she provides. For Winnicott the good enough holding environment thus allows for the integration of love and aggression leading to the tolerance of ambivalent feelings and ultimately to the emergence of concern for the other.

Both Klein and Winnicott formulated their theories in the context of close observation of clinical phenomena but neither worked within a formal empirical research paradigm. However, subsequent research findings have broadly supported some aspects of their work. This applies notably to Winnicott's key formulations concerning the importance of sensitive maternal care in the early stages of life; the inherent limitation on this sensitivity, consistent with his concept of "good enough" mothering; and his views regarding the traumatic effects of early maternal failure (Fonagy and Target, 2003, pp. 154-5). But research findings have not supported his exclusive concern with the relationship between the infant and mother as the basis for serious mental disorder. A related criticism of Winnicott's theory is its perceived romanticization of the role of motherhood (Frosh, 1999, p. 117). Noting the existence of anthropological data indicating that relationship patterns in early infancy are socially constructed, Frosh writes: "approaches that "naturalise' mothering as much as object relations theory does neglect these data and fuel attempts to bolster traditional patterns of family life" (ibid.). Implicit in this is a critique of the apolitical, humanistic slant of object relations thinking and its associated preoccupation with personal change. Viewed from this perspective, the object relations approach does not offer a sufficiently radical advance beyond the classical tradition. It extends the focus beyond the individual to the relationship with the mother but then treats this dyad as if it were an individual, rather than a socially constructed entity. Whilst object relations thinking, such as the Winnicottian idea of a "true self" recognizes environmental obstacles to personal fulfilment and growth, it also

reinforces the idea of a human essence that is pre-given and separate from society.[10] In Frosh words:

> ……at its most extreme, it proposes that social and personal distress could be overcome if we could only return to that fundamental state of human nature expressed in the new-born child's loving relationship with the mother; all would be harmonious if the world were only less frustrating. This idea leads to the proposal that complete integration and happiness is achievable through alterations to the kind of relationships that parents form with their children, without a restructuring of society- a view opposed by many political and feminist theorists. (Ibid., pp. 117-8)

Thus far I have drawn on Kleinian and Winnicottian contributions to the object relations orientation, the significance of which is difficult to exaggerate in terms of the wider development of psychoanalysis. The dominance of this tradition currently, underscores the relational ethos of contemporary theory and practice and the implicit shift towards moral/ethical concerns. This is reflected in the theme of concern for the other as a key organizing concept in the different approaches outlined.

In twentieth century philosophy the realization that we are always already embedded in language gave rise to a radical paradigm shift from a philosophy centred on individual consciousness to one that privileges intersubjectivity and language. It seems reasonable to conclude that a similar paradigm shift has been witnessed in the psychoanalytic discipline based on recognition that we are always already embedded in contexts of intersubjectivity and communication from the start of life. This paradigm shift is at heart of later discussion concerning the limitations of current moral/ethical debate in psychotherapy. In essence my argument is that these limitations reflect a failure to embrace the full potential of the paradigm shift from an individual to a relational and communicative perspective that now infuses the psychotherapeutic field. From the perspective of the study, this shared ground and shared paradigm shift between the therapeutic approaches outlined is of much greater interest than differences between them, which can be a source of such heated controversy within the psychotherapeutic world. I began by supporting the research and clinical stance that takes seriously the question, "what works for whom?" and throughout the study my assumption is that this is the most helpful context in which to think about differences in clinical approach

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[10] See Chapter 7 pp. 165-70.

within and between psychotherapeutic orientations. My concern is to offer a general mapping of the field as a prelude to engaging more explicitly with moral/ethical themes. With this in mind I now turn to a further example of the relational ethos that pervades current psychoanalytic thinking. This model connects with earlier object relations thinking as outlined above but with a very specific focus on expanding therapeutic methodology for a wider patient population. It also connects very helpfully with themes and concerns in the wider psychotherapeutic community including those within family therapy discourse.

The theory of mentalisation or reflective functioning

In recent years the theory of mentalisation, also known as reflective functioning, developed by Fonagy and Target (1996, 1998, 2003) has emerged in the psychoanalytic field as an influential developmental framework for conceptualizing the difficulties of patients with limited reflective capacity.[11] Previously these people might have been deemed unsuitable for psychoanalytic intervention. They have difficulty taking in analytic interpretations and are not readily amenable to a classical psychoanalytic insight oriented approach. However these are people who may also be in considerable personal difficulty and distress, sometimes with a diagnosis of borderline or narcissistic personality disorder (Bateman and Fonagy, 2004). They constitute a substantial grouping within the population seeking help and increasingly represent a clinical challenge with which contemporary psychoanalysis seeks to engage. The theory of reflective function should be understood in this context. It is an attempt to formulate and understand this category of difficulty, drawing on a developmental psychological perspective. Reflective function, in psychoanalytic terms, refers to the capacity to conceptualize mental processes in self and other people, that is the ability to interpret one's own and others' actions in terms of mental states including thoughts, feelings, beliefs, desires, intentions and so on. An important distinction is made between this concept and self- reflection or introspection which, crucially leaves out the inherently intersubjective nature of reflective functioning as conceptualized psychoanalytically. Another important distinction is that reflective function is seen as rooted in procedural

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[11] Whilst the terms "mentalization" and "reflective function" are used interchangeably, Fonagy and Target (2003, p. 270) clarify that the *capacity* to understand interpersonal behaviour in terms of mental states is referred to as "mentalization" and this concept is operationalized for research purposes as "reflective function".

knowledge and is understood as an automatic process unconsciously invoked in interpreting human action unlike self reflection.

Within this approach it is suggested that in early childhood, prior to the age of three, the infant exists primarily in a psychic equivalence mode, that is, ideas or perceptions are experienced not as representations but rather as accurate replicas of the way reality is. This oscillates with the pretend mode that is characteristic of the child's play in which his/her ideas are experienced as representational but are not thought to have a relationship to the outside world as such. In the optimal developmental situation these two modes are eventually integrated and mental states begin to be experienced as representations. Inner and outer reality can then be seen as linked and the capacity for mentalisation or reflective function is laid down. At the heart of this theory is the view that the acquisition of reflective capacity is rooted in the intersubjective process that unfolds between an infant and his/her parents. In this context the child internalises the thinking self from the emotionally containing object with whom he/she interacts. In situations of good enough parenting this eventually leads to the consolidation of the child's own reflective functioning capacity.

There is accumulating evidence to suggest that maltreatment impairs the child's reflective capacity (Fonagy and Target, 1998) and an important focus for therapeutic intervention with such patients is the offer of space where thinking about ideas and feelings can be experienced as safe perhaps for the first time.[12] Here the relationship between analyst and patient is pivotal but, as in the Winnicottian orientation, it entails a way of working that is less focused on explicit interpretation of unconscious content at least in the early stages of the work, given the limited capacity of the patient for this level of reflective endeavour. Nonetheless there is emphasis on the provision of an external perspective by the analyst rather than simply locating and empathizing with the patient's own subjective experience. The focus is on helping the patient to gradually learn that mental experience involves representations that can be thought about, talked about, played with and changed. Whilst heavily infused with Winnicottian themes, this contemporary psychoanalytic theory is also similar to the Kleinian stance in important respects. These perspectives all reflect the implicit shift towards moral/ethical concerns

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[12] Fonagy and Target (1998) cite evidence from Beeghly and Cicchetti (1994); Cicchetti and Beeghly (1987); Schneider-Rosen and Cicchetti (1984, 1991).

that typifies current psychoanalytic discourse. They try to conceptualize the developmental trajectory of our human capacity to recognize mental states in others and to engage for example with states of hurt and suffering in the other. In these approaches there is emphasis on the provision of an objective/external perspective by the analyst and indirectly therefore they raise the issue of how to understand and formulate analytic objectivity. They underline the privileging of intersubjectivity and communication in current therapeutic practice and the focus on helping those for whom communication is profoundly limited and distorted by psychological difficulties. The transference relationship between analyst and patient becomes the arena in which these difficulties are played out, understood and addressed.

The theory of reflective function also represents an important contribution in its own right not least because it opens up a very specific and important technical discussion about how best to work with those whose reflective capacity is seriously impaired. Here it brings psychoanalytic discourse closer to shared technical concerns with other therapies including family/systemic therapy which will be explored in Chapter 3. Systemic therapy has long focused on finding ways of working therapeutically with people who are not primarily motivated by an interest in intrapsychic insight and therefore not readily amenable to a classical analytic approach. In this respect reflective functioning could be thought of as something of a bridging concept between the two therapies (Donovan, 2009). The pivotal status of the theory of reflective functioning also rests on the fact that it offers a developmental psychological perspective on why some people have greater reflective functioning capacity which, as we shall see, in the case of systemic therapy is couched in terms of the concept of reflexivity. This common ground between psychoanalytic and systemic discourse, anchored in the concept of reflective functioning/reflexivity is important within the overall argument of this study and is particularly important for the endeavour in Part 111 to connect the therapeutic concept of reflexivity with its social theoretical formulation. This in turn will serve as the basis for thinking about an adequate conceptualization of the moral/ethical ethos of psychotherapeutic engagement in both therapies. My argument will be that psychotherapy can serve as a reflexive resource in personal and social contexts, helping to increase reflexive capacities which facilitate participation in spheres of discursive or reflexive communication as characterized in Habermas' theory of communicative ethics. As a prelude to all of this, Chapter 2 now considers current formulations of

moral/ethical themes in psychoanalytic discourse. In essence my argument is that whilst recent contributions indicate recognition of the need for a more satisfactory engagement with the moral/ethical landscape in which psychotherapists operate, they fail to engage convincingly with the shift described in Chapter 1, from individual to relational themes, and thus fail to engage with the radical potential that it represents.

Chapter 2

Psychoanalytic thinking and practice: the moral question

An historical perspective on the moral question in psychoanalysis

We have seen that the shift from classical psychoanalysis to the object relations tradition implicitly brings moral/ethical themes and concerns into the foreground and I will now consider to what extent psychoanalytic discourse conceptualizes these concerns explicitly. I begin by considering the deep seated historical ambivalence towards moral/ethical themes in the psychoanalytic tradition and the context for this ambivalence before moving on to explore the parameters of contemporary ethical debate including the postmodernist influences that permeate current thinking. My argument is that whilst recent contributions indicate recognition of the need for a more satisfactory engagement with the moral/ethical landscape in which psychotherapists operate, they fail to engage convincingly with the shift described in Chapter 1, from individual to relational themes, and thus fail to engage with the radical potential that it represents.

In essence the dominant view within psychoanalysis has been to regard the field of morality as outside its concern (Chazan, 2001, p. 182). It is not surprising therefore that "psychoanalytic theory and the forms of therapy that have grown from it, or in reaction to it have not had a great deal to say explicitly about ethics and values" (Palmer Barnes and Murdin, 2001, p. 2). The historical precursor to this gap in theorizing can be found in Freud's own critical and sometimes cynical perspective on morality and ethics: "Ethics are remote from me….I do not break my head very much about good and evil, but I have found little that is "good" about human beings on the whole." [1] He made little distinction between ethics and morality and had no inclination to explore in depth the question of the validity of moral judgments (Hartmann, 1960). At best he might have us follow the principle: "Be as moral as you can honestly be and do not strive for ethical

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[1] Letter from Sigmund Freud in Meng, H. & Freud, E. L. (Eds.) (1963) *Psychoanalysis and faith: the letters of Sigmund Freud and Oskar Pfister,* New York, Basic Books. (pp. 61-2), quoted in Meissner, 2003, p. 5.

perfection." [2] As Chazan (2001) reflects, much of this was due to his preoccupation with the role played by an excessively harsh superego in the aetiology of his patients' disorders. Strands of Freud's theory raised serious challenges to the moral thinking of his time and were at odds with the Kantian view that moral actions are performed out of a sense of duty towards the moral law.[3] His clinical experience led him to believe that it was impossible psychologically to act as Kant suggested, that is out of respect for duty which presents itself as obedience to a moral law that is universally binding. In the first instance the pleasure principle's governance of the psychic apparatus appeared to entail an egoistic hedonism that shed doubt on the notion of concern for the other for its own sake. Whilst Freud considered the ability to love as a criterion for mental health, he considered it impossible to love one's neighbour as oneself (ibid.). Secondly his explanation of morality in terms of the superego suggested an ethical relativism that did not easily sit alongside attempts to adjudicate between rival moral standards. These were seen to vary systematically in line with factors such as child development and sociocultural context.

Wallwork (1991) reflects that the body blow to traditional ethics wrought by these and other psychoanalytic doctrines are sometimes seen as being at least partly responsible for the culture of narcissism evident in modern western societies.[4] Some of Freud's interpreters drew the conclusion that his theory made ethical reflection pointless, as genuine moral conduct was impossible given his account of drives as causal components of human action and his related account of the superego (ibid.). Allied to this, the first generation of psychoanalysts tended to distance themselves from ethical reflection because of their positivist conviction that psychoanalysis should aim to be a value neutral science, free from the distortion of moral values. (Hartmann,1960). In clinical terms this was represented in the analytic stance of anonymity and abstinence that could be seen to mirror the natural scientist's detachment from his or her subject matter. Within psychoanalytic culture all of this contributed to a pejorative attitude towards ethics that had become deeply entrenched by the 1950s despite the contribution of a minority of writers such as Rieff ([1959]1979) and Hartmann (1960) who endeavoured to articulate ethical themes in psychoanalysis. Others, notably Fromm

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[2] Letter from Sigmund Freud in Hale, N. G. (Ed.) (1971) *James Jackson Putnam and psychoanalysis,* Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press. (p. 122), quoted in Wallwork, 1991 p. 243.
[3] See Chapter 4 pp. 95-6.
[4] See Lasch (1978) for example, and Chapter 8 (pp. 203-7) below for Giddens' (1991) critique of Lasch.

([1941]2004, [1947] 1999)[5] and Adler (1961), broke ranks with the classical psychoanalytic tradition in order to develop a theory that allowed space for ethical reflection but their work has had little impact within mainstream clinical psychoanalysis in the UK.

Notwithstanding Freud's marked reticence as a moral theorist he recognized that psychoanalytic practice itself depended on a moral pact between analyst and analysand with reciprocal obligations and duties on both sides. Psychoanalysis was in effect underpinned by an "ethic of honesty" (Reiff, [1959]1979). Analysands were expected to speak as truthfully as possible even about very shameful matters and to keep their promise in a minimal sense by, for example, coming to sessions regularly, paying for them and so on. Freud also recognized that the analysand must begin to take "moral responsibility" for disavowed fantasies, motives and action. In turn the analyst was guided by ethical standards such as confidentiality, respect for the patient and truthfulness. These ethical standards made psychoanalytic treatment possible. "The great ethical element in psycho-analytic work is truth and again truth and should suffice for most people. Courage and truth are of what they are mostly deficient".[6] As Meissner (2003) points out, what Freud has in mind here is not simply honesty and truth between analyst and patient but that of the patient to and about him/herself.

The gap in analytic thinking between the anti moral ethos of classical psychoanalytic theory and the fundamentally moral aspects of analytic practice is striking (Wallwork, 1991). Furthermore, Freud's anti moralist stance with respect to duty based Kantian ethics is by no means the whole story of his engagement with ethics. In his detailed philosophical examination of ethical themes in Freud's work, Wallwork observes a more complex picture and notes that Freud is in fact very respectful towards key emphases in Kantian moral philosophy notably the centrality of respect for individual autonomy (ibid., p. x). Similarly Fonagy (2005) reflects that the classical psychoanalytic

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[5] Erich Fromm, was also associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory. However having become increasingly estranged from the thinking of the first generation critical theorists, he left the Institute of Social Research at Frankfurt University in 1939. The Freudian revisionist and humanistic stance associated with Fromm is critiqued by Marcuse (1955b) for what he perceived to be its removal of libido theory and other radical concepts from Freudian theory. See Held (1980) pp. 110-5 for overview of the Fromm/Frankfurt School debate.
[6] Letter from Sigmund Freud in Hale, N. G. (Ed.) (1971) *James Jackson Putnam and psychoanalysis,* Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press. (p. 171) quoted in Meissner, 2003, p. 10.

view which is "rooted in a Kantian philosophical tradition holds that striving towards autonomy and the reign of reason is the key to being human" (p. 135). Arguably, the lack of overt theorizing about ethics means that this more complex engagement with moral/ ethical themes gets overlooked. Continuity with traditional Kantian based moral thinking also gets overlooked, even as the abstract individualistic bias of this philosophical outlook infuses the psychotherapeutic field, notably in the emphasis placed on individual autonomy as the core value in psychotherapy (Holmes and Lindley, 1989). The emergence of the object relations orientation with its increased focus on relational themes, that distinguishes it from the classical tradition, undoubtedly signalled an implicit engagement with what would normally be termed moral/ethical concerns as we have seen. However this was not in fact accompanied by any historically significant shift towards explicit theorizing of moral/ethical themes and the positivist ethos of the classical tradition with its sharp divide between ethics and what was seen as value neutral scientific enquiry persisted.

It is true that Kleinian psychoanalytic theory has resonated for theorists interested in making links between psychic and social phenomena. But here, Wallwork's (1991) observation regarding the Freudian tradition also applies, namely that most of this literature comes from psychoanalysts and sociologists whose primary concern has been to draw normative implications from psychoanalysis for evaluating social phenomena and "not with understanding how psychoanalytic findings relate to the deepest questions of philosophical ethics" (p. 2). The observation by Samuels' (1993) regarding the gulf between depth psychology in the academy and depth psychology in the clinic, which as he notes is especially pronounced in the UK and North America, also merits attention here. He reflects that it is academic depth psychology and not the clinical version that "seems more at home with an insertion into the political field" (p. 5).[7] He is also very critical of attempts to employ object relations thinking derived from clinical work with individuals or small groups to engage with social, cultural and political themes. What he describes as the object relations "consensus" straddling the work of Klein and Winnicott comes under particular scrutiny. Whilst Samuels accepts that this object relations psychoanalytic stance may help us to make sense of how a person relates to their social world for example in terms of paranoid schizoid or depressive functioning, he does not

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[7] Samuels' definition of what constitutes academic depth psychology is very broadly based to include contributions from other theoretical discourses, for example, Habermas' writings on psychoanalysis.

think that it helps us makes sense of society itself and is deeply critical of the psychological reductionism evident when attempts are made to use object relations theory in this way:

> The assumption that a good- enough environment is all that innate potential of an individual requires to flower, and that this is determined within the nuclear family and in the first months of life, is hopelessly passive in the face of problematic social and political structures……..well being may not be achievable in a society characterized by alienation. The time-honoured values of humanistic ethics are not free of political bias and complicity in the construction of an oppressive and conformist society. (1993, p. 271)

This issue of psychological reductionism is among the most persistent criticisms levelled at psychoanalysis and I shall return to it in Part 111 when I locate psychoanalysis and psychotherapy in a dialogue with critical social theory.[8] Here, my focus remains on the problematic status of ethics within clinically oriented psychoanalytic discourse and the historical failure to articulate an ethical stance in both the classical and object relations traditions under the guise of a value neutral natural science.

Contemporary contributions to moral/ethical debate in psychoanalysis

In recent times the historical and deep seated ambivalence towards ethics within psychoanalytic discourse has been overtaken by a growing literature in the wider psychotherapeutic field that includes contributions by some writers with a psychoanalytic background (Hill and Jones, 2003; McFarland Solomon and Twyman, 2003; Palmer Barnes and Murdin, 2001). This literature is predominantly focused on ethical issues relating to the professional regulation of psychotherapy and much of its momentum comes from changes in social attitudes since the 1980s onwards:

> In the 1980s, attitudes were changed and the emphasis moved from the practitioner who was offering the service to the rights of citizens receiving it….Professionals who had assumed that they knew what was best for the patient began to have to explain what they were doing and why, both to their colleagues and to the public. (Palmer Barnes and Murdin, 2001, p.1)

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[8] See Chapter 7 pp. 164-70.

One of the more interesting features of this emerging literature is that, implicitly it encourages acknowledgement of common ground across traditional, rigidly held divides, notably between psychoanalysis and Jungian analytical psychology.[9] This is not surprising for once ethical themes in psychotherapy are disentangled from their traditional fusion with method and technique, then common ground across traditional ideological divides in the therapy world also becomes more apparent, as this study will demonstrate in the case of psychoanalytic and systemic therapeutic orientations. The tentative integrative ethos evident in this newly emerging ethical debate is therefore of interest even if one needs to be cautious about exaggerating its significance and cognizant of the fact it may also herald newly developing alliances and schisms in the complex political discourse of professional organizations.

Leading contributors to this debate bring with them extensive experience of the workings of professional codes of ethics and practice, ethics committees, complaints procedures and a range of other matters relating to professional regulation. This experience and concern with professional ethics firmly establishes the overall tone for debate as does the perceived need for psychotherapy to comply with contemporary expectations around professional responsibility and consumer rights. In the words of two contributors to this debate, the need which they address, relates to "society's interest in the provision of right conduct in analytic clinical practice" and "growing public concern about such issues as professional misconduct, breaches of confidentiality, and duties of care including child protection" (McFarland Soloman and Twyman, 2003, p. ix). There is no doubt that this emerging debate speaks to an appreciative audience of clinicians, who may find themselves facing stressful ethical dilemmas relating for example to the breaking of confidentiality in situations where their client, or perhaps the client's child, appears to be at risk of harm, or where they may have concerns about the working practices of a professional colleague. These are

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[9] The founder of analytical psychology was Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist who collaborated with Freud for a number of years up to 1913 when personal and conceptual differences resulted in their estrangement. Amongst other things, Jung disagreed with Freud over the nature of libido and with what he perceived as Freud's exclusively sexual interpretation of human motivation. He also saw Freud's approach to the psyche as overly mechanistic and causal. The divide between psychoanalysis and Jungian analytical psychology has persisted to this day but it is also the case that the latter has borrowed heavily from psychoanalysis particularly in the area of analytic clinical technique and in understanding developmental processes in infancy and childhood (Samuels et al., 1986). The term "depth psychology" which refers to psychology that addresses the deeper layers of the psyche namely the unconscious, encompasses both psychoanalysis and analytical psychology. For a brief account of the Freud/ Jung dispute see Samuels et al.(1986) pp. 118-22. For more general commentary see Fordham (1995); Glover (1950); Samuels (1985).

situations that induce high levels of personal stress and anxiety and it is important not to minimize the significance of contributions to the literature which speak to these very real dilemmas faced by clinicians. Nonetheless there are serious problems and limitations with the current parameters of ethical debate, including its exclusive and restrictive preoccupation with professional ethics, which need to be addressed.

What is most striking about this debate as it is currently formulated is its marginal status in wider psychotherapeutic discourse; the marked absence of a broader engagement with moral/ethical and political themes beyond the sphere of professional micro ethics and the sparseness of dialogue with social and philosophical perspectives that might broaden the debate and ground it at a deeper level. The impoverished quality of theoretical discussion that emerges from this restrictive context is striking even in the recent contributions to the literature, mentioned above, which show some awareness of these difficulties. Strawbridge (2003) notes that the marginal status of ethics is also evident in the way this subject is approached on psychotherapeutic training courses. Codes of ethics are presented to trainees but are rarely debated or critiqued in any depth. It is as if psychotherapy lacks the conceptual scaffolding for this to be possible. Discussion concerning ethical dilemmas is conducted against the backdrop of overarching legal or quasi legal ethical codes or frameworks whose own legitimacy is generally taken for granted. Issues relating to ethical standards are presented in a manner that reinforces their status as external to the actual process of therapy and thus implicitly reinforces their marginal status in the overall process of therapy. The pervasive influence of the positivist stance in psychotherapy favours emphasis on technical competence and a reliance on therapeutic method and technique. In Strawbridge's words; "adopting a natural science model of psychology, with its technical expertise model of practice, encourages avoidance of ethical and political debate…. It militates against viewing therapy as a fundamentally ethical activity" (2003, p. 5, her emphasis). In this climate the subject of ethics is addressed in a way that can all too easily reinforce the uncritical reification of certain codes and frameworks in the absence of clarity or even interest concerning the underlying conception of morality from which such codes derive. Yet without this deeper level of debate it is difficult to see how the subject of ethics can escape its marginal status, move beyond the preserve of those with specialist knowledge or interest in professional regulation and evolve into

a more vibrant and meaningful discourse that is seen as integral to the therapeutic endeavour.

In the past decade a significant feature of two collections of papers on the subject of ethics in psychotherapy, is that they both straddle the historical divide between psychoanalytic and Jungian analytic perspectives, (McFarland Solomon and Twyman, 2003; Palmer Barnes and Murdin, 2001) and both also show signs of wishing to move beyond the historically restrictive engagement with ethics within psychotherapeutic discourse, not least by adopting a stance of recognizing ethics as integral to the therapeutic process. Both collections also take as their starting point the recognition that adhering to ethical codes is not synonymous with ethical practice and that one can stay within an ethical code whilst behaving unethically. However despite their more expansive approach to the subject it is striking that both collections fail to develop significantly new thinking beyond a series of short and fragmented contributions that convey each author's personal perspective but without any overarching or unifying argument that might push the debate forward. Neither collection succeeds in transcending the restrictive discourse of professional ethics. In both the paucity of engagement with philosophical perspectives is striking as is the difficulty in establishing a creative dialogue with philosophical perspectives, including some postmodernist contributions, that are fleetingly considered. Yet both collections undoubtedly offer a revealing snapshot of the current state of ethical debate in psychotherapy and, as such, warrant attention. I begin by exploring how ethics and morality are defined in this literature and how the assumptions evident at this level permeate the entire debate.

In the introduction to this study, it was noted that the terms ethics and morality are used interchangeably in psychotherapeutic discourse and I have essentially used them in a similar fashion. In Palmer Barnes and Murdin's collection they include a paper by Richard Rowson, a philosopher with expertise in professional ethics who writes that no significant distinctions can be made between the two terms: "they are used interchangeably to refer to general ideas of right and wrong behaviour, good and bad states of affairs" (2001, p. 6). Whilst quoting Rowson, the editors nonetheless qualify his position, adding that in common usage the difference between these terms is that "morals are usually seen as the system adopted by an individual whereas ethics is the science of morality and duty" (pp. 1-2). Contributors to their book show a strong

preference for the term ethics which appears in the title of several essays. In McFarland Solomon and Twyman's collection there is further engagement with this question of definition. Twyman, a psychoanalyst, writes that the term ethics is used in two ways, firstly as a set of rules or ways of thinking that guide, or claim authority to guide actions of a particular group, as in a professional code of ethics. In the second sense, ethics is used to denote the "systematic study of thinking about how we ought to act" (p. 15). Again a strong preference for the term ethics is implicit in her account. Acknowledging the interconnection of the two terms she adds: "morality can, however, in common usage be seen to carry a loading of a stern set of duties that require us to subordinate our natural wishes in obedience to a moral law, and is often seen to carry a religious connotation and to be associated with behaviour regulated by a sense of guilt" (p. 16). We may conclude that morality is a term not much favoured by psychoanalysts either historically or in the contemporary era. In his analysis of ethics and values within the wider psychotherapeutic field, Tjeltveit (1999) echoes this theme. Whilst also acknowledging that ethics and morality are used interchangeably and that no standard distinction exists, he declares a preference for the term ethics over morality on the basis that the latter,

> often carries negative connotations, perhaps because of its association with the negatively-tinged "moralizing".… and "moralistic". Moralistic is often used to refer to a narrow, conventional, simplistic, judgmental, or rigid imposition of ethical principles on others. (p. 31)

In contrast to "morality", "values" are very much in favour in psychotherapeutic ethical discourse (Holmes and Lindley, 1989; Palmer Barnes and Murdin, 2001, Tjeltveit, 1999). Palmer Barnes and Murdin reflect that like morals, this term is often used interchangeably with ethics. It is used by them to highlight the assumptions we make about value or worth and which may scarcely be conscious for the therapist or for the patient: "Most of the models in use today would place a high value on such concepts as awareness and choice, and perhaps increasingly on responsibility and an attitude of concern for others" (p. 2). The emphasis on awareness and choice is noteworthy as is the implication in their account that responsibility and concern for the other has lacked the same emphasis in the past. Holmes and Lindley (1989) writing some years earlier, are unequivocal in emphasizing personal autonomy as the core value or principle in psychotherapy. They acknowledge the connection with a Kantian conception of morality but add that a philosophical justification of this principle is beyond the scope

of their discussion. Similarly, Tjeltveit (1999) observes that autonomy is the primary good that therapists seek for their clients and that whilst all the therapies affirm this value, psychoanalytic approaches are amongst those that stress it. In general, core values like codes of ethics in psychotherapy are presented without philosophical discussion or justification and without reference to the underlying conception of morality from which they derive. However a reading of the contemporary literature points to the enduring influence of the Kantian moral framework.[10] This pertains in particular to the paradigm of solipsistic subjectivity that still pervades ethical debate with its emphasis on individual autonomy, even as attempts are also made to transcend this paradigm and engage more directly with relational themes. One of the arguments of this study is that we are greatly assisted in this process by understanding the moral philosophical thinking that underpins the individualistic orientation and by engaging with philosophical debates in which it is challenged.

Within psychotherapeutic discourse there appears to be an underlying concern that the emerging debate about moral/ethical themes, reflected in the above mentioned contributions to the literature, potentially leads into the arena of subjectivity and personal belief that needs to be kept in check. This is crystallized in unease with the term morality which is perceived to carry such associations. Conversely the assumption appears to be that thinking in terms of ethics and values as distinct from morality lends some measure of objectivity or restraint to the debate. Arguably this restrictive engagement with moral/ethical themes highlights the enduring influence of positivist thinking in psychotherapy. Positivism argues for the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the social sciences and upholds a sharp split between ethics and science; between what is viewed as the disinterested, value neutral pursuit of knowledge on the one hand and the ethical framework surrounding its application in practice on the other hand. As Delanty (2005, p. 10) observes, positivist thinking has been under sustained attack for much of the 20th century from a variety of perspectives and has fallen out of favour not least because of developments within the natural sciences themselves and in the philosophy of science which challenged the positivist model of natural scientific enquiry. It has also been challenged by the hermeneutical tradition and by critical social theorists, including Habermas ([1963]1974) who from his earliest

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[10] Chapter 4 pp. 95-6.

writings railed against the excesses of scientific- technological rationality. As he observes, the sharp split between science and ethics becomes the basis for the latter to be subordinated to the former and for power to become increasingly invested in those who take up expert positions, together with the interests they serve:

> ….no attempt at all is made to attain a rational consensus on the part of citizens concerning the practical control of their destiny. Its place is taken by the attempt to attain technical control over history by perfecting the administration of society, an attempt that is just as impractical as it is unhistorical. (Ibid., p. 255)

Whilst issues relating to the political dimension of the psychotherapist's position as an expert in our society and the power invested in this position will be considered in Chapter 7, my concern here is to underline the persistent influence of positivist thinking in psychotherapeutic engagement with ethics. Amongst other things it is reflected in the split between ethics and morality with the latter carrying the weight of ambivalence towards the subject under discussion.

The split between ethics and morality and the avoidance of engagement with the latter term also highlights the overall lack of systematic philosophical debate. It is noteworthy that in the discourse of critical social theory, theorists such as Habermas and Honneth have a rather different perspective on the distinction between morality and ethics, which has roots in the Kantian philosophical tradition. Here morality is, in Honneth's (1995) words, understood as:

> the universalist attitude in which one respects all subjects equally as 'ends in themselves' or as autonomous persons; 'ethical life', on the other hand, refers to the settled ethos of a particular lifeworld, and normative judgements are to be made about this ethos only to the extent to which it is more or less able to approach the demands of universal moral principles. (p. 172)

Honneth further notes that in our times, critics of the Kantian tradition advocate reversing the relation of morality to ethical life by making the validity of moral principles dependent on historically contingent conceptions of ethical life. In Chapter 4, I explore Habermas' engagement with universal moral principles in the shape of his discourse ethics where he addresses criticism of Kantian solipsistic individualism whilst retaining the Kantian universalist perspective. In Chapter 6, I will also consider Honneth's development of a moral theory of recognition. In essence my argument is

that these theoretical positions open up rich and fruitful vistas for psychotherapy to explore, beyond the cul-de-sac of professional ethics. In particular they open up possibilities for engagement with moral/ethical themes which retain a universalist moral perspective and a way forward beyond the contingency of morality construed exclusively in terms of personal belief.

Philosophical influences in contemporary moral/ethical debate

In both collections of essays on ethics in psychotherapy discussed above, the names of Levinas ([1961]1969,1985, 1989) and Bauman (1993, 1997) recur, and it is clear that psychotherapists with an interest in ethical themes are finding in their work, some potential for expanding thinking about ethics. Unfortunately their engagement with these writers is so fleeting that it is difficult to draw conclusions from their tentative dialogue. Perhaps there is concern that delving too deeply into such considerations will take psychotherapists away from the practice based focus of their endeavour. Yet notwithstanding this reticence there is a sense that even minimal engagement with philosophical perspectives outside psychotherapy potentially enriches the restrictive debate about professional ethics. Lowenthal and Snell (2001) contribute an essay to Palmer Barnes and Murdin's collection in which they are concerned to make links with Levinas' existential thinking. They begin by referring to his idea of ethics as putting the other first and suggest that if this is what all relationships should strive for, then:

> *ethics as practice* is not in anyway separate from psychotherapy....To separate ethics from practice is fundamentally unethical. This has profound implications for the teaching as well as the practice of psychotherapy. Psychoanalysis is crucially an examination of the ethics of relationships and the primary place for this examination is the patient – therapist relationship. An essential question for the training of psychotherapists is therefore: What does it mean for the psychotherapist to put the patient first? (p. 23, their emphasis)

In their short essay, attempts by the authors to answer this question lead them to consider Levinas' ideas about truth:

> ….genuine experience in the Levinasian sense is a reaching towards a beyond, beyond what familiarly surrounds us. Can it therefore only be in a relationship where the other is put first, in dwelling with the absolutely other, that truth is to be found? We shall not arrive at truth if we see the beyond as something to be colonized and incorporated. (p. 25)

They regard psychotherapeutic attempts at scientific certitude, including those of Freud, as instances of this colonizing tendency. In contrast they tentatively suggest that one might characterize their own Levinasian influenced ethical position as "postmodern humanism" (p. 29).

What implications can be drawn from this perspective for psychotherapeutic practice? One implication is their dismissal of ethical codes on the basis that such codes and associated appeals, complaints procedures and so on involve a type of knowing which is not about accepting the other: "The truth of the other is missed and we do not learn in a way that enables us to make the right decision" (p. 30). But the authors do not say much about what might help us make "the right decision", ending their deliberations with the vague plea that we "see the other as someone we can serve and learn from" (ibid.). They say little about the actual process of therapeutic engagement that might encompass this ethical perspective. The abstraction of their thinking is unlikely to enhance the status of ethics in psychotherapy since it does not connect substantially with the dominant discourses of method and technique beyond the implication that ethics entails a certain attitude or disposition in one's work, characterized as serving the other or putting the other first. Whilst Lowenthal and Snell are keen to distance themselves from the traditional emphasis on individual autonomy in psychotherapeutic discourse, their success in moving to a more convincingly relational frame is questionable. Notwithstanding the reference to "postmodern humanism" with its implication of something new, their stance appears on the same continuum as the traditional Kantian based conception of ethics that has prevailed in psychotherapy and allied "helping professions" notably the discipline of social work which in the past has been more inclined than psychotherapy to articulate its ethical stance or value base (Butrym, 1976; Plant, 1970; Younghusband, 1967).These formulations have tended to favour abstract principles such as respect for persons, as core principles of clinical practice and despite Lowenthal and Snell's relational emphasis, the abstract quality of their plea that we see the other as "somebody we can serve" is strongly reminiscent of such Kantian influenced exhortations to respect others as ends in themselves.

Arguably one way to move ethical debate in psychotherapy forward and to secure its relational stance would be to ground this debate more explicitly in the paradigm of communication. Throughout the psychotherapeutic literature on ethics under

consideration there is also evidence of theorists straining towards a different engagement with ethical themes, which is less focused on the individual and where the communicative processes that underpin psychotherapy come to the fore. This tension is evident in the essay by Lowenthal and Snell (2001), where for example, the authors reflect that one of the main problems currently with codes of ethics and complaints procedures is the way that truth becomes dependent on the school of psychotherapy to which we belong and the extent to which ethical procedures "shore up" the organizations that legitimize us. They note that ethics committees looking at complaints rarely include members outside the particular training of the person complained about, let alone from outside the world of psychotherapy. Yet their deliberations lead them towards a dismissal of codes of ethics rather than an engagement with how distorted processes of communication underlying professional ethical procedures might be challenged. Their thinking veers off into more abstract philosophical territory in which the link with practice is weakened. They dismiss notions of scientific certitude in psychotherapy but do not engage directly with the discourse of method and technique in which modernist notions of scientific certitude prevail. And yet, as in their reflections on the unrepresentative nature of complaints procedures, a recurring but poorly formulated theme in the literature is that of communication processes in psychotherapy being opened up to greater scrutiny and the need for more transparency. It is this issue that underpins what Bennett (2005) describes as the obsession with confidentiality in psychotherapy. It is reflected in the acute concern in the literature with consent processes, for example when a psychotherapist wishes to use confidential case material in published material. This is an area of communication between therapist and client that has come under much greater scrutiny in recent professional ethical debates with significant implications in practice. Yet it is as if psychotherapy lacks the conceptual scaffolding to engage with the full import of these ethical deliberations that relate to power structures in the therapeutic relationship even as it seeks to develop processes of communication between therapist and client in which power differentials are potentially addressed.

Perhaps the gap in theorizing about, what we might describe as the ethics of communication in psychotherapy, also reflects the fact that much of the current pressure for change comes from outside psychotherapy in the shape of societal concern with consumer rights and professional accountability. Psychotherapeutic formulations of its

ethical stance not only struggle to connect with wider developments in psychotherapy, notably the relational thrust of current theory and practice. There is a sense in which it also struggles to keep pace with wider societal trends and developments. I am arguing that in order to propel ethical debate forward, we need to move from the paradigm of the individual to the paradigm of communication as the touchstone for ethical deliberation. Here, ideas about ethics become ideas about the kinds of conversations we might have, whether in ethics committees or in direct encounters with our clients, in which matters of ethical import are considered. Here, a concern with communication processes is no longer an aside to the main debate about abstract individually oriented principles. It becomes the central focus of debate. I am also arguing that in turning to philosophical and sociological perspectives to flesh out our thinking we need to move beyond the current, albeit limited engagement with postmodernist and related theories. We need to engage with other theoretical perspectives within social and philosophical theory, in which the dialectical relationship between modernist and postmodernist themes is elaborated in a way that speaks more clearly to the concerns and challenges of clinical practice.

I have noted that the names of Levinas and Bauman recur in current ethical debate in psychotherapy and there is a sense that their writings are seen as a potential source of inspiration. Unfortunately, as demonstrated in the essay by Lowenthal and Snell, this engagement is cursory, lacking a critical edge and it is difficult to draw conclusions about its potential. Nonetheless it is interesting to speculate that some of the problems which I identified in Lowenthal and Snell's application of Levinasian thinking, notably its abstract quality, might be traced back to Levinas' own work. Alford (2002) writing from the perspective of political theory comments on what he describes as "the great lack in Levinas. For all his brilliant evocation of what we owe the other, there is little room for conversation. There is, in other words something lonely about Levinas' world: his philosophical world that is" (p. vii). Whilst Levinas' existential perspective is not a direct focus in this study, I am nonetheless mentioning Alford's critique because it reminds us of what is in danger of being lost or overlooked in the absence of a more substantive and critical dialogue with theoretical sources of inspiration.

Moving beyond Levinas to Bauman, whose sociological thinking is closely linked to the postmodernist perspective and whose work will be addressed in Chapter 6, we find a

similar pattern of fleeting engagement. McFarland Solomon (2003) writes that Bauman speaks of the self's ethical capacity as deriving not from shared ontological reality but from value and meaning which are "different, higher and unconditional". She continues:

> This is a philosophical position similar in kind to Kant's notion of the categorical imperative. It is the unique and non-reversible nature of my responsibility to another regardless of whether the other sees their duties in the same way towards me, that makes me an ethical being. (p. 24)

Differences between the Kantian modernist perspective and postmodernist thinking about ethics are not addressed in this contribution. Twyman (2003) also makes passing reference to both Levinas and Bauman and considers their thinking about responsibility especially pertinent to the work of the psychoanalyst: "In exploring the nature of the concept of responsibility there is a widening of the frame which provides a freedom to think beyond the usual confines of ethical codes and guidelines. We are invited to consider more than keeping to the rules and not doing the wrong thing" (p. 20). Whilst this contribution is invaluable in challenging the traditional restriction of ethical debate in psychotherapy, it may also be said that key contributors to this debate appear to struggle in taking this insight forward, in developing new ways of thinking about ethics and finding accessible points of dialogue with postmodernist thinking. Paradoxically, away from the confines of explicit ethical debate which has been the focus of this discussion there is a richer engagement with postmodernist themes, which unfortunately does not translate into or appear to challenge current ethical thinking.

The Postmodern perspective in psychoanalysis

The 1990s heralded the arrival of a burgeoning literature within psychoanalytic discourse notably in North America, which focused on hermeneutical and postmodernist themes (Aron, 1996; Gill, 1994; Hoffman, 1991; Renik, 1993). Gabbard (1997), an influential psychoanalytic commentator, summarizes the unifying factor of this postmodern theoretical movement in psychoanalysis as one of scepticism towards fundamental or unquestionable truths: "In an era where constructed truths and multiple perspectives are the currency of psychoanalytic discourse, uncertainty is far more fashionable than a search for truth" (p. 22). He makes these remarks in the context of arguing against, what he sees as the excesses of a postmodern relativist perspective in psychoanalysis, which privileges the patient's subjectivity and in the words of Goldberg

(1994), bids "farewell to the objective analyst". Predictably the postmodernist perspective within psychoanalytic discourse has not been without controversy but it has also done much to challenge the lingering positivist influence which locates psychoanalytic objectivity and certainty in the context of the natural science paradigm.

In their lucid analysis of psychoanalytic attempts to navigate "the postmodern turn", Elliott and Spezzano (1996) steer a middle course between the oppositional and divisive polarities of modernism and postmodernism, reminding us at the outset that modernism and postmodernism are "not homogeneous or unambiguous facts but only partially successful attempts to locate and define intellectual centers of gravity" (p.56). They begin their analysis with a brief overview of the three different faces of the modernity/postmodernity debate in general terms. Firstly, the aesthetic debate in which modernist attempts to uncover an inner truth are abandoned in favour of a playful celebration of style and surface. Secondly, attention is focused on philosophical and cultural concepts of modernity and postmodernity. Here postmodern theories of knowledge have resulted in a profound questioning of modernity's preoccupation with foundations, universals and absolutes. Postmodernism signals a disengagement from the grand narratives of modernist philosophy and science and recognition that reason can come in many forms (Lyotard, 1984). The emphasis is on particularity, ambiguity and difference. The third area of debate differentiated in Elliott and Spezzano's analysis is that concerning the personal, social and cultural aspects of postmodern society. Here the focus is on the way postmodernity affects the world of the self and of interpersonal relationships. Here the authors also draw on Bauman's (1991) social theory in which he identifies postmodernity as marked by a view of the human world as irreducibly pluralistic with no horizontal or vertical order:

> Postmodernity is a self-constituting and self-propelling culture, a culture which is increasingly self-referential in direction. From cable TV to the information superhighway: postmodern culture is a culture turned back upon itself, generated in and through reflexive systems of technological knowledge. (Elliott and Spezzano, 1996, p. 60)

Following Bauman, Elliott and Spezzano underline that modernity and postmodernity need not be seen as dichotomous and that in western societies modern and postmodern cultural forms are deployed at the same time. They also helpfully underline continuity between contemporary postmodernist influenced thinking in psychoanalysis and earlier

perspectives including that of Klein and Winnicott. In the object relations stance of these psychoanalytic writers, as we have seen, a relational perspective signals the beginnings of a shift away from the classical stance. In the latter, the secrets of the unconscious are uncovered in a context where knowledge is still understood primarily in terms of rationality and control. For Winnicott (1971) on the otherhand, knowledge of the self and others emerges in a "transitional space" between infant and carer. In Kleinian thinking there is also an understanding of the intersubjectively constituted nature of the self and knowledge of the self and the focus of therapeutic intervention is the exploration of phantasy and desire in the framework of the transference/ countertransference relationship. For Elliott and Spezzano these and other developments in post- Freudian psychoanalysis, at least signal a very tentative shift away from positivist scientific certitude and an engagement with "more open- ended forms of knowledge and of experience" (p. 75). They are not suggesting that theorists such as Winnicott and Klein can be read as "postmodern" but rather that the development of psychoanalytic theory is inevitably intertwined with the emergence of the postmodern world-view and culture. In response to the question whether psychoanalysis has become postmodern or whether a "postmodern psychoanalysis" exists, Elliott and Spezzano conclude that this is not the most helpful framing of the issue. Instead their suggestion is that self reflexivity of the kind which psychoanalysis has promoted since its emergence is radicalized and transformed in postmodern culture and that in recognizing this we can begin to appreciate the interconnection between psychoanalysis and postmodernity. In elaborating their argument the authors reflect that in Habermas' ([1968]1978) reading of Freud it is precisely this self reflexivity which is seen as the central discovery of Freud's original work.

Elliott and Spezzano's contribution carefully avoids any false polarization of modernism and postmodernism and reveals a nuanced recognition of continuity between the two perspectives within the psychotherapeutic context, which this study also wishes to promote. Unfortunately their balanced position is by no means representative of the overall tone of this debate. On the contrary it is precisely to challenge what they regard as reductive, divisive and dismissive positions that the authors make their contribution. Their attention is particularly focused on criticism of the postmodernist perspective in psychoanalysis which accuses it of holding to a notion of the self as inescapably fragmented and of leaving little hope for establishing the truth

about anything (Glass, 1993; Leary, 1994). For Elliott and Spezzano, postmodern thinking leads us to an idea of the self as decentred as distinct from fragmented. It also leads us to see all contributions as perspectival. Unlike critics of postmodernist thinking in psychoanalysis whose work they address, they do not believe this necessarily implies a relativist position that any psychoanalytic interpretation is as good as any other. However they acknowledge in passing that they share some of the concerns of Glass (1993) regarding aspects of Lacanian influence and similar approaches within postmodernist theorizing in psychoanalysis:

> If the identity of the self, as some post modernists assert, following the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, is imaginary- a kind of papering over of the indeterminacy of desire itself- then the human subject is fully desubjectivized. That brand of postmodernism isolates the self and argues that there is nothing hidden or split off in psychological experience, nothing inaccessible to ideological explanation. We share that concern about Lacanian and similar brands of postmodernism, but since Glass assumes that postmodernism is homogeneous he believes that all postmodernists carry this subject- destroying virus. (Elliott and Spezzano, 1996, pp. 61-2)

As noted earlier Lacan ([1953]1977) was a French psychoanalyst who urged what he called "a return to Freud" whilst rejecting the biological aspects of Freudian theory and offering instead a structuralist rewriting of the latter.[11] This focused on language as the basic structure of mental life and included the idea that the unconscious is structured like a language. Lacan did not regard the constitution of subjectivity in terms of a process of individuation nor did he see it in terms of any pre-existing subjectivity that is then expressed in words. Instead he regards the "subject" as constituted by language and culture which he refers to as the "symbolic order". In his view "it is the world of words that creates the world of things" (ibid., p. 65 quoted in Frosh, 1999, p. 140). Lacan's formulation of the "mirror stage" which introduces the subject to what he calls the "imaginary order" is another key component of his theory. This describes the formation of the ego through a process of identification with one's own image. Although the infant lacks bodily coordination he/she recognizes him/herself in the gaze and mirroring responses of other people, but this image which is one of unity or wholeness contrasts sharply with the infant's own experience of lack of bodily coordination. On Lacan's account, the infant identifies with this "false" image of bodily unity and this in turn becomes associated with an imaginary sense of mastery. For Lacan the mirror stage

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[11] See Part 1, Introduction p.16.

shows that the ego is the result of a misunderstanding, a process of mistaken perception whereby the subject first becomes alienated from him/herself. Whereas the object relations perspective focuses on the object within a framework of need satisfaction that assumes the possibility of a satisfying relationship between subject and object, Lacanian psychoanalysis emphasises the symbolic dimension of desire. For Lacan the object can only be perceived when it has become separated from the infant. It represents a loss that can never be made good and it is this that Lacan refers to as desire. As in Freudian theory, the Oedipus complex is also central to Lacanian psychoanalysis and in that sense it represents a criticism of the shift in emphasis associated with object relations thinking onto the early mother/child relationship.

Whilst Alford (1987) observes a certain similarity between Lacan and Habermas with respect to the idea of the unconscious as structured like a language, this similarity is of a superficial nature in the context of their sharply diverging approaches:[12]

> For Habermas, the goal of analysis - and its society-wide correlate, discourse - is the re-establishment of the autonomous individual on a new basis, grounded in the mutual recognition of self and other. The goal is to reconstruct (as Habermas uses the term in *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus* to signify the transformation of a still valid perspective, in order to give it new life) rational individuality on a new basis. For Lacan, the goal is to show that the idea of rational individuality is a veil, concealing repression on the one hand, and the will to control on the other. To put it simply, Habermas seeks to recentre the subject, Lacan to decentre him or her. (Alford, 1987, p. 5)

Earlier it was noted that in their largely sympathetic account of postmodernist perspectives in psychoanalysis, Elliott and Spezzano also express concern about some aspects of Lacanian influenced psychoanalytic thinking that relate in particular to the desubjectivized human subject. Whilst they do not elaborate on this theme it echoes a wider criticism that is succinctly summarized by Frosh (1999):

> If humanism is a fraud and there is no fundamental human entity that is to be valued in each person, one is left no way of defending the 'basic rights' of the individual, for the individual is apparently nothing more than her or his construction. The concept of the Real, which Lacanians propose as a third order, bubbling away 'under' the registers of the Imaginary and the Symbolic and fuelling them through its constant subversive threat goes some way to alleviate this problem. Nonetheless it must be admitted that Lacan's position threatens

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[12] Habermas ([1985]1987b) makes a number of passing references to Lacan, in the context of his critique of Michel Foucault's post-structuralist theory.

always to slip either into the essentialism it abhors….or into such a relentless structuralism that no content at all is allowed the human subject. (p. 150)

Notwithstanding these tensions and difficulties, Lacanian psychoanalysis has undoubtedly exercised significant influence within academic psychoanalytic discourse, notably in the area of feminist psychoanalytic theory (Cixous, 1980; Irigaray, 1985; Kristeva, 1986), even if its influence within the UK psychoanalytic clinical context is less evident. Furthermore as Elliott and Spezzano's analysis reveals, there is little doubt that in general terms the thinking that has emerged from psychoanalytic navigation of the "postmodern turn" represents a rich source of ideas. Whilst these debates are located at the margins of clinical discourse it might reasonably be expected that they would have had some impact on ethical discourse within the psychotherapeutic field. Yet as we seen, the influence of postmodernist forms of thought in mainstream ethical debate in the UK is extremely tenuous. There are a number of factors that might account for this, including the split alluded to earlier between academic depth psychology and the clinical version, and which is especially pronounced in the UK and North America. Thus whilst the influence of postmodernist thinking may be well established in the academic context, for example in the Lacanian or Neo- Lacanian thinking of writers such as Irigaray (1985) and Kristeva (1986), these contributions barely register in the clinical context where the influence of traditional object relations thinking associated with Klein, Winnicott and others remains dominant. Ethical debate in psychotherapy is firmly rooted in the clinical context and this may in part account for its lack of connection with debates that unfold primarily in the academy. But it is also arguable that lack of substantial engagement with postmodernist thinking in mainstream ethical debate reflects more fundamental difficulties and polarization of views.

Beyond the academic/clinical split there is a wider polarization of traditional and postmodernist perspectives which in the clinical context is represented in the emergence of relational psychoanalysis in North America as a distinctive clinical tradition in recent decades (Benjamin, [1990]1999; Mitchell, 1988; Spezzano, 1993; Renik, 1993). Whilst this psychoanalytic orientation is heavily influenced by object relations thinking, it also sets itself apart as a separate tradition (Mitchell and Aron, 1999). Allowing for differences between its contributors, the hallmark of this approach is, to borrow Fonagy and Target's (2003) words, "the assumption that the psychoanalytic encounter is co-

constructed between two active participants with the subjectivities of both patient and analyst generating the shape and the substance of the dialogue" (p. 204). Within psychoanalytic discourse this orientation most clearly encapsulates postmodernist forms of thinking but its emergence as a distinctive therapeutic tradition also underscores divisions in the field and the limitations of existing mediating discourse. It is not my intention to explore the "relational psychoanalytic tradition" in detail since its clinical impact is much less pronounced in the UK context. Postmodernist and hermeneutical influences within systemic psychotherapy on the other hand have been at the forefront of mainstream developments in recent decades and will therefore be explored in Chapter 3, as representative of postmodernist influence in the UK clinical context. However, one contribution that is closely associated with the relational psychoanalytic stance, which holds particular significance in this study, is that of Jessica Benjamin (1988, 1998, 1999). Her writings encompass a dialogue between critical social theory, psychoanalysis and feminist thinking and have been influential in the development of Axel Honneth's moral theory of recognition.

Benjamin is noted for her contribution to thinking about the concept of intersubjectivity in psychoanalytic discourse and the related concept of mutual recognition which she sees as the core of intersubjectivity.[13] For Benjamin what the various relational perspectives on the self within psychoanalysis share is:

> the belief that the human mind is interactive rather than monadic, that the psychoanalytic process should be understood as occurring between subjects rather than within the individual (Atwood and Stolorow, 1984; Mitchell, 1988). Mental life is seen from an intersubjective perspective. Although this perspective has transformed our theory and our practice in important ways, such transformations create problems. A theory in which the individual subject no longer reigns absolute must confront the difficulty that each subject has in recognizing the other as an equivalent center of experience. (1999, p. 184)

She focuses on the habitual use of the term "object" within psychoanalytic discourse, including, for example, the object relations perspective on the internalization of interactions between self and objects. She sees this term "object" as symptomatic of the problem which a relational theory needs to address; "an inquiry into the intersubjective dimension of the analytic encounter would aim to change our theory and practice so that

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[13] Benjamin (1999, p. 185) links the term intersubjectivity, which has been brought into psychoanalytic discourse, with Habermas' work ([1968]1978, 1970).

"where objects were, subjects must be" (ibid., p. 184). This is not to suggest that the relationship to the other as "object" is negated. On the contrary both are seen as central to psychic experience and to psychoanalytic thinking with one drawing attention to intrapsychic dimensions of experience and the other to intersubjective dimensions. What relational and intersubjective perspectives seek is to address "the collapse of subjects into objects". Drawing on feminist perspectives she uses the early mother-infant relationship to highlight the issues raised. In particular, she addresses the traditional psychoanalytic emphasis on the child's developmental achievements of separation and individuation which she regards as incomplete and as representing a denial of the mother's subjectivity:

> In the ego- object perspective the child is the individual, seen as moving in a progression towards autonomy and separateness. The telos of this process is the creation of psychic structure through internalization of the object in the service of greater independence..….it leaves the aspects of engagement, connection and active assertion that occur with the mother as other in the unexamined background. This perspective is infantocentric. (Ibid., p.186)

For Benjamin, intersubjectivity is a developmental achievement entailing a struggle between self assertion and recognition of the other, where resolution is marked by mutual recognition. As will become clear in my later engagement with Honneth's moral theory of recognition in Chapter 6, Benjamin's psychoanalytic perspective on recognition is a key building block in his elaboration of the psychological dimension of his moral theory.[14] As such it holds a significant place in contemporary dialogue between critical social theory and psychoanalysis. Furthermore whilst Benjamin's theory encompasses a critique of object relations thinking it can also be seen as maintaining continuity with this perspective and nowhere is this more evident than in her (1998) creative use of Winnicottion theory, in particular his thinking about the role of aggression in the developmental process of engaging with the object. This creative dialogue with traditional object relations theory is also elaborated in Honneth's theory and will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

Notwithstanding her close affiliation with critical theory, the relational psychoanalytic tradition in which Benjamin's work is positioned, is much more commonly associated

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[14] Like Honneth (1995), Benjamin connects this concept of recognition back to Hegelian (1807) philosophy.

with postmodernist influence. Her work also maintains important continuity with modernist psychoanalytic perspectives as reflected in her engagement with Winnicottian thinking. In that sense her approach could be read as challenging any simplistic polarization of modernist and postmodernist contributions and any polarization of critical theory and postmodernist thinking. She quotes with approval Fraser's (1991) comment that one does not have to choose between critical theory and postmodernism but rather that each can help clarify the problems of the other (Benjamin, 1998, p. 85). Her integrative outlook could be read as consistent with Elliott and Spezzano's argument that the postmodernist perspective in psychoanalysis represents a broad church and should not be addressed by its critics as if it were a homogeneous entity. However even they acknowledge more extremist tendencies that are also evident within this orientation and as we have seen, they single out Lacanian influence in this respect.

Gabbard (1997), a prominent psychoanalytic commentator mentioned at the start of this discussion, addresses in greater detail some of the more problematic aspects of the postmodernist perspective in psychoanalysis in a notably measured contribution that resists any divisive polarization of modernist and postmodernist themes and which also acknowledges the persuasiveness of Elliott and Spezzano's analysis. His starting point is a concern that one of the excesses of the postmodernist perspective is the privileging of the patient's subjectivity (Lindon,1991a, 1991b; Schwaber,1983, 1990) and he reiterates the argument of another commentator, Hanly (1995) that psychoanalysis needs to explore the possibility of an epistemology in which objectivity and subjectivity are integrated. For Gabbard,

> the origin of objectivity in the term object is often overlooked. The analyst's position as an object, external to the thinking mind or subjectivity of the patient, offers a vantage point from which the analyst can share observations that are different from the patient's by virtue of being external to the patient…. Even though the analyst cannot transcend the intersubjectivity of the analytic couple, part of that intersubjectivity involves a perspective outside that of the patient. (1997, p. 15)

Gabbard singles out Benjamin's work on intersubjectivity and recognition and Fonagy and Target's model of mentalization or reflective functioning as examples of that psychoanalytic stance which allows for the idea of the analyst as an object external to the mind of the patient. Both imply "a theory of therapeutic action that emphasises the

analyst as a new, real object and the analysand's appreciation of the analyst's subjectivity" (ibid., p. 18). Interestingly neither of these examples of psychoanalytic thinking that allows for an integration of objectivity and subjectivity in Gabbard's view, can be located unequivocally within the postmodernist fold. We have seen that Fonagy and Target's approach stands outside the postmodernist orientation in psychoanalysis and is heavily influenced by earlier object relations thinking notably that of Winnicott, whilst Benjamin's work is located within the postmodernist fold although her primary philosophical allegiance would appear to lie with critical theory and she is of course also indebted to Winnicottian theory.

As noted above one of the major difficulties with contemporary moral/ethical discourse in psychotherapy generally is that very little of the complexity and richness of the debate arising from psychoanalytic navigation of the "postmodern turn" makes its way into the consideration of moral and ethical themes. Some of the key questions which this study wishes to raise are whether this disjuncture can be traced back to the limitations of the post-structuralist, postmodernist and related hermeneutical perspectives themselves regarding moral/ethical considerations; and whether the noticeable failure of postmodernist thinking to impact on mainstream ethical debate in psychotherapy is rooted not simply in the gulf between academic and clinical discourses but in a polarization of modernist and postmodernist theoretical and clinical perspectives and the lack of a satisfactory mediating discourse. Chapter 3 will continue this discussion with further exploration of clinical themes, this time focussing on the systemic psychotherapeutic tradition. I will draw on the example of systemic psychotherapy to explore issues and difficulties relating to moral/ethical concerns within postmodernist influenced versions of psychotherapy. I am privileging the systemic tradition's engagement with postmodernist themes because, unlike psychoanalysis in the UK, postmodernist thinking has for sometime held a dominant position within systemic psychotherapeutic discourse.

Chapter 3

Family/ Systemic Psychotherapy: The Postmodern Perspective

We have seen that contributors to ethical debate in psychotherapy register their interest in postmodernist thinking. Wiener (2003) notes the postmodernist celebration of uncertainty and considers that this fits well with her own analytical approach: "The postmodern human condition espouses the individual state of mind and moral choices have to be made without the reassurance of philosophical foundations, relying rather on self- monitoring, and self- evaluation" (p. 132, her emphasis). But beyond a passing engagement we have also seen that ethical theorists in psychotherapy struggle to locate accessible points of dialogue with postmodernist thinking. The current situation is well summarized by Hill and Jones (2003):

> Postmodernism may well be exerting subtle influences as a result of the adoption of ideas such as multiple realities, co-construction of stories, and concerns about the question of (whose) ethics, but in terms of day- to- day practice, ethical thinking generally appears to remain firmly rooted in modernist ideas: principles and values. (p. 157, their emphasis)

Modernist and postmodernist forms of thought become overtly polarized in the context of theoretical debate but more commonly they operate on separate tracks without any satisfactory mediating discourse. In the case of ethics the resulting difficulties are especially acute given the poor articulation of moral/ ethical themes in modernist versions of psychotherapy and which, as we shall see, is replicated in postmodernist influenced formulations of psychotherapy. Arguably it is only by developing a satisfactory mediating discourse in which ethical themes are addressed, that psychotherapy can find a way out of its restrictive cul de sac of professional ethics. Whilst hermeneutical and postmodernist influences in therapeutic discourse undoubtedly challenge the pseudo-objectivity of traditional psychotherapy, their failure to engage convincingly with the ethics of therapeutic practice weakens and undermines their critique. In what follows I will explore these issues as they arise in family/systemic psychotherapy's navigation of the "postmodern turn".[1]

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[1] The terms "family" and "systemic" are used interchangeably in the UK psychotherapeutic context. See Introduction, footnote 2, p. 1.

The origins and development of systemic psychotherapy

Whilst Freud recognized the role of the family in the development of the individual's symptoms, he made little attempt to see family members together in therapy. On the contrary he left a legacy of conviction that it was unhelpful and possibly dangerous to work therapeutically with more than one family member (Gurman and Kniskearn, 1991. p. 19). The reasons for this are not wholly clear from his writings but it is likely they related to concerns about impartiality and the potential for multiple transference and countertransference complications arising. Whilst many analysts accepted the prohibition against seeing family members together, family/systemic psychotherapy nonetheless emerged in the 1950s in the context of growing dissatisfaction with existing psychotherapeutic techniques that were primarily psychoanalytic in nature and which were focused on the individual. There was for example, a growing recognition that when one person in a family recovered from difficulties relating to their mental health, another member sometimes developed symptoms and also when some hospitalized patients were discharged to their families they were more likely to suffer a relapse than those living alone (Hayes, 1991). In child and adolescent mental health services, interventions with the family group began to be applied pragmatically against a background of concern that more than one child in a family was often in difficulty and that multiple individual treatments for one family group were uneconomic and impractical. The traditional focus of psychoanalytic therapy on the intrapsychic world of the individual was replaced by a relational focus on the family group and the communication patterns and sequences within this group. Individual symptoms were understood and addressed in the context of the family system.

Initially this method of treatment, which involved seeing family members together, developed mainly in North America in a number of diverse locations, but by the end of the 1950s had formed itself into a more cohesive movement (Ackerman et al., 1967; Guerin, 1976; Gurman and Kniskern, 1991; Kaslow, 1980). Family therapy was deemed "systems" therapy or "systemic" therapy since it considered the system as a whole. It represented a radical departure in therapeutic treatment and was pioneered by a generation of therapists, many of whom had already trained within the psychoanalytic fold but who regarded the treatment they offered as fundamentally different from psychoanalysis. They also drew extensively on theoretical sources that were very

different from psychoanalytic theory, notably cybernetics (Wiener, [1948]1954) and general systems theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1968). In the years since then, the institutional separation of the psychoanalytic and systemic orientations has masked recognition of continuity between developments unfolding in each discipline. However since the 1990s, an important debate has been gaining momentum in the systemic field which challenges the historically oppositional relationship between systemic and psychoanalytic perspectives and explores opportunities for the enrichment of systemic thinking through re-engagement with psychoanalytic ideas (Donovan 2003, 2005; Flaskas, 1996, 1997; Flaskas and Pocock, 2009; Pocock, 1997; Larner, 2000). Conversely it is also the case that within mental health services, particularly those for children, adolescents and their families, where family therapy is a key treatment modality, many of the core ideas of the systemic orientation have been assimilated into the thinking and practice of other clinicians, including those with a predominantly psychoanalytic training even if this is not always acknowledged.[2]

Within the systemic field itself the emerging dialogue with psychoanalytic ideas now represents one of the most vibrant sources of new thinking and as indicated earlier, this study aims to contribute to this dialogue through exploration of ethical themes across the two orientations. Undoubtedly one of the key developments leading to a more creative engagement with psychoanalysis is the increased concern with relational themes in contemporary psychoanalytic approaches. This makes for a level of compatibility with the vigorously relational focus of systemic psychotherapy that was absent in the era of classical psychoanalysis. Another important trigger for interest by systemic theorists in psychoanalysis is the perception of common ground in the hermeneutic and postmodernist influences that to varying degrees now permeate both fields. This thinking typically finds expression in the social constructionist stance within systemic therapy, which will be discussed below and which emphasizes the way that reality inevitably grows out of our experience as language using social beings. When people talk to each other the world, as we know it gets constructed. This stance contrasts sharply with the early development of family/systemic therapy when a predominantly positivist outlook prevailed, with considerable investment in the idea of

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[2] See Bateman (2000) for general discussion of the frequently unacknowledged integrative tendencies in psychotherapeutic practice (In this discussion his specific clinical focus is integration between cognitive behavioural therapy and psychoanalysis).

the therapist's objectivity and separation from the family systems in which he/she intervened.

Early pioneers in the development of family therapy included Gregory Bateson (1972, 1979), an anthropologist and philosopher who adopted ideas from Von Bertalanffy's (1968) general systems theory to the study of family systems. Other founding members of family therapy included Don Jackson (1959, 1968) who in 1959 established the first family therapy centre for training, research and treatment in California. Salvador Minuchin (1967, 1974) was another pioneer who founded what has come to be known as the structural school of family therapy in Philadelphia, drawing on his experience of working with poor and socially disadvantaged families in which he observed extreme disorganization and unclear hierarchies and which became the focus for his treatment. Jay Haley (1971, 1976), another member of this early group of American family therapists, established the strategic model of family therapy. A further pivotal development occurred in the late 1960s when a group of Italian clinicians with psychoanalytic backgrounds, came together to formulate what came to be known as Milan systemic therapy (Selvini Palazzoli et al., 1978, 1980a, 1980b), which has exerted considerable influence on all subsequent developments in the field.

In its early years family therapy was very much in thrall to the concepts that were borrowed from cybernetics and general systems theory. Parallels were drawn between communication processes in families and information exchange processes in inanimate systems (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967). The family was viewed as a cybernetic system governed by rules and homeostatic mechanisms, which the therapist sought to uncover with a detachment not unlike that of the natural scientist. Much attention was focused on the attributes of the system as a unified whole consisting of interrelated parts and on the processes and patterns as distinct from the content of family communication. As in the development of psychoanalysis, a positivist outlook prevailed. The therapist uncovered the implicit rules of the system from an outsider perspective and on this basis made strategic interventions which destabilized the system and made change possible. This idea of the therapist as an expert technician who could engage in the technical manipulation of variables to bring about change, underpins Jay Haley's (1971) controversial assertion that "change really comes about through interactional processes set off when a therapist intervenes actively and directively in particular ways in a family

system and quite independently of the awareness of the participants about how they have been behaving" (p. 7).

It is not my intention to dwell on the various methodological differences between the early schools of family therapy, since from the perspective of this study what is more important is the shared epistemological ground between them, which also sets them apart from subsequent developments in family therapy that occurred during the 1980s and later, in which hermeneutical and postmodernists influences come to the fore. What is important to emphasis is that during this early period, family therapy developed a rich repertoire of techniques for intervening with families, many of which remain in use today. Of these one of the most significant is the distinctive style of asking questions which has evolved in family therapy, and which is known as circular questioning. The thinking behind this technique was first developed by the Milan group of systemic therapists (Selvini Palazzoli et al., 1980a), but is now used widely in both family therapy and in a range of other therapeutic disciplines. This technique emerged from the Milan group's application of Bateson's (1972) ideas about circular, patterned relationships between elements in a system. Circular questioning (Brown, 1997; Penn, 1982) aims to draw connections and make distinctions between members of the system whilst defusing strong emotions in a way that allows space for potentially helpful conversation to emerge. The behaviour of one person is shown to be connected to the behaviour of others in a circular manner rather than in a linear focus on cause and effect. Instead of exploring why somebody is depressed for example, a circular form of therapeutic questioning would be more likely to enquire about when somebody showed this depression and what other family members do when this is happening. Here the therapist is trying to construct a map of interconnections between family members that allows problems to be framed in new ways. During this process, family members are continuously exposed to feedback from others in the family. The process of questioning becomes a therapeutic intervention in itself rather than an exercise in information gathering for the therapist. Techniques such as circular questioning emerged against a background of engagement with cybernetics and general systems theory and whilst these theories have long been jettisoned, the highly effective techniques from this era of family therapy have not only survived but remain at the centre of contemporary practice.

Postmodernist and hermeneutic influences in systemic psychotherapy

By the mid 1970s a vigorous critique of the assumptions and practices of the first wave of family therapy, which came to be known as first order family therapy, was emerging. Much of this emanated from a feminist perspective and feminist writers within the field were instrumental in moving the systemic agenda forward (Bograd, 1984, 1999; Goldner, 1985; Hare-Mustin, 1978). They did so through their insistence on the moral/political dimensions of family life and relationships and through their exposure of first order therapists' implicit engagement with a particular normative model of family functioning beneath the veneer of scientific neutrality. In her seminal text, The Family Interpreted, Luepnitz (1988) elaborates many of the criticisms of first order family therapy which began to emerge from the 1970s onwards. Titles of papers from that era: *Prisons of Love: the reification of the family in family therapy*, (Pearson, 1974) or *Tricks of the Trade: questionable theory and practice in family therapy*, (Whan, 1983) are also evocative of this critical standpoint. They reflect a deep unease with cybernetic epistemology and in particular the mechanistic aspects of this thinking which ripped family structure out of wider social structure and depoliticized human conflict in families with its view of the family as a self-regulatory cybernetic system.

Following on from this critique, the 1980s witnessed a major shift in family/systemic psychotherapy from the predominantly natural scientific paradigm of earlier decades to a hermeneutic/social constructionist orientation and from a conceptualization of the therapist as technical expert to a more symmetrical formulation of the therapist/family relationship. The role of the therapist was no longer defined in terms of privileged access to definitions of change; a shift epitomized in the development of the reflecting processes/reflecting team perspective by a group of Norwegian family therapists led by Tom Andersen (1987, 1989, 1990, 1992a, 1992b, 1993, 1995, 1998). This approach was initially developed as a practice based innovation and was later elaborated within a theoretical framework that made strong links with hermeneutic and postmodernist themes. The reflecting processes/reflecting team format is now used extensively in the clinical training and supervision of family therapists in the UK and has exerted a profound influence on the field since the 1980s.

Because of the highly complex and emotionally demanding nature of therapeutic intervention with whole family groups, family/ systemic therapists have tended to

favour a style of practice in which they work alongside a supporting team. Traditionally the team observed the therapy in progress from behind a one way screen and offered live supervision perhaps via a telephone link to the therapist or mid session discussion in which the therapist left the family in order to consult privately with the team. The central strand of the reflecting team approach was a very simple yet revolutionary shift in therapeutic practice. The anonymous expertise of the observing team behind the one way screen was replaced by a style of practice in which the team offered their thoughts to the therapist and family together. They did so in the shape of an evolving conversation amongst team members, which might happen either once or at intervals during the therapy session. The family and therapist listened and observed the team's thinking in the making but did not participate directly, although it was anticipated this thinking would subsequently inform the flow of the therapy session.

Nowhere was the impact of the reflecting team and related approaches more apparent than in the changed position of the therapist vis-à-vis the client/family. Gone were the old style certainties of an earlier strategic model of family therapy which held that change comes about through interactional processes set off when a therapist intervenes independently of the awareness of the participants about how they have been behaving (Haley, 1971, p. 7). In its place comes an emphasis on the therapist's joining with the client/family system in conversations that have an indeterminate outcome. This practice based reflecting team development was perhaps the most tangible sign of a changing culture of ideas within the field and it is not surprising that when those who initiated this development looked for a conceptual framework in which to explore and develop their thinking, they turned to hermeneutics and postmodernism. This is notably represented in the writings of Tom Andersen, the best known exponent of the reflecting team approach, who uses the hermeneutic circle as a paradigm for exploring the dynamics of reflecting team conversations and draws together hermeneutic and social constructionist strands of thinking in his work as in the following:

> Gadamer says we are inevitably prejudiced when we meet with a person we are to understand; we have started to understand them even before we meet him/her. Gadamer used the work prejudice and Heidegger used the work "preunderstanding" for this. Some people assume (have brought with them a preunderstanding) that what a person says and does is generated from an "inner core" of the person….An alternative preunderstanding to that of an inner core is that the center of a person is outside the person- in the conversations and

> language the person takes part in. The other person will be best understood by concentrating on his/her conversations and language. (Ibid., p. 12)

Alongside the reflecting team perspective a second manifestation of what might loosely be termed the postmodernist turn in systemic psychotherapy, was the growing influence of the narrative metaphor and the development of narrative therapy. This approach is most closely associated with an Australian family therapist Michael White (1984, 1995, 1997, 1989, 1990), whose theory was influenced by the work of Michel Foucault [3] and whose formulation of the narrative approach has been extremely popular in recent times. In his work, White takes up Foucault's idea of the intimate relationship of power and knowledge and the extent to which power comes to be exercised through knowledge. Dominant discourses are established which censor and marginalize other discourses and ways of understanding. White's concern is the way this social context impacts on individual lived experience and to this end he attaches Foucauldian ideas to the metaphor of narrative. He then considers how our individual dominant stories about ourselves have been shaped by familial, interpersonal and social contexts and how these stories restrain us from exploring and knowing other versions of ourselves and our experience. In Flaskas' (2002) words, "therapy thus becomes a process of deconstructing dominant stories and reconstructing alternative narratives which free up the possibility of difference and change" (pp. 44-5). Clients are encouraged to locate the problem outside the self and helped develop creative strategies for counteracting its effect.[4] As Flaskas observes, White's work represents a very selective and idiosyncratic interpretation of Foucauldian thinking. It is also fair to say that his particular interpretation of Foucault has not been at the forefront of systemic engagement with his work where the focus has been on clinical issues and in particular White's techniques around deconstructing dominant narratives in conversations with clients.[5]

A third and related strand within postmodernist influenced contemporary approaches in systemic therapy is the contribution of two American therapists, Harlene Anderson and Harry Goolishian (1988, 1992) who formulated what has come to be known as the collaborative language systems approach and which they characterize as postmodern

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[3] See Chapter 5 pp. 117-25.
[4] This practice of externalizing the problem and relating to it as if to an external entity was famously devised by White (1984) in treating children suffering with encopresis.
[5] Flaskas (2002) singles out an article by Fish (1993) as a rare exception in this neglect of White's engagement with Foucault.

therapy. Social constructionist thinking plays a central part in the development of their model and their account of the social constructionist perspective has become a key reference point for practitioners in the field. Their work is heavily influenced by the theory of an American social psychologist Kenneth Gergen (1991, 1994) and during the 1990s his writings also emerged as a major reference point for social constructionist thinking in systemic discourse. In essence, Gergen's work underlines the primacy of language in the construction of the world as we know it and the primacy of relationship as the generative context in which this process of social construction unfolds. Included in this is a perspective on the social construction of the self and a rejection of the idea of an irreducible inner reality as represented by such words as cognition or emotion. Our descriptions are viewed not as maps of reality but as the products of our communal exchange. In the work of Anderson and Goolishian, this translates into an understanding of "problems" in therapy as constructions in language, whilst the therapy itself is framed as a "problem dis-solving system" (1988). They adopt the metaphor of therapy-as- conversation and the idea of the therapist as taking an "unknowing" stance in the work. The process of therapy becomes one of collaborative conversation in which new meanings and narratives might emerge. The ethos of this approach is about the therapist adopting a position of uncertainty, non directiveness and being client led.

As in my earlier discussion of first order systemic psychotherapy, I do not intend to focus on differences between these systemic approaches that have evolved since the 1980s and which are often referred to as second order therapy. What is of primary interest here is the shared post-structuralist, postmodernist and hermeneutical backdrop to these approaches, which separates them from earlier modernist formulations of family therapy that drew on cybernetics and general systems theory. Second order perspectives are, as Tomm (1998) notes, marked by a shift from the idea of the family as an observed system to an idea of therapy as the observing system. The influence of observing is seen as recursive and the therapist is seen as an integral part of the relational field that constitutes the therapy system. Reflexivity emerges as a key concept, understood essentially in the dictionary sense as "the bending or folding back of a part upon itself " (Hoffman, 1993, p. 126). In the reflecting team format for example, the team of therapists is no longer a protected species, observing the family anonymously from behind a one-way screen. Now the family has the opportunity to reflect back on the team's reflections in a recursive spiral. The ethos is in Hoffman's

words, one of "making the expert disappear" (ibid., p. 127). For her the concept of reflexivity is at the heart of collaborative second order approaches and she underlines that it implies an ideal of partnership:

> To me the word implies that there is an equity with regard to participation even though the parties may have different positions or different traits…..one might say that the formats that are most characteristic of this new approach all "fold back upon themselves" .The developments around the reflecting team, the use of reflecting conversations and reflexive questioning, the prevalence of "co-" prefixes to describe a therapeutic conversation ("co-author", "co-evolve") indicate a preference for a mutually influenced process between consultant and inquirer as opposed to one that is hierarchical and unidirectional. In particular, this approach calls into question the high- level status of the professional. (Ibid. pp. 126-27)

As part of the growing interest in reflexivity, the systemic technique of reflexive questioning was also formulated during the 1980s (Tomm, 1987a, 1987b). In certain respects it represented a development of the first order practice of circular questioning formulated by the Milan group whilst at the same time locating the concept of reflexivity firmly within systemic methodology. For Karl Tomm, the family therapist who elaborated reflexive questioning, reflexivity is that which draws attention to processes in which one is both performing and at the same time audience to one's own performance. Within the therapeutic context he characterizes it as a process of helping to make connections between different levels of meaning in families (1987b). An example of reflexive questioning by the therapist might be a line of enquiry that very deliberately concentrates attention on the future and in so doing implicitly triggers in families, stuck in problem saturated past and present lives, the thought that it might actually be possible to create a future involving choices and alternatives. One of the arguments of this study which I develop in Part 111, is that the concept of reflexivity and the endeavour to embed it within therapeutic discourse represents a key methodological development whose full potential has yet to be recognized and explored. Arguably this is impeded because of its entanglement with the postmodernist therapeutic stance. Unfortunately within systemic discourse, postmodernist and hermeneutical thinking tends to slide away from issues of method and technique in a context that idealizes the therapeutic encounter as a collaborative, "co- constructed" engagement between equals. It also slides away from ethical issues in a context that

privileges diversity and difference and I will now consider these difficulties more closely in the case of the reflecting team approach.

Ethics and hermeneutic/ postmodernist influenced systemic psychotherapy

Within second order, postmodernist influenced therapeutic perspectives outlined above, the therapist is embedded in the process of therapy to a degree that is as far removed from the first order cybernetic analogy as it is possible to imagine. As such they could be seen as the successful culmination of a lengthy process of discarding the excesses of an earlier objectivistic era in family therapy. Reimers (2000) describes this vividly:

> As practitioners we should never forget some of the excesses that preceded the postmodern challenge. Clients were often seen as people whose strategies had to be outwitted. Military and boxing metaphors proliferated, and unseen teams were used to help the therapist deal with both compliant and defiant families (e.g. Papp, 1980). Functional families were often distinguished from dysfunctional families as sheep from goats. (2000, pp. 24-5)

Viewed from this perspective, the second order postmodernist influenced contribution is indeed immense. However a question at the heart of this study is whether the scales have moved too far in the opposite direction whilst retaining the difficulties of an earlier era regarding the conceptualization and justification of the normative/ethical dimension of psychotherapeutic intervention. First order family therapy operated within a natural science paradigm which upheld a clear divide between science and ethics; between what was viewed as the disinterested and value neutral pursuit of knowledge on the one hand and the ethical framework surrounding its application in practice on the other hand. In the case of psychoanalysis we have considered the marginalization of ethical debate which this positivist orientation entailed. This was replicated in the case of first order family therapy until it was challenged by the feminist influenced critique of the 1970s and 80s. However what is most striking in the present context is that the radical paradigm shift following on from this critique, has done so little to challenge the marginalization of ethical debate in systemic discourse and the associated diversion into a narrow preoccupation with professional codes of ethics.[6]

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[6] In Part 11, I will argue that, what we might describe as a refusal of conceptualization around ethics in the contemporary psychotherapeutic field can be linked to the hermeneutical, post-structuralist and postmodernist strands of influence within psychotherapy since the 1980s.

Inger and Inger (1994) talk about the personal ethical crisis that propelled Tom Andersen towards initiating the reflecting team approach, namely his personal unease with the hierarchical nature of existing practice. Early commentators on the reflecting team approach are also keen to emphasize the ethical significance of this way of working. In Hargens'(1990) words it, "entails some kind of deep respect for people based on some kind of ethics- often a neglected or overlooked issue when working 'this way'" (p. 13). What can be gleaned from Andersen's own writings about the "kind of ethics" that his work entails? In fact there is little explicit engagement with ethics as such, something that Andersen (1993) himself appears to acknowledge in asking if "maybe an identification of our ethical standards ought to be the most important issue we reflect on" (p. 311). Hargens is right to draw attention to the value base of "deep respect for people" identifiable in the reflecting team and related therapeutic approaches, which draws sustenance from postmodernist influenced thinking in psychotherapy regarding "relativism in expressions of identity" (Gergen and Kaye, 1992, p. 179) and "uniqueness of each individual client's narrative truth" (Anderson and Goolishian, 1992, p. 30). But for those who undertook prior clinical training particularly in the allied discipline of social work, during an era when modernist thinking prevailed, such phrases as "respect for persons" and "uniqueness" are also evocative of an ethical stance that was heralded as constituting the value base of clinical work at that time and which was explicitly grounded in the modernist philosophy of Kant (Butrym, 1976). However this continuity is rarely if ever acknowledged.

Speed (1996), writing about the implications of the move to second order thinking and practice in systemic therapy, touches on the confusing sense of déjà vu that can result:

> Some of the ideas of Hoffman (1993) and Anderson and Goolishian (1992) seem to overlap with what many of us learned years ago in our social work courses. The relationship once again is central …..Empathy once again becomes respectable, along with positive regard, respect, a non-judgmental stance, silence, tentativeness on the therapist's part. (p. 115)

Yet as Speed also points out, one of the main reasons that many clinicians undertook further training as family therapists was precisely to acquire technical skills that might deepen and enhance their work beyond a narrow preoccupation with the therapeutic relationship. Her observation serves as a reminder of the extensive repertoire of skills and expertise in working therapeutically with families that accumulated during the era

of first order systemic thinking and practice. The postmodern perspective is rightly wary of the technocratic impulse in first order perspectives. However, the danger arises that psychotherapeutic approaches which minimize knowledge and expertise risk obscuring the potentially authoritarianism of a therapy that hides its expertise in 'unknowingness' and supposed equality. Beyond this also lies the danger that minimizing technical expertise and knowledge may ultimately undermine the impact of therapy through the erosion of taken for granted first order expertise. Here one is reminded of Fonagy and Target's (2003) acerbic remark regarding the postmodernist influenced relational psychoanalytic tradition: "While interpersonal-relational theorists have successfully established that psychoanalysis is an inherently interpersonal enterprise they have failed to demonstrate that the interaction of two people on an equal footing is a valid form of therapy" (p. 229).

In Tom Andersen's writings there is a telling example of the difficulty that arises once the anchor of first order certainty in family therapy is loosened. This occurs when Andersen (1993) suggests that "maybe we should encourage only those who are currently able to listen and see each other without interrupting to come to "therapy" and let those who are not ready to do so eventually join later" (p. 310). From a therapeutic perspective this is wholly unrealistic given the challenging clinical contexts in which therapists work. It points to a therapeutic perspective that is overly in thrall to a model of conversation and dialogue unfolding against a background consensus. It introduces a note of caution into clinical practice which contrasts sharply with the pioneering spirit of first order family therapy that was so effective in extending the reach of psychotherapy to those not readily amenable to traditional insight oriented psychoanalytic intervention. Here it is difficult not to make comparisons with first order family therapists such as Salvador Minuchin (1967, 1974) who had no hesitation in introducing new ways of communicating to families with little capacity to "listen and see each other without interrupting". This he did, for example, by taking some family members behind the one way screen to observe the rest of the family communicating and in that sense forcing them quite vigorously into a less action oriented mode of being in the session. He undertook this work with families living in acute socio-economic deprivation who were generally regarded as beyond the reach of insight-oriented psychotherapy. Arguably certain ideas contained in Minuchin's structural family therapy could be seen as precursors of Andersen's reflecting team approach. The

polarization of modernist and postmodernist perspectives in systemic discourse means that continuity of methodological developments is effectively obscured in a way that risks alienating clinicians from the richness of their methodological inheritance. What gets lost from view in this ideological split is that the issue is one of difference between two modes of enquiry, one in which explanatory engagement with objectified processes from an outsider perspective is privileged and another in which interpretative engagement with subjectivity and meaning from an insider perspective is privileged.

Arguably the challenge for psychotherapy lies in resolving the tension between these paradigms in a way that secures and preserves what is best in both traditions. In different ways what both Minuchin's and Andersen's contributions lack is a reasoned defence of the ethical stance underlying their work. Minuchin and his contemporaries were writing in an era when the dominance of first order positivist thinking disguised the need for such justification and the fact that some of their assumptions about appropriate patterns of communication might warrant critique. Andersen writes from within a hermeneutical/postmodernist paradigm, in which he struggles to articulate an ethical stance, lapses into an idealization of the therapeutic encounter as a co-constructed entity, and settles for a contemporary variation of the modernist Kantian ethic of respect for persons, without making this explicit. Flaskas (2002, p. 43) offers a similar observation in the case of Anderson and Goolishian's collaborative language systems approach, when she reflects that they firmly embed their social constructionist orientation in an ethical and political position emphasizing respectful and client led practices which in fact have a great deal in common with the traditional humanist values of earlier therapeutic approaches. Ultimately it may be argued that despite the sharp polarization of modernist and postmodernist perspectives in systemic theoretical debate, the latter does not unequivocally represent the radical paradigm shift to which it aspires. Instead it reveals the enduring influence of a modernist perspective on ethics as belonging to a de-politicized domain of individual consciousness and encapsulated in abstract ideals such as respect for persons.

I would argue that family therapists as diverse as Minuchin and Andersen are straining towards a very different formulation of ethics, namely an ethics of communication, which takes account of the radical paradigm shift in psychotherapy from a primary concern with what happens inside individuals to what happens between them in

relational contexts when they try to communicate. In Chapter 4 we will explore Habermas' view that in the case of critical social theory, reflection cannot be tied to a model of dialogue given that language is also a medium of power and domination. One could make this argument in the case of psychotherapy also where the optimum conditions for relatively unconstrained dialogue rarely if ever apply. In family meetings for example it is often the case that communication processes are infused with elements of force and coercion. Frequently the work of the therapy is precisely that of helping individuals and families move towards the point where relatively unconstrained communication might begin to be possible either within the therapy itself or elsewhere. I will therefore argue for the relevance in psychotherapy of Habermas' formulation of an ethics of communication and his framework for thinking and practical engagement in which modernist and postmodernist themes are dialectically intertwined.

Within the systemic field, postmodernist influenced approaches now occupy a dominant position in theoretical debates and overt criticism is muted. Yet as Reimers (2000) acknowledges, research findings (Bor et al. 1998) also suggest that in its purest form, the postmodernist perspective has not gained as much of a grip on therapeutic practice as one might imagine from reading the literature. What seems to happen is that those aspects of postmodernism which are perceived to be at odds with therapeutic discourse are screened out. There is also a marked absence of direct engagement in the systemic literature with key post-structuralist, postmodernist or hermeneutical thinkers including Foucault and Gadamer who will be considered in Part 11. Instead their contributions come in a prepackaged format in which those aspects that are deemed incompatible with therapy are either ignored or supplemented. Flaskas (2002) uses Anderson and Goolishian's fleshing out of social constructionist theory with more traditional humanist values as an example of this tendency. The contributions of Frosh (1995) and Pilgrim (2000) stand out as offering a more explicit questioning of the compatibility of postmodernist thinking and psychotherapy. In Frosh's contribution he argues that the postmodernist tendency towards fragmentation and celebration of irrationality are at odds with the therapeutic search for meaning that has some constancy. Pilgrim sees the abandonment of a realist ontology within postmodernist orthodoxy as the main source of difficulty. Referring to the enduring relevance of social structure and the causal impact of disadvantages rooted in economic and power differentials, he argues;

Recording and generating one narrative after another will not suffice in this regard. Some notion of hard reality and its impact on mental health status is required as a point of reference to understand mental health professionals and to guide social policy decisions to prevent or ameliorate mental health distress....Postmodernism is more likely to obscure than clarify the full political picture about the role of family therapy in society. (2000, pp. 21-2)

This line of criticism is similar to that of first order family therapist, Salvador Minuchin (1991) who observes that for socially and economically disadvantaged clients, reality is not so much a social construct, as "a stubbornly concrete world".

Flaskas (2002), writing from a second order systemic perspective, finds herself in some sympathy with Minuchin's views and in her work she is also concerned with powerful social realities such as poverty and racism that carry a destructive force. This leads her to argue for the reclamation of some idea of reality and of truth in contemporary systemic psychotherapy. Significantly she locates her analysis firmly within the discourse of emotionality rather than a discourse around ethics, implicitly drawing our attention to the marginal status of ethics in systemic theoretical debate. Using case vignettes, she paints a vivid picture of the search by her clients for the truth of their experience, for example of sexual abuse, and she also reflects on the therapeutic importance of "bearing witness" to the reality of people's livid experience. She believes that the privileging of multiple or diverse meanings over truth in postmodernist influenced psychotherapy, undermines this important therapeutic process of "bearing witness". In Part 111, I will link this theme with Axel Honneth's moral theory of recognition, as a way of bringing critical theory closer to the subjective concerns of psychotherapy and conversely as a way of drawing Flaskas' ideas around truth and "bearing witness" into the arena of moral/ethical discourse.

My underlying question throughout, is whether the noticeable failure of post-structuralist, postmodernist and hermeneutical thinking to impact significantly on mainstream ethical debate in psychotherapy is rooted in the limitations of these paradigms. On the one hand we have seen that contributors to ethical debate in psychotherapy register their interest in postmodernist thinking. But beyond a passing engagement we have also seen that they struggle to locate accessible points of dialogue with this perspective. Whilst modernist and postmodernist forms of thought may become polarized in the context of theoretical debate in psychotherapy, more commonly

they operate alongside each other without any satisfactory mediating discourse. In the case of ethics the resulting difficulties are especially acute given the poor articulation of moral/ ethical themes in modernist versions of psychotherapy, which is then replicated in postmodernist influenced psychotherapy. Hermeneutic and postmodernist influences have undoubtedly challenged the pseudo-objectivity of traditional psychotherapy. However the failure to engage convincingly with the ethics of therapeutic practice weakens and undermines their critique. My argument is that they need to be supplemented by ongoing dialogue with philosophical and social theoretical perspectives that can shed light on moral/ethical themes in psychotherapy and help elucidate what is most progressive and creative in current practice. To this end I turn to an elaboration of Habermas' communicative ethics. However before concluding this discussion, I will revert briefly to the issue of therapeutic technique in order to underline that, alongside ethical considerations, this dimension of therapeutic intervention is also poorly articulated within the postmodernist stance in systemic psychotherapy. This relates in particular to the theme of reflexivity which is embedded in postmodernist thinking in psychotherapy and which arguably has much greater methodological significance than is recognized or theorized in this stance. The subject of reflexivity has an added resonance in the context of this study since it not only connects with wider themes in social theory but with similar methodological challenges and developments in psychoanalytic discourse and thus underlines the shared ground between the two orientations.

Reflecting processes and reflective functioning

We have seen that in second order systemic therapy reflexivity is a key concept which denotes the idea of flexible movement between different level of meaning and communication. We have also seen that a number of technical approaches have been formulated to help increase reflexive capacities in those who attend for therapy, which include the reflecting team approach and the practice of reflexive questioning. This focus on reflexivity and the task of formulating technical approaches that address difficulties in this area of psychological functioning are echoed in contemporary psychoanalytic discourse, notably in the model of mentalization or reflective functioning discussed in Chapter 1. Within this model the capacity to mentalize denotes our ability to conceptualize mental processes in self and others: in other words, the

ability to interpret one's own and others' actions in terms of mental states including thoughts, feelings, beliefs, desires, intentions and so on. The concept of mentalization or reflective functioning is an attempt to formulate and understand difficulty in this area, drawing on a developmental psychological perspective. We have seen that this theory emerged in response to the challenge of working analytically with people who are not readily amenable to a classical analytic interpretive approach: people who have been described as un-psychologically minded or concrete thinkers. These were the "wrong" clients of a previous era who might well have been viewed as unsuitable for psychoanalytically oriented intervention. In general, their difficulties are deep-seated and challenging and they are often in considerable personal distress. Crucially these are people who also present very frequently in child and adolescent mental health clinics with problems that may be relational in origin but which are presented as firmly and concretely located in their children. They are likely to be well represented in the caseloads of most family therapists working in such settings.

Similarity between the systemic concept of reflexivity and the psychoanalytic concept of reflective functioning is striking. This similarity might very simply be described as a shared interest in engaging clients in the reflexive process of thinking and talking about their thinking and talking and in helping those for whom this reflexive capacity is deeply compromised. The theory of reflective functioning (Fonagy and Target, 1996, 1998, 2003) has emerged in the psychoanalytic field as an important contribution to the debate about appropriate therapeutic response and technique in working with people presenting with difficulties on this spectrum and offers much scope for creative exchange across the traditional systemic/psychoanalytic oppositional divide. In Part 111 this shared ground serves as the springboard for connecting with similar themes in social theory and for conceptualizing psychotherapy as a reflexive resource in social and personal contexts, helping to develop reflexive capacities that will in turn facilitate participation in discursive communicative contexts as these are characterized in Habermas' theory of communicative ethics. In Part 11, I now turn to the elaboration of Habermasian theory as the first step in arguing for its relevance to ethical debate in psychotherapy and to the conceptualization of the moral/ethical ethos of contemporary practice.

Part II

The moral ethos of contemporary psychotherapy: connections with social theory

Introduction

Contemporary psychotherapeutic discourse, as represented both by psychoanalytic and systemic perspectives, is significantly influenced by strands of post-structuralist, postmodernist and hermeneutical thinking. Whilst this influence has impacted on theoretical and clinical processes as discussed in Part 1, its impact on psychotherapeutic formulations of the ethical underpinning of clinical practice is less clear. On closer examination much of what passes for new thinking on ethics remains firmly rooted in the Kantian tradition of abstract individualism favoured by previous generations of "helping professionals". I have argued that this is deeply problematic. Crucially the individualistic ethos of this perspective fails to encapsulate the radical paradigm shift in contemporary psychotherapy from an exclusive focus on intrapsychic processes to one in which relational themes now dominate. This results in a disjuncture between ethical considerations and wider theoretical debate, as a consequence of which both domains are mutually impoverished and deprived of potentially creative input.

In this study I am arguing for the reformulation of ethical debate in psychotherapy in terms that take account of contemporary engagement with relational themes. I am arguing for an understanding of ethics that is firmly rooted in processes of communication and to this end I engage in a dialogue with current themes in social and political theory that could potentially inform and enrich psychotherapeutic discourse. One of the difficulties with current thinking in the field is the lack of direct engagement with social and political theory and a heavy reliance on derivative texts, which lends itself to much confusion and lack of a critical perspective. It also cuts psychotherapy off from the richness and complexity of wider theoretical debates. In focussing on key social and political theorists, whose work connects with postmodernist thinking but which lies somewhat outside the postmodernist fold, I am also hoping to broaden the framework of debate beyond current influences, in the direction of a more satisfactory engagement with ethical themes.

Chapter 4 explores Jűrgen Habermas' discourse ethics and locates it within the broader context of his work. This discussion serves as an anchor for later dialogue between discourse ethics and psychotherapeutic concerns which this study seeks to promote and for consideration of other theorists whose work is loosely sympathetic to, or consistent with the tradition informing Habermas' thinking. Chapter 5 explores similarity and difference between Habermas and the hermeneutical and post-structuralist perspectives that influence psychotherapy. I begin by considering Habermas' engagement with Gadamer's hermeneutical perspective and argue that Habermas' critique implicitly highlights the limitation of philosophical hermeneutics as a paradigm for psychotherapy. The focus then switches to his equally important critique of Foucault's post-structuralist thinking which paves the way for consideration in Chapter 6 of contemporary postmodernist influenced thinking about ethics represented notably in the work of Zygmunt Bauman. This chapter concludes by drawing the discussion back to critical social theory with a focus on Axel Honneth's moral theory of recognition which serves to supplement Habermas' theory of communicatives ethics in order to provide a more fleshed out formulation of an ethical stance that we might consider appropriate for psychotherapeutic practice. Throughout Part 11, the underlying argument is that Habermas' discourse ethics addresses the limitation of current hermeneutical, post-structuralist and postmodernist influences in psychotherapy in a way that underscores its relevance for future moral /ethical debate in the field.

Chapter 4

Habermas' Discourse Ethics

The work of Jűrgen Habermas belongs to the tradition of the Frankfurt School of critical theory and represents an ongoing dialogue with this heritage.[1] At the heart of his work is an exploration of the idea of a critical theory of society and an attempt to establish its normative foundations. Alongside his engagement with the Frankfurt tradition and more generally with Western Marxism, Habermas' early work encompasses distinctive strands of debate that, from the standpoint of this study, have a clear resonance for psychotherapeutic discourse. In his work of the 1960s ([1962] 1989, [1963]1974, [1968a]1978, [1968b, 1969] 1971, [1971] 1990), he is centrally concerned with philosophical and sociological issues raised by the scientistic reduction of knowledge to that offered by the empirical sciences, where these are viewed as an unproblematic reflection of reality. The influence of this scientistic tendency within psychoanalytic and systemic psychotherapy has already been discussed along with the opposing swing towards a postmodernist and hermeneutically infused perspective in more recent decades.

Another important strand of debate in Habermas' work ([1967]1990b) is his critical engagement with the hermeneutical tradition as represented notably in the work of Heidegger([1927]1996) and Gadamer ([1960]1991). On the onehand Habermas accords great significance to the hermeneutical tradition but he is also deeply critical of what he regards as its conservative bias. In his work he strives to uphold what he sees as being of value in this tradition in order to construct a critical hermeneutical position. One of the most significant aspects of Habermas's engagement with hermeneutics is that it reinforces the linguistic turn in his work that became explicit from the 1970s onwards and that leads into his formulation of an ethics of communication (1970, [1976]1979, [1981a]1984,1987a, 1990a). Where he departs from the hermeneutical perspective most significantly and also from post-structuralist and postmodernist perspectives, is in his commitment to a universalistic perspective on ethics. His elaboration of a discourse

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[1] See Held (1980) and (Jay (1973) on the Frankfurt School tradition.

ethics is central to this project and I will begin by locating this ethical perspective within the wider evolution of Habermas' work.

Habermas' constant search for a rational grounding of ethics in his work and his defence of a method of critical social enquiry or "depth hermeneutics" that is distinct from, though related to the hermeneutical standpoint was underpinned by his own formative experience of growing up in Nazi Germany. The Frankfurt School of critical theory went into exile at that time and continued with their radical agenda of social critique, whilst Heidegger's hermeneutics was tainted by his sympathy for Nazism. Habermas (1983, 1987b) sees the latter not as a sign of philosophical naivety but much more seriously as reflecting the inner logic of a system of thought which veers into idealism and mysticism of "being" and loses the sense of philosophy as critique and as that which is morally and politically engaged. For Habermas therefore, philosophy is necessarily a critical theory of society, a form of reflection that should seek to further and promote the ideal of emancipation from any form of domination. The recognition that language develops historically and can be as much a medium for power as for communication is at the heart of Habermas' work and his theory of communicative ethics evolved out of his search for a critical standpoint from which one might begin to judge structures of domination and distorted communication. It is this concern with distortions in communication and the search for a critical standpoint that also points towards potential convergence with the concerns of psychotherapy and the ethical demands of this practice based endeavour.

Knowledge and human interests

In Habermas' early work ([1963]1974, [1968a]1978), a key element in his reformulation of Marxism was the distinction between work and interaction, or in Habermasian terminology, that between instrumental and communicative action. This distinction also became central to his critique of positivist thinking. The starting point for his perspective on Marxism is the unresolved tension between the categorical framework of Marx's interpretation of history and his material investigations. At the latter level Marx viewed social practice as encompassing labour and interaction. He viewed the self formative process of the human species as involving these two dialectically related dimensions: on the one hand the historical development of the

forces of production as human beings reproduce the material conditions of their lives; and on the other hand, the historical formation of consciousness and institutions, that regulate the interaction of human beings among themselves. The institutional framework determines the extent of repression by the unreflected force of social dependence and political power. Within this framework, the burdens and rewards of production are distributed according to social laws. However, while Marx's concept of social practice encompasses both labour and interaction, the latter is not included in his philosophical frame of reference. Here, he comprehends the self creation of the human species solely on the basis of the logic of its activity in the production of objects.

Progress within the realm of labour or instrumental action is marked by new technologies and here the ultimate goal is the emancipation of the species from necessary labour through the complete substitution of machines for people. However, progress within the social self formative process is marked, not by new technologies, but by "stages of reflection through which the dogmatic character of surpassed forms of domination and ideologies are dispelled" ([1968a]1978, p. 55). Here the ultimate goal is the development of self consciousness to the point where it is freed from all ideological delusion through critical reflection; where institutions based on force are replaced by an organization of social relations bound only to communication freed from domination; and where self conscious control of the social life process is thus achieved. Progress towards this goal of social freedom is undoubtedly prompted by scientific-technical progress but it does not occur directly through the latter. It can be attained, only through a process of enlightenment. Developments within the realms of labor and within the social self formative process of the species are interdependent, yet they are mutually irreducible. Habermas argues that, while Marx tried to capture this relation in the dialectic of the forces and relations of production, he failed to do so, because at the epistemological level of his analysis he camouflages the difference between productive and reflective knowledge. On the latter level, Marx's insight into the dependence of the human self formative process on both labour and interaction would have required a concomitant distinction between the human species as a tool-making animal and as a language using animal. For Habermas, Marx's scientistic self- misconception, together with subsequent objectivistic misinterpretations of his theory are logical consequences of a categorical framework restricted to instrumental action.

As in his critique of Marxism, Habermas' critical perspective on positivism is underpinned by the distinction between instrumental and communicative action. Positivism in essence argued for the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the social sciences, thereby advocating a unified science (Delanty, 2005). For Habermas on the otherhand, the social sciences differ fundamentally from the natural sciences not just in their subject matter but also in their methodology. Social scientists cannot be separated from their objects of research in the way that proponents of a positivist stance imply. Access to a symbolically pre-structured reality cannot be gained by observation alone since this access also includes a hermeneutic engagement with meaning. For Habermas, this also excludes any possibility of methodological dualism arising from the separation of the natural and human sciences. The social sciences have to resolve this tension between the two approaches. Positivism falls for the illusion of pure theory and neglects the hermeneutical dimension involved in social science which cannot separate itself from what he terms "knowledge-guiding interests". The publication of his major work *Knowledge and Human Interests* in 1968 sets out this position comprehensively.

It is Habermas' contention that the human species organises its experience in terms of anthropologically rooted knowledge- guiding interests. His starting point for this hypothesis is that we are a tool making but also language using species. We have an interest in the creation of knowledge which will make it possible to control objectified processes and also to maintain a consensus based on mutual understanding without which severe conflict would result. These are referred to as the technical and practical knowledge guiding interests. For Habermas, the natural sciences on the one hand and the human or cultural sciences on the other hand formalize the procedures required for success in each of these spheres of activity. In the natural sciences, reality is constituted as being, subject to general laws. The process of inquiry is organized within the framework of instrumental action governed by technical rules based on empirical knowledge which realizes defined goals under given conditions. In the human sciences, reality is constituted as the community of speakers and actors. The process of inquiry takes place at the level of communicative action where participants are primarily oriented to the achievement of understanding and agreement. However, besides the technical interest in the mastery of nature and the practical interest in furthering mutual understanding and agreement, human beings have in Habermas' schema a third interest,

an emancipatory cognitive interest which aims at the pursuit of reflection. This interest is rooted in our capacity to be self reflective and self determining.

With regard to the emancipatory interest of knowledge, the relationship between knowledge and interest, between theory and practice, is different than for the technical and practical interests. Here, theory and practice are inherently connected in the process of self reflection. Self knowledge, generated through self reflection, makes us aware of forces which have heretofore exerted an influence behind our back. The act of knowing and the goal of the interest namely emancipation as a subject, coincide. At the level of scientific inquiry, the emancipatory interest finds expression in the critically oriented sciences, whose goal is to facilitate self reflection and to dissolve those forces which impede the self conscious development of life. Habermas cites Marx's theory of society and Freud's metapsychology as examples of this critically oriented approach. However, just as Marx tended to classify his theory with the natural sciences, likewise, Freud was guilty of a scientistic self misunderstanding of his metapsychology.[2] He did not take methodological cognizance of that which distinguishes psychoanalysis from both the natural and the human sciences. Nonetheless, in Habermas' view, Freud went beyond Marx in some respects in opening up perspectives which provide the key to the logic of a reflective science and thus to the construction of a critical social theory. Habermas' later work took him in a rather different direction from that set out in Knowledge and Human Interests and as part of that development he lost interest in psychoanalysis as a paradigm for critical social theory. We have seen that psychoanalysis has also moved beyond classical Freudian theory with its emphasis on instinctual processes to an object relations orientation. Notwithstanding these changes it is helpful in the present context to explore Habermas' engagement with classical Freudian theory in his early work both in terms of outlining the background to his communicative ethical theory but also as an historical marker for the dialogue between social theory and contemporary therapeutic discourse which this study seeks to promote.

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[2] Habermas defines the "metapsychological framework" of Freudian thinking as," the basic categories of the new discipline, the conceptual constructions, the assumptions about the functional structures of the psychic apparatus and about mechanisms of both the genesis of symptoms and the dissolution of pathological compulsion" ([1968a]1978, p. 252).

The psychoanalytic paradigm for critical theory

We have seen that for Marx, the focus of attention was man as a tool-making animal. He assumed that we elevated ourselves from the animal species when we began to produce our means of subsistence. We have also seen that this focus on the categorical framework of production had serious implications for Marx's theory in terms of blurring the distinction between productive and reflective knowledge. For Freud in contrast, the focus of attention was not the labour process but the family. He assumed that the distinction between the human and animal species arose with the invention of an agency of socialisation for offspring whereby instinct governed behaviour was transformed into communicative action: "What interests him, is the destiny of the primary impulse potentials in the course of the growing child's interaction with an environment, determined by his family structure, on which he remains dependent during a long period of upbringing" (Habermas, [1968a]1978, p. 283). Because he conceives of the institutional framework of society in connection with the repression of instincts, Habermas believed that Freud's theory allowed for the conceptualization of power and ideology in a way that evaded Marx.

For Freud, the motive of human society is in the last resort an economic one. Since it does not possess enough provisions to keep its members alive unless they work, it must restrict the number of its members and divert their energies from sexual activity to work. Because this fundamental conflict between self preservation and libidinal impulses is defined by the level of technical control over nature, the degree of instinctual repression is historically variable. It is dependent on the degree of technical control over natural forces as well as the organisation of their exploitation and the distribution of what is produced. Because of the constraint of reality, not all interpreted needs can be satisfied. Therefore, the institutional framework involves compulsory norms and roles which suppress and transform linguistically interpreted needs. These norms derive their force by imposing substitute gratifications which reconcile and compensate for imposed renunciations.

With the rapid development of the forces of production, the historical necessity for existing forms of renunciation is undermined and it is in this context of repression, going beyond what is socially necessary, that the power of ideology or 'illusions' is

threatened. As distorted communication, these "illusions" represent the unconscious of society where motives which have been split off from communication are channelled into substitute gratifications. For Habermas, an understanding of the origins of the institutional framework in structures of distorted communication brings the emancipatory potential of self reflection into focus. The history of the species is determined both by a process of self production through labour and of self formation under conditions of distorted communication. Developments at the level of the forces of production provide the objective possibility of reducing repression at the institutional level, but they cannot guarantee the realisation of the utopian contents of ideology. This can occur only through enlightenment leading to the destruction of distorted self limiting communication and a corresponding transformation of the institutional framework.

An engagement with psychoanalysis is deeply rooted in the Frankfurt tradition of critical theory and this is an important backdrop to Habermas' contribution. First generation critical theorists, Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, were prominent in attempts to bring psychoanalysis into dialogue with social theory and within Freudian drive theory they identified a source of resistance to what they perceived to be an increasingly authoritarian, bureaucratized and rationalized world.[3] From this perspective, "Freud's drive theory expressed the unalterable opposition between actual human needs and a historical world that demands the suppression of these needs as the apparent price of civilization" (Alford, 1987, p. 7). In the work of Marcuse ([1955a]1987) in particular, an engagement with psychoanalysis evolved into consideration of possibilities for transcending the opposition between human nature and the external world through radical transformation of the latter. For Marcuse, the existence of the instinctual dimension of mental life thus represents a deeply optimistic idea. It implies that whatever repressions are in place there is always an alternative residing in the unconscious. However as Frosh (1999) points out, it is the individual's instincts and liberation of individual desire that is Marcuse's focus. Comparing aspects of his work with that of Wilhelm Reich's ([1933]1975, [1942]1983) engagement with psychoanalysis, Frosh concludes that both theories reflect libertarian and individualistic tendencies in their consistent failure to consider the institutions of a liberated society:

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[3] For example, see Horkheimer ([1936]1972); Adorno et al. ([1950]1969; Marcuse ([1955a]1987).

> Neither theorist has a detailed view of a society structured to allow a different order of sexuality which would be less repressive (to the individual) and oppressive (to others) at the same time. Instead they paint a picture of a world in which there is no organization, in which play is the highest good, sexuality busting out libidinously and energetically, aggression conveniently having withered away in the process. There is no society in this view: social relations are reduced to pure, unproblematic and unmediated encounters between totally unalienated individuals. (p. 174).[4]

Whilst Habermasian theory is influenced by the same classical version of psychoanalysis that informed the first generation of critical theory, Freudian drive theory does not hold the pivotal position that it commands in Marcuse's work, for example. Thus whilst Habermas does not reject drive theory as such, in the evolution of his theory the source of opposition to oppressive societal organization is no longer located within the individual but within the structures of language (Alford, 1987). On Habermas' reading of Freud, the latter's metapsychology understood as a theory of distorted communication, brings into focus the creative role of language as the bridge between the unconscious and conscious. However, this theory evolved in the absence of a comprehensive theory of language, which in Habermas' view had repercussions for Freud's understanding of deformations in language. Habermas' explication of Freudian metapsychology as a theory of distorted communication was influenced by later developments, notably the work of Alfred Lorenzer (1974, 1976) in the field of linguistic analysis. Furthermore because Freud was caught in a scientistic self-understanding of his theory he was unable to preserve it from a false objectivism which finds expression in his energy distribution model. In Freud's view:

> the future may teach us to exercise a direct influence, by means of particular chemical substances, on the amounts of energy and their distribution in the mental apparatus…. But for the moment we have nothing better at our disposal than the technique of psychoanalysis….." [5]

Habermas' argues that in assuming the existence of a non linguistic substratum, Freud failed to recognise that the concept of instinct is already rooted in a linguistically interpreted life world. Freud's energy distribution model also contradicts his own

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[4] Whilst observing this common ground between Marcuse and Reich, Frosh (1999) also acknowledges that Marcuse is a more rigorous and sophisticated social theorist who does resist the simple reduction of emancipation to sexual freedom but nonetheless shares with Reich the failure to consider adequately the institutions of an emancipated society that would allow a different order of sexuality (pp.174-5).

[5] Freud, S.(1940) An outline of psychoanalysis, in *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 23*, p. 182, quoted by Habermas ([1968a]1978, p. 247)

realisation that for psychoanalysis to be successful, it must lead to the conscious appropriation of repressed material by the analysand. It was this realisation, which led to his dissatisfaction with the technique of hypnosis since the latter did not lead to self reflection by the analysand but only to the manipulation of consciousness and therefore remains at the level of technical control over psychic processes. In moving away from hypnosis, Freud recognises the hermeneutic dimension of psychic life.[6] For Habermas, psychoanalysis thus comes of age when it distinguishes itself from hypnosis and seeks to restore meanings that were previously lost by the analysand. In Jessica Benjamin's words: " Freud's move away from hypnosis is of a piece with a gradual process of lessening the doctor's grip on the patient's mental activity, of relinquishing coercion and control by the doctor, with a concomitant freeing of the analysand, whose autonomy should be realized within the analysis itself" (1998, p.13). However Benjamin is also quick to observe that whilst Freud's movement away from hypnosis may well have displaced the "hierarchical binaries" of the therapeutic relationship, it by no means eliminated them. This power differential in the therapeutic relationship is integral to any consideration of the ethics of the therapeutic endeavour.

Psychoanalysis seeks out the meaning of a distortion which is inaccessible to the analysand because it has been split off or repressed. This it does by combining understanding with causal explanation, because the unconscious motives which assert themselves behind the back of the analysand have the status of causes. Explanation, in the form of a reconstructed life history, seeks to close the gaps of memory and thereby enable the analysand to reflectively dissolve the causal connection between an original scene of conflict and his/her present symptoms. It can do so only when the analyst's explanatory hypothesis enables the analysand to relate his/her own history and to understand that which has blocked the path of self reflection. In this respect the general interpretations of psychoanalysis differ fundamentally from the general theories of the natural sciences. The methodological separation between the object domain of the latter and their theoretical statements does not apply in the case of general interpretations. Here we find that the subject cannot obtain knowledge of the object unless it also becomes knowledge for the object. A general interpretation does not give the analyst technical control over the psychic apparatus. On the contrary, by overcoming causal

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[6] See also Chapter 1, pp. 17-22.

connections themselves, psychoanalysis gives power back to the ego: "The neurotic patient presents us with a torn mind, divided by resistances. As we analyse it and remove the resistances, it grows together; the great unity which we call his ego fits into itself all the instinctual impulses which before had been split off and held apart from it".[7] The ego gains conscious mastery of the instincts and asserts its identity independent of social roles and norms. The intrapsychic confrontation between instinctual and social needs, or between private and public language, is no longer worked out behind its back.

The intense focus on psychoanalysis in Habermas' early work is rooted in the conviction that it offered a paradigm for critically oriented science. Within social theory this use of psychoanalysis had a rather sceptical response however and as Outhwaite (1994) observes, it has been associated with much misunderstanding of Habermas' intentions, notably the idea that social theorists were being cast as social psychoanalysts in relation to society. This was not what Habermas had in mind. His concern was rather to draw comparisons between the relatively abstract conceptual and methodological features of two theoretical perspectives, critical theory and psychoanalysis. He was not proposing that the addressees of critical theory, or indeed society itself could be approached as a macro-subject whose eyes the social theorist seeks to open. It is also important to emphasise that Habermas was not giving any particular weight to psychological transformation as a political project (Keat, 1981). Whilst criticism of his use of psychoanalysis in his early work can be linked to such misunderstandings, it is also the case that Habermas himself came to recognise the limitation of the psychoanalytic paradigm for critical theory and lost interest in it as his work unfolded in new directions.

A second strand of criticism of Habermas' engagement with psychoanalysis holds greater significance in the present context. It charges him with a serious misunderstanding of unconscious processes as outlined by Freud and suggests that the limitation of his engagement with psychoanalysis reveals an underlying weakness throughout his work, including his later focus on discourse ethics (Elliott, 1999). In essence this criticism relates to the excessively cognitive thrust of Habermas' oeuvre. In

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[7] Freud, S.(1919) Lines of advance in psycho-analytic therapy, in *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 17*, p.161, quoted by Habermas ([1968a] 1978), p. 233.

his early engagement with psychoanalysis this reveals itself in his negative view of the unconscious that links it mainly to distortions in communication and which allows little space for more positive or creative features to emerge. This difficulty is also evident in his rather idealised view of the analytic situation, emphasizing self reflection and emancipation to an extent that suggests it might almost be possible to leave the unconscious behind and which is at odds with psychoanalytic perspectives on the unconscious as ultimately unknowable. Arguably it is Habermas' assimilation of the unconscious to the linguistic realm that underpins this divergence from Freud. In Elliott's words: "unconscious processes….which exist prior to the mastery of language are of an entirely different order to the communicative utopia posited by Habermas" (1999, p. 101). Echoing an earlier critique by Whitebook (1985), Elliott continues:

> Freud's prelinguistic realm of the unconscious cannot be contained within Habermas' 'linguistic idealism'. ….Habermas' excessively rationalistic account of the conscious/unconscious dualism fails to capture, in short, Freud's fundamental emphasis on an 'inner foreign territory' of the self. (p. 101).

Whilst the criticism of cognitive abstraction and excessive formalism in Habermas' work should not be minimized, paradoxically in a dialogue with psychotherapeutic discourse this need not represent the same hurdle as in other contexts. On the contrary, as Steuerman (2000) observes, psychoanalytic thinking can helpfully supplement Habermas' cognitive orientation with an account of intersubjectivity that is closely tied to an understanding of emotional life. Here Habermas' abandonment of psychoanalysis in the development of his work begins to look like a missed opportunity and later discussion of the work of Axel Honneth (1995) will show that it is possible to supplement Habermas' cognitive and formalistic stance with an allied perspective that creatively resurrects the dialogue with psychoanalysis. In drawing to a close this discussion of Habermas' early work it should also be emphasized that he relied on a classical formulation of psychoanalysis which has been superseded by developments that place greater emphasis on the relational dimension of intrapsychic life and on the relational dynamic between analyst and analysand as the focus of therapeutic interest. These developments, loosely grouped under the heading of object relations psychoanalysis have been explored in Part 1 as have the ongoing difficulties in formulating the ethical underpinning of this work. Following *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas' own work also took a new direction in which much of the thinking

from this earlier phase was superseded by new developments and within which his social theory of communication comes increasingly to the fore. Whilst he continued to refer to the model of cognitive interests occasionally and did not jettison this completely, he moved his own model of critical theory much more in the direction of a theory of communicative action culminating in the publication of his two volume major work, *The Theory of Communicative Action* in 1981.

Communication and discourse ethics

Habermas' starting point for an attempt at a rational grounding of ethics in communication is a return to the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant, from which so many of our contemporary ideas about morality still derive, not least our ideas around respect for others. Central to Kantian philosophy is the idea of the individual as potential moral agent who represents an end in him\herself and as such warrants respect. It is the individual's inherent status as potential moral agent that makes him\her worthy of respect and not the conjunction of any particular empirical qualities which he\she might possess. Reason exists to inform the individual's will about its duty and so create a good will (Kemp, 1968; Kroner, 1956). For Kant, to will is not to desire but to decide on a course of action and such a decision is morally good only if taken for the sake of doing one's duty. This duty presents itself as obedience to a law that is universally binding. We must act in such a way that the principles of our actions may have without inconsistency, the force of a universal law. In other words, "do as you would be done by", that is each of us should act as we would wish anybody else to act in similar circumstances. This is the principle of rationality underlying Kantian morality. We should never treat other beings simply as a means but always as ends in themselves. The constraint on each individual is that of respecting the freedom of all. Kant's principle of universalizability or categorical imperative, according to which any action contravening ethical norms contains a self-contradiction, is his attempt to provide a rational grounding for ethics. As such it has proved enduringly popular through its identification of the formal principle that determines content, which seemingly raises morality out of the realms of the irrational, the arbitrary or the religious.

Kantian morality has been critiqued for the emptiness of its conception of morality and the fact that given sufficient ingenuity and qualification, almost any action can be

universalized consistently (Lukács, 1971). Here the danger is that it becomes available to provide a motive for particular duties, which a society may prescribe. Duty becomes a clarion call to conformity and the freedom of the individual is directed wholly inwards: "The 'eternal iron' regularity of the processes of nature and the purely inward freedom of individual moral practice appear at the end of (Kant's) Critique of Practical Reason as wholly irreconcilable and at the same time as the unalterable foundations of human existence" (ibid., p. 134). Gilligan (1982, 1983), writing from a feminist perspective, has also issued a provocative challenge to the Kantian tradition by looking at the particular qualities of moral thinking in women. She contrasts the Kantian style ethic of justice, which emphasizes rights, balance, autonomy and separation, with an ethic of responsibility and care, which she identifies in how women typically think about moral issues. Here the focus is on compassion, connectedness, context-sensitivity and avoidance of harm. Gilligan argues for an idea of morality and moral development in which the two voices of morality, that of individual integrity and autonomy and that of care and connectedness are integrated. Habermas (1990a, pp. 175-82) has considered Gilligan's research and concludes that his project of formulating an ethics of communication is largely compatible with her ideas about morality in which "dialogue replaces logical deduction as the mode of moral discovery" (Gilligan, 1983, p. 45, quoted by White, 1988, p. 84). However as White observes, Habermas' ethical theory is also reliant on analyses such as that of Gilligan to compensate for the lack of engagement with subjectivity and emotionality in his own theory. White concludes that Habermas' communicative ethical perspective is "crippled" if it proceeds in an emotional vacuum (ibid., p. 85).[8]

Whilst Habermas is also critical of Kantian philosophy of consciousness and is keenly aware of the need to take the linguistic turn, he is respectful towards the Kantian ethos and retains the critical reflective impetus of uncovering a rational foundation for ethics. This singles him out from the postmodernist perspective and in many ways it is more accurate to describe his oeuvre as an attempt to rework the philosophical project of modernity. At the centre of his theory of ethics is a rather simple and even obvious idea, namely that when we speak, our utterances carry deep within them an ethical ideal, which transcends specific situations and language games and which he suggests, has a

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[8] See also Chapter 6 pp. 155-9 and Chapter 9 p. 224 for further discussion of this issue.

universal status. It is this ethical ideal which Habermas seeks to reconstruct in his theory of communicative ethics. In *A reply to my critics* (1982), Habermas quotes approvingly the following description of the shift from the Kantian categorical imperative to an ethics of communication and the attempt to locate the principle of universalization in the framework of intersubjectivity: "The emphasis shifts from what each can will without contradiction to be a universal law, to what all can will in agreement to be a universal norm" (McCarthy, [1978]1984, p. 326, quoted by Habermas, 1982, p. 257).

 Like the postmodernist and hermeneutical perspectives, Habermas recognizes that our ideas about objective truth or morality always remain inside language. It is within language that we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge. We might as natural scientists decide to abstract ourselves from this world to some extent in order to get on with what we do, but natural science and the validity of its findings, as much as any other activity takes place within the hermeneutic context of language. What interests Habermas is not so much the relativity of truth, which this implies. He takes a different path in asking what it is that can rationally motivate a hearer to accept something as truth. Staying inside the framework of language, Habermas (1990a) continues: "The fact that a speaker can rationally motivate a hearer to accept such an offer is not due to the validity of what he says but to the speaker's guarantee that he will, if necessary, make efforts to redeem the claim that the hearer has accepted" (p. 58).

This redemption when called for must of necessity also take place within language but at a heightened or reflexive level of communication, a level of "discourse" where we stand back from our routine everyday communication to some extent in order to engage in a more reflective consideration of the claim to truth that has been brought into disrepute. Central to Habermas' formulation of an ethics of communication ([1976]1979, [1981a]1984, 1987a, 1990a) is this suggestion that whenever we speak, our utterances implicitly raise a number of universal validity claims of which the claim to truth is one. Furthermore, if the background consensus between speakers is brought into disrepute, our utterances already implicitly suggest that these validity claims could be vindicated or redeemed in discourse. Essentially what he is trying to do is reconstruct the very minimal conditions that make communication possible on a routine basis and it is here that the interest of the philosopher\critical theorist and the therapist potentially

coincide in this area where the minute details of why communication does or does not happen, are being explored.

Habermas identifies three key validity claims contained in the utterances that we make and which we use implicitly as a means of rationally motivating the hearer to accept what we are offering. These are the claims to propositional truth, normative legitimacy, and authenticity or truthfulness. These correspond to three attitudes towards our world; the objectivating, the norm-governed, and the expressive attitudes respectively; and three interlocking spheres of our world; the objective, social and the subjective. Habermas then proceeds to consider what might constitute rationality in relation to each of these validity claims.

> In contexts of communicative action, we call someone rational not only if he is able to put forward an assertion and, when criticized, to provide grounds for it by pointing to the appropriate evidence, but also if he is following an established norm and is able, when criticized, to justify his action by explicating the situation in the light of legitimate expectations. We even call someone rational if having made known a desire or intention…etc., and is then able to reassure critics in regard to the revealed experience by drawing practical consequences from it and behaving consistently thereafter. ([1981a]1984, p. 15)

In situations where the participants continue to be motivated by the communicative interest in reaching understanding and agreement, claims to truth or normative legitimacy when questioned can only be addressed by moving to a level of communicative argumentation which Habermas calls "discourse". He further suggests that each of us through our ordinary communicative competence implicitly holds an idea of the kind of discourse in which contested validity claims could be redeemed. His excavation of these implicit assumptions about discourse leads him towards the notion of an "ideal speech situation". This ideal is immanent in the way in which we routinely draw on language but remains as an ideal that guides our communication rather than something, which we would ever concretely realize in practice. Before considering the parameters of this ideal speech situation I will comment briefly on Habermas' justification for his theory of ethics thus far.

In the case of the validity claims Habermas suggests that anybody who tries to contest the idea that such claims underlie our communication is immediately caught up in a "performative contradiction" (1990a, p. 89), since that person is already asserting

his\her own validity claims. Thus whilst we might contest the detail of Habermas' claims we cannot contest the central plank of this "depth hermeneutics" without departing the sphere of communicative engagement. If we claimed that "it is untrue" for example, we are already implying the idea of conversation with another person\s in which we might justify this claim, thereby confirming his argument in a minimal sense. For Habermas, it is here in these conversations implied by our utterances, even if they are not realized, that he wants to locate our ideas about ethics. For him ideas about ethics are fundamentally ideas about the kinds of conversations we might have in which it is possible for us to redeem validity claims and thereby remove constraints to ongoing communication. Here in Habermasian thinking, we reach the ethical heart of our being as linguistically constituted subjects. Thus even in situations where we might act strategically within communicative action, by deciding to tell a lie for example, we still rely on the validity claims, their implicit acceptance by the hearer and presumption that they could be redeemed, in order to secure the "success" of our strategic action. We draw on and connect with the ethical undercarriage of communication in general even as we might flaunt it in the particular situation.

Habermas suggests that participants in discourse concerning a disputed validity claim either of truth or normative legitimacy cannot avoid certain "idealizing presuppositions" immanent in such situations which can be reconstructed as rules of rational discourse. Briefly, this reconstruction leads him towards the conclusion that our presuppositions about rational discourse effectively represent communicatively based formulations of such ideals as respect, fairness, equality and justice. In situations of argumentation where we remain committed to the goal of reaching a rationally motivated agreement, we are likely to assume for example that all participants are allowed to initiate and take part in the discourse; that everyone is allowed to question any assertion made; that everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion into the discourse; that everyone is allowed to express his\her attitudes, desires and needs; and that speakers will not be prevented by internal or external coercion or constraint from exercising these rights (1990a, p. 89). These are ethical assumptions and ideals that we implicitly uphold as members of an intersubjective communication community even in situations where we might, as individuals or groups, strategically manipulate such ideals to our own ends.

Whilst criticism from a postmodernist perspective that Habermas is not so much drawing on universalist as on modernist assumptions about what might constitute an ideal speech situation is broadly accepted within the communicative ethical debate, defenders of this ethical perspective would argue that the ideal itself retains its universal status even if the question of how we fill it is closely entwined with our place and time in history (Benhabib, 1990). This post- universalist perspective which seeks to transcend the dualism of universalism and relativism is reflected for example in Benhabib's argument that once the oppositional framing of universalism and historicity within moral philosophy is challenged, the situation regarding communicative ethics can be seen in a new light. In her engagement with communicative ethics she argues for a "historically self- conscious universalism" in which, following on from Habermas, she sees the principles of universal moral respect and egalitarian reciprocity as representing our "philosophical clarification of the constituents of the moral point of view from within the normative hermeneutic horizon of modernity" (1990a, p. 339). Even amongst those who distance themselves from the universalist stance it is observed that there persists a tendency to assign a favoured status to moral appeals which stress equality and mutual recognition (White, 1988, p. 2). Here the great appeal of Habermasian theory is that it attempts to provide a systematic elaboration of such appeals, to give them a measure of universal validity and to show that ideas of equality and mutual recognition need not be completely indeterminate.

In her defence of the universalist perspective, Nussbaum (2000) reflects on the confusion that can arise between ideas relating to respect for diversity and ideas of relativism, noting that some find the latter attractive on the assumption that it indicates respect for different ways of life. However as she goes on to reflect it does no such thing: "By making each tradition the last word, we deprive ourselves of any more general norm of toleration or respect that could help us limit the intolerance of cultures" (ibid., p. 49). For Nussbaum, a universalist theory that is framed in terms of what she describes as human capabilities offers the best framework within which to locate our thoughts about difference. She argues that certain basic aspirations towards human flourishing are recognizable across differences of culture, class and other variables and uses this thinking as the basis for an account of general human capabilities for which she claims universal status. Within this approach, capability denotes what people are able to do and be, "in a way informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of

dignity and respect" and an idea of the person as an "end", not a "tool of the ends of others" (ibid., p. 5).

In Habermasian theory it is clear that the communicative competence to enter "discourse" presupposes certain cognitive capacities alongside a willingness to do so, rather than simply repeating one's assertions in a dogmatic fashion (Outhwaite, 1994). As the argument of this study unfolds it will become clear that this also extends to emotional capacities and that together these capacities or- borrowing Nussbaum's terminology- capabilities for participation in discourse raise particular challenges in the psychotherapeutic context. This arises because of the considerable difficulty many psychotherapy clients experience engaging in reflexive discursive deliberation due to underlying problems of a cognitive or emotional nature which contribute to rigid and concrete thinking processes and difficulty in moving between different levels of communication. From a psychotherapeutic perspective, Nussbaum's use of the expansive language of capability is therefore helpful in redressing the imbalance towards cognitive abstraction in Habermasian theory and offering an emotionally grounded engagement with the detail of our human potential to flourish and realise our communicative competence in favourable circumstances. In that sense her theory, like Gilligan's mentioned earlier, could be seen to supplement the lack of engagement with subjectivity and emotionality in Habermasian theory. Later I will argue that the moral theory of recognition put forward by Axel Honneth, who writes within the same theoretical tradition as Habermas, offers an invaluable perspective that addresses these lacunae in Habermas' work. Honneth's own work has developed against the backdrop of an evolving postmodernist discourse and his appraisal of the relevance of this perspective, in particular the "ethical turn" of postmodernism in recent decades, for Habermasian ethical theory will also be considered in Chapter 6.

In summing up we may say that the key contribution of Habermasian theory to current debates is his reworking of the Kantian principle of universalisation in terms of the transcendental pragmatic conditions of communication. He argues that we start from a situation of intersubjectivity and that it is only within this intersubjectivity that moral phenomena and moral problems arise. This situation of intersubjectivity implies certain unavoidable presuppositions of communication, namely that in order to communicate we share an ideal of agreement between equal partners towards which we strive, in

discourse. It is no longer the universalization of isolated subjects seeking to prescribe to all; it is now a discursive test amongst partners in communication of what could be agreed by all to be a universal norm. In this way Habermas moves towards a formulation of ethics that is consistent with the radical paradigmatic shift in contemporary thinking from consciousness to language. In essence what he achieves is to create possibilities for a different kind of engagement with ethical issues that takes account of other fundamental changes in how we think about ourselves and our world.

From the practice based psychotherapeutic perspective of this study, one of the key questions that emerges in considering discourse ethics is whether the price that Habermas pays for his univeralist perspective and for salvaging a moment of ethical certainty in his work is that it becomes too formal and abstract to be of much practical significance. In essence the argument of this study is that on balance this is not the case and that his theory can be linked productively and creatively with psychotherapeutic concerns notwithstanding its abstraction. Furthermore difficulties in the latter regard can be addressed by supplementing Habermas' ethical theory with perspectives that are more closely tied to practical and historical concerns and with perspectives – including those from within psychoanalysis itself- that are more closely tied to an understanding of emotional life. In drawing this discussion to a close the point I wish to underline is that notwithstanding its limitations and incompletion, the value of Habermas' contribution is in offering an overarching philosophical framework for scientific enquiry and engagement in which ethics is firmly anchored and in what follows I outline some key debates in which he engaged with other leading thinkers of the 20th century, Gadamer and Foucault. These debates offer additional clarification of Habermas' own perspective on ethics and that which separates his position from the hermeneutical, post-structuralist and postmodernist perspectives. I then move on to consider more recent developments within postmodernism and critical theory with a specific focus on the work of Zygmunt Bauman and Axel Honneth. Throughout this discussion my overriding concern is to make helpful connections with social and philosophical theory and to develop a framework for conceptualizing the nature of the psychotherapeutic endeavour and our ethical engagement therein.

Chapter 5

Critical Debates: Habermas Contra Gadamer and Foucault

Two deeply significant strands of debate in Habermas' work are his engagement with
Foucault's post-structuralist theory and with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. In
this chapter I consider his dialogue with hermeneutics before moving on to the debate
with Foucault. The encounter between the thinking of Habermas and the hermeneutical
tradition as represented in the work of Heidegger ([1927] 1996) and especially Gadamer
([1960]1991) has been the focus for much attention within philosophical discourse.[1] We
have already seen that alongside postmodernist influences, hermeneutical thinking has
also had a significant impact within contemporary psychotherapy. It has been
particularly influential for those seeking alternative perspectives to the positivist
influences of an early era. In the case of systemic psychotherapy this is reflected in the
shift from first to second order thinking and practice and the abandonment of the first
order natural science paradigm in favour of a hermeneutic/social constructionist stance
in second order approaches.[2] The therapist is no longer seen as holding privileged
access to knowledge or definitions of what needs to change. Instead there is much
emphasis on joining with clients in conversations that have an indeterminate outcome.
In the context of this study which seeks to explore the potential contribution of
Habermasian thinking to current themes in psychotherapy particularly relating to ethics,
it is therefore important that we consider the common ground but also points of
difference between Habermas and the hermeneutical tradition. Hans-Georg Gadamer
has been the most influential voice in the development of contemporary hermeneutics
and the encounter between him and Habermas will serve as a reference point for
exploring the latter's relationship with hermeneutics and the relationship between
hermeneutics and psychotherapy.

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[1] The debate between Habermas and Gadamer was initiated in 1967 when Habermas published *Zur logik
der sozialwissenschaften* (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp) which included a critique of Gadamer's (1960) *Truth and
Method* (See Habermas, [1967]1990b). A debate between the two theorists followed which was published
in 1971 in *Hermeneutik und ideologiekritik* (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp). For analysis, see for example,
Harrington (2001), How (1995), McCarthy ([1978]1984), Mendelshon (1979), Misgeld (1976), Ricoeur
(1981) and Warnke (1987).
[2] See Chapter 3 pp. 69-74.

Habermas' Dialogue with Gadamer

The Hermeneutical Tradition

In essence "hermeneutics" denotes interpretation and is generally taken as referring to the interpretative processes of communication. The term is sometimes linked to the Greek myths where Hermes acted as the messenger of the Gods (Schmidt, 2006). As a methodological concept hermeneutics has its origins in seventeenth century German philology where it applied to biblical interpretation. This was against the background of the rise of Protestant theology where issues relating to the interpretation of scripture came to the fore. The model of a form of textual interpretation that was not dependent on the authority of the priest continued to guide the hermeneutical tradition and in the context of the Enlightenment it shifted to more general use, evolving into a science of textual interpretation. From the late nineteenth century onwards two strands within the tradition can be identified (Delanty, 2005); firstly, the tradition of hermeneutics leading from Dilthey and Neo- Kantian thinkers, such as Windelband and Rickert, to the sociology of Weber and Freudian psychoanalysis; secondly, the tradition of the philosophy of language from Heidegger and Wittgenstein through to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.

Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is generally regarded as the first to unite the various discipline specific hermeneutical theories into a universal hermeneutics (Ricoeur, 1981; Schmidt, 2006). He believed that hermeneutics as the interpretation of meaning was applicable to all forms of communication. His work also encompasses the idea of the "hermeneutic circle" which underlines the interdependence of whole and parts. At the level of the text this implies that while the text can only be understood from an understanding of its sentences, the meaning of these sentences can only be understood from out of the whole. One cannot understand the whole without understanding the parts and one cannot understand the parts until one has understood the whole. For Schleiermacher, this circle is only an apparent circle however. With a sufficient level of understanding of the language one can begin the hermeneutical task with a general overview and then return to a more detailed interpretation of the parts. This hermeneutical thinking also encompassed a marked psychologism in that the essence of

the hermeneutical method was for the reader/ interpreter to enter the mind of the author/speaker in what is known as the method of divination (Warnke, 1987, p. 13).The interpreter identifies with the author of the work being studied and imaginatively relives the thoughts and experience that brought about the work. This tradition of interpretation which takes the reconstruction of the author's intention and thinking as its focus, continued after Schleiermacher in the work of Dilthey (1833-1911) and later becomes the object of critique in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.[3]

The influence of Kantian philosophy in the movement towards a universal or general hermeneutics is evident. In Ricoeur's (1981) words:

> Kantianism constitutes the nearest philosophical horizon of hermeneutics ….it is easy to see how, in a Kantian climate, one could form the project of relating the rules of interpretation, not to the diversity of texts and things said in texts, but to the central operation which unifies the diverse aspects of interpretation. (pp. 45-6).

In addition there was considerable unease in the neo-Kantian era with the focus of Kantian philosophy on the natural sciences and the fact that it had little to say regarding the human or cultural sciences. Kant's critical philosophy did not encompass a theory of the human sciences and the neo- Kantian thinking of writers such as Rickert and Windelband can be seen as an extension of Kant's critique of pure reason to the critique of historical reason.[4] Neo- Kantians argued for a science of the conditions of possible cultural knowledge and demanded the separation of the human sciences from the natural sciences. Dilthey was closely linked to the Neo-Kantian tradition and is one of the key thinkers within the hermeneutical tradition, whose work encompasses a systematic defence of the autonomy of the human sciences.[5] This was in the context of the

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[3] See Rickman, H.P. (1976) *Dilthey, selected writings*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. It is worth noting that Dilthey's writings also moved in the direction of a more sociological focus on the hermeneutic interpretation of cultures (Delanty, 2005, p. 50; Outhwaite, 1975, p. 26).

[4] Unlike Dilthey, Rickert and Windelband did not conceptualise methodology in psychologistic terms (Delanty, 2005). An important debate between them concerned the human as distinct from the cultural sciences, with Rickert arguing for the exclusion of psychology from the cultural sciences and Dilthey arguing for its inclusion as a human science.

[5] Whilst Dilthey's work is grounded in a deep understanding of Kantian philosophy, unlike the Neo-Kantians he recognises that the distinction between the human and natural sciences rests on a difference in modes of experience rather than objects of experience alone and that the human sciences are grounded in the historicity or temporality of experience. Whilst this is his appeal for Gadamer, the latter also believed that Dilthey's objectivist tendencies ultimately undermined his own insights by leading him to conclude that the legitimacy of the human sciences rested on methodological foundations (see Warnke, 1987, pp. 26-34).

positivist demand that the model of all knowledge be taken from that of empirical observation and explanation, which typified the natural sciences.

Dithey's focus was on the elaboration of a methodology and epistemology for the human sciences that would secure their objectivity and thus put them on a par with the natural sciences. To this end he differentiated two modes of knowing that produce universally valid propositions. Explanation occurs in the natural sciences and understanding in the human sciences. The natural sciences explain phenomena by subsuming them under universal causal laws and theories while the human sciences understand meanings that are expressed in external empirical signs. In the natural sciences we explain phenomena in terms of cause and effect and in terms of the general and particular whereas in the human sciences we understand in terms of the dialectical relation between part and whole, that constitutes the hermeneutic circle.

Central to Dilthey's thinking was the concept of Erlebnis or lived experience which stands in contrast to natural scientific abstraction and which encapsulates the distinctive subject matter of the human sciences. This concept signifies that the subject matter of the human sciences is already meaningfully constituted. Human beings unlike physical objects have an inner mental and emotional life and we cannot observe another's inner life directly but must gain access to it through its external manifestations. Methodological understanding is the process by which we gain access to the manifestations of other people's lives both past and present and it is in the sphere of psychology that Dilthey looks for the distinctive features of this understanding. He belonged to that generation of neo-Kantians for whom the pivot of all science was the individual and this is the wider context in which he takes psychology as the model for the human sciences. For him all human sciences presuppose the innate capacity to transpose oneself imaginatively into the inner mental life of others.

For Dilthey and the neo-Kantians the focus was primarily on the human sciences in the shape of history, psychology or economics and it was only with the arrival of Weber (1949) that social science began to assume a distinctive identity (Delanty, 2005). Whilst Weber also belonged to the neo- Kantian tradition he differed from the other thinkers in his belief that the social sciences must combine explanation and understanding in their methodology. His work signals the transition from an older hermeneutic tradition to

interpretative social science. As a social scientist his focus was on social action rather than textual interpretation. His explanatory-understanding sociology was essentially an investigation of the motivations that might explain social action. However whilst he conceived of social action as social he nonetheless adopted a stance of methodological individualism in that understanding for him meant understanding the actions of an ideal individual (Delanty, 2005; Outhwaite, 1983). The emergence of Freudian psychoanalytic thinking also has its place within this tradition and was a further important expression of the emerging interpretative method that claimed scientific objectivity. Whilst the neo-Kantians and Weber worked on the basis of conscious intentionality, Freud's starting point was the unconscious. Instead of the text as the focus for interpretation, Freudian hermeneutics focussed on the dream as its subject matter. Whilst Freud himself moved towards a self- understanding of his work that was heavily influenced by the model of the natural sciences, his thinking had a deeply significant impact on the self understanding of the social sciences for future generations of social theorists including Habermas. It is therefore important to locate psychoanalysis within the wider context of hermeneutical thinking and its development.

The hermeneutical tradition from Dilthey and the neo- Kantians, through Weber to Freudian psychoanalysis held firmly to the idea that the scientific study of human meaning could claim objectivity. A second strand of hermeneutical thinking shifts the emphasis much more onto the subjective dimension of interpretation as context bound. This tradition known as philosophical hermeneutics starts with Heidegger ([1927]1996), continues in the later work of Wittgenstein (1953) and marks a radical paradigm shift from the philosophy of consciousness to the philosophy of language. For Dilthey and the neo-Kantians, consciousness remained their reference point. Now language comes to the fore as that which constitutes reality, as we know it, including our scientific knowledge. Language is in Heidegger's terminology the "house of Being".[6] It is not possible for interpretations to transcend this life world context of language. This recognition of the linguistic constitution of the social has been pivotal for subsequent developments in social and philosophical theory including postmodernist thinking. It

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[6] Language holds a central place in the later works of Heidegger. See Heidegger, M (1947) Letter on humanism, in *Basic Writings* (1993, Revised and Expanded edition) David F. Krell (Ed.), New York, Harper Collins.

has also served as the foundation for contemporary philosophical hermeneutics represented notably in the work of Gadamer.

In his influential text, *Truth and Method* ([1960] 1991) Gadamer rejects the traditional hermeneutic model of understanding with its emphasis on objectivity. Hermeneutics for him is no longer to be regarded as a discourse on methods of objective understanding. Instead it seeks to offer an account of the conditions of the possibility of understanding in general. What Heidegger did was to demonstrate that understanding is part of our primordial being- in- the world and following Heidegger, Gadamer argues that understanding is always tied to the linguistic and cultural context of the interpreter. His objective is to offer a philosophical justification for the experience of truth that transcends the domain of scientific method and resides in the ontological structure of understanding. Such experiences of truth he argues occur in art, philosophy and the human sciences. He identifies two distinctive hermeneutic tasks, reconstruction and integration and is strongly critical of the historical shift to reconstruction in the hermeneutical tradition, which he links with Schleiermacher. On Gadamer's account, Schleiermacher proposes a radical change in the task of hermeneutic interpretation. Previously the interpretative focus was around understanding the truth of a text and integrating this into the interpreter's life. In the case of biblical interpretation for example there was a presumption of its normative validity and authority and the task of hermeneutics was pedagogical. It sought to elaborate the truth content of the text so that people could understand and learn from it. With Schleiermacher came a shift away from this process towards the reconstruction of the creative process of the author in order to understand his/her intended meaning.

For Gadamer this emphasis on psychological interpretation is problematic in shifting the focus away from the subject matter under discussion. His position is that one can never enter fully into the mind of another person but one can enter into dialogue and bring about what he calls a "fusion of horizons". He rejects the suggestion of Schleiemacher that it is possible to escape the hermeneutic circle of understanding. Instead following Heidegger he argues that there is no escape from the fore - structures of understanding that one brings to a new situation based on the historical context in which one is always

already embedded.[7] Contrary to theories of direct sense perception or intuition, Heidegger's position was that interpretation could never be a presuppositionless grasping of something previously given directly to the senses or the intuition. From a Heideggerian perspective what is important is not to get out of the hermeneutic circle of understanding but to enter into it correctly. The interpreter needs to engage in a continuous checking that provisionally accepted conceptions in the fore-understanding which she/he has are appropriate to what is being interpreted and not simply based on popular conceptions.

Where Heidegger refers to fore-structures of understanding, Gadamer somewhat provocatively uses the term prejudices to encompass everything one knows consciously or unconsciously. All understanding begins from our prejudices he believes. Through our language, our education and our upbringing we acquire the prejudices from which our understanding proceeds. For Gadamer prejudices may be legitimate or illegitimate and for him the term has a neutral connotation contrary to its negative connotation in everyday use. In *Truth and Method*, he seeks to demonstrate the process of legitimisation and of refuting illegitimate prejudices that unfolds in understanding something. Central to this project is his wish to rehabilitate the authority of tradition in order to demonstrate that it can be a possible source of legitimate prejudices, which get passed on to the next generation. For something to survive in tradition does not give it an absolute authority. However it does suggest that it was judged to have been of value by those who embraced it. We study the past because of our belief that we might learn something from this process.

We saw in Chapter 3 that hermeneutical thinking has had an influence within psychotherapy and it is not difficult to see why psychotherapists might gravitate towards Heidegger's and Gadamer's accounts of human beings relating to their lives in a continuous process of self interpretation, experience and re-interpretation. In the case of Gadamer's model of textual interpretation, for example, the connection with psychotherapeutic processes is obvious. In essence Gadamer's model for interpretation

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[7] Heidegger demonstrated that all interpretations are preceded by our pre-structured understanding of the world deriving from our historical tradition (How, 1995). In *Being and Time (1927)* he identified three interrelated fore-structures of understanding which one brings to a new situation of understanding; fore-having which means what one has before; fore-sight which means a previous looking towards; and fore-conception which means what has previously been grasped conceptually.

is that of a dialogue in which the aim is to come to agreement about the subject under consideration. The interpreter listens to the other in the shape of the text, is open to the truth claim of the text and to having a new experience. Central to Gadamer's thinking about the shape of dialogue is the dialectic of question and answer as the logical form of openness to new experience. Questions already point in the direction in which they are enquiring. In Gadamer's terminology the question has a horizon. It places what is being questioned in a particular perspective and to ask the question correctly it must be framed in the correct horizon. Whilst we might talk about discovering the solution to a problem it is perhaps more likely, to borrow Gadamer's words, that "a question occurs to us that breaks through into the open and thereby makes an answer possible" (1991, p. 365). This type of thinking is very much echoed in theoretical perspectives about the nature of the psychotherapeutic process that emerged in the systemic field in the nineteen eighties.

In a seminal paper by the systemic writer Karl Tomm (1987b), he gives a telling account of how the therapeutic technique of reflexive questioning first emerged. In this account he underscores the enormously healing potential in asking the right kind of question in the course of a therapy session. He describes the growing realisation of family therapists in that era that some questions can themselves function as a therapeutic intervention resulting in fundamental changes in perception for individuals and families without the need for a more formal or packaged interpretation, traditionally delivered by the therapist towards the end of a family therapy session. Whilst this thinking is now taken for granted in systemic discourse it is difficult to exaggerate its ground - breaking status at that time. Tomm's vivid account of how a particular question emerged from the reflecting team during a tense family session with unexpected and very helpful results brings to mind Gadamer's thoughts on the question that "breaks through into the open thereby making an answer possible". Not surprisingly when systemic clinicians began to construct a theoretical framework around their practice based innovations they drew on the hermeneutical tradition for inspiration. This is evident for example in the work of the systemic psychotherapist Tom Andersen who pioneered the reflecting team approach and whose writings, as we have seen earlier are suffused by hermeneutical thinking.[8] This influence shows in Andersen's emphasis that

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[8] Chapter 3 pp. 69-71.

we are inevitably prejudiced when we meet with somebody whom we aim to understand and in the emphasis of his therapeutic approach on conversation and language as the precursor of thinking. Its overall subjectivist ethos is in marked contrast to earlier formulations of family therapy and arguably serves as an important antidote to the positivist excesses of that which preceded it. In that sense the contribution of hermeneutical thinking to systemic psychotherapeutic discourse is beyond dispute. However I will argue that the limitations in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, to which Habermas draws our attention, can also be detected in that strand of systemic thinking, which has been influenced by hermeneutics. I am also proposing that Habermas' model of critical social theory, normatively grounded in a theory of communicative ethics, offers a more helpful and less restrictive paradigm for the psychotherapeutic process than that of philosophical hermeneutics.

The Habemas /Gadamer debate

For Gadamer, like Heidegger, language is disclosure of the world and there is no language that would disclose the world in itself (1991, p. 474). Language is the medium of interpretation and there is no single interpretation which is correct in itself. Rather the interpreter will bring a horizon of understanding to the text that is shaped by their place in history and therefore the correct understanding of what a text has to say will be different at different historical times. This points to the relativist perspective at the heart of philosophical hermeneutics but it does not mean that misinterpretations are impossible within this perspective. In essence it is Gadamer's contention that at some point in the dialogue between the interpreter and text where various possible interpretations emerge, one shines forth and convinces the interpreter of its truthfulness. This on Gadamer's account is the hermeneutic event of truth, when everything falls into place and the fusion of horizons happens. The hermeneutic discipline and rigour of questioning can by itself lead us to truth without reliance on scientific methodology. It is here that Habermas' model of critical hermeneutics diverges from Gadamer and where his dialogue with the latter becomes especially relevant to our discussion.

It should be emphasised that Habermas attaches great significance to the hermeneutical tradition but he is highly critical of its conservative stance towards tradition. In his own work he seeks to develop a critical hermeneutical theory which moves beyond

hermeneutics whilst retaining what he sees as being of value within the hermeneutical tradition. He recognises its substantial contribution in establishing a clear demarcation between the natural and human sciences at both the methodological and ontological levels and he is strongly in agreement with the linguistic turn in twentieth century philosophy associated with philosophical hermeneutics. In the development of his theory of communicative action and communicative ethics he recognises that his original conception of reflection was overly reliant on the paradigm of consciousness and needed to be tied in much more to processes of communication. He agrees with Heidegger and Gadamer that all understanding starts with the fore- structures of understanding and with their critique of the positivist stance towards social scientific enquiry. But Habermas also believes that Gadamer goes too far in his strict opposition of truth to method and in his critique of methodology.

In *A Review of Gadamer's Truth and Method* ([1967] 1990b), Habermas argues that whilst Gadamer's criticism of objective science is justified this "cannot lead to a suspension of the methodological distanciation of the object, which distinguishes a self –reflective understanding from everyday communicative experience" (ibid., p. 235). In self- reflective understanding the interpreter takes up a distanced position towards the object of study that can allow for the application of method in a way that is different from the natural sciences. Gadamer fails to recognise the power of reflection that develops in understanding. In Habermas' view reflective reconstruction of tradition can clarify the conditions under which a prejudice has been accepted. It is possible that the process of reconstruction will reveal structures of power and dogmatic authority underlying the original acceptance and solidification of a prejudice as part of tradition. In this case those who come to understand through the power of reflection are able to reject the prejudice and criticise the tradition. Whilst accepting that an interpreter cannot escape from the horizon of language, nonetheless the power of reflection can make possible the transcendence of the particular circumstances of the interpreter's inherited language. We have seen how Habermas draws on Marxist theory and Freudian metapsychology as instances of this critically oriented mode of enquiry. In his work the objective is to radicalise hermeneutical thinking by steering it in a critical direction. Here the idea of a fusion of horizons gives way to a critique of ideologically distorted communication.

In Gadamer's response, *Reply to My Critics* ([1971]1990) one of his counterarguments concerns Habermas' use of the model of classical psychoanalysis as a paradigm for critical hermeneutics with an emancipatory interest. Transposed to the social level this conjures up an image of social analysts holding superior knowledge and expertise with all the potential for dogmatism, which that implies. We have seen that Habermas himself also moved away from this paradigm as his work evolved in the direction of a theory of communicative action and communicative ethics and in that sense the debate with Gadamer serves as an historical marker in the evolution of his own theory. From the point of view of this study the key significance of the debate between Gadamer and Habermas is that in holding out for a universalist perspective on ethics, Habermas' work serves as a challenge to the subjectivist and relativist ethos of hermeneutics. In the present context the debate between the two theorists is also deeply significant in another respect which is that Habermas' critical approach brings methodology firmly back into the equation in a way that highlights the limitations of philosophical hermeneutics as a paradigm for psychotherapy.

I have noted common ground between aspects of Gadamer's thinking and developments in systemic psychotherapy that began to take shape from the 1980s onwards and as outlined in Chapter 3. In the case of the reflecting team approach this is reflected in Andersen's (1992, 1998) use of concepts such as "prejudice" and the "hermeneutic circle" in elaborating his work. The systemic tradition was also keen to explore the power of questions in a way that echoes the centrality of the discipline of questioning in Gadamer's hermeneutical theory. But this is where the lack of fit also becomes evident. For Gadamer on the one hand there is no such thing as a method of learning to ask questions or of learning to see what is questionable. It is simply that the correct question breaks through into the open making an answer possible. For psychotherapy as a discipline on the other hand, any downplaying of methodology and technique holds enormous risk and raises complex questions concerning the status of its own methodological base. With the emergence of second order systemic therapy, conversation and meaning now come to the fore as the focus for intervention and change. Dialogue becomes the paradigm for the therapeutic encounter and the therapist is urged to adopt an "unknowing" stance in the work. Methodology and expertise are downplayed in a way that is essentially in keeping with the hermeneutical spirit of this therapeutic approach. An oppositional relationship between first and second order

approaches is set up in which the methods and techniques that evolved during the pioneering decades of first order systemic therapy are at risk of being eroded and devalued. We have also observed the gaps in psychotherapeutic thinking around ethical issues that have persisted in this second order perspective. From our discussion thus far it should be clear that all of these trends are broadly in keeping with the hermeneutical thinking that inspired or affirmed some of the innovations in systemic psychotherapy from the nineteen eighties onwards. The argument of this study is that hermeneutics along with post-structuralist and postmodernist perspectives which will shortly be discussed, fail to offer a satisfactory paradigm for that mode of enquiry and practical engagement we call psychotherapy and which therefore needs to seek out new sources of inspiration. It will also be argued that Habermas' model of a critical theory holds considerable potential both as a framework for reformulating the theory/ practice relationship and for reformulating ethical debate in psychotherapeutic discourse.

It is Habermas' view that in the case of critical social theory reflection cannot be tied to the model of dialogue given that language is also a medium of power and domination ([1967]1990b). One could make this argument in the case of psychotherapy also where the optimum conditions for relatively unconstrained dialogue rarely if ever apply. In family meetings for example it is often the case that communication processes are infused with elements of force and coercion. Frequently the work of the therapy is precisely that of helping individuals and families move towards the point where relatively unconstrained communication might begin to be possible either within the therapy itself or elsewhere. For this challenge the hermeneutic paradigm of dialogue is wholly inadequate. In fact the difficulty in adopting this paradigm for psychotherapy is neatly if inadvertently reflected in Andersen's suggestion, discussed in Chapter 3, that "maybe we should encourage only those who are currently able to listen and see each other without interrupting to come to "therapy" and let those who are not ready to do so eventually join later" (1993, p. 310). I have argued that this is totally unrealistic given the clinical contexts in which we are often required to work and points to a therapeutic perspective that is overly in thrall to the hermeneutic model of dialogue unfolding against a background consensus. Unfortunately it also introduces an element of cautiousness into clinical practice which contrasts with the adventurous spirit of first order systemic approaches that were so effective in extending the reach of psychotherapy to those not readily amenable to traditional insight oriented therapy.

Here one is reminded notably of the first order therapist Salvador Minuchin (1967, 1974) who had no hesitation in introducing new ways of communicating to families with little capacity to "listen and see each other without interrupting" for example, by taking some family members behind the one way screen to observe the rest of the family communicating and thus, in a sense, forcing them into a less action oriented mode of being in the session. I have argued that that some of these therapeutic strategies involving creative use of the one way screen could be seen as precursors of Andersen's reflecting team approach. However in the first and second order split that subsequently took hold in systemic discourse, this continuity at the methodological level is effectively obscured and this in turn risks alienating contemporary clinicians from the richness of their methodological inheritance. Within this ideological split we lose sight of the fact that the key issue to address is one of difference between two modes of enquiry, a natural scientific logic of enquiry favoured by the first order approach and a hermeneutic logic of enquiry favoured by second order therapy where explanatory engagement with objectified processes from an outsider perspective is privileged by the former and interpretative engagement with subjectivity and meaning from an insider perspective is privileged by the latter. I am arguing that the challenge for contemporary psychotherapy is that of resolving the tension between these two paradigms in a way that secures what is best in both therapeutic traditions.

Within the human and social sciences, Habermas is not alone in voicing unease at the manner in which the hermeneutical tradition seeks to resolve the tension between the explanatory and interpretative paradigms. The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1981) and as well as the German philosopher Karl Otto- Apel (1980) share similar reservations to those of Habermas and between them they articulate a perspective that might loosely be termed critical hermeneutics (Thompson, 1981). For Ricoeur the challenge is that of going beyond the "ruinous dichotomy" inherited from Dilthey between explanation and understanding and the conviction that an explanatory attitude belongs exclusively to the natural sciences (1981, p. 92). In his view hermeneutics can no longer regard issues of method as secondary and derivative which happens in Gadamer's work. However Ricoeur is also keen to preserve and defend the richness of the hermeneutical contribution. He concludes that it is important not to abolish differences between hermeneutics and the critique of ideology as proposed by Habermas: "Each has a privileged place and, if I may say so, different regional

preferences: on the one hand an attention to cultural heritages, focused most decidedly on the theory of the text; on the otherhand, a theory of institutions and of phenomena of domination, focused on the analysis of reifications and alienations" (1981, p. 100). He also cautions against "deceptive antinomies" between the two perspectives, a theme which is echoed in Harrington's (2001) suggestion that the difference between Gadamer and Habermas can be exaggerated in a way that distracts attention from significant agreement between them on the nature and structure of understanding (p. 23). However from Harrington's perspective one difference which does matter is Habermas' wish to restore argumentative parity of interpreters with their subjects and to rectify Gadamer's privileging of the authority of the subject over the interpreter. In a similar vein Warnke (1987) reflects that perhaps Gadamer did not take Dilthey's fear of relativism seriously enough: "The question is whether the reflection that evolves out of history and experience is enough or whether some methodological assurance of its reliability is required" (p. 34). But Warnke is also keen to defend what she regards as Gadamer's wish to retain the concept of reason in his work: "If others have used the insight into historicity to jettison the concept of reason itself, Gadamer does not. Our historical situatedness does not only limit what we can know with certainty; it can also teach us how to remember and integrate what we must not forget" (1987, p. 174).

From the above it is clear that whilst differences between Habermas and Gadamer are more nuanced than might at first appear, there are important distinctions between their positions. Here it should be emphasized that my intention is not to take issue with the potential contribution of hermeneutical thinking to psychotherapeutic discourse as such. If anything it is arguable that this contribution has not been adequately explored. My argument is rather than any such consideration must also take careful note of other perspectives within philosophy and social theory that not only criticize but also supplement the hermeneutical perspective and thereby move the debate forward. In Habermas' writings he proposes a model of critical hermeneutical enquiry that follows Weber's synthesis of explanation and understanding. Unlike Weber however this takes the form of a critical social theory with an emancipatory interest, where explanation and understanding are inherently connected in the process of self reflection. I am proposing that this methodological integration of explanation and understanding provides a more realistic model for the clinical challenges of psychotherapy and one that is more appropriately attuned to the particular object domain in which psychotherapy operates.

In addition Habermas' grounding of his work in a theory of communicative action and communicative ethics serves as an anchor for reformulating ethical debate in psychotherapy in line with the relational ethos of contemporary practice. Both of these arguments concerning the potential contribution of Habermasian thinking to psychotherapy will be taken up and developed in Part 111.

Habermas' dialogue with Foucault

Alongside Habermas' dialogue with the hermeneutical tradition, a second deeply significant strand of debate in his work is his engagement with the post-structuralist theory of Michel Foucault. We have seen that alongside hermeneutics, Foucauldian thinking has also impacted significantly on what might loosely be termed the postmodernist perspective in contemporary psychotherapy. In what follows I begin with an outline of key aspects of Foucauldian thinking, with an emphasis on those that connect with psychotherapeutic discourse. I then draw on Habermas' critique of Foucault in the context of considering Foucauldian influences in contemporary psychotherapy. In essence my argument is that the limitation of Foucault's theory to which Habermas draws attention, in particular that relating to moral/ethical considerations, is also evident in psychotherapeutic perspectives that draw their inspiration from Foucault.

The post-structuralist theory of Michel Foucault

Whilst the philosophy of Kant provides a common reference point for Foucault and Habermas, it is their very different approaches to recasting the Kantian project of critique which crucially sets them apart (Owen, 1999). For Habermas the central feature of Kant's critical project resides in its recognition of the limits of reason and at the same time its preservation of the critical transcendental capacity of reason to ground claims to truth and normative appropriateness. We have already considered key aspects of Habermas' reformulation of Kantian philosophy of consciousness in terms of a theory of intersubjectivity, focused on reconstructing the rational structure of communication orientated to understanding and agreement. For Foucault (1984, 1996) on the other hand the key challenge of Kantian philosophy is that of taking up a critical attitude towards the limits of the present and it is this critical ethos which he sees as guiding his own

work. Foucault also observes that within Kantian philosophy there is a slippage from this critical ethos towards the more formal concept of critique as that which focuses on the apriori conditions of knowledge and experience. He sees his own historical analyses as reversing this trend and reinstating the conception of enlightenment as a critical attitude. His intention is "to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression" (1984, p. 45). His method of conducting this critique, he terms "archaeological":

> Archaeological – and not transcendental- in the sense that it will not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge or all possible moral action but will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think and do as so many historical events. And this critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. (1984, p. 46)

In his seminal text *The Archaeology of Knowledge* ([1969]1972), Foucault offers a detailed retrospective formulation of his archaeological method, which he develops in three historical works written in the 1960s; his doctoral thesis, *The History of Madness* ([1961]2006), *The Birth of the Clinic* ([1963]1973) and *The Order of Things* ([1966]1970). In a subsequent work on the history of the prison, *Discipline and Punish* ([1975]1977) his closely related genealogical method emerges more clearly. In all of these works, Foucault systematically seeks to demonstrate that the structures we think of as immutable have in fact changed over time and have not always existed. He sees us as profoundly historical beings that produce forms of knowledge also governed by history. There is no universal template of order but rather each historical phase requires critical reflection and archaeological investigation in order to identify those patterns of order which it encapsulates and through which relations of power and social regulation operate.

Foucault's archaeology is closely linked, firstly with the idea that language is a source of thinking in its own right and secondly with the idea that in any given historical phase there are implicit rules that restrict the range of thinking (Gutting, 2005, pp. 32-3). Going beyond obvious constraints of grammar and logic which render certain formulations meaningless, the archaeologist of thought focuses on deeper constraints which make certain things unthinkable. Whilst we may now think of "madness" as

mental illness, for example, Foucault's archaeological perspective reconstructs considerable differences in how it was thought about in previous historical periods. His concern is not so much with a history of ideas as it is with the underlying structures that form the context for these ideas. Here his analyses, particularly those in the early works ([1963]1973, [1966]1970) connect with structuralist methodology, notably that of De Saussure ([1916]1966) and Levi- Strauss ([1958]1963). However from The Archaeology of Knowledge onwards he was keen to distance himself from structuralism. Where he diverges significantly is in the historical thrust of his work and his concern with differences and discontinuities that arise. Rejecting the structuralist idea that the linguistic phenomenon of discourse is autonomous and constitutive of reality, he shifted towards social analysis. Here his genealogical perspective also develops to complement his archaeology as he searches for a method of causal explanation of changes and discontinuities between systems of thought. As this happens the theme of power emerges into the foreground as the engine of change, which not only constrains but also produces new forms of knowledge.

Central to Foucault's thinking is the conceptualization of knowledge in terms of a power struggle that is played out in various social discourses. In his theory "discourses" can be compared to the paradigm in the writings of Kuhn (1970) in that they structure the domain of knowledge (Delanty, 2005, pp. 110-11). He suggests that in modern society all spheres of life are the focus of investigation, surveillance and regulation in and through discourse and his early studies included the ground breaking historical analysis of the rise of the discourse of psychiatry as madness becomes increasingly absorbed into the realm of medicine ([1961]2006). In these early works the impression given is that of power inhering in institutions such as the prison, hospital or asylum and the sense of individuals' powerlessness in the face of such effective and diffuse forms of social control. As his thinking evolved this sense of power contributing only negatively to the historical formation of subjects gives way to its conceptualization as a more fluid entity, a pervasive human dynamic determining our relations with others. Power is not just about constraint, it can also be productive. It is not possessed but rather exercised and it "exists only when it is put into action" (1982, p. 219). Foucault also believed that where there is power there is always resistance and the element of freedom in his understanding of power gains prominence ([1976]1980, pp. 95-6). Although domination

may be a part of some power relations, in itself the exercise of power is not synonymous with domination or violence (1982, p. 220).

For Foucault a key theme is that modern forms of power are constructed around a discourse of subjectivity or individuality. The subjectification of "Man" is both the creation of power, the means by which power is mobilized and is also of relatively recent origin. This is a key element in his critique of humanist discourse with its emphasis on principles of individual autonomy, self determination and self mastery, perceived as grounded in a universal, timeless human nature (1984). For Foucault it is "a source of profound relief to think that man is only a recent invention, a figure not yet two centuries old, a wrinkle in our knowledge, and that he will disappear again as soon as that knowledge has discovered a new form" (Foucault, 1970. p. xxiii, quoted by Delanty, 2005, p. 110). Given the Kantian humanistic ethos that pervades psychotherapeutic engagement with moral/ethical themes, in particular the emphasis on respect for personal autonomy, self determination and so on, as discussed in Chapter 2, Foucault's critique of humanism is especially pertinent in the present context. It is also deeply significant for Habermas' critique of Foucault which will be considered shortly.

Whilst in very simple terms we might describe the humanistic stance as that which focuses on the subject of "man" and places this subject at the centre of life, Foucault observes that what is called humanism has also varied greatly in terms of its content and the values it has promoted: "at least since the 17th century, what has been called humanism has always been obliged to lean on certain conceptions of man borrowed from religion, science or politics. Humanism serves to colour and to justify the conceptions of man to which it is after all, obliged to take recourse" (1984, p. 44). This critique is similar to that cited earlier in this study concerning the formal emptiness of the Kantian conception of morality and the likelihood of it therefore becoming a basis for conformity to whatever duties a particular society might prescribe.[1] For Kant, "man" is the transcendental arbiter of reason but for Foucault "man" cannot be set apart from history in this way. His conception of the subject sees it as having no particular unity or universal essence. On the contrary, throughout his writings he is deeply preoccupied with the complex historically unfolding processes in and through which social discourses shape the subject. In his later work which has a particular resonance for

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[1] Chapter 4 p. 95-6.

psychotherapy, he extends this thinking on the subjectification of "man" to a view of sexuality that sees it in strictly historical terms ([1976]1980, 1985, 1986).

Foucault's perspective on psychotherapy

In The History of Sexuality Vol.1 (1980) Foucault seeks to demonstrate that power and sexuality are intricately linked and that power serves to construct sexuality. As we know it, sexuality is the result of an ongoing process of monitoring, classification and medicalization of this domain and his focus is on the way in which sex, desire and power thus intermingle. Medical experts, psychologists and other specialists use knowledge to separate normality and pathology and in that sense regulate and shape sexuality. From his perspective modern society is typified by an ongoing expansion of discussion of sex, which becomes the focus for our contemporary concern with personal identity and with the true self. Sexuality becomes the most revealing sign of our true selves. People are preoccupied with the cultivation of the self in and through sex in a way that for Foucault amounts to a self- policing of sexuality.

Foucault regards the Roman Catholic confessional as an historical marker in this movement towards the self-regulation of sex. This was later reconstituted as a scientific discourse and with this came the creation of networks of knowledge and power including the emergence of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. Instead of sex being regulated by external sources it becomes much more a matter of internal attitudinal discipline and he sees psychoanalysis and psychotherapy as key instances of this trend towards self-policing. Information divulged in this setting is treated as liberation from repression and the means to freedom. He traces the historical trajectory of this idea from its beginnings in Christian confession and penance and concludes that the subjectification of "man" as a confessing entity has emerged through centuries of coercion (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982; Foucault, 1977, 1980). Hence his critique of the humanistic orientation of psychoanalysis towards personal autonomy achieved through the bringing to consciousness of what has been repressed. For Foucault (1980) this Freudian perspective on the repression of sexuality is extremely problematic. It is not so much a case of the person discovering their true self and of sexuality being set free when an expert is consulted but more a case of the person being subjected to a socially constructed "regime of truth".

In effect Foucault sees psychotherapeutic discourse as part of a structure of cultural conventions in and through which sex is subjected to public scrutiny and through which psychotherapy becomes another means of social control (Elliott, 2001). His analysis of the Freudian perspective on the Oedipus complex underlines this point. For Freud, Oedipus' search for the truth of his identity can be compared to the task of psychoanalysis in searching for the truth of identity hidden far from conscious awareness and tied to the dimension of sexuality and desire. The oedipal triangle of father/mother/child, which for Freud is the key metaphor for understanding the individual, is in Foucauldian thinking a conceptual instrument used by the psychoanalyst for governing individuals. He does not regard the Oedipus complex as reflecting any particular truth but rather as an instrument of compulsion which forces desire into a conventional family structure (Bernauer and Mahon, 1994). Oedipus is in effect an instrument of power which society, the family and political power establish over the individual within a framework that fuses subjectivity, sexuality and truth. [2]

I have elaborated aspects of Foucauldian thinking in some detail, not least his focus on the links between psychoanalysis/psychotherapy and social control since this is a subject of considerable significance to which I shall return in Part 111, in the context of a more general dialogue between social theory and psychotherapy. Foucault's theory unquestionably offers a useful frame in which to think about the intermingling of power and knowledge in the psychotherapeutic field; the political battles for supremacy between different strands of psychotherapy; the monopolization of zones of expertise such as the "unconscious" by certain groups; the development of exclusive therapeutic language games to stake out specialist territory and to underscore difference from other approaches and so on. Critical engagement with these and other phenomena undoubtedly owes a huge debt to Foucauldian thinking. But there is also a weakness in Foucault's critique of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy which is consistent with a more general criticism of his work, namely that he is too quick to make the assumption that people are the passive recipients of discourse:

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[2] In his essay, "Against interiority: Foucault's struggle with psychoanalysis", Whitebook (2005), observes that "Foucault could never successfully exorcise the spectre of Freud. He kept returning to Freud throughout his career" (p. 312). Thus, in Whitebook's view, whilst Foucault may appear to have refuted the claims of psychoanalysis in *The history of sexuality, Vol.1*, his relationship to Freudian thinking and practice was much more complex and conflicted than this might indicate:

> In Foucault's approach to sexuality it is discourse which produces human experience rather than experience (psychic dispositions, emotional desires, personal biographies) producing the discourse. The strength of Foucault's position is that he underlines the extent to which individuals in defining themselves as sexual subjects become fixed in relation to symbolic discourses and social prohibitions. The making of sexual identities, says Foucault, is always interwoven with a mode of social control. However the weakness of this standpoint is that it bypasses the psychic makeup of the individual so that issues of agency, knowledgeability, desire and emotion are not analytically addressed. (Elliott, 2001, pp. 92-3)

There is a downplaying of the complexity of psychic makeup and human experience and the individual as a by-product of social discourse overshadows consideration of the individual as capable of critical reflection. In Elliott's view this reductive and one dimensional tendency also leads Foucault to a simplistic linkage of therapy and the confessional in which the complexity of the therapist's conceptualization of human experience and how it is structured internally is completely lost. Whilst this is undoubtedly a weakness in Foucault's critique of psychotherapy, more importantly it is central to an understanding of the difficulties that arise when constructive efforts are made to integrate Foucault's critical thinking into therapeutic approaches as happens in contemporary post-structuralist/ postmodernist influenced psychotherapy, which I shall consider shortly.

Whilst Foucault viewed his work as opening a space for individuals to experiment with their self- definition, another widely held criticisms of his work is the neglect of the self's relations with others (Thompson, 1999, p. 199). It is true that in his later work, Foucault turned increasingly to the subject of the ethical formation of the self in the context of a general move towards a less pessimistic and more flexible view of human agency. Thus in his genealogy of the modern sexual subject for example, processes of subjectification are no longer presented as strictly coercive in the way they might have been in his early work. Power relations are also seen to manifest themselves in productive discursive practices (Conway, 1999, p. 65) Foucault's engagement with the ethical formation of the self is also evident in his later analyses of ancient Greek and Roman views on sexuality and the self (1984, 1985). Since the progression of this later work was cut short by his death, it is unclear how he might have developed his thinking about an ethics of truth as a way of living. Nonetheless it is noteworthy that his

formulation of ethics is one that is very closely tied to aesthetics, where the primary criterion would seem to be the will "to live a beautiful life and to leave to others memories of a beautiful existence" (Foucault, 1983, p. 230). As White (1988) observes, Foucault's ethics of aesthetic self-formation have "the unavoidable connotation of solitude" (p. 151). In Foucault's work the self appears primarily as a monadic entity shut off from emotional intimacy and from communal ties. Foucault's concern was to loosen the grip of what holds people captive. His work is concerned with,

> disrupting certainties, with acting with untimely deliberation upon the present, with finding ways to move beyond our current moral certainties; its utopian telos, its regulatory idea, being the possibility that we might make of ourselves not creatures that conform to our knowledge of ourselves but something like works of art. (Osborne, 1999, p. 57)

Amongst feminist writers, Foucauldian theory has been the focus for much debate and differences of perspective on its potential contribution to feminist approaches (Hekman, 1996). In her largely positive engagement with the potential in Foucault's later work to contribute to feminist thinking, Sawicki (1996) admits that the relationship between Foucault and feminism has not always been entirely happy and that criticism of his work emanates from both sympathetic and more hostile camps with most feminists pointing to Foucault's androcentric gender blindness. Whilst some do not regard this as a fatal flaw in his work, others believe it contaminates his entire project. Hartsock (1990), who falls into the latter category argues that his post-structuralist theory cannot provide a theory of power that might apply to women. Amongst other things she observes that because power in Foucault's conceptualization is not seen in terms of an individual dominating another individual or in terms of one group dominating others, his theory makes it very difficult to locate domination including that within gender relations: "his account only makes room for abstract individuals not women, men or workers" (1990, pp. 168-9). This critique of the implicit abstract individualistic bias in Foucault's theory is integral to an understanding of the limitation of Foucauldian thinking in connecting with the relational ethos of psychotherapeutic discourse. I will argue that it is also integral to an understanding of the problematic continuity between Foucauldian influenced psychotherapy and modernist formulations in terms of their individualistic moral/ethical bias.

Throughout this study much emphasis has been placed on the vigorously relational ethos of contemporary psychotherapy and on the disjuncture between this ethos and the highly individualistic orientation of traditional psychotherapeutic moral/ethical formulations. Arguably the most important distinction between Habermas and Foucault from the perspective of psychotherapy is therefore Habermas' insistence on entering moral/ethical territory in a way that Foucault steadfastly resisted. This applies notably to Habermas' project to detach humanist ethics from the Kantian standpoint of the philosophy of consciousness and the paradigm of the individual. His communicative reconstruction of Kantian ethics is, in Fraser's words, "an attempt to divest the humanist notion of autonomy of some of its Cartesian trappings (its "monologism" and its ahistorical formalism) while preserving its efficacy as an instrument of social criticism" (1985, p. 172). Habermas engages with communicative and relational themes that are of urgent concern in everyday psychotherapeutic practice: "unlike Foucault, he is a committed intersubjectivist whose theory depends significantly on the idea that our identities are first formed and then sustained by our relations to others" (Thompson, 1999, p. 205). These and other distinctions have fuelled the debate between Habermas and Foucault, which I shall now consider in terms of its relevance for psychotherapeutic themes and concerns.

The Habermas/ Foucault controversy

As in the encounter with hermeneutics, that between Habermasian and Foucauldian thinking has been the focus for much debate in philosophical discourse (Ashenden and Owen, 1999a, Flyvbjerg, 1998, Ingram, 2005, Kelly, 1994a). Although Habermas and Foucault did meet at least once, they never debated in any formal sense and therefore the "debate" as such is one that has largely unfolded in the years since Foucault's death in 1984. In the view of some commentators it has been skewed in Habermas' direction because of this fact (Kelly 1994b). Issue has also been taken with the tone of debate set by Habermas, which in the view of some, takes the form of an uncharitable polemic (Ashendon and Owen, 1999b). Habermas' Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (1987b) which includes a lengthy consideration of Foucault was published after his death and therefore received no reply. However the controversy started some years earlier and famously included Habermas labeling Foucault a "Young Conservative" (1981b). Habermas' accusation is that Foucault's work aims less at a resolution of the

problems of modern societies than a radical rejection of modernity whilst at the same time presupposing some of the categories of modernity which it claims to have surpassed. Regardless of its aspirations, it is in Habermas' view at best modern and at worst antimodern (Fraser, 1985).

In essence the criticisms of Foucauldian theory presented by Habermas (1987b) are that the overall coherence of this historical approach is undermined

> (1) by the involuntary *presentism* of a historiography that remains hermeneutically stuck in its starting situation; (2) by the unavoidable *relativism* of an analysis related to the present that can understand itself only as a context-dependent practical enterprise; (3) by the arbitrary *partisanship* of a criticism that cannot account for its own normative foundations. (p. 276, his emphasis)

For Habermas, Foucault's approach leads to a "historiography that is narcissistically oriented to the standpoint of the historian and instrumentalizes the contemplation of the past for the needs of the present" (ibid., p. 278). He also objects to Foucault's work on the basis that it fuses the situation of being context-dependent with being context-bound whilst he sees his own work as using criteria of rationality that are context-transcending. Furthermore because Foucault cannot account for the normative foundations of his critique he cannot answer the question "why fight?" As Ashendon and Owen (1999b) observe, this latter point is one that is likely to be accepted at least partially even by sympathetic readers of Foucault. Habermas' criticism is of course based on his view that it is necessary to provide a general answer to the question "why fight?" and to do so by offering a grounding for universal norms that can in turn offer an answer to the question as to why we might resist oppressive regimes of power. As we have seen Habermas addresses this challenge by seeking to reconstruct the universal presuppositions of rational argumentation. Whether one accepts the terms on which his criticism of Foucault is presented is thus closely linked with whether one accepts the cogency of his own contribution.

On the other side of this encounter Foucault professes to be a little more in agreement with Habermas than the latter is with him, but he has difficulty with what he regards as the utopian tendencies in Habermas' work. Instead he speaks of finding it difficult to believe in a society without relations of power and that such relations are not something bad in themselves:

> I am quite interested in [Habermas'] work, although I know he completely disagrees with my views. While I, for my part, tend to be a little more in agreement with what he says, I have always had a problem insofar as he gives communicative relations this place which is so important and, above all, a function that I would call 'utopian'. (Foucault, 1997, p. 298, quoted by Owen, 1999, p. 39)

What for Foucault is "utopian" is for Habermas a regulative idea against which actual communicative contexts suffused by relations of power can be evaluated. Contrary to Foucault's implication, Habermas does not believe in a society without relations of power and in this respect there appears a kernel of common ground between the two theorists from which a more creative dialogue might be possible but which is not immediately apparent from their rather polarized exchange. This perspective on the Habermas/ Foucault encounter as potentially representing less oppositional, more complementary positions is one that is taken up by some commentators (Ingram, 2005; Strydom, 2000; Thompson,1999; Tully, 1999). Amongst other things, the shared Kantian reference point of both theorists is offered as a supportive framework for this argument:

> Foucault's approach aims to enable us to think and act differently by means of critical histories that exhibit the singularity, contingency and arbitrary constraints of our forms of subjectivity. Habermas' approach aims to discover a universal form of the subject, the decentered subject implicit in our forms of subjectivity, by means of universal pragmatics and development logic and to use it as a regulative idea to evaluate existing practices. These two philosophical orientations are not necessarily opposed. They could complement one another; one clearing away the contingent and the other explicating the universal … On Foucault's interpretation, Kant saw the two critiques in this complementary way…. (Tully, 1999, pp. 107-8)

For Osborne (1999) however, it is not so much a matter of uncovering complementarity between Habermas and Foucault but one of accepting that the similarities and dissimilarities between them are "just not all that interesting" (p. 57). From all of this we might conclude that it is possible for psychotherapeutic discourse to engage in an exploratory dialogue with both philosophical perspectives without undue concern for the finer detail of the controversy between them. But this is precisely the tendency within psychotherapeutic discourse which I have already criticized in this study, namely a simplistic and uncritical engagement with philosophical and sociological theories which isolates them from the complex debates to which they belong. The richness of

Foucault's insights including his critique of psychotherapy is beyond question but my earlier discussion also raised concerns that are especially relevant given contemporary attempts to integrate Foucauldian thinking into psychotherapeutic practice based approaches.[3] These are firstly that his theory reveals a reductionist tendency that downplays the complexity of psychic make up and of human experience. Secondly it neglects the self's relations with others, a view that is crystallized in Hartsock's (1990) feminist based critique that Foucault's theory of power only makes room for "abstract individuals". On closer inspection Habermas' critique of Foucault also holds much relevance for psychotherapy. This relates in particular to the charge of a "cryptonormative" allegiance to humanism which he levels at Foucault (1987b, p. 276) and which I will argue can also be detected in contemporary Foucauldian influenced psychotherapeutic approaches.

In essence Habermas' reference to "cryptonormativity" focuses attention on the unacknowledged appeal by Foucault to a hidden framework of norms and ideals relating to autonomy and creativity, which reveals the residual humanism of Foucault's own theory, notwithstanding his overt opposition to the traditions of humanism (Conway, 1999; Fraser, 1983). Why we might ask does Foucault appear to side more with prisoners than wardens or with sinners than confessors in his studies? (Conway, p. 77). For Habermas the answer lies in a silent normative commitment that includes a "picture of an undamaged intersubjectivity" (1987b, p. 337) and which cannot be accounted for within the terms of Foucault's own theory given the radical nature of his critique of reason. As Fraser (1983) observes, the unmasking of coercive power in his historical analyses draws its political force from "the reader's familiarity with a commitment to modern ideals of autonomy, dignity and human rights" (p. 59). From Habermas' perspective these analyses are unable to be genuinely critical in the absence of explicit normative standards against which discourses can be judged.

Throughout Foucault's work the precise grounding and extent of his rejection of humanism remains ambiguous and has given rise to divergent views amongst his interpreters. Is he rejecting the Cartesian philosophical underpinning of humanism whilst holding on to the substance of humanist ideals or is he claiming that humanism is intrinsically undesirable and a formula for domination "tout court" (Fraser, 1985).

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[3] See Chapter 3 p. 71.

Fraser observes that Foucault did not have one consistent position and she finds Habermas' critique insufficiently nuanced in this respect.[4] Nonetheless she is sympathetic to the Habermasian conclusion that in the absence of a "nonhumanist ethical paradigm, Foucault cannot make good his normative case against humanism" (p. 182). This lacuna in Foucault's work and the Habermasian charge of cryptonormative allegiance to humanism, underscore the immense potential for confusion in any attempt to apply Foucauldian thinking in psychotherapeutic contexts. This is particularly the case given psychotherapy's own troubled engagement with moral/ethical considerations as outlined in Part 1 and given what we might now describe, in Habermasian terminology, as psychotherapy's own tendency towards cryptonormative allegiance to humanistic values notably in those approaches that align themselves with the postmodernist banner.[5]

Implications for psychotherapy

In my earlier account of contemporary trends in systemic psychotherapy in Chapter 3, reference was made to the impact of Foucauldian thinking, notably in the hugely influential narrative therapy approach of the Australian therapist Michael White (1987, 1989, 1990). We have seen that this therapeutic approach takes up Foucault's thinking about the intimate relationship of power and knowledge, the way in which power is exercised through knowledge and the idea of dominant discourses which censor and marginalize alternate discourses and ways of thinking. Using the metaphor of narrative, White draws on these ideas to explore the way that our dominant stories about ourselves and our experience are shaped by familial, cultural and social contexts and relationships and the way in which these stories can restrain us from thinking about and knowing other stories about ourselves. In White's work, therapy becomes an arena in which dominant narratives are deconstructed and alternative stories reconstructed which allow space for difference and change.

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[4] Fraser (1985. p. 167) cites Hoy (1981) as an example of those interpretations that have seen Foucault as "a merely conceptual or philosophical rejectionist of humanism" without giving up on the critical core of humanism. In Fraser's view this interpretation of Foucault is incomplete and unsatisfactory. She argues that his work reveals a stronger version of rejectionism and cites Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) as an example of that interpretation which see Foucault as a "substantive, normative rejectionist of humanist values". This latter reading is – or at least should be in Fraser's view- the real focus of Habermas' critique.
[5] See Chapter 3 pp. 69-73.

White's application of what might very loosely be termed Foucauldian thinking to his engagement with individual lived experience in the therapeutic context is undoubtedly highly selective and idiosyncratic. However as Flaskas (2002) observes, there is no doubt that White himself considers this application entirely harmonious with the spirit of Foucault's project. Furthermore, critical engagement with this aspect of White's work has been almost entirely absent in the therapy literature despite the extensive influence of his narrative therapy. Other approaches within, what is loosely termed the postmodernist perspective in systemic psychotherapy that were also discussed in Chapter 3, whilst not engaging directly with Foucault in the manner of White, similarly make considerable use of thinking that is heavily influenced by Foucault, for example in their emphasis on the historical and cultural relativity of knowledge, the centrality of discourse in the social construction of subjectivity and their rejection of the idea of an inner, true or essential nature to be discovered in psychotherapy or elsewhere.[6] However as in White's work, the tendency is towards a superficial and uncritical engagement with their theoretical sources.

The work of the Australian family therapist Flaskas is noteworthy in reflecting unease with this uncritical and idiosyncratic engagement by systemic psychotherapy writers with philosophical and social theoretical source material. In her text, Family Therapy beyond Postmodernism (2002), Flaskas systematically maps out the various strands of contemporary postmodernist influence in systemic psychotherapy and their theoretical roots notably in social constructionist and Foucauldian thinking. Whilst Flaskas mostly steers clear of direct critique of these theoretical influences, she does address the difficulties that arise in attempting to mould them to psychotherapeutic concerns. Here she is particularly concerned with their limitation in addressing the richness and complexity of human experience as encountered in therapeutic practice. Flaskas is prominent within a group of contemporary systemic writers who challenge the traditional opposition to psychoanalysis within systemic psychotherapy and who promote the selective integration of psychoanalytic thinking into systemic discourse.[7] Not surprisingly her critique of postmodernist influence in systemic discourse takes her in the direction of psychoanalysis in search of a more satisfactory engagement with the complex psychic and relational processes that shape human experience consciously and

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[6] See Chapter 3 pp. 69-73.
[7] See Introduction p. 2.

unconsciously. Here she also encounters postmodernist influence and quotes Sass's (1992, p. 178) critique of the "thinning or hollowing-out of existence" evident in such influence.

Whilst Flaskas' critique is deeply rooted in psychotherapeutic discourse and debates therein and is not directed at the post-structuralist theory of Foucault per se, it is interesting nonetheless to make connections with Elliott's (2001) social theoretical critique of Foucault mentioned above. Elliott's argument relates to the reductionist tendencies in Foucault's work which lead to a downplaying of the complexity of psychic make up and human experience. In their sympathetic account of psychoanalysis "navigating the postmodern turn", Elliott and Spezzano (1996, p. 74) similarly agree with the criticism that unconscious and libidinal processes are rendered mere products of social processes of power and knowledge in Foucault's work. It is difficult not to conclude that this is a major limitation in any attempt to integrate Foucauldian thinking into psychotherapy and arguably one that is inadequately addressed in current debates given the reluctance to engage more critically and in a less formulaic manner with philosophical and social theoretical sources of inspiration.

Given Foucault's critique of the psychotherapeutic enterprise as implicated in disciplinary power, the enthusiastic adoption of his thinking or derivatives of his thinking within the post-structuralist/postmodernist paradigm in psychotherapy is not without irony. This point is mostly obscured by the modernist/postmodernist split in psychotherapeutic discourse which presents the latter in terms of a radical break with the former and by implication a radical break with all its associated difficulties. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 3, paradoxically postmodernist influenced therapeutic approaches are also routinely presented with an overlay of humanistic values emphasizing principles of autonomy and respect for the uniqueness of each client's "narrative truth". These individually oriented traditional humanistic values, albeit packaged in the contemporary language of the narrative metaphor, either remain implicit or are presented uncritically as the normative foundation of postmodernist influenced practice devoid of recognition of their modernist credentials. Here it is interesting to note the criticism leveled at the narrative approach in systemic therapy by Salvador Minuchin (1967, 1974) whose own work was so influential in the early development of the family therapy movement. This criticism is neatly summarized in the title of his article, "Where

is the family in narrative family therapy?" (1998) and raises the concern that a renewed focus on the individual story and on individual experience in narrative therapy may dilute the vigorously relational ethos that has typified systemic psychotherapy. This ethos is represented graphically in the choice of seeing family members together with a strong therapeutic focus on the here and now of relational processes. At the very least this raises a concern that what we might describe as the postmodern humanist stance in psychotherapy infused with individualistic values is not simply out of step with the relational ethos of contemporary clinical practice. It may actively dilute or undermine this ethos in subtle and silent ways that are unavailable to debate given the impoverished quality of current moral/ ethical deliberations and the restrictive focus on professional ethics.

Beyond the Habermas/ Foucault debate

In this study, I am raising the concern that postmodernist influenced therapeutic approaches appear unable to transcend the difficulties of an earlier positivist era in conceptualizing the normative/ethical dimension of psychotherapy. I am arguing for an engagement with alternative sources of inspiration that might help address this difficulty and in particular the difficulty in moving beyond the abstract individualistic bias of traditional moral/ethical formulations. From the perspective of this study it is deeply relevant that at the heart of Habermas' critique of Foucault, is a concern regarding the silent normative commitment to traditional humanist values which cannot be accounted for within the terms of Foucault's own theory. To borrow Conway's (1999, p. 76) words, Habermas' is "certain the game of normativity is best played in the light of day", and it is this conviction that makes his work so relevant to the concerns of psychotherapy in engaging with the moral/ethical challenge of therapeutic practice. Notwithstanding the undoubted richness of Foucault's theory, the lacuna in terms of articulating the normative foundations of his work limits its potential relevance to psychotherapeutic practice. My conclusion is that on balance, Habermas' persistent engagement with relational themes in the context of his communicative reformulation of Kantian ethics ultimately renders his contribution more relevant to the contemporary challenges of psychotherapy.

This is not to suggest that Habermas' own work is without problems. As Fraser (1985) observes in her discussion of the Habermas/Foucault controversy, the ideal of autonomy in Habermas' communicative reformulation of Kantian ethics also remains vulnerable to feminist critique such as that of Gilligan (1982) cited earlier. This critique contrasts the Kantian ethic of justice emphasizing rights, autonomy and so on with an ethic of care and responsibility. Here the emphasis is on compassion, connectedness and context sensitivity. We have noted that Habermas considers his project compatible with this perspective but concern about the abstraction of his theory persists:

> Habermas is often criticized, even by sympathetic readers, for not attending adequately to the role in reciprocal communication of passion, affect and all other non-reasonable elements of human intercourse. The project of universal pragmatics is often described as promising, yet sterile, as pertaining more appropriately to angels than to the mortals. (Conway, 1999, p. 75)

From the practice based perspective of psychotherapy this obviously presents challenges. Paradoxically it can also be a focus for creative exchange as Steuerman (2000) suggests in her dialogue between Habermas, Lyotard and Kleinian psychoanalysis where she makes the case that Habermas' thinking can be supplemented by accounts of intersubjectivity that are more closely tied to an understanding of emotional life notably those offered by contemporary object relations psychoanalysis. Whilst Habermas lost interest in psychoanalysis as his own work developed, this potential for further creative exchange has been taken up and developed by Axel Honneth (1995) whose moral theory of recognition draws significantly on the object relations psychoanalytic thinking of Winnicott.

Within the tradition of critical social theory, Honneth's theory of recognition elaborates a theme which also plays an essential part in Habermas' theory of communicative ethics, and in so doing it brings this project closer to the practice based arenas of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in which psychotherapy operates. Within postmodernist discourse, developments in recent decades also merit attention. These relate, in particular, to the "ethical turn" in postmodernism which, as Honneth (2007) observes, presents a challenge to Habermas' theory. Although Foucault did not classify his work as "postmodernist" he played a major role in creating the conditions for subsequent developments in postmodernism. (Delanty, 2005, p. 110; Elliott and Spezzano, 1996, p. 74). We have noted that Foucault's work on ethics was cut short by

his death and it is important to consider the fate of ethics in the subsequent development of postmodernist thinking. The following chapter addresses this theme with particular reference to Zygmunt Bauman whose thinking also resonates in contemporary psychotherapeutic discourse. The chapter concludes with a consideration of Honneth's theory of recognition. Both contributions will be addressed in relation to Habermas' theory of communicative ethics and in terms of their relevance for moral/ethical debate in psychotherapy.

Chapter 6

Beyond Foucault and Habermas: Contributions from Bauman and Honneth

Throughout this study I am arguing for the reformulation of ethical debate in psychotherapy in terms that take account of contemporary engagement with relational themes. In particular I am arguing for an understanding of ethics that is more firmly rooted in processes of communication and to this end I engage in a dialogue with current themes in social and political theory that could potentially inform and enrich psychotherapeutic debates. Habermas' discourse ethics is at the centre of my endeavour to make links between psychotherapy and social theory as are the key debates in which he engaged with Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Foucault's post-structuralist thinking. In essence my argument thus far has been that the limitations of Gadamer's hermeneutics and Foucault's post-structuralism, which are underlined by Habermas, in particular those relating to moral/ethical considerations, are also evident in psychotherapeutic perspectives that draw their inspiration from these sources. In what follows I continue this dialogue between psychotherapy and social theory focusing on the postmodernist influenced work of Zygmunt Bauman and the critical theoretical perspective of Axel Honneth.

We have seen that contemporary psychotherapeutic discourse is significantly influenced by strands of hermeneutical, post-structuralist and postmodernist thinking. Whilst this influence has impacted on theoretical and clinical processes as discussed in Part 1, its impact on psychotherapeutic formulations of the ethical underpinning of clinical practice is less clear. On closer inspection much of what passes for new thinking on ethics within the postmodernist perspective in psychotherapy remains firmly anchored in the Kantian tradition of abstract individualism favoured by previous generations of "helping professionals". I have argued that this is deeply problematic. The individualistic ethos of this perspective fails to encapsulate the radical paradigm shift in contemporary psychotherapy from an exclusive focus on intrapsychic processes to one in which relational themes now dominate. This results in a disjuncture between ethical considerations and wider theoretical debate, as a consequence of which both domains

are deprived of creative input. Chapter 5 traced this problem back to the Foucauldian perspective informing much of what is loosely described as postmodernist thinking in psychotherapy.

From a psychotherapeutic perspective, areas of particular difficulty in Foucault's work include the tendency to downplay the complexity of psychic experience and neglect of the self's relations with others, its implicit abstract individualistic bias and the cryptonormative appeal to a humanist framework of norms and values which is the focus of Habermas' critique. Whilst Foucault's later work signalled a shift towards increased engagement with the ethical formation of the self, this endeavour was never fully developed. His post-structuralist theory nonetheless prepared the way for later developments in postmodernist thinking. From the perspective of this study, one of the most significant of these developments is the "ethical turn" in postmodernism that is notably represented in the work of Zygmunt Bauman. His work has an added significance in the present context since, as discussed earlier, some albeit limited attempts have been made to engage with his thinking in current ethical debate in psychotherapy.[1] For this reason I am privileging his work over other contributions that also reveal the ethical turn in postmodernist thinking, including that of Derrida (1978, 2005) who is similarly influenced by Levinas (1969, 1985, 1989)[2] or that reflected in the social postmodernist perspective of Nicholson and Seidman (1995).

In essence the argument which follows is that whilst Bauman's theory signals a welcome shift towards engagement with ethical themes, his reduction of the connection between the ethical and the political to something that can only be formulated in deeply personal terms means that any engagement with his thinking within psychotherapeutic discourse risks reinforcing the latter's individualistic tendencies. For this reason, I will argue that Bauman's work cannot offer psychotherapy an adequate framework for ethical debate and for challenging the persistent marginalization of ethical themes. The discussion then moves back to the tradition of critical theory and considers the third generation work of Honneth who has been influenced by developments within postmodernist thinking particularly relating to the politics of identity. I will argue that

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[1] Chapter 2 pp. 50-54.
[2] See Honneth (2007b) "The other of justice: Habermas and the ethical challenge of postmodernism", in *Disrespect: the normative foundations of critical theory*, Cambridge, Polity.

his contribution, which addresses the lacuna in Habermasian thinking with regard to issues of emotionality and personal identity, offers a helpful bridge for dialogue between critical social theory and psychotherapy and that in conjunction with Habermas' theory, it offers psychotherapy a way forward beyond the limitations of postmodernist thinking with regard to moral/ethical considerations.

Bauman's contribution to postmodernist thinking

Recent decades have witnessed a burgeoning interest in Zygmunt Bauman, a Polish born theorist of Jewish descent, who has come to be regarded as one of the leading social theorists of our times. Although his writings are prolific he has never aspired to create a cohesive theoretical system and one of the challenges which his work presents is a marked tendency to resist easy or concise classification (Tester, 2004). From the 1960s through to the 1980s his thinking evolved primarily in dialogue with Marxism and his publications from this time reflect his interest in class and social conflict (1972, 1973, 1982). He was especially influenced by the Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci (1971) and his work from this period is generally categorized as cultural Marxism.[3] From the 1980s however a significant shift towards the postmodernist perspective becomes evident and is represented notably in his text Legislators and Interpreters (1987). This was in line with his recognition that the Marxist framework in social theory was losing explanatory appeal as the world changed in profoundly important ways. These changes would later be encapsulated in his metaphor of the transition from solid to liquid modernity (2000b). Whilst others might continue to define him as postmodernist or even regard him as the preeminent theorist of the postmodern he has distanced himself from this designation, switching to the metaphor of solid and liquid modernity. He is especially wary of confusion that arises between the messenger and the message in the debate about postmodernism, commenting for example, that the very talk of postmodernity has been taken as a sign of joining the "postmodernist" camp: "I found myself in the company of bedfellows with whom I would rather not share a bed" (Bauman and Tester, 2001, p. 97; Tester, 2004, pp. 13-14).

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[3] Whilst subsequently letting go of the Marxist framework, Bauman has continued to describe himself as a socialist (Interview in The Guardian newspaper, 5th April 2003).

Like Freud, Bauman conceptualizes modernity in terms of a trade off between competing principles. Whilst For Freud these are the reality and pleasure principles, in Bauman's analysis the key terms of reference are security and freedom. In what he later terms modernity's solid form, freedom is significantly compromised to ensure the benefits of increased security. This entails the removal of unknowns and uncertainties through rules and regulation, categorization, hierarchical bureaucracy and so on. From Bauman's perspective the core issue in understanding modernity is this quest for order that forces anomalies into systems of classification holding immense authority. These dominant systems of classification are based on processes and patterns of compulsory inclusion and exclusion and tend to breed intolerance. Ambivalence is squeezed out and for Bauman the height of the modernist attack on ambivalence is unleashed with the holocaust. In Modernity and the Holocaust (1989) Bauman makes a strong case for a view of the latter as an expression of the instrumentalizing logic of modernity and the growing distance between action and responsibility. Born and executed in our modern rational society and thoroughly modern in its reliance on the ambitions of social engineering, he sees the holocaust as a problem of modernity.[4] Postmodernity on this account represents a waking up from the modern.[5] It is modernity without illusions, involving greater pluralism, openness and tolerance of ambivalence. But Bauman is keen not to pit postmodernity against modernity in any simplistic sense and whilst his work sometimes celebrates the postmodern, he also relates to it as an ambivalent development. In particular he recognizes that postmodern tolerance can easily degenerate into indifference and selfishness of those who have resources. In Modernity and Ambivalence (1991) socialism makes a reappearance towards the end as modernity's last stand, its counterculture, He accepts that refraining from social engineering comes at a cost and as Beilharz (2001, p. 12) observes, here we encounter some minimal common ground with Habermas, for Bauman agrees that modernity is an unfulfilled project. However for him the point is that it is unfulfilled because it is unfulfillable.[6]

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[4] As Delanty (2000, p. 52) observes, this thesis was originally proposed by Arendt (1964).

[5] In Bauman's writings this development can have either a strong or weak formulation, that is postmodernity can be seen as a shift within modernity or alternatively can be seen as something new.

[6] See also Smith (1999, pp. 175-8) for brief overview of the differences in perspective between Bauman and Habermas.

The metaphor of "liquidity" was introduced by Bauman in Liquid Modernity (2000b) and encapsulates what he describes as the flexible nature of the contemporary world. Whereas in "solid" modernity an individual's identity involved accepting sameness, conformity and in general "knowing your place" in the class system and so on, in liquid modernity this orderly life is dismantled. As security wanes, people's lives increasingly take on the imprint of individualization and individual choice much more than social class or other forms of social stratification becomes a key determinant of how life is conducted. In contrast to solid modernity, which aspired to a stable social order, liquid modernity implies a more flexible, adaptable order encompassing greater risk globally, socially and at the individual level. In liquid modernity engagement tends to be more short term, transient and less committed with the associated risk of significantly reduced social cohesion and solidarity. These changes reflect the transition from a postwar European world where security was of paramount importance to the contemporary era when the principle of freedom takes precedence. Central to these changes was the explosion of individualist and materialist values from the 1960s onwards. In the same way that the mines and steelworks formed the industrial working class in a previous historical era, now the seductions of the shopping mall shape the consumerist masses. This transition also coincides with the shift from a producer to a consumer society where freedom is now inextricably bound up with freedom to purchase and consume.

Bauman's work is compelling in its articulation of the concerns of the contemporary world. He focuses on issues that are central to people's lives and is deeply skeptical of theory that does not engage directly with existence as lived. All of this has deservedly led to recognition as a leading theorist of the zeitgeist. However his work is not without its difficulties, not least the criticism that he puts too much emphasis on processes of individualization at the expense of focusing attention on contemporary social formations. Against this charge, it can be argued that Bauman's concern is with describing the situation as it is and with reconciling social theory to an already existing reality, namely a society of reflexive human beings who are deeply individualistic. Supporters would further argue that he never waivers from the position that democracy is the ultimate guarantor of individual freedom and that his work entails a thoroughly sociological understanding of freedom, recognizing that it is always a social relation (Blackshaw, 2005, p. 9). He is also acutely aware of the contradiction at the heart of liquid modernity namely that increased opportunity for self assertion coexists with

decreased capacity to control the social settings that underpin individualism, resulting in growing inequality, insecurity, distrust and social fragmentation. However these observations for the most part lead to a pervasive fatalism in Bauman's work which critics would argue, can be traced back to the reductionist slant of his underlying conceptual framework. (Delanty, 1999, 2000; Outhwaite, 1999).This shows notably in his reduction of modernity to instrumental rationality as evidenced in his analysis of the holocaust and as I shall discuss below, in his reduction of the connection between the ethical and the political to something that can only be formulated in very personal terms.

Bauman on Postmodern Ethics

Bauman's writings bear the hallmark of a profoundly ethical thinker and are noteworthy for their engagement in reconciling postmodernism with morality. Drawing on his analysis of modernity and the holocaust, Bauman concluded that we are all capable of the barbarity which the latter represents and he introduces the idea of evil as a choice. The philosophy of Levinas (1969, 1985) serves as a backdrop for his thinking and his formulation of ethics has much in common with Levinas' concept of responsibility for the Other:

> When God asked Cain where Abel was, Cain replied angrily with another question. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The greatest ethical philosopher of our century, Emmanuel Levinas commented: from that angry response to Cain's question all immorality begins. Of course I am my brother's keeper and I remain a moral person as long as I do not ask for a special reason to be one. ……The moment I question that dependence and demand as Cain did to be given reasons why I should care, I renounce my responsibility and am no longer a moral self. (Bauman, 2001, p. 72)

For Bauman the essence of all morality is the responsibility which people take for the humanity of others. Crucially this entails choice and is an entirely open ended matter. With the collapse of traditional forms of authority in liquid modernity this choice becomes ever more open ended and uncertain. In Postmodern Ethics (1993) Bauman addresses the issue of how the postmodernist perspective might offer a new ethical

understanding for this situation and he begins by firmly distancing himself from that strand of postmodernist thinking which adopts an "everything goes" relativist stance:[7]

> What has come to be associated with the notion of the postmodern approach to morality is all too often the celebration of the 'demise of the ethical', of the substitution of aesthetics for ethics, and of the 'ultimate emancipation' that follows. Ethics itself is denigrated or derided as one of the typically modern constraints now broken and destined for the dustbin of history…..Ours is the era of unadultered individualism and the search for the good life, limited solely by the demand for tolerance (when coupled with self-celebratory and scruple-free individualism, tolerance may only express itself as indifference). (1993, pp. 2-3)

In contrast Bauman's starting point is the hope that the advent of the postmodernist perspective might enhance the chances for the "moralization" of social life. For him the novelty of this perspective towards ethics rests not in the abandonment of what might be thought of as typically modern moral concerns but in rejecting modern ways of addressing these concerns through coercive normative regulation or the philosophical search for absolutes and universal principles. Whilst the great issues of morality such as social justice and human rights have not lost their resonance in the contemporary world they need to be addressed in new ways he argues:

> Modernity had the uncanny capacity for thwarting self-examination; it wrapped the mechanisms of self-reproduction with a veil of illusions without which these mechanisms, being what they were, could not function properly…. 'the postmodern perspective' to which this study refers means above all the tearing off of the mask of illusions: the recognition of certain pretences as false and certain objectives as neither attainable nor, for that matter, desirable. …..It remains to be seen whether the time of postmodernity will go down in history as the twilight, or the renaissance, of morality.
> (Ibid., p. 3).

Whilst modernity was animated by the idea of a "non-ambivalent, non-aporetic ethical code", morality when viewed from the postmodern perspective brings into sharp focus the inherent ambivalence of human beings. For Bauman this ambivalence and associated uncertainty is the very meaning of being moral. Humans are neither essentially good nor bad and no logically coherent ethical code can fit the ambivalent condition of morality. Neither can the moral impulse be overruled by rationality, but merely silenced, for moral phenomena are inherently "non-rational". They are neither

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[7] Bauman singles out the work of Gilles Lipovetsky (1992, 2005), as representative of this relativist stance within postmodernist thinking.

regular nor repetitive in a way that would allow them to be formulated as rule- guided. Thus Bauman concludes that moral phenomena cannot be encapsulated by any ethical code. To think otherwise is to substitute learnable rules for the moral self, constituted by responsibility; to replace answerability to the Other and to moral self-conscience by answerability to legislators and guardians of the ethical code. The "solitude of the moral subject" is a significant theme in Bauman's work and is closely connected with this understanding of the inherent ambivalence of morality as responsibility for the Other. Loneliness in the face of the choices that confront the individual is integral to the moral life:

> No universal standards then. No looking over one's shoulders to take a glimpse of what other people 'like me' do. No listening to what they say they do or ought to be doing - and then following their example……One may legislate universal rule dictated *duties*, but moral *responsibility* exists solely in interpellating the individual and being carried individually. Duties tend to make humans alike; responsibility is what makes them into individuals. (Ibid., pp. 53-4, his emphasis).

In the case of psychotherapy it is not surprising that even minimal engagement with Bauman's ethical perspective or that of Levinas from whom he draws inspiration, leads to unease with the dominant focus on professional codes of ethics and unease with a debate that rarely moves beyond this narrow focus. Unfortunately, as we have also seen in Chapter 2, theorists who make the connection with Levinas or Bauman appear to struggle in taking these insights forward and developing new ways of thinking about ethics in psychotherapeutic practice contexts.[8] In particular there is a marked failure to connect with the psychotherapeutic discourse of method and technique beyond the implication that this new thinking involves a certain personal disposition or attitude in one's work. This disposition has for example been described by Lowental and Snell (2003, p. 30) as that of seeing "the other as someone we can serve and learn from". What is striking about "postmodern humanism" as Lowenthal and Snell characterize their Levinasian influenced ethical stance, is the sense of continuity with the dominant Kantian based conception of ethics that has prevailed in psychotherapy and allied helping professions. At the level of psychotherapeutic clinical practice the exhortation to see the other as "someone we can serve" appears not that different from the Kantian based plea to respect others as ends in themselves, in terms of its abstract individualistic

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[8] Chapter 2 pp. 50- 54.

bias and failure to articulate a more fleshed out relational ethical framework consistent with the relational thrust of contemporary psychotherapy.[9]

Postmodern humanism in psychotherapy does not challenge the problematic disjuncture between ethical deliberation and wider theoretical and methodological debate. As in traditional ethical formulations there is a sense that it entails something deeply personal with only limited scope for mediation with wider public and practice oriented discussion. Not surprisingly the dominant focus on codes of ethics within these public debates therefore persists regardless of postmodernist influenced disengagement or disapproval. As Hill and Jones aptly observe:

> Postmodernism may well be exerting subtle influences as a result of the adoption of ideas such as multiple realities, co-construction of stories, and concerns about *the question of* (whose) *ethics*, but in terms of day to day practice, ethical thinking generally appears to remain firmly grounded in modernist ideas: principles and values." (2003, p. 157, their emphasis)

In essence modernist and postmodernist formulations operate independently on parallel tracks without any mediating discourse in a way that reinforces the fragmentation and marginalization of ethical debate. The key argument of this study which will be developed in Part 111, is that one way to move this creatively stuck situation forward is to anchor the debate about ethics much more explicitly in the mediating paradigm of communication, but for now my focus remains on the postmodern ethical stance in psychotherapy and on tracing its limitation back to a significant theoretical source in Bauman's social and ethical theory.

On Bauman's (1995) account the problem of ethical responsibility in traditional societies was addressed by recourse to religion which simplified the need for choice whereas the modernist project heralded the arrival of a different solution, the rule of law which offered an ethical code designed to eliminate the ambivalence of choice. Secular authorities took over the burden of choice from the individual by privileging the rule of the legislator. In this space between the ethical rule of law and the solitude of the moral individual, self-identity emerged. Modernity is characterized by the quest for legislative

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[9] This underlying continuity is clearly, if unwittingly underlined in McFarland Solomon's (2003, p. 24) contribution discussed in Chapter 2, where she explicitly equates Bauman's ethical stance regarding responsibility for the Other with Kant's categorical imperative and with no attempt made to elaborate their differences.

certainty but also by concern for the autonomous individual. In the postmodern era however the problem of choice cannot be so easily addressed by recourse to established authority. The burden of responsibility shifts back to the individual whilst concern with the autonomy of the individual which characterized modernity is more fully unleashed. Postmodernity represents both opportunity and danger. It dramatically increases choices and possibilities but prescribes no solutions. Within Bauman's framework this is a situation where the regulative idea of moral responsibility comes to the fore but only as something deeply personal and disconnected from political and institutional domains. In Bauman's work there is little possibility for mediation between the ethical and the political (Delanty, 1999, p. 120). Thus whilst his contribution powerfully challenges earlier post-structuralist and postmodernist disengagement from ethics and morality, this lack of mediation underscores its limitation as a source of ethical insight for psychotherapy. Given its formulation of a regulative idea that is couched in very personal terms, it is notably lacking in potential as a springboard for challenging the individualistic bias of traditional ethical formulations in psychotherapy. My argument is that an effective challenge to this individualistic ethical bias requires an underlying paradigm shift from individual consciousness to communication and that Habermas' discourse ethics effectively points the way. However, whilst thus privileging the latter's ethical theory over Bauman's postmodernist stance, this is not to deny that Bauman's theory holds potential insights for psychotherapy and I will consider these further.

Bauman and psychotherapy

The metaphor of transition from solid to liquid modernity encapsulates the shift from a highly structured society to a more fluid and flexible world where individuality dominates, where separation and aloneness are encouraged and where people are distanced from earlier formative anchors such as class and community. Bauman recognizes that this is a world where personal relationships increasingly represent a primary means of self expression and self actualization but he is also concerned that in liquid modernity we are losing our ability to establish firm, solid and reliable personal relationships. In Liquid Love (2003) he writes:

> This book's central characters are men and women, our contemporaries, despairing at being abandoned to their own wits and feeling easily disposable, yearning for the security of togetherness and for a helping hand to count on in

a moment of trouble, and so desperate to 'relate'; yet wary of the state of
'being related' and particularly of being related 'for good', not to mention
forever- since they fear that such a state may bring burdens and cause strains
they neither feel able nor are willing to bear….In our world of rampant
'individualization' relationships are mixed blessings. They vacillate between
sweet dream and a nightmare, and there is no telling when one turns into the
other. (p. viii)

Whilst these relational challenges fuel what he refers to as the contemporary
"counselling boom", his verdict on the potential of "counselling" to assist those
experiencing relationship difficulties is damning:

> What they hope to hear from the counsellors is how to square the circle: to eat
> the cake and have it, to cream off the sweet delights of relationship while
> omitting its bitter and tougher bits ….The experts are willing to oblige,
> confident that the demand for their counsels will never run dry since no amount
> of counselling could ever make a circle non circular and thus amenable to being
> squared…Their counsels abound, though more often than not they do little more
> than raise common practice to the level of common knowledge, and that in turn
> to the heights of learned, authoritative theory. (p. ix)

Whilst Bauman's comments appear to be directed at the more populist end of the
counselling/ psychotherapy spectrum including that represented in magazine advice
columns, he does not elaborate on this point. There is a sense of all therapeutic
interventions being tarnished in his critique and it is difficult not to conclude that the
reductionist tendencies in his conceptual framework also show themselves in this very
superficial engagement with "counselling" or psychotherapy. One is reminded of the
systemic family therapist Flaskas' (2002, p. 97) observation cited earlier, regarding the
difficulty postmodernist influenced psychotherapeutic perspectives appear to have in
addressing the richness and complexity of human experience and the sense of a
"thinning out" of existence which they exhibit. Arguably it is a criticism that might also
apply to Bauman's engagement with psychotherapy. It is also difficult not to compare
Bauman's superficial stance towards the therapeutic endeavor unfavorably with Axel
Honneth's very rich engagement with psychoanalytic theory which will be discussed
shortly, in which he draws on the insights of the latter to put flesh on key aspects of his
own moral theory of recognition, in a way that can also be channeled back into
psychotherapeutic discourse, as I shall argue.

In Postmodern Ethics (1993) Bauman draws on Giddens' concept of the "pure relationship" as a framework for elaborating his thinking about the shape of personal relationships in the contemporary world. He quotes Giddens' description of the pure relationship as referring to,

> a situation where a social relation is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it. (Giddens, 1992 quoted by Bauman, 1993, p. 104)

What is of interest to Bauman is the extent to which "postmodern intimacy" encapsulated in the idea of the pure relationship is characterized by the elimination of all references to moral duties and obligations: " 'Pure relationship', I would suggest, is the intimacy of persons who suspend their identity of moral subjects for the duration. Pure relationship is a de-ethicized intimacy" (ibid., p. 106). In my later engagement with Giddens' thinking and its application in the therapeutic context in Chapter 8, I shall argue, contrary to Bauman's assertion regarding the pure relationship as representing a de-ethicized intimacy, that this mode of relating could be conceptualized as intimacy in search of an ethic and that the latter can helpfully be framed in terms of an ethics of communication.[10]

From the above it might seem that a dialogue between Bauman's theory and psychotherapy holds little promise beyond that alluded to earlier, namely that he contributes towards putting ethics back on the agenda of the postmodernist debate whilst challenging the restrictive focus on codes of ethics. However there is another aspect of his work that merits acknowledgment, namely that he makes a significant argument for putting emotionality back on the agenda of ethical debate. We have seen that a key weakness in Habermas' work is its excessively cognitive orientation. Bauman on the other hand offers a perspective on ethics which at the very least accords space for emotionality:

> Most ethical arguments follow unstintingly Kant's invalidation of emotions as morally potent factors: it has been axiomatically assumed that feelings, much as acting out of affections, have no moral significance - only choice, the rational faculty, and the decisions it dictates can reflect upon the actor as a

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[10] Chapter 8 pp. 202-6.

> moral person. In fact, virtue itself meant for Kant and his followers the ability
> to stand up to one's emotive inclinations, and to neutralize or reject them in
> the name of reason. (Ibid., p. 67)

For Bauman, allowing morality and ethics out of the armour of ethical codes means they are "re- personalized". On the one hand this raises the expectation that his postmodernist ethical stance has greater potential compatibility with the emotionally charged arenas of psychotherapeutic clinical practice than modernist formulations. However as we have seen the weakness of his theory is that it lacks adequate mediation with social and political themes and thus risks reinforcing psychotherapy's individualistic inclination. In essence my argument is that his theory cannot offer an adequate framework for effectively challenging the marginalization of psychotherapeutic ethical debate and associated preoccupation with professional micro ethics, nor can it offer a basis for challenging the abstract individualistic bias in psychotherapeutic engagement with ethics. This is not to negate the importance of the postmodernist critique however and within the tradition of critical social theory the challenge of postmodernist engagement with emotionality, with an ethic of care and responsibility for the Other and more generally with the theme of recognition of difference articulated in the politics of identity has been taken up to some extent in Axel Honneth's moral theory of recognition. Whilst this perspective remains anchored in the discourse of critical social theory and is strongly influenced by Habermas' communicative ethics, it has an added advantage in the present context which is that it engages in a creative dialogue with psychotherapeutic theory in the shape of Winnicottian object relations psychoanalysis. In what follows I consider how Honneth's theory elaborates and supplements Habermas' communicative ethics and brings our consideration of communicative ethics closer to the intimate and personal arenas of psychotherapeutic clinical practice.

Honneth's moral theory of recognition

Whilst modernity can be seen as centrally concerned with the self and with recognition of the sameness and equality of the self and other, postmodernity reflects a turning to the other and the struggle for recognition of difference (Delanty, 2000, p.150). Although these need not represent philosophically oppositional polarities, historically they have been embedded in a divisive modernist/ postmodernist debate. It is true that much

separates Habermas from Bauman and in Postmodern Ethics (1993) Bauman is very dismissive of the modernist project for a universalist ethics. However as the modernist/postmodernist debate has evolved there appears more opportunity for its complexity and nuances to be addressed. We have noted that Bauman reacts to postmodernity as an ambivalent development and endeavours not to pit modernity against it. With respect to the Habermas/Foucault debate, it also seems highly unlikely that it would have remained on the oppositional and confrontational track on which it started, but for Foucault's untimely death. Habermas has, as previously indicated, taken on board some aspects of the postmodernist critique and within the tradition of critical theory the work of Axel Honneth ([1992]1995, [2000]2007a), the successor to Habermas at the University of Frankfurt, represents a further development of this debate in which oppositionality gives way to a degree of mediation and moving forward. Throughout the history of the Frankfurt tradition, as Bausure (2010) observes, a history of "continuity through rupture" is evident which has ensured the ongoing vitality of this tradition. Habermas' work continued but also broke with the earlier work of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse and in a similar vein we can think of Honneth's contribution as continuing but also moving beyond Habermas.

In exploring differences between Habermas and Foucault, it was noted that Habermas, unlike Foucault, is "a committed intersubjectivist" and this may also be said of Honneth. Like Habermas, his theory is rooted in the idea that our identities are formed and sustained by our relations with others. For Honneth the relationship to oneself is not a case of the solitary ego appraising itself. It is an intersubjective process wherein my attitude towards myself emerges through the encounter with the other's attitude towards me. In his work this is taken forward in terms of a theory of recognition, which conceptualizes a theme that also holds considerable importance in Habermas' work but is insufficiently elaborated therein (Thompson, 1999). This theme of "recognition" which is closely associated with Hegelian philosophy has, as Fraser and Honneth (2003) observe, become one of the key words of our times and is central to efforts by political theorists to conceptualize contemporary struggles regarding identity and difference.

> Whether the issue is indigenous land claims or women's carework, homosexual marriage or Muslim headscarves, moral philosophers increasingly use the term "recognition" to unpack the normative basis of political claims….Hegel's old figure of the "struggle for recognition" finds new

> purchase as a rapidly globalizing capitalism accelerates transcultural contacts, fracturing interpretative schemata, pluralizing value horizons and politicizing identities and differences. (Ibid, p. 1)

For Honneth, recognition is seen as one of the fundamental mechanisms of our social existence. Drawing on Hegelian philosophy ([1805-6]1983) and the social psychology of Mead ([1934]1974), he formulates a theory of recognition, at the centre of which is the proposal that full human flourishing and identity formation is anchored in three modes of relating practically to oneself, self-confidence, self-respect and self- esteem. In his theory these terms serve as theoretical constructs with meanings that differ somewhat from everyday usage (Petersen and Willig, 2002; Zurn, 2000).They are neither purely beliefs nor emotional states but involve a dynamic process in which individuals come to experience themselves as having a certain status. In *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (1995) Honneth argues that self-confidence, self -respect and self-esteem can only be acquired and maintained intersubjectively through recognition by others whom one also recognizes. In his schema the three modes of relating to oneself are therefore situated within three corresponding modes of recognition: the love and emotional support experienced in primary relationships; the cognitive respect experienced in legally institutionalized relations of universal respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons; and the esteem experienced within networks of solidarity and shared values. These relationships are not pregiven but are secured and extended through the historical unfolding of social struggles. As Honneth sees it, social struggles are thus motivated by the experience of being denied the conditions for recognition and identity formation.

> The 'grammar' of such conflicts is 'moral' in the sense that the feelings of outrage and indignation driving them are generated by the rejection of claims to recognition and thus imply normative judgments about the legitimacy of social arrangements. (Anderson, 1995, p. xii)

The violation or withholding of recognition patterns which Honneth refers to as disrespect and which includes abuse, the denial of rights, exclusion or denigration can be seen as distortions of the good life (Honneth, 1996). The challenge is to elucidate and diagnose these processes that may be defined as social pathologies (1996, 2007)

Love and self- confidence,

Turning to the first of the three modes of relating to oneself, basic self- confidence, Honneth (1995) draws on psychoanalytic object relations theory of early childhood, in particular that of Winnicott (1965, 1971)[11] to tease out the link between this relation- to-self and relations of love. Previously in this study, by way of underlining the unequivocally relational orientation of contemporary psychoanalysis, I contrasted the classical Freudian perspective on the new born infant as a narcissistic entity with the object relations view of the infant as an active partner from birth, capable of relating to his/her carer. Given the intersubjectivist thrust of Honneth's work it is not difficult to see the appeal of this perspective in which the significance of early emotional bonds as distinct from the vicissitudes of the instincts are revealed. We have seen that for Winnicott, good enough infant care requires a high degree of emotional and intuitive involvement amounting to a state of symbiosis or undifferentiated intersubjectivity from which infant and caregiver slowly extricate themselves, learning to recognize and love each other as separate, independent beings. At the heart of Winnicott's work is a detailed explication of the process of negotiating the balance between ego dissolution and ego demarcation, symbiosis and separateness, or dependence and independence as it unfolds in this delicate process and which is seen as providing the basis for relationships of love and friendship in later life. An understanding of this intersubjectively constituted process is also central to Honneth's engagement with object relations theory.

Given that Winnicottian theory has been explored previously it is unnecessary to follow Honneth's detailed elaboration here. Suffice to say that two key psychological mechanisms identified by Winnicott as significant for successful ego development are of particular interest to Honneth. These are the role of destructive impulses and transitional phenomena in the child's development. As the child leaves the place of absolute dependence or merger and begins to recognize the mother as an entity in her own right outside of the child's omnipotent control, both of these psychological mechanism come into play. A process of disillusionment sets in and the child begins to relate to the mother with aggressive attacks. Winnicott (1965) understands these not so much as expressions of frustration but as purposive acts by which the child unconsciously tests out whether the mother does actually belong to a world beyond

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[11] See Chapter 1 pp. 29-35.

influence and in that sense "objective". In surviving these attacks without retaliation the good enough mother places herself outside the child's omnipotent control and at the same time helps the child recognize his/her dependence on the loving care provided by the mother. When all goes reasonably smoothly, the ongoing experience of the mother's reliable and continuous care allows for the growing capacity of the child to tolerate periods of separation and allows for a growing confidence in the environment to meet his/her needs. This internalized expectation that one's fundamental needs will be met is central to Honneth's formulation of basic self- confidence as a mode of relating to self.

The early space of relating and separating between child and mother is where one also locates the second psychological mechanism which engages Honneth's attention, that of the "transitional object", the first "not me" possession, for example, a favourite blanket or toy. On Winnicott's (1953, 1971) account this object represents a transitional space between the state of symbiotic merger and one of relating to the mother as a separate being. Here we also find the child relating to the transitional object with symbiotic tenderness and with attacks of rage, which Winnicott sees as part of the early process of reality testing, as in attacks on the mother. For Honneth what is most significant is Winnicott's hypothesis that the child is able to be creatively absorbed or "lost" in interaction with transitional phenomena only to the extent that he/she has a basic confidence in the continuity of the mother's loving care. Under the protection of this felt intersubjectivity the child begins to develop the capacity to be alone in the sense of engaging more with the outside world and discovering his/her own personal life creatively without anxiety or fear of abandonment. This also encompasses beginning to recognize and assert needs as his/her own and acquiring a sense of confidence in his/her own body as a reliable source of signals of need.

Honneth follows Jesssica Benjamin (1988) in introducing the idea of reciprocal recognition as an explanatory construct in his engagement with Winnicottian theory, pointing out that like the child, the mother also has to come to terms with separateness, recognizing for example that the child's destructive fantasies and impulses must be ascribed to the child as an independent person.[12] Mother and child learn to recognize their separateness but also their mutual dependence on each other's love without the

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[12] See Chapter 2 pp. 59-64.

need for symbiotic merger. For Honneth following Winnicott, it is this delicate balancing of tendencies towards separation and merger anchored in the dynamic of mutual recognition that later provides the basis for a positive, undistorted relation-to-self and for successful adult relations of love. Drawing on Benjamin's work again, Honneth also considers adult love relations that run into difficulty, as distortions of this delicate balance of reciprocal recognition in the direction of symbiotic dependence or egocentric separateness. He concludes succinctly that "ideally speaking the love relationship represents a symbiosis refracted by recognition" (1995, p. 106). Here in Honneth's very rich engagement with Winnicottian theory, we uncover the contribution of psychoanalytic thinking to our understanding of the intersubjectivist basis of identity formation and the intersubjectivist origins of basic self confidence in relations of love. For Honneth such relations are,

> conceptually and genetically prior to every other form of reciprocal recognition. This fundamental level of emotional confidence- not only in the experience of needs and feelings, but in their expression- which the intersubjective experience of love helps to bring about, constitutes the psychological precondition for the development of all further attitudes of self-respect. (Ibid., p. 107)

Our experience in primary love relations forms the bedrock for our experience of selfhood and establishes the basic affective and behavioral dispositions that we carry into the world. It secures the self- confidence which is "indispensable for autonomous participation in public life" and for Honneth, echoing Hegel, we can therefore discern within it "the structural core of all ethical life" (ibid.).

Self-respect and self-esteem

In Honneth's (1995) conceptual framework there is a strong Kantian component to his understanding of self- respect, the second mode of relating to self in his conceptual schema. It implies having a sense of oneself as an "end" as opposed to a "means and as possessing the universal dignity and respect of persons, in line with Kant's categorical imperative. One respects oneself because one is seen as deserving the same respect as every other person and as having the same status as them. In the terminology of Habermas' discourse ethics it implies having a view of oneself as capable of accessing one's speaking rights, raising validity claims and participating in public deliberation or

"discursive will formation". In practical terms this mode of relating- to- self is mediated through legal rights and the recognition these imply.

> Just as, in the case of love, children acquire, via the continuous experience of 'maternal' care, the basic self-confidence to assert their needs in an unforced manner, adult subjects acquire, via the experience of legal recognition, the possibility of seeing their actions as the universally respected expression of their own autonomy. (Ibid., p. 118)

Whilst Honneth emphasizes that the attribution of rights needs to be seen in the widest sense as including entitlement to material equality and to a life free from sectarianism, racism or misogyny for example, he has been criticized for appearing to privilege culturally based recognition over issues of material distribution and political economy (Fraser and Honneth, 2003). Against this criticism he has continued to assert that problems relating to material distribution are better understood if treated as problems of recognition entailing the denial of rights or unjust devaluing of the contribution of some social groups to society through their work (ibid.).

Whereas self respect entails viewing oneself as entitled to the same status as other persons, Honneth's category of self- esteem, the third mode of relating to self in his schema, refers to the sense of what makes one special and unique. "Solidarity" is the term which he adopts for the cultural climate in which acquiring self-esteem becomes possible. One speaks of solidarity where shared concerns and values are in play.

> …..a good society, a society in which individuals have a real opportunity for full self-realization, would be a society in which the common values would match the concerns of individuals in such a way that no member of the society would be denied the opportunity to earn esteem for his or her contribution to the common good. (Anderson, 1995, p. xvii)

Unlike the sphere of legal rights which represents a medium of recognition relating to universal features of persons, solidarity reflects a communitarian particularity. Values endorsed by a community are a matter of contingency, the outcome of social and cultural struggles, lacking the universal dimension of legal relations. Whereas in the latter case one respects oneself because one merits the respect of everyone else, the social conditions for self-esteem are determined by the prevailing sense of what constitutes a worthwhile contribution to society. In this engagement with issues relating to solidarity and self- esteem, Honneth's focus is similar to that of culturally oriented

movements that have impacted on debates about multiculturalism and feminism for example. Honneth regards struggles for recognition in which issues of self esteem are central as attempts to end social patterns of denigration and demeaning cultural images. However for him, self-esteem is intricately linked to the individual's contribution to the common good. Thus whilst eliminating demeaning cultural images does not offer self-esteem directly it facilitates the conditions under which people who have previously experienced this denigration can secure self-esteem by contributing to society.

For Honneth the three spheres of recognition in relations of love and friendship, legally institutionalized relations of universal respect and networks of solidarity and shared values satisfy key dimensions of our need for affirmation from others. As indicated, Honneth attaches particular significance to love as a mode of recognition and sees it as the bedrock of our selfhood which sets in place the basic affective and behavioral dispositions that we take with us into the world. This emphasis on recognition within primary relationships brings Honneth's work into close contact with the discourse of psychotherapy as indicated by his engagement with Winnicottian theory. In the above discussion I have privileged this aspect of his work which intersects with psychotherapeutic engagement and serves as a useful foundation for further dialogue between Honneth's recognition theory, Habermas' discourse ethics and the concerns of psychotherapy.

Bauman contra Honneth

My interest is not to pit these different theoretical perspectives against each other but to compare their potential contributions to ethical debate in psychotherapy. Whilst Honneth leaves no doubt about the centrality of self- confidence and love in his conceptual schema, it is also the case, perhaps predictably, that it has received less attention in wider debates than have the more explicitly political dimensions of his theory (Thompson, 2006). However this aspect of his work is of central interest here since it offers an overarching conceptual framework that powerfully mediates between the intimate and personal spheres that are the overt focus of psychotherapy and wider social and political spheres. It also offers a mediating discourse between the modernist emphasis on universal rights, equality and legal codes versus the postmodernist emphasis on personal identity and difference. This sets Honneth's contribution apart from Bauman's postmodernist influenced theory. Like Bauman, Honneth is concerned

with social processes in liquid modernity that reinforce processes of individualization and lack of solidarity and make the establishment of solid personal relationships very difficult. In Honneth's (2007) framework this is characterized as the dissolution of stable forms of recognition and shows itself for example in the fragility and instability of contemporary family relations. However, Honneth's three fold schema helps him avoid Bauman's sociological reductionism in which the dynamics of personal relationships are conflated with social processes. We have seen that the only role available to Bauman's "counsellor" with those experiencing relationship difficulties appears to be a cynical taking advantage of the social situation to promote their fee charging service. Honneth's more encompassing conceptual schema, including his rich engagement with psychoanalytic theory helps him avoid this reductionist tendency.

Honneth's theory of recognition shows that a very delicate balancing of independence and dependence is integral to identity formation. Successful relationships of love both in childhood and adulthood, together with the logic of this developmental process, need to be understood on their own terms, alongside but not conflated with social trends and developments which may support or hinder this developmental process. At the very least this creates potential space for a more nuanced and two way dialogue across the different spheres of social interaction and integration, and in the present context, across the spheres of psychotherapy and social theory. Throughout this study I have argued that lack of a mediating discourse between the personal and the social or political and between modernist and postmodernist concerns, underpins so much of the difficulty and fragmentation in psychotherapeutic ethical debate. In the case of Bauman I have argued that a retreat into subjectivity evident in his work compounds existing individualistic tendencies in psychotherapy that need to be challenged as part of a creative ethical debate. Honneth's three fold schema challenges the reductionist tendency to conflate these interrelated but distinctive arenas of social interaction and in conjunction with Habermas' discourse ethics, I am arguing that it offers a solid foundation for further dialogue between psychotherapy and critical social theory.

Habermas and Honneth

On the one hand there is significant continuity between Habermas' communicative ethics and Honneth's theory of recognition not least because the latter elaborates on a theme that is also central to the Habermasian perspective but inadequately theorized in

this work. On the other hand there are important distinctions between the two theorists, some of which have a particular resonance in the present discussion. One of the key differences is that Honneth engages with a broader concept of communication than Habermas whose focus is primarily on linguistic communication. As Bausure (2010) observes, this more inclusive conceptualization is especially evident in the importance which Honneth attaches to pre-linguistic communication in the development of subjectivity, notably within the parent/child relationship. For Honneth,

> the normative presuppositions of social interaction cannot be fully grasped if they are defined solely in terms of the linguistic conditions of reaching understanding free from domination; rather we must consider above all the fact that social recognition constitutes the normative expectations connected with our entering communicative relationships. (2007a, pp. 71-2)

Honneth does acknowledge that underlying Habermas' resolute defence of the cognitivist stance is a concern regarding the pitfalls of "an affectively shielded particularism" and a concern that,

> if it is primarily empathy and intuitive understanding that subjects are supposed to show for one another, then moral discourse quickly becomes dependent upon chance emotional ties and loses the function of being a cooperative search for truth based solely on reasons. (2007b, p. 112)

Nonetheless he is critical of the tendency within the Frankfurt tradition, including in the work of Habermas, to judge social pathologies exclusively from the perspective of human rationality which in his view leads to "a rational- theoretic narrowing of social critique" (ibid., p. 73). Adopting the perspective of recognition theory means that a critical diagnosis of social pathologies can no longer be compressed within a theory of rationality and in this regard the overall thrust of Honneth's critique clearly shares at least some common ground with other critical commentaries on Habermas that were referred to in Chapter 4.[13]

In Honneth's essay, *The Other of Justice: Habermas and the Ethical Challenge of Postmodernism* (2007b) he engages specifically with the postmodernist challenge to Habermasian theory. Amongst those commentaries on Habermas discussed earlier was that of White (1988) and in Honneth's essay, White's (1991) subsequent work including the formulation of a "postmodern ethics" is the focus of attention. As Honneth sees it

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[13] Chapter 4 pp. 93-6.

the key dimension of this contribution is the emphasis placed on the virtues of listening, willingness to be emotionally involved, and to accept and encourage personal particularities and differences: "in short, all those modes of conduct summarized today in the concept of 'care' " (Honneth, 2007b, p. 108). We have seen that Habermas has also considered the challenge posed by formulations of an ethic of care such as that of Gilligan (1982) and has concluded that his communicative ethics is largely compatible with her ideas about morality in which dialogue replaces logical deduction as the primary mode of moral engagement. In the case of White's postmodern ethics, Honneth similarly draws the conclusion that,

> if, in contrast to Habermas, affective capabilities- as given, for instance, in empathy- are also counted among these communicative virtues, then we have already reached the point from which we can recognize in White's postmodern ethics the elaboration of an implication of discourse ethics. (Ibid., p. 113)

Honneth's verdict is that this formulation of "postmodern ethics" ultimately remains within the normative boundaries of Habermas' Kantian influenced universalist framework. However, notwithstanding this conclusion with respect to White's contribution, he is anxious not to underestimate the overall challenge that the postmodern ethical perspective presents to modern theories of morality that remain within the Kantian tradition. In particular he considers the Levinasian influenced contribution of Derrida (1978, 2005), which explores the asymmetrical nature of our obligation to provide care and help to another person as a central principle of morality and concludes that on balance this work may be seen to extend the normative horizon of the Kantian tradition. This is subject to careful qualification by Honneth however:

> Yet in no way should this lead us to conclude- as does Levinas- that care or benevolence be declared not only the genetic but also the logical foundation of all moral principles. What we understand under modern conditions as the "moral point of view" is explained first and foremost by the universalist principle of equal treatment. What has been said so far, however, must also be accompanied by the conclusion that care be again awarded that place in the domain of the moral which it has all too frequently been denied in the Kantian tradition of moral philosophy…..postmodern ethics has taken a small but significant step beyond the normative horizon constituted by the idea of equal treatment, which has hitherto been the determining factor for modernity. (Ibid., pp. 124-5)

In this study I have considered the influence of Levinasian inspired ethical thinking in psychotherapeutic discourse and have argued that it fails unequivocally to transcend the

limitations and abstraction of the traditional Kantian influenced psychotherapeutic ethical perspective.[14] My argument is that Habermas' grounding of ethics in the paradigm of communication represents a creative and accessible starting point for the challenge of moving this debate forward and that Honneth's recognition theory offers further invaluable insights from within the framework of critical social theory on how this might be achieved. In this respect Honneth's views on the family are especially revealing in terms of conceptualizing how a Habermasian universalist ethical stance might be integrated with additional perspectives that can loosely be categorized under the heading of an ethic of care.

Honneth (2007) observes that the modern family is an arena where the requirements of a morality of justice and universal respect and a morality of love and care need to be carefully balanced. He notes the major structural changes that have impacted on the family from the nineteenth century onwards such as the ending of child labour and the anchoring of the marital relationship in the emotional framework of love. These and other changes have gradually enabled the family gain access to a private sphere and to evolve autonomously. However they have also brought with them new dangers which have impacted significantly on family life. Honneth draws on Giddens' (1991, 1992)[15] model of the "pure relationship" as the prototype for contemporary couple relationships, anchored in feelings of love and trust as distinct from more traditional criteria of kinship or duty for example. He then considers the fragility and insecurity within relational dynamics that can result. Family relationships become increasingly dependent on currents of personal feeling for their survival as a result of which children and women are especially - but not exclusively- vulnerable. He suggests that the family represents a social space where two distinctive moral orientations continually collide:

> .…family members have to be able to recognize one another as legal persons, because it is only in this way they can protect their personal integrity; on the other hand, they have to reciprocally recognize one another as unique subjects whose individual well-being deserves special attention and care. If the first form of recognition vanishes, then the autonomy of individual family members is threatened; if the second form of recognition evaporates, the emotional bond within the family will be destroyed. On the basis of this initial finding, we can pose the question as to whether we can make any theoretical assertions about the dividing line that has to run between these two moral orientations within the family. (Ibid., pp. 155-6)

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[14] Chapter 2 pp. 50- 4.
[15] Chapter 8 pp. 198-208.

For Honneth the conclusion is that the future of the family would appear to depend on its capacity to develop the "discursive reflexivity" with which it might continually locate an appropriate balance between the requirements of justice and affective bonds.[16] He also reminds us that it is only by referring to universal principles of equal treatment that people who find themselves in situations where further appeals to emotional bonds of empathy and affection appear futile can, in his words, "shatter the conventionalism of care". This emphasis on "discursive reflexivity" as a framework for balancing the different moral requirements within the personal arenas in which psychotherapy routinely practices, will be a recurring theme throughout the remaining chapters of this study.

Part 11 began with an outline of Habermasian thinking and emphasized the far reaching importance of the paradigm shift from individual consciousness to communication which underpins his engagement with ethics. It was subsequently argued that Habermas' theory can be used to shed light on the limitations of current hermeneutical, post-structuralist and postmodernist influences in psychotherapy. The limitations of Habermasian theory, which the postmodernist perspective brings to light particularly relating to emotionality, personal identity and engagement with difference, were also acknowledged. In drawing the discussion to a close, I returned to critical social theory with a focus on Axel Honneth's moral theory of recognition which supplements Habermas' theory of communicative ethics in a way that addresses some of these limitations and provides a more fleshed out formulation of an ethical stance that we might consider appropriate for psychotherapeutic practice. In essence the argument which I defend in subsequent chapters is that we may helpfully formulate the moral "grammar" of the psychotherapeutic encounter in terms of the closely intertwined struggles for understanding and agreement as depicted in Habermas' discourse ethics and the struggle for recognition as elaborated by Honneth. In Part 111, attention now turns to a more detailed elaboration of what this means for psychotherapy and for moral/ethical debate therein.

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[16] Here Honneth's argument comes within a similar orbit to Habermas'(1990) earlier engagement with Gilligan's (1982) work in which Habermas comments on the compatibility of discourse ethics with her formulation of an ethic of care. However a crucial difference between Habermas and Honneth of course, is the enhanced status which themes associated with an ethic of care command in Honneth's work.

Part III

Towards a communicative ethical orientation for psychotherapy

Introduction

This study began with the question, what good is served by psychotherapy and argued that current attempts to provide answers within the framework of empirical outcome research need to be anchored in a critical debate concerning the moral/ethical ethos of psychotherapy. In order to assess what constitutes a "good outcome" we need to engage in a critical appraisal of the normative orientation of our work. Clients, funding agencies and other interested parties may have their own criteria for evaluating outcomes but unless we are able to add our voice to this process clearly and effectively, there is a danger that what we hold to be of most value in our work and what may have the greatest creative potential, will be overshadowed by other priorities and evaluative criteria, not least those of social compliance and cost minimisation. Definitions of mental or psychological health and illness reflect our social, cultural and personal biases as do definitions of a good treatment outcome. The latter cannot be viewed in absolute terms: "What is "outcome" or whose outcome is it anyway?" (Fonagy et al., 2002, p. 4). In the child mental health field the optimal outcome for one family member may be less favourable for other members. When for example, is the preservation of the family unit a good outcome and for whom is it so? Within a communicative ethical framework we might say that a "good enough" outcome is one in which psychotherapeutic intervention has helped create the optimum communicative conditions for these decisions to be discussed and decided; communicative conditions that allow space for those involved to have their different voices and conflicting interests heard and recognized.

Traditionally, questions relating to the normative orientation of psychotherapy have been fused with questions relating to method and technique and were buried under a veneer of positivist scientific neutrality. This ethos is very clearly represented in the early development of systemic psychotherapy, notably in the cybernetic metaphor adopted by the early family therapists as the epistemological foundation for their work. In Chapter 3 we also noted the radical paradigm shift in more recent times, which again

has been especially marked in the case of systemic psychotherapy. Here the 1980s witnessed the abandonment of cybernetics and general system's theory and its replacement by a hermeneutic and postmodernist orientation which is now the dominant discourse in the field. In the case of psychoanalysis, similar trends are evident but they have evolved less dramatically over a longer time span in what is a more broadly based discourse. Postmodernist and hermeneutic influences have explicitly informed the development of "relational psychoanalysis" in the North American context[1] but this influence is also evident in a more general softening of the traditional positivist stance of scientific certitude in psychoanalytic discourse. Whilst the object relations perspective of Klein, Winnicott and others discussed in Chapter 2, remains the dominant paradigm in UK psychoanalysis we have also observed that the work of these analysts can be seen as an important precursor to the postmodernist perspective in terms of its relational thrust and greater appreciation of the intersubjectively constituted nature of knowledge and of the self. Underlying continuity is also evident in systemic psychotherapy, despite the overt polarisation of modernist and postmodernist perspectives. This continuity is apparent, not least in the ongoing widespread use of therapeutic techniques that were developed in the era of modernist, first order family therapy. Creative continuity at a methodological level is often masked in a context that splits modernist and postmodernist themes and in the absence of an adequate mediating discourse.

Another dimension of continuity between modernist and postmodernist perspectives in psychotherapy which is a great deal more problematic than that relating to methodology and which this study brings into focus is that relating to the vexed question of morality and ethics. I have explored the restrictive and limited professional ethical debates, rooted in abstract individualism, which typify the modernist perspective in psychotherapy and which have persisted notwithstanding the postmodernist influenced paradigm shift of recent decades. Ethical perspectives within postmodernist infused contemporary psychotherapeutic approaches are strikingly similar to traditional formulations of ethical themes even if this is rarely acknowledged. In Part 11, I have argued that these difficulties can be traced back to the post-structuralist, postmodernist and hermeneutical paradigms upon which these new psychotherapeutic perspectives

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[1] See Chapter 2 pp. 59-63.

rely for inspiration and I have used Habermas' critique of Gadamer and Foucault as an anchor for this discussion. My thesis up to this point has been that, notwithstanding the significant limitations of explicit ethical debate, there is also evidence that key trends and developments in psychotherapy are straining towards a communicative ethical orientation implicit in the relational ethos of current theory and practice. Furthermore I have argued that the theoretical vacuum around this subject has impeded recognition of its full potential. In mapping the contemporary field in both psychoanalytic and systemic approaches, my concern has been to underline this relational stance which transcends any polarisation of modernist and postmodernist themes.

What then are the implications of Habermas' communicative ethical perspective and the complementary work of Axel Honneth for conceptualizing the moral/ethical orientation of psychotherapy? This is the key focus of the rest of this study. In essence I will argue that the moral "grammar" of the psychotherapeutic encounter may be framed in terms of the struggle for understanding and agreement and the struggle for recognition and that both can be anchored in Habermasian thinking around a communicative ethics. Notwithstanding the limitations and incompleteness of Habermas' own work, it offers an overarching philosophical framework for scientific enquiry and engagement in which ethics is firmly anchored. It also allows for supplementation by theoretical perspectives, including those of Honneth (1995, 2007) and Giddens (1991, 1992) that are closer to the subjective concerns of psychotherapy and which offer a bridge for thinking about the links with critical social theory. In exploring the relevance of Habermas' and Honneth's moral theories for psychotherapy, I am not proposing any formulaic application of theory to clinical practice. My intention is to facilitate a dialogue between critical theory and psychotherapy and each of the chapters that follow, adopts a different starting point from which to approach this dialogue.

Chapter 7 engages in a critical exchange with psychotherapy from the perspective of social theory. It considers the criticism of psychological reductionism and argues that challenging this tendency means challenging the abstract individualistic moral/ethical ethos which as we have seen is very deeply rooted in psychotherapy. Habermas' alternative communicative ethical perspective is then considered in terms of what it may have to offer. The theme of the psychotherapist as professional expert in our society runs though this discussion. Options for transcending the restrictive dimensions of the

expert position within a communicative ethical framework, and for connecting with creative and emancipatory trends in contemporary society are explored. Chapter 8 takes up this argument, from a perspective inside psychotherapeutic discourse, drawing in particular on the theme of reflexivity as it is formulated and developed in systemic and psychoanalytic approaches that were previously discussed in Part 1. It considers how these formulations connect with sociological perspectives on reflexivity; how they might fit with a view of psychotherapy as a reflexive resource in our society and a view of the psychotherapist as helping to increase reflexive capacities in those with whom they work. An argument will be made for an idea of psychotherapy as a potential carrier of communicative reason helping people develop and enhance cognitive and emotional capacities that will in turn help them enter spheres of discursive or reflexive communication. Chapter 9 continues this elaboration, this time with a greater focus on clinical practice and drawing on clinical vignettes, including some from the author's own practice as a family therapist in a National Health Service setting.

Chapter 7

Towards a Communicative Ethical Framework for Psychotherapy: Perspectives from Social Theory

The charge of psychological reductionism is one that is often levelled at psychotherapy, sometimes in terms that imply an underlying lack of sympathy or even hostility towards the therapeutic endeavour. At its most strident this critique argues for a view of the latter as an exclusively conservative force promoting adjustment and accommodation to the social and political status quo whilst placing the onus for change onto individuals and families. An example is the traditional Marxist view that psychoanalysis represents a bourgeois doctrine unable to see beyond the class based interests of the bourgeoisie (Brooks, 1973; Timpanaro, 1976). It is also echoed in what Elliott (1999) describes as the "Freud bashing" that has characterized much of the debate around psychoanalysis in recent decades and which in his view reflects a "preoccupation with external forces as determining personal subjectivity, as well as a profound disinterest in issues surrounding the complexity of the psyche and the self" (p. x). Aspects of this critique are present in the Foucauldian view of psychotherapy as an instrument of social control, discussed in Chapter 5, whilst Bauman's assessment cited in Chapter 6, concerning the role of "counselling" in promoting individualization for a fee is another version of this rather unsympathetic perspective amongst theorists, for some of whom the opposite charge of sociological reductionism might equally apply.[1] Yet beyond this oppositional exchange there is reason to take seriously some elements of this critique not least because they are shared by some writers (Frosh, 1999; Samuels, 1989, 1993, 2001) within the psychotherapy field who bring a nuanced understanding of the clinical process to their assessment. In this study I have underlined the abstract individualistic bias of psychotherapeutic values, which can be seen as reinforcing the reductionism of which it stands accused.

Paradoxically, alongside "Freud bashing" and general negativity from certain quarters, it is also the case that the impact of psychoanalysis has never been as far reaching as in

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[1] See also pp. 203-4 below for brief discussion of Christopher Lasch's (1978) critique of psychotherapy and Anthony Giddens' (1991) response.

recent decades, and as witnessed in the engagement with psychoanalytic theory by a wide range of academic disciplines (Elliott, 1999, pp. xv-i). I have already noted Jŭrgen Habermas' engagement with psychoanalytic theory in his early work and its more recent reappearance in the critical theory of Axel Honneth. Alongside evidence of a positive and invigorating contribution to debate outside the field, we have also seen, that internally psychotherapy has been reinventing itself for sometime and this includes articulating a less individualistic, more vigorously relational stance both in theory and in method. If anything these developments are being slowed down and impeded by the individualistic bias of psychotherapy's traditional value base coupled with the fragmented and marginalized nature of ethical debate generally within the field. I have argued that this results in a creatively stuck situation that is impoverishing for psychotherapeutic discourse; that a radical paradigm shift at the level of moral/ ethical and political conceptualization is required; that imported theoretical sources of inspiration from the hermeneutical, post-structuralist and postmodernist traditions fall short of meeting this challenge; and that Habermas' reformulation of Kantian ethics in terms of a theory of communicative ethics holds important insights for how it might be achieved. In what follows I begin with an overview of key aspects of the critique of psychotherapeutic reductionism with particular reference to the neglect of issues of power. This leads into a more general consideration of the social construction of psychotherapy as a professional discipline and how we might begin to conceptualize power in the psychotherapeutic relationship. Options for moving beyond the restrictive confines of the expert position within a communicative ethical framework, drawing on the thinking of Habermas and Honneth will then be explored.

Psychological reductionism in psychotherapy

In recent decades two theorists within psychotherapy, Samuels (1989, 1993, 2001) and Frosh (1999) have made noteworthy contributions to its critical appraisal. Both begin with an acknowledgment of the promise which object relations theory holds in terms of its emphasis on the interpersonal world in the construction of individuality and which sets it apart from classical psychoanalytic theory. Both theorists are also clear that it stops short of delivering on this promise not least in its unsatisfactory engagement with social and political themes both inside and outside the consulting room. In *The Political Psyche* (1993) Samuels discusses the weakness of the object relations perspective when

attempts are made to apply its insights beyond the clinical setting. In the earlier discussion of Kleinian theory, I noted Rustin's (1991) analysis of the links between racist states of mind and the primitive splitting and projection that characterizes Klein's delineation of paranoid-schizoid functioning. I also noted Kapur and Campbell's (2004) Kleinian influenced analysis of *The Troubled Mind of Northern Ireland*, as examples of the application of object relations thinking to social and political processes. For Samuels (1993) the key weakness of analyses that are anchored in object relations thinking is the tendency to reduce complex social and political phenomena to the level and time frame of individual development and he questions the assumption often made that object relations theory lends itself more easily to political analysis than Freudian theory: "When the paranoid- schizoid position is offered as an explanation for a particular kind of social or cultural malaise, what is accepted and uncritically assumed to follow is that the depressive position is the only possible basis for a healthier state, and is ever the case" (p. 218). The world is approached as an individual or even an infant whilst complex political and social phenomena that do not conform to this "individualistic, chronological, moralistic, pathologizing framework" (p. 9) are ignored. For Samuels the implication in much of object relations thinking that a good enough environment, provided within the first months of life and in the family, is primarily what is required for an individual to flourish is, as he puts it, "hopelessly passive" in the context of problematic social and political structures.

Within the object relations perspective on clinical processes it is also the case that social, political and other collective aspects of presenting problems are given scant attention whilst intrapsychic and interpersonal issues at the individual or familial level take centre stage. Here it could be argued that by concentrating on the latter, the psychotherapist at the very least offers something that is potentially constructive in the clinical context by way of addressing the presenting difficulty, however incomplete or limited this may be. Here one is also reminded of the Freudian dictum that the limited goal of psychoanalysis is to turn hysterical misery into common unhappiness (Freud and Breuer, 1895). In Frosh's (1999) view: "none has described more succinctly and accurately than Freud, the limited opportunities for individual change within a repressive environment, neither have they always appreciated his insight into how important even this amount of change can be" (p. 63). The question is surely how this can be executed with integrity, honesty and openness in the therapeutic communication

of the clinical setting and how this might serve as a building block for further creative change either at the personal or social level. It is here that mainstream theoretical analyses of clinical processes generally fall short, not least in addressing power differentials in the therapist/patient relationship which impact on the transparency of communication between them.

In family therapy as in object relations psychoanalysis the classical psychoanalytic view of the individual as a closed system of biological drives is replaced by one that firmly locates the individual in a relational context. However as in object relations theory this does not necessarily lend itself to enhanced engagement with social and political processes either inside or outside the clinical context. As in psychoanalysis, the consulting room remains the key setting for family therapy practice and here we have seen there is considerable enthusiasm for postmodernist influenced therapeutic perspectives such as the narrative approach and collaborative language systems therapy discussed in Chapter 3.[2] Given the dominance of these perspectives in contemporary family therapy it offers a particularly useful context in which to analyze postmodernist influence in psychotherapy generally, including how power is addressed in this therapeutic stance. We have seen that what may loosely be termed the postmodernist perspective in family therapy, incorporating hermeneutic and poststructuralist strands, emerged against a background of great unease with the hierarchical nature of earlier positivist approaches. The idea of the therapist as objective observer is replaced with one that firmly locates the therapist inside the therapy system as a collaborative partner in dialogue. Emphasis shifts from objectivity and certainty to diversity, uncertainty, and multiple realities. But we have also seen that this opens up the thorny issue of relativism in psychotherapy; concern that the therapist appears to lack an independent ethical position from which to take a stand; concern about a sliding away from issues of power and the abuse of power in family relationships; concern about relativizing reality and the danger that therapy as a process of bearing witness to the destructive reality of "disrespect" including abuse, is thereby undermined.

Drawing on this earlier critique of imported postmodernist influence in family therapy, it seems fair to conclude that like the home grown object relations perspective in

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[2] Chapter 3 pp. 69-74.

psychoanalysis, it falls short in conceptualizing issues of power. Ideas around expertise and other hierarchical differences between therapist and patient or family are obscured or ironed out in a context that emphasizes equality and "unknowingness" in the therapeutic relationship. Herein resides a danger that the potential authoritarianism of a therapy that hides its expertise in "unknowingness" and supposed equality is also obscured. I have argued that this problem can be traced back to the troubled engagement with moral/ethical and political themes within the internal logic of the hermeneutic, post-structuralist and postmodernist theoretical traditions that have been imported uncritically into psychotherapeutic discourse. Writing about psychoanalytic approaches specifically, Frosh (1999) reminds us that there is a significant difference between analysts who obscure the power relationship and those who examine it (p. 14). One might add there is also a significant difference between theoretical approaches in psychotherapy generally that lend themselves to offering a framework in which issues of power can be adequately conceptualized and approaches where this is missing.

If we accept the argument that psychological reductionism, including the neglect and obscuring of issues of power is the reflection of an innately conservative bias or, to borrow Samuel's (1993) words, "a secret alignment with the existing order" (p. 276) in psychotherapy, this simply raises the question of why this might be but also how it might be challenged. From the perspective of this study key factors include the severely restricted, individualist framework of moral/ethical debate, the conceptual vacuum in which this debate occurs and the lack of mediation with social and political themes and concerns at this level of debate. Interestingly when Samuels himself explores ways of addressing the problem of psychological reductionism, his thinking appears to take him beyond the consulting room to questions of how "the therapeutic attitude" and in particular that of therapeutic engagement with emotional communication encapsulated in the transference/countertransference dynamic might be employed in larger, collective contexts. Regardless of how helpful this might be, unfortunately it also takes the debate well beyond the horizon of most clinically based psychotherapists whilst questions of how these concerns regarding psychological reductionism might be addressed in the

clinical setting are left largely unanswered.[3] As argued in the introduction to the study, this perspective can leave psychotherapists feeling understandably alienated or disinterested and needs to be superseded by a more inclusive engagement with moral/ethical and political themes that addresses the personal and intimate domains in which psychotherapy predominantly operates.

For Frosh (1999), whose critique of object relationships thinking is in many respects similar to Samuel's, the richness of the psychoanalytic contribution to social and political critique rests precisely in its focus on subjectivity: "The object of psychoanalytic knowledge is subjectivity, the flowing, changing, productive and disjointed experience that each of us has of ourselves and the world and the pattern of linkages that this subjectivity has with unconscious and with external events" (p. 9). Without a theory of subjectivity there can be no complete approach to politics, as he observes. Arguably this is clearly demonstrated in the contrast between Honneth's moral theory of recognition and Habermas' communicative ethics, and specifically in the way that Honneth's theory, drawing on object relations thinking, compensates for the neglect of subjectivity in Habermasian theory. In Frosh's view psychoanalysis is capable of offering insights that are congruent with a progressive politics even when it restricts itself to the personal concerns of the individual precisely because "at the heart of these concerns is a social process" (ibid. p. 244). However like Samuels he is all too aware of the charges of conformism directed at psychoanalysis throughout its history, which are linked to this tendency to reduce what is social and political to what is subjective and personal and to reduce collective and institutional processes to the psychological make up of their individual members. In the case of psychoanalysis Frosh's own conclusion is that it can nonetheless contribute to progressive social and political change:

> Most importantly, different analytic approaches show varying degrees of awareness of the power relations present in therapy and of how these can and should be worked with. Where these power relations are recognized and used to

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[3] It is important to acknowledge Samuel's contribution in helping to establish an organisation known as *Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility*, in 1995, with the aim of using insights from psychotherapeutic practice within wider political and public discourse. For a brief outline of this organisation's activities, see Samuels (2003). Whilst it has remained very small in scale and has not attracted the support of the vast majority of psychotherapists in the UK, it has campaigned on a variety of issues such as the rights of asylum seekers or the rights of lesbian and gay applicants for psychotherapy training.

explore the internalized power structures that have been embedded in the client's personality, psychoanalysis begins to contribute to social change.
(1999, p. 42)

The view informing this study is that psychotherapy can make a relevant contribution to progressive personal, social and political change and that harnessing what we might describe as its emancipatory potential requires rigorous engagement with its normative orientation. We need a clear and reasoned understanding of what progressive change and "good outcomes" can mean in the psychotherapeutic context. In what follows I look at processes of professionalization in psychotherapy as the backdrop to any consideration of the therapeutic relationship, the power embedded therein and the question of what progressive change and a "good outcome" might mean in this context. I then look at the shape of the therapeutic relationship in more detail and include in this discussion some aspects of Habermas' dialogue with psychoanalysis in his early work. Whilst he subsequently lost interest in its potential insights for critical theory, this thinking continues to have relevance for psychotherapeutic self understanding of the internal logic of the therapeutic process.

Processes of professionalization in psychotherapy

Adopting the very simple definition of professionals as those to whom power and authority is delegated by society, based on the assumption that they have certain knowledge and skills not generally available (Tjeltveit, 1999, p. 28), it may be said that psychotherapy has a complex and sometimes ambivalent relationship with its professional status. For some psychotherapists including those with a background in allied professions such as medicine or clinical psychology, there may be a taken for granted, unquestioned quality to psychotherapeutic professional status whilst for others who lack this background, having it conferred via psychotherapy training may hold considerable significance in terms of social status and earning potential. But there is also considerable negativity attached to professionalization for others who view it not so much in terms of opportunity but in terms of external constraint. Amongst the latter are those who hold to a view of psychotherapy and especially its large hinterland of counselling practice as more closely linked to the idea of a "social movement" than a profession (Bennett, 2005) For this group the roots of many counselling and psychotherapy organizations in the voluntary sector, the spirit of service to the

community by volunteer counsellors and belief in equality of access to therapeutic services, is at the heart of what these organisations represent. They are fearful of this spirit being eroded by accelerating professionalization and what they perceive as the associated transformation of counselling into a service industry.

For many years an uneasy alliance of conflicting perspectives on professionalization, as on many other matters, has been held together by a system of self regulation within the psychotherapy field which has offered assurances to the public regarding training standards, competency to practice, ethical codes and complaints procedures. This system has been managed by the main organizing bodies in psychotherapy. However in recent years this arrangement has been overtaken by a new and what is for many, an alarming turn with the planned replacement of voluntary registration of psychotherapists by a statutory registration scheme which will be managed by a state sponsored regulator, the Health Professions Council. In general terms the extent to which psychotherapeutic ethical debate has been influenced by external concerns about accountability and the discourse of consumer rights, has been noted in Chapter 2 and the proposed switch to state regulation may be seen as another step in this process. For those who support this development it represents an advance in securing psychotherapy's professional status and its future viability. For others it represents the erosion of autonomy and power within the discipline to determine therapeutic priorities, values and training criteria and as such is an ominous development. This group includes some who are concerned for the future viability of open ended, exploratory, depth psychological interventions in a wider political climate that shows a strong preference for a positivist therapeutic stance, informed by the medical model of treatment. The latter is commonly associated with interventions that adopt an illness model of psychological difficulty, are time limited, oriented to behavioural change, adopt clearly defined goals and outcome objectives, place considerable emphasis on building a strong evidence base in empirical research and tend to view psychotherapy primarily in terms of a collection of techniques.[4] In psychotherapeutic discourse the therapeutic approach that comes closest to this positivist ideal is cognitive behavioural therapy and the

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[4] Significant elements of this thinking are reflected in what is commonly known as the *Layard Report* (Layard et al., 2006) on depression which has influenced policy relating to state funded psychological therapy provision. This report is associated with a Government sponsored initiative known as the *Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) Programme*, where the core therapeutic modality is cognitive behavioural therapy. For consideration of the limitations of the medical model of psychological treatment see Bentall (2003) and Dowrick (2004).

distinction between this orientation and others including the psychoanalytic and systemic approaches that are the focus of this study constitutes one of the major fault lines of current debate. [5]

It is not my intention to enter into the complex and highly charged clinically oriented discussions about difference between psychotherapeutic approaches to alleviating psychological suffering and promoting change. Arguably what they hold in common and what transcends their differences is an underlying orientation to psychotherapy as a "talking cure". It is at this level of common ground that we need to anchor the debate about the normative orientation of psychotherapy not least if we are to avoid the traditional fusion of normative questions with those of method and technique. Whilst it is important not to minimize the impact of clinical differences on the shape of psychotherapeutic "talking", there is also evidence that the various specialist orientations may be more generic and integrative in the privacy of the consulting room than in the politics of public debates.[6] The point is to secure the most enabling and potentially creative discursive space in which such discussions between the orientations can unfold and contribute to the future development of psychotherapy as a "talking cure". Understandably there is concern about the extent to which psychotherapy as a state regulated profession can embrace this process.

Against the background of current debates one is not only reminded of Foucault's conceptualization of knowledge in terms of a power struggle played out in social discourse,[7] one is also left in little doubt about the intensity of current power struggles that give shape to psychotherapy as a socially constructed entity. This is a climate where the need to move beyond the cul-de-sac of professional micro ethics to articulate a reasoned, overarching justification of psychotherapy's normative stance has never been more urgent. In the absence of this philosophically anchored debate it becomes more difficult to challenge the implicit assumption within powerful strands of the contemporary discourse and beyond, which imply that an orientation towards personal

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[5] Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) evolved from the merging of behavioural therapy with cognitive therapy (Beck, 1976) and is prominent in the contemporary psychotherapeutic field. For an outline of CBT, see Grant et al. (2004) and Westbrook et al. (2007). For discussion of the divide between CBT and psychoanalysis see Milton (2001) who writes from a psychoanalytic perspective and for a more integrative perspective on this subject see Bateman (2000).

[6] Bateman (2000) offers an overview of research findings and a helpful discussion of this subject as it relates in particular to cognitive behavioural therapy and psychoanalysis.

[7] Chapter 5 pp. 117-21.

change anchored in positivist thinking offers the most appropriate overarching framework for psychotherapy. Conversely it becomes more difficult to challenge critics who denounce psychotherapy comprehensively on grounds of psychological reductionism.

The therapeutic relationship in psychotherapy

Given the private and confidential nature of psychotherapy practice, it is a discourse that often struggles to include the voice of recipients in public deliberations beyond the implicit feedback that comes from empirical research. The latter has long been another highly contested area given the dominant reliance on the methodology of the randomized controlled trial in such research; the challenge of applying this methodology in psychotherapy; the challenge of evaluating outcomes particularly in the more exploratory depth analytic approaches where therapeutic objectives and outcomes are more difficult to define; and the concern that this evidence based ethos privileges approaches that are oriented to behavioural change, more amenable to empirical evaluation and more closely aligned with the medical model of treatment.[8] We have seen that for Foucault power is a fluid entity and is not synonymous with constraint. Where there is power there is always resistance he believed. Against the background of current struggles, one is also reminded of the link that Foucault made between psychotherapy and social control and his view that within the therapeutic process the patient is subjected to a socially constructed regime of truth.[9] Current battles over what we might define as different regimes of truth in psychotherapy crystallize the fact that it is a highly contested area. They also crystallize the urgent need for a wide ranging and thoughtful engagement with issues of power in psychotherapy generally including those aspects that shape the therapist/client relationship: the need for thinking that might enhance our understanding of these processes and help us explore options for transcending their more restrictive aspects; and the need for theoretical perspectives that might help articulate a normative grounding for psychotherapy that is more appropriately attuned to contemporary relational concerns than the Kantian based individualist framework which currently prevails.

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[8] See Mace et al. (2001), Roth and Fonagy (2005), Goodheart et al. (2006) and Norcross et al. (2006) for consideration of the different dimensions of this debate.

[9] Chapter 5 pp. 121-5

We have seen that in Habermas' early work he drew on psychoanalysis as an epistemological paradigm for critical social theory in which recognition of the asymmetrical relationship between analyst and patient was central to his conceptualization.[10] Psychoanalysis understood in terms of a theory of distorted communication seeks out the meaning of distortions that have become inaccessible to the patient because they are split off or repressed. Explanation in the form of a reconstructed life history seeks to close the gap of memory and enable the patient to reflectively dissolve the causal connection between the original scene of conflict and his/her symptoms. It can do so only when the patient finds meaning in the explanatory interpretation offered and can use it to relate his/her own history. In the course of this experience there is an implicit realignment of power within the therapeutic relationship. A psychoanalytic interpretation does not give the analyst technical control over the patient's psyche. On the contrary by overcoming causal connections themselves, psychoanalysis gives power back to the patient's ego. For the early Habermas, psychoanalysis therefore offered an important paradigm for a form of knowledge and practical engagement revolving around methodical self- reflection which facilitated a more complete self reflection than would otherwise be possible.

Much has changed since the era of classical Freudian analysis which Habermas explored, yet arguably the shape of the relationship between the analyst and patient in the now dominant object relations tradition remains unchanged in important respects. The nature of interpretations may be of a different order with less focus on historical reconstruction and greater attention to the here and now of intrapsychic and interpersonal processes as played out in the transference relationship. But the overall shape of the intervention remains the same, including the asymmetrical relationship between analyst and patient; the dialectical relationship between the "objectivity" of the analyst and his/here subjective experience of the patient; the reliance on interpretation as a key method of intervention and the idea that interpretations offered possess validity to the extent that they are experienced as meaningful by the patient. To borrow Habermas' words, this remains a mode of practical engagement where "the subject cannot obtain knowledge of the object unless it becomes knowledge for the object- and

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[10] Chapter 4 pp. 89-95.

unless the latter therefore emancipates itself by becoming a subject" ([1968a]1978, p. 262).

In the course of earlier discussion of Habermas' dialogue with Gadamer, I made a case for the above epistemological paradigm drawn from classical psychoanalysis as interpreted by Habermas, as one that is applicable more widely within psychotherapy.[11] I did this on the basis that it allows for the methodological integration of explanation and understanding and is therefore more appropriate to the object domain of psychotherapy than an exclusively hermeneutical stance in terms of the space which it allows for recognition of systematic distortions in communication and the application of therapeutic methodology in addressing these difficulties. I also argued that therapeutic approaches which rely exclusively on a hermeneutical stance risk alienating clinicians from the expertise of their rich methodological inheritance. Implicitly an unhelpful schism is also set up with alternative orientations such as cognitive behavioural therapy where the discourse of method and technique is prominent. Habermas' epistemological paradigm offers a more inclusive and encompassing framework in which to formulate the different and dialectical strands of the therapeutic relationship. This paradigm has an added resonance insofar as it offers conceptual scaffolding for addressing the power structure of the therapeutic relationship and the possibilities for its transcendence within the internal logic of the therapeutic process. But here it should be emphasized that Habermas' account of the psychoanalytic process is a highly idealized version in which his primary interest is not psychoanalysis per se but the insights he can derive for critical social theory. His account is far removed from the not so ideal realities of psychotherapeutic clinical practice where issues of power are as likely to be obscured as they are to be addressed in the routine communication of the therapeutic session, and where an explication of psychotherapy's methodological status needs to be firmly anchored in consideration of the ethical underpinning of the therapeutic endeavour. To this end I turn to the subsequent development of Habermas' work in his theory of communicative ethics and its applicability in the therapeutic context.

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[11] Chapter 5 pp.78-82.

Towards a communicative ethical framework for psychotherapy

Following my observation of the disjuncture between individually slanted ethical deliberation and the relational thrust of wider psychotherapeutic theory and practice, I also noted an implicit straining towards a different formulation of ethics that is less individualistic and somewhat more focussed on the kinds of conversations we might have where matters of ethical import are discussed. Unfortunately lacking an adequate conceptual framework in which it might be explored, this thinking remains poorly developed and the gulf between a marginalized ethical debate and wider developments in the field persists. In this study I have focussed in particular on the relational ethos of psychoanalytic object relations thinking and the vigorously relational thrust of systemic family therapy. Whilst retaining much of its traditional intrapsychic focus it may be said that major strands of contemporary psychotherapy are now profoundly concerned with what happens between people and in particular what happens between them when they try to communicate, whether within the therapeutic relationship or within family relationships. In the case of family therapy, the intersubjective milieu of family relating becomes the primary focus of intervention. This is a place where, moment by moment, people discuss, sort out, negotiate - or fail to do so - about how "best" to live their lives together. Adopting the language of Habermas and Honneth we could describe it as a communicative context suffused by interpersonal struggles for understanding, agreement and recognition. Viewed from this perspective, a Kantian based morality anchored in the paradigm of the solitary individual and the personal struggles of individual conscience appears understandably remote from the intensity and immediacy of familial communication processes.

In Habermasian thinking he reformulates Kantian theory in line with the paradigmatic shift in twentieth century philosophy from individual consciousness to intersubjectivity and language. The focus of concern shifts from the isolated individual to the intersubjective community. Inner reflection is replaced by dialogue and a model of argumentation replaces the silent thought experiment of the Kantian categorical imperative. It is these paradigmatic changes that give Habermas' communicative ethical theory such a powerful resonance in relational psychotherapeutic practice. In Habermas' theory communication is stripped back to its most basic level and as such it speaks very powerfully to the psychotherapeutic endeavor understood as a "talking cure". Given the

relational thrust of current practice I have suggested it could be more appropriately termed the "communication cure" and Habermas' theory crystallizes the moral/ethical themes that are integral to the communicative process. In essence he reconstructs from a moral/ethical perspective the very minimal conditions that make communication possible on a routine basis and it is here that the interest of the philosopher/critical theorist and the psychotherapist coincide in this space where the minute details of why communication does or does not happen are explored.

For Habermas, ideas about ethics are fundamentally ideas about the kinds of conversations we might have in which matters of ethical import can be discussed and in which it might be possible to remove constraints to ongoing communication. We have seen that at the centre of his ethical theory is the rather simple yet profound idea that when we speak our utterances carry deep within them an ethical ideal, which transcends specific situations and which, he suggests, has a universal status. It is this ideal that Habermas reconstructs in his theory of communicative ethics. He focuses on what can rationally motivate a hearer to accept something as truth and concludes this is due to "the speaker's guarantee that he will, if necessary, make efforts to redeem the validity claim that the hearer has accepted (1990a, p. 58). To summarize very briefly for the present discussion, this redemption takes place at the level of "discourse" where we step back from our routine everyday communication to some extent in order to engage in a more reflective consideration of claims to truth or normative appropriateness. Habermas further suggests that each of us through our ordinary communicative competence implicitly holds an idea of the kind of discourse in which contested validity claims can be redeemed and his excavation of these implicit assumptions leads him to conclude that they represent communicatively based reformulations of such ideals as respect, equality and justice. These preconditions of discourse include the assumption that it is inclusive, that all participants are allowed to initiate and question assertions and that everyone is allowed to express their attitudes, desires and needs without being prevented by external or internal constraint from so doing. This ideal is immanent in the way we routinely draw on language and remains as an ideal that guides our communication rather than something we would ever realize fully in concrete situations. Psychotherapy understood as a communicative process is undoubtedly imbued with this ethical ideal which Habermas describes, even if it remains entirely implicit. I am arguing that at its best the psychotherapeutic endeavour could be understood as a form

of striving towards this communicatively formulated ideal. For some this will appear self evident without the need for theorization. Yet, arguably it is precisely the lack of explicit articulation and theorization of this regulative ideal anchored in communication that compromises and restricts its critical impact in clinical practice. I will elaborate on these points below.

There is much in Habermas' conceptualization of communicative ethics and discourse that resonates in the therapeutic context. At the outset his engagement with the breakdown of claims to truth, normative appropriateness and also truthfulness is echoed in most referrals for individual, couple or family therapy. Whether the referral is triggered by violence or abuse in the couple or family relationships, unfaithfulness by one of the partners, family breakdown and the impact on children, "inappropriate" or challenging behavior by a child inside or outside the family, the distress for individuals resulting from these historical or contemporary events and so on, it is hard to imagine a request for psychotherapy where questions concerning a problematic validity claim is not part of the background to the referral and the ensuing therapeutic conversation. Yet referrals and subsequent interventions are predominantly thought about in pragmatic and methodological terms and are rarely if ever considered in moral/ethical terms unless a clearly defined "ethical dilemma" arises, for example the need to break therapeutic confidentiality because of concern for somebody's well being or safety. In psychotherapeutic discourse it is fair to say that morality and ethics inhabit a space that is visited on special occasions only. In essence they are part of the taken for granted, mostly untheorized backdrop to routine work encapsulated in a document entitled Code of Ethics and Practice.[12]

This reification and marginalization of ethics in psychotherapy is undoubtedly reinforced by the enduring influence of a modernist perspective that locates morality and ethics, formulated as abstract ideals such as duty and respect, in the depoliticized domain of individual conscience and consciousness. It is a situation which is reinforced by processes of professionalization which further reify ethics as a specialist discourse addressed by expert ethics committees, complaints procedures, codes of ethics and so on. Writing about an allied profession, that of social work, Bauman (2000a, p. 9) makes

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[12] For example, see the Association for Family Therapy's Code of Ethics (2008) at http://www.aft.org.uk.

a point that could equally be applied to psychotherapy in organizational settings, namely that processes of bureaucratization squeeze ethics out of daily practice which in turn becomes distant from its original ethical impulse. This individualized and professionalized shaping of ethical discourse remains as we have seen, largely untouched by wider developments including the impact of postmodernist thinking in psychotherapy. In sharp contrast, the reification of morality and ethics is powerfully challenged in Habermas' work and when this is brought into dialogue with psychotherapy, his conceptual framework has the immediate and striking effect of anchoring our thinking about morality and ethics in contexts of everyday communication. Borrowing Bauman's (1993, p. 3) terminology from a different context, we might describe this as a process of "moralization", or perhaps more accurately of re-moralization, of the therapeutic encounter as a communicative endeavor. The power of this reframing is considerable and there are a number of implications following on from this which I shall consider here and in following chapters. I begin by locating the discussion in the context of clinical psychotherapy practice drawing on the example of child and family psychotherapy. This will lead into a more theoretically oriented exploration of the relevance of Habermas' thinking for psychotherapy in the following chapter before returning to the arena of clinical practice in the final chapter. It should be emphasized that the following discussion is being used only as an example of how Habermasian thinking about distortions in communication and the moral/ ethical implications that ensue, might be integrated into thinking about clinical issues. Beyond this it does not aspire to offer a comprehensive account of the clinical issues raised.

Towards a communicative ethical framework for child and family psychotherapy

In child and family mental health service provision within the UK National Health Service, psychotherapists routinely work in multidisciplinary teams alongside other professionals including medically trained psychiatrists and nurses. In this clinical setting much attention is focused on whether a child's particular symptoms of emotional, behavioral or learning difficulty meet criteria for various disorders as laid down in the

discourse of psychiatry.[13] This approach does not exclude other professional involvement and may well result in a recommendation for psychotherapy to address issues in the background to the referral including family relationship problems. Nonetheless it raises critical questions about the appropriateness of extensive reliance on a medical discourse of diagnosis in the field of child mental health and on treatment programmes that include widespread use of medication for children, as in the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) for example.[14] These are questions which take us well beyond the privacy of the clinical setting to the arena of social and political debate regarding contemporary society's engagement with children in difficulty

From a social theoretical perspective the pronounced trend towards diagnostic categorization of children brings to mind Bauman's (1989) observations on the relentless ordering and systematizing tendencies of modernity, the god like authority bestowed on these hegemonic systems of classification and the implicit question of what is excluded and unrecognized in this systematizing frame. One is also reminded of the Foucauldian ([1961]2006) link between the discourse of psychiatry and that of social control. From a Habermasian communicative ethical position one might enquire about systematic distortions in debate on child mental health issues and in particular the distorting influence of vested interests such as drug companies or professional organizations including the medical profession. These issues are not far from public consciousness and in the context of growing awareness of diagnostic trends relating to children, we find a newspaper article asking whether it is indicative of a society that is "less tolerant of difference and needs to medicalize unnormality".[15] Paradoxically these are critical questions that one is less likely to encounter in state funded clinical practice where the struggle to meet overwhelming demand and manage waiting lists for service tends to monopolize thinking processes. Given that systemic family therapists work predominantly in National Health Service child and family clinics, lack of engagement with these issues in the family therapy literature and debate is striking. Here one finds lone voices of concern or alternatively of interest in issues of diagnosis (Pentecost,

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[13] Psychiatric diagnoses are generally formulated in line with criteria as laid down in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manuel of Mental Disorders* (DSM- IV-TR, 2000) published by the American Psychiatric Association.

[14] See Baughman (2006) and Lloyd et al. (2006).

[15] *Does labelling children with behavioural problems such as ADHD help?* Times Newspaper, 16th February, 2009.

2000; Speed, 2004) but a marked absence of any systematic debate or critique. Instead the dominant stance appears to be one of deferential accommodation towards psychiatric diagnosis. It is a situation suffused with moral/ethical considerations even if these are not widely acknowledged and my argument is that bringing this subject, amongst others, into the framework of communicative ethics not only sheds light on its complexity but offers an invaluable anchor for moral/ethical debate both at a clinical level and at more overtly social and political levels.

It should be emphasized that the value of a psychiatric diagnosis or of treatment with medication in specific clinical situations is not the issue in question here but rather the communicative contexts in which these processes unfold. Systemic family therapy's accommodation to diagnostic trends is especially noteworthy given the marked disparity between the individualizing psychiatric diagnostic orientation with its emphasis on expertise on the one hand and the dominant postmodernist infused non- hierarchical, "unknowing" collaborative stance espoused in the family therapy literature on the other hand.[16] I have already argued that this latter stance obscures structures of power within the therapeutic relationship. Arguably an accommodation to diagnostic trends in the wider discourse of child mental health also masks silent support for this hierarchical, "knowing" approach notably where therapists are struggling to manage challenging clinical situations. When a child is presenting with extreme and out of control behavior, diagnosis and medication can come as a great relief not only to the family but to the psychotherapist, struggling to hold the situation in an exclusively therapeutic "talking" frame. The likely impact of a diagnosis is to lower anxiety levels within the family not simply because of the hope that symptomatic relief will follow but because of the misleading impression that it offers an explanation for the presenting problem. Paradoxically the latter is rarely the case and in the example of ADHD mentioned above, there is no exact aetiology, with expert opinion divided on the balance of environmental and genetic factors involved.[17] Nonetheless the inference sometimes taken from a diagnosis is that the condition is innate and need not be thought about within a relational frame. Unfortunately this can have the effect of prematurely shutting

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[16] Interestingly this silent accommodation by contemporary postmodernist infused systemic family therapy to individualizing diagnostic trends is also in marked contrast to the early pioneering days of what is known as first order or modernist family therapy, which emerged in the context of vigorous disengagement from the individualizing ethos of classical psychoanalysis at that time (See Chapter 3).

[17] See Biederman (2005), Joseph (2000) and Rowland et al. (2002).

down the therapeutic exploratory conversation either partially or completely. In the words of the systemic therapist, Bebe Speed: "Diagnosis talk doesn't have to be used to shut down exploration but in my experience it often does" (2004, p. 276).

When a diagnosis is confirmed as in the example of ADHD, then it is likely that medication to address the child's behavioral symptoms will follow. This does not rule out therapeutic "talking" for the child and family also aimed at addressing emotional and behavioral problems and running parallel to the pharmacological treatment. This dual approach is routinely recommended. However the diagnosis powerfully sets the tone for the therapeutic work. In the case of family therapy where a child in the family is carrying a diagnosis belonging to a separate individually oriented discourse, it may well run counter to the family therapist's efforts to address complex relational issues in the family, perhaps between the child and the parents or within the parental relationship, that may also be impacting significantly on the child's difficulties. In a climate where positivist thinking and the medical model of diagnosis and treatment prevail it can be difficult for psychotherapists to acknowledge or even conceptualize the challenge this presents for their work and the lack of comprehensive critical engagement with these issues in contemporary family therapy literature is very striking.

Whilst the clinical therapeutic challenges described above are not insurmountable and the value of a psychiatric diagnosis can be considerable, a communicative ethical framework concentrates attention very powerfully on the communicative processes in which this work unfolds and decisions are reached. In particular it concentrates attention on relations of power which infuse this communication. For example parents and teachers may put pressure on mental health professionals to offer a diagnosis and medication whilst being less eager to consider their contribution to the particular unfolding of the presenting problem and the part they may need to play in its resolution. The question of whether the voice of the child is adequately represented in these discussions is brought more sharply into focus in a communicative ethical framework encompassing Habermas' reconstruction of the minimal conditions that need to be met for undistorted communication. Where a child is involved they will commonly require help to have a voice but this is not a reason to exclude them. Habermas' regulative ideal of the conditions of "discourse" offers a yardstick against which actual communication may be judged and concentrates attention on whose interests are being served in this

communication. It is a regulative ideal which leaves little room for complacency about communicative contexts in which important decisions regarding a child's life are made.

For the psychotherapist working alongside colleagues in multi disciplinary teams who adopt a different and sometimes more hierarchical professional ethos it can be difficult to take a stand on clinical issues that concern them. Drawing on the regulative ideal of discourse ethics, they may feel encouraged to do so since it offers a framework in which to locate their intuitive sense of distortions in the communicative process and thus lends itself to feeling empowered to address these issues more openly and rationally. Perhaps more importantly it also presents a challenge to psychotherapists themselves whose vested interest in the diagnostic process may be informed by an underlying interest in closing down the therapeutic conversation because it feels unproductive, emotionally overwhelming or outside their area of expertise. These are good reasons for opening up a conversation with colleagues about the challenges of the work but not necessarily good reasons for closing down the therapeutic conversation. The process by which these matters are resolved in professional discussions are often subtly strategic whereas a communicative ethical framework challenges those involved to push for further critical or radical opening up of the communicative processes in which these complex matters are addressed.

Psychotherapists drawing on a postmodernist influenced conceptual framework as outlined in earlier discussion, lack a mediating discourse between their "unknowing", collaborative and narrative based ethos and the hierarchical, medical paradigm adopted by other professionals in the wider discourse of mental health service provision. The result is that the separate professional discourses rest alongside each other whilst contradictions and tensions remain unarticulated. The onus appears to rest with the individual psychotherapist drawing on his/her personal moral code to confront situations that feel intuitively inappropriate. Writing on a similar theme Pilgrim's (2000) assessment is blunt:

> Recording and generating one narrative after another will not suffice in this regard. Some notion of hard reality and its impact on mental health status is required as a point of reference to understand the role of mental health professionals and to guide social policy decisions to prevent or ameliorate mental distress. To rely on postmodernism may simply help professionals to feel

> that they are being hip about a new de-differentiated world, whilst enjoying their salaries and status in much the same way as their predecessors. (pp. 21-2)

Pilgrim's blunt comments underline that in the discourse of mental health suffused as it is with relations of power and moral/ethical/political considerations, taking a stand is sometimes what is required. For psychotherapists drawing on the mediating discourse of Habermasian communicative ethics there is little room for accommodation or complacency regarding distortions in the communicative framework in which their work is located including the possibility of inappropriate diagnosis and medicalization of psychological distress. This ethical framework is also more conducive to taking a stand and having confidence to do so since its regulative ideal is no longer anchored exclusively at the level of individual conscience. Taking a stand that is rooted in the framework of communicative ethics might set the therapist on a collision course with deeply entrenched structures of distorted communication in their own practice or within the wider institutional and social context of this practice. Conversely it may be welcomed by other professionals who are on the frontline of pressure to offer a diagnostic/labelling response to children in difficulty and who may experience relief at being supported in opening up a therapeutic conversation with families and others involved, rather than feeling pressurized to follow a path that closes down or compromises this possibility. More than any of the theoretical traditions explored in this study to which psychotherapy refers for inspiration, Habermas' communicative ethical framework offers a theoretical context in which these complex moral/ ethical issues might be formulated and addressed.

Whilst Habermas' ethical framework is potentially very helpful in considering processes of distorted communication in the wider context of engagement with clients and with other institutions and professionals, as has been argued above, it is in the actual therapeutic intervention itself that its full potential is crystallized. Here its contribution can be formulated on two levels: firstly in addressing structures of distorted communication that individuals and families bring with them to the therapeutic conversation and secondly in promoting developments that may enhance their capacity to engage in the discursive resolution of the difficulties that have brought them to therapy. For Habermas "discourses are islands in the sea of practice, that is improbable forms of communication; the everyday appeal to validity-claims implicitly points however to their possibility" (1982, p. 235). Psychotherapeutic encounters at their best

might also be described as "islands in the sea of practice" that constitutes individual or family life. Here, some of the constraints that routinely infuse everyday life can temporarily be challenged or cast aside in a context which - as in Habermas' idea of discourse - is characterized by striving towards what might be described as a heightened or reflexive form of communication. It is here that psychotherapy implicitly seeks to unleash the full communicative potential of language. Fostering clients' or families' capacity for reflexivity is at the heart of this process and in what follows I will turn to an explication of reflexivity as it applies in psychotherapy and in social theory. The context for this discussion is the continued elaboration of the relevance of Habermasian communicative ethics for psychotherapy.

Chapter 8

Psychotherapy as a reflexive resource: shared ground in systemic and psychoanalytic approaches

Within psychotherapeutic discourse there have been surprisingly few attempts to make connections with Habermas' communicative ethics. As with other philosophical and social theoretical sources, connections that are made tend to be superficial, consisting of little more than passing reference (Flaskas, 2002; Frosh, 1999). Some of this indifference may be down to the complexity and abstraction of Habermas' writings, but it is more likely that it is influenced by the "postmodern turn" of recent decades in psychotherapy and the fact that Habermas' work is positioned outside the postmodernist fold.[1] The few contributions that demonstrate a more sustained attempt to connect with his work tend to be peripheral to mainstream debate including that on ethics, and are articulated by what might be described as lone voices, typically writing from a context other than clinical practice. Of these, two that stand out are: Steuerman's (2000) dialogue between Habermas, Lyotard and Melanie Klein; and Bennett's (2005) analysis of "the purpose of counselling and psychotherapy", in which he draws extensively from Habermasian theory. Previously I have mentioned Steuerman's perspective on the emotional vacuum in Habermas' work and her view that psychoanalytic thinking has the potential to complement his theory.[2] She writes from a philosophical, rather than a psychotherapeutic perspective and her primary interest appears to be not so much in psychoanalytic theory per se but in how it might be integrated into other theoretical contexts. Steuerman does not engage with current debates in psychotherapeutic discourse beyond her largely uncritical account of Kleinian theory.

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[1] Loewenthal and Snell (2003), writing from a postmodernist perspective within psychotherapy, engage very briefly with Habermasian theory and reveal a complete misunderstanding of the latter when they link it with the positivist orientation of mainstream psychotherapeutic discourse in the following statement: "A Habermasian, late-modern way of thinking has, however, won in important respects in the world of psychotherapy. At the start of the twenty- first century psychotherapy would seem increasingly to have gone down the path of empiricism, as can be seen, for example in cognitive-behavioural thinking, which tacitly privileges that which is measurable and outcome- based." (p.181).

[2] Chapter 4 p. 94

Another noteworthy and unusual contribution to this debate is that of Bennett (2005), who emphasizes that the context in which he writes is neither academic nor clinical. Whilst he is not a psychotherapist, his experience as manager and trustee with a large counselling service in the voluntary sector both at local and national level has brought him into close contact with the challenges facing therapeutic services in the UK and the extent to which organisational decisions are determined by pragmatic criteria in the absence of an overarching sense of the purpose of counselling and psychotherapy. He turns to Habermas' work in search of a philosophical underpinning for these activities and offers a commendably accessible account of communicative ethics and how it might connect in very broad terms with psychotherapeutic concerns. Whilst there is common ground between his analysis and the focus of this study, Bennett's work is hampered by his position outside clinical practice and his application of theory to clinical contexts can appear overly simplistic. His analysis also lacks significant critical engagement with Habermas' theory and mostly isolates the latter from wider debates and developments in philosophy and social theory to which it belongs. This contributes to the impression of a somewhat reified theory being applied to psychotherapeutic contexts as distinct from a critical dialogue being fostered. His views are firmly rooted in the voluntary sector and are unlikely to be shared by many in the field, notably his view of counselling as a "social movement" that is being unhelpfully drawn into the framework of a service industry and profession. He understates the extent to which counselling and psychotherapy have always shown conformist tendencies, and the complexity and challenge in drawing out their "social movement" potential. The best that may be said of his view that psychotherapy could potentially contribute to what he terms "a new social order" is that it requires much more rigorous analysis than is offered, to protect it from the criticism of appearing overly idealistic. Whilst it is unlikely to speak to the clinical preoccupations of the majority of psychotherapists, Bennett's analysis of the relevance of Habermasian thinking for psychotherapy nonetheless shares some common ground with this study and will be referred to again.

A third contribution to this debate which merits attention is that of Stephen Kubacki (1994), an American psychologist. His paper, Applying Habermas' theory of communicative action to values in psychotherapy, offers a microscopic analysis of how strands of Habermas' theory of communicative action and ethics connect with psychotherapeutic interventions. His particular focus is the relevance of the validity

claims of appropriateness and truthfulness in the therapeutic context. Given that it is written from a position of familiarity with clinical issues this contribution has some advantage over those mentioned above and as such it will also inform later discussion to a limited extent. Unfortunately Kubacki's contribution is severely restricted not only by the need to condense complex ideas into one paper, but by an uncritical and reified application of Habermasian theory, abstracted from its own theoretical context, in which much of the richness of this thinking is lost or reduced. As with the other contributions there is little if any sense of a critical dialogue between the discourses of critical theory and psychotherapy and therefore the application of Habermasian thinking to practice situations can appear formulaic.

The contribution which perhaps has most in common with this study comes from an allied discipline, social work. Here a number of theorists have been drawn to Habermas' work as a framework both for exploring the normative basis of social work and for challenging the current high levels of regulation and proceduralization of the social work task (Blaug, 1995; Lorenz, 2004; Hayes and Houston, 2007; Houston, 2009, 2010a, 2010b). Prominent amongst these contributors is Houston, who in a number of insightful articles makes links between Habermasian thinking, Honneth's recognition theory and social work practice. Whilst there is much of value in this contribution, a major limitation from the perspective of this study arises from the different practice based priorities of social work and psychotherapy. Foremost amongst these is the explicit statutory powers held by social work to influence and determine the course of a client's life, for example in situations where a child is removed from his/her parents and placed for adoption. Houston's main focus is on the communicative contexts in which decisions or recommendations of this order are made and on the potential for Habermas' regulative ideal of discourse to serve as a "moral yardstick" in securing a relatively egalitarian communicative framework for discussion and decision making. He is also very clear on the need for Habermasian theory to be supplemented by Honneths's recognition theory in these practice contexts. One of the key differences between Houston's arena of application and psychotherapy is that in the latter, moral/ethical and political themes are normally more subtle and buried in contrast to social work's explicit engagement with the dual functions of social care and social control. Given what we might describe as its greater proximity to the moral/political coalface, arising from its statutory function notably in child protection and adult mental health practice, it

is perhaps not surprising that social work has traditionally been more concerned than psychotherapy with theorizing and critiquing its value base. Houston (2010a) challenges the individualistic bias of this value base and in particular its contemporary manifestation in social work in the neo-liberal ideology of "personalization".[3] He contrasts this with the Habermasian idea of ethics as grounded in processes of communication and in that sense there are significant parallels between his work and this study.[4]

What distinguishes this study from those outlined above is that it is written from a UK based clinical psychotherapy perspective. It explores the theme of ethics in psychotherapy in detail and offers a critique of postmodernist, post-structuralist and hermeneutical influences relating to ethical debate, or more specifically their lack of impact on this debate. The overall discussion is framed in terms of a dialogue between critical theory and psychotherapy and connects extensively with debates in both discourses. It seeks to avoid the formulaic application of a reified critical theory to psychotherapeutic practice and focuses instead on developing critical discussion between the two perspectives. Whilst acknowledging and drawing on the insights of the above contributions to a limited extent, it therefore aspires to a deeper and more comprehensive engagement with the subject. To this end the discussion now moves to consider the concept of reflexivity which serves as an important mediating or bridging concept between social theory and psychotherapy. In what follows I explore the meaning of reflexivity in both contexts and argue that each can enrich the other. In concluding this discussion I underline the importance of Honneth's recognition theory as a supplement to Habermas' discourse ethics and argue that the moral grammar of the psychotherapeutic encounter can be framed in terms of the struggle for mutual understanding and agreement and the struggle for recognition and that both can be anchored in Habermasian thinking around a communicative ethics.

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[3] Houston's (2010a) critique of "personalization" and the related theme of "individualization" builds on an earlier contribution by Ferguson (2007) to this debate within the social work literature.
[4] Houston (2009) acknowledges this connection also with reference to a previously published article by the author of this study (Donovan, 2003a) which addresses the marginalization of ethics in contemporary postmodernist influenced family therapy.

Reflexivity in psychotherapy

Whilst this concept is much in vogue in postmodernist influenced psychotherapeutic discourse, its meaning can be surprisingly hard to pin down and the use of slightly different terminology in the different therapeutic approaches further complicates the issue. It is a theme that runs through the various attempts to apply Habermasian thinking in psychotherapeutic contexts discussed above, but only in Bennett's work is it discussed explicitly. For Bennett (2005), reflexivity is equated with "self-awareness" and he quotes with approval Williams' (1993) observation that "there is no way back from reflectiveness" (p. 163, quoted by Bennett, 2005, p. 70). In his view this captures something of the essential nature of reflexivity as that which we cannot step back from consciously once it is achieved. He then moves on immediately to discuss the decentred self and the idea of self identity as a reflexive project, drawing on social theoretical perspectives including that of Giddens (1991). Missing from his discussion is an account of the rich engagement with this subject in psychotherapeutic discourse which, as we have seen in Chapter 3, is shared between systemic and psychoanalytic orientations and which will now be revisited to locate it within the present dialogue with Habermasian theory.[5] An understanding of what reflexivity means in psychotherapy is an important first step in considering how social theory might enhance this understanding. Conversely it is the first step in demonstrating that psychotherapeutic engagement with reflexivity can also contribute to social theoretical formulations.

Whilst the dictionary definition of reflexivity simply refers to the idea of something directed back upon itself or its own operations,[6] in psychotherapy the common denominator in its various formulations appears to be the idea of flexible thinking and talking processes that can easily and creatively move between different levels of meaning and communication. This is in contrast to the rigid, concrete thinking regularly encountered in those seeking psychotherapeutic help and which can be the source of so much psychological distress both for them and their relational network. Here the connection with Habermas' idea of the speaker's competence to move between different levels of communication and specifically between communicative action and discourse is clear. Adopting Habermasian terminology one might describe these peoples' capacity

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[5] Chapter 3 pp.80-1.
[6] Sykes (1982) *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*.

to move from their immersion in communicative action to a discursive consideration of problematic validity claims as severely restricted. In essence it is this connection that lies at the heart of my endeavour to link Habermas' thinking with psychotherapy. I am arguing that the central strand of contemporary psychotherapeutic intervention that is concerned with promoting reflexivity in thinking and talking processes can also be framed as an endeavour that addresses restricted communicative capability to move between the levels of communication identified in Habermas' ethical theory. Psychotherapy is not commonly conceptualized in the latter terms however and therefore the moral/ethical dimension of communicative processes, theorized in the framework of communicative ethics, is more likely to be obscured by considerations of methodology and technique.

In systemic psychotherapy, reflexivity is generally understood as a process in which one is both performing and, at the same time, audience to one's own performance. Oliver (2005) observes that, "when we practise reflexivity we make choices about how we will think and act. We become responsible and accountable for our choices, our actions, and our contributions to a relational system" (p. 3). The systemic family therapist, Karl Tomm (1887a, 1987b) thinks of it in terms of the family's ability to make connections between different levels of meaning and as a therapist he works towards developing this capacity using a style of interviewing known as reflexive questioning, previously discussed.[7] As we have seen, another key technique in family therapy that is seen to enhance reflexivity is the use of reflecting teams and reflecting processes. For Hoffman (1993) these are all examples of therapeutic formats that fold back upon themselves. In the reflecting team approach for example, the observing team of therapists is no longer a protected species, surveying the family anonymously from behind a one way screen. Now the family has the chance to reflect back on the team's reflections in a recursive spiral.

Crucially this thinking about reflexivity in systemic therapy and its impact on therapeutic technique is firmly embedded in the influential postmodernist framework that emphasizes equality between therapist and client/ family. Continuing her account of reflexivity, Hoffman writes:

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[7] Chapter 3 p. 73.

> The developments around the reflecting team, the use of reflecting conversations and reflexive questioning, the prevalence of "co" prefixes to describe a therapeutic conversation ("co-author", "co-evolve") indicate a preference for a mutually influenced process between consultant and inquirer as opposed to one that is hierarchical and unidirectional. (1993, p. 127)

As argued previously this idealization of the therapeutic relationship as a co-constructed entity and the implication that structural inequalities between therapist and client might be cast aside by the addition of "co" prefixes, by adopting an "uncertain" style of conversation and so on, is a highly problematic aspect of postmodernist influenced psychotherapy. Creative thinking around the concept of reflexivity needs disentangling from this unhelpful fusion with the postmodernist stance, or more accurately a psychotherapeutic postmodernist stance narrowly delineated in opposition to earlier modernist "hierarchical" approaches.

We have seen that systemic psychotherapy evolved historically in contexts of making sense of the difficulties of those not readily amenable to a classical analytical insight oriented approach. Whilst seeking relief from their suffering they did not necessarily view the interpretation of intrapsychic conflict as part of this process. Over the years, a rich repertoire of alternative techniques to that of analytic interpretation of unconscious processes emerged, which are focussed on helping people develop a capacity to stand back and reflect on their difficulties as part of the change process. Within systemic discourse this capacity, as well as the techniques designed to enhance it such as the reflecting team, are now conceptualized under the heading of reflexivity and as discussed above are firmly anchored in postmodernist thinking. Unfortunately this masks recognition of important continuity with earlier "modernist" systemic theory and technique which sought to address similar difficulties using interventions that can be regarded as precursors of current "postmodernist" approaches. The oppositional framing of modernist and postmodernist thinking in systemic discourse masks recognition of this continuity and further underlines the need to disentangle the concept of reflexivity from this oppositional frame so that its creative potential can be more fully explored and developed. One way of reinforcing this point is by underlining common ground between the emphasis on reflexivity in systemic psychotherapy and similar thinking within the psychoanalytic model of mentalization or reflective functioning (eg. Fonagy and Target, 1996, 1998, 2003) that has developed outside the postmodernist fold within

psychoanalysis, and which is closely connected to traditional Winnicottian object relations theory.

Similarity between the systemic concept of reflexivity and the psychoanalytic concept of reflective functioning is striking. This similarity might loosely be described as a shared interest in engaging clients in the reflexive process of thinking and talking about their thinking and talking and in helping those for whom this reflexive capacity is deeply compromised. Echoing the historical development of systemic psychotherapy, the psychoanalytic model of mentalization has emerged in recent times in recognition of the therapeutic needs of people not readily amenable to a classical interpretative analytic approach; people variously described as unpsychologically minded, as concrete thinkers or as not ready for analytic interpretations. In a previous era they were often deemed unsuitable for psychoanalytic intervention. The concept of mentalization refers to the capacity to conceptualise mental processes in self and others, which is sometimes referred to as having a "theory of mind": that is, the ability to interpret one's own and others' actions in terms of mental states including thoughts, feelings, beliefs, desires, intentions and so on. The psychoanalytic model of mentalization is an attempt to formulate and understand difficulty in this area, drawing on a developmental psychological perspective. As discussed earlier, it is suggested that in early childhood the infant exists in a psychic equivalence mode in which ideas or perceptions are experienced as exact replicas of reality. This oscillates with the pretend mode that is characteristic of the child's play in which ideas are experienced as representational but are not thought to have a direct relationship to the outside world as such. In the optimal developmental situation these two modes are eventually integrated and mental states begin to be experienced as representations. Inner and outer realities become linked and the capacity to mentalize is laid down. (Fonagy and Target, 1996)

In people who demonstrate very rigid and concrete thinking patterns the capacity to mentalize, including the capacity to play with thoughts, ideas and other mental phenomena is markedly absent. The link between this capacity and psychological well being is demonstrated in the fact that people with significant difficulties in this area frequently present in therapy in states of acute distress and experience severe problems with affect regulation. They often carry a diagnosis of narcissistic or borderline personality disorder. Psychotherapeutic interventions with this client group can be

technically very challenging given their difficulty with insight oriented interventions. However this rather extreme clinical manifestation should not obscure the fact that in everyday life, deficits in reflexivity/reflective functioning are also very common, if not the norm, and can impact significantly on relationships notably in terms of difficultly with empathizing and placing oneself in the shoes of the other. Clearly this is an area of psychotherapeutic theorizing that underlines the challenge in drawing on communicative ethics as delineated by Habermas, in real life contexts. This applies notably to Habermas' principle of universalization which specifies that in contexts of "discourse" each participant must assume the perspective of all others, a principle that echoes Mead's concept of "ideal role-taking".[8] More generally this is an area of psychotherapeutic thinking that intersects with wider social theoretical engagement with the phenomenon of narcissism which I shall discuss later. The model of mentalization underlines the prevalence of deficits in reflexive capacity to engage with the minds of others which may reinforce narcissistic tendencies as well as undermining ordinary competence to participate in the kinds of discursive exchanges specified in Habermasian theory.

Central to the psychoanalytic theory of mentalization is the view that the acquisition of the capacity to mentalize is rooted in the intersubjective process that unfolds between an infant and his/her parents. Current thinking in this area is strongly influenced by Winnicottian object relations theory which we previously considered, including Honneth's engagement with this theory.[9] Here it is important to emphasize that the theory of mentalization also represents an important development beyond Winnicott. This has implications for Honneth's theory since we can no longer think of "basic self confidence" as offering an adequate account of what emerges from primary relations of mutual recognition. On the contrary what becomes clear from current thinking is that what we might describe as our very capacity for reflexivity is laid down in primary relationships. It is hypothesized that in the early child/carer relationship the child internalises the experience of being thought about by the emotionally containing parent with whom he/she interacts and in situations of good enough parenting this eventually leads to the consolidation of the child's own capacity for reflective functioning or mentalization. Fonagy and Target (1998), who have developed the psychoanalytic

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8 See Joas (1985); Habermas (1990a, p. 65); Mead, ([1934]1974).
9 Chapter 6 pp. 150-2

model of mentalization, point to evidence suggesting that trauma and maltreatment impair the child's mentalizing capacity and an important focus for therapeutic intervention with such patients is the offer of space where thinking about ideas and feelings can be experienced as safe, perhaps for the first time.[10]

Within the psychoanalytic model of mentalization, the focus is on helping the patient to gradually learn that mental experience involves representations that can be thought about, talked about, played with, loosened up and changed. It entails a way of working that has, therefore, much in common with the systemic practitioner's focus on increasing reflexivity in the family's thinking and talking processes; notably, through the use of reflexive and circular questioning and reflecting teams/reflecting processes which are designed to loosen up fixed patterns of thinking, communication, perception and belief. In both orientations the emphasis is on increasing space for people to adopt an observer perspective in relation to themselves, their families and their world generally. Borrowing from the language of philosophy and social theory one might describe these interventions as having the ultimate goal of producing a "heightened sense of reflexivity" (Kögler, 1999, p. 266). The psychoanalytic perspective on mentalization also has much in common with earlier object relations thinking in that both reflect a shift towards moral concerns: both try to conceptualize the developmental basis of our human capacity to recognize mental states in others and ourselves and to engage for example with states of hurt or suffering in the other; both perspectives also underline the privileging of intersubjectivity and communication in current therapeutic practice and the focus on helping those for whom communication is profoundly limited and distorted. The pivotal status of the model of mentalization rests on the fact that it offers a developmental psychological perspective on why some people have seriously impaired mentalizing or reflective functioning capacity which, in systemic discourse, would be described in terms of their capacity for reflexivity.

Central to both systemic and psychoanalytic perspectives is the view that reflexivity or reflective function is deeply rooted in intersubjective contexts and should not be conflated with insight, introspection or self reflection although it may be seen as underpinning these processes. In his systemic interventions, Tomm emphasizes that

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[10] Fonagy and Target (1998) cite evidence from Beeghly and Cicchetti (1994), Cicchetti and Beeghly (1987), Schneider-Rosen and Cicchetti (1984, 1991).

"change occurs as a result of alterations in the organisation and structure of the family's pre-existing system of meanings….the basic mechanism of change is not insight but reflexivity" (1987b, p. 172). Fonagy and Target (1998) similarly emphasise that the capacity to mentalize should not be conflated with introspection or self-reflection. It is rooted in procedural type knowledge and is understood as an automatic process invoked in interpreting human action, unlike introspection. Holmes (2005) refers to mentalization as a "meta- cognitive" phenomenon" (p. 180) and describes the mentalization approach as "designed to help establish reflective capacity, before the traditional aim of insight-promotion can be pursued" (p. 195). Difficulties in the area of reflective functioning point to a structural deficit in the thinking apparatus and unless addressed, normal psychoanalytic interpretation of unconscious content is unlikely to be helpful. The overarching psychotherapeutic focus is therefore defined in terms of the recovery of mentalizing capacity. This can subsequently facilitate the move to a more straightforwardly interpretative approach focussed on unconscious material as the patient's capacity for this level of self reflective endeavour increases.

We may conclude that within psychotherapeutic discourse, reflexivity/reflective functioning on the one hand and self reflection on the other hand are not synonymous. Here it also needs acknowledging that whilst this distinction is made, it is generally very poorly delineated and there is widespread imprecise and interchangeable use of these terms. From the above discussion however the implication is that the capacity for reflexivity/reflective functioning may be integral to self reflection but it is also "meta" to the latter process. This is important because it challenges the conflation of reflexivity with "self awareness" as in Bennett's (2005) account. To conflate them is to miss the complexity and richness of reflexivity as it is formulated in psychotherapeutic discourse. Crucially it also minimizes the vigorously intersubjectivist framing of this concept and shrinks the possibilities for connecting this thinking with perspectives in social theory which I shall consider below.

Throughout this study a key theme has been the problematic nature of the oppositional divide between modernist and postmodernist perspectives in psychotherapy. This divide obscures deep rooted shared difficulty in both camps, notably relating to the subject of ethics and results in a creatively stuck situation in which the individualizing tendencies of modernist ethical perspectives are largely replicated in postmodernist formulations.

This argument was elaborated within a critique of contemporary approaches in systemic psychotherapy that are loosely termed postmodernist. Subsequent analysis of post-structualist, postmodernist and hermeneutical influences, drawing on Habermasian thinking, pointed to the limitations of these theoretical influences in psychotherapy notably relating to ethical themes. But it was also observed that the highly oppositional tone of Habermas' critique masks recognition of at least some common ground or complementarity between these perspectives and his own critical theoretical stance. This applies notably to the Habermas/ Foucault debate. Had it not been for the premature death of Foucault, it now seems highly unlikely that this debate would have remained on the confrontational footing on which it began and as noted, a case is now made by some commentators for their encounter as representing less oppositional, more complementary positions.[11]

Subsequent discussion of Bauman and Honneth also revealed the evolving relationship between postmodernist and critical theory, with the former showing a pronounced "ethical turn" whilst the latter addresses, what Honneth terms the "ethical challenge of postmodernism" encapsulated in the principle of care or concern for the Other. The wider context of this evolving dialogue is well captured by Delanty (2000):

> If modernity was about the centrality of the Self, postmodernity reflects a turning to the Other. From a concern with equality – a struggle for the recognition of the sameness of the Self and the Other – postmodernity is about the struggle for the recognition of difference. (p. 150)

Viewed from this perspective, the futility of persisting in a view of the modernity/ postmodernity divide as representing hostile, oppositional camps is clear, and the challenge becomes one of identifying possibilities for the creative combination of both. This is the challenge that presents itself to psychotherapy and nowhere is this more apparent than in the debate about ethics. We have seen that in the context of an oppositional modernist/ postmodernist divide this debate has been allowed to atrophy and become mired in the cul de sac of professional ethics. Whilst it is argued in this study that Habermasian thinking on a communicative ethics has much to offer, this argument is put forward not in opposition to the postmodernist perspective but in a spirit of searching for an ethical standpoint that might complement, or transcend the

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[11] Chapter 5 p. 127.

limitations of current postmodernist thinking in psychotherapy whilst giving due acknowledgment to creative methodological continuity across the modernism/postmodernism divide. We have seen that the concept of reflexivity is central to current psychotherapeutic concerns and challenges and in what follows it is argued that this concept also holds the key to a constructive dialogue between psychotherapy and Habermas' theory of communicative ethics. I begin this discussion with a short outline of reflexivity as it formulated in social theory.

Reflexivity in social theory

Within psychotherapy, perspectives on reflexivity are underpinned by a distinction between flexible forms of thinking or communicating and more concrete, rigid manifestations. Within social theory, reflexivity encompasses somewhat similar themes including at a very simple level, the idea that we think increasingly about the conditions in which we now live as constructed by ourselves rather than as representative of a natural order. Social theorists have become especially focussed on reflexivity as the appeal of the paradigm of reflection associated with the decontextualized subject of modernist philosophy has waned. Thinking about reflexivity underlines the situated character of reflection and it is seen as a defining feature of the contemporary world. In the work of Melucci (1989, 1996a, 1996b) it includes the idea of complex human societies experiencing themselves as capable of learning and in that sense also experiencing themselves as constructed entities. Delanty (1999) observes that this perspective incorporates an emancipatory moment since its constructivist slant reveals potential for creative change. In Melucci's work reflexivity is closely tied to thinking about "new" social movements and their potential to represent a politics of reflexivity through the construction of collective identities and the articulation of struggles for recognition. The theme of the reflexive potential inherent in communicative action is also integral to Habermasian theory and underpins his idea of discourse ethics in which we stand back from routine communication and enter into a discursive redemption of validity claims. Whilst Habermas has been criticized for the abstract, decontextualized quality of his ethical theory it does allow for supplementation by analyses that are more closely tied to historical and practical concerns. In this study what is most helpful about recent thinking on reflexivity both in social theory and in psychotherapy is the bridge that it provides between Habermas' abstract model of discourse ethics and the everyday

life contexts in which psychotherapy is immersed. To this end my focus is on analyses within social theory that offer a broadly based perspective on reflexivity and reflexive forms of communication and that offer a mediating framework for dialogue between discourse ethics and psychotherapeutic concerns. The work of Anthony Giddens (1991, 1992) and specifically his focus on psychotherapy and allied themes within the context of reflexive modernization, renders his contribution of particular interest.

In the introduction to their seminal text, *Reflexive Modernization* (1994), Beck, Giddens and Lash frame their thinking as an attempt to break the stranglehold of the protracted modernity/postmodernity debate which they judge as wearisome and as having produced little by way of conceptual innovation. However they also acknowledge significant differences even amongst themselves in how reflexivity is understood and as in psychotherapy, we find that within social theory generally, a precise meaning is hard to pin down. Lash's introductory remarks in his contribution to Reflexive Modernization (1994), serve as a useful point of entry to the subject. Building on the contributions from Beck and Giddens, he enquires what happens when modernity begins to reflect on itself. "What happens when modernization, understanding its own excesses and vicious spiral of destructive subjugation (of inner, outer and social nature) begins to take itself as object of reflection?" (p. 112). The response he uncovers is that the "self-reflexivity of modernity" can be seen as a development that is immanent to the modernization process itself:

> In the late twentieth century, if modernization as economic growth is to be possible, the work- force must acquire substantial information-processing abilities and thus must be highly educated. The framework of problem-solving, questioning and the like involved in this education process is also a condition of acquisition of the sort of knowledge that can be turned as rational critique upon the "system" itself. If modernization presupposes increased individualization, then these individuals- less controlled by tradition and convention- will be increasingly free also to be in heterodox opposition to the dystopic consequences of modernization. (p. 113)

Continuing his elucidation of reflexivity whilst drawing on the work of his co-authors, Lash distinguishes structural reflexivity from self-reflexivity. In very simple terms, structural reflexivity refers to the idea of agency, freed from the constraints of social structure, reflecting on its social conditions of existence whilst in self- reflexivity, agency reflects on itself. Giddens' analyses in Modernity and Self Identity (1991) and

The Transformation of Intimacy (1992) are notable contributions to the subject of self reflexivity, focussing as they do on the contemporary shift to autonomous monitoring of personal and relationship narratives. Within this twofold categorization of structural reflexivity and self-reflexivity another distinction is introduced which concerns the role of "expert-systems" and Lash observes that here his co-authors, diverge. Whereas for Beck, reflexivity in modernity involves greater potential freedom from expert systems both at the levels of structural and self-reflexivity, for Giddens reflexivity in modernity comes via a double hermeneutic in which one medium of interpretation is the social agent whilst the second is expert-systems. In Giddens' framework self-reflexivity is seen as unfolding via direct or indirect engagement with expert systems that, significantly in the context of this study, include psychotherapy.

In my earlier discussion of reflexivity as it is taken up in psychotherapeutic discourse, the distinction between this concept and self reflection was underlined and in the theory of reflexive modernization the distinction between reflexivity and conscious reflection is also addressed. This applies notably in the work of Beck. Refuting Lash's charge that his theory is based on a cognitively foreshortened concept of reflection, Beck emphasizes that reflexive modernization "does not imply (as the adjective "reflexive" might suggest) reflection, but (first) self-confrontation". In the transition from the industrial to the risk period of modernity, reflexive modernization encapsulates the idea of self-confrontation with the effects of risk society. We are, in his words, "living in the age of side effects".

> Let us call the autonomous, undesired, and unseen transition from industrial to risk society *reflexivity* (to differentiate it from and contrast it with *reflection*). Then 'reflexive modernization' means self confrontation with the effects of risk society that cannot be dealt with and assimilated in the system of industrial society- as measured by the latter's institutionalized standards. The fact that this constellation may later, in a second stage, in turn become the object of (public, political and scientific) reflection must not obscure the unreflected, quasi-autonomous mechanism of the transition. (p. 6, his emphasis)

For Beck, there is a sharp distinction between conscious reflection and the unintended reflexivity of modernity and whilst the latter can lead to reflection on the self-endangerment of industrial society it need not do so. He also underlines difference between his theory's "neutral" stance and what he describes as more optimistic cognitive theories of reflexive modernization: "The cognitive theory of reflexive

modernization is optimistic at its core - more reflection, more experts, more science, more public sphere, more self awareness and self- criticism will open up new and better possibilities for action in a world that has got out of joint" (p. 177).

Whilst Beck's theory of reflexive modernization is formulated at a very different level of conceptual analysis from that of psychotherapeutic theory, some parallels can tentatively be drawn. What appears most significant is Beck's emphasis on the uncertain path between reflexivity and conscious reflection that is obscured in any simplistic conflation of these categories. This applies in individual as well as in social contexts and psychotherapeutic approaches that have traditionally emphasized insight and self reflection as the exclusive mechanism of change in psychotherapy can be charged with such conflation. In their preoccupation with promoting intrapsychic insight they have neglected to engage with difficulties in the underlying psychic structure that facilitates self reflection and have thus excluded from the "talking cure" large numbers of potential clients, often those most in need of help. Addressing the difficulties of these "new" client groups under the more broadly based category of reflexivity/reflective functioning entails the quiet democratization of the therapeutic process to include many who were previously excluded. Arguably it also enhances the openness of the therapeutic encounter by teasing out the distinction between a broadly based focus on helping people to learn how they might think flexibly and creatively under the heading of reflexivity and a specific interpretative focus on what they might be helped think about under the heading of insight or self reflection. Whilst both have their place, the latter was often privileged in psychoanalytic approaches in particular in the absence of a wider therapeutic lens, a problem which the model of mentalization/reflective functioning now arguably begins to address.

In the social theory of Giddens, connections are also made between the dynamic of reflexivity and processes of democratization in the arena of personal life. Central to Giddens' theory is the idea of the double hermeneutic in which specialist knowledge contributes to the reflexivity of modernity by routinely reshaping those aspects of social life on which its analyses are based:

> Each of us not only 'has', but *lives* a biography reflexively organized in terms of
> flows of social and psychological information about possible ways of life.
> Modernity is a post-traditional order, in which the question, 'How shall I live?'

> has to be answered in day- to- day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat- and many other things- as well as interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity. (1991, p. 14, his emphasis)

Abstract systems become centrally involved in the formation and continuity of the self and for Giddens one of the most distinctive connections between these systems and the self can be found in the expansion of various forms of psychotherapy and counselling. Interestingly he does not draw the pessimistic conclusion from this development, evident in Bauman's analysis. Whilst accepting that it is possible to interpret the expansion of therapy services in purely negative terms as a reflection of the alienating and depersonalizing effects of contemporary life coupled with the lack of supports available in more traditional contexts, this is not his focus. On the contrary his view is that,

> therapy is not simply a means of coping with novel anxieties but an expression of the reflexivity of the self- a phenomenon which, on the level of the individual, like the broader institutions of modernity, balances opportunity and potential catastrophe in equal measure. (1991, p. 34)

In Giddens' work we are offered a very different social theoretical perspective on psychotherapy than is offered in a range of contributions mentioned earlier where attention is exclusively focussed on psychological reductionism and related themes.[12] Giddens guides our attention in an altogether more optimistic direction, implicating psychotherapy in developments that hold considerable potential to enhance the democratization of personal life.

Common ground on reflexivity between Giddens and Habermas

The starting point for this discussion is Outhwaite's (1998) observation that what is offered by Habermas is:

> a philosophy of reflection which develops outside the limits of what has traditionally been understood by the philosophy of reflection, consciousness, and the subject. It is a philosophy or a sociology for a world of the kind described, for example, by Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens with the notion that modernity has become reflexive. This is a world in which individuals are increasingly thrown onto their own resources to define their own social

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[12] See above pp.165-70.

relations - what Habermas calls "risky self-steering by means of a highly abstract ego- identity". (p. 167)

Harrington (2001) similarly links Habermas' with Beck and Giddens, noting that Habermas' emphasis on communicative rationality can be linked productively with their focus on the reflexive opening up of previously exclusive expert systems to democratic scrutiny. Delanty (1999) also comments on the correlation between Beck's and Habermas' respective theories of a "discourse society", and Giddens's idea of a "sociological society". Whilst the former refers to an increase in discursive questioning of established forms of legitimation and authority by public citizens, the latter similarly explores the democratizing implications of a society that is becoming ever more informed and by implication more reflexive. In Giddens' framework knowledge makes reflexivity possible and the reflexive appropriation of knowledge is regarded as a potentially transformative force.

> What is different about knowledge is that it is less objectivating and not so easily reduced to ideological manipulation. Indeed, knowledge transcends structure and agency: it is neither a property of individuals nor of structures. The idea of a 'sociological society' thus suggests a kind of society in which individuals become increasingly more self-reliant as a result of having recourse to such resources as knowledge. Basically, then, everybody can become a 'sociologist': reflexive modernization facilitates democratic structuration." (Delanty, 1999, p. 163)

In his engagement with psychotherapy as an expert system, Giddens (1991, 1992) is similarly interested in the reflexivity of this process, in particular how psychotherapeutic thinking, as articulated in self help manuals for example, becomes integrated into those aspects of social life on which it comments, thus reconstituting these domains. The constitution of the self is a reflexive project, entailing a more or less continuous interrogation of past, present and future and this project is now conducted amidst a wide range of reflexive resources that include psychotherapy and therapeutically inspired literature. As indicated, Giddens disagrees with those who only draw negative conclusions from this development and here he singles out the work of Christopher Lasch (1978, 1984) for critique.

On Lasch's (1978) account, modern social life is characterized by a retreat into purely personal concerns in the face of a social environment that seems impermeable to change. In this climate we witness the rise of the narcissistic personality type, who

typically shows little awareness or concern for the needs of others whilst endlessly striving for an elusive sense of self worth or well being. At the level of personal relations, the narcissist's search for intimacy becomes as pressing as it is unobtainable given his/her relentless self absorption. The contemporary growth of therapeutic services only compounds the problem since the therapeutic encounter encourages the individual to become the focus of reflection and concern. Dependence on "experts" who offer these services becomes a way of life. In this critique such "experts" are viewed as intrinsic to a social and cultural climate that promotes narcissistic and individualistic tendencies. This is yet another variation on that criticism which, as we have seen, has long bedevilled psychotherapy and whilst it generally targets the discipline as a whole, arguably its appropriate target is the individualistic bias of psychotherapy's normative orientation. This normative framework, anchored in Kantian ethics, has traditionally privileged such abstract ideals as individual autonomy and self determination and, as discussed in this study, is deeply at odds with the vigorously relational thrust of contemporary psychotherapeutic theory and practice. Whilst Giddens does not deny that therapy can be seen to promote or reinforce narcissistic tendencies and withdrawal and can also be construed as a form of diversion for those who are privileged, he is unequivocal in his view that it is much more than this:

> Therapy is not just an adjustment device. As an expression of generalized reflexivity it exhibits in full the dislocations and uncertainties to which modernity gives rise. At the same time it, participates in that mixture of opportunity and risk characteristic of the late modern order. It can promise dependence and passivity; yet it can also permit engagement and reappropriation. (1991, p. 180)

For Giddens, what Lasch and similar commentaries offer is a wholly inadequate representation of human agency as a passive entity in the face of external forces. Against this, his argument is that human agents rarely accept external conditions passively but continuously reflect upon them and reconstitute them taking account of their particular circumstances. He also argues that on a collective as well as individual level there are significant areas of appropriation of new possibilities that flow from the increased reflexivity of social life and that psychotherapy as a contemporary reflexive resource is positively implicated in these democratizing developments. He uses the example of key changes in personal and family life centred on what he calls "the pure relationship" to demonstrate this argument.

For Giddens (1991, 1992), the "pure relationship" is prototypical of developments in personal life that signal the "transformation of intimacy" in the sense of a growing democratization of this sphere. In simple terms it refers to a context of relating in which "external criteria have been dissolved: the relationship exists solely for whatever rewards that relationship as such can deliver" (1991, p. 6). Trust is integral to the pure relationship and can only be mobilized by elements within the relationship that are anchored in mutual disclosure as distinct from criteria outside the relationship such as kinship or social duty. Integrity is something that each partner presumes of the other and is integral to the ethical framework of the pure relationship. Underpinning this mode of relating is an ongoing process of reflexive monitoring by the partners which intersects with wider contexts of reflexivity. Specialist texts and manuals, magazines, television programmes and so on convey information and debate about close relationships and in this process reflexively reconstruct what they seek to describe and analyse. The expansion of therapy services is closely linked to the emergence of the pure relationship since this mode of relating puts considerable pressure on the integrity of the self and on the requirement not only to understand oneself but to present oneself authentically within the communicative framework of the relationship.

The pure relationship is a mode of relating, which can be terminated at will if it fails to offer sufficient "psychic returns" for the individuals involved. On this basis, as will be recalled, Bauman (1993) draws the sweeping conclusion that it represents the "intimacy of persons who suspend their identity of moral subjects for the duration. Pure relationship is a de-ethicized intimacy" (p. 106). This is profoundly different from Giddens' own conclusion regarding the ethics of the pure relationship since he regards the transformation of intimacy personified in this mode of relating as closely entwined with processes of democratization in the personal sphere. He elaborates on the meaning of democracy in personal life at some length (1992, pp. 184-203) and at the risk of oversimplifying this account, essentially it upholds the ideal of "relating to others in an egalitarian way" at its centre. For Giddens, "democracy means discussion, the chance for the 'force of the better argument' to count as against other means of determining decisions" (p. 186) and in the context of the pure relationship he speaks of the imperative of free and open communication as the sine qua non of this relationship. It is not difficult to understand why commentators thus make connections between

Habermasian ethical theory and Giddens' work or why Outhwaite (1998) might conclude that Habermas offers a philosophy for a world of the type described by Giddens – and Beck - as having become reflexive. In his brief consideration of the link between psychotherapy and the pure relationship, Giddens himself stops short of making an explicit connection with Habermasian communicative ethics but elsewhere he speaks of the "energising vision of emancipation" (1991, p. 213) that is offered by the Habermasian concept of the ideal speech situation. The pure relationship represents a contemporary form of relating in which the communicative processes between those involved take precedence over external or abstract criteria such as duty or obligation. Far from being a "de-ethicized intimacy" it is intimacy in search of an ethical standpoint anchored within a communicative ethical framework. What Giddens' work underlines is the need for an ethical understanding that is firmly anchored in communicative processes given the centrality of communication to the contemporary transformations of personal life which his analyses so vividly capture. It is difficult not to conclude that Habermas' communicative ethics is well placed to offer this ethical framework

Whilst Giddens distances himself from the negative perspective on psychotherapy represented in Lasch's critique, he is acutely aware that the therapeutic endeavour unfolds against a background of significant moral impoverishment that characterizes the contemporary world of "late modernity". He notes the burden and pressure which results in the sphere of pure relationships as an arena that potentially offers "a morally rewarding milieu for individual life development". But again he resists the conclusion that the latter milieu can only be understood in terms of a defensive retreat into personal life and a shrinking of self-identity. Notwithstanding the struggle to survive in a disturbing external world which Lasch depicts, Giddens argues that on the basis of the research he has considered, there is much evidence of ongoing persistent and creative engagement with the outer social world. He uses the example of the reflexive reorganisation of family life and relationships in the aftermath of divorce, the creative restructuring of gender and kinship relationships and the phenomenon of reconstituted families to illustrate this point. He sees this as an example of institutional reconstitution on a massive scale orchestrated by those affected by marriage breakdown. However despite these outward looking, creative, relationally oriented developments in contemporary personal life, he does accept that personal meaninglessness and moral impoverishment is a fundamental issue in late modernity:

'Existential isolation' is not so much a separation of individuals from others as a separation from the moral resources necessary to live a full and satisfying existence. The reflexive project of the self generates programmes of actualization and mastery. But as long as these possibilities are understood largely as a matter of the extension of the control systems of modernity to the self, they lack moral meaning. 'Authenticity' becomes both a pre-eminent value and framework for self-actualisation, but represents a morally stunted process. (1991, p. 9)

Giddens suggests that one implication of this morally impoverished social climate in which psychotherapy operates is the tendency to emphasize the values of control and mastery and to formulate the reflexive project of self primarily in terms of self determination. As has been argued throughout this study the problems of psychological reductionism, individualisation, social conformism and so on are not intrinsic to psychotherapy per se but to the reductionism and individualistic bias of the normative framework by which it is underpinned. Giddens' social theoretical analysis implicitly makes a compelling case for the relevance of an alternative communicative formulation of ethics for the psychotherapeutic endeavour as a response to the widespread moral impoverishment which his analysis describes.

In drawing this discussion to a close it is important to reflect on a question that Lash (1994) believes neither Giddens nor Beck address with sufficient urgency, namely why we find reflexivity in some places and not in others and in some economic sectors but not in others. Clearly this question is primarily for social theory to address. However within psychotherapeutic discourse one contribution to this debate emerges from the model of mentalization, which is the idea that the capacity for reflexivity is intricately linked with the experience of being recognized and cared for in primary relationships and conversely the idea that it is impaired by experiences of "disrespect" within primary relationships. We have seen that the model of mentalization is closely linked to Winnicottian theory and in Giddens' work he engages very briefly with this object relations perspective in a manner similar to Honneth, but without the comprehensive approach of the latter. Arguably Honneth therefore takes this particular discussion further than Giddens and in so doing also goes further towards supplementing the gap in Habermasian theory in this respect. I have noted the emotional lacuna in Habermasian theory which Honneth's work addresses and it needs to be reiterated that the dialogue

between critical social theory and psychotherapy which this study seeks to promote is one in which Honneth's theory has a central place.

I am arguing that the moral "grammar" or moral "force" within the psychotherapeutic encounter can be formulated in terms of struggles for understanding and agreement and struggles for recognition of those with whom psychotherapists work and that these interrelated dynamics can helpfully be anchored in the framework of communicative ethics. In this chapter I have explored the concept of reflexivity as a bridge between communicative ethics and psychotherapeutic concerns. Giddens' social theory has been used to anchor the discussion and to reinforce the need for a reformulation of ethics in psychotherapy to take account of contemporary engagement with relational themes. In essence my conclusion, following on from this discussion, is that psychotherapy has the potential to serve as a reflexive resource that draws out the potential for communicative rationality in those domains in which it operates and that in this process, Habermas' communicative ethics can helpfully serve as a regulative ideal. This argument will be developed further in the final chapter where attention is more explicitly focussed on clinical practice based themes.

Chapter 9

Towards a Communicative Ethical Framework for Psychotherapy: Perspectives from Clinical Practice

Within the Frankfurt tradition of critical social theory, an engagement with psychoanalysis dates back to the first generation of theorists that included Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse.[1] Whilst it may be said that the outcome of this early endeavour was somewhat disappointing, it re-emerges in the second generation work of Habermas, for whom the classical Freudian model offered "the only tangible example of a science incorporating methodological self reflection" ([1968a]1978, p. 214). For Habermas, as for Marcuse before him, the significance of Freudian thinking was that it represented the possibility of a therapeutic social science and emancipation from distorted communication (Delanty, 2000, p. 138). Unfortunately the dialogue with psychoanalysis articulated by Habermas was also largely disappointing and is associated with a theoretical cul de sac in his work. He subsequently lost interest in the subject as his theory of communicative ethics evolved. Reviewing this somewhat unsatisfactory connection between critical theory and psychoanalysis it could be argued that the difficulty which Habermas and his predecessors encountered was indicative not only of limitations in their own theoretical frameworks but also of underlying limitations in the individualistic paradigm of classical psychoanalysis with which they engaged. We have seen that the classical Freudian model has been powerfully challenged in the objects relations perspective of Klein, Winnicott and others, which is the dominant orientation within contemporary British psychoanalysis. In the third generation of critical theory, represented notably by Axel Honneth, this relational transformation of psychoanalysis brought about by object relations theory now inspires a reinvigorated engagement by critical theory with psychoanalytic thinking.

Notwithstanding impasses along the way, it is arguable that critical theory's interest in psychoanalysis has always held much creative promise which has ensured its survival. Yet for all its potential, insights gleaned from this engagement have generally failed to

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[1] See Chapter 4 pp. 90-1.

make their way back into mainstream clinically oriented debates either within psychoanalysis or within the wider discourse of psychotherapy.[2] Whilst in some respects this contrasts with the relationship between psychotherapy and what is loosely termed postmodernist thinking, we have also seen that the extent of the latter's influence is more problematic and peripheral than might initially appear particularly with respect to moral/ethical debate. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges to creative dialogue between social theory in general and psychotherapy is the implicit expectation of a formulaic connection between theory and practice that infuses psychotherapeutic discourse. Undoubtedly this reflects the residue of positivist thinking that adheres within psychotherapy and which implicitly discourages engagement with other discourses that are regarded as overly abstract or as holding little practical import. Contrary to the idea of a prescriptive application of theory to practice this study is interested in possibilities for a mutually influencing critical dialogue between theoretical and practice based perspectives. Whilst the focus of engagement with psychoanalysis by consecutive generations of critical theorists has been to derive insights for their formulation of social theory, here the focus is on the potential insights that are thrown up by this encounter for psychotherapeutic theory and practice and more generally on what can emerge from the reflexive redirecting of strands of critical social theory back into psychotherapeutic debates. In particular, attention is directed to the contribution of Habermas' and Honneth's thinking, towards reinvigorating moral/ethical debate.

In what follows the discussion now shifts gear to some extent with a greater emphasis on clinical practice based concerns and the relevance of insights drawn from Habermas and Honneth at this level of engagement. As indicated my interest is not to elicit prescriptive formulae from these theoretical perspectives. Their contribution lies rather in offering a depth philosophical anchor for moral/ethical debate in psychotherapy from which, amongst other things, further and more specific practice oriented theorizing might emerge. My primary concern is to explore in broad terms how Habermas' and Honneth's thinking might impact on our thinking and theorizing. In this final chapter, I begin by drawing together themes relating to the relevance of Habermas' work, which

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[2] The work of the American psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin (1988, 1998, [1990]1999) which is heavily influenced by critical theory, is a notable exception in this regard. However her work is positioned within a specialist discourse most commonly associated with the postmodernist orientation of the American relational psychoanalytic tradition. As such it remains somewhat peripheral to mainstream clinical debates in psychoanalytic discourse, particularly within the UK context (See Chapter 2 pp. 60-3).

includes a short practice based discussion drawing on two case vignettes from the author's clinical practice in a child and family mental health setting.[3] This underlines the importance of a communicative ethical framework for psychotherapeutic practice. In further drawing together the connections between critical theory and psychotherapy the theme of reflexivity again emerges as an important bridge for discussion. Additional case material will be used to underline the relevance of this concept in the clinical setting and make connections with wider themes within social and political theory. As in the previous chapters, the key argument underlining this discussion is that the moral grammar of the psychotherapeutic encounter can be framed in terms of the intertwined struggles for understanding and agreement and for recognition and that we can helpfully think of psychotherapeutic practice which is anchored within a communicative ethical framework as representing a reflexive resource and potential carrier of communicative reason in personal and social contexts.

Perspectives from clinical practice

Starting with the hypothesis that communicative ethical theory offers scope for reinvigorating psychotherapeutic moral/ethical debate, this study considered the difficulties with current debate. These can be traced back to the historically individualist normative bias in psychotherapy and its contemporary manifestation in the restrictive framework of professional micro ethics. Influential trends which emanate from the vigorously relational thrust of current psychoanalytic and systemic psychotherapy and which are at odds with this individualistic bias were also explored. The disjuncture between these relational developments on the one hand and a peripheral individualistic moral/ethical debate on the other has been a key focus. Another important strand of discussion has been the influence of postmodernist thinking and the extent to which it has failed to move the debate forward. Essentially a modernist, Kantian influenced, individualistic moral/ethical framework and a postmodernist influenced general theoretical debate operate on parallel tracks in the absence of any mediating discourse. The problems that result in clinical practice have been considered in Chapter 7 with specific reference to concerns that arise in the practice arena of child and family

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[3] Both case vignettes have previously been discussed in an article by the author of this study (Donovan, 2003a) published in the peer reviewed *Journal of Family Therapy*. Issues of confidentiality and clinical relevance have therefore been addressed in this context.

psychotherapy.[4] An example of a pressing moral/ethical concern from this context relates to the extensive use of psychiatric diagnoses and pharmacological treatment in child mental health practice. It was argued that psychotherapy's evident difficulty in confronting and engaging with what we might describe as macro ethical issues of this nature can be connected to the absence of a conceptual framework in which they might be located and which could serve as an anchor for practitioners and theorists in taking a stand on matters that concern them. It was also argued that Habermas' communicative ethics could offer this framework and I will now develop this argument further.

In practice settings that continue to be heavily influenced by positivist thinking emanating from psychotherapeutic discourse itself, from allied disciplines and from the social and institutional context of practice, an engagement with Habermasian theory has the very immediate and striking effect of opening up the moral/ethical domain of therapeutic engagement by anchoring our thinking about morality and ethics in contexts of everyday communication. Introducing the Habermasian frame results in what I have described as the remoralization of the therapeutic encounter as a communicative endeavour. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this contribution in a context where morality and ethics currently inhabit a deeply marginalized and reified space. Whilst as discussed previously, the breakdown of claims to truth, normative appropriateness and truthfulness underpin most referrals for individual, couple or family psychotherapy, these difficulties are rarely thought about in moral/ethical terms and are more likely to be approached within an exclusively pragmatic, methodological frame. The remoralization of the space inhabited by psychotherapy therefore lies at the heart of the contribution of Habermasian theory to psychotherapy and all further influence follows on from this. For Habermas, ideas about ethics are fundamentally about the kind of conversations we might have in which matters of ethical import can be discussed and in which it might be possible to remove constraints to ongoing communication. The significance of his work is that it places ethics firmly on the agenda of theoretical debate and offers an overarching framework for scientific enquiry and engagement in which ethics is firmly anchored. I now consider how we might begin to think about this communicative ethical perspective in relation to routine intervention in a child and

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[4] Chapter 7 pp. 179-85.

family mental health setting which adopts the systemic reflecting team therapeutic approach, previously discussed in Chapter 3.[5]

Family A

Mrs A, her two and a half year old son and six year old son are seen because of the latter's severe behavioural difficulties at school and at home. She is a single parent and there is no contact with the children's father. The atmosphere in sessions is fast moving and chaotic with much quarrelling and competition for mother's attention. It is a situation where there seems to be little space for the complexity and nuances of life to be considered. Life is to be survived by just getting by. A traffic accident involving the family, which happened between the therapy sessions, is dismissed as of little consequence in that nobody was physically harmed. Plans to send the older child to boarding school at eight years are mentioned lightly as if he might not understand or care about what is being said. The children do not seem to know why their father is absent and he is rarely mentioned.

The therapist in the consulting room with the family struggles to contain the situation and to create space for thinking. She seeks input from her colleagues observing from behind the one way screen. Following a reflecting conversation amongst team members, observed by the family, in which the team members talk mostly about their own reactions and feelings whilst listening to the family's earlier conversation with their therapist, calm prevails for a time as if something has been contained, as if the family has at least momentarily absorbed some of the reflecting qualities of the team.

Family B

This family consisting of Ms B, her four-year old daughter and her partner, the child's stepfather are seen because of an acute problem with being unable to sleep which the child is experiencing. Ms B in particular has many doubts and worries about the therapeutic process and there is a powerful sense of constraint regarding what can and cannot be talked about. She is keen to keep the focus on the subject of sleep. At a certain

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[5] See Chapter 3 pp. 69-71. The context of this work is a family therapy training clinic and the reflecting team was comprised of three trainees with a supervisor observing from behind the one way screen.

point in this very tense conversation the therapist suggests that the team on the other side of the screen might care to join them for a reflecting conversation. Ms B raises an objection just as the team are entering the consulting room. She would like the team members to make eye contact with her and her family during their conversation this time and finds it uncomfortable and unsettling that they have not done so in previous sessions.[6]

The team has little time to gather their thoughts before finding themselves in the room. It becomes immediately clear there are differences of view within the team with one member feeling that it is not the correct basis on which to proceed with the reflecting conversation given Ms B's unease. This hesitantly evolves into a conversation between team members about what to do and their thoughts about the meaning of this issue that has arisen. The idea of helping the family to adopt an observer position in the sessions and of keeping some conversations within the team, so that members can thus share their "thinking in the making" with the family is introduced and explored between team members.

These practice snapshots that capture fleeting moments in routine psychotherapeutic sessions, underline the slow moving, unremarkable qualities of the work. They also highlight the way that it is routinely infused with questions of validity, of normative appropriateness and therefore of morality and ethics within a Habermasian frame, for example, the appropriateness of a particular cultural/class norm of sending young children to boarding school in case A, or the appropriateness of particular ways of working therapeutically as a reflecting team in case B. Yet such matters are rarely conceptualized explicitly in moral/ethical terms in a professional context that most commonly prioritizes questions of methodology and technique, and within which therapists generally think of themselves as aspiring to a non-judgemental, non-directive therapeutic stance. Here the strength of the Habermasian communicative ethical framework for psychotherapy is that it brings questions of ethics in from the cold, disentangling them from their reified position within professional codes of ethics and locating them in contexts of ordinary everyday communication.

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[6] It is customary for the reflecting team to keep their conversation- their "thinking in the making"- within the team and not to interact directly with the family in therapy. This reflecting team conversation is subsequently discussed between the family and their therapist.

With the A family, the social norm about boarding school was questioned discursively in the course of this therapy, by opening up reflecting team discussions that held different shades of opinion on this emotionally charged issue. From a Habermasian perspective one could say there was considerable constraint on movement between different levels of communication in the A family, that is from the day to day level in which the appropriateness of this norm seemed entirely taken for granted to one in which its validity could be opened up to reflecting processes. The reflecting team challenged this distortion in communication. Boarding school was not on the agenda for discussion, as Mrs A sometimes jokingly reminded the team. Yet somewhere in her joke was recognition that it mattered and recognition that the team believed it mattered. In reconstructing the ethical underpinning of discourse, Habermas (1990a) notes the requirement that all participants are allowed to take part and to express their attitudes, needs and so on. The team and therapist sometimes had the opportunity to act as advocates for the six year old in this case, not in the sense of "knowing" definitively what was best for him but in the sense of helping to construct the best possible conversation in which matters that concerned him could be thought about and in which he could be helped to participate at a level that was developmentally appropriate. In this case the transition to boarding school continued to come up in reflecting team conversations where it seemed to link with material in the sessions and over time the therapeutic conversation with the family shifted towards the idea of "being ready or unready" for this transition and how this might best be decided and judged.

Much of the work in these cases is essentially about engaging with and patiently chipping away at constraints on talking and thinking that are a source of suffering and discomfort. In the B family presenting with a child's sleep problem, the very idea of talking and thinking other than in a highly circumscribed way seemed terrifying. Here the essence of the reflecting process consisted in putting this into words and daring to voice some of the underlying worries that might be impacting on family members including the child. What seemed so important was sharing with the family an experience of relatively uncircumscribed thinking and talking about the difficulty in thinking and talking. In taking a stand to defend the potential for unhindered communication between themselves, the team challenged the narrative of constraint within the family. They presented a view that some ways of communicating are better

than others. Mrs B's opposition to the reflecting team method set them on a potential collision course, which they might have avoided by acquiescing or fuelled by becoming prescriptive. Instead the dilemma of how to proceed was reflected upon in the presence of the family in a way that highlighted differences between team members and uncertainty about how to proceed and offered a model for moving forward through debate. Of course the team's reflections were informed by technical considerations about how to conduct a reflecting team conversation, but this example also underlines the ethical dilemma that Mrs B's opposition triggered and which was addressed discursively in the work. In essence, a certainty/uncertainty dialectic played itself out, insofar as the team was relatively certain about needing the opportunity to explore and understand its uncertainty in a discursive exchange.

The relevance of Habermas for moral/ethical thinking in psychotherapy

Alongside its traditional intrapsychic interest, contemporary relationally oriented psychotherapy is profoundly concerned with what happens between people when they try to communicate whether this is within the therapeutic relationship or elsewhere. In systemic psychotherapy the intersubjective milieu of family relating becomes a key focus. Within this communicative context people routinely discuss, negotiate, sort out and compromise about how best to lead their lives. A breakdown in this communicative process is often the point where psychotherapy begins or is likely to be a significant factor in the background to referral. Kantian based morality anchored in the paradigm of the solitary individual appears far removed from the intensity of this interpersonal context and not surprisingly an ethical framework formulated in Kantian terms is marginalized within the wider discourse of psychotherapy. Situations which present themselves in the therapeutic space are most commonly suffused by interpersonal struggles for understanding and agreement and it seems reasonable to infer that, what we might describe as the underlying moral grammar of this therapeutic encounter may be defined in relation to this communicatively formulated struggle. The appeal of Habermasian theory is that it strips communication back to the minimal conditions that make understanding and agreement possible and, as I have argued, it is here that the interest of the critical theorist and the psychotherapist coincide in this space where the intricate details of why "good" communication may or may not occur are explored.

The key significance of Habermasian communicative ethics is that it also offers relationally oriented psychotherapy practice a moral/ ethical framework that includes the regulative ideal of "discourse", against which actual situations of communication might be considered. Given the distance to be navigated between the philosophical abstraction of Habermasian theory and the intensely personal, intimate arenas of psychotherapeutic practice this claim might seem improbable. Yet arguably the presuppositions of discourse as reconstructed within Habermasian theory are essentially what psychotherapists adhere to implicitly in their attempts to open up and challenge distorted communication processes in routine practice such as that described in the above case vignettes. Briefly these assumptions are likely to include the idea that it is helpful for the therapeutic conversation to be as inclusive as possible, that it is helpful for all participants to be allowed initiate and question assertions and that it is helpful for everyone involved to be able to express their attitudes, desires and needs without obstruction by external or internal constraint. This common ground between a relationally oriented psychotherapeutic practice and the theory of communicative ethics is hardly surprising if we consider that the aim of Habermasian theory is to reconstruct the implicit normative assumptions that each of us holds as part of our ordinary communicative competence. As argued in Chapter 8, psychotherapy at its best could be understood as a form of striving towards the communicatively formulated ideal of discourse as reconstructed in Habermasian theory, however improbable this ideal might be in practice. The issue is that within psychotherapy, this normative ideal, rooted within processes of communication, operates silently whilst explicit moral/ethical debate remains trapped within the restrictive paradigm of individual consciousness. My argument is that lack of theorization of the normative presuppositions of relationally oriented psychotherapy compromises and restricts the latter's critical impact in practice.

Within a communicative ethical framework our ideas about ethics are reshaped as ideas about the kinds of conversations we might have in which matters of ethical concern can be raised and debated and the reflecting team approach, used in the case vignettes, is an example of current relationally oriented therapy which is remarkably consistent with this communicative ethical orientation. However the case I am making goes beyond compatibility. I am suggesting that by drawing out the communicative ethical underpinning of psychotherapeutic practice and debating it in the literature, we are more likely as therapists to maximize its potential including what could be described as its

emancipatory potential. We are more likely to have the courage to "take a stand" in our work about issues that concern us, whether inside or outside the consulting room, if we believe our position can be defended and if we have a framework for offering this defence and accepting critique.

Drawing on Habermasian language, I would argue that progress in both of the above cases held an emancipatory moment symbolized by a four year old who no longer has anxiety related difficulty getting to sleep or a six year old who can think about and talk with his mother about things that really matter to him and that are likely to impact enormously on the course of his life including the plan to send him to boarding school at a young age. These may not register on the revolutionary scale but they draw attention to the ethical thrust of psychotherapy and to what we might mean when, in our code of ethics we aspire to maximising "the good". An ethical theory, which guides us towards an ethics of communication, also guides us towards an idea of ethics as integral to each passing moment of our work rather than something to be visited on special occasions. Ideas about maximizing the "good" are reshaped as ideas about maximizing opportunities for "good" conversations and the starting point for debate about what might constitute a "good" conversation. Within this framework ethics is no longer "simply a matter of individual conscience or subjective consciousness but rather a concern indissolubly connected with language and communication" (Dallmayr, 1990, p. 2). The individual thought experiment of the Kantian universalisablity test gives way to a "dialogically reformulated universalist ethical theory" (Benhabib, 1990, p. 334).

We have seen that the universalist thrust of Habermasian theory sets it apart from hermeneutical, post-structuralist and postmodernist perspectives, fuelling much debate as outlined in Part 11. However as was also discussed, Habermas is not simply opposed to what these traditions represent and has been influenced by them along the path of his own theoretical development not least in recognizing that his initial conception of reason as self reflection was too closely tied to solipsistic subjectivity and needed to be relocated in contexts of intersubjectivity. The criticism that in reconstructing the regulative ideal of discourse, Habermas is essentially drawing on modernist assumptions about what might constitute an ideal speech situation is broadly accepted within the debate about communicative ethics but defenders of communicative ethical theory would argue that the ideal itself retains its universal status even if the question of

how it is filled is specific to our place and time in history. In that sense it is more appropriate to speak of a post- universalist perspective in which the dualism of universalism and relativism is transcended. Benhabib for example, makes a strong case for a "historically self-conscious universalism" (ibid., p. 339) and observes that the oppositional framing of universalism and historicity within moral philosophy is no longer tenable. She distils the Habermasian reconstruction of the universal and necessary preconditions of discourse into two key principles, universal moral respect and egalitarian reciprocity, with the former referring to the right of all who are capable of speech and action to be included in the moral conversation and the second requiring that each has symmetrical rights to raise and question assertions and so on, within the conversation: "The principles of universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity are our philosophical clarification of the constituents of the moral point of view from within the normative hermeneutic horizon of modernity" (ibid.). Benhabib also observes that the intuitive idea behind universalist ethics is not only of ancient origin but has always been closely entwined with the principle of reversibility of perspectives which requires us to judge situations from the other's point of view within a moral community. This theme of reversibility of perspectives is as we have seen, also implicit within the psychotherapeutic constructs of reflexivity and reflective functioning and I shall return to this important common ground between contemporary themes in psychotherapy and the idea of a universalist ethics in concluding the study.

It is sometimes observed that even amongst those who distance themselves from the universalist or post-universalist stance, there persists a tendency to assign "some sort of favoured status to moral appeals which stress equality as well as mutual recognition and appreciation of different forms of life" (White, 1988, p. 2). Here the great strength of Habermasian theory is that it attempts to provide a systematic elaboration of such appeals, to accord them a measure of universal validity and to show that ideas of equality and mutual recognition can be articulated in ways that do not have to be completely indeterminate. Steuerman (2000) observes that any defence of the particular has to involve some idea of the universal and that in the absence of universal values the possibility of justifying one's condemnation of the Holocaust, for example, disappears given that its perpetrators could claim it conformed to the values of nazism. However whilst thus concluding that a radical relativism is impossible to sustain, she also introduces a note of caution, reflecting that the inevitable universalistic dimension of

morality is insufficient to justify specific rights: "General laws need to be seen against their specific backgrounds, where no answers are given once and for all" (ibid., p. 5).

In her defence of the post- universalist perspective, Nussbaum (2000) also reflects on the confusion that arises between tolerance of diversity and relativism, noting that some find the latter attractive on the assumption that it indicates respect for different ways of life:

> But of course it does no such thing. Most cultures have exhibited considerable intolerance of diversity over the ages, as well as at least some respect for diversity. By making each tradition the last word, we deprive ourselves of any more general norm of toleration or respect that could help us limit the intolerance of cultures. (p. 49)

We have seen that for Nussbaum, a universalist theory that is framed in terms of general human capabilities offers the best framework within which to locate our thoughts about difference.[7] She argues that certain basic aspirations towards human flourishing are recognizable across differences of culture, class and other variables and uses this thinking as the basis for an account of general human capabilities for which she claims universal status. Within this approach, capability denotes what people are able to do and be, "in a way informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of dignity and respect" and an idea of the person as an "end", not a "tool of the ends of others" (ibid., p. 5). In her framework she includes capabilities that relate to emotional development, forming attachments and showing concern and compassion for other human beings. These include what she terms the capability for "affiliation" and which encompasses the idea of "being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation" (ibid., p. 79).

Nussbaum's normative philosophical theory undoubtedly speaks very clearly to the concerns of the psychotherapist and the psychotherapeutic constructs of reflexivity and reflective functioning, which have much in common with her category of "affiliation", fit easily within this perspective on human capabilities. From a psychotherapeutic perspective her work implicitly underscores the embryonic nature of our human

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[7] Chapter 4 p. 100-1.

disposition towards reflexivity and focuses attention on those conditions in personal and social life that may impede its development or alternatively help it to flourish. From a psychotherapeutic perspective her use of the expansive language of capability is also particularly helpful in that it redresses the imbalance towards cognitive abstraction in Habermasian theory and offers an emotionally grounded engagement with the detail of our human potential to flourish and realise our capabilities in certain circumstances. In that sense her theory, like Honneth's, could be seen to supplement the lack of engagement with subjectivity and personal identity in Habermasian theory. In the present context the overriding significance of Nussbaum's theory resides in her emphatic rejection of relativism and her support for a universalist ethical stance.

In the wake of the poststructuralist and postmodernist critique of several decades, the challenge now is as Delanty (1999) observes, "no longer a question of attacking false universalisms but of overcoming relativism and the fragmentation of the social" (p. 3). In the case of psychotherapy we have seen that the influence of what is loosely termed postmodernist thinking leads to concerns about a possible relativizing of reality, a sliding away from issues of power and abuse of power in family relationships and a concern that therapy as a process of "bearing witness" to destructive realities of "disrespect" is thereby undermined. The "ethical turn" of postmodernist thinking has been considered and whilst aspects of this development not only present a significant challenge to Habermasian theory but in general have much to commend them, we have also seen that postmodernist influence fails notably to challenge the individualistic bias of a privatized, professionalized moral/ ethical debate in psychotherapy. It also fails problematically to connect with the psychotherapeutic discourse of method and technique. In this context I have argued that Habermasian communicative ethics has much to offer psychotherapy on the basis that it shifts the centre of gravity of moral/ethical debate away from individual conscience and subjective consciousness and anchors it firmly in the mediating paradigm of communication.

The evolving relationship between critical social theory and postmodernism has also been considered and the futility of persisting in a view of the modernity/ postmodernity divide as representing hostile, oppositional camps has been acknowledged. The challenge becomes one of identifying possibilities for the creative combination of both perspectives and this is the challenge that is presented to psychotherapy, nowhere more

so than in the debate about morality and ethics. We have seen that in the context of an oppositional modernist/ postmodernist divide this debate has been allowed to atrophy and whilst it is argued that Habermasian thinking on a communicative ethics has much to offer, this is put forward not in opposition to the postmodernist perspective but in a spirit of searching for an ethical standpoint that might complement, or transcend the limitations of current postmodernist thinking in psychotherapy whilst allowing for ongoing creative methodological continuity across the modernism/postmodernism divide. The idea of a "social postmodernism" associated with the work of Nicholson and Seidman (1995) has relevance here in that it advocates a perspective within postmodernism that has not closed itself off from "the social" and from a positive politics but which searches for new ways of conceptualizing these processes. Reflecting on these developments, Delanty (1999) notes that "the problem is no longer relativism versus universalism, but is one of expanding the discursive and democratic space" (p. 113). Against this background I am commending Habermas' communicative ethics as offering a moral/ethical framework in which opportunities for the ongoing democratization of the discursive space of psychotherapeutic engagement might be explored and radicalized.

The relevance of Honneth for moral/ethical thinking in psychotherapy

Writing from the perspective of an allied discipline that of the social work, Hayes and Houston (2007) are also of the view that Habermas' discourse ethics can act as a moral yardstick against which actual situations of communication can be judged and they use the Family Group Conference as an example of current social work practice where the regulative ideal of discourse can helpfully be applied. This type of conference takes place when a child is deemed in need of care and protection and includes family members, care professionals and other supportive figures. It is convened and facilitated by an independent coordinator who, on Hayes and Houston's account, has a key role in promoting and nurturing unrestrained dialogue oriented to reaching understanding and agreement on what is in the best interests of the child and in addressing power plays within the conference, whether rooted in professional ideologies or intra-familial entanglements that might impede this process. In their view the procedural model of discourse provides a very useful yardstick in establishing communicative conditions for "moral decisionmaking" in this situation:

> …what we find is a procedural model that underscores reason, universalization, and democratic sentiments allowing all to participate free from the constraining effects of power. This particular direction is exacting in its demands. It alerts us to the many ways in which communication becomes ridden with strategic influence. (Hayes and Houston, 2007, p. 1003)

In this study I have made the case for supplementing Habermasian communicative ethics with Honneth's theory of recognition on the basis that Habermas' orientation is overly cognitive and his focus is primarily at the macro social and political levels of analysis whereas Honneth engages more directly with issues relating to emotionality and personal identity. In so doing, he offers a bridge between Habermas' communicative ethical framework and the intensely personal, emotionally charged arenas of psychotherapeutic engagement. Houston (2009) makes a similar argument in the case of social work and drawing on case material concludes that an approach to moral/ethical deliberation based solely on the Habermasian procedural model has significant limitations:

> Evidently, a more fundamental, heartfelt understanding of a person's identity must exist *prior* to discourse; moreover, it must carry through to discourse to ground it in everyday suffering. Communicational procedures, which are framed in abstract terms, can be acted out blithely without any real substantive identification with human pain or hurt. (2009, p. 1281-2, his emphasis)

Whilst the theme of recognition plays an important part in Habermasian theory it is conceptualized in abstract terms as embedded in structures of language and communication. For Honneth the human struggle for recognition is addressed through the dynamic of identity formation in real life contexts and is much more comprehensively theorized. In Houston's view, Honneth's three limbs of recognition, that is the experience of love and emotional support, rights and solidarity offer a "prism" through which social workers can become attuned to ethical imperatives in their work. This has the effect he believes, of sharpening empathy and can lead to a more heartfelt understanding of a person's identity struggles in the three domains of recognition. However he also observes that sensitivity to an individual's need for recognition has to be channelled through a communicative striving for understanding and agreement in situations of conflict where social workers are often required to intervene. Here Habermas' discourse ethics offers an anchoring framework for

Honneth's model of recognition and Houston (2009) concludes that combining these two perspectives offers a "synergy of 'heart' and 'head' " at the level of ethical theory.

Allowing for certain differences between psychotherapy and social work practice, Houston's argument translates easily into the psychotherapeutic context.
On the whole psychotherapy is less oriented to decision making than social work and there is more opportunity for adopting a "meta" position and engaging with the process of communication as distinct from the outcome. Within this context there is much potential for challenging distorted communication processes which individuals, couples and families bring with them to the work and in the case vignettes we saw that the reflecting team approach is one strategy employed by psychotherapists to this end. But here as in social work, there is a great need for emotionally grounded engagement if we are to avoid the pitfall of subsuming discourse ethics into an already existing professional framework of sterile moral/ethical rules and codes of practice. Writing about the dialogue between Habermasain theory (1990a) and the feminist influenced work of Gilligan (1982), White (1988) observes that the communicative ethical perspective needs supplementing by accounts of intersubjectivity that are more closely tied to an understanding of emotional life and he regards this ethical perspective as "crippled" if it proceeds in an emotional vacuum:

> ……..one has to conclude that any attempt to deepen Habermas's insights into what a communicative orientation really entails must draw heavily upon sources such as Gilligan which explore the social side of being human, not in terms of language claims and contested norms, but in terms of our character as creatures who are constituted by concrete relationships and the necessity of providing long-term attentive care for their young. (p. 85)

As Benjamin (1998) observes, Habermasian theory provides a "point of entry" into intersubjectivity but pays insufficient attention to emotional barriers to communication rooted in struggles for recognition, which she conceptualizes drawing on her psychoanalytic frame of reference. In Honneth's work (1995, 2007) he also reignites critical theory's longstanding engagement with psychoanalytic thinking as part of his endeavour to offer a psychological grounding for his moral theory of recognition and in so doing he goes some considerable way towards addressing the emotional lacuna in Habermasian theory.

From the perspective of this study Honneth's moral theory of recognition offers an invaluable corrective to the moral relativism that pervades postmodernist influence in psychotherapy and which as we have seen is the focus of sharp criticism, notably in the work of the systemic theorist Flaskas (2002). In making a case for "family therapy beyond postmodernism", she speaks eloquently of her clients' search not simply for the meaning but for the "truth" of their experiences, for example of sexual abuse and she reflects on the centrality of the emotionally charged process of "bearing witness" to the reality of people's lived experience within psychotherapy. Similarly she talks about powerful and stubbornly concrete social realties such as poverty and racism which impact so powerfully on the life experience of those with whom she works. Within Honneth's recognition theory he offers a comprehensive framework for conceptualizing these different strands of disrespect and violations of recognition at the personal, social and political levels and in so doing extends and deepens the impact of communicative ethics in remoralizing the space in which psychotherapy operates. It is difficult to exaggerate this contribution of Honneth's overarching framework which powerfully mediates between the personal on the one hand and social and political domains on the other. Within psychotherapy an engagement with patterns of recognition at the personal/familial level has traditionally been severed from thinking about the dynamics of recognition at more overtly social and political levels. Whilst the latter are then seen as outside the sphere of influence of psychotherapy, the former have traditionally been addressed within a positivist framework which obscures their moral/ethical/political significance whilst privileging questions of methodology and technique.[8] Honneth's three fold schema of love, rights and solidarity challenges the reductionist tendency to conflate or conversely isolate these interrelated but distinctive arenas of social interaction and struggle.

As with moral/ethical debate in general within psychotherapy, the moral challenge of "bearing witness" to the various dimensions of disrespect which our clients experience has had a troubled history that long precedes postmodernist influence but which is compounded by the latter influence. I am arguing that Flaskas' alternative perspective on the therapeutic significance of "bearing witness" to oppressive personal, social and political realities in clients' lives can be linked productively with Honneth's moral

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[8] This point was at the heart of the feminist influenced critique of first order family therapy which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. See Chapter 3 p. 69.

theory of recognition. This theory offers an inclusive conceptual framework from which we can at least begin to address the chasm between the majority of psychotherapists who concentrate on the arena of "personal" difficulties in the clinical setting and a small minority who advocate a more overtly "political" role for psychotherapy beyond the clinical setting. Whilst this split has its roots in the dated oppositional framing of personal and political themes it is sustained by the abstract individualistic normative bias of psychotherapy and the lack of a more encompassing moral/ethical framework in which the entrenched divide between the individual on the one hand and the social and political on the other hand might be challenged.

In this study I am arguing that engagement with the social origins of psychological distress needs to be anchored within the intimate and personal arenas of clinical practice. It is within this space that we need to begin reformulating and broadening the parameters of our moral/ethical and political engagement. We need to start with what is already creative in psychotherapy and use this as the foundation for further creative and progressive development of our work. The great contribution of Honneth's inclusive multidimensional moral theory is that it implicitly discourages privileging one form of disrespect or disadvantage over another and thus guards against either psychological or sociological reductionism. On this basis I am arguing that Honneth's and Habermas' combined theories of recognition and communicative ethics offer psychotherapy a powerfully inclusive moral/ethical framework for practice and I will continue to explore the implications of this normative orientation for clinical practice based concerns.

Psychotherapy as a reflexive resource: a clinical perspective

The psychotherapeutic emphasis on "bearing witness" to the meaning and "truth" of various forms of disrespect articulated by Flaskas (2002) is a helpful starting point for making connections with Honneth's theory of recognition and for recognizing that, as with the search for understanding and agreement, the closely intertwined struggle for recognition is a moral force that permeates the therapeutic encounter. However the challenge of integrating this moral perspective into psychotherapy requires rigorous linking with the discourse of methodology and technique. We need a moral/ethical/political perspective that not only guards against psychological reductionism in our work but which conversely embraces its psychological complexity

and the methodological challenge that it therefore entails. In Houston's (2010a) social work based analysis he views Honneth's multidimensional perspective on disrespect as offering a platform for an educationally oriented "conscientization" process (Freire, 1972):

> Through conscientization, the dispossessed begin to question their social exclusion and lack of social rights…. Social work has a vital role to play here by fostering social education, social praxis, empathy, advocacy and changes that are directed both within the established system and outside it as well. (Houston, 2010a, p. 852)

Unfortunately, when translated into psychotherapeutic contexts the great difficulty with this thinking is firstly, the inadequacy or thinness of the conscientization or consciousness raising paradigm in relation to the psychologically complex and entrenched situations that present in psychotherapy and secondly, the gulf between this educational approach and therapeutic methodology. As argued throughout this study we need an approach to moral/ethical/political considerations that embraces psychotherapy's rich methodological inheritance and its clinical challenges, not one where these are ignored or sidelined and which will simply entrench existing dichotomies in the field between those who are clinically motivated versus those who are politically motivated.

Returning to Flaskas' (2002) therapeutic theme of "bearing witness" and the connections that can be made with Honneth's recognition theory, it is reasonably self evident what the act of "bearing witness" might mean in a technical sense in the case example involving sexual abuse which Flaskas uses in her work. This material depicts the therapist actively responding by labelling as "abusive" a situation from childhood which her client has just recalled in disturbing detail but stopped short of defining as abuse. In this case the conclusion that it was abusive and the therapist's "bearing witness" in naming it as such, appears relatively uncontroversial. However the majority of situations within psychotherapy are a great deal less certain, less clear cut and more entangled than that described by Flaskas and "bearing witness" within these contexts will inevitably rest on more nuanced and uncertain foundations. Here the therapeutic focus is likely to centre on fostering a sufficiently reflexive, undistorted dialogue or "discourse" where the individual or family together with the psychotherapist can begin to step back from the immediacy of their experience and their communication and

reflect on its meaning. As proposed earlier this is likely to include, what could be described in Habermasian terms as discursive exploration of claims to truth, truthfulness or normative appropriateness and which might for example conclude that something is indeed abusive as in Flaskas' example. However, here the therapeutic process of "bearing witness" to experiences of disrespect, acknowledging painful struggles for recognition and offering emotional support unfolds within a more nuanced, and technically challenging therapeutic conversation than is evident from Flaskas' succinct but perhaps overly simplistic case example. In essence we are in the realm of facilitating reflexivity and reflexive communication as discussed in the previous chapter. This is closely entwined with considerations relating to method and technique that might facilitate the development of reflexive capacity in those for whom it is severely restricted and for whom the option of standing back from the immediacy of their experience to engage in a more reflective and discursive consideration of events and feelings is not easily available.

Within psychoanalytic discourse it will be recalled that thinking about reflexivity is encapsulated in the model of mentalization and here a correlation is made between restricted mentalizing capacity and early experiences of trauma and abuse.[9] It is most likely that the capacity of these clients to engage in a reflective consideration of the meaning of their experiences will be seriously compromised at least in the early stages of the work. Here the technical style is likely to be tentative and non interpretative initially as the therapist helps foster a therapeutic climate where thinking about ideas and feelings can be experienced as safe perhaps for the first time in the client's life. Within the psychoanalytic model of mentalization, the focus is on helping the client to gradually learn that mental experience involves representations that can be thought about, talked about, loosened up and changed. It is a way of working psychoanalytically that has, as I have suggested, a great deal in common with the systemic practitioner's focus on increasing reflexivity in families' thinking and talking processes for example through the use of reflecting teams/reflecting processes which are also designed to loosen up fixed or rigid patterns of thinking and communication. In both orientations the emphasis is on increasing space for people to adopt an observer perspective in relation to themselves, their families and their world.

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[9] Chapter 8 pp. 194-5.

We have noted Benhabib's (1990) observation that the principle of reversibility of perspectives which requires us to judge situations from the other's point of view in a moral community has always been integral to the idea of a universalistic ethics. We have also noted that at the centre of Habermasian ethical theory is this principle of universalization which specifies that in contexts of "discourse" each participant must assume the perspective of all others, a principle that echoes Mead's concept of "ideal role- taking". However as Outhwaite (1994) observes, in the case of the discursive redemption of validity claims, "the ability to enter the sphere of discourse presupposes certain cognitive capacities (e.g. metacommunication)" (p. 50). Within psychotherapy we have also seen that this capacity for metacommunication is framed in terms of reflexivity which includes both cognitive and emotional dimensions. The pervasiveness of severely restricted capacity for reflexivity in those who attend psychotherapy underlines the challenge of drawing on a universalistic ethical perspective in real life contexts and I will now use further case material to anchor this discussion of reflexivity in clinical practice and underline the challenge that it represents.[10] I will then reconnect the clinical discussion with the moral/ ethical framework offered by Habermas' and Honneth's combined theories and will conclude the study by drawing together various themes relating to the psychotherapeutic "talking cure" as a reflexive resource that can help unleash the genuinely communicative power of talking and listening.

Family C

Mr and Mrs C reluctantly attend family therapy sessions with their twelve-year old son Adam, an only child. They are firmly of the view that what Adam needs is individual therapy for a range of difficulties that concern them. These include facial tics, lack of confidence and self- esteem, physical aggression, a deeply negative relationship with his father and in addition some reluctance around attending school. My co therapist and I also believe that Adam could benefit from individual therapy running parallel to family/parental intervention but he has resolutely refused to separate from his mother when arrangements have been made for him to have an individual meeting. Multi-disciplinary discussion of the case has concluded that for now, family therapy is the optimum treatment and it is hoped that family meetings interspersed with parental meetings might help Adam separate from the acute emotional entanglement in his

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[10] This case material has previously been discussed in Donovan (2009).

parents' troubled marriage which makes consideration of his own separate needs so difficult both within the family and in the therapeutic context. It is a classic family therapy case with questions and battles around who is the "identified patient" at the heart of the work. It is also typical of many cases encountered by psychotherapists in child and adolescent mental health settings and an example of the routine challenges of our work in engaging families in a therapeutic conversation within an uneasy therapeutic alliance.

In the initial meetings our impression is of a family clinging together in highly ambivalent relationships. Mr and Mrs A both express dissatisfaction with the marriage and air their thoughts about divorce but seem incapable of making a decision. Marital therapy at another clinic fizzled out. Both parents have past histories of mental health difficulties including hospitalisation and these histories have the status of secrets in the family. They are deeply concerned that their son's current problems may represent the onset of similar mental health issues. A powerful sense of stuckness prevails and I often feel relieved when my colleague who is observing my conversations with the family from behind the one way screen, joins me for a reflecting conversation in front of the family. I experience these as moments when my own thinking is freed and I begin to play with thoughts and words in a way that feels very difficult with this family. Sometimes our reflecting conversation simply entails putting into words this stuckness and rigidity of thinking and talking that we experience and then exploring its possible ingredients. We might reflect on our impression that everybody in the family seems very deeply attached to their own perspective and is waiting for somebody else to do the changing. We might draw out and think about fleeting moments in the session when the seeds of a different and less restrictive way of thinking and communicating seemed possible. Much of our exchange is as likely to be about the process of conversation as it is about content issues.

Often it seems that in our meta-conversations in front of the family, my colleague and I are looking for a variety of ways of saying the same things so that they might be heard and taken in. In the early sessions it is striking that different aspects of the reflecting conversation resonate for different family members and here we find the spontaneous free flowing quality of the reflecting process helpful in furthering each family member's engagement with the therapy. Put simply, what seems most important is that we are

introducing and constantly reinforcing the value of thinking and talking about the family's thinking and talking. It could be argued that what we are doing is modelling a different kind of conversation which has a less restrictive way of dealing with differences of perspective; a conversation that places greater emphasis on putting feelings into words, on playing with words and ideas and allowing for contradiction, mixed feelings and compromise in and through the talking process. In effect all our effort are directed towards developing this family's severely restricted capacity for reflexive communication which we hope will create the foundations for further insight-oriented talking about the specific symptoms, disagreements and worries that have brought them to therapy .

It is difficult to overstate the gulf between the severely and systematically distorted communicative processes represented in the above case and the Habermasian regulative ideal of undistorted communication. Furthermore these processes are unfolding in a deeply personal and intimate space in contrast to the macro social and political contexts that are Habermas' primary focus. Nonetheless I would argue that within this intimate therapeutic space the regulative ideal of undistorted communication centred notably on presuppositions of inclusivity, reciprocity, the absence of coercion and the ability to move between different levels of communication, as reconstructed in the theory of communicative ethics, implicitly permeate our faltering attempts to help this troubled family move towards a less restrictive, more reflexive mode of communicating and resolving their differences. An explicit theorization of these presuppositions drawing on Habermasian communicative ethics can only help secure, consolidate and expand this fragile and uncertain therapeutic process.

But this case also depicts the very early stages of supporting the parents in offering their son a more appropriate, emotionally containing family context where his developmental needs as a twelve year old boy rather than a substitute partner to his mother, can be recognized and where he can be helped to consolidate the basic self confidence which Honneth (1995), following Winnicottian thinking, describes as a fundamental mode of relating to self and the bedrock for our engagement with the outside world. For this twelve year old boy the world beyond his immediate family will include his peer group and school and it is hoped that therapeutic input will, in the long run, help him to

participate more fully and satisfyingly in this external world in ways that might enhance his self esteem and loosen the grip of his current destructive, all consuming struggle for recognition within his family. Helping him towards accepting the offer of individual therapy sessions away from his parents might also represent a symbolic movement towards accessing his speaking rights as an independent person and a very small step on the road towards adulthood and what we might describe, in line with Honneth's theory, as "autonomous participation in public life" (1995, p. 107). Overall I would argue that the threefold schema of love, rights and solidarity offers an invaluable "prism" through which we can become ethically and emotionally sensitized to this troubled young person's identity struggles in the three domains of recognition as outlined by Honneth.

Problems that present themselves in psychotherapy are often deeply entrenched at the personal level as in the above case and whilst our moral/ethical framework needs to guard against psychological reductionism, it also needs to embrace the psychological complexity of our work. The great value of Habermas' and Honneth's combined theories in the psychotherapeutic context is not only their overarching compatibility with a therapeutic focus which I have discussed throughout this study but the specific ways in which the orientation of these theories can be seen to operate in unison with therapeutic method that is honed to address psychological complexity. This is what I have endeavoured to illustrate, albeit to a limited extent, in the case material discussed in this chapter. Engaging with the minds of other people which the moral principle of reversibility of perspectives asks of us may be a presupposition of the universalistic ethical perspective but for many, including those who attend psychotherapy, nurturing the capability to engage with one's own mind and that of others may be a life long journey. For those who are helped on this journey by psychotherapy there is little doubt that it constitutes a "good" outcome; one that is entirely consistent with a communicative ethical orientation and with progressive, democratizing developments in personal, social and political contexts as defined within this communicative ethical framework.

Conclusion

> Of course our moral and political world is more characterized by struggles onto death among moral opponents than by a conversation among them. This admission reveals the fragility of the moral point of view in a world of power and violence but this is not an admission of irrelevance. (Benhabib, 1990, p. 340)

At the heart of this study lies the argument that the psychotherapeutic "talking cure" can contribute to progressive, democratizing change in personal, social and political spheres and whilst this contribution may be very modest in scale particularly at the latter levels, this is not, to borrow Benhabib's words, "an admission of irrelevance". On the contrary what is underlined is the need for fresh impetus and renewal of a debate that has become hopelessly mired in the conceptually impoverished framework of professional micro ethics, whilst eschewing engagement with the macro level of moral/ethical and political theory and debate. Ethical concerns and dilemmas that confront clinicians are addressed within overarching quasi legal moral codes, whose legitimacy is accepted uncritically without clarity or even interest regarding the underlying conception of morality from which such codes derive. Not surprisingly this reified micro ethical debate is then consigned to a peripheral status within the wider discourse.

In asserting that psychotherapy can contribute to progressive change at the personal and social levels our starting point needs to be a rigorous engagement with the normative orientation of our work and a critical evaluation of what progressive change might mean in this context. Evaluating what constitutes a "good" outcome in psychotherapy is intricately linked with wider, macro level evaluations of what constitutes good and right living. Inevitably this leads us into the territory of moral, social and political theory notwithstanding positivist inclinations to steer clear of such considerations and concentrate exclusively on matters relating to therapeutic methodology and technique. In this study I have explored the limitations of current professional ethical debate in psychotherapy as well as the inadequacy of the postmodernist response. I have argued that the Habermasian communicative ethical framework, including his regulative ideal of undistorted communication, complements and expands existing progressive and democratizing trends within psychotherapeutic discourse and in so doing offers a very promising foundation for reinvigorating moral/ethical debate.

Few places offer a better vantage point than that offered by the psychotherapeutic session, from which to observe in minute detail the persistence but also the fragility of the moral point of view when framed in communicative terms as in the above quotation from Benhabib's work. Within the ebb and flow of psychotherapeutic intervention it is often that case that what unfolds comes closer to, what Benhabib terms, "struggles onto death" as opposed to "conversation". The therapeutic process itself may break down acrimoniously and perhaps also the relationships that were its focus. In extreme cases other agencies may be summoned to ensure personal safety notably in situations of domestic violence, suicidal ideation or suspected child abuse and neglect. Such developments do not necessarily signal the end of the therapeutic conversation however but rather the opportunity for realignment of power and speaking rights which may offer a fairer and more solid foundation for therapeutic conversation to reconvene and which may include some or all of the previous participants. Within this reconvened conversation the challenging endeavour of communicatively reshaping "struggles onto death" into struggles for understanding agreement and recognition can then resume. I am arguing that the latter constitute the moral "force" at the heart of the psychotherapeutic encounter and have drawn extensively on the critical theories of Habermas and Honneth as a theoretical framework for this discussion.

The theme of reflexivity has been central to the discussion not least as an important bridge between the discourses of psychotherapy and critical social theory but also as a theoretical construct that embraces the profound therapeutic challenge of helping those for whom thinking and communicating are severely limited and distorted by internal or external constraints and deprivations. In essence the challenge of promoting reflexivity within the psychotherapeutic process centres on facilitating less rigid, less concrete and constricted thinking and talking processes including the capacity to move between different levels of meaning and communication. Here I have underlined the connection with Habermas' idea of the speaker's competence to move between communicative action and discourse. Put simply much of our work aspires to modes of thinking and communicating that encompass discursive principles of fairness, inclusivity and non coercion and within which those struggles for understanding, agreement and recognition that infuse the psychotherapeutic process can be opened up to relatively unbiased and undistorted consideration. Should this sound overly idealistic, the case material upon

which I have drawn in the final chapter serves as a reminder of the painstaking and modest aims of the "talking cure" in action. Nonetheless I would argue that this case material also reveals the implicit yet potent influence of a normative ideal of undistorted communication that permeates routine psychotherapeutic interventions and which can be linked productively and creatively with Habermas' communicative ethical theory.

We have seen that a problematic issue relating to Habermasian theory is that it presupposes certain cognitive and emotional capacities as a basis for engaging in "discourse", including those capacities that relate to the principle of universalization. This principle specifies that in contexts of "discourse" each participant must assume the perspective of all others, a principle that echoes Mead's ([1934]1974) concept of "ideal role- taking". In this study I have argued that the cognitive and emotional capacities required for participation in discourse may helpfully be framed in terms of the psychotherapeutic constructs of reflexivity or reflective functioning. However the pervasiveness of severely restricted reflexive capacity in those who seek psychotherapy also underlines the challenge of drawing on a universalistic ethical perspective in real life contexts. Whilst engaging with the minds of other people, which the moral principle of reversibility of perspectives requires of us, may be a presupposition of the universalistic ethical perspective, for many who attend psychotherapy, generating the capacity to engage with their own and other peoples' minds is likely to encompass a long and painful journey out of narcissistic withdrawal or other related difficulties. Here I would argue that psychotherapy can helpfully draw on the language of "human capability" reflected notably in Nussbaum's (2000) normative philosophical approach, as a basis for thinking about the construct of reflexivity within a moral/ethical framework.

The value of Nussbaum's work, as with Honneth's recognition theory, is that it redresses the imbalance towards cognitive philosophical abstraction in Habermasian theory. Thinking about reflexivity within a universalist framework that privileges capability or human potential underscores the embryonic nature of this disposition and focuses attention on conditions in personal and social life that may impede its development or alternatively help it to flourish. The challenge of theorizing about these conditions is integral to the psychotherapeutic objective of enhancing reflexivity and this objective clearly fits most comfortably with normative philosophical approaches

where the theorization of such issues is also prioritized, as in Nussbaum's work. This emphasis is similarly evident in Honneth's recognition theory which as we have seen goes some considerable way towards addressing the limitations of Habermasian theory and which offers an invaluable bridge for dialogue between psychotherapy and critical social theory. I have argued that the contemporary psychotherapeutic constructs of reflexivity/reflective functioning which straddle both cognitive and emotional dimensions can be encompassed within but paradoxically also expand Honneth's thinking about "basic self-confidence" as a primary mode of relating to self. In Honneth's schema this thinking is rooted in earlier object relations theory that largely privileges a discourse of emotionality over that of cognition. For Honneth basic self-confidence as a mode of relating to self is seen as the bedrock for our capacity to access our speaking rights and participate in contexts of discourse. From a psychotherapeutic perspective I am suggesting that we can think of the capacity for reflexivity/reflective functioning as a mode of relating to self and others, encompassing both cognitive and emotional dimensions, which serves a comparable function.

The focus within relationally oriented psychotherapy on expanding restrictive reflexive capacity brings us to the heart of the potential psychotherapeutic contribution to progressive personal and social change as defined in communicative ethical terms. Borrowing from the language of social theory, I am arguing that in this reflexive therapeutic endeavour, "a space of freedom is opened up" (Kögler, 1999, p. 270) or potentially opened up. At its best the therapeutic session expands into a reflexively constituted space where we are helped to engage more openly, creatively and playfully with our own thinking and talking and that of others and where the moral point of view as a communicatively constituted process of reversing perspectives and placing oneself in the shoes of the other can slowly begin to emerge. We have seen that the charge of psychological reductionism and of promoting individualizing tendencies is one that has bedevilled psychotherapy over the years and I am arguing that this is not so much a reflection of any inherent weakness in the psychotherapeutic process as of the latter's traditional individualistic normative bias. The mediating paradigm of communicative ethics offers scope for transcending this bias and reinforcing already existing relational currents in contemporary theory and practice.

Writing about psychoanalytic therapy, Frosh (1999) asserts that it is capable of offering insights and experiences that are "congruent with, and can contribute to, progressive political changes," on the basis that psychoanalysis represents "an agency of criticism even when it restricts itself to the personal concerns of individuals because at the heart of these concerns is a social process" (p. 244, his emphasis). Nowhere is this idea of the social at the heart of the personal more evident within psychotherapy than in current thinking about reflexivity or reflective functioning. In the latter case we have seen that psychoanalytic thinking on the capacity for reflective functioning and its acquisition is deeply anchored in the framework of primary relationships. Its difference from insight, self reflection or introspection is also strongly upheld, with Holmes (2005) for example emphasizing that it represents a "meta- cognitive phenomenon". Difficulties in this area point to what can be described as structural deficits in the thinking apparatus and the overarching psychotherapeutic focus is defined in terms of the recovery and development of reflexive capacity, or "capability", if we adopt Nussbaum's terminology. This can pave the way for a more traditional insight oriented therapeutic approach but the underlying intersubjective framing of this reflexive endeavour is very clear as is its distinctiveness from processes of personal introspection. In essence the focus is more about helping people learn how to think within the context of the therapeutic relationship rather than what to think about. Thus whilst the widespread expansion of psychotherapy and counselling services and literature has been greeted with dismay by some social theorists (Bauman, 2003; Lasch, 1978, 1984) who perceive it as evidence of current individualizing tendencies, this differentiation between reflexivity and personal introspection provides a useful basis for questioning this critique. It underlines that far from promoting any exclusive narcissistic retreat, contemporary psychotherapy is profoundly implicated in developments that also challenge the narcissistic psychic structure and which nurture a reflexive capacity to engage creatively and empathically with the minds and the emotions of others. We have seen that the principle of reversibility of perspectives lies at the heart of the universalistic ethical perspective and I am arguing that it is also closely entwined with contemporary relationally oriented trends in psychotherapy.

Contrary to negative social theoretical perspectives on the rise of psychotherapy, we noted that Giddens (1991, 1992) reaches a strikingly different conclusion and in drawing this study to a close I will refer to his thinking as a framework for bringing

together significant themes from earlier discussion. Whilst not denying that therapy can be seen to promote or reinforce narcissistic tendencies, Giddens is adamant that it is much more than this. He argues that it holds considerable potential to enhance the democratization of personal life and he is especially interested in the reflexivity of the therapeutic process:

> Therapy is not just an adjustment device. As an expression of generalized reflexivity it exhibits in full the dislocations and uncertainties to which modernity gives rise. At the same time it, participates in that mixture of opportunity and risk characteristic of the late modern order. It can promise dependence and passivity; yet it can also permit engagement and reappropriation. (1991, p. 180)

In Giddens's view there are significant areas of appropriation of new possibilities that flow from the increased reflexivity of social life and he views psychotherapy as a reflexive resource that is positively implicated in these democratizing trends. We have seen that Giddens uses the example of key changes in personal and family life centred on what he calls "the pure relationship" to illustrate his general argument. In his view the "pure relationship" is prototypical of developments that signal the "transformation of intimacy" in the sense of a growing democratization of this sphere. Trust is integral to the pure relationship and is mobilized by elements within the relationship that are anchored in mutual disclosure as distinct from criteria outside the relationship. Integrity is something that each partner presumes of the other and is integral to the ethical framework of the relationship. Underpinning this mode of relating is an ongoing process of reflexive monitoring by the partners which intersects with wider contexts of reflexivity. The expansion of therapy services is closely linked to the emergence of the pure relationship since this mode of relating puts considerable pressure on the integrity of the self and on the requirement not only to understand oneself but to present oneself authentically within the communicative framework of the relationship.

Whilst Bauman draws the sweeping conclusion that the pure relationship "is a de-ethicized intimacy" (1993, p. 106), this view diverges sharply from Giddens' own conclusion. He regards the transformation of intimacy personified in this mode of relating as closely entwined with processes of democratization at the personal level. For Giddens, "democracy means discussion, the chance for the 'force of the better argument' to count as against other means of determining decisions" and in the context

of the pure relationship he speaks of the imperative of free and open communication as the sine qua non of this relationship (1992, p. 186). As we have seen it is not surprising that connections are thus made between Habermasian ethical theory and Giddens' work, with Outhwaite (1998), for example, observing that what Habermas offers is a philosophy for a world of the type described by Giddens - as having become reflexive. The pure relationship represents a contemporary form of relating in which the communicative processes between those involved take precedence over external or abstract criteria such as duty or obligation. In this study I have argued that far from being a "de-ethicized intimacy" the pure relationship could be seen as intimacy in search of an ethical standpoint anchored within a communicative ethical framework. What Giddens' work implicitly underlines is the need for an ethical understanding that is firmly anchored in communicative processes given the centrality of communication to the contemporary transformations of personal life which his analysis so vividly captures.

We have seen that Giddens (1991) is also acutely aware that the therapeutic endeavour unfolds against a background of significant moral impoverishment that characterizes the contemporary world of "late modernity". He notes the burden and pressure which results in the sphere of pure relationships as an arena that potentially offers "a morally rewarding milieu for individual life development" (p. 169). But he resists the conclusion that the latter can only be understood in terms of a defensive retreat into personal life and instead argues that there is much evidence of ongoing creative engagement with the outer social world. He uses the example of the reflexive reorganisation of family life and relationships in the aftermath of divorce to illustrate this point. However despite these outward looking, creative, relationally oriented developments he accepts that personal meaninglessness and moral impoverishment is a fundamental issue in late modernity. Furthermore an implication of this morally impoverished climate in which psychotherapy operates is the tendency to emphasize the values of control and mastery and to formulate the reflexive project of self primarily in terms of self determination. As argued throughout this study the problems of psychological reductionism, individualisation, social conformism and so on are not intrinsic to psychotherapy per se but to the reductionism and individualistic bias of the normative framework by which it is underpinned. Whilst he does not spell this out and his perspective on psychotherapeutic discourse is that of an observer, Giddens' social theoretical analysis

implicitly points towards the relevance of an alternative communicative formulation of moral/ethical themes as a response to the widespread moral impoverishment which his analysis describes.

Adopting Giddens' positive perspective on the potential for psychotherapy to contribute to progressive change, we may conclude, contrary to Bauman's view, that widespread expansion of psychotherapy services is a welcome development which facilitates enhanced access for those in need of help. Significantly this expansion has been accompanied by a radical opening up of the therapy field that includes the proliferation of therapeutic modalities and which greatly increases the choices available to potential clients. Two examples of this development have been highlighted here. Firstly the emergence of systemic psychotherapy in a clinical world that was still in thrall to classical psychoanalysis and which offered a much needed therapeutic service to families and individuals who were unlikely to be engaged or helped by a classical insight oriented interpretative approach. Over the decades systemic psychotherapy has constructed an impressive repertoire of alternative styles of practice for engaging and helping people develop a reflexive capacity to stand back from their presenting difficulties as part of the change process. The reflecting team approach has received particular attention in this study as an example of this style of therapeutic engagement. Contemporary psychoanalysis demonstrates a similar preoccupation with exploring ways of engaging and working with those not readily responsive to a traditional interpretative approach. Fonagy and Target's model of mentalization or reflective functioning which has been explored here is a good example of this endeavour to broaden the repertoire of psychoanalytic practice and to help client groups with deep seated psychological difficulties that might previously have been deemed unsuitable for psychoanalysis. These developments challenge any dismissal of psychotherapy as a mere indulgence of those who are already privileged and point to the quiet democratization of the therapeutic field as a result of which more people with more severe levels of difficulty have increased opportunity to access appropriate help.

Another aspect of this democratizing trend is the reflexive opening up of the therapeutic process itself which is clearly demonstrated in the development of the reflecting team approach for example. With this development the role of the systemic therapist is no longer defined in terms of any privileged access to definitions of change. Gone are the

old style certainties of an earlier era which adopted a predominant natural science paradigm for the therapeutic process and within which it was not uncommon to view change as that which happened when the therapist intervened independently of the awareness of the participants about how they were behaving. In its place comes much greater emphasis on "joining" with the client/ family in conversations that are seen to have an indeterminate outcome. When those who initiated these radical developments in therapeutic practice looked for a conceptual framework in which to locate and develop their thinking it is perhaps not surprising that they turned to hermeneutics and postmodernism for inspiration. Undoubtedly the latter theoretical traditions offered much needed impetus for the elaboration of what were ground breaking therapeutic developments, but as discussed at length in this study, hermeneutical, post-structuralist and postmodernist influence within psychotherapy also came with very significant difficulties attached.

I have criticized the tendency within therapeutic approaches influenced by hermeneutic and postmodernist thinking to idealize the therapeutic relationship as a "co-constructed" entity. I have also criticized the assumption within these approaches that structural inequalities and power differentials between therapist and client might simply be cast aside by adopting an "uncertain" style of conversation and so on, in the absence of substantive engagement with issues of power within the therapeutic relationship and in the absence of substantive consideration of the normative orientation of therapeutic practice. I have also argued for the need to disentangle contemporary engagement with reflexivity from its unhelpful fusion with the postmodernist stance, or more accurately a psychotherapeutic postmodernist stance delineated in opposition to earlier modernist "hierarchical" approaches.

Habermas' communicative ethics offers a helpful theoretical context for expanding our thinking about this key construct of reflexivity from a moral/ethical perspective and crucially as we have seen, does not require us to divorce our thinking from the discourse of methodology and technique and therefore from engagement with questions of therapeutic expertise. In the case of the Habermas/Foucault encounter it was observed that at the heart of Habermas' critique of Foucault is the conviction that the game of normativity is most helpfully played in the light of day and this same critique might equally be applied to post-structuralist and postmodernist influenced therapeutic

orientations. In the absence of rigorous debate and engagement with the normative foundations of psychotherapy it is difficult to imagine that key progressive, democratizing developments, which I have underlined in this study, can realize their full potential given the challenging social context in which psychotherapy currently operates. This context includes an entrenched positivist ethos within certain strands of the discourse which in turn connects with powerful vested interests both inside and outside the field that promote a heavily truncated version of psychotherapy with objectives that are defined primarily in terms of symptom relief and circumscribed behavioural change. In this process, whether it is fuelled by ideology, monetary reasons or other criteria, there is a real danger that the richness of the "talking cure" as depicted throughout this study both in its systemic and psychoanalytic formulations is suppressed or simply preserved for privileged groups who can afford it.

In Giddens' work, we have seen that he defines democracy in dialogical terms. He also identifies a number of domains of life which represent dialogic space for the extension of democracy and which, as Delanty points out, brings his thinking very close to Habermasian discourse theory (1999, p. 169). These domains include personal life, the dynamic of social movements, the organizational sphere and the global sphere. This study began with the premise that any satisfactory engagement with moral/ethical and political themes in psychotherapy needs to focus on the personal space of psychotherapeutic intervention as its starting point. It is within this space that we need to begin the task of reformulating and broadening the parameters of moral/ethical and political debate in psychotherapy. We need to begin with what is creative and progressive in psychotherapy as it is currently practiced and use this as the basis for further development. Honneth's theory of recognition gives invaluable direction for how this might be embraced. By offering a comprehensive framework for conceptualizing different strands of disrespect and violations of recognition at the personal, social and political levels, his contribution extends and deepens the impact of communicative ethics in remoralizing the space in which psychotherapy operates. Honneth's overarching framework powerfully mediates between the personal on the one hand and social and political domains on the other. His three fold schema of love, rights and solidarity challenges any reductionist tendency to conflate or isolate these interrelated but distinctive arenas of social interaction and struggle. I have argued, in line with Houston's (2009) social work perspective, that Honneth's framework serves as

a "prism" through which psychotherapists can become more sensitized to identity struggles in the three domains of recognition which are identified. How psychotherapists address this in their work is a subject for both moral/ethical debate and methodological consideration.

Giddens (1991) observes that we live in a world that is not only witnessing considerable transformation within the personal sphere but that similar processes are to some extent evident within the social and political spheres and which are closely interconnected. For him these changes include the emergence of "life politics", the politics of a reflexively constituted world focussed on life choices relating to personal identity. In essence we might describe this as the politics of a world that psychotherapy routinely inhabits. It is also arguable that past suppression of this aspect of political debate is an important dimension of the oppositional relationship between personal and political themes and concerns that has persisted within psychotherapy. Even if psychotherapists continue to remain within the intimate space of the consulting room rather than venturing out into more overtly political spheres it seems likely that political themes and debate will coalesce more explicitly around concerns that are often the focus of psychotherapy. This is already evident in the politicisation of issues relating to sexual abuse and related forms of disrespect, as awareness grows of widespread organisational collusion with this very personal tragedy which so often finds its first voice in the intimate space of the psychotherapeutic session. Delanty (1999, p. 57) observes that we live in a world that seeks to give more place to feelings, emotions and desires and which has inspired many social movements. There seems little doubt that psychotherapy is an integral part of this changing social environment. However the extent to which it can become a significant democratizing force in the unfolding of these developments remains to be seen. How psychotherapists address this challenge in their work is a subject for both moral/ethical debate and for methodological consideration.

In Giddens' work he does not see "life politics" usurping the place of "emancipatory politics" as articulated for example in Habermasian discourse theory. On the contrary the less there is suppression of themes and concerns relating to "life politics" the more we encounter "moral disagreements" relating to these existential concerns and the need for these to be reconciled. In her rich engagement with communicative ethics, Benhabib (1990) believes that notwithstanding its various flaws, the model of a universalist moral

dialogue envisaged by Habermasian discourse theory can serve as a defensible version of "the moral point of view":

> ….the less we view such discourses along the model of public fora or courts of appeal, and the more we understand them as the continuation of *ordinary moral conversations* in which we seek to come to terms with and appreciate the others point of view, the less do we submit to the distorting lens of procedural universalism. To argue that the counterfactual ideals of reciprocity, equality and the "gentle force of reason" are implicit in the very structures of communicative action, is to argue that the "moral point of view" articulates more precisely those implicit structures of speech and action within which human life unfolds. Each time we say to a child, "But what if other kids pushed you into the sand, how would you feel then? and each time we say to a mate, or to a relative "But let me see if I understand your point correctly," we are engaging in moral conversation of justification. And if I am correct that it is the process of such dialogue, conversation, and mutual understanding, and not consensus which is our goal, discourse ethics can represent the moral point of view without having to invoke the fiction of *homo economicus* or *homo politicus*." (1990, p. 358, her emphasis)

This nuanced defence of discourse theory encompasses the spirit of qualified engagement with Habermasian thinking that I have endeavoured to present throughout this study. We have seen that for Habermas, discourses are "islands" in the sea of communicative practice. Drawing on this analogy we might think of significant discursive moments in the therapeutic encounter as islands of heightened reflexivity in the ebb and flow of ordinary conversations both within and beyond the consulting room, in which the full communicative power of language is unleashed. I have presented the communicative ethical perspective not as a model for therapeutic practice but as a way of thinking about morality and ethics in practice. Thinking about these themes is not an alternative to thinking about emotionality, methodology and technique and I have underlined the extent to which these dimensions are intricately linked in psychotherapy. It is unlikely that we would ever draw very precise prescriptions for therapeutic practice from Habermas' highly abstract moral theory which is deeply rooted in philosophical discourse. On the contrary it is only through integrating this thinking into our therapeutic debates that we will get a realistic sense of how it might reshape our work and how it might contribute to further more radical democratization of the therapeutic process and of the domains in which psychotherapy operates. For Habermas the neglect of morality and ethics inevitably leads to the neglect of human aspirations. My hope is that I have been able to demonstrate what a communicative ethical framework has to

offer psychotherapy in guarding against such neglect and serving as a touchstone for further debate and progressive development of our work.

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