

## **Culture-Centric vs. Person-Centered Cultural Psychology and Political Philosophy**

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My work in cultural psychology – i.e., sociocultural theory – has two branches. One is the study of psychological phenomena as cultural phenomena. The other is the study of the discipline of cultural psychology as a cultural phenomenon. By this I mean the concepts and methods and interventions that the discipline employs, and the cultural factors that shape them. The discipline of cultural psychology is as culturally shaped as the psychology of the people it studies. It can be as culturally mystified as the psychology of the people it studies.

It is important to reflect on the cultural elements of the discipline in order to understand its approaches and conclusions. Since the cultural elements of the discipline determine its concepts, methods, and interventions, it follows that cultural elements determine its objectivity, validity, its insights and its mystifications, and the kinds of psychological and social changes it promulgates.

I have found that one of the most powerful cultural determinants of the discipline is the political philosophy that cultural psychologists adopt. Political philosophy is usually implicit in their thinking – as a social unconscious – however, it can be detected from a sophisticated political understanding of culture and behavior.

Applying this perspective to SCT, I have found the field divided into two conflicting approaches, a culture-centered, ‘classic’ approach, and an individual-centered, ‘revisionist’ approach. These, in turn, are rooted in competing political philosophies, Marxism and liberal-humanism, respectively. Of course, neither of these is perfectly homogeneous. However, their internal

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similarities outweigh their internal differences, and their external differences with each other outweigh their internal differences (Ratner, 2015).

Vygotsky's approach is culture-centric. It maintains that humans construct macro-cultural factors that are integrated, objectified forms of material, social, symbolic, and subjective elements. Psychology is thus an element of material, social, and symbolic macro-cultural factors. It is the subjectivity that animates and maintains them. Because objectified macro-cultural factors are humans' survival mechanisms and fulfillment mechanisms, subjectivity/psychology is ultimately directed at constructing and maintaining and refining them. Subjectivity is not free-floating agency that expresses individual processes. Humans strive to construct schools, houses, implements, organized activities such as religious customs, and collective symbols such as language. Subjectivity has a cultural *intentionality* that structures it. And subjectivity is structured by the material, institutional, and symbolic elements of macro factors that house subjectivity/psychology. Changing, or enriching, psychology requires reorganizing the macro-cultural factors in which it is formed and which call for it, require it, and support it. This is its progressive political thrust. It draws people into understanding and improving society in order to understand and improve themselves. Vygotsky wrote a telling essay 'The Socialist Transformation of Man' that I cited.

The revisionist approach is individual-centered. It claims that psychology is primarily an individual, personal process that expresses individual, personal desires and ideas. Culture is reduced to the set of these personal processes. Macro-cultural factors are minimized, decimated, weakened, destabilized, and derogated as reified, in order to open them up to individual re-construction, selection, and flexible utilization for individual purposes. Individual behavior is glorified as individual agency and creativity. Culture-centric explanations, descriptions, and predictions are denounced as depersonalizing, mechanistic, and static.

These differences in the two approaches to SCT and cultural psychology are grounded in political philosophies. Vygotsky's approach is grounded in Marxist political philosophy, while revisionist SCT is grounded in a liberal-humanist political philosophy. These political philosophies culminate in disparate political directions. Vygotsky's Marxist SCT is directed at changing macro-cultural factors. Revisionist SCT is based upon individualistic freedom. It seeks to free individuals from cultural structures so they can express their personal agency. This is the basis of their individualistic SCT that emphasizes agency, personal meanings, and glorified individuality.

The liberal-humanist idea of individual freedom is a false view of freedom that has been philosophically debunked. It reproduces bourgeois individual-

istic ideology, particularly neo-liberal ideology. I have debunked this individualistic freedom and person-based philosophy and social science throughout my work. Individual freedom is a myth. People depend upon culture; culture is what makes us human; it is our civilization. We cannot be human without it. The value of culture is its objectified coherence that unites individuals into coordinated, sustained, common action and objectives. Dissipating this into individual acts of agency deprives us of the sustaining, supporting, integrating strength of culture.

Freedom is not freedom from culture, it is the freedom to reorganize culture. Slaves gained their freedom not through individual acts within the slave system, but through eradicating that sociocultural system. Women gained civil rights, not through individual acts of defiance (e.g. smoking cigarettes, which many women turned to), nor through demanding personal forms of respect, but through concerted political action to change social laws. Poverty is not escaped by individual acts or by receiving personal respect; it must be eradicated through social policies that alter macro-cultural factors. Freedom and creativity depend upon creating a hospitable system of macro-cultural factors (e.g. schools, jobs) that facilitate and support and demand these competencies.

I argue that the fundamental error of individual freedom generates an erroneous view of culture, the individual, and psychology. Revisionist SCT is thus a coherent doctrine just as classic SCT is. The difference is that the latter is true while the former is false.

In his critique, Jones (2016) admits to being a revisionist. He acknowledges his antipathy to the classic Vygotskyian perspective. Yet he does not refute my criticism of revisionist SCT. He does not logically, theoretically, or empirically defend its conception of culture, the individual, psychology as personal construction by creative agency, its view of language, or its interpretation of the school dialogues that I presented. Instead, he criticizes my defense of classic SCT. He seems to think that if he can refute my position, then his is the only one left standing and requires no defense. This is wrong.

I will address the diverse elements contained in his reply. Since Jones represents the SCT revisionist position, my comments extend to that position as a whole.

1. Jones accuses me of presenting classic SCT crudely and dogmatically. He never explains how I am crude or dogmatic.
2. Jones jumps to arguing against my characterization of Vygotsky as deeply Marxist: 'There are also good reasons for challenging Ratner's view of the unequivocally Marxist roots of SCT. While having clearly stated Marxist aspirations, Vygotsky was cautious about claiming progress toward that goal.'

These points are non-sequiturs. Caution about claiming progress toward the Marxist goal is not a reason for challenging my view of Vygotsky's Marxist roots. Vygotsky simply expressed a realistic recognition that it is difficult to achieve a Marxist theory of psychology. The fact that Marxist psychology was Vygotsky's goal, and that he used Marxist concepts and methodology, testifies to his Marxism. Thus, Jones does not refute my characterization of Vygotsky as Marxist. (I demonstrate Vygotsky's Marxism in my forthcoming book with D. Nunes, *Vygotsky, Marx, and Psychology*, 2016, Taylor & Francis.)

3. Jones then takes issue with my Vygotsky quote about the depth of social conditioning of individual behavior. I used this quote to illustrate my characterization of Vygotsky as culture-centric. His quote clearly expresses this idea. I was not using this quote to illustrate Vygotsky's Marxism. I did not mention Marxism in conjunction with the quote.

Nonetheless,, Jones tries to use Vygotsky's quotation to demonstrate his deviation from Marxism. He says Vygotsky's quotation reflects some analogy with Pavlovian reflex theory, not Marxism. Jones hopes to show that Vygotsky's reflexology carried through to his entire cultural-psychological theory and invalidates its cultural and psychological aspects.

Jones never offers any evidence that Vygotsky conceived social conditioning and mediation as analogous to a Pavlovian reflex. Marx spoke of social determinations in Hegelian terminology. Jones never proves that Vygotsky meant anything different. He fixates on Vygotsky's use of the term 'stimuli' – as in society refracts and directs stimuli acting on the individual – to presume Vygotsky's Pavlovian notion of social influence. However, this single word does not prove what Vygotsky's social theory entailed. 'Stimuli' is a common term that has a general meaning. Not every use of it implies a Pavlovian concept. Vygotsky was working with reflexology in his psychological work (and decisively rejected it), however, this does not prove that he regarded everything in the world in reflex terms at that time. Indeed, Vygotsky said that humans create our own auxiliary stimuli which is an active, creative, non-Pavlovian use of the term. Vygotsky had read Marx, and Jones needs to prove that Vygotsky was using Pavlov and *not* using Marx's social theory of determinations in his comments about social refraction and mediation. Instead he makes an unsupported accusation.

His claim is undermined by a detailed reading of *Psychology of Art*. In it Vygotsky says, 'Art is an expanded "social feeling" or technique of feelings' (ibid., p. 244). 'Art is the social technique of emotion, a tool of society which brings the most intimate and personal aspects of our being into the circle of social life' (p. 249). Art is a rich social phenomenon that embodies emotions. It is a 'social feeling'. Art is a macro-cultural factor that is laden with subjectivity

and it includes intimate and personal aspects of our being. People learn these feelings as they experience art. There is nothing mechanistic or reflexive about this. This is nothing akin to dogs salivating at food as Jones imagines. On the contrary, ‘the perception of art requires creativity’ (*ibid.*, p. 248).

4. Jones then seeks to continue this mechanistic accusation throughout Vygotsky’s psychological and cultural concepts. ‘As he revised his position in search of a more plausible account of distinctively human thinking and behaviour, he did not completely transcend the mechanistic reflex conception (of Cartesian origin) but cemented it into his theoretical system as an account of the putative “lower” (“natural”) foundation for the development of “higher” (“cultural”) mental functions. This “natural” foundation was purely reactive, responsive to external stimuli or, in the case of “practical intellect”, at best capable of supporting rudimentary actions in the here and now.’

This is a gross misinterpretation of Vygotsky’s theory. Vygotsky explicitly divorced higher, cultural psychological functions from lower, natural-biological determinants of behavior. He did not use the latter as the foundation of the former. Jones is completely wrong to say that reflexive natural mechanisms were foundational of higher, psychological processes. Vygotsky reiterated their distinction repeatedly, and I have emphasized this distinction throughout my work, including my Preface to vol. 5 of Vygotsky’s *Collected Works*. For instance, Vygotsky and Luria (1993, pp. 179, 180, 186–187) said, ‘Infantile, natural, biological attention ‘is characterized by its nonintentional, nonvolitional, character: Any strong and sudden stimulus immediately attracts the child’s attention and reconstructs his behavior.’ ‘The child’s natural memory is replaced by the new artificial [notational] methods ... His memory begins to work in a new manner.’ ‘In the course of his development, the child does not simply train his memory, but rearms it, shifting to new systems, as well as to new techniques for remembering.’ ‘If we wish to analyze the memory of an adult person, we would have to examine it not in the form nature gave it, but in the form that culture created. Indeed, it would be completely wrong to limit memory to those laws of reinforcement and reproduction of experience that are embedded in the natural mnemonic functions.’ ‘The work of the intellect begins at the point where the activity of instinct and conditional reflexes stops or is blocked’ (*ibid.*, p. 179, 180, 186–187, 69).

5. Jones is equally wrong to claim Vygotsky’s ‘entire perspective on the relationship between social and individual behavior ... grew from an accommodation to the mechanistic assumptions of reflexology. The cost of this accommodation was an endlessly problematic and unresolved dualism of “natural” and “cultural” psychological functions at the heart of the approach.’ Vygotsky’s

psychological theory remains marked by a mechanistic social determinism stemming from a dualism of “natural” versus “cultural” informed by reflexological assumptions.’ We have just seen that Vygotsky did *not* hold a dualistic contradiction between natural and cultural psychological functions. He explicitly superseded natural determinations in adult psychology by the cultural-psychological – although he obviously acknowledged natural, biological processes involved with psychology, that are socially precipitated, mediated, and modulated. He resolved the relationship between natural and cultural by making the natural compatible with the cultural. This dialectical *aufhebung* of biology in adult psychology eliminates mechanistic biological determination of psychology. This supersession applies to sexuality. It impugns the popular notion that sexuality, gender are innate, biological functions, and that homosexuality is given at birth.

Again, Jones sees cultural organization of psychology as inherently destructive of agency, which he construes as autonomous individuality. Jones seeks to confirm his (erroneous) view by identifying mechanistic reflexology as the basis for Vygotsky’s thinking about psychology, culture, and the individual.

6. However, Vygotsky contradicts this misunderstanding. He explicitly emphasized the active role that activity and experience plays in socialization. ‘The perception of art requires creativity’ (ibid., p. 248). ‘The emotional experience [*perezhivanie*] arising from any situation or from any aspect of environment, determines what kind of influence this situation or this environment will have on the child. Therefore, it is not any of the factors in themselves (if taken without reference to the child) which determines how they will influence the future course of his development, but the same factors refracted through the prism of the “*perezhivanie*”’ (Vygotsky, 1994: 339–340).

Jones cannot appreciate Vygotsky’s sophisticated dialectical form of cultural-psychology because he has dichotomized culture and subjectivity. Any structural, objectified, systemic, organized form of culture is anathema to free subjectivity, so it must be categorically rejected. Nuances in this form of culture that include experience and creativity cannot redeem it from the garbage bin because they are not pure, free, personal subjectivity that humanists demand.

7. For some unstated reason, Jones feels compelled to dissociate Bernstein from Vygotsky, despite the fact that Bernstein studied Vygotsky and made Vygotsky’s Marxist political philosophy pivotal to his linguistic theory and educational theory: ‘there is nothing corresponding to Bernstein’s “codes” in Vygotsky.’ Actually there is. Luria uses the term cultural-historical codes to explain social/class differences in psychology, just as Bernstein does. ‘Perception depends

on historically established human practices that can alter the system of codes used to process incoming information.' 'In sociohistorical conditions in which life experience is basically determined by practical experience and the shaping influence of school has not yet had effect, *the encoding process is different* because color and shape perception fit into a different system of practical experiences, are denoted by a different system of speech terms, and are subject to different laws' (Luria, 1976: 21, 41, 45, my emphasis). Since level of schooling is a proxy variable for social class in Western countries, everything that Luria says about codes and school directly applies to class differences in psychology today. This is exactly what Bernstein is talking about.

8. Jones is most distressed by classic SCT's treatment of oppressed people. He is appalled that I could describe them as psychologically oppressed. For psychological oppression contradicts the liberal-humanist ideal of natural, intrinsic, human autonomy, agency, and creativity. Even though I carefully explained that this is not blaming the victims, and it is rather blaming oppressive class conditions for their stultification, Jones feels that any pejorative attributions of an individual human being is unfair and wrong. He rants against the notion that lower class people really are stultified and trapped in low skilled, dead-end, precarious jobs. He cannot accept the notion that the fast food joint becomes the prison house of language and thought for the fast food worker. For that denies the intrinsic agency that makes us human.

Humanist liberalism is an anti-cultural, individualistic, ideological fiction. Taking cultural psychology seriously means comprehending the fact that oppressive cultures generate oppressed and oppressing psychology. This is how oppressive cultures sustain themselves, by oppressing the psychology of their victims so that they accept their social fate and adjust to it. Social oppression and psychological oppression are interdependent. The reality is that capitalism is stupefying (see Frank, 2004). Even Adam Smith recognized this in *The Wealth of Nations*: 'The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations ... has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention ... He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become.' Two-thirds of American eighth graders are *not* proficient in math and English (*Wall St. Journal*, 28 October 2015: A3). Emphasizing oppression emphasizes its dialectical other, which is transformation and liberation.

Marx wrote extensively about the psychological and spiritual impoverishment of wage laborers. Vygotsky similarly wrote about the industrial system stifling human development. The revolutionary psychologists Frantz Fanon and Martin-Baro documented the psychology of oppression in the fatalism,

ignorance, self-deprecation, sexism, and prejudice of the lumpen proletariat. Fanon wrote about ‘the neurosis of blackness’, and pathological desires of colonial subjects to imitate their oppressors. Friere, in *Pedagogy of The Oppressed*, wrote ‘But almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or “sub-oppressors”. The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped.’ The objective of emphasizing this is promoting social transformation. This is why I sought to identify oppression in the speech of Deena. This is the dialectic of critique. Critique dialectically leads to improvement.

Liberal humanists, such as Jones and Michaels (and SCT revisionists, in general), dismiss this empirical psychological reality as ‘class bias’ of the researcher. They blame the messenger for the message. They uphold their theory of subjective autonomy in the face of contradictory empirical reality. This is dogmatism. They replace class oppression by capitalists with class bias by researchers. They attack the critics of social class and oppression, rather than attacking social class itself, and its defenders. This is the most reactionary political position imaginable.

This led Michaels to invent evidence of these attributes in Deena and the lumpen proletariat. I have systematically refuted all of Michael’s purported evidence that denies Deena’s psychological oppression and seeks to demonstrate her equal competence with Mindy. I concede that one of my descriptions of Deena’s linguistic differences with Mindy is weak. Jones correctly notes that on one occasion, both girls used indefinite descriptors instead of concrete object terms. This is because both girls were describing objects that were directly present, which the listener could see. So ‘this’ and ‘that’ were intelligible. However, all of the other class differences in communication that I described are evident. Again, Michaels says this herself – until she changes her mind. A large Brazilian study on social class differences in communication confirmed these. All research confirms that lower class children suffer cognitive deficits compared to middle class children.

Jones is silent about all of these refutations of the liberal-humanist adulation of Deena and lower class psychology. Instead, he maintains it by pointing to fast food workers currently involved in the global ‘fight for \$15’. He implies that they must have better cognitive and communicative competencies than the psychology of oppression I attribute to them. He seeks to respect their agency while I deprecate it. However, he fails to prove his point, just as Michaels fails.

Protesting oppression does not disprove its existence or its profound psychological effects. First of all, only a tiny minority of fast food workers partici-

pates in the movement. And among them, a much smaller number is actively involved in concrete planning and communicating with the public. So whatever competencies the activists manifest do not represent the vast majority of workers. Second, Jones has no information about the competencies of the protestors. Mere protest for more money does not indicate any great psychological competency. And the handful of activists who are engaged in planning and communicating are aided by union activists, attorneys, consultants, and a bevy of allies who would compensate for deficiencies in the workers' psychology. Jones has no idea about the level of activists' actual communication competencies and how effective they are. Nor does he consider the failures and mistakes that activists make, which are due to their oppressed psychology. Finally, the few activists who are associated with the limited successful alternatives, such as raising the minimum wage, may not even come from the lower class. They may come from the middle class and therefore possess the requisite communicative and cognitive skills for political organizing. Some middle class people do work in fast food restaurants. Jones' attempt to refute cultural psychology in the name of respecting individual agency fails once again.

9. Jones constructs a theory of culture around the precepts of liberal-humanism regarding free individual subjectivity. He argues against objectified structures that organize psychology, and he replaces this with culture as a composite of free, micro-level, interpersonal, interactions that express the agency of individual participants. This epitomizes the person-centered approach. Jones says: 'social frames in which we are "contained" (the family, school, work), often against our will or in the absence of realistic choice, fatally [conceptually] frame our personalities, our mental horizons and scope for future action. On this picture, the individual inevitably reduces to a linguistic cipher, a generic and disposable exemplar of some reified construct (such as "discourse").' Instead, 'Communication is born of the interdependence of *self-acting individuals*. Learning to communicate is not about adults taming the child's "reactions" but "*infant experiments with cooperation*". *Communicational (including linguistic) contributions are reciprocal acts – they are ways in which these people (as opposed to others) relate to one another practically, emotionally and ethically in particular circumstances, learning what the boundaries are for expected behavior across an open-ended range of settings and challenges, and how to respect them, as well as how to skirt or push the boundaries. While our communicational powers, then, are always nurtured and exercised in particular contexts, these contexts are never fixed in advance ... . Consequently, these powers presuppose a creative and generative communicative intelligence for actively and self-consciously joining and "fitting" with others in situations*

*that are always unique*, though not always of our own making or within our control.'

Jones feels no compulsion to connect his individualistic fantasy with logic or evidence. It is nonsensical to claim that contexts – such as jobs (or prison) – are not fixed in advance of individual participation, and that employees re-structure them to express their subjectivities.

Jones' notion of language development contradicts the entire thrust of sociocultural theory. He denies the social shaping of language (which he pejoratively calls 'taming', like he pejoratively labels all cultural influences) and instead claims that children develop it spontaneously, through self-acting experimentation. Yet social linguistics has empirically disproven this. Indeed, the social formation of language is at the heart of sociocultural theory as elaborated by Lantolf, Thorne, and Poehner. It is also at the heart of Foucault's writings about discourse (Hook, 2001). Empirical research proves that middle class parents model different linguistics (including the amount of speaking and reading) to their children from what lower class parents do. The result is that kindergarteners display social class differences in linguistic competencies on the first day.

Gentner and Christie (2008) report that deaf children of hearing parents who do not know sign language, have no social model or stimulation for language and develop a primitive sign language which does not contain symbols for spatial relations or numbers. In contrast, deaf children of deaf parents learn sign language from them. Sophisticated language does not spontaneously develop on an individual level; it is a social product. The same is true for numerosity: 'even when integrated into a numerate society, individuals who lack [systematic, organized] input from a conventional [mathematical] language do not spontaneously develop representations of large exact numerosities' (Spaepen, *et al.*, 2011: 3163).

Far from spontaneous learning and development among children (which is Chomsky's anti-cultural argument for innate universal grammar), parents assiduously 'scaffold' their children's reactions. 'Tiger moms', 'helicopter moms' and 'soccer moms' are normative. Western parents even construct a child-centered language, called Motherese, to facilitate their children's language learning. Parents frantically search for the latest techniques to stimulate the perfect child. Jones lets none of this reality get in the way of his individualistic fantasy about personal autonomy.

It is also significant that when Jones refers to real cultural factors beyond the micro-individual level, he construes them as abstractions – as 'family', 'work', 'school'. Jones does not name concrete cultural factors, such as Guantanamo Bay, Amazon distribution centers, privatized schools and prisons, and Tyson Foods slaughterhouses. For these have concrete, enduring political interests,

objectives, social relations, roles, principles, and leaders. These are not formed by individual acts of agency by all participants, nor are they readily changed. In contrast, abstractions such as “work” and “family” have no specific origins, founders, political interests, administrators, social roles, and no obstacles to ‘people’ ‘reconstructing’ them. This liberal-humanist bias is also dominant in cultural psychology journals such as *Culture & Psychology*, and *Mind, Culture, Activity* which focus on cultural abstractions and micro-processes, and rarely mention concrete cultural factors such as neoliberalism, capitalism, commodification, and alienation.

In addition, Jones’ culture theory is incoherent and self-contradictory. On the one hand, it is typical liberal-humanist ideology about self-acting individuals reciprocally interacting in open settings where they can skirt or push boundaries that are never fixed in advance, so that interacting individuals, themselves, (as opposed to other people) can utilize their creative and generative intelligence for creating unique situations. Yet Jones also acknowledges that situations are not always of our own making or within our control. They sometimes ‘may hem us in and limit drastically the opportunities we may have; they may damage us physically and psychologically’. But this is oxymoronic. How can the first set of attributes lead to the second? No self acting, creative people, interacting in open ended situations, who can push the boundaries and negotiate behavior themselves, without interference by other people (even parents), would ever create a constraining, alien, destructive environment for themselves. Conversely, the latter would extinguish the liberal humanist attributes.

Jones similarly contradicts himself in the another statement: ‘It is a mistake to straightforwardly equate our communicative and cognitive skills and potential with the social “frames” to which we may have to conform and submit for longer or shorter periods of time, but which we can also dissolve, destroy and reconstruct as we re-make ourselves in creative and transformative action.’ But if we can destroy social frames as we remake ourselves, then why would we have to conform and submit to them for longer or shorter periods of time?

And what does longer or shorter mean? There is a huge difference between submitting to alien culture for one minute vs. 60 years. It is absurd to throw these together as ‘culture’. Yet Jones does this to *ambiguate* culture. It can be anything, it is indefinite; it has no definite effects because it can be as brief as a one minute exposure. Ambiguating culture is one of the ways that humanists minimize culture – along with abstracting it, and distorting it as mechanistic, reified, and unchangeable, and reducing it to individual acts.

Culture is not an evanescent influence. It is a definite, enduring, structuring influence. Class is the most powerful determinant and predictor of

psychological functioning. Class differences in psychology are extremely difficult to overcome. American higher education is increasingly the preserve of the elite. The sons and daughters of college-educated parents are more than twice as likely to go to college as the children of high school graduates and seven times as likely as those of high school dropouts. Only 5% of Americans ages 25 to 34 whose parents did not finish high school have a college degree (*New York Times*, 23 September 2015: B1). [Isn't this a prison house?] Class differences grow over the life span, they do not dissolve. Educational psychologists have identified a 'cumulative deficit' in cognitive/educational competencies, which means that social class differences *increase* from first grade through 12th grade (Kozol, 2012; Sacks, 2007). Class differences in psychology also persist across generations. Even micro-level interpersonal actions are extremely difficult to alter and overcome. Everyone knows about women who feel incapable of exiting from an abusive interpersonal relationship with a spouse or lover. They cannot dissolve the gendered social frame.

And these structures exist in 'open societies'. When we consider authoritarian, orthodox, religious States such as Saudi Arabia, which impose strict laws on women's dress and behavior that are enforced by punishment – even by 'honor killings' – Jones' individualistic ideology is even more ludicrous.

Nor does Jones explain how we would dissolve and destroy culture by re-making ourselves. How would an Arab in Guantanamo Bay destroy his pre-set, restrictive social frames by remaking himself? How would a third generation welfare child, growing up in a crime-infested, rat-infested neighborhood that has outsourced skilled jobs to China, leaving a deskilled occupational configuration ('social frame') for citizens, destroy his restricted, pre-set, social frames by remaking himself? And if it is so easy, why is class mobility minimal, and why are class differences increasing on every single indicator, instead of disappearing as individuals exercise their self-activity across open-ended, flexible social situations? (It should be emphasized that Jones' humanistic phrase 're-making oneself' is the essence of neoliberalism. Conservative neoliberals tell people to stop imagining social, structural impediments to their success, stop relying on social support programs such as welfare, and re-make themselves to take advantage of social opportunities. Liberal Jones has joined the neoliberal ranks.)

Jones and the humanists are less socially conscious and progressive than conservatives. Even Adam Smith recognized the stultifying effects of capitalist division of labor. And nowadays business schools are putting income inequality on the syllabus because they recognize that inequality is the widest in decades. 'Everyone is waking up to the seriousness of the problem,' said a professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management (*Wall St. Journal*, 5 November

2015: B9). Everyone except for liberal humanists who deny structural social problems and insist on the inherent creativity of every human being no matter what.

It is interesting that humanists know these obdurate, grim facts. Yet somehow their humanist ideology and political demoralization block this knowledge from being used in their psychological theory.

10. Jones, and humanists in general, use individual, subjective freedom to guide their own thinking and behavior. They feel entitled to reject established rules of scientific thinking, logic, analysis, and evidence. In my article, I showed how Michaels did this in trying to prove that Deena's linguistic style was just as logical, elaborated, descriptive, and explicit as Mindy's. Jones does the same thing.

He uses liberal-humanist ideology about free subjectivity as an intellectual, cultural, and political wrecking ball. It wrecks intellectual discipline and integrity, it wrecks an adequate conception of culture, it wrecks cultural psychology, it wrecks SCT, it wrecks understanding the individual and agency, and it wrecks political movement for comprehensive social improvement.

11. Subjective idealism never confronts social and physical reality; it creates its own subjective reality that transcends social and physical reality. This leaves the latter intact and unchallenged. Humanistic subjectivist autonomy isolates the individual from reality by constructing a personal reality, and by wrecking the cognitive tools necessary for apprehending and challenging reality. This leaves the latter intact and free from critique and opposition. The dialectical result of ignoring reality is to trap people in a restricted social, symbolic, material, and psychological reality. This is the conservative outcome of all forms of individualistic subjectivism that includes social constructionism (Valsiner), postmodernism (Gergen), micro-cultural psychology (Gonzalez-Rey), and neoliberalism.

In contrast, emphasizing the cultural-political fact of psychology makes Psychology a potentially revolutionary discipline. It uses psychological oppression as a reflection of the political-economic system that calls for its transformation. Social – and psychological – transformation is an arduous and dangerous struggle. Humanists eschew this necessary struggle to achieve emancipation. They replace it by validating individuals now, by declaring everybody to be inherently equal and competent. All we have to do is recognize and respect this inherent emancipation of all human beings instead of negating it – as revolutionaries do. Idealizing the psychology of oppression leads to dragging the entire culture down to that level. A typi-

cal example is the recent changes to the Scholastic Aptitude Test that include longer and harder reading passages and more words in math problems. ‘The shift is leading some educators and college admissions officers to fear that the revised test will penalize students who have not been exposed to a lot of reading, or who speak a different language at home – like immigrants and the poor’ (New York Times, 9 February 2016: A1). Thus, Deena’s low educational and intellectual competence defines the cultural norm, and any attempt to raise this norm is construed as discriminating against Deena. Accordingly, universities will be populated by students who have not mastered the language that is used in universities and society at large.

Marx mocked this in his complaint of ‘the empty, nebulous and blurry arguments of those German liberals who think freedom is honoured by being placed in the starry firmament of the imagination instead of on the solid ground of reality. It is in part to these exponents of the imagination, these sentimental enthusiasts, who shy away from any contact of their ideal with ordinary reality as a profanation, that we Germans owe the fact that freedom has remained until now a fantasy and sentimentality. Germans are by nature most devoted, servile and respectful. Out of sheer respect for ideas they fail to realize them. They make the worship of them into a cult, but they do not cultivate them’ ([https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_Rheinische\\_Zeitung.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Rheinische_Zeitung.pdf)).

This flawed political philosophy is the root of the flawed cultural psychology known as SCT revisionism, micro-cultural psychology, postmodernism, and social constructionism. This flawed political philosophy is also the root of most contemporary Western social movements for progressive change.

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