

Power, Interest and Psychology: Elements of a Social Materialist Understanding of Distress

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The central argument of this book is that human conduct, and in particular psychological and emotional distress, cannot be understood by an analysis of individual will, intention or cognition. Conventional therapeutic psychology suggests that we are essentially self-creating and able (with a little help from a therapist) to heal ourselves of the emotional ills that beset us. This kind of view reflects the wishful thinking and make-believe that are necessary for the success of modern consumer capitalism, but it does not reflect the way things are. The alternative set out here, explains how our experience of ourselves as well as much of our conduct is accounted for in terms of the social operation of power and interest. A framework is established for making sense of our emotional distress as the outcome of environmental pressures.

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