NOTES ON THE CONCEPT OF AGGRESSION AND
ITS (MIS) USE IN MEDIA RESEARCH.

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Keith Roe

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1. INTRODUCTION

The discussion and study of aggression and its manifestations is a common preoccupation, not only among media researchers but also in wider public discourse. The result has been a vast and bewilderingly contradictory mass of theoretical perspectives and research findings. The purpose of this paper is to present a short critical review of some of the major approaches to the subject of aggression with the aim of clearing up some of this confusion and of helping to counteract the reductionism which seems to be prevalent in some contemporary media research. No paper of this scope can even begin to encompass the whole range of work in this field, nevertheless it is hoped that it will provide the student of Media Studies who ventures into the morass with a glimpse of the enormous scope and sophistication of these approaches, enabling him/her to treat the subject with rather more discernment than is often now the case.

The study of aggression embraces a wide spectrum of approaches, from the micro-analysis of the psychological and physiological functioning of the individual to the macro-analysis of socio-economic structural factors. There is no single theory which can claim to account for all, or even most, aggressive behaviour; nor indeed could there be; for the phenomenon is multi-causational in nature and multi-faceted in its manifestations, even to the extent of varying in the same individual at different times and in different contexts. It follows that there can be no simple unidimensional explanations, or remedies, for such a complex set of behaviours.

2. THE CONCEPT OF AGGRESSION

The first problem which confronts any study of human aggression is the definition of the concept itself. A rich stock of definitions can be found, depending on the perspective of the theorist concerned. Indeed this very variety has led some to question whether or not the whole concept is now heuristically useless. Storr (1968) for example, argues that the term ought either to be dropped or else be more closely defined. However, even he is forced to admit that the complexity of behaviour subsumed under this concept is so great that in the absence of a suitable substitute it cannot yet be discarded.

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary defines aggression as "an unprovoked attack", or "an assault", whereas Gunn (1973) takes it to mean any "attacking process"; and May (1974) defines it as, "a moving out, a thrust towards the person or thing seen as the adversary", an action he subsumes under the concept of power Further disagreement exists with regard to the relationship between aggression and intention. Thus, Pelton (1974) asks whether or not aggression always implies a specific intention to hurt or transgress others. He believes that intention should not be incorporated into a definition of aggression since the term should be reserved for any actions as a result of which there is, some expectation that it will injure another. However, this only opens up a further set of difficulties, whose 'expectation' are we referring to? How do we define 'injury' - physically, psychologically or both? And if psychologically, how can we know or measure the extent of psychological injury and how can we have 'realistic expectations' of something we know so little about? The fact is that the term 'aggression' covers a wide variety of behaviours which can in fact be viewed as entirely different phenomena. As Fromm (1974) points out, to use one term to denote them all is useless theoretically if one is looking for causes.

The instinctivist - biological perspective regards aggression as innate, the eruption of instinctual energy aimed at mastering the environment. However, such an approach poses the serious danger of adopting a fatalistic view of the phenomenon at the expense of serious consideration of the social system within which such behaviour is performed and adapted. Despite this, the instinctivist perspective has, at times, enjoyed widespread support, especially in the wake of the work of Lorenz (1966) and Morris (1967). Nevertheless, much criticism of Lorenz's perspective has issued forth, not only from behaviourists but also from other instinctivists. Tiger ((1971), for instance, sees aggression as instinctive but as occurring within an explicit social context which varies considerably from culture to culture, and which contains a learning component. Berkowitz (1962) also rejects the instinctivist model arguing that there is no real evidence for it in animals or humans and that, while there is certainly an internal potential for aggressiveness, it is only triggered by external factors, primarily frustration.

In fact, the concept of aggression has come to refer to something rather different from its original meaning. In the original Latin root of the word there is incorporated a double interpretation, one positive in the sense of being a relational approach to another, and a second which is negative in the sense of moving against another with intent to harm. In contemporay usage the second interpretation is obviously preponderant so that 'aggression' is now viewed, at least in our culture, in almost exclusively negative terms. To have the same word for a friendly approach and a violent assault is clearly not conducive to conceptual clarity. This has led many theorists to differentiate positive forms of aggressive behaviour from negative forms. Clearly, such a distinction involves culturally and contextually specific value judgements and considerable disagreement can be expected at the margins of these areas. Still, the price seems to be worth paying in order to put into a clearer perspective what aspects of aggression should be regarded as socially facilitative and which as socially destructive.

'Positive' aggression is so socially essential that May (ibid) claims that its opposite is not a loving utopian peace, but isolation, the state of no contact at all. This adaptive view is most strongly held by Social Darwinists who see such behaviour as essential for survival, at which point the concept once again becomes closely intertwined with those of dominance and power seeking. At its extreme this perspective sees aggression as a more significant human behaviour than sexuality and a generalized 'will to power' as the dominant human motive for behaviour.

From a different perspective, Tiger (ibid) similarly defines aggression in terms of self assertion within the environment in forms of action, competition and striving for superiority; as a result of which it is possible, but by no means inevitable, that negative destructive forms of aggression will ensue. Thus, negative aggression is seen as only one possible outcome of the asserting behaviour of humans.

A number of terms have been employed to label these different behavioural outcomes. Gunn (ibid) distinguishes 'aggression' (positive) from 'severe aggression' (physical violence). May (ibid) employs the terms 'positive' and 'negative' aggression; whilst Tiger (ibid) distinguishes 'aggression' as a

social organizational term referring to a process, from 'violence', described as an event with injurious consequences. Fromm (ibid),on the other hand, employs a distinction between 'defensive' (which he terms 'benign' aggression), and 'destructive' (or 'malignant') aggression.

However defined, both forms of behaviour (i.e the 'positive' and the 'negative') require investigation and analysis, although up to now the latter has received by far the most attention. Only in the fields of existential and gestalt psychotherapy has any real effort been made to examine the problems of approaching and relating to the 'other' and some reference will be made to these approaches below. On the whole, however, this paper will be concerned with examining what research has had to say about the genesis of the 'negative' destructive type, for it is this type which has also featured most in media studies.

For the sake of convenience the discussion will henceforth employ May's distinction between 'positive' and 'negative' aggression. It will avoid the term 'violence' because this should be regarded as a seperate concept, itself requiring differentiation, and in some ways as difficult to deal with satisfactorily as 'aggression'. Thus, 'positive' aggression' will refer to that behaviour which is aimed at social interaction (i.e with increasing the contact and decreasing the social and psychological distance between individuals), and individual well-being; whilst 'negative aggression' will refer to that behaviour which is socially destructive (i.e increasing the social distance between people), and individually injurious.

Nevertheless, it is also worthwhile to heed May's (ibid) caution that in fact all behaviour can be viewed as a mixture of both positive and the negative forms.

3. PSYCHO-ANALYTIC, PSYCHO-SEXUAL AND RELATED APPROACHES

It seems appropriate to begin with a review of the psycho-analytic contribution to the understanding of aggression. This is justified for a number of reasons, first because the Freudian conceptual apparatus laid the basis of much of modern psychology, and to some extent still casts a long shadow over it; and second, because the process of sexual development must be seen as not only extremely relevant to the study of aggression in general, but as vital to some form of adolescent aggression in particular. Third, while it may be as its critics claim, that psycho-analysis overestimated the role of sexual factors in human development, we risk falling prey to the danger of allowing the pendulum to swing back too far, with the result that little or no attention is paid to sexual development and its problems. This is especially apparent in media research, by far the greater part of which is 'de-sexualized' to a stunning degree. After identifying gender as an important background variable, media research tends to become prudishly coy and implicitly seems to assume that the TV/video viewer has temporarily been neutered when s/he comes to the screen and is subjected to its effects. This is even true in research into adolescents' relations with the media, which is even more remarkable when we remember that adolescence is generally regarded as starting at puberty and involving, amongst other things, the transition to adult sexual rights and obligations.
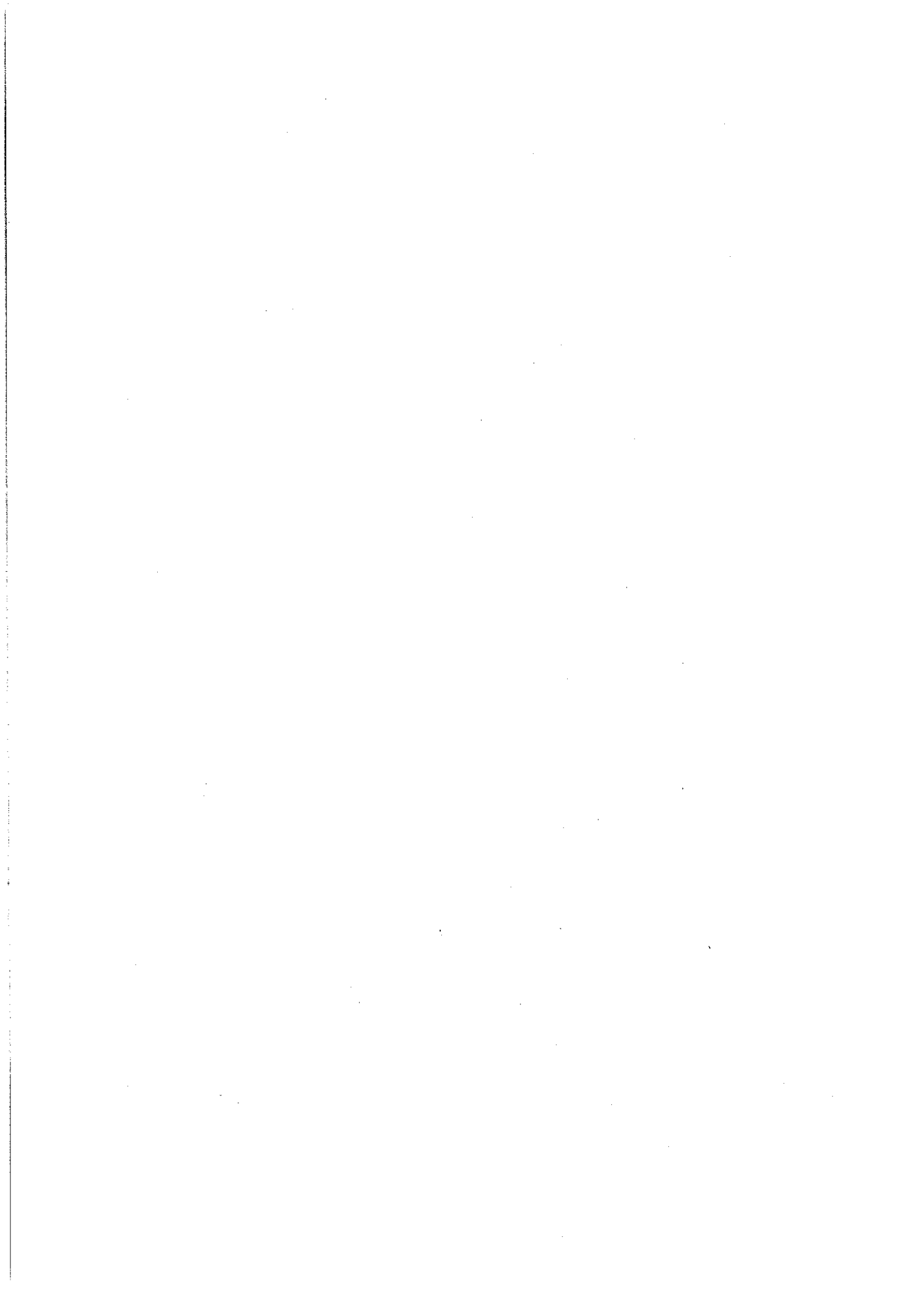
Freud's contribution to the understanding of aggression is, in fact, not altogether straightforward. His theories fit into the instinctivist approach, at least in so far as he postulates a mechanistic, hydraulic model of an innate libininal drive as the behavioural energizer which is capable of being dammed up until released in action. According to this model humans are continually seeking an energetic release from the tensions and consequent unpleasure which results from an increase in libido. At first Freud addressed himself only to the sexual aspects of this phenomenon (see Freud, 1974), only coming much later to forge the link with aggression (Freud, 1957).

Initially, Freud subsumed aggression under the sexual instinct, linked it to the phenomenon of sadism, and saw it as resulting mainly from frustration. Even when he began to devote his attention to aggression the results were not always satisfactory. As Horney (1971) remarked, "precisely in this area almost everything is problematic. Precisely those ideas, recently advocated by Freud, on the innate aggressive tendences in mankind, in contrast to other psycho-analytic concepts, have not developed from empirical observations but are the product of speculative thinking."

The problem is compounded by the fact that Freud was by no means consistent in his conceptual formulations in this area and many of his writings betray an uncharacteristic vicissitude. Basically, Freud's later postulate was based on the dichotomy between a life instinct ('eros') and a death instinct ('thanatos'). The death instinct is viewed as being associated with the pleasure principle (i.e the release of libidinal tension), as being the drive to the relieving elimination of the tension in life itself. The life instinct is seen as turning the death instinct towards objects in the outer world, thereby preserving the organism. In addition libido is merged with the death instinct, eroticizing it, and thereby making aggressive behaviour a possible source of sexual pleasure (thereby accounting for sadism and masochism). In introducing this dichotomy Freud elevates negative aggression to the status of a primary phenomenon of life, along with 'eros', with which it is in perpetual opposition. It follows that Freud saw aggression not as originating in the environment (although it could give it form and direction), but as a constantly flowing innate impulse.

The majority of psycho-analysts, while accepting the main body of Freudian doctrine, explicitly rejected the thanatos concept. Some compromised by accepting a destructive instinct, unrelated to the thanatos idea, as the oppsoite pole of the sexual instinct. Acording to Berkowitz (ibid) three major psycho-analytic positions have developed since then: a few held fast to the 'death instinct'(e.g Menninger, 1972); others developed the original hypothesis (e.g Fenichel, 1955); and a third view, which can be described as orthodox, maintained the instinctual view but divested itself of the thanatos notion (e.g Hartman et al. 1949). It is this third group which posited the sexual-aggressive impulse polarity as the mainspring for behaviour. Behaviouristic research, following Skinner (1953) has cast great doubt on the validity of this approach. Moreover, it can also be criticised on the grounds, already noted, of failing to differentiate the concept of aggression itself and of attempting to account for different kinds of aggression by the existence of a single instinct.

Anthropological and zoological research does not necessarily support the psycho-analytic theory of an innate, free-flowing aggressive instinct either. Reich (1972) harnassed anthropological evidence to support his critique of the concept, and animal studies tend to refute it too. The latter show that, while there may be some relationship between physical aggression and the production of the male hormone (accounting for the preponderence of this kind of aggression among young males), some form of external environmental stimuli is probably required to trigger actual aggressive behaviour (Tiger and Fox, 1971).

Before we dismiss the psycho-analytic instinctual theory as a valid basis for understanding aggressive behaviour, however, it should be noted that the second line of development of Freuds conceptions, the frustration hypothesis, is much harder to refute. Here, the work of Dollard et al (1939) builds a bridge between psycho-analysis and behaviourism. They define "frustration" as, "an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal response at its proper time in the behavioural sequence." Such frustrations may be internal or external. 'Aggression' is defined as, "any sequence of behaviour, the goal response to which is the injury of the person toward whom it is directed." Such behaviour may be overt or it may occur at the phantasy or symbolic levels. The basic hypothesis is that frustration often arouses or increases the instigation to aggression and that aggressive behaviour presupposes the existence of some form of frustration; although as Fromm (ibid) has noted, later refinements of the hypothesis allowed for the fact that frustration could instigate a number of different types of response, only one of them being aggression.

This theory was widely accepted by contemporaries as explaining the basic cause of aggression. It also fits in with more sociological interpretations concerning the failure of social goal attainment and alienation, as represented for example by Merton (1957). In addition it can be linked to self-concept, as well as social learning theories, each of which will be discussed below.

The frustration-aggression hypothesis has been shown to be not wholly satisfactory. The main question is, is frustration a necessary and sufficient condition for the arousal of aggression? In addition, there are problems associated with defining what exactly constitutes a 'frustration'. Neither 'instrumental' nor 'learned' aggression fit well into this hypothesis since both tend to ignore antecedent and intervening variables in the analysis of the frustration-aggression sequence. Individuals clearly differ in their tolerance of frustration and the same individual may manifest different responses to similar stimuli at different times and in different situations. In fact, all behavioural approaches of this kind, with their simple stimulus-response models are inadequate representations of social reality and they do not permit the formulation of wide-ranging accurate predictive hypotheses concerning the causes or incidence of negative aggression. The frustration-aggression hypothesis, then, while valuable in its reappraisal of psycho-analytic thought failed to formulate a systematic theory concerning the sources of negative aggression. Despite this fact many models of the relationship between media content and human behaviour are still implicitly based on a simple stimulus-response assumption.

The 'frustration' school also adopted a heavily environmentalistic position, stressing the vital importance of damaging influences in infancy and early childhood. While valuable in itself, this was taken so far in some cases that it led to the propogation of notions of extreme permissiveness in child-rearing and education, residual influences of which are still common today. Not only are such notions anti-Freudian (Freud himself saw childhood socialization and control of the primitive anti-social id as essential if civilization were to be possible); they lead to other damaging results which are antithetical to the intended aim. It may, for example, lead to weak internal restraints against aggression and low tolerance of goal interfering stimuli. Alternatively it may result in an extremely low self-concept which may incline the individual towards aggressive responses. Thus, Coopersmith (1974) notes that some research confirms the hypothesis of a causal link between low self-esteem and aggressive anti-social behaviour, as well as postulating a curvilinear relationship in child rearing, with both over-permissiveness and over-rigidity being damaging.

What then remains of psycho-analytic approaches that can constructively be utilized for the analysis of aggression? If we go back to the original Freudian framework we see that the most significant point which separated Freud from his predecessors and contemporaries was his stress on the sexual instinct as the well spring of all passions (aside that is from the 'eros - thanatos' dichotomy which has been discounted). It is with this instinctive force, and the way in which the forces of the environment counter and adapt it, that we find the essence of Freudian psychology and characterology; and it is here that some of the origins of negative aggression may be traced.

Freud's work, and that of his successors, was effective in facilitating understanding of, and changing attitudes to, infantile sexuality. Attitudes towards toilet training, feeding, infantile masturbation etc, identified by Freud as possible sources of negative behavioural characteristics later in life, have changed considerably since his revolutionary contribution. In the main, however, the attempt at dealing with and preventing sexually based disturbances ended there. From then on, and particularly in the years surrounding puberty, little is done to facilitate successful maturation into what Freud termed the fully genital character. Many adolescents are still left to acquire knowledge from older peers,• fumbling experimentation and pornography, a combination which may result in sadism, exploitation or frustrated aggression.

In tracing the origin of psycho-neuroses Freud (1979) noted, "most psycho-neurotics only fall ill after the age of puberty as a result of the demands made upon them by normal sexual life." It does not require a wild stretch of the imagination to ascribe at least part of the increased level of negative aggression around this time to the same source. It is surely not just coincidence that much 'negative' behaviour appears at this time, the time when the mechanisms of repression implanted during infancy and latency are subjected to serious assault from the heavily increased libido activity stimulated by physical and hormonal changes. Adolescence is acknowledged to be a time of stress, role confusion, narcissism and sexual exploration, and yet at this vital stage the educative process fails formally to intervene properly to facilitate sexual development.
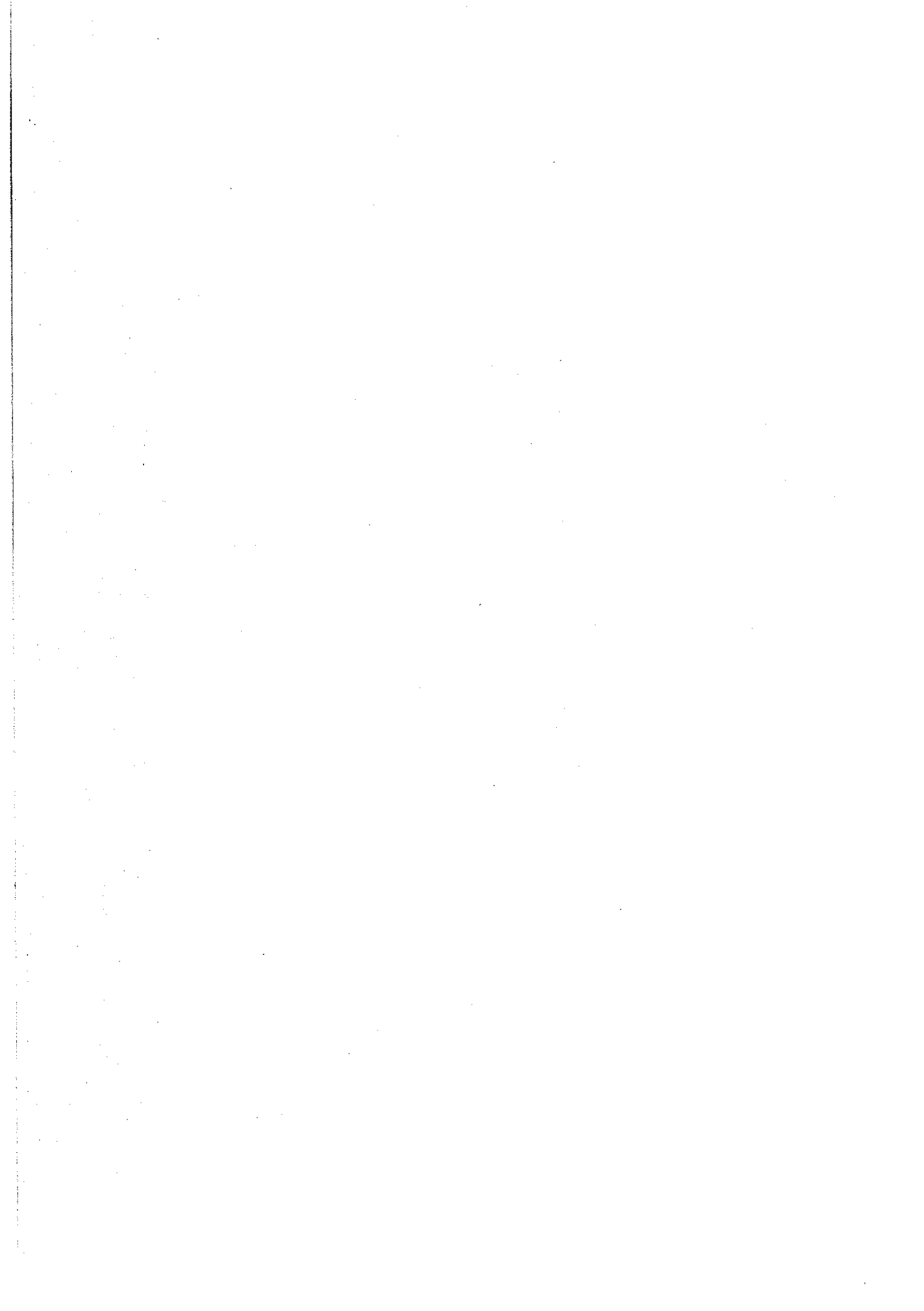
Anna Freud (1937) provided support for the hypothesis that sexual conflict at puberty is a potent source of behavioural disturbance, seeing it as the time when numerous disturbances anchored in infancy reappear. Where this occurs, she claims, the libido regresses and becomes attached again to earlier libidinal wishes in order to avoid the anxiety created on the higher, present level of sexual organization. In addition, various defence mechanisms such as reaction-formation and displacement are employed. If they are unsuccessful, neurotic symptoms ensue and qualities and achievements at that stage of libidinal development are lost, for regression involves reversion to the emotional attitudes connected with the fixation point of regression. This may account for the oft-repeated observation that standards of school work and general behaviour actually decline among some children in the years surrounding puberty. At the same time, the instinctual potential for an increased level of aggressiveness is already present,

> "There is more libido at the id's disposal and it cathects indiscriminantly any id impulses which are at hand, e.g aggressive behaviours are intensified to the point of complete unruliness, naughtiness becomes criminal behaviour." (ibid).

We have returned to the central Freudian hypothesis of the primacy of the sexual drive and the problems of completing successful maturity in order to pinpoint one of the central potential causes of negative aggression. It should also be noted that a number of neo-Freudians have stressed other factors which may amplify this relationship; for example anxiety and guilt, narcissism, self concept and self esteem (e.g Klein, 1969; Rochlin, 1974).

Reich (1933) takes the most radical position of all the neo-Freudians. He follows the orthodox Freudian line that character structure and ego-armouring are rooted in the conflict between instinctual demands and the frustrating outer world, a conflict which he regards as, up to a point, a necessary process. What is important is the manner in which conflicts are resolved and in this the family and education, along with the rest of society, have a huge influence. For Reich, excessive armouring as a result of social suppression causes a reduction in the possibility for sexual satisfaction and may intensify sadistic impulses which express themselves in either brutal conforming morality or violent anti-social behaviour.

Full maturity implies the ability to sublimate aggression in social achievement but, says Reich, the socio-economic climate is often unfavourable to the successful completion of full maturity. Here Reich separated himself from Freud on the nature of the process of sublimation. Freud had seen sublimation and instinctual gratification as antithetical, whereas Reich (1972) completely rejected this hypothesis. It was his contention that not only is sexual suppression not essential for social development but that the reverse is actually the case, i.e the maximal capacity for achievement is reached only when a person becomes capable of full sexual gratification. If Reich is right, then sexual suppression does not facilitate a civilized social life but in fact stimulates the very anti-social behaviour which it is supposed to prevent. This occurs because it prevents the

gratification of natural biological needs and results in the
generation of secondary pathological impulses which in turn must
be inhibited, leading to a desire-repression-anxiety vicious
circle which has destructive consequences.

Reich is most explicit and insistent that the primary cause
of destructive anti-social behaviour in adolescence is society's
negative suppressive attitude to adolescent sexuality; and that a
rational solution of the 'puberty problem' would at one stroke
eliminate social ills, such as adolescent criminality. It is of
course easy to criticize such a radical position as that of
Reich's. It is probable that because of the social structure of
his time he overemphasised the importance of the sexual factor in
accounting for negative behavioural traits. Social attitudes to
sexuality are now somewhat more permissive, but it would be a
mistake to reject Reich's work altogether. Despite public
rhetoric there is still much insecurity and ambivalence
surrounding sexual matters in our society, and perhaps still
especially so at precisely that critical point of development,
adolescence. Even if we remove Reich's exaggerations, there
remains a great deal of support for one of his primary
hypotheses: that there is an extremely close relationship between
sexual suppression and negative aggression, particularly during
adolescence.

Another interesting off-shoot of Freudian theory, which
stresses the social and political aspects of the relationship
between sexuality, repression and modern society is most
prolifically represented by the work of Marcuse (1968, 1973).
Marcuse re-examines Freuds pleasure-reality principle formula
along with the concepts of sublimation, repression etc. Economic
scarcity has taught man that he cannot wholly abide by the
pleasure principle and so the demands of the reality principle
are implanted in the instinctual structure. He agrees with Reich
that repression does not really solve the pleasure-reality
conflict. Civilization instead plunges into a "destructive
dialectic" which ultimately strengthens and releases the very
destructive forces against which the mechanisms of repression
were initially employed. However, in contrast to Reich, Marcuse
supports Freud's 'thanatos' concept, seen as the instinctual
source of mans negative aggression, and from this he builds a
hypothesis concerning the nature of sublimation and the operation
of the reality principle in modern society.

Marcuse believes that the nature of the social utilization
of the reality principle has been altered by developments in
modern technology and the nature of work. No longer is the
defence mainly against the instincts but is engaged in the
attempt to control consciousness and leisure. This allows a
relaxation of sexual taboos, but this does not produce freedom
since the fundamental antagonism of sex and social utility of the
original Freudian hypothesis is replaced by a newly designated
"performance principle" which replaces the reality principle and
reinforces social control by tying individuals to the work
process over and above the degree to which it is strictly
necessary for material provision. For Marcuse the achievement of
a completely non-repressive society on all fronts (and especially
of work) is the aim, not mere sexual liberalization - for that
can be incorportaed by repressive society by switiching the
target of repression to other areas of life and consciousness.

These brief comments do not do justice to the breadth and complexity of Marcuse's conceptual analysis, for he deals not only with Freud's death instinct but also develops the concept of narcissism, besides considering more socio-economic and politically oriented factors. However, this review of the psycho-analytic approach to aggression has tried to concentrate on the core of Freudian psychology, i.e the sexual drive and the way in which society deals with it. The central weakness of the pure instinctual approach is that it disregards what is most significant; namely, the conditions that pervert natural sexuality into negative behaviour. It is the nature and origins of these conditions which must be confronted if the insights of psycho-analytic theory are to bear their full fruit in terms of actual, practicable and successful ameliorative measures. This leads us to the search for the specific conditions under which destructive drives are acquired and provoked.

4. ALIENATION AND OTHER SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES

At first sight the theory of alienation may appear to be an unlikely place to search for the genesis of human aggression. However, the concept of alienation can be seen to play a central role an inter-disciplinary approach to understanding negative aggression and its manifestations.

The essence of the concept of alienation concerns the notion of estrangement, of the failure of close relationships and the disruption of social and group solidarity. Most of the discourse which stems from this conceptual core have been largely sociological, yet there are those who maintain that the concept has a strong psychological element. Whether or not alienation is 'properly' to be regarded as primarily a social or a psychological phenomenon is a dispute of marginal concern here and it will be assumed that the concept has an obvious interpersonal context which encompasses both the 'social' and the 'psychological'.

Marx was among the first to operationalize the concept of alienation for social theory, although in other fields, particularly philosophy it had long been used, not least by Hegel. The marxian conception is essentially concerned with the relationship between humans and their environment; specifically their power over and freedom within that environment; humans are seen as unique in being simultaneously part of the world and, at the same time, through their self-awareness, separated from it. The property relations pertaining under industrial capitalism cause individuals to experience work as something not belonging to them, with the result that they become alien to their own activity. It is in this way that we see a socio-economic process resulting in a psychological condition. The underlying assumption is that this alien condition is in some way a loss or deviation from our 'real' needs. One such vital need is self-realization through creative work, with work as an activity worthwhile in, and for, itself.

Under industrial capitalism the work situation (and by extension the educational situation) and social relations are such that work is an alienating activity. Instead of being creative, work 'objectifies' us and, since it is through work activity that we express, produce and experience our lives, objectified and alienated work produces an alienated life. Objectification occurs since the workers' relation to the product of his labour is that of an alien object exercising control over him. Furthermore, to alienated (wo)men alienation appears as a normal state, and the state of unalienation seems unreal and utopian.

Not only are social relations altered because of private ownership, capitalist (indeed all) industrialization presupposes a division of labour which tends to fragment production into **small tasks apparently unrelated in any meaningful way to the** finished product. Even management and the bureaucracies of the public sector become 'rationalized' to such an extent that an analogous situation occurs even there. Creative expression of personality is impossible in such a situation.

Moreover, labour itself becomes a commodity subordinated to market laws. Marx terms this process the "fetishism of commodities" (see "The German Ideology"). Indeed, everything becomes a commodity with use-value to be placed on the market: goodwill, virtue, knowledge, education, freedom, even love, become commodities which command economic value i.e become objects of exchange; alien and meaningless except in terms of the return or use which they provide. In this way nothing is ever done for itself, but always for the sake of something else. Activity is separated from itself and humans become alien to their own activity.

It is in this way that activity appears to develop a logic of its own, independent of the individual - who comes to feel that it no longer has any meaning for her and that she is powerless, no longer in control of events. We do not work because we want to, because it is fulfilling, but because we feel that we must. Particular forms of work may be questioned, but very seldom work itself. Ironically, the more we work the more powerful becomes the world of objects, and the more impoverished becomes our inner life. The more we produce, the more we ourselves become a cheapened commodity. Under such a system a richer material world produces a poorer human world. This does not imply a romantic view of pre-industrial work as a creative agrarian idyll. Rather, it stresses that industrial production under a system of capitalist property relations alienates the worker in certain specific ways.

In this situation work is either compulsive or is so unpleasant that it is avoided as much as possible and school/factory discipline replaces voluntary effort. Not only are we fragmented in work but our social and cultural institutions reflect this fragmentation, as indeed do our personalities, for ultimately we lose touch with ourselves. These subjective states have further effects on the social structure so that, while socio-economic processes alienate (wo)man, it is (wo)man herself who creates and changes the basic processes of production and social structure.
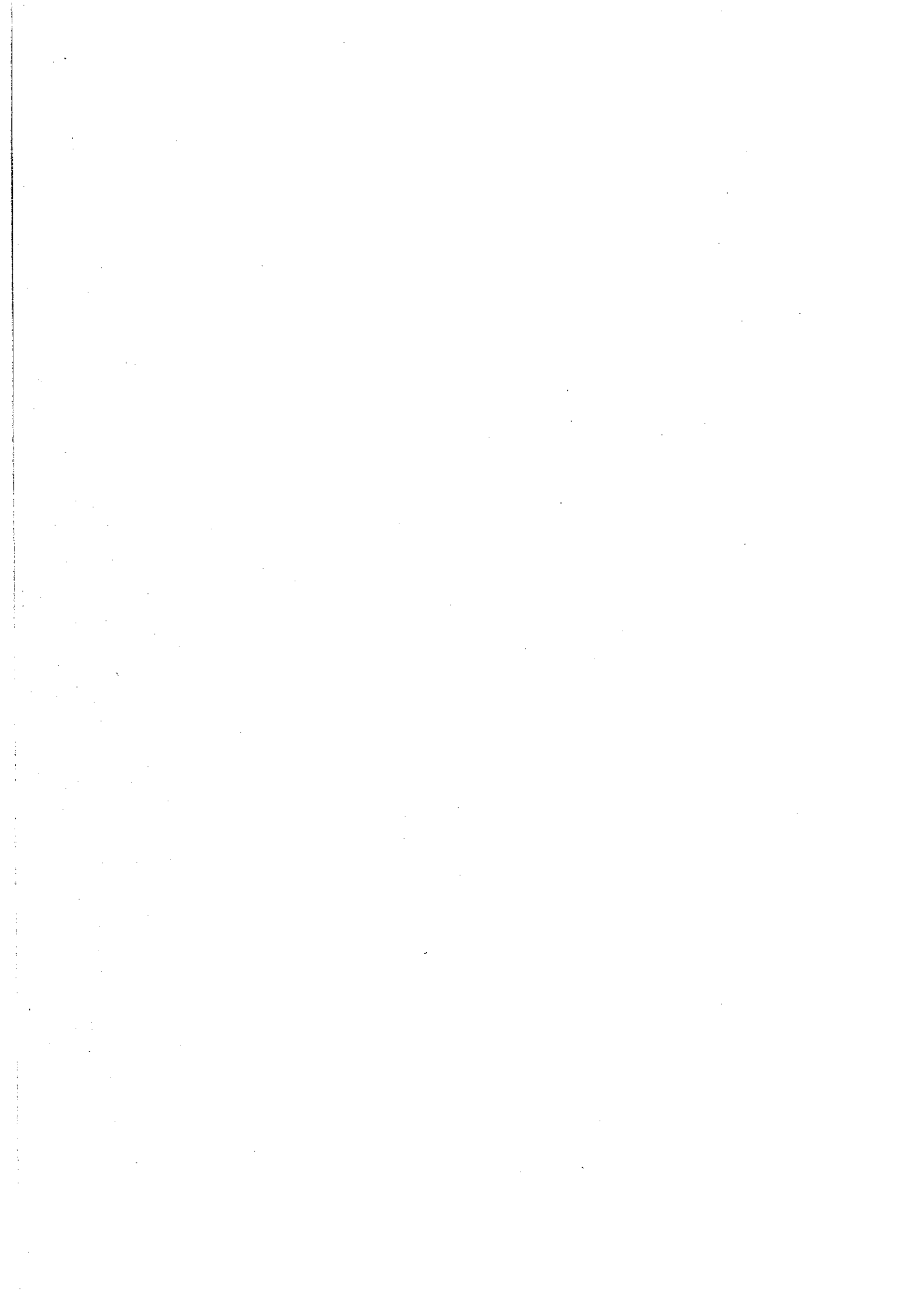
A central distinction of the psychology of alienation is that between natural human potential and (wo)man as he exists as a consequence of specific socio-economic structures (a theme shared, as will be seen, by certain existential and humanistic schools of thought). Natural spontaneity, work and the capacity for social relationships are lost and alienated individuals become instead calculating, evaluative and profit seeking in objective terms; individuals, that is, who use others primarily as means of gain and exploitation.

As we have seen, alienation involves not only objectification of relationships, work etc. but also an objectification of thought itself with the result that abstraction is treated as concrete reality. This is the essence of the process of reification, a process which results in the failure to see the alienated state as being abnormal; for the whole condition comes to acquire and present the characteristics of naturalness. Moreover, the more conditions provoking alienation develop, the more deeply does reification become 'normal' in the consciousness of (wo)man. This failure subjectively to experience alienation has been termed 'false consciousness' and is analogous to certain forms of mental illness where individuals no longer experience themselves as 'ill'. Reification results in the individual being unable to analyze either his own psychological problems or his social situation.

The question is, how is the theory of alienation linked to the phenomenon of human aggression? One such linkage is provided by the earlier works of Fromm (1960, 1968) in which he stresses the considerable importance of the process of alienation for human social psychological development. To some extent Fromm sees alienation as inevitable in life, a result of the growth of 'self' as a distinct entity, for with this growth comes an inevitable dissolution of primary ties. This process he terms 'individuation', and inherent in it are degrees of powerlessness and anxiety, involving the loss of original identity (as we shall see also an existential problem); and the development of a feeling of separateness. Thus, with individuation comes the problem of relatedness to others. Fromm's central thesis is that freedom brings insecurity and without proper cultural support individuals will be unable to tolerate the anxiety provoked by this insecurity and will be subjected to powerful tendences to submit to any external authority that will remove that insecurity, even at the cost of a loss of freedom. This is what Fromm means when he speaks of "The Fear of Freedom" and in this concept we can see parallels with some of Reich's work on the development of the character structure and the mass psychology of fascism (Reich, 1933; 1975). We have here a bridge between the Marxian conception of alienation and the neo-Freudianism of Fromm and Reich, viewed in terms of the impact of the family (seen as an agent of a repressive, alienated society), confronting the 'normal' development of the child.

Fromm quite explicitly chooses the concept of alienation as the central point from which to develop the analysis of the contemporary social character. Specifically what he does is to attempt to transplant Freudian theory onto Marxist analysis. Like Marx he begins with certain postulated human needs, such as 'relatedness' and 'creative work', and then proceeds to

differentiate these 'naturals' from the actual social character
of (wo)man; this being, essentially, the character structure
shared by most members of a given social group. The function of
the social character is to mould human beings and channel their
energy into directions which will ensure the continued
functioning of this society, a form of social sublimation in the
Freudian sense, which is here reconciled with the socio-economic-
psychological dialectic of the Marxist analysis.

Viewed in this light there is no doubt that alienation is,
in large part, a psychological phenomenon involving subjective
experience and specifically means a loss of self and a loss of
experience as a thinking, feeling, loving person bearing
productive powers. Such a person no longer feels that her acts
are her own. The result is the failure to perceive ones 'real'
needs and the substitution of 'false' needs such as ownership of
money, overconsumption etc. (Fromm, 1960).

Marcuse (1970) pursues this theme further, arguing that the
nature of technology has decisively altered the nature of modern
society in comparison with Marx's time and, hence, has also
altered the nature of alienation. Firstly, automation and
computerization have reduced the physical and time demands of
work; long hours and fatigue are no longer such major issues as
they were in the past; instead lack of communication and monotony
take their place.

Secondly, advanced technology has led to a new
stratification system with the growth of new 'white collar'
professions which have profoundly different relationships to the
means of production than did the industrial worker in the
traditional sense. According to Marcuse these changes have deeply
affected our attitudes and consciousness and have moved us in the
direction of total reification. We have become so far removed
from the meaning of work that we have become totally powerless in
the face of it and, since authority has become invisible in the
fog of corporatism, we lack any specific targets for frustration
except for the seemingly omnipotent 'system'. However, these
frustrations are eased by the high level of consumption which
advanced technology provides, so that for the majority, life is
not experienced as intolerable.

This reification provides a new, invisible, and more
complete form of social control and manipulation over the
individual. This is further enhanced by the lessening of
suppression in the sexual sphere; instead, suppression now
centres on consciousness so that thought processes, language etc.
become 'one-dimensional'. What is required is conformity and
standardization in all spheres of life, the elimination of the
individual and the possibilities of self-realization.

A number of researchers have gone even further, to trace
direct links between alienation and reification and specific
mental disturbances such as schizophrenia (see e.g. Gabel, 1974;
Laing, 1965). Horney (1951) also contributed to a psychological
theory of alienation from self. She differentiates 'real self'
from 'idealized self' and both from 'actual' or 'social' self.
Social conditions are seen as stunting the growth of the 'real'
self in the child as a result of which the child fails to develop
a feeling of belonging; these feelings provoke feelings of
isolation and helplessness in a hostile world, which in turn
trigger anxiety. This anxiety further submerges the 'real' self

and its needs, this being the beginning of alienation from the self, for this recession causes the individual to become unable to distinguish where s/he stands or whom s/he is. In other words, the individual loses feelings of identity which give meaning power and significance to self. Instead of 'real' self development the unconscious creates an idealized image of self and energy is diverted into actualising this image (this being the source of neurotic ambition, or in Marcusian terms, the 'performance principle'). In time the reactions and perceptions of others create an 'actual' or 'social' self, thus producing a three-way split which may, if these elements conflict seriously, be the source of severe psychotic disturbance. (See also the work of Gestalt thrapists e.g Perls, 1971).

Having established a link between alienation and psychological disturbance we may move on to examining some of the more sociological dimensions of the concept of alienation. Here, the concept has been applied to a wide range of phenomena, from industrial strife to football hooliganism. However, all of these uses return eventually to the Marxian core sense of some lack of social solidarity, a dissatisfaction with social relations, meaninglessness and powerlessness, rebellion against social values and behavioural norms etc. In the sub-discipline of educational sociology it has been applied to account, in part at least, for the academic failures of working class children, immigrant children, and for the negative behaviour exibited by some children, especially from the aforementioned groups.

The evidence that many children from the working class do significantly worse at school than children from the middle classes is overwhelming. This relative lack of success not only provides alienation and antagonism between these young people and the wider culture but also becomes a crucial factor in reproducing the social stratification of society. Furthermore, the compartmentalization of learning and impersonal routines of the school have an alienating effect on children.

It is also noteworthy that much research into the sources of juvenile delinquency comes to the conclusion that educational alienation and its accompanying anti-social negative behaviour, is a frustrated response to school failure (for a summary of this research see Roe, 1987). It follows that negative aggression may be traced, at least in part, to the response of youth, especially from the working class, to the repressions and limitations imposed on them by an impersonal school system representing an alien class culture and system of control. Apparently 'mindless' acts of violence and vadalism may even be best explained by utilizing the concept of alienation.

As was noted above, one result of overly repressive or permissive child rearing is a poor self-concept. The same result can be seen to be achieved by persistent academic failure and by educational alienation (see Roe, 1989). The concept of self is developed through transactions with the environment. It follows that educational and class based alienation can lead to a low self-concept which, in turn, leads to an increased propensity for negative behaviour (and also for media use of video violence, see Roe, ibid). To the unsuccessful student, especially those from lower socio-economic status backgrounds, society and its schools may appear as massive dispensers of failure, rejection, punishment and depreciation. The result is either fatalism and apathy, or attempts to rehabilitate self-esteem by clashing, often violently, with the social norms and agents which are seen as antagonistic.

If we view the development of the self-concept as being the acquired capacity of the individual to be an object to himself, we can see that such objectification is open to all of the alienative influences that have been postulated as present in industrial society. Can we then postulate a causal link between alienation and some forms of negative aggression, with failure and low self-concept as intervening variables?

Education must, to a large degree, reflect and reinforce societal alienation; indeed it can be seen as a major vehicle of that condition. Firstly, the educational system is compartmentalized and fragmented. Not only is it separated from the rest of society, but it is divided into convenient, often arbitrary, subject distinctions which are often justified in terms of ease of administration. The result is nothing less than a fragmented intellectual division of labour for the production of 'knowledge'.

Secondly, we have a compulsory system of education, with a compulsory curriculum tailored not to meet the needs of the individual child, but those of society. It is hardly surprising, in these circumstances, that many young people (especially those who 'fail') go to school reluctantly and are aggressive and destructive on arrival.

Thirdly, education has become an immensely saleable commodity, in the classic fetishistic Marxian sense. We go to school primarily not to learn for its own sake, but in order to be able to get a job. We go to school because the law demands it and because the modern world discriminates against those who fail to exhibit evidence of proficiency in a certain narrow range of largely irrelevant cognitive and intellectual skills that few will ever really need again. We go because, in a modern economy, society doesn't really know what to do with adolescents.

Modern education (or more properly speaking schooling, for the two are not necessarily synonimous), can be seen as a classic case study example of alienation. Instead of real learning, schooling has been objectified; it neither belongs to, nor has any meaning for the individual except in terms of justifying something else. Whatever the official rhetoric, the real functions of school are external, focusing on discipline and geared towards sorting a differentiated work force to staff the modern economy (cf. Roe, 1983).

Subjected to this type of schooling we inevitably run the risk of becoming alienated, blocked from awareness of self, from creative potentials which are stifled. The student is geared and motivated externally by incentives, or if they fail to work, then by threats or actual punishment. Failing to trust his own motivations or perceptions, his initiative is replaced by obedience, automoton conformity, or rebellion, with its occasional outbursts of violent frustrated anger. In schools, as in society at large, alienation is taken as a sign of healthy adjustment and manifestations of the real self (creative, positive and negative) are labelled as 'aggressive' and 'disruptive'. To compound the problem, in some research the very agents of alienation (in this case the teachers) are the very agents who assess and label the extent of this real-self behaviour (cf. Sonesson, 1989); when they are in fact the most perfectly placed precisely not to be able to perceive the origin

and meaning of this kind of behaviour; themselves being victims of what Fromm called "the pathology of normalcy". Furthermore, this closed rationale leads to an exaggerated, futile and sterile search for 'causes' outside of the school; in family, neighbourhood, I.Q. the media etc.

This section has linked the original Marxian conception of alienation, and its effects, to individual and social behaviour. A psychology, as well as a sociology, of alienation has been examined and it has been postulated that the impact of these factors can be viewed as generators of negative aggression. The relationship of class, educational organization, failure and self-concept to alienation has been postulated and this led to a hypothesis of a direct causal link between alienation and negative aggression among young people. This relationship may be particularly valuable in helping to account, not only for disruption and rebellion in the classroom, but also for those acts of negative aggression which appear to be the most irrational such as wanton vandalism and destruction of property.


5. THE EXISTENTIAL APPROACH.

We have seen that the growth of industrialism in the past two centuries has been associated with a technology based upon the division of labour. This principle has not been restricted purely to application in technology, it has also come to invade our thinking about society and ourselves. This involves the fragmentation of thought and action, and in education and research it has led to the fracture of one body of knowledge from another.

It has also been seen that Freud's work, and that of later psycho-analysts has tended to be part centred, thereby developing a distorted picture of (wo)man as s/he actually is. The emphasis on physical and instinctual processes and on natural scientific 'objective' method placed the reality of the phenomenal in second order of importance. The behavioural perspective amplified these tendences to the extent of seeing (wo)man as merely an amalgam of instincts and conditioned responses, a blank sheet of paper upon which culture is written. Cumulatively, these developments led to the development of a humanistic and existential perspective which aims at restoring (wo)man and knowledge to a unitary whole. In this process it is possible to trace direct paths from the analysis of Freudian psychology and the theories of alienation which converge and fuse in the existential perspective. What can this perspective contribute to our understanding of negative aggression?

First, what is meant by the term 'existential'. The question by no means has a clear-cut answer, especially since 'existential' psychology is often closely intertwined with humanistic psychology and is occasionally even treated as synonimous with it. In fact the existential approach can be viewed as one specific element within the wide-ranging, ill defined field of humanistic psychology.

Existentialism as a. philosophy is based mainly on the thought and writings of three men and is an amalgam of their thought, although one of them (Heidegger) actually denied being, strictly, an existential philosopher. The other two are Kierkegaard, the founder of the philosophy, and Sartre. Of the three only Sartre has made any real excursions into psychology (e.g Satre, 1956; 1974).
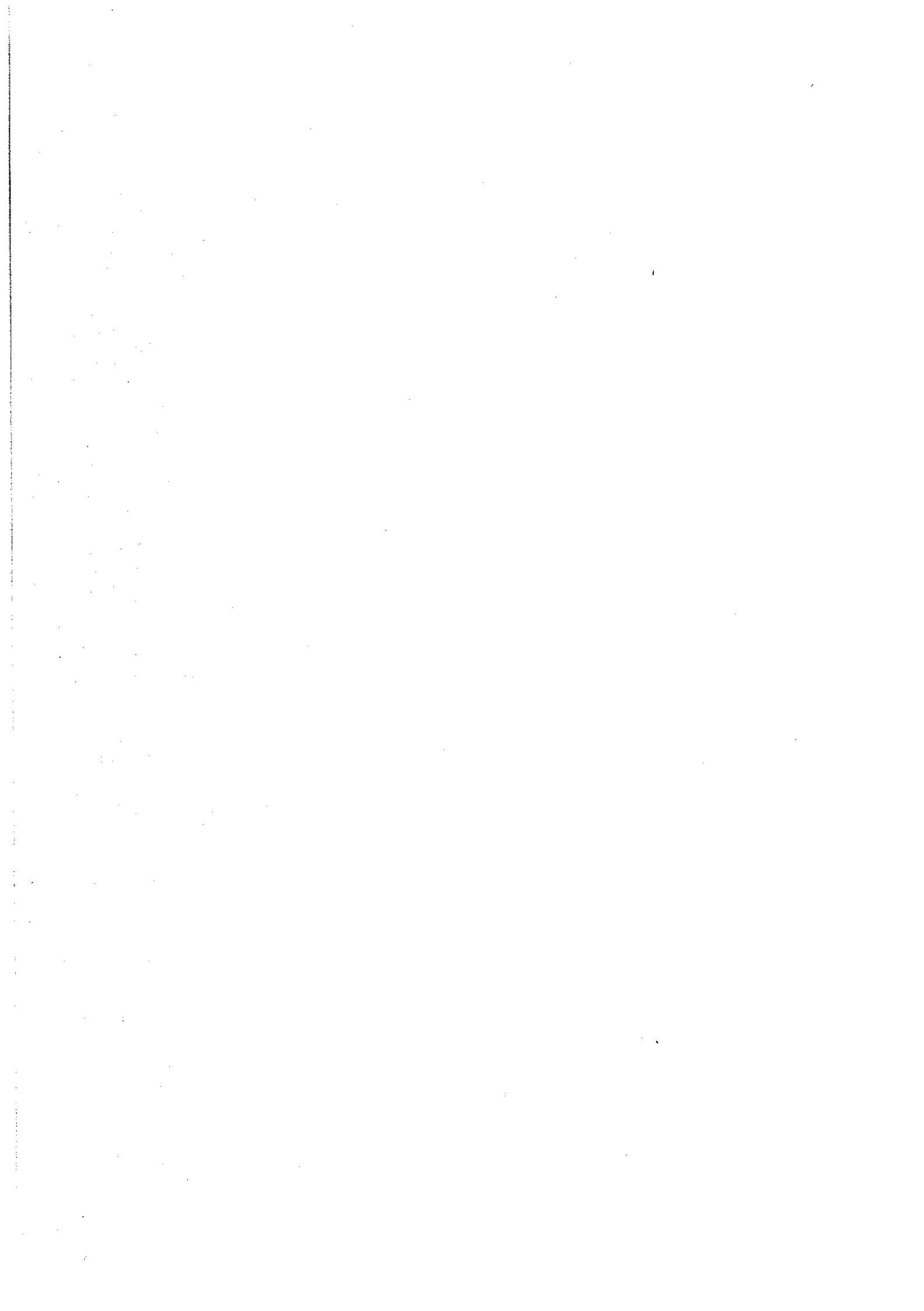
Existentialism is an area of considerable conceptual complexity but basically it is concerned with (wo)man and his 'being', the a priori assumption being that human existence simply 'is'. The individual is seen as the sole creator of values, while at the same time, as having the potential to actualize. Hence (wo)man is seen as always 'becoming' and the task of existential philosophy is seen as growth inducement in these terms, directed to what has been termed "maximum accord with the whole of life" (Bugental,1969).

It follows that its basic concern is with the science of being (or ontology), and as such it is also phenomenological in that it regards knowledge as intersubjective and the individual's inner world of experience as a unity. This means, in any analysis, beginning with the subject's experience and not some external 'objective' interpretation of it. It also infers that whatever the behavioural problem, the individual is consciously or unconsciously employing her whole existence, his whole being-in-the-world. Consequently we cannot properly analyze one aspect of behaviour in isolation from the whole unity of a person's experience and existence.

This is not to deny that anlaysis of specific relationships cannot be useful, nor that proper empirical observation of behaviour is, in any way, useless. Obviously humans have drives, adapt, are socialized and conditioned to adapt to the environment in various ways, but beyond that we return to the neo-marxist conception noted earlier, that (wo)man also has certain indestructable qualities and existential needs, which require her to search for social and psychological conditions which satisfy these needs.

Existentialism actually attempts to transcend the subject-object dichotomy of Cartesian philosophy (May, 1967). Kierkegaard (1954) had appealed to a reality underlying both subjectivity and objectivity, clearly recognizing the non-sense that reality can be understood in an abstracted, detached way. It is impossible to separate the subject, as (wo)man, from the object being observed and to attempt to do so is in itself a form of alienation. Kierkegaard postulated the existence of an inner subjective reality which we can try to understand objectively, rejecting neither, while denying distorted emphasis on either.

The most detailed application of existential ideas to psychology has come from the adaptation by Binswanger (1966) of Heidegger (1949). Here we are concerned with 'being-in-the-world, which Heidgger terms 'Dasein'. Dasein is, in essence, indistinguishable from the 'self' as already discussed, but Binswanger takes the Dasein concept and claims that, since it is a structural whole which cannot be divided, it undercuts the traditional dichotomies and offers a view of (wo)man as both an instinct driven animal and a socially determined being. This ontological conception removes the need to separate mind from body, and both from spirit, which is the basis of the Cartesian split. Existentialism is essentially and profoundly holistic, seeing (wo)man as greater than the sum of her parts. It follows that conceptual dissection of (wo)man cannot provide full answers as to the nature of (wo)man as s/he really is. While necessary and convenient for methodological purposes such dissection not infrequently leads to reification and fragmantation.

.It should be noted that this also rules out instinctive comparisons with animal behaviour which, as we have seen, some zoological and behavioural oriented researchers have attempted. Wo)man is not a precocious gorilla, nor a performing rat; the holism and humanism of existentialism place considerable emphasis on the uniqueness of human behaviour and the centrality of reflective self-awareness (which also refers us back to the question of self-alienation). Existential holism stresses that human behaviour cannot validly be considered apart from the whole of which it is an element. Behaviour does not occur in a vacuum, nor does it involve only one small part of the organism or one small part of the environment. (Wo)man is seen as the ultimate creator of values, constrained by the external factors of the human condition in general, but possessed of absolute freedom within that condition along with the concommitant of that freedom, absolute responsibility.

Behavioural disturbance is seen as occurring when the Dasein is unable to face this ultimate responsibility for choice and when freedom is surrendered to the power of another. According to Binswanger (ibid) this is resisted by the Dasein, which may renounce certain of its potentials in order to fight off the threat from another meaning context, an action which, itself, threatens the self (cf. Fromm's Fear of Freedom concept). Since it is the very renunciation of the potentials for existence that began the threat and the dissolution of the self, all such effort leads to its own negation, and a self-motivating cycle of disturbance may be set in motion until, ultimately, psychosis (the position of complete surrender) is reached. Note the parallels between this sequence and that described by Horney (ibid) for self-alienation

The work of Laing also stretches into the existential-phenomenological approach (Laing, 1965, 1974). Utilizing the concepts of 'relatedness' and 'separateness' Laing sees existential insecurity as leading to an unembodied self which then turns upon itself, a defence that ultimately destroys that which is 'defended', leading to the fragmentation of the self characteristic of chronic schizophrenia. In a similar vein Maslow (1954) speaks of neurosis as a 'failure of personal growth'. Both he and Laing, amongst others, forge a link with the psychological theories of alienation already discussed.

A related neo-phenomenological approach is that of Kelly (1971) who argues that all thinking is based in part on a priori convictions, which he terms 'constructs'. These are ways of construing the world and are used for predictions (correct or incorrect), which in turn provide a dynamic feedback essential for construct revision and reality compatibility. In this way the subject is seen as an active participant in his encounter with the environemnt, for s/he is continually imposing her construct system upon it. This approach provides us with an epistomological link between philosophy and psychology and its neo-phenomenology is encapsulated in Kelly's basic postulate, "All behaviour, without exception, is completely determined by and pertinent to the phenomenal field of the behavioural organism. (Ibid:40).

The fundamental variable is the way in which a person anticipates events, for his processes are psychologically channellized by the ways in which he does this. Furthermore, experience is made up of the successive construing of events, not merely by the succession of events themselves. It is not what happens around us that makes us experienced, it is the successive construing and reconstruction of what happens, as it happens that enriches the experience of life.

It may appear from the above that existentialism remains a purely theoretical system with little immediate potential for everyday use, a philosophical, metaphysical and intellectual net in which to catch those aspects of our existence with which we have difficulty in coming to terms. However, there are those, like May (1967) who claim that existential analysis is in fact an empirical science with its own method and particular ideal of exactness. He claims that Heidegger opened up a new horizon of understanding for the scientific exploration of human existence and its specific modes of being. Some advances in developing a methodology for existential psychotherapy have also been made e.g by Frankl (1967), Binswanger (ibid) and Laing (ibid). There are also the related humanistic approaches of Maslow (ibid) and Rogers (1968).

While one is left with the feeling that the existential perspective is imprecise and vague, it is nevertheless possible to operationalize existential theory by employing the concepts of 'resistance' and 'anxiety'. Resistance is brought into defensive operation in order to cope with threat, both existential (i.e the ultimate conditions governing experience e.g freedom, responsibility, death etc), and environmental. Resistance is also built into the individual's construct system (to use Kelly's term) through and by which an individual experiences and structures his world. 'Threat' may be real or imaginary and resistance (in the Freudian sense) is employed to prevent the intolerable from coming into consciousness. Threat is a meaningful experience attached to, and transmitted via, perception. Anxiety is the subjective experience triggered by that threat and a certain degree of anxiety is inevitable in the human condition (just as in Fromm's framework we saw that some alienation is an inevitable concomitant of the process of 'individuation'). Anxiety occurs when defences against threat fail and new mechanisms are required, especially the distortion of awareness. The ground-work for an empirical study of this character process was, as we have already seen, laid by Reich, and it was he who showed that the thus provoked defensive reaction does, in fact, end up as self-defeating, facilitating the impact of the original threat. If the character armouring which embodies resistance is established then it tends to be persistent over time and difficult to penetrate. In this event a number of behavioural reactions are available, e.g anger, defiance and destructiveness.

The anxiety provoked suppression of perception and awareness, of course, leads to alienation from the real self and a detachment from one's own experience. Self-alienation, however, involves increasing the subjective experience of the existential threats of emptiness, powerlessness and meaninglessness. Free choice becomes irrelevant in a world where choices have no, or only superficial, meaning and an alienated, frustrated individual
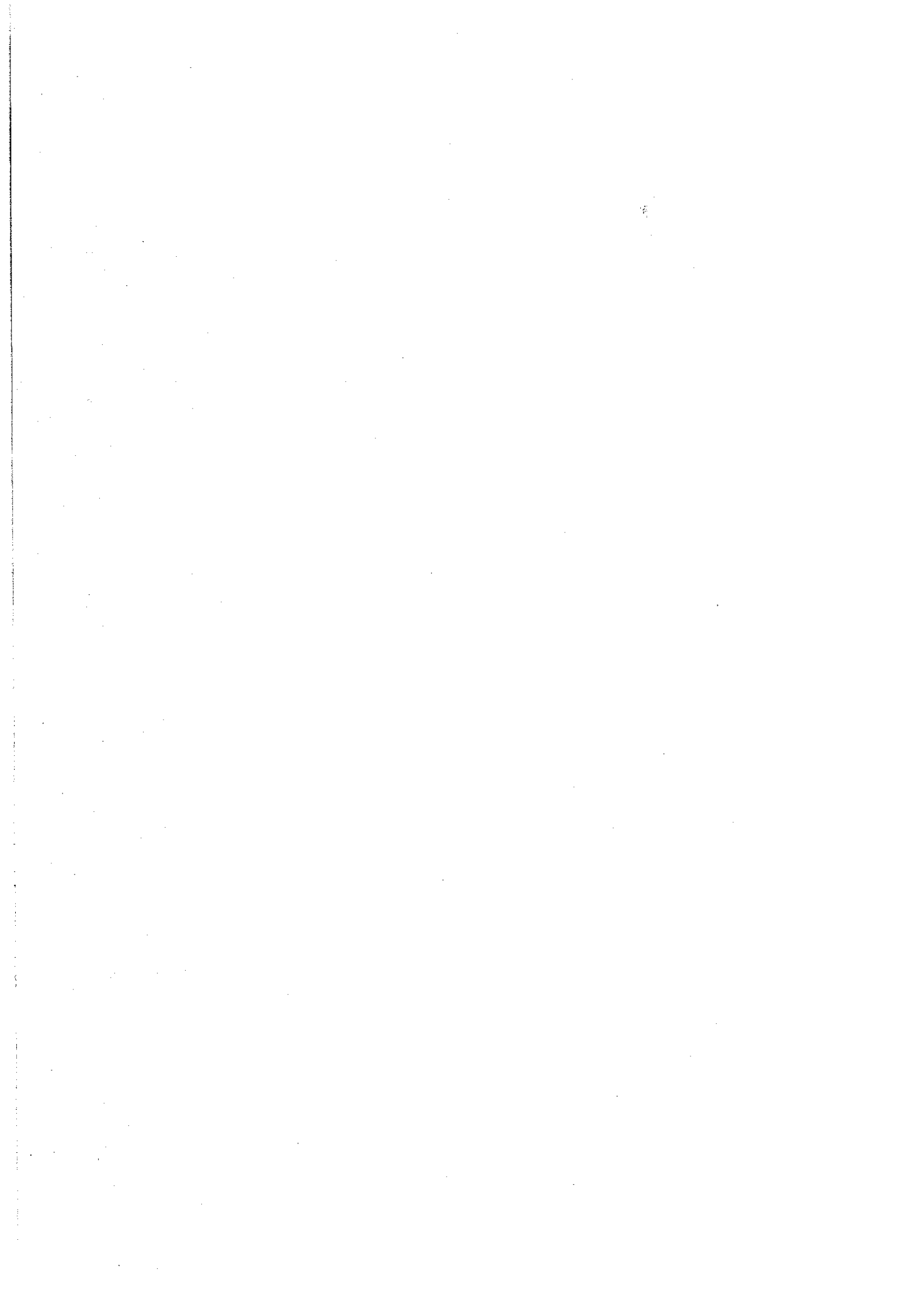
confronts an alienating, frustrating environment over which s/he feels himself to have little power and with which s/he feels little meaningful contact. Two patterns of distorted being are available in this situation, destructive and apathetic. The individual either gives in, or kicks back. A violent reaction may not even be negative in the strict sense but may be an inverted, distorted re-channelling of thwarted creative energy.

This is not a new synthesis. Psycho-analysis long ago postulated the link between environmental threat, resistance, anxiety and hostility. Horney (1939) sums it up thus,

> "The environment is dreaded as a whole because it is felt to be unreliable, mendacious, unappreciative, unfair, unjust, begrudging and merciless....the child feels the environment as a menace to his entire development and to his most legitimate wishes and strivings." (p.75).

This hostile world produces reactions of helplessness and destructiveness, the latter occurring since basic anxiety is projected onto the world at large, a subjectively experienced hostile world which provokes reaction onto itself. Existentialism contributes the concept of existential dread in the face of which the individual feels threatened and powerless. The theory of alienation indicates how de-humanizing socio-economic structures and systems of interpersonal relations are important sources of threat and anxiety, exacerbated in the adolescent by normal developmental identity problems.

All of these factors may combine and result in the assumption of a negative identity and behavioural reaction in adolescence. The existential approach helps us here in its recognition of existential crisis, or the 'existential moment'. Its impact is succincly described by Morris (1966:112),

> "Somewhere in the general vicinity of puberty....comes a moment in the subject life of the individual which I speak of as the existential moment. It is the moment when the individual first discovers himself as existing. It is the abrupt onset, the changed beginning, of awareness of the phenomena of one's own presence in the world as a person. Prior to this point there is no such awareness. Children do not know what they are; they do not even know that they are. Childhood is a pre-existential phase of human life."

This existential moment is seen as more profoundly turbulent than the normally ascribed string of adjustments attached to adolescence. For the first time choice and responsibility confront us, we become truly self-aware, in an 'explosion of consciousness' we encounter meaninglessness. The Dasein, or self, already struggling with the repressive confusion of society's attitude to sexuality and open to the alienating influences of society is, in addition, forced to cope with the most profound threat of all, the realization of itself, of its own responsibility, vulnerability and terminal existence. Here is existentialisms' unique contribution to the study and understanding of human behaviour.
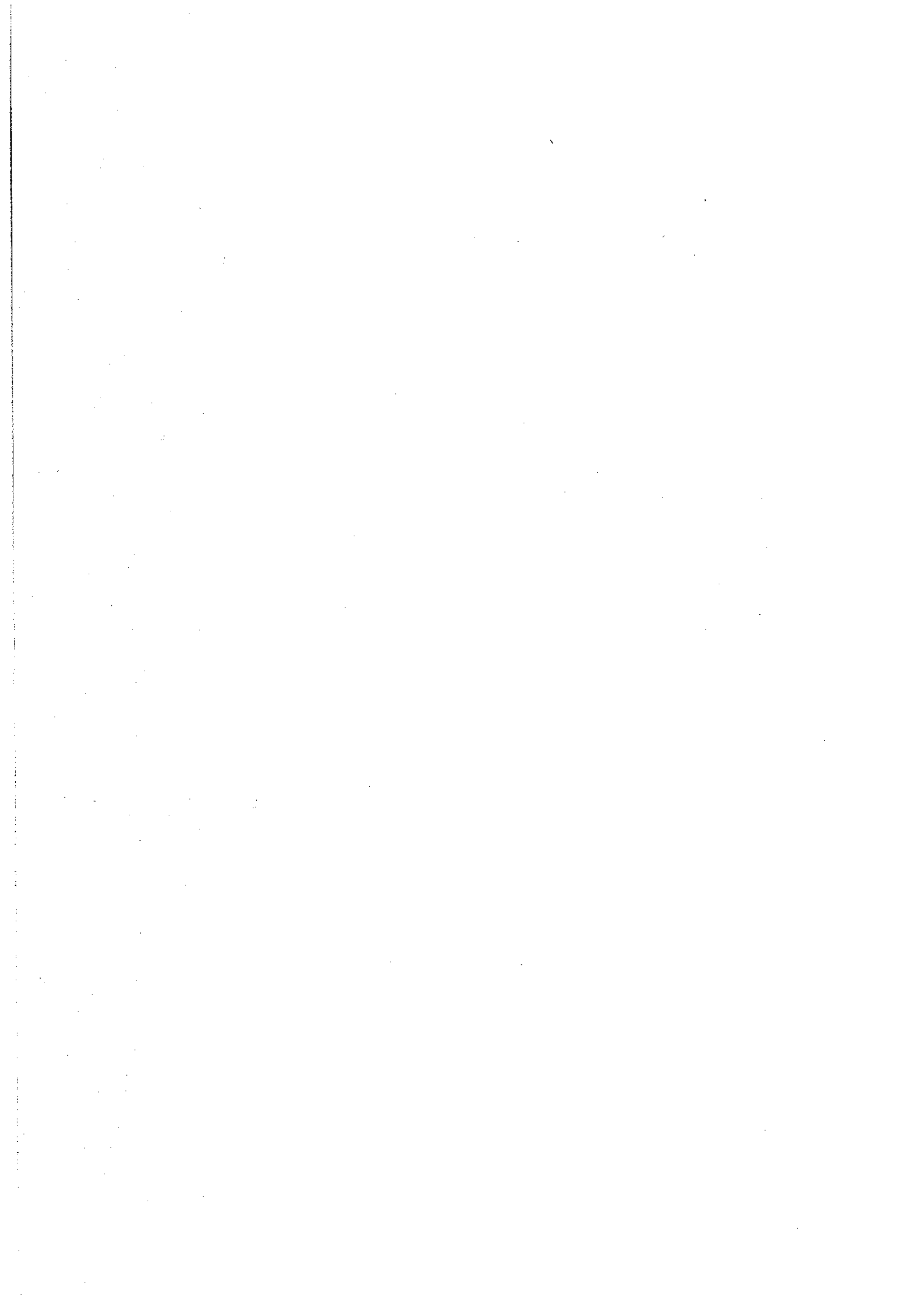
6. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This paper has been concerned with a broad conceptual discussion of various approaches to the social psychology of aggression. Its range has necessarily been limited and it is not pretended that it has, in any way, been exhaustive, e.g. the more recent work of Ziehe (1986) has not been dealt with, although it is recommended to the readers attention.

First it was noted that the singular concept 'aggression' is confusinging to the extent that it embraces a number of distinctly different forms of behaviour which may have a variety of different causes. It follows that the search for single 'cause' for all these forms of 'aggression' is misleading, if not futile. We need to employ the whole range of perspectives available if we are to have any chance of understanding those aspects of behaviour which here have been termed 'negative aggression'. If we are to construct a complete picture of this behaviour, and of isolating the factors which are relevant to it, we must examine not only (wo)man's instinctual predispositions but also her existential needs, the socio-economic system, social institutions and our ways of relating to our fellow human beings. This is, of course, an enormous inter-disciplinary undertaking involving great conceptual and methodological sophistication. However, we need to be aware of these central approaches if we are to facilitate greater all-round understanding of the subject.

The approaches dealt with here begin from radically different premises and points of departure, yet they share many common elements and in some ways merge into a common conceptual territory. Pure instinctivist approaches give an insufficient account of negative aggression, and neither do animal studies and comparisons provide a satisfactory answer. Human aggression differs significantly in nature and context from that of even our primate relatives. Frustration can provoke aggression, so can overcrowding, so can threat and anxiety, but not all aggression can be reduced to these factors. We may conclude that whilst human negative aggression is not an instinct, it is a human potential rooted in the conditions of our existence. In this way it is not only possible to link the instinctivist approach with the existential approach but, by studying all of the influential factors rooted in these conditions, we are forced to relate the biological, psychological and socio-economic forces which constitute them. It implies that if it cannot be eliminated altogether by postulating a utopian paradise (even if this were desirable), negative aggression is subject to social factors which can be affected and altered so as considerably to reduce its incidence. To do this we need to understand (wo)mans' needs and the ways in which society deals, or fails to deal, with them.

The first of these to be stressed is the sexual need. As the brief review of psycho-analytic and related approaches indicated, denial and distortion of this need can provoke aggressive drives and reactions. Analysis of the sexual factor also provides us with a possible account of the differential incidence of negative aggression between the sexes. As Gunn (1973) notes, there is good evidence that in most mammals the male is more aggressive than the female. On the other hand, Fromm (1974) claims, "There is no evidence whatsoever that would lead to the assumption that women are less destructive or cruel than men." Here cultural definitions of aggression become significant and it will be interesting to observe how the changing role of women in advanced industrial societies affects the incidence of female aggression.
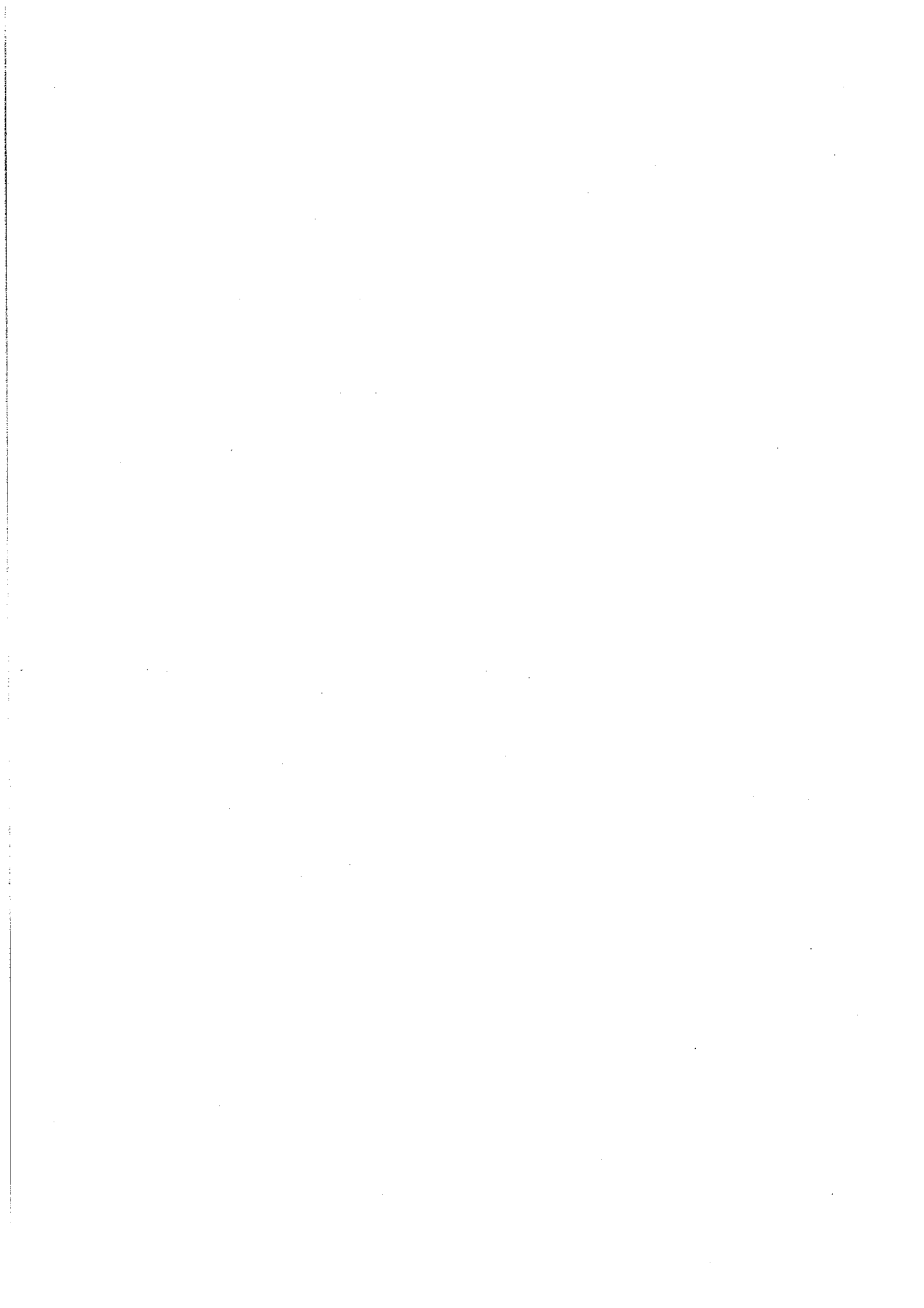
Sex is a means of self-asserion and self-fulfilment, as well as a basic need. The conventional view has been that for civilization and culture to be possible some repression of the sex drive is necessary in order to re-channel its energy into constructive channels. That model is no longer widely accepted. The work of Reich and Marcuse was cited in support of the view that far from being antithetical to culture, creativity and productive work, sexual fulfilment is in fact a precondition for them, and that repression in fact itself creates the very conditions it was designed to counter. Marcuse showed the way in which sexual repression has been altered in modern technological systems so that the pleasure principle has been converted into the performance principle thereby continuing social domination and repression. These approaches show us the link between sexual repression and alienation as well as pointing out that creative expression and productive work are essential human needs which are denied expression. We also saw that the relationship is a complex one and that sexual fulfilment per se is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the reduction and elimination of negative aggression. Sexual repression is practiced not essentially for its own sake but in the service of exploitative and alienating work relationships. It follows that the concepts of sexual repression, alienation and existential need must be taken together.

It seems clear that any real move to understanding and countering negative behaviour amongst adolescents should acknowledge and incorporate adolescent sexuality. Freud took the veil from infant sexuality but we are still uncomfortable when it comes to adolescent sexuality perhaps because it is more urgent, forceful, direct and potentially consequential. Thus, the sexual factor is still denied in the vast majority of work addressed to negative adolsecent behaviour (and this includes media research). Reich was in no doubt that many of the problems of adolescence can be traced directly to the failure to achieve the fully genital character, and the causal links between repression and sadism, frustrated anger and exploitation are too well established to be dismissed.

Relationships between self-actualization, creativity and productive work, and the negative results of blocking or distorting these essential needs were identified as causes of anxiety, frustration and a negative self-concept. The concept of alienation, as separation from these needs and its associated fragmentation of society and (wo)man herself, was employed to understand these complex interrelationships. Furthermore, it was argued that the schooling process is a major source of alienation and therefore, indirectly at least, stimulates in various ways negative behavioural reactions. The negation of our wide-ranging interests is seen as the primary source of aggression; distortion and negation threaten our basic sense of identity and one of the most effective ways of asserting the self in this situation is to become aggressive.

The existential approach showed us that threat to a part of our functioning is perceived as a threat to our whole being. Various conceptual paths lead to the same conclusion, be it via alienation, injured narcissism, sexual repression, resistance or anxiety - all come to the same formulation: aggression results from the denigration of our essential sense of personal human worth; from feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem; from cultural repression of our basic needs.
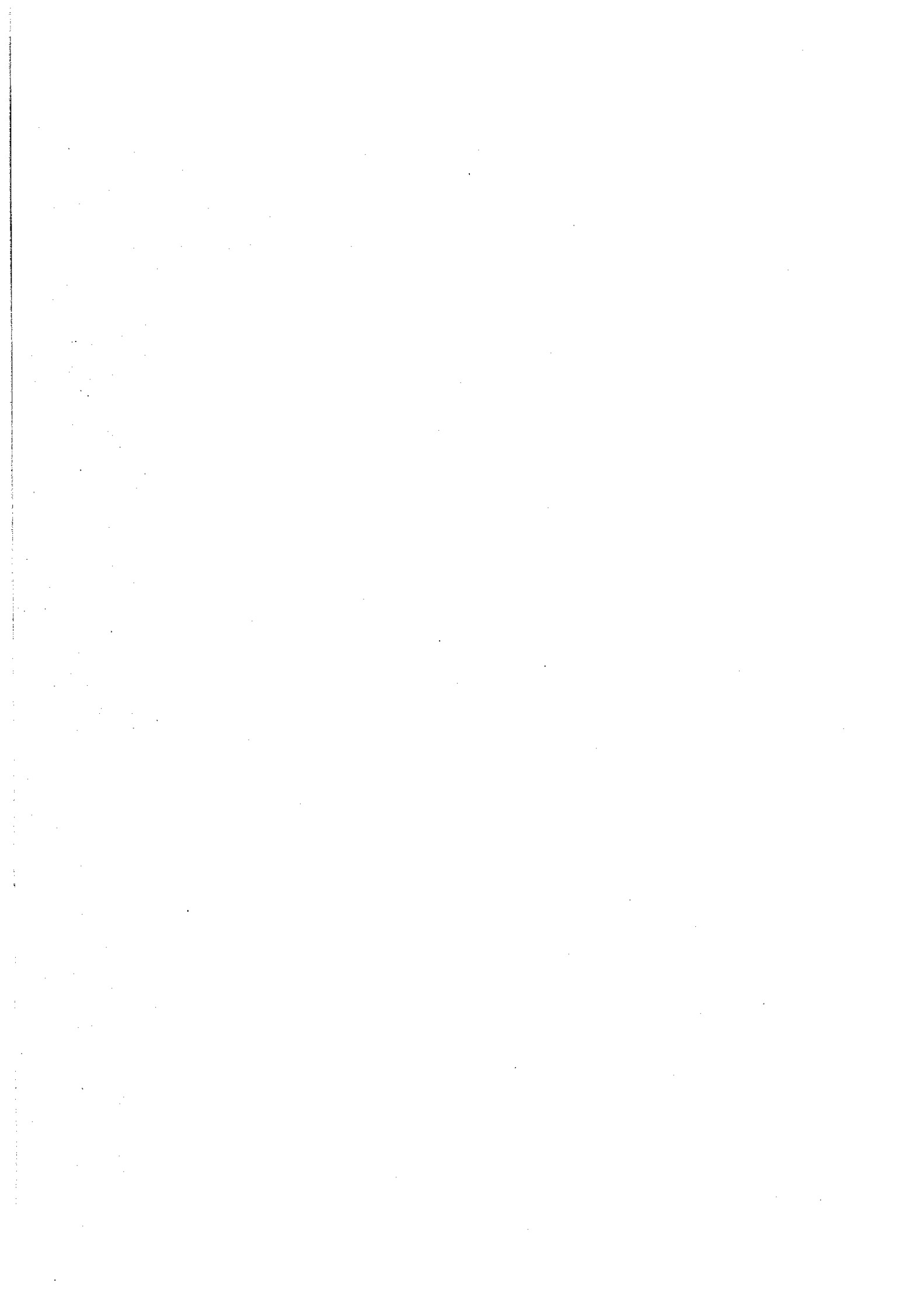
What has all this 'psychologism' got to do with empirical sociological studies of relationships between media and actual aggressive behaviour? Apart from the requirement of at least rudimentary famliarity with the field, one answer to this question was provided by Dennis Wrong in a now classic article. Wrong (1961) pointed out that it is difficult to see how, at the level of theory, Sociologists can fail to make assumptions about human nature. If these assumptions are left implicit, he warned, we will inevitably presuppose a view of man that is tailor made to our special needs. Now, following the discussion presented above, it should be obvious that the very first thing that needs to be made explicit in studying the impact of television or video viewing on aggressive behaviour is a working definition of the term aggression, yet it is still possible to find major studies of this relation which fail even to address the problem of definition (see e.g. Sonesson, 1989).

Of equal importance is the way in which both aggressive behaviour and media use are measured. As Wurtzel and Lometti (1984) have noted, since it is impossible to observe aggressive behaviour on a systematic basis, researchers have utilized such measures as peer ratings and teacher ratings. While these may indicate something, it should be perfectly obvious that it does not address the crucial question, "Does exposure to television violence cause people to commit aggressive acts?" Moreover, even measures of television or video viewing, with seemingly self-evident face-validity, may in fact be highly problematic. Salomon and Cohen (1978) have argued that that if differences in an essentially descriptive measure such as television viewing are used for explanatory purposes (e.g. to 'explain' later aggressive behaviour) then meanings are attributed to the measure which have neither face-validity nor which are self-evident.

This would be of less significance if it were not for the fact that causal claims are then sometimes made on the basis of the analyzed data. This is remarkable not just because the behaviour 'caused' has not even been defined or adequately measured, but because, by claiming to have found causal relations on the basis of correlational data, such studies fail to stand up to the basic requirements of scientific inference and practice.

The plain truth, as Janowski (1985) has noted, is that to date no one has been able to demonstrate a direct causal relationship between television viewing and aggressive behaviour. What we do have are a number of correlations which may point in that direction (though even here the correlations are usually low). The problem is that some people have a tendency to substitute 'causation' for correlation, not realising, or ignoring the fact that these are quite different terms with quite different meanings. Claiming to have explained the 'causes' of behaviour that one has not even bothered to define - and to do so on the basis of correlational data - would merely be reprehensible were it not for the fact that by being dressed up in the aura of scientific objectivity and advanced statistical methods such claims may be taken seriously by politicians and policy makers.

When approaching studies claiming to have demonstrated a simple causal relationship between media use and aggressive behaviour, the critical student would do well to heed not only the conceptual richness and theoretical sophistication of the

approaches discussed here, but also the timely warnings made by Cliff (1983). Cliff reminds us of a number of principles of scientific inference which still apply, even when the most sophisticated computer programmes are used to analyze data. The first principle is that data do not confirm a model, they only fail to disconfirm it, together with the corollary that when the data do not disconfirm a model there are other models that are not disconfirmed either. Thus,

> "If variables x and y correlate, this is an interesting observation. If x somehow seems more fundamental than y, or precedes it in time, we may tentatively conclude that x is an explanation for, even a cause of y. But suppose two other variables v and w are known to correlate, or are suspected of correlating, with x and y. Then the sceptic can argue that the correlation between x and y is an epi-phenomenon, and the real explanation is v and w. Then, traditionally it has been the responsibility of scientists to go and see whether v and w indeed correlate with both x and y. It is also our responsibility.....not to go charging off in pursuit of x until we have been assured that reasonable alternative explanations have been ruled out."

The second principle is that post hoc does not imply propter hoc, i.e if a and b are related, and a followed b in time, it is not necessarily true that b caused a. This principle is especially operative where the data are correlational. Almost the only satisfactory method for demonstrating causality is the active control of variables. With correlational data, it is not possible to isolate the empirical system sufficiently so that the nature of the relations among the variables can be unambiguously ascertained.

Cliff, reminds us that the temporal order of observations is not an infallible guide to the identification of causal relations. If a comes before b, and they are correlated, then there is still room for the influence of an innumerable collection of other variables to operate, particularly where the separation in time is substantial. This is also a point made by Murray (1980) in his review of 25 years of research into the link between TV violence and aggressive behaviour - namely, that there is a myriad of variables which must be entered into the violence-viewing-to-aggressive-behaviour equation, variables which, moreover, have a nasty tendency to interact, thereby making the task of presenting a succinct causal statement difficult. Post hoc ergo propter hoc, is a conclusion we reach only after ruling out the influence of all possible alternative causes. Until then, post hoc non est propter hoc.

It may be argued that the constraints of practical research require some relaxation of the stricter requirements of acquaintance with the field, definition, measurement and analysis. This may be so, but concomitant to the acceptance of these constraints must be more circumspectation in the inferences drawn from such research. If the failure to heed these basic rules of scientific practice is a result of their being forgotten, this is carelessness; if it is because they are wantonly ignored, then this is irresponsibility, especially if and when they are presented to politicians and policy-makers as scientifically established 'causal' findings.
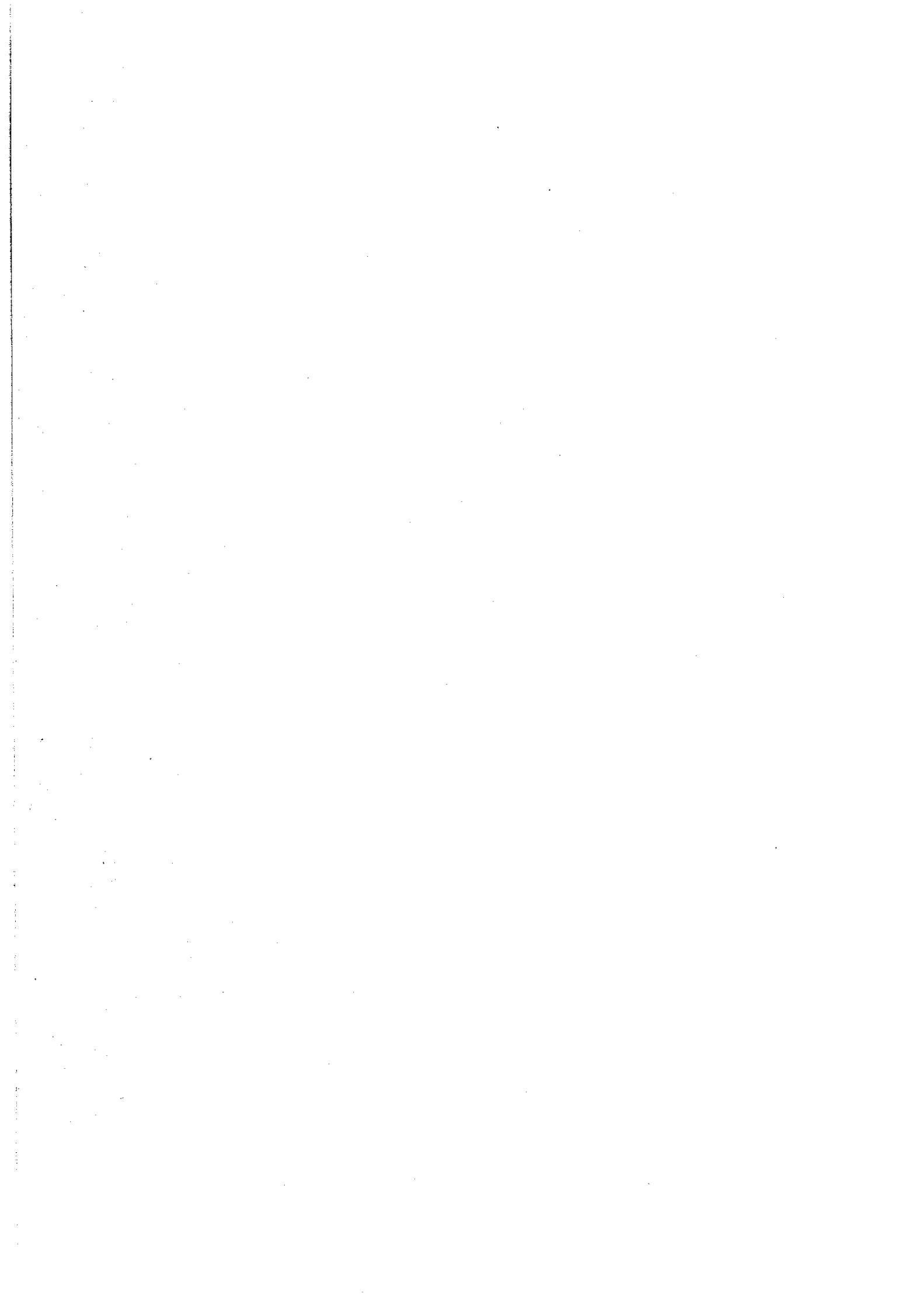
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