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978-0-521-03100-4 - Critical Psychology: Contributions to an Historical Science of the Subject

Edited by Charles W. Tolman and Wolfgang Maiers

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Critical Psychology, which has been developing in Germany for over twenty years, constitutes a radical critique and reconstruction of scientific psychology from a dialectical and historical-materialistic point of view. Its aim is to provide a firmer foundation than presently exists for a psychology that is methodologically sound, practically relevant, and theoretically determinate. This book makes the work available for the first time to an English-speaking audience.

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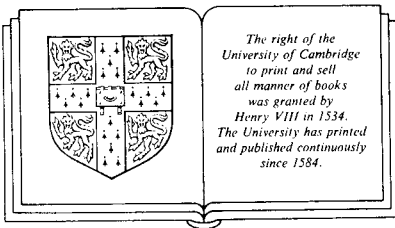
Edited by

CHARLES W. TOLMAN

*Department of Psychology,
University of Victoria*

WOLFGANG MAIERS

*Psychological Institute,
Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences,
Free University of Berlin*



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Preface

Books like this frequently have innocent beginnings. The editors were among those who gathered in Plymouth, U.K., from 30 August to 2 September 1985, for the founding conference of the International Society for Theoretical Psychology. Michael Hyland, the principal organizer of the conference, had thoughtfully arranged an evening of relaxation and sightseeing aboard an excursion boat that took us some distance up the River Tamar. It was just what we needed after two days of vigorous debate over matters that could arouse only those keenly interested in the “just right” conceptualization of psychological phenomena. For the most part, however, although the seriousness abated, the discussions continued. We (C. T. and W. M.) found ourselves regretting the general lack of acquaintance among our English-speaking colleagues with the work of the German Critical Psychologists.

“Someone ought to translate a collection of key articles,” one of us said.

“Yes,” the other replied, “that’s a good idea.”

“It’s a fairly straightforward task.”

“Yes, with a little effort we could have the thing together by next spring.”

Almost five years later we are getting the manuscript off to the publisher. It has been five years of translating text that was often extremely difficult. It was a job that was assumed “on the side,” to be squeezed into the all-too-infrequent spaces between normal teaching and administrative and research obligations. For a time our project even had to compete with the urgencies associated with the preparation of an *Habilitationsschrift*. During this period of gestation, some of the ideas, issues, and analyses have been overtaken by more recent developments in Critical Psychology, but all of the pieces chosen for inclusion continue to provide clear examples of characteristic concepts, methods, and applications. We understand the present volume to be only the beginning of Critical Psychology in English and hope that it will stimulate the interest needed to motivate the translation or direct publication in English of more recent developments, particularly those in the areas of the psychology of

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Preface

women, racism and xenophobia, multidisciplinary therapeutic practice, and learning.

It has been a long and difficult path, one that could not have been traveled successfully without the assistance and support of many people. We have both been sustained in numerous visible and invisible ways by our respective institutions. The University of Victoria gave us a grant for translation assistance. Although most of the translation work was done by the first editor, very useful initial translations were provided by Frigga Haug for Chapter 12, by Ole Dreier for Chapter 10, and by John Garner for Chapters 6, 7, and 8. Renate Eulig-Tolman, without whose moral support some of the translations would never have been completed, read much of the English text and made valuable suggestions for improvement.

We have received much needed encouragement from numerous colleagues in many countries. Among these we wish especially to acknowledge the support of Jean Lave, who played a significant part in the successful completion of our innocently undertaken project.

The project began in the atmosphere of discussion created by the newly founded International Society for Theoretical Psychology. We feel very strongly that this book is ultimately a product of that atmosphere and therefore constitutes some measure of proof for the value of such enterprises.

To those named here and many left unnamed we are much indebted and acknowledge that debt here with sincere gratitude.

Charles W. Tolman

Wolfgang Maiers

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Contributors

Karl-Heinz Braun
Fachbereich Sozialwesen
Fachhochschule Fulda
Fulda, Germany

Ole Dreier
Psykologisk Laboratorium
Universitet Koebenhavn
Koebenhavn, Denmark

Frigga Haug
Hochschule für Wirtschaft and Politik
Hamburg, Germany

Klaus Holzkamp
Psychologisches Institut
Fachbereich Philosophie und
Sozialwissenschaften I
Freie Universität Berlin
Berlin, Germany

Ute Holzkamp-Osterkamp
Psychologisches Institut
Fachbereich Philosophie und
Sozialwissenschaften I
Freie Universität Berlin
Berlin, Germany

Wolfgang Maiers
Psychologisches Institut
Fachbereich Philosophie und
Sozialwissenschaften I
Freie Universität Berlin
Berlin, Germany

Morus Markard
Psychologisches Institut
Fachbereich Philosophie und
Sozialwissenschaften I
Freie Universität Berlin
Berlin, Germany

Charles W. Tolman
Department of Psychology
University of Victoria
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

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