Re-Evaluating Burton's Human Needs Approach
from Critical Theory Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

An initial response to the thought-provoking critique of John Burton's conflict resolution approach by Laureen Park (2010), became a substantive re-evaluation of Burton's Human Needs approach. Her critique is based on the idea that Burton's basic human needs approach is 'biological', and overly deterministic, and therefore to be rejected out of hand. We defend Burton's position, using the ideas of the very Critical Theory/psychoanalysis and poststructuralist perspectives that she also uses, and point out that Burton's thinking is ultimately not entirely at odds with the central tenets of the first, second and third generation Critical Theory scholars such as Horkheimer, Habermas and Žižek, respectively. It is important for the conflict resolution field that Burton's perspective on basic human needs continues to be explored and further elaborated.

Keyword
Human needs theory, John W. Burton, Laureen Park, Critical Theory, psychoanalysis, poststructural approaches to conflict resolution

Introduction

In the 1990s John Burton published his 'conflict series' and other works as the culmination of his writing on conflict resolution; intended to provide an alternative to the then prevalent thinking on international conflict management, which seemed to him to be ineffective in its application to many of the intractable conflicts of his era.

Burton believed that much of the thinking in the field was deeply flawed, emanating as it did, from a largely 'Realist', state-centric, power-based model, which he often characterised as reducing explanations to 'black-box' thinking, that left the inner workings of the state out of consideration. The human element was for Burton all important, and he brought in the notion of basic human needs from other areas of scholarship. He emphasised the importance of second-track diplomacy, and his own approach – the problem-solving workshop as an approach to conflict resolution.

Although Burton was highly regarded by a number of scholars in the conflict resolution field at the time, especially Chris Mitchell, Sandole, Banks John Groom, etc, his work was sharply criticised by some, including Kevin Avruch, Peter Black, Vivienne Jabri, and Later Laureen Park. According to our reading, there has not been sufficient defence of Burton's ideas, as scholars have moved on to other concerns or, alternatively, have not given Burton's position on Human Needs sufficient thought and reflection.

Laureen Park (2010) has written a thought-provoking paper on Needs Theory (NT) from the perspective of both Critical Theory (CT, in the [post-] Marxist tradition of the Frankfurt School, although this is not stated explicitly) and psychoanalysis. Her paper contains much to be commended, but, as is the case with any contribution to the extant knowledge, is not above reproach and could possibly be fruitfully developed further. Ultimately, Park's critique of

Burton, through the lenses of critical theory and psychoanalysis, turns on her idea that Burton's needs concept is seen as 'biological' and therefore overly deterministic and rejected out of hand. This is particularly important, as Burton's approach is often criticised on the basis of its human needs content, and his very promising praxis (Fisher, 1997: 189; Clements, 2015) may have been discarded on the grounds of said critique.

Theoretical framework/methodology

In this contribution, we add a number of perspectives (such as an extensive overview of Habermas's contribution to Frankfurt School Critical Theory [CTFS] and a poststructuralist perspective on complex problems, namely conflict) which build on Park's insights/conclusions. This being said, we are not uncritical of the assumptions (in particular her out-of-hand rejection of Burton's so-called biological view of human needs) which she built into her otherwise valuable piece of work. We consider the convergence between Habermas's approach to communicative rationality (and the possibility of reaching consensus) and Burton's approach to Conflict Resolution uncannily similar even though they use different grammars. In our view, this observation underlines the value of an inter- and even trans-disciplinary approach to conflict and the possibility of conflict resolution, an issue on which both CTFS and CR agree. Putting Habermas and poststructuralist thought, on the one hand, and Burton, on the other hand, in conversation with one another has had the benefit of greatly enhancing our understanding and grasp of Burton's perspective on basic human needs. One such basic human need is language and its employment in communicating and reaching consensus between different groups with different concerns.

By way of example, Habermas's (1975a: 113) well-known 'ideal speech situation' (though anti-utopian and meant as a gold standard against which opportunities for consensus can be measured) and Burton's consensus-building workshops are, in our view, two amazingly talented ways, if approached from seemingly very different angles (philosophy and diplomacy), of addressing the problem of conflict management and the possibility of lasting consensus. Both are acutely aware of how vested interests can and do derail the possibility of broad-based agreement fostered in the general interest. Habermas (1975a: 113-114) refers to this phenomenon as special interests masquerading as general interests. Finally, both Habermas's (1970a) idea of 'systematic communicative distortions' and Burton's well-known wariness of agenda-negotiation (no doubt honed through his years of experience in the diplomatic corps) bring them close to the poststructuralist position. This is the denial of the possibility of reaching consensus rather than Gadamer's position of holding out for the fundamental possibility of agreement. Both Habermas and Burton also consider the need for institutional change embodying the principles of communicative rationality to be pressing (even though both advocate evolutionary, communicative or peaceful means to this end).

As such, we pursue a Marxist reading or methodology, as both Burton and Habermas are closer to Marx and his understanding of oppressive societal forces and the role of ideology in societal arrangements than to Weber. For these reasons, and those developed below, we focus on Habermas's so-called 'transitional phase' of the 1970s as he is the most articulate representative of CTFS in its contemporary reformulation. To this end, our discussion below on Habermas's contribution to CTFS methodology and in particular its (post-)Marxist moments, should add sufficient substance to our proposed theoretical framework/methodology. We also propose a different overall framework (within the context of a poststructuralist overview of the feasibility

of 'both/and' rather than 'either/or') which leads to altogether divergent conclusions, as well as a research approach which advocates greater inclusivity (but one to which Park herself would not be averse).

A Burtonian Perspective

From a Burtonian perspective, two further questions which demand consideration are:

- Can we prove the existence of basic human needs?

- Are needs necessarily always benign?

These questions, central to Park's rejection of Burton's pragmatic, if post-theoretical approach, will be considered and interwoven throughout the discussion below. As we argue below, Burton, a seasoned diplomat, was a pioneer in the field of Conflict Management/Transformation and his findings and/or approach was sometimes at odds with established theory. This might partially have been the result of outdated institutions not fit for purpose or the results of institutional outcomes geared toward managing conflict *ex post facto* rather than forestalling conflict pro-actively. Burton's well-known critique of (Western) institutional culture should be seen in this light and the fact the extant theory does/did not always support Burton's outcomes or processes, could almost certainly be the result of this paradigmatic shift in his thinking - hence our high-lighting his 'post-theoretical' (albeit not anti-theoretical) contribution. At the outset, we note that it is striking that Park structures her critique of Needs Theory around the pincer-movement of Critical Theory (CT) and psychoanalysis.

David Rasmussen (1996: 11) defines Frankfurt School Critical Theory (CTFS) as a peculiar intellectual framework aimed at generating a critical theory of society with an emancipatory vision based on the interaction of praxis and theory that found its motivation in the thinking of Marx and Freud (our emphasis). The Frankfurt School had its moorings in the work of Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse who were the most important representatives of the First Generation, and in the late twentieth century it found its contemporary reshaping in the work of Jürgen Habermas, especially. To Rasmussen's definition we should add that the work of Freud and Marx are critically reconstructed and appropriated to enrich the contributions of the corpus produced by three generations of scholars of Critical Theory in this tradition. Whereas Habermas is almost certainly the main exponent of the Second Generation, important names in the Third Generation are those of Axel Honneth, a student of Habermas, Sheila Benhabib and the well-known Slavoj Žižek. A number of issues arise from this definition.

Explorations of the CTFS

Firstly, the Frankfurt School is not the only orientation in the tradition of 'critical theory', but it has the distinction of developing inter-disciplinary perspectives of a critical theory of society forged on post-Marxist instruments and Freud's engagement with the unconscious. Catherine Belsey (2002) draws the valuable distinction between Frankfurt School 'Critical Theory' (with capitals) and other forms of 'critical theory' (with small letters) of which the latter encompasses any critical practice relating to the analysis of cultural, political or social phenomena. We

propose referring to the former tradition as more properly CTFS so as to distinguish it from other currents in the various traditions of critical theory.

When Park refers to CT, but only quotes intellectuals (notably Herbert Marcuse) in the Frankfurt School tradition, this distinction should be kept in mind. Paul Riceour, another scholar she refers to with approval, arguably belongs more plausibly to another contemporary German philosophical tradition, phenomenological hermeneutics of which Gadamer (referred to below) is arguably its most famous advocate, and certainly not to CTFS. We argue, however, that a cross-fertilization between CTFS and poststructuralism (currently the dominant philosophical tradition in France, considering that Riceour is also French and not German) would lead to considerably fruitful results, as we demonstrate below. Nothing turns on Park calling Riceour, albeit incorrectly, a figure in CTFS.

Secondly, we consider it curious that Park critiques HNT for its overly rationalistic approach to conflict resolution (CR) when the great divide between the various generations of Critical Theory in the tradition of the Frankfurt School (CTFS) is precisely the emphasis, or de-emphasis, the role of reason within the process of potential emancipation. Whereas the first generation of public intellectuals, notably Marcuse, but also Eric Fromm, placed great emphasis on interweaving Freud's corpus with Marx's body of work, Habermas focused on rehabilitating reason (to the exclusion of non-rational intervention) in the service of CTFS. In contrast, Fromm, who also features quite prominently in the canon of the conflict analytical literature, is well-known for his contestation with Konrad Lorenz on the extent to which conflict behaviour is hard-wired, or socialized into the human condition.

Rationality

Habermas's work had its rationale, though, since, in the wake of Horkheimer and Adorno's disillusion with reason's potential for emancipation after the horrors evoked by the Second World War and especially the Holocaust in Europe, it was deemed important to demonstrate that reason could nonetheless serve as a guide to emancipation. The third generation felt confident enough in reason's redemption (despite the indisputable foothold of the irrational in social comment as evidenced in the growing stature of post-Freudians such as Jacques Lacan) to forge either a feminist perspective (Benhabib) or a renewed fusion of Marx and Freud (Žižek) within the loop of CTFS.

Thirdly, although Park bases her criticism of NT on both CTFS and psychoanalytic theory (especially orthodox Freudian notions), Critical Theory in the tradition of the Frankfurt School could arguably be considered to embrace both pincers, especially in the context of the concerns of the first and the third generations, as we argue above. As we note above, CTFS fuses Marx with psychoanalysis (especially Freud's work and Lacan's orthodox interpretation of Freud) in its emancipatory vision of a critical theory of society.

Having related Rasmussen's definition of CTFS to Park's general treatment of HN in a Critical Theory context, we move now to consider her theoretical framework in greater detail. Park (2010) argues that positivism (and technocracy, its concomitant mindset) has been beset by the inability of HNT scholars such as Burton to consider and incorporate the social dimension of needs-based theory. By focusing largely on the biological basis of needs, HNT was unable to move beyond its positivistic trappings. This has resulted, according to Park, in Conflict Resolution being unable to grasp the socially engineered or conditioned nature of needs (i.e. the fact that needs are not biologically based) and the fundamental overlap of needs with values. Our

own position is that, although culture invariably shapes needs, universal basic human needs (food, shelter, recognition, love, etc.), as proposed by Burton, is an incontrovertible fact of the human condition.

Indeed, a thorough reading of Burton and his HNT predecessors, would see individual cultures as specific manifestations of different processes of human needs satisfaction. Habermas, incidentally, has made the same accusation as Park levels against Burton, against philosophy and social science in general. In view of Habermas's seminal, albeit nuanced position in CTFS, we devote considerable space to an overview of the early Habermasian contribution, keeping in mind both his post-Marxist move and his abandonment of Marx's empirical philosophy of history with practical intent, in favour of a reconstructed theory of the human species by way of a fresh take on social evolution (McCarthy, 1978: 264).

Habermas' Contribution to CTFS

Perhaps Habermas's greatest contribution to critical theory, methodologically speaking, is his insistence on forging the emancipatory goal of social inquiry in a post-positivist frame by aligning that project with the best of the intellectual heritage of the modern world. He sought to combine classical (or traditional) theory with the methodological rigour of modern science (Habermas, 1973: 79). In so doing, Habermas aims to reach beyond the understanding of philosophy as a 'first philosophy' to a notion of a social inquiry that paves the way for social change (practical intent) based on communication structures free from unnecessary domination (McCarthy, 1978: 128-133). Since the late fifties, when he published his first paper on Marxist methodology, his project has undergone substantial revisions and we can do no more here than sketch the outlines of his work insofar as it impinges on our methodological exploration of Critical Theory. In the words of Thomas McCarthy (1978: 127), we shall also "be concerned only incidentally with questions of the [chronological] development" of Habermas's work. In fact, our overview may even appear to be circular.

We attempt, in particular, to outline Habermas's on-going reformulation of the Marxist project of a critical theory of society (Roderick, 1986: 69-73) by focusing, for the reasons stated, on his so-called 'transitional phase'. This is the period from the appearance of the German edition of *Knowledge and Human Interests* [1968, English edition 1971] until the publication of the English version of *Communication and the Evolution of Society* [1979]. We limit our exploration of Habermas's valuable project for two reasons. These are to keep the discussion manageable as well as the fact that we found the intermediary period of Habermas's oeuvre most profitable for the purposes of this article. Bohman & Regh (2014) describe these ten years of Habermas's intellectual development as his 'transitional phase.'

> In this transitional phase from *Knowledge and Human Interests* to *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas's basic philosophical endeavor was to develop a more modest, fallibilist, empirical account of the philosophical claim to universality and rationality. This more modest approach moves Critical Theory away from its strong transcendental framework, exemplified in the theory of cognitive interests with the unmistakably Kantian language of object-constitution.

We consider two formulations below, which mirror Habermas's so-called weaker transcendental framework, for the reasons noted below. Despite the fact that Habermas (1994) explicitly rejected these earlier formulations of transcendental reconstruction in his later mature,

post-metaphysical work, we consider it most valuable for explicating his position in the Critical Theory corpus as it relates to an understanding of Human Needs Theory. Considering Habermas's distaste for technocratic thinking (in which only 'useful' notions are acceptable), he would, in our opinion, not be averse to our utilizing his earlier, if discarded, ideas. These are Habermas's epistemologically-based critical theory of society with practical intent and his later theory of social evolution conceived of as a "materialistically transformed transcendental reflection" (Roderick, 1986: 71).

First Reformulation of the Marxist project

As with Horkheimer (2002/1937), Habermas understands knowledge to be both historically and socially contextualized. Unlike Horkheimer, however, he replaces Horkheimer's differentiation between traditional and critical theory with his own three-layered notion of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' (Roderick, 1986: 53). In *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1971/1968), Habermas advanced the argument that knowledge forges three sets of different human interests.

Firstly, empirical-analytical sciences imply a (technical) interest in control. Examples of such are chemistry, geology and physics. Secondly, according to Habermas, hermeneutical-historical sciences aim to understand the human condition and are guided by a practical interest. Examples of such are sociology, politics, conflict management and psychology. Overlap between these interests is legion. Foucault (2006/1961) notes that the social sciences (notably medicine, pharmaceutics and psychiatry) are employed to legitimate repression. Lacan (2007: 20-22, 24) indicates that the master is only interested in knowledge which has the potential to justify the status quo. Philosophical reflection, according to Habermas (1971/1968: Preface and 68etc.), is central to emancipatory practice so as to counter positivism in the extant knowledge, namely historicism in the social sciences and scientism in the natural sciences.

Thomas McCarthy (1978: 135-136) states the Frankfurt School Critical Theory's case against positivism as follows: "This double reflexivity distinguishes it not only from the objectivism of the exact sciences but also from the self-sufficiency of traditional philosophy." Historicism is the mistake of grasping social phenomena solely in their historical context (McCarthy, 1978: 170). The so-called 'objectivity' and 'value-free' findings of the positivistic sciences, which McCarthy refers to, and the social sciences infected by historicism, could not, however, account for the well-known notion of the dearth of meaning in Western modernity, as proposed by Weber.

Emancipation

Finally, Habermas contends that critical sciences (such as Critical Theory) have an interest in emancipation which goes beyond the technical and the practical. The question needs to be asked, however, why, in the light of Habermas's distaste for positivism, these emancipatory practices should be labeled 'sciences' at all. His favorite examples of emancipatory sciences or practices are Marxism and psychoanalysis (Habermas, 1973: 9). Curiously, it is precisely these two bodies of knowledge; Marxism and psychoanalysis, which Karl Popper labelled as pseudo-sciences as they are by their very nature non-falsifiable. Nevertheless, Marxism is famous for its emancipatory potential. Breuer's patient, Anna O. (as is generally known), called psychoanalysis the 'the talking cure'.

Emancipatory practices such as spirituality (as opposed to organized religion), feminism, literature and vegetarianism (from an ethical position), come to mind. Thomas McCarthy (1978:

53), a respected commentator on Habermas, expresses the view that Knowledge and Human Interests represent "Habermas's first attempt to present his position systematically […]." McCarthy argues that this work attempts to re-evaluate and unblock discarded avenues of reflection which is the result of the domination of positivism since the late nineteenth century. We concur with McCarthy's argument on the importance of this source for an understanding of the 'transitional' Habermas; both in terms of stating his position systematically and his sustained attack on the presence of positivism, in both philosophy and the social sciences in general.

Positivism manifested itself in the almost obsessive insistence on objectivity in both the social and the natural sciences in the twentieth century. It was the linguistic turn in philosophy that superseded the previous emphasis on consciousness (Rorty, 1982: 195). Habermas became convinced that since his own point of view is not free of ideological distortion, it was necessary for him to devise a comprehensive theory of society 'free' of knowledge-constitutive interests – his efforts found expression in a theory of the species' universal communicative competences. Ironically, Habermas's (1982: 231) revulsion for immanent critique found a home in internal criticism.

This practice of internal criticism of various texts over a number of different disciplines to gauge their strengths and weaknesses (a 'philosophy of history with practical intent') is a *modus operandi* which Habermas borrowed from Marx (McCarthy, 1978: 137). Its aim is to devise a comprehensive, integrated methodology for critical theory of society with emancipatory intent. Habermas (1970: 188, McCarthy's translation) suggests that regaining meaning in the sense of 'Verstehen' is vital for the possibility of a trans-disciplinary understanding of the encompassing reality, which led him to coin the phrase "[the] gate through which methodology must pass if positivistically paralyzed reflection is to be brought to life again."

Habermas's post-Marxist moves

Habermas argues that human beings find agreement in the language use that they have in common with one another as this is basic to their form of life. Habermas points out the fallaciousness of Wittgenstein's overlooking the essence of the translatability of an idea into the investigator's home language, (Habermas, 1970b: 244-245) and its relevance here is the malleability of language.

This is also the point of departure which Habermas, briefly referred to above, following Chomsky, employs in his thinking on universal pragmatics, to ground his theory of communicative competences. McCarthy (1978: 169) comments that:

> If it were possible to develop a universal theory of language, the "grammars" of different language games could be given standard descriptions in a theoretical language […] it could be undertaken "in a theoretical attitude."

Curiously, as we noted above, the celebration of subjectivity that came with the discovery of the grammars of different life forms became a platform, once again, for objective rules which all grammars are meant to obey: Habermas's universal pragmatics are a case in point. Habermas borrows his concept of 'developmental logic' from Piaget in his attempt to explain the logic which drives the various stages of developmental trajectories (Roderick, 1986: 100). In his debate with Gadamer on the proper limits of the critical hermeneutical project (to use Hurst's valuable classification), the latter proposes the case for critical hermeneutics in the following terms:

> The hermeneutic problem is not therefore a problem of the correct mastery of a
> language […] Such mastery […] is a precondition for understanding in dialogue.
> (Gadamer, 1975: 362; McCarthy's translation at 1978: 172)

Despite their disagreement on a great number of details, Habermas and Gadamer are both interested in the preconditions for achieving consensus in dialogue. We note below that the linguistic turn in philosophy (a central feature of twentieth century philosophy on both sides of the Atlantic) in fact confirms Burton's notion of universal human needs. Habermas's differences with Gadamer are useful in showing the reach of the former's goal for his conception of social inquiry, namely nothing short of the pursuit of a comprehensively integrated methodology for a critical theory of society. We proceed to consider his theory of social evolution insofar as it relates to, or explains Habermas's methodological direction or programme for rational reconstruction.

Further reformulation of the Marxist project

It is Habermas's attempt to deal with Gadamer's critique of the ideological dimension of critical theory in the broad sense of the word (McCarthy, 1978: 264) as well as his awareness of the conflation between critical reflection and transcendental reflection (referred to below), which convinced him to abandon Marx's empirical philosophy of history with practical intent for a reconstructed theory of the species in the form of a theory of social evolution (McCarthy, 1978: 264).

This move into a post-Marxist paradigm implies two new directions for Habermas's critical theory of society. Firstly, his insight that a critique of ideology based on the idea of systematically distorted communication must rest on a theory of ordinary communication, necessitating a reconsideration of Critical Theory's foundation from a theory of knowledge to a theory of communication (Roderick, 1986: 71).

Secondly, Habermas conceives the theory of social evolution as a rational reconstruction of historical materialism (McCarthy, 1978: 232-237) which presents yet another deviation from the classical Marxist project. Since orthodox Marxism's revolutionary agent has fallen by the wayside (Habermas, 1971/1968: 25-63; 1973: 195-252), Habermas envisions an evolutionary model of the development of the species' universal communicative competences. It concerns itself with a history of the species in the sense of a "reflective appropriation of its self-formative processes" (McCarthy, 1978: 263).

It was only after he concluded the first German edition of *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968, second edition 1973), that Habermas (1975b: 182) understood that the traditional use of the word 'reflection' confusingly includes both 'rational reconstruction' and 'critical self-reflection'. Since these terms are "at the heart of his most recent work" (Held, 1980: 327), it is worth considering the difference between them. According to Habermas (1973: 22), rational reconstruction is an exercise that deals with reorganizing anonymous rule systems. Anybody can comply with these rules provided he or she has acquired the necessary competence. Reconstruction thus does not encompass subjectivity, within the horizon of which alone the experience of reflection [understood as self-reflection] is possible.

In contrast, self-reflection brings "to consciousness those determinants of a self-formative process which ideologically determine a contemporary praxis and conception of the world"

(Habermas, 1973: 22). Whereas a rational reconstruction is aimed at a 'pure theory' (devoid of any constitutive interest), critical self-reflection is projected only for the purpose of emancipatory change. It should be clear, however, that despite the differences between the two concepts, Habermas is at pains to point out that the two processes enhance each other and build on one another. Rational reconstruction bolsters self-reflection in the sense that it makes the range of possibilities explicit and limits human action. In particular it necessitates a "successful participation in a functioning rule-governed context" (Held, 1980: 327). Critical reflection, however, will allow space for the former to unfold because new avenues, previously foreclosed through ideological distortion, are now available for consideration and appropriation. Subsequent remarks by Habermas (1973: 24; 1975: 184) indicate that he would not be averse to such a conclusion. Since a normative-theoretical foundation for critical self-reflection is provided by the results generated by rational reconstruction, Habermas (1975b: 184) argues that the

> [c]ritical sciences such as psychoanalysis and social theory also depend on being able to reconstruct successfully general rules of competence. To give an example, a universal pragmatics capable of understanding the conditions that make linguistic communication at all possible has to be the theoretical basis for explaining systematically distorted communication and deviant processes of socialization.

Critical self-reflection and rational reconstruction work hand in glove to achieve the goals of a positive prognosis for a society without communicative distortions, and hence without oppression. According to Habermas (1975a: 113), 'the suppression of generalizable interests', or in Burtonian terms, 'agenda-negotiation', prevents the attainment of the former's well-known 'ideal speech situation' (re)constructed along the following lines:

> [H]ow would the members of a social system, at a given stage in the development of productive forces, have collectively and bindingly interpreted their needs (and which norms would they have accepted as justified) if they could and would have decided on the organization of social intercourse through discursive will-formation, with adequate knowledge of the limiting conditions and functional imperatives of their society?

The notion of the ideal speech situation, explored briefly above, feeds into Habermas's motivation of reconstructing orthodox Marxism's notion of historical materialism. What are Habermas's reasons for reconstructing historical materialism? David Held (1980: 323) suggests that Habermas was convinced that historical materialism (the hallmark of classical Marxism) had to be "reformulated as a critical theory of society which incorporates the insights of the psychoanalytic model, particularly its insights into the significance of self-reflection." Freud's three-tiered therapeutic model (of metatheory, general interpretation to sustain a rational narrative and a specific application) was very influential in shaping Habermas's first reformulation based on a theory of knowledge (Habermas, 1971/1968: 214ff.), and it was Gadamer's critique, among other criticisms, of critical theory's potential ideological deformation that led the former to seek out a rational reconstruction of historical materialism as a theory of social evolution.

Likewise, Burton's theory provides a critique of the social order or *status quo* and in this sense, he mirrors Habermas's concern with formulating a critical theory of society with an emancipatory vision. Thomas McCarthy (1978: 378) contends that "even in his more recent writings on the theory of social evolution […] Habermas maintains that at least the analysis of contemporary society has an irreducible practical dimension: if the past can be systematically reconstructed, the future can only be practically projected." Habermas (quoted in McCarthy 1978: 265-266, the latter's translation) is as concerned as Burton with "structural possibilities that are not yet institutionalized (and will perhaps never find an institutional embodiment)". This commitment to societal change on an institutional level shows, perhaps more than any other feature, how close both Habermas and Burton are to Marx in their critique of the *status quo*.

We conclude this overview of the relevance of Frankfurt School Critical Theory for a reflective, critical reconsideration of Human Needs Theory, in noting that Horkheimer, as the second director of the Institute for Social Research, proposed to infuse the institute's research programme with a Marxist-inspired perspective of a critical theory of society. Although Horkheimer and Adorno (both Jews forced to leave Germany during its Nazification in the 1930s) later turned increasingly pessimistic over reason's emancipatory potential, the early Horkheimer (1993/1931: 6-11,14) eloquently defined Critical Theory in this distinctively German tradition. Its great illustrious predecessor Hegel, who had such ground-breaking influence on Marx, suggested that reason was driven by an internal logic or teo-logical (goal-directed) historical mandate of ensuring increasing human emancipation. In his inaugural lecture, Horkheimer (1993/1931) took up this well-known Marxist kernel and advocated that philosophy and the empirical social sciences should work hand-in-hand with the former in the role of a Diagnostic Philosophy with practical intent verifying its findings or policy recommendations by way of empirical research for changed historical circumstances. This feeds into Burton's contention that practice has often been at cross-purposes with established theory, as we conclude below.

Revival of interest in Marxism as a methodology

Even though Marxism has subsequently all but disappeared (Grondin, 1994: 9) from the German philosophical scene – 'necessitated by' the historical contingencies of the destruction of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union – Horkheimer's reformulation was the first of many post-Marxist instruments and predicated on the reverse of Marx's insistence that philosophy will only come into its own by negating itself, as we note below.

The appearance of studies such as Terry Eagleton's *Why Marx was Right* (2012), written from a literary perspective, Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty First Century* (2013, English translation 2014), written from an economic perspective, and R.W. Johnson's *How long will South Africa Survive? The Looming Crisis* (2015), written from a historical-political perspective, although he is not explicit about his methodology, has since spurred renewed interest in Marxism as a useful form of analysis in late capitalism.

Before their adoption of Marx's well-known critique of Hegelian idealism, the early members of the Frankfurt School attempted to formulate a critique of 'instrumental reason'. Weber's (1958/1904-5: 180-183) well-known thesis on the 'iron cage' of reason and its colonization of modernity in the West, became their central focus. This view of the instrumentality of reason in the modern era led, according to Weber, to the irrevocable undermining of meaning and freedom, and the Frankfurt School Critical Theory group concluded

that their mandate, as the advocates of an inter-disciplinary approach of a critical theory of society, was to grapple with the evolving role of reason within the context of the project of human emancipation (Habermas, 1971: 194). To this end, Habermas (1971: 68-69) was convinced that the project of emancipation hinges on the possibility of rehabilitating reason, since reason, understood as reflection, is crucial in combatting the infiltration of positivism. Positivism is nothing if not "the denial of reflection", according to Habermas (1971: 68-69).

Habermas drew a seminal distinction between instrumental action (e.g., labour) and communicative action (intersubjective networking) and we suggest that this difference between the two concepts is vital to his venture as a whole. It also has the advantage of illuminating a certain line of continuity between Habermas and the first generation of scholars of the Frankfurt School. This distinction, which weighs so heavily with Habermas, is of prime importance for our discussion of conflict management or transformation since it illustrates the set of conditions (namely alienation as opposed to goodwill and the mutual acceptance of bona fides among interlocutors) which causes conflict and/or is indicative of its resolution, management and/or transformative potential (as the case might be). McCarthy (1978: 20) explores this idea well by suggesting that whereas Marx demanded the negation of philosophy as pivotal to enable scientific critique, Habermas and the members of the first generation insisted that the elimination of scientism (the notion that only empirical scientific findings are 'properly' knowledge) was a precondition for embracing Marxism as social critique. It ties in well with Burton's view that the 'received wisdom' of the conflict management practice are not always indicative of successful outcomes on the ground.

Burton's emphasis on Universal Needs

Clearing away the cobwebs of positivism allows for critical reflection enabling the emancipation project to get off the ground. And with 'emancipation', CTFS has in mind nothing less than the integration of marginalized groups which resonates so well with Human Needs Theory. Burton argues that denying people their basic needs is precisely what perpetuates conflict in society. Laureen Park contends that Burton's insistence on the 'biological' nature of needs (while denying their social origins) is yet another unwelcome manifestation of positivism. We are in partial agreement with her. We do argue, however, that we should at least leave open the possibility that some behaviour is neurologically/biologically co-determined. Latest research is pretty unequivocal in this regard (Clark and Grunstein, 2004; Feldman Barrett, 2017). The facts mitigate against the assumption that there is nothing universal in respect of human behavioural manifestation. We argue that Burton's emphasis on universal human needs is justified for the reasons enumerated.

We contend that there is something uncomfortable in an approach, such as Park's, that rejects certainty as a matter of course, being so certain in its rejection of another's position. To his credit, Burton himself is not categorical on the exact nature or role of basic human needs. He sees evidence for them, and suggests that a more coherent, more reliable picture will emerge in the course of research into these issues of contention, in due course. From a CTFS perspective, support for Burton's (albeit equivocal) position on the neurologically/biologically co-determined nature of needs is to be found in communicatively-orientated theorists, such as Habermas and Apel's, insistence on language as central to our humanity. Habermas is skeptical about the possibility of reaching consensus on deeply seated issues of conflict on the basis of what he calls 'systematic communicative distortions' (essentially vested interests distorting the conversation) but he concedes that embedded in human language use is also the possibility of reaching

consensus and resolving, or at least managing, conflict. To this end, Habermas envisages a counter-factual 'ideal speech'-situation which is meant to gauge the potential conditions of existing disputes for resolution on procedural grounds and which is not available to us because of the presence of 'systematic communicative distortions' (as we indicate above). Gadamer, although he was a great deal more sanguine about the possibility of reaching consensus than members of CTFS, expressed this idea famously in the following words: "Being, insofar as it can be understood, is language." We suggest that humans' peculiar need for and use of language is a prime example of the neurologically/biologically co-determined nature of needs, as Burton contends.

        Curiously, as Park also points out, both Marx and Freud felt convinced at some stage in their development that Marxism and psycho-analysis respectively were 'sciences' in the orthodox, natural science sense of the word. These examples of positivism, as they manifested themselves in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, took root (quite understandably) in the spirit of the belief in progress and general optimism over the prospects of science to improve the human condition (Baumer, 1977: 305-314). But if needs are evolutionarily functional, they are likely to be predominantly aligned with positive human development, and so will not be malignant unless they become frustrated – which is Burton's whole point. Because humans are social creatures, evolutionarily-engendered needs must be generally socially benevolent. Needs are not malignant until frustrated, in which case they 'drive' anti-social behaviour; whether against other individuals, or against institutions. Under conditions of wholesale oppression (needs denial), it is therefore likely that violence (even so-called irrational violence) will be brought to bear against others, or even the institutions that may be ideologically legitimated by society. Burton does indeed frequently make the point, that in a conflict between needs-satisficing individuals, and needs denying institutions, individuals must ultimately prove successful. Burton (1984: 27) does make the point that behaviour is not necessarily benign, and acknowledges the harmful effect that authoritarian personality of leadership can have on politics. Even if some needs are benign, it is perhaps high time that we come to terms with our darker, often neglected, side, as Freud and a long line of post-Freudians have argued about the role of the unconscious in human behaviour.

        Park's critique is, of course, around basic human needs – that is what she sets out to do, and she manages this through the bifocal lens of Critical Theory/Psychoanalysis. Others (notably anthropologists, such as Avruch and Black, 1987) have also taken aim at Burton for daring to propound a universalistic view of human nature, and sociologists and the humanities in general (for daring to privilege nature over nurture.) But the important point needs to be made that although Burton's contribution in cementing basic human needs within the study of social conflict is an important element of his approach, he was first and foremost a pragmatic conflict manager, albeit one who sought to develop a theoretical underpinning for his practice.

    While not denying the importance of Burton's breakthrough in respect of the introduction of basic human needs to conflict scholarship (he was not the first, but perhaps the most important) – we are in danger, as was Burton, of a reliance on needs as an explanation to the exclusion of other factors. This emphasis in Burton sets him up for unwarranted critique, as everything begins to turn on basic human needs – acting as a sort of lightning conductor for criticism. Burton, along with figures such as Johan Galtung, provided impetus for a complexity-based understanding, of (especially) deep-rooted social conflict, and Burton in particular risks being caricatured/crucified on the cross of basic human needs, which is only a small aspect of his total

invaluable contribution, which includes the following ten valuable, cardinal points all of which have become core elements of the canon of conflict resolution thinking:

• Making distinctions between disputes and deep-rooted social conflict

• Accepting that social conflict is an important, indeed positive part of the human life-world

• Making distinctions between settlement and resolution of social conflict

• Bringing human beings to the front and centre of conflict management, and relegating institutions to a lower level of importance

• Recognising the destructive role of self-legitimating ideology in everyday governance

• Disentangling the artificial (academic disciplinary) boundaries between the international and the other levels of human behaviour

• Acknowledging the exceedingly important role of analysis in conflict management

• Recognising the weaknesses of negotiation and mediation as universal forms of conflict management

• Asserting the desirability of institutionalising conflict management

• Legitimating the role of the 'scholar practitioner' in the conflict field.

Poststructuralism and the ideal of inclusivity

Park notes that Burton's approach to Human Needs Theory has been criticized for being ethnocentric, and falling short of the claim to universal application. The same is true for CTFS (Roderick, 1986: 104; Galtung and M. Kuur-Sörensen, 2007). Park covers the argument relating to Burton's Human Needs Theory and we intend to briefly do the same for CTFS so as to prepare the way for our own proposed conclusion, namely an argument in favour of advancing the prospects of the caring society. The idea of the caring society has received considerable attention from feminists, such as Carol Gilligan (1993), who argues that women inhabit a different moral dimension from that of men. According to Gilligan, whereas men rationalize their moral choices and decisions by prioritizing their own needs, a woman decides matters in terms of the preferences of her own intimate circle as opposed to her personal needs, namely relationally. The idea of an 'ethic of care' has been developed by feminists in response to overly rationalistic theorizing, such as that ascribed to Habermas, on the prospects of a more equitable and just society. Feminists such as Martha Nussbaum (2000) and Fiona Robinson (1999) have developed Gilligan's work further and they have rejected the idea of abstract 'rights' to guide social justice in a world teeming with neglect and want. Instead, practical care is urgently demanded.

Poststructuralism and complex problems

This ethics of care as part and parcel of a revival of practical philosophy can also justify a much more inclusive approach in terms of 'both/and' rather than 'either/or', a position that finds increasing support among poststructuralists. Hurst (2004: 42) attempts to define poststructuralists as follows:

> If these thinkers have to be categorised at all (and not one of them is likely to appreciate any kind of categorisation), then they belong to a tradition of 'critical' postmodernism or poststructuralism. Here, thinkers (whom, following John Caputo, I have subsumed under the title of 'radical hermeneutics') share a common attempt to think in a way that differs fundamentally from the 'either/or' logic that has, until recently, governed Western theory. These thinkers, in various ways, attempt to retain some sense of a shared understanding, against the radical particularity and transitoriness celebrated by 'freeplay' postmodernists, without at the same time invoking the rigid structures of universality. In simpler terms, this means that they try to do justice to the cultural diversity and differences in the world without sacrificing our ability to think.

Poststructuralists, such as Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, have evolved a convincing argument that the complexity of the postmodern condition demands as many perspectives as possible in the hunt for possible solutions to complex problems in our postmodern world. We are in agreement with Hurst's (2004: 7, 9-10) suggestion that the social world is a complex phenomenon. She argues that "[k]nowledge in these disciplines [the social sciences] depended not so much on perception and abstraction, as on understanding (Verstehen) – that is, the ability to enter sympathetically into the experience of others, as a consequence of our common humanity" (Hurst, 2004: 12). Bert Olivier (2015) contends that the "post-structuralist turn" has a competitive edge over the traditionalist approach of a thoroughgoing single theoretical lens.

Olivier (2015: 349-350), with whom Hurst (2004: 42) seems to agree, proffers the 'neither/nor' (or, alternatively, 'both/and') inclusive poststructuralist notion of theory appropriation instead of 'either/or' thinking favored by scholarly 'purists' (a left-over of Aristotelian thinking). He explores 'neither/nor'-logic by utilizing Lacan's (1977) understanding of the three registers of meaning, namely the real, the symbolic and the imaginary. Olivier (2015: 349) is of the view that these "ontological registers from the complex intertwinement of which human subjectivity (or 'being' for that matter) can be understood."

During the imaginary phase the subject (mis)recognizes herself in the mirror image while the symbolic register allows the subject to acquire language. Both these registers presuppose the register of the so-called 'real' which remains a lost memory forbidding return, but which may be experienced in an overlapping fashion in the sense of reliving a traumatic incident. Lacan (1981: 52-64, cited in Olivier, op. cit.) refers to a traumatic experience as the phenomenon of 'what if' or 'if only' which continues to evade human appropriation. We can never know the 'true' nature of the easy chair we occupy since time and space structure our understanding of all perception.

The limits of human experience illustrate Olivier's (2015) argument on the value of an eclectic selection of available theoretical offerings (as the situation calls for) rather than one dominant theoretical lens, as traditional research would have it. Stated differently, poststructuralism has a decided preference for methodological and theoretical pragmatism (an

idea Galtung and Burton would agree to) over (unexamined) dogmatism in its scholarly work. Eclectic theory appropriation (dictated by the scholar's continuous attempt to approximate the real) has a striking correlation with Frankfurt School-critical theory's preference for interdisciplinary (and, as is the case with Habermas, even trans-disciplinary) investigation of complex social problems.

It is this emphasis on the 'ethics of care', on the one hand, and the need for inclusivity, on the other hand, which supports our conclusion that the better argument is not a choice between different philosophical positions. Taking our cue from both Burton and Johan Galtung's complexity-based understanding of social conflict (noted above), we contend that contemporaneous positions within French poststructuralism have made a convincing case for addressing the understanding and possible resolution of complex problems (such as deep-rooted social conflict) by bringing as many perspectives as possible to bear on the problem in question. This is the inclusive notion of 'both/and' rather than the traditional 'either/or.' Mansilla, Duraisingh, Wolfe and Haynes, (2009: 337) define interdisciplinary understanding as "the capacity to integrate knowledge and modes of thinking in two or more disciplines or established areas of expertise to produce a cognitive advancement – such as explaining a phenomenon, solving a problem, or creating a product – in ways that would have been impossible or unlikely through single disciplinary means." Mansilla, Duraisingh, Wolfe, and Haynes, (2009: 334) argue that "[a]t the dawn of the twenty-first century […] [s]ocio-environmental challenges such as mitigating climate change or eliminating poverty demand interdisciplinary solutions." The authors (2009: 335) quote with approval the American National Science Foundation's mandate which encourages "investigations that cross disciplinary boundaries and require a systems approach to address complex problems". Whereas simple social problems could be approached by way of only one body of scholarship (sociology or economics, for example), complex problems in a postmodern, post-colonial, increasingly cosmopolitan world, demand as many approaches as possible to make sense of multi-facetted, complex problems. Burton's own decidedly inter-disciplinary approach to conflict management/resolution underscores this view of reality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we argue that although Park's critique of Burton's position is not without value, her own argument is not above reproach either. Tied in to our approach is our caution against the tendency to over-theorize, since if praxis continually returns good results for Burton's methods (Clements, 2015; Fisher, 1997: 189), we should be careful of rejecting them simply because they offend the sensibilities of a particular school of thought. Although we do not deny the value of theory, we note that Marx himself remarked famously that philosophers have only interpreted the world, but the urgent contemporaneous demand is to change the world. By the same token, Freud's well-known insistence on the pivotal role of the irrational unconscious in human behaviour further illustrates our assertion that theory, valuable as it no doubt is in providing a heuristic framework (Rabaté, 2002), is unable to provide a comprehensive explanation for basic human needs which includes communication, a cardinal interest of CTFS. Burton's work has further been vindicated by Habermas's distrust of 'systematic communicative distortions' in public life and Foucault and Lacan's exposure of the ways in which the extant knowledge is used to legitimate the *status quo* (as we argue above). In this respect, we are confident that our utilization of (post-) Marxism – adjusted from its classical core to meet the demands of a changing world – as a methodology and/or theoretical framework, has added impetus to the

growing realization of its value and importance as a critical (if economic-based) analysis of late capitalism with its 21st century-face depicting deepening inequality and right-wing populism on a global scale.

Our defence of Burton's Human Needs approach would be incomplete without a reference to the (equivocal/nuanced) treatment of positivism within both CTFS and Burton's own (not inconsiderable) corpus. Habermas's somewhat harsh critique of the role of positivism in modern science and philosophy (referred to at length above) is balanced by Horkheimer's insistence on the partnership between philosophy and the empirical sciences and Burton's own equivocal position on the co-determinents – both biological/neurological and otherwise – of basic Human Needs, as displayed in his discussion on the topic in *Violence Explained* (1990: 37). These considerations, among others, lead us to conclude that it is fair to characterize the status of positivism in CTFS and Human Needs Theory, at least as far as Burton is concerned, as nuanced. The truth, as has often been argued, is rarely simple. The result of this witch hunt against the remnants of positivism in Burton's work, as exemplified by Laureen Park's contribution, however, has led to the unfortunate and perhaps unintended consequence of his valuable and considerable scholarship being unjustifiably dismissed *en masse* out of hand. This, in our view, is an injustice to Burton's scholarship and the discipline of conflict management/transformation as a whole and demands redressing. Burton's own position was that the basic human needs approach needed further research and elaboration insofar as it pertained to conflict resolution. In reaching this perspective, a comprehensive overview of both French and German contemporaneous, continental philosophy has proved to be invaluable.

Burton has thrown down the gauntlet to the field of conflict scholarship regarding a very promising direction for further inquiry. Beyond the critique of the few scholars some of whom we have mentioned above, we note a singular lack of response in taking up the challenge, as much of the recent literature in the Peace and Conflict Resolution field seems to largely concern itself with praxis, rather than the pursuit of a research agenda designed to refine the theoretical understandings proposed by John Burton (and others). We therefore stand with Tim Jacoby (2008) who makes the important point that much of the recent scholarship in the conflict management field has been on the partial abandonment of the scholarly pursuit of theoretical explanation for apprehending the causes of conflicts, in favour of how best to respond. Hopefully, this humble contribution will constitute a gentle nudge in the opposite direction.

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