

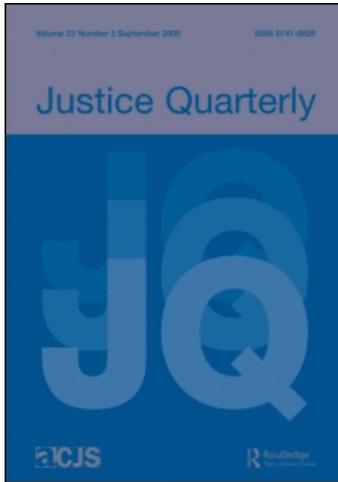
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REASSESSING THE CRITICAL METAPHOR: AN OPTIMISTIC REVISIONIST VIEW*

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Even while debates still plague, polarize, and personalize some of the discipline's most crucial issues, critical criminologists have managed to overcome, expand, and push beyond the borders that they and others established a decade ago. Nonetheless, doubt and suspicion remain concerning the future and the legitimacy of the perspective, partly because of its nebulous definition. Here we offer a revisionist interpretation and assessment of the critical perspective by arguing that a crisis, if there ever was one, no longer exists, and that it is past time to dispel the siege mentality. We argue that critical criminology is a metaphor still in its infancy, that it remains on the cutting edge of the discipline, and that its practitioners have learned from and contributed to so-called traditional criminology, leaving both areas stronger. By overcoming the fragmentation within diverse critical criminologies, the potential for unification enhances the endeavors of critical science and social action.

Nobody is very likely to consider a doctrine true merely because it makes people happy or virtuous—except perhaps the lovely “idealists” who become effusive about the good, the true, and the beautiful and allow all kinds of motley, clumsy, and benevolent desiderata to swim around in utter confusion in their pond (Nietzsche 1966:49).

Recognizing the limitations of traditional criminology, critical criminologists have emerged from the primordial pond to spawn new doctrines. Contrary to the critics' views, however, no critical criminologists judge their own doctrine true because of its

* The core of our ideas is borrowed from a flurry of conversations, arguments, and discussions following the formation of the Progressive Caucus at the annual meetings of the American Criminology Society in November 1988, but the passage of time makes attribution impossible. Degrees of belated thanks go to Greg Barak, Bob Bohm, Bob Brogan, Frank Cullen, and especially Dragan Milovanovic and Kathleen Daly. None of them have read this manuscript, but each has stimulated our thinking. Address all correspondence to: Jim Thomas, Department of Sociology, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115.

psychopharmaceutical effects. Granted, a few critical criminologists argue that because of the virtue of the idea that justice will prevail, their theoretical claims must be true. Yet the "truth" of critical criminology—any critical knowledge, for that matter—lies neither in its virtue nor in its affective power. Rather it lies in an ability to transcend, even if not quite to escape, dominant ideas and to reshape them in ways that suggest new theoretical insights and empirical directions. Through the dialectic of intellectual struggle, new ideas emerge and old ones melt away.

Those who announced the end of radical criminology a decade ago were correct in some ways. Their accuracy, however, was not based on a knowledge of the field or on any coherent critique. In fact, some of those who would limit criminology to studying the nasty behavior of street villains in order to quantify and predict who will do what to whom, how often, and when, still argue that criminology from the left remains worthless. One otherwise reflective and reputable observer, even while recognizing the crisis in traditional criminology, would rather march down a dead-end path with pugnacious metaphors than acknowledge the contributions made by other traditions:

Limited though the outcome [of traditional criminology] has been, it is much more constructive than turning to the new, radical, conflict, or Marxist criminology. After more than 20 years, we suspect that the principal product of that turn has been hot air, heat but no real light (Gibbs 1987a:3).

Unwillingness to look, let alone to march, in new directions has contributed to the misunderstandings between critical scholars and other researchers. Much of the confusion arose because critics do not seem to recognize the diversity of critical thought, let alone possess functional familiarity with the literature. In addition, critical criminologists themselves initially were fragmented as they developed their ideas in isolation from and suspicion of those whom they perceived as noncritical. Perhaps most of the critics' confusion and attribution of crisis stemmed from failure to recognize normal birth pangs and from lack of patience to nurture the infant into adolescence.

Here we explore the current status of critical criminology, primarily in the United States, in order to assess its development in the decade since the Declaration of Crisis. By revising the conception of critical criminology, we hope to clarify the perspective and to illustrate its vitality. Our approach is synthetic, exploratory, and conciliatory. First, we move the current status of critical criminology from the periphery to the core of the discipline by demonstrating that it is neither marginal nor useless. Second, we attempt

to rescue the label "critical" from its current narrow meaning by tracing the roots of critique as an intellectual project. We suggest that a narrow definition has contributed to a crisis of terminology rather than of substance. Next, we argue that critical criminology is basically a metaphor that provides a cognitive mapping device by which to interpret and discuss social offense and control. Finally, we trace new directions taken by some post-1980s practitioners, which demonstrate the variety of critical criminologies; each offers considerable promise for empirical, conceptual, and theoretical research. We conclude by acknowledging that critical criminology is not a theory, despite critics' attempts to label it as such. Rather it is a different construction of reality, which applies an alternative discourse and perspective to interpretations of social control.

Historically, leftists have been their own worst enemies, finding creative new ways to fragment and destroy themselves. Demands for ideological purity and correct political thought accelerate this tendency, preventing alignments with potential allies who may differ, but who nonetheless voice similar concerns and who march at least part of the way in the same direction. We contend that a critical criminology need not declare a socialist or a Marxist identity, even though most of us are aligned closely with one or both ideologies. We hope to dispel the view that ideology precedes critique, that political preferences necessarily bias research outcomes, and that the "scientific basis" of a critical criminology should be distrusted.

A word of warning is required in speaking of critical criminology. To identify relevant examples, the observer must gather the diverse intellectual pieces that create an identifiable mosaic. To observe and to describe what is observed require that we freeze the scene long enough to present a relatively clear image. By assuming the existence of a unified domain, we necessarily reify the topic. The resulting narrative creates a dichotomous universe in which texts are sorted. This sorting process carries the risk of further polarization: those who do not conform to the proper discursive unity are discarded; those remaining are enclosed within boundaries of monologic and objectified meaning. The diversity of critical criminology, however, hampers classification because examples range along a continuum. Those which lie on the cusp between (for example) "liberal" and "critical" may be placed arbitrarily on one side or the other. Often the only difference between the critical scholar and the dread liberal researcher is simply a matter of rhetoric: the liberal scholar may be more circumspect in critique, leaving the subtleties for others to develop. One internationally known criminologist, for example, after

observing that protesters in the 1960s carried placards reading "The police are Fascist pigs," stated, "It took me 400 pages to say the same thing." The point is not whether this researcher was a critical criminologist, but that his research was dismissed by some who failed to recognize how it supported many of their own descriptions of the relationship between social ideology and law enforcement.

This failure to recognize critical criminology as a *metaphor*, and the tendency to reify it, even among advocates, has distorted the nature of the enterprise and has diverted attention from its purpose toward some of its most highly visible personalities. This situation, in turn, has contributed to the inaccurate belief that a small segment of literature constitutes the genre; it has allowed critics to focus on a few epiphenomenal ideas, usually misinterpreted, that they mistakenly believe reflect its essence.

We adopt the term "critical criminology" to define that body of work generally associated with the Marxian, the conflict, and the "radical" perspectives. "Critical" seems more appropriate than other labels because it describes accurately the project rather than the different and occasionally incompatible theoretical traditions in which practitioners work. Many adherents, for example, have deemphasized or avoided an explicitly Marxist perspective and have moved toward deconstruction (Pfohl 1985b; Pfohl and Gordon 1986; Thomas forthcoming), critical theory (Groves and Sampson 1986), semiotics (Milovanovic 1986, forthcoming), feminism (Daly 1989a, 1989b, 1989c; Daly and Chesney-Lind 1988; Klein 1982; Morris 1987), and other topics previously considered anathema.

We call our perspective "revisionist" because, like many of our colleagues, we remain critical while still recognizing the possibility of integrating other perspectives as a means of strengthening social criticism. Yet we want more. By describing how critical thought has penetrated the discipline and has influenced movement in several fruitful new directions, we enlarge the narrow definition of the term "critical."

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRITICAL

Toby (1980) observed correctly, but for the wrong reasons, that critical criminology was not new. Critical thought originated in a long tradition of intellectual rebellion in which rigorous examination of ideas and discourse constitutes political challenge. Although critical criminologists initially critiqued the relationship among capitalism, crime, and power as a means of issuing a political challenge, the perspective consists of more than criticizing the

state in "politically correct" terminology. Virtually all serious critical criminologists now recognize this fact; we can think of no scholar published in recent years who has not moved beyond the inchoate critical premises established in the early 1970s. The irony of moving ahead lies in looking back and in returning to the goals of social criticism.

Social critique, by definition, is radical. Derived from the Greek *Krites* ("judge"), the Latin term *criticus* implies an evaluative judgment of meaning and method in research, policy, and human activity. Critical thinking implies *freedom* by recognizing that social existence, including our knowledge of this existence, was not simply imposed on us by powerful and mysterious forces. This recognition leads to the possibility of transcending our immediate social or ideational conditions. The act of critique implies that we can change our subjective interpretations and our objective conditions by thinking about and then acting on the world. As Remy Quant observed, freedom, as a component of critique, connects the emancipatory, normative, and evaluative features of critical thought:

Freedom, first of all, implies that man is not totally encompassed and submerged in that which he *de facto* is. The norm, secondly, is a demand made with respect to the facts. Finally, the value is a special light which must be distinguished from the light provided by the fact (Quant 1967: 30).

Critical thought facilitates challenging and perhaps overcoming ideational and structural obstacles that restrict perception and discussion of (for example) crime and social control. "Critique" conveys freedom in that it requires the capability to explore alternative meanings without constraint. It denotes value because it requires a discerning rational judgment in order to *choose* between conceptual and existential alternatives; it suggests *norms* to guide both the discourse and the interpretative activity of knowing. If critical criminology is to be more than a reflection of the criminologist's conscience, it must have some conceptual unity. For some scholars this unity remains ideological, guided perforce by Marxian thought to justify the label "critical." For others, the variations are influenced by a broader socialist conception of unity, more humanist than Marxist. In our own view, demand for ideological unity subverts the central purpose. Insistence on "correct" political thinking constricts the binding activity—the critique—into a narrow mode of inquiry that limits thought and diminishes possibilities for theory and action. By preferring critique rather than ideology as the primary unifying principle, we find it easier to identify other critical approaches.

WHAT IS A "CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGIST?"

Definition is the first problem that one confronts when discussing critical criminology. Most researchers continue to qualify the varieties with such labels as "new," "radical," or "Marxist." Yet one can be a Marxist even while limiting one's critique to capitalist social structures. This is a worthwhile but incomplete project because it limits attention primarily to structural relations. One can be a conflict theorist without being "critical" because approaches vary in intent and focus and do not necessarily entail critique. "Radical" seems far too broad a term to be of much use because "radical" is a characteristic rather than a definition of critical thought.

A critical act begins with the recognition that ideas possess the capacity both to control and to liberate. We accept the working definition of Quinney, for whom critical thought lies at the heart of liberation. In his view, critical criminology is:

. . . critical not only in assessment of our current condition, but critical in working toward a new existence, a negation of what *is* by thinking about and practising what *could be*. And to follow the argument to its conclusion, any possibility for a different life will come about only through new ideas that are formed in the course of altering the way to think and the way we live. What is involved here is no less than a whole new way of life. What is necessary is a new beginning—intellectually, spiritually, and politically (Quinney 1975:181).

Contrary to some views, critical criminology is not a utopian perspective but an invitation to struggle; it is a call to recast definitions of social offense more broadly than do traditional criminologists, who rarely challenge unnecessary forms of social domination.

In the early 1960s the resurgence of Marxian-based theory and empirical research, the growth of critical theory and the Frankfurt School, and critiques of positivism in the social sciences and philosophy preceded developments in criminology, and were incorporated into that field only belatedly. The label "critical criminology" emerged in the early 1970s and gained acceptance after the publication of *The New Criminology* (Taylor, Walton, and Young 1973). Although their unapologetic, value-laden research startled conventional colleagues both in Great Britain and in the United States, their intellectual perspective was not particularly new. Since then, however, the perspective has evolved differently in the two countries. In Great Britain the initial enthusiasm of the 1970s eventually lost momentum, primarily because some early advocates were redirected and because of a delayed response to revising some of the less tenable positions (e.g., Downes 1978, 1988;

Rock 1988; J. Young 1988). Many of the early British scholars remain prolific, but some scholars express concern that the "new generation" of British criminologists may lack the vitality of their innovative predecessors:

[The younger criminologists] are not *virtuosi* but professional scholars. Importantly, too, they do not appear to constitute a distinctive intellectual generation in their own eyes. They are not organized. They have not met collectively as their predecessors had done in the National Deviancy Symposium (Rock 1988:59).

In the United States the experience has been quite different. The genre, if not the name, emerged in the late 1960s, influenced by conflict and phenomenology/labeling theories¹. Particularly influential pre-1980 exemplars include Beirne (1979), Carter and Clelland (1979), Chambliss (1964, 1966, 1969, 1971, 1975), Currie (1974), Garafolo (1978), Kennedy (1976), Krisberg (1975), Pepinsky (1976), Pfohl (1978), Platt (1975, 1977), Quinney (1970, 1975, 1977, 1979), Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1975, 1976), Scull (1977), Spitzer (1977), Spitzer and Scull (1977), and T.R. Young (1978).

A new wave of critical criminologists was formed in the United States by a group of scholars, including many post-1980 Ph.D.s. They were encouraged particularly by Tony Platt, Paul Takagi, and Gregory Shank at the journal *Crime and Social Justice* and by T.R. Young's Red Feather Institute. Their works include Anderson (forthcoming), Barak (1980, 1986, 1988) Beirne (1979, 1980, 1988), Bohm (1980, forthcoming), Brady (1982, 1984), Caringella-MacDonald (1988a, 1988b), Friedrichs (1980a, 1980b, 1980c, forthcoming), Greenberg (1981), Greenberg and Humphries (1982), Groves and Corado (1983), Groves and Sampson (1986), Humphries and Wallace (1980), Meserschmidt (1986), Mika and Thomas (1988), Milovanovic (1988a, 1988b, 1988c), Milovanovic and Thomas (1989), Rafter and Stanko (1982), Schwartz (1989), Thomas (1988a, forthcoming), and Tift and Sullivan (1980). In addition, those active in the previous decade continued to provide a solid base of research and commentary, including Michalowski (1983, 1985, 1987, 1988a), Michalowski and Kramer (1987), Pepinsky (1980a, 1980b, 1986a, 1986b, 1987a, 1988a), Pepinsky and Jesilow (1984), Platt and Takagi (1988), Quinney (1988a, 1988b,

¹ Space prevents listing all influential practitioners; obviously we have excluded many who deserve recognition. The exclusion is not an intentional oversight, but reflects a random selection of names generated by requesting lists from colleagues. Some may question our inclusion of works that we consider critical or may ask whether some works are even criminology. Our purpose is to illustrate the continuum on which researchers fall and to identify works of explicit critical relevance.

1988c), Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1983), Spitzer (1980), Spitzer and Scull (1984), and the prolific T.R. Young.

Many works that we consider critically relevant are not always recognized as such. The most striking of these are two recent papers by Massey and Myers (forthcoming) and Myers and Massey (1988). Each tests empirically the relationship between social control and class or labor, using time series analysis in a way that more conventional researchers prefer. Yet if the names Massey and Myers were replaced with Michalowski and Milovanovic, these works surely would be labeled as archetypically critical. To our minds, this scenario suggests that too often we associate perspectives with names; to our peril we ignore the scope of relevant literature outside a small, predefined sphere.

OUTSIDERS ON THE INSIDE

Substantial evidence shows that critical criminology has become an integral part of the field. A cursory look at the programs of the annual meetings of the Midwest Sociological Association and the American Criminological Society suggests that although sessions devoted explicitly to critical criminology may fluctuate annually, a steadily increasing number of critical researchers are integrating their works into mainstream sessions. The formation of a "progressive caucus" at the 1988 American Society of Criminology attracted (by one count) at least 83 participants. A newsletter, *The Critical Criminologist*, appeared in 1989, and *Social Justice*, the primary critical journal in the United States, has roughly 1,500 subscribers. More than one-third of the critical works cited in our own bibliography appeared within the last three years, further corroborating the continued productivity of adherents. In addition, the number of critical scholars who have moved into leadership positions in the American Society of Criminology, the academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, and other mainstream organizations illustrates the recent trend toward conciliation and compromise with more traditional colleagues.

Weight of numbers has enabled scholars in the United States to develop a new generation of critical thought. Contributions to both specialized and mainstream journals, active leadership roles, and intellectual maturation have combined to confer legitimacy on the perspective. It seems clear that the siege has lifted.

THE "PROBLEM" WITH CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGY

There is no dearth of criticism of critical criminology by sympathizers (Ainlay 1976; Bankowski, Mungham, and Young 1977; Cohen 1979; Currie 1974; Downes 1978, 1979, 1988; Greenberg 1980;

Hinch 1983; MacLean 1989; Melossi 1985; O'Malley 1987; Reiman 1982; Rafter 1986; Rock 1979; Wenger and Bonomo 1978; J. Young 1986) and by others (Gibbs 1987a, 1987b, 1988; Inciardi 1980; Jacobs 1980; Nettler 1988; Toby 1980). Some of these criticisms seem serious; others reflect normal opposition by traditionalists to any new perspective in science. Still other criticisms reflect adherents' struggles with intellectual and other problems.

A decade ago, Inciardi (1980: 8-9) identified three major and five lesser crises that he perceived as facing radical criminologists. The major "coming crises" resulted from lack of credibility, lack of acceptance, and isolation, which occurred because critical criminology was "empirically shallow," "emotionally biased," "intellectually biased," "scholastically bankrupt," and "historically naive." More recently, Gibbs (1987, 1988a, 1988b) implied that critical criminology is not criminology at all because adherents fail to address variable crime rates or to develop theoretical predictability. In a particularly strident attack, Douglas (1986) took the perspective to task for (among other things) romanticizing crime and failing to conduct empirical research or to study socialist countries².

Some Marxian scholars initially rejected the "new" perspective, arguing that there could be no specifically radical criminology. Bankowski, Mungham, and Young (1977:38), for example, stated that "criminology and crime are not areas or resources worthy of study for a radical analysis of present (capitalistic) social arrangements" and that "the idea of a radical criminology is not possible in *principle*" (1977:45). Although dogmatic political candor may be refreshing, strident dogma not only claims the title of radicalism for one narrow variant of Marxist scholarship, but also ignores the fundamental philosophical basis of Marx's own critique.

Critical criminologists themselves recognized many of the problems and confronted them voluminously and aggressively. The inability to formulate a systematic program to curtail street crime and related predatory activities impelled the "British realists" to reassess a position perceived as inappropriately idealist (J. Young 1986:12-13). Other self-criticisms by adherents included recognition of the failure to challenge the "criminological establishment" (J. Young 1986:8) and of a tendency to be inappropriately suspicious of quantitative data analysis (Lynch 1987). Some critical

² If we judge from casual comments at conferences and with colleagues, the "failure" to study crime in socialist society seems a common criticism. Aside from the hubris of dictating what another person should study and the problem of human mortality preventing a small group of persons from eternally pursuing every possible research topic, studies of socialist countries have been made by leftists, most notably Beirne and Hunt (1988), Beirne and Sharlet (1980), Brady (1983), and Jankovic (1984).

researchers began to strengthen the theoretical weaknesses identified in the perspective (Groves and Sampson 1986; O'Malley 1987; Spitzer 1975, 1977). Others began to provide empirical studies of police (Brogden 1987; Brogden, Jefferson and Walklate 1988; Haring 1983; Pepinsky 1987b; Scraton 1985), prisons (Colvin 1981, 1982; Greenberg 1980; Jankovic 1980; Wheeler, Trammel, Findlay, and Thomas forthcoming), corporate crime (Michalowski and Kramer 1987), class, crime, and race (Braithwaite 1981; Headley 1983; O'Malley 1979), youth gangs (Zatz 1987), courts (Barak 1980), and violence against women (Ferraro 1989; Ferraro and Johnson 1983; Klein 1982; Scully and Marolla 1985). Recognizing the need for social policy and ameliorative action, some scholars also began to examine possible crime control and related policy strategies (Bohm 1984, 1986; Michalowski 1988a; Platt 1982, 1984; Reiman and Headlee 1981; Robinson 1985; Selva and Bohm 1987; Thomas *et al* 1981).

Other problems also plagued the perspective; each took its toll on credibility and growth. One serious failing of critical criminologists is that we still tend to polarize: we divide the world into "them," referring to some nebulous group that represents repressive establishment forces, and "us," meaning anybody who doesn't like "them." This tendency was illustrated by a feminist after a recent postconference session discussion. A critical criminologist, after hearing about the impressive content of feminist research, asked a participant, "Why aren't you with us?" Another woman responded, "Why haven't you bothered to read feminist stuff?"

This story illustrates several points. First, many scholars on the left seem not to read the works of "them"; if they do so, they do not take them seriously (Thomas 1988b). Second, many of these scholars overlook the possibility of creating alliances with feminists, critical liberal scholars, and others who may agree with some elements of male-dominated critical criminology, but who also are pursuing the empirical and theoretical work that engenders social change. As Kathleen Daly (personal communication) observes, male critical criminologists tend to frame the terms of the discussion both from gender-biased and from ethnocentrically biased premises. Such biases leave little room for appreciation of difference, for penetration of alien ideas, or for the decency simply to listen, although this situation is changing rapidly.

A third failing, a matter of omission rather than of commission, is the relative silence in the face of critics' charges of theoretical irrelevance. Although many of those whom we classify as critical criminologists are in fact doing empirical and even statistical research, and have shown the critics to be wrong, continued

lack of response to criticisms (even if the criticisms are ill-founded) only distorts the debates and perpetuates confusion.

Fourth, *kosherizing*, the term Jock Young (1986:13-15) uses to describe the purge of nonbelievers' "profane" works from sacred critical temples, dominated the 1970s. This process led potential sympathizers to view critical criminology as a narrow, even obscurantist, perspective in which a cliquish few write primarily to co-ideologues. This situation, however, has changed; a survey of the bibliographies of critical studies, especially in the past few years, shows the extent to which critical scholars have integrated their work with other perspectives.

Finally, both critical and traditional criminologists tend to personalize issues. Those who have been the most critical (e.g., Gibbs 1987a, 1987b, 1988; Toby 1979, 1980), seem to have read and understood the least. When Toby (1979, 1980) labeled the "new criminology" "baloney," he cited only one work, a volume by Taylor, Walton, and Young (1973). Gibbs's rather strident attack on critical criminology (1987a) reflects a lack of awareness of the theoretical and philosophical debates in which those of the left have engaged in the past decade. Scholars on the left occasionally have been equally strident. Yet as the perspective matures and acknowledges and addresses its problems, its practitioners mellow, and our thinking and discourse are tempered by the wisdom that we like to think accompanies age.

CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGY, "SCIENCE," AND METAPHORS

Of the criticisms levied against the perspective, currently the most serious may be the alleged failure to confront the scientific basis of empirical claims. Gibbs (1987a, 1987b, 1988) typifies a common view in his contention that the approach possesses little scientific merit. He argues (correctly) that it is not unreasonable to expect theories advancing empirical statements to employ appropriate criteria for assessing their accuracy. Although Gibb's intellectual imperialism may be a rhetorical ploy, he asks a legitimate question: What is the scientific basis of a critical criminology? We might recast the question and ask instead: "How does critical criminology differ from traditional criminology?"

The terms "traditional criminology" and "critical criminology" provide a means of distinguishing between competing intellectual orientations. If we accept as the broad definition of theory a systematically related set of statements, including some generalizable propositions that are empirically verifiable or falsifiable (Rudner 1966:10), then critical criminology is clearly not a theory. In itself

it does not provide a set of explicit testable formulations or explanatory accounts of the social world; we can think of no adherent who ever claimed that it does so. As Groves reminds us:

For the record, we have no quarrel whatsoever with causal analysis. More than that: the causal structures which inhere in positivism are *indispensable* for a balanced understanding of criminal (or any other) behavior. But let us not make too much of this claim, for there can be no doubt that criminology is top-heavy with positivist thinking (Groves 1985:129).

Just as "traditional criminology" is not a theory but an amalgam of theoretical approaches, critical criminology is a way of asking questions and interpreting data. No harm can come from acknowledging overtly that critical criminology is not a theory in and of itself; defensive responses to the contrary only increase critics' distortions. Instead it is an approach to inquiry, certainly as valid as that of traditional theory and as capable of generating systematic knowledge, which is the goal of any science.

As Brown (1977) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue, *all* knowledge and concepts are metaphoric in that they provide icons and mapping techniques for interpreting the social terrain. The contours of the social world depicted by theories provide ways of both seeing and moving about within that terrain. Metaphors allow us to examine and discuss our objects from several vantage points while employing various sets of images, thus expanding our concrete knowledge of the topic of choice as well as our insight into that topic. Metaphors offer system and structure to research by providing analogues for the alternative recoding of aspects of social existence into a more fruitful set of images. To paraphrase Brown's (1976:178) observation in a related context, the choice is not between scientific rigor and critical criminology, but between more or less fruitful metaphors, and between using metaphors or being their victims.

The critical metaphor refers to a fundamental image of the world from which models and additional illustrative analogues may be derived. As metaphor, critical criminology directs attention to symbols of oppression; it also suggests a strategy for reconceptualizing crime, social control, or social response into meanings from which to "read off" deeper structural concepts such as ideology, power, domination, and structural logic. By viewing the critical paradigm as a sensitizing *metaphor*, we can avoid needless polemics against competing and incompatible approaches and can suggest differences between traditional and critical positions.

The label "critical criminology," then, denotes a metaphoric social imagery invoked by scholars; it is this invocation that places

one inside or outside the critical sphere. Among the significant differences between critical and traditional models of science, the most profound is the central metaphor of each: organicism and mechanism, respectively (Pepper 1948:280). These metaphors do not themselves "image" the thing they characterize. Instead they give directions for finding the set of images that are intended to be associated with that thing (White 1978:91). They have a focus and a frame that suggest interpretive rules for assigning meaning and establishing the discursive tropes by which we name and consolidate those meanings (Billow 1977; Black 1962; Brown 1977; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Manning 1979; Pepper 1948; White 1978).

Different metaphors obviously produce different sets of images to study. We agree with White (1978:252) that whatever else a metaphor might be, it is characterized by the metaphor user's apprehending both a similarity and a difference in the two objects represented by its symbols on either side of the copula. Critical criminologists' rejection of traditional theory lies in a rejection not of science, but of its metaphor and of the objects it represents. Most scholars would agree with Horkheimer's assessment that positivist science seeks especially to reproduce in ideas a strictly objective order, an order independent of the knower, in a contemplative and disinterested manner:

Both traditional and critical theory share a logical structure consistent with the canons of science. [Science] corresponds to the activity of the scholar which takes place alongside all the other activities of a society but in no immediately clear connection with them. In this view of theory, therefore, the real social function of science is not made manifest; it speaks not of what theory means in human life, but only of what it means in the isolated sphere in which for historical reasons it comes into existence (Horkheimer 1972:197).

The weakness of traditional theory's mechanistic metaphor lies in its tendency to assign scientific meaning only on objectivist grounds. Objectivism, typified by positivist sociological theories, refers not to the use of quantitative techniques but rather to an ontological and epistemological view of what is worth knowing and how we are to know it. Objectivism here refers to

. . . an attitude that naively correlates theoretical propositions with matters of fact. This attitude presumes that the relations between empirical variables represented in theoretical propositions are self-existent. At the same time, it suppresses the transcendental framework that is the precondition of the meaning of the validity of propositions (Habermas 1972:307-8).

Borrowing from Pepper's (1948:280) typology, we identify the foundation of critical criminology as *organicism*, a term to be used with caution³. Organicism generates two additional concepts, those of process and of integration.

The concept of process enables the theorist to examine phenomena as continually undergoing transformation. Social control mechanisms, for example, both produce and are products of a variety of closely related structural forces, including ideology, culture, hierarchical power arrangements, and economic factors. This concept requires a dramatically different conceptual framework than do traditional theories, which ontologically freeze the object of analysis and thus de-emphasize the processes as part of the research question. Conventional analysis of the genesis of a particular criminal law, for example, may focus upon the content of the law as the embodiment of a norm, of hidden power relations, of a conflict process, or of semantic meanings. Although such analyses are not incompatible with the imagery of flux, they posit a static ontology closer to the mechanistic perspective.

The concept of integration allows social inquiry to be built up along several key dimensions, thus providing new ways of understanding that which we may think we know already, and of developing questions along dimensions that may be less familiar. The conflict metaphor allows us to decode things and events critically and to recode them in a new form. This new form permits us to include the social processes that lead to unnecessary forms of social domination, including those resulting from gender, race, or class.

When critical criminology is understood as a metaphor rather than as a theory, the battle between traditional and critical scholars is waged not over differing claims to truth but over the metaphoric basis of knowledge. The empirical claims of critical criminologists are fully amenable to verification; the number of researchers engaged in empirical work attests to the degree to which adherents accept the general canons of science. If the *empirical* claims of a given work are not verifiable, that fact is a flaw of the research, not a characteristic inherent in a critical approach. For critical criminologists, however, *knowledge* cannot be reduced *solely* to verifiable propositions, even if assessing propositions or claims statistically or hermeneutically is a crucial first step.

The debates between traditional and critical researchers, then, centers on what shall count as *knowledge*, and on whether traditional, objectivistic science can claim to be the only approach to

³ Organicism does not denote a biological model or imply a structural-functionalist connection.

"theory" and knowledge. For critical thinkers, theory is only one aspect of knowledge, albeit an important aspect, but the goal of theory is to produce knowledge, not only testable hypotheses of predictive power. Although most critical criminologists would not consider themselves "post-modern theorists," their writings are quite consistent with Lyotard's position:

Knowledge, then, is a question of competence that goes beyond the simple determination and application of the criterion of truth, extending to the determination and application of criteria of efficiency (technical qualification), of justice and/or happiness (ethical wisdom), of the beauty of a sound or color (auditory and visual sensibility), etc. Understood in this way, knowledge is what makes someone capable of forming "good" denotative utterances, but also "good" prescriptive and "good" evaluative utterances. . . . It is not a competence relative to a particular class of statements (for example, cognitive ones) to the exclusion of all others (Lyotard 1984:18).

When critical criminology is viewed as a metaphor, it hardly seems necessary to debate scientific status or whether valid explanatory theories can be derived from the critical perspective. The use of quantitative data and statistical analysis is not a sufficient criterion for classifying a scholar as a positivist, and there is nothing incompatible between critical thought and sophisticated statistics. It is folly to confuse techniques of data manipulation with necessary ontological premises.

Equally misleading are the debates over the social constructionist bases of critical criminology. We know of no critical thinker who does not accept (at least implicitly) a social constructionist view, by which we mean the domain assumption that people act upon and create their social world, just as they are created by and acted upon it. Social constructionism, however, is neither a theory nor a method. It is an approach to knowledge acquisition that places the subject at the center rather than at the periphery of social action and structure. Therefore the distinction should be made not between social constructionism and positivism as "theories of knowledge" but among social facts, social constructionist, and critical paradigms as competing metaphors (e.g., Ritzer 1975; Thomas 1982:296)⁴. Each metaphor offers a different view of the relationship of the knowing subject to the object to be known, different goals are projects for research, and preferred ways to process and present data. The general rules of scientific logic cut across all domains, however, and the theories derived from any of

⁴ The terms "metaphor" and "paradigm" are not synonymous. Metaphors provide the operative imagery from which a paradigm generates the theories, concepts, exemplars, and methods.

these metaphors may be assessed fully, even if not identically. As a consequence, we are unconvinced by those who dismiss critical criminology because a social constructionist position lacks explanatory power. Indeed one can develop testable theories from a constructionist perspective, as demonstrated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and by a horde of symbolic interactionists, *verstehen* sociologists, and others.

We offer a final set of responses to those who claim erroneously that critical criminologists fail to address the means by which claim to truth can be corroborated or disconfirmed. First, it is no more reasonable to expect critical researchers to specify anew in each work their philosophical or epistemological basis of knowledge than to require that information from traditional researchers. Second, it might be argued that positivists especially have emerged from a tradition of science in which the basis of claims has been elaborated adequately. Even if we discount the debates over the adequacy of positivism in the philosophy of science, a critical criminologist working in something other than a social facts tradition can allude just as easily to an equally long tradition in hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism, and other approaches. Despite critical scholars' tendency to write as if their epistemological bases were created *de novo*, and despite the increasingly rare claim that the truth will be affirmed through *praxis*, the philosophy of science contains a considerable body of literature from which to draw for epistemological adequacy. Finally, more than 60 years have passed since the radical potential of logical positivism emerged from the Vienna Circle; criminologists working in this tradition have diluted that potential to little more than a method of data manipulation. Although the traditions followed currently by most critical researchers are not new, they are being employed in new ways. Perhaps in 60 more years the critical potential will be equally ineffective. Until then, however, it seems pointless to castigate the carpenter before the house is complete, unless one simply doesn't like new shelter.

NEW DIRECTIONS

If critical criminology is to be accorded credibility, it must consist of something more substantial than an "exposé" criminology based on a perspective hardly more systematic than a profound sense of moral outrage and a criminal investigator's case study mentality. How are critical criminologists to have any impact on society in a context that depends for its cohesion on a sense of outrage and injustice? One answer lies in the new directions taken to

expand intellectual and practical boundaries. In an otherwise insightful essay, Williams (1984) lamented what he perceived to be a "demise of the criminological imagination." Yet the criminological imagination can be ignored only if one accepts that the central task of criminology is to identify the etiology of crime. Conversations with colleagues confirm our own observations that several broad and promising directions are included in the critical paradigm, an observation elaborated concisely by Schwartz (1989). We identify four such directions:⁵ *British realism, criminology of peacemaking, feminism, and postmodernist criminology*. It is not our intention here to critique or elaborate each perspective, not only because of the injustice that brevity would do to each but also because each area has generated sufficient literature to make more precise summaries available elsewhere. Instead we offer a modest sampler.

British Realism

The first new direction, British (or "left") realism, represents a departure particularly from the excesses of critical criminology of the mid-1970s. Currently its advocates attempt to reconcile radical theory with realistic social policy. Acknowledging that radical analysis had lost touch with the problem of crime, left realists observed that in the past they had overemphasized the role of the state in creating and defining crime and had de-emphasized victims (Mathews and Young 1986:1). In an attempt to redress this emphasis, British realists, typified by the works of Kinsey, Lea, and Young (1986), Lea (1987), Lea and Young (1984), Matthews (1987), Scraton (1985), and J. Young (1986, 1987), redirect analysis to the problem of street crime and to formulating radical policy analysis to reduce it. Lea and Young (1984:264-73) identify six basic premises of the realist orientation.

First, "*crime is really a problem.*" This recognition of unacceptable crime rates and of the fears they stimulate moves beyond the "left idealism" of the previous decade by confronting the "impact of crime materially, politically, and ideologically, on the maintenance of capitalism" (Lea and Young 1984:264). Second, "*we must look at the reality behind appearances.*" This step requires seeing through the "deception and inequality of the world."

Third, "*we must take crime control seriously.*" Although predatory behaviors are unacceptable, the problem is crime, not

⁵ We omit critical legal studies with considerable misgiving. This perspective emerged in the late 1970s as a response to conventional legal scholarship; its adherents isolate such issues as gender, language, and law as forces of domination. For a summary and bibliography, see Milovanovic (1988c).

the criminal. From this premise comes a three-point crime control program that requires 1) demarginalization, or reversing the trend to isolate and ostracize offenders; 2) preemptive deterrence, or intervening in the environment through the use of citizens' groups and other decentralized strategies; and 3) minimal use of prison, whereby only those who pose extreme danger to the community are incarcerated.

Fourth, "*we must look realistically at the circumstances of both the offender and victim.*" A criminal act involves an element of choice; these choices exist in a social context. By recognizing the variable contexts of offense and victimization, social response can be both punitive and preventive.

Fifth, "*we must be realistic about policing.*" The reciprocal relationship between police and public must be recognized, and the autonomy and arrogance that police currently exhibit must be eliminated. Finally, "*we must be realistic about the problem of crime in the present period.*" This step requires recognizing the common interests in reducing crimes of all kinds, from street crime through police harassment to environmental problems, and developing a sense of community and politics appropriate to reducing the root causes.

Not all critical criminologists accept this new direction with enthusiasm (DeKeseredy 1988; MacLean 1989; Schwartz 1989). Nonetheless, it marks a dramatic departure from a position characterized previously as abstract and inattentive to the "real world" of victims and the public's fear of crime. The British realists refreshingly confront one major weakness: the left has not engaged actively in formulation of crime policies, and thus has created a vacuum into which less progressive thinking has penetrated by default. The debates stimulated by this new direction challenge sympathizers and critics alike to reassess the current stance regarding crime and social control.

Criminology of Peacemaking

The second direction is criminology of peacemaking. This perspective has been identified with anarchism, humanism, or social responsiveness, but we adopt the term "criminology of peacemaking" from Quinney (1988a) as the most descriptive and least confusing.

The adherents of this perspective see crime as only one form of violence among many, including war, debilitating social formations, and suppression of human potential. The criminology of peacemaking, articulated most clearly by Anderson (forthcoming), Pepinsky (1988b), Quinney (1988a, 1988b, 1988c), and Tiftt (1979),

is a proactive approach to crime and justice characterized by a focus on universal social justice as the prerequisite to elimination of all predatory behavior.

Tifft (1979), emphasizing minimal control structures and spiritual rejuvenation as the preconditions for a just society, offered one of the earliest systematic attempts to establish a base for a criminology of peacemaking. Stressing empathy for the plight of others, he argued that existing social structure and forms of appropriation perpetuate human misery, and that crime and misery are irrevocably intertwined. Spiritual rejuvenation requires empathy with those who, because of their social position, are more likely to be relegated to life conditions characterized by structural inequality, existential despair, and physical or mental suffering.

In contrasting this perspective with positivism, Pepinsky (1979:250) observed that "rather than trying to find out what *is*, the humanist uses data to calculate what *can be*." In a recent refinement, Pepinsky (1988b) argued that there is a direct relationship between violence and social unresponsiveness, which occurs through processes of depersonalization. In a subtle shift, he recasts the etiological conception of crime and suggests that an *act* of crime is defined conventionally by nuances of context and motive, a distinction that he rejects (Pepinsky 1988b:551-53). Many scholars may find this general line of argument unconvincing, but the central argument establishing a correlation between unresponsiveness and social predation is amenable to causal modeling for those who are inclined toward quantitative theorizing and to social action for those who are not.

The possibility of integration between Marxist and more ethereal philosophies has been illustrated by Anderson's (forthcoming) attempt to unify Marx and Gandhi as a way to infuse criminology with a new, revolutionary impulse. Quinney's replacement of Western thought (Quinney 1988c) with Eastern philosophy (Quinney 1988a) offers a more reflective approach. Quinney's (1988a, 1988b, 1988c) and Quinney and Pepinsky's (1988) works provide the most current systematic formulation, echoing the sentiment of other more traditional theorists in lamenting the failure of criminological theory:

Let us begin with a fundamental realization: No amount of thinking and no amount of public policy have brought us any closer to understanding and solving the problems of crime (Quinney 1988a:67).

Forsaking the pathos of marching in the same old directions, Quinney develops nine "elementary observations" (1988a:67) in propositional form, arguing for a system of justice based on inner rebirth that grounds the spirit of peace in our "very being" (1988a):

All of this is to say, to us as criminologists, that crime is suffering, and that the ending of crime is possible only with the ending of suffering. And the ending both of suffering and of crime—the establishing of justice—can come only out of peace, out of a peace that is spiritually grounded in our very being. To eliminate crime—to end the construction and perpetuation of an existence that makes crime possible—requires a transformation of our human being. We as human beings must *be* peace if we are to live in a world free of crime, in a world of peace (Quinney 1988b: 5).

Feminism

Those who write from within the feminist tradition constitute a third critical approach. These scholars have challenged assumptions not only about crime but also about the patriarchal structure that is reproduced in all social relations. Smart (1976) was the first to develop an explicitly feminist perspective on crime and justice; others quickly contributed to an impressive body of empirical and conceptual literature⁶.

In their concise overview of the relationship between criminal feminism and criminal justice, Daly and Chesney-Lind (1988) dispel the misconception that a focus on gender is unimportant for crime and challenge the assumptions that underlie traditional research on gender and criminal justice. Speaking in a provocatively different voice, Daly (1989b) identifies seven issues that connect feminism to the discipline:

1. With the exception of some treatments of rape and intimate violence, criminology has not felt the impact of feminist thought except in its most rudimentary liberal feminist form.
2. Efforts to describe or explain women's (or girls') involvement in crime are stuck in three lines of inquiry: the "liberation" model, the "crime as protest or resistance" model, and the "plundered waif" model.
3. Some criminologists are proceeding on the assumption that gender is just another "variable" to be plugged into their regression equations.
4. The most frequent refrain we hear is that women are not interesting or important to study because there are so few female criminals.
5. Most feminist work in crime and justice has focused on men's violence against women.
6. Studies of the criminal justice system—the courts, jails, and prisons—have focused primarily on whether men and women are treated "equally."

⁶ For a comprehensive history and bibliography of feminist research in criminology, see especially Daly and Chesney-Lind (1988).

7. The field of criminology cannot be transformed from within: its space of inquiry is too narrow and constrains both feminists and progressive inquiry (Daly 1989b:1-5).

The impact of feminism on critical criminology will be profound as researchers attempt to address these concerns. The British realists have been among the first to acknowledge their debt:

The limits of the romantic conception of crime and the criminal were brought home most forcibly by the growing feminist concern during the 1970s with the problem of rape. Discussions around this issue served to reintroduce into radical criminology discourse neglected issues of aetiology, motivation and punishment (Matthews and Young 1986:2).

Scholars not directly concerned with gender issues may remain uncertain about the contributions of feminism to their work. Chesney-Lind offers one answer:

What's in this for the criminologist who is not specifically interested in research on gender and crime? In my view, a lot. The early insights into male crime were largely gleaned by intensive field observation. This work needs to be re-thought with an eye toward the meaning of these behaviors within patriarchy. New work on male crime and official responses to this behavior must continually ask what the impact of this particular behavior is on the patriarchal order. Does it empower men at the expense of women? Does it replicate (in the underclass) the gender divisions of the dominant society or not? Does it encourage female reliance on male protection (dubious though it may be)? There are many new questions to ask about old data, many new avenues of inquiry opened once these issues are considered (Chesney-Lind 1988:16).

Feminism's contribution to criminology may provide the most immediate impact because it not only raises issues about gender and society but also demands a restructuring of the power hierarchy latent in thought and language. As criminologists begin to reflect on unexamined assumptions about how they currently approach their topics, previously held theories and concepts will change accordingly. The result of this dialectic cannot be predicted easily, but it will continue to change the discipline.

"Postmodernist" Criminology

The final group, which for convenience we call "postmodernist" criminology, includes those who have moved into semiotics, poststructuralism, and similar perspectives that challenge both social structure and social knowledge. The ambiguity

of the term defies concise definition, but it is characterized by distrust of totalizing theories, playful use of irony, preference for narrative discourse, focus on intersubjectivity, and suspicion of universalistic claims to truth. We concede the problems of this characterization, but find it a convenient category in which to place researchers who are working in traditions influenced by recent continental philosophy, cultural analysis, linguistics, and poststructuralism.

Unlike other new directions, postmodernism possesses no unifying thread or body of literature that weaves the variations together. Some postmodernist scholars draw heavily from the works of Michael Foucault's "post-structuralism"; others derive their stimulus from Umberto Eco and other semioticians. Schwartz (1989), however, observes correctly that of the variants of postmodernist criminology, deconstruction is the most common. Drawing from literary analysis, deconstructionists envision the social world as a text and conceive of its features as a language that can be read and interpreted as a narrative. The "syntax" and the "lexicon" of behavior convey the rules that structure social order. The critical component of deconstruction derives from deciphering how these rules shape hierarchical power relationships both in social structure and in interaction. The most ambitious attempts at deconstructionist criminology are those of Pfohl (1985b) and Pfohl and Gordon (1986). In a deceptively minimal summary, Pfohl and Gordon describe the goal as follows:

We want to de-realize the hierarchical goal of modern Man [sic], to intervene within against the hegemonic codes that socially dominate our sense of time and space. Codes of empire. Phallic codes. Codes of economy and color. We want out. We want a different knowledge and want knowledge different. We want a "partial" knowledge: a cognitive, moral and carnal relation to power that is, at once, always incomplete and politically reflexive in its own material and imaginary position within history (Pfohl and Gordon 1986: S95).

In another attempt at deconstructionist criminology, Thomas (forthcoming) argues that in prisons, traditional concepts such as violence, coping strategies, and street gangs cannot be understood in isolation from the meanings that they possess in the broader narrative of prison culture. These concepts provide a language to be decoded in the context of resistance, anger, powerlessness, or self-help. A deconstruction of "culture as text" allows a different reading of concepts traditionally studied as isolated variables.

Other variations of postmodernist criminology draw from semiotics. Milovanovic's (forthcoming) analysis of subjectivity in law and his discussion of linguistic coordinate systems illustrate

one approach to a critical semiotics. Seaton's (1987) analysis of prisoners' tattoos suggests another direction for postmodernists. The work of feminists in deconstruction outside criminology also seems to be penetrating especially into British criminology.

With the exception of critiques of Foucault's relevance to criminology (e.g., Steinert 1983), no broad debates yet challenge scholars influenced by postmodernism. Even so, this broad new direction presents several problems, including the amorphousness of concepts and a tendency to rely on ways of thinking about topics in ways that presuppose considerable literacy outside criminology. A second problem lies in the ambiguous nature of the perspective, and in whether it can be developed eventually into a viable position for directing inquiry. Its adherents, however, judge the strength of postmodernism to lie in the requirement to reconceptualize fundamental concepts, including language itself, as a way of reducing constraining social forces. Even if postmodernist variants ultimately fail as distinct perspectives, the penetration of the ideas can only enrich critical thought.

CONCLUSION

We are optimistic about the future. The creature that hatched from the primeval intellectual egg nearly 20 years ago has begun to develop plumage and grace. The alleged crisis of critical criminology appears to have been more a new initiate's rite of passage than the threat of extinction to a new species. The past decade has been a turning point, but a point that brings maturity. By any reasonable indicator, including productivity, numbers, and professional participation, critical criminology's adherents and cotravelers have established the perspective as something more than a platform on which to express moral outrage. Past accomplishments, however, do not assure future survival. It is obvious that many past problems have been overcome, but the next phase of critical development requires that we apply what we have learned in recent years.

Three immediate tasks remain. Interaction with colleagues suggests that most critical scholars recognize and understand the nature of these tasks, although not all will agree with our suggestions for accomplishing them. Our goal in summarizing these tasks is an attempt to provide others with an overview of at least some current thought, and to generate dialogue within and outside the perspective.

The first task for continued development of the critical enterprise lies in becoming more inclusive. As the boundaries widen

and new voices are heard, internal debates clarify and refine intellectual growth. We suggested that a return to the fundamental project of critique is one way to strengthen the intellectual vigor of critical criminology. This idea might be ideological anathema to some scholars, but the goal of progressive social change is not limited to those who bear a particular label.

A second task, one rejected by those who believe that we already know enough about crime, entails more, not less, research. By posting critical criminology as a metaphor, we attempt both to clarify the nature of the enterprise and to expand the corpus of relevant literature. The critical enterprise, we contend, should be expanded to all social realms, including our own research and political direction, in order to prevent stasis and to direct action.

Finally, alliance formation, both intellectual and political, remains the most important task of critical criminologists. This need is often recognized in our writings, but is not implemented well in practice. Forging alliances requires more than contacting relevant groups. It also necessitates reflection on how our own practices—language, behavior, knowledge production—proceed from a series of biases that not only limit our understanding but also repel those with whom we would affiliate.

There is little new in our repetition of the tasks other than our way of approaching them. By widening the boundaries of critical thought and by making the endeavor of critique consistent with its fundamental purpose, we hope to begin bridging the gap between diverse scholars who may be critical without any of us realizing it.

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