

Preface to Arabic edition of *Psychoanalysis and Revolution*

This manifesto is a critical, theoretical and practical text. First, it is critical because it reveals a deep theoretical gap that has hindered the liberation movements from effectively engaging with world affairs and their revolutionary practice throughout the twentieth century and so to the present day. Criticism as a dialectical deconstructing and restructuring mechanism always finds justification for this failure in the current conditions of the victory of the counter-revolution, which is led by capitalism in its neoliberal version and is armed with technological and cultural devices articulated around capital and ideology.

Second, it is a theoretical text in two respects. On the one hand, it brings back the concept of revolutionary theorizing by restoring the subjective element, subjectivity, to the space of collective liberation action, through restoring the critical practice of psychoanalysis as a practice of the liberation of the individual and collective subject, a subject that can assist the liberation movements. This critical reflection, psychoanalytic critical reflection, has been at times, neglected and excluded from the circles of liberation and revolutionary movements in the West as well as in the Third World.

At other times psychoanalysis was accused of being mere bourgeois science, of being merely a useless fake-scientific forgery. On the other hand, this manifesto critically reconsiders the authenticity of psychoanalysis in terms of it being an authentically liberating and revolutionary science, not a mere psychological treatment or tool for a psychological profession only promoting a therapeutic method that rids the individual of their so-called 'psychological illnesses' or 'madness'. That kind of psychological treatment aims at adapting the individual to contemporary consumer society where racist and sexist ideologies dominate, part of a capitalist system based on the falsehood of the self-sufficient 'ego' that is locked in on itself and comforted by myths of individual salvation and 'happiness' promoted in popular self-development handbooks.

Psychoanalysis was created to help liberate the subject as one that is inseparable from the group, the subject as the people, the workers, the marginalized, the excluded, and the enslaved. Liberation from the prisons of capital, oppression, discrimination, and alienation can only be achieved by collective, democratic, revolutionary and international action that transcends boundaries of race, gender, family, and the political-economic entities that are re-produced to serve capital and profit. This profit — surplus value — is only in the interest of the 1%, whether this operates on a national or an international level.

Third, it is a practical statement, because a theory is to be considered revolutionary only by virtue of its transformative practice, practical struggle, or in being able to be transformed into a practice that continues to grow, modify, develop and reformulate its arguments. Every act of critical thinking is in itself a critical exercise. To speak truth to power is a militant act that is no less effective than a popular revolutionary protest, and is effectively part of such protest.

Yet, what does this statement present to the liberation movements in the third world, specifically in our Arab world? It is noticeable that the national liberation movements, the communist, and the leftist organizations in our countries, during decades of struggle and

sacrifices, remained captive to a theoretically one-sided and reductionist model of society and the individual. This model impeded the processes of struggle against the current authoritarian, dictatorial and non-democratic regimes because it did not take into account, among other things, the decisive role that 'the subjective factor', subjectivity, could play in these processes. This subjectivity remains in the eyes of that failed model a familial, female-gendered, and private affair separated from the 'major' struggle, and so then any insertion of these supposedly private matters into the great national affairs is viewed as suspicious and disguised attempt to dismiss 'real' politics.

Thus, these familial and sexual affairs were not understood in terms of being political, or as a space for daily struggles between enslavement and freedom, submission and rebellion, discrimination and equality, exploitation and sharing, persecution and resistance, conquest and justice, between 'rationality' and 'madness', between what is 'reasonable' and what is disparaged as 'abnormal'. For example, an important issue was often excluded from the agenda of the liberation struggle, which is the issue of women in the family as well as in society, in places of production and government.

Although the political programs of the organizations built by the communist and the leftist parties include tenets of social justice and national liberation, feminist, socialist, and revolutionary liberation of women were even so usually absent from them. These parties and organizations only emphasized the notion of 'equality' between men and women, a notion being at the same time abstract, and reduced, at other times, to an image of the female militant always standing behind the man during political and national battles. This was at a time when patriarchal assumptions prevailed in the perceptions of communists and leftists of women and their position in the party, especially in the family and society, a perception that then came close to those of Islamist parties or of conservative and reactionary nationalism.

Likewise, we can understand the secret of the absence of a critical, analytical and interpretive psychological approach that is indispensable today in understanding the relationship between the personal and the public, the subjective and the collective, and between the family and the state, and so on. Psychoanalysis is an interpretive paradigm and a liberating practice that can ally with other revolutionary theories and with collective memories of the social and national struggle.

However, it is also true that the national and social liberation movements in our countries, with their exclusion and neglect of psychoanalysis, and psychological approaches in general, did nothing but reflect the ominous and dominant perception in everything related to psychology. Then, our psychology has been ideologically linked in the popular imagination and also in the authorities' mind with 'madness', as behaviour that threatens the values of the family, society, and religion, or as a mental impairment that deserves pity, that calls for fear and caution.

As for the best cases, when some governments established hospitals and clinics for what they categorise as 'mental illness', these institutions turned into something like detention centres and prisons for these patients of poor, labouring, or the lower-middle classes. Meanwhile, better psychological 'clinical' services that were available remained confined,

given their high medical costs, to the private sector and attracted only the bourgeoisie and the upper classes. In both cases, treatment approaches remained captive to a conservative and adaptive perspective.

Accordingly, and for other historical, social, and cultural reasons, it was natural that psychoanalysis, to the present day, did not assume the place it deserves as a liberating clinical practice. Despite the efforts paid here and there to elevate and develop this practice, it still continues to be a mere academic science. Individual efforts to reform it could not shift psychoanalysis, with its revolutionary originality and its great distinction from psychology, mental medicine, and mainstream 'psychotherapy', from the academic or professional sphere in order to relocate it in the space of political, social and cultural engagement, as Marxism was able to do in the past. These efforts have witnessed a retreat from the direct political field to the narrow and academic field, despite their liberation from Soviet versions that were reductive and positivist and which prevailed in the educational pamphlets of the Arab communist parties throughout the domination of the Comintern.

We agree with the opinion of the authors that psychoanalysis, when restored as critical psychology, can add much to the theoretical struggle and efforts of militants in our countries. Those efforts are multiplied because the enemies of freedom, social justice and gender equality in our country are not only assimilated with the existing authoritarian regimes, with their military, intelligence, prisons, religious institutions, and social alliances, but also with their imperialist supporters that keep their forces in place in order to maintain the existing conditions as they are, this for fear of any historical, national and social liberation that threatens the global capitalist system.

This is a double task in our struggle that demands liberation movements expand the frameworks of their vision and practice, to criticize defeatist or arrogant thinking, and to reassess the experiences of struggle that have evidently failed. Such a thing, requires above all, a belief in the capacity of critical thinking and revolutionary action based on a renewed radical theory and combative practice that can connect in one movement all the circles of the liberation struggle, from individuals to families and social groups, from society to the nation, from local ecology to the world as a whole, and from desire to the body and thought, to creativity and imagination.

In conclusion, the translator has singled out at the end of the manifesto a table of the most important terms with their equivalents in the Arabic language, and he bears full responsibility for the linguistic errors in this Arabic translation. We hope that this manifesto will contribute to supporting the liberation movements in our countries with a renewed tool of struggle that responds to the dreams of the revolutionaries and the uprisings for their dignity, for 'democratization' of their societies, and the expansion of space for social justice, freedom, human solidarity, and ecological liberation.

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