The Intellectual Legacy of Stephen Bantu Biko (1946-1977)

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SUMMARY

In this essay I will attempt to explain the significance of Stephen Bantu Biko's life. This I will do in terms of his intellectual contribution to the liberation of black people from the radically unjust *apartheid* society in South Africa. Firstly, I will discuss his contribution to liberate blacks psychologically from the political system of *apartheid,* pointing out how he broke through the normative and pragmatic acceptance of the situation in the radically unjust *apartheid* society. He experienced black people as being defeated people, and he wanted to direct their attention to the fact that the cause of their unjust situation was other human beings and thus they could change it. Secondly, I point out how he gave black people a new self-understanding and self worth. One way of doing this was by means of community projects that fostered self-reliance. For Biko it was important that black people should act autonomously, and not let other people make decisions on their behalf. They also had to re-evaluate their cultural heritage to discover the positive aspects thereof. Lastly, I focus on his views on his ideal for a future just South Africa and show how important he regarded dialogue as a political tool.

OPSOMMING

In hierdie artikel wil ek 'n verklaring bied van die betekenis van Stephen Bantu Biko se lewe. Dit gaan ek doen aan die hand van sy intellektuele bydrae tot die bevryding van swart mense van die radikaal onregverdige Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing. Eerstens sal ek sy bydrae bespreek om swart mense sielkundig te bevry van die politieke stelsel van apartheid, terwyl ek aantoon hoe hy swartmense se normatiewe sowel as pragmatiese aanvaarding van hul onregverdige situasie deurbreek het. Hy het swart mense as verslae en verslane mense ervaar en wou hul aandag daarop vestig dat ander mense verantwoordelik is vir hul onreg en dat dit dus verander kan word. Tweedens toon ek aan hoe Biko aan swart mense 'n nuwe selfverstaan en eiewaarde gegee het. Een manier om dit te doen was deur die aanbieding van allerlei gemeenskapsprojekte wat selfstandigheid bevorder het. Vir Biko was dit belangrik dat swart mense outonoom moet optree en nie behoort toe te laat dat andere vir hulle besluit nie. Hulle moes ook hul kulturele erfenis herevalueer, om die bruikbare aspekte daarvan op te spoor. Laastens fokus ek op sy ideale vir 'n toekomstige Suid-Afrika en toon ek aan hoe belangrik hy dialoog as 'n politieke instrument geag het.

1. Introduction

One of the most infamous remarks ever made by a South African politician was the one by Jimmy Kruger, a minister of law and order, who in 1977 after the death of Stephen Bantu Biko - for which he had to take ultimate political responsibility - said: "*Biko's death leaves me cold.*" Why did this Nationalist government minister make such a callous remark and why should no human being *ever* feel this way about the death of Stephen Bantu (Steve) Biko at the hands of the South African Police, while he was being detained without trial?

In this essay I will attempt to explain the significance of Biko's life in terms of some aspects of his intellectual contribution to the liberation of black people in South Africa. First I will discuss his contribution to liberate black people psychologically from the political system of *apartheid* and then I will discuss how he tried to give black people a new self-understanding and self worth, and lastly I will focus on his views on his ideal for a future just South Africa.

2. Breaking the acceptance of *apartheid*

In order to understand Biko's intellectual legacy, one must say something about the people to whom he addressed his ideas and the effect of their political context, viz. a radically unjust society, on them. People living in radically unjust societies *sometimes* experience suffering, degradation, oppression, humiliation, exploitation, and so on, without necessarily conceptualizing this as being unjust. They thus accept their situation willingly and endure it passively, because they have internalized a set of ideas legitimating it. This is a *normative* acceptance of their situation in the society, which they regard as legitimate, as they have come to accept the moral justifications for their situation provided by the group ruling the society (Cf. Moore 1978 & Abercrombie *et al* 1980).

Something of this kind has happened in South Africa. Biko clearly saw this phenomenon amongst black people in South Africa. One of the forces that they are subjected to and which Biko regarded as the most important is the fact that "the black man in himself has developed a certain state of alienation, he rejects himself, precisely because he attaches the meaning white to all that is good, in other words he associated good and he equates good with white" (Biko 1976 in 1978:117). This is a result of growing up in a society where there are major differences between the living conditions of blacks and whites, who live in racially separate areas, which cause a feeling in the black child that "there is something incomplete in your humanity, and that completeness goes with whiteness" (Biko 1976 in 117).

There are other important factors too that tend to create a "sense of self-hatred" (Biko 1976 in 1978:118) or a "kind of feeling of self-censure" (Biko 1976 in 1978:120) amongst blacks. One of them is their experience of the foreign Western culture with, for example, some of its spectacular success in medicine, which makes black people "look at it as a superior culture than yours" (Biko 1976 in 1978:118). Another factor that reinforces these negative feelings is the negative connotations of the word "black", seen in expressions such as "black magic" and "black market", whilst the word "white" has much more positive connotations, as it is associated with God, angels, beauty, and so on (Biko 1976 in 1978:120). Another black South African, viz.. Manas Buthelezi, refers to this state of mind as colonized "humanity," by which he refers to a kind of human being who is the object of dominion by other human beings, whose selfhood is "crushed by external

forces and circumstances or is subject to pressure from outside to direct itself in such a way as to serve interests other than those of self" (Buthelezi 1973:12).

However, it might also be the case, as is already suggested in the remark by Buthelezi, that people in radically unjust societies perceive their situation as the inevitable product of forces which they are powerless to alter in any way. This *pragmatic* acceptance of their situation results when they comply with the rules of their unjust society for the reason that they are unable to visualize any conceivable, realistic alternative to it. In their experience everyday life and its routines have a coercive quality to it and it furthermore sometimes appears entirely natural to them.

Biko depicted black people's pragmatic acceptance of their situation in no uncertain terms when he said that "All in all the black man has become a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity" (Biko 1970 in 1978:43). Amongst the reasons for this attitude is an "absolute fear of the police", who intimidated anyone who thought of protest through "security visits and occasional banning orders and house arrests". There were also so many laws that governed the lives of black people in South Africa that no average person "can ever at any moment be absolutely sure that he is not breaking a law" (Biko 1970 in 1978:89). These factors creates a fear "that erodes the soul of black people in South Africa" (Biko 1970 in 1978:90). This fear makes it impossible for them to act as self-respecting people, and Biko quite correctly asks whether people can be prepared to "put up a resistance against their overall oppression if in their individual situations, they cannot insist on the observance of their manhood?"

People living in this way are people without hope, people who do not see any way forward, "they are just defeated persons, they live with their misery and they drink a hell of a lot because of the kind of misery ..." (Biko 1976 in 1978:155). In his testimony to court (Biko in Arnold 1978:28) Biko said that the major factor about the black people in South Africa is that they show the signs of being a defeated people, as if they have "given up the struggle." This sense of defeat was what Biko was fighting against so that black people would not give in to the hardships of life in the radically unjust *apartheid* society, but that they could develop hope, face their problems together and acquire a new sense of humanity (Biko in Arnold 1978:28).

It is only when people - such as these that Biko directed his attention to - begin to see their situation as the result of social, and thus human, causes *that they themselves might be able to remove*, that a sense of injustice starts to develop that could sustain the prolonged struggle that would be needed to transform their society.

3. Identifying injustice

The identification of injustice in radically unjust societies at least requires a transition from passively enduring a situation, conceptualized as the inevitable product of unalterable forces, to the conceptualization of that situation as containing forms of injustice brought about by other people. What is needed are the conditions which might enable people in radically unjust societies to start looking at their society in a new way so that they can perceive the injustice being perpetrated against them as something "they need not, cannot, and ought not to endure" (Moore 1978:459). They must be enabled to see their society in its current form as the result of human activity and thus

as something that they as human beings can modify, alter, transform, etc., according to various possible sets of principles.

This is what Steve Biko tried to do in South Africa. In one of his essays he set out to establish "whether our position is a deliberate creation of God or an artificial creation of the truth by power-hungry people whose motive is authority, security, wealth and comfort" (Biko 1973:36). Biko strongly believed in the latter and he elsewhere (1971 in 1978:64) points out that white racism is the one major force in South Africa. He defines racism in the South African context as discrimination by one group against another "for the purposes of subjugation or maintaining subjugation" (Biko 1970 in 1978:39). He had no doubt that black people suffered from political oppression "because of their skin" (Biko 1970 in 1978:39). Many of the social problems experienced by black communities, e.g. theft, assault, murder, adultery, and so on, could not simply be explained by reference to personal sin, as some ministers of religion tried to do. Biko insisted that these vices should be related to broader social problems such as "poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, lack of schooling and migratory labour" (Biko 1972 in 1978:71). These social problems could only be well understood within the wider context of a country "teeming with injustice and fanatically committed to the practice of oppression, intolerance and blatant cruelty because of racial bigotry" (Biko 1972 in 1978:71).

Having determined that the South African society is a creation of white people, he then seeks to "evolve our own schemes, forms and strategies to suit the need and situation, always keeping in mind our fundamental beliefs and values" (Biko 1973:41). By changing people's perception of their social and political circumstances in this way, as Biko has done, one sets resistance to it into motion, because the act of saying that something is an injustice "*marks it* for moral indignation and moral concern" (Wolgast 1987:203).

4. A new self-understanding

It is important that this change of perception must not be done - in the first place - by using theoretical frameworks imported from other societies or by means of ideas devised by people other than those suffering from injustice and political oppression. People in radically unjust societies must come to an awareness of the injustice of their own specific society by making use of their own resources, or resources that they feel free and comfortable to identify with. Such people must analyze their own society in terms of the requirements of their conception of justice and such an analysis could simultaneously serve the purpose of increasing their self-understanding of the position and role they have in their society. What such a new self-understanding could imply for those suffering from a radically unjust society is stressed by Biko when he says that the "interrelationship between the consciousness of the self and the emancipatory programme is of paramount importance" (Biko 1989:154).

It is so important because Biko realized that the "most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed' (Biko 1971 in 1978:82). For this reason he said that a very strong "grass-roots build-up of black consciousness such that blacks can learn to assert themselves and stake their rightful claim" is a prerequisite for any further political action (Biko 1970 in 1978:35). This could be done by making "the black man come to himself," by reminding him of his "complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused" (Biko 1970 in 1978:43), and by

infusing the black community with a "new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life" (Biko 1971 in 1978:63).

The black consciousness movements (SASO - South Africa Students' Organization and BPC - Black People's Convention) in which Biko was involved launched several community projects as part of their strategy to conscientize black people to become fully aware of their own situation and thinking. In his testimony to court he explained the significance of these programs as follows:

> "*Now, conscientization programmes are precisely the type of programs we embark upon in communities....In other words, if we have got a physical program like a clinic, we are helping the community to remove from their mind the defeatist element that good comes only from Whites. Here are Blacks working amongst us. Here are Blacks achieving a particular end which [it] is thought could not be achieved by us as Blacks. This helps in the building up process. This is conscientization. And liberation precisely implies that liberation from present notions: We say that we as Blacks cannot achieve anything; anything good must come from White society.*"
> (Biko in Arnold 1978:100, 101).

The goal of these community projects (cf. Ramphele in Pityana 1991:157) was to develop self-reliance amongst black people. For this reason black people had to be in charge of these projects at all phases - from the initial idea to the final evaluation thereof. These projects also wanted to show the oppressed people that their well-being mattered to the Black Consciousness movement - an attempt to show that somebody in society cares. According to Ramphele (in Pityana 1991:157) it was argued that "people who had known nothing but scorn and humiliation, needed symbols of hope to lift them out of despair and to empower them to liberate themselves."

5. Asserting autonomy

Part of what is needed to construct a theory of justice for use as guidance in a radically unjust society and to implement its basic requirements by means of protest and negotiation, is a lifestyle that demonstrates that human beings are relatively autonomous beings vis-a-vis the cultural tradition and heritage that they start out from. The intertwinement of the formation of culture and its evaluation - something experienced throughout all history, although in varying degrees in different societies - powerfully suggests human beings' ability to make up their own minds, to decide for themselves what is acceptable or not. This autonomy of human beings can be defined as, one the one hand, their freedom to choose their actions based on their own reflective assessment of their situation, and, on the other hand, the guidance of their choice according to principles which they have formed, chosen or ratified themselves after these principles, as part of a wide range of options, have passed their critically reflective (moral) scrutiny and satisfied their (moral) reasoning (cf. Heller 1988, Connolly 1983, Hurka 1987, Kuflik 1984 and Nielsen 1984).

How important autonomy can become for people suffering from a radically unjust society can be seen in the writings of Steve Biko. He criticizes liberal whites in South Africa for being so immersed in their racial prejudice that they "do not believe that blacks can formulate their thoughts without white guidance and trusteeship" (Biko 1973:38). Although blacks know, according to him, that white people are the source of their problems in the *apartheid* society, "it is still other whites

who want to tell us how to deal with that problem" (Biko 1973:38). This he finds totally unacceptable.

Against this background it becomes clear why Biko so strongly supported one of the motto's of the Black Consciousness Movement, viz.. "Black man, you are on your own!" (Biko 1973:40). He asserts the autonomy that he wants for black people in several ways. He acknowledges that religion and education played a "terrible role" to create a false understanding amongst black people of themselves and therefore blacks must now "become our own authorities rather than wait to be interpreted by others" (Biko 1989:158). In a sense blacks themselves were responsible for the fact that so many things "are said so often to us, about us and for us, *but very seldom by us*." (Biko 1972:7). This creates a "dependency mood" amongst blacks by which Biko means that blacks accept the judgements of other people about themselves without sufficiently taking into account that those judgements are made in terms of the values and attitudes of the dominating white community (Biko 1972:7).

What Biko would have preferred is that blacks should judge themselves in terms of a truly African value system. For this reason he turns to his African legacy. The most important aspect of black culture - of which he gives a simplistic interpretation as a monolithic whole - that he singles out as worthwhile for blacks to build their lives on, is that aspect which "implies freedom on our part to innovate without recourse to white values" (Biko 1973:45). The importance of this attitude in a radically unjust society for Biko is that if a person "is free at heart, no manmade chains can bind one to servitude" (Biko 1973:41).

It was not only the liberals who took away aspects of the autonomy of black people, but also - and especially - the cultural domination of Western values that coincided with the political domination exercised by whites. Biko experienced South African culture as being European (Biko 1976 in 1978:149) and described South Africa correctly as being "an island of Europe in Africa" (Biko 1977 in 1978:163), as it was a post-colonial society politically and culturally dominated by the descendants of European colonists. For black people this meant that they were required to "fit in as people tolerated with great restraint in a Western type society" (Biko 1971 in 1978:60). According to him all aspects of the culture of black people in South Africa have been given a negative evaluation so that the "exploitative basis (of) the Anglo-Boer culture" could be justified (Biko 1971 in 1978:55).

Further, the negative evaluation of traditional African society and its history by Westerners is conveyed to black children at school and it has the effect that "the African child learns to hate his heritage in his days at school" (Biko 1970 in 1978:43). For this reason Biko thought it wise that the history of black people in South Africa should be rewritten, and "to produce in it the heroes who form the core of the African background" (Biko 1970 in 1978:44). He believed that black people would eventually be able to make a "proportionate contribution in the joint culture" which would sufficiently change this South African culture to "accommodate the African experience" (Biko in Arnold 1978:56).

6. Criticism with reference to own resources

An important reason for taking such a close look at the cultural products of a specific community is that it facilitates a form of criticism which comes from the inside of a society, and it thus appeals (in part) to local or localized principles (Walzer 1987:39). This kind of social criticism, done in "the name of values recognized and shared in that same society," (Walzer 1987:89) is much more powerful than other kinds, as the values, beliefs, and norms accepted by people are turned against them, as well as against their social practices and institutions. This forces them to engage in critical reflection, to re-examine and reformulate their understanding of such values, beliefs, and norms.

Biko thus wants to show black people "the value of their own standards and outlook" and to urge them to evaluate and judge themselves by these standards (Biko 1970 in 1978:43). In an article he pointed out the worthwhile and enduring aspects of African culture that black people ought to accept and be proud of (Biko 1971 in 1978:54-61). Black people should retain such cultural products for use in the future just South Africa which they were hoping and working for. Thus, those working for the liberation of blacks in South Africa must seek to restore to them "the great importance we used to give to human relations, the high regard for people and their property and for life in general; to reduce the triumph of technology over man and the materialistic element that is slowly creeping into our society" (Biko 1973:45).

Biko emphasizes that the African society is a "man-centred society" in which people enjoy one another's company - talking, communicating - for its own sake (Biko 1971 in 1978:55). This creates a strong sense of community that is exemplified in several ways, inter alia in the African people's love for song and rhythm, which he regards as "part and parcel of our way of communication" and as a dramatic illustration of "the eagerness of the African to communicate with each other" (Biko 1971 in 1978:56,57). Biko regards this emphasis on human relationships as so important that it could become "the special contribution to the world by Africa" (Biko 1971 in 1978:61).

7. Preparing for dialogue

An important consequence of Biko's attempt to give black people in South Africa a new self-respect and to encourage their autonomy, is that it played an indispensable role in preparing blacks for political dialogue with whites. He strongly rejected the idea that white liberals should articulate black interests, or their protest, and regarded this as a task that blacks should do themselves. However good the intentions of these white liberals were, they nevertheless claimed a "'monopoly on intelligence and moral judgement'" and thought that *they* ought to set the "pattern and pace for the realization of the black man's aspirations" (Biko 1970 in 1978:35).

Biko, however, wants to free blacks from their inferiority complex so that they can assert themselves, articulate their own interests and demand their own rights from a position of strength (Biko 1976 in 1978:151). For this kind of dialogue to take place, Biko correctly saw mutual respect as a prerequisite (Biko 1970 in 1978:35). There is no doubt that only self-respecting, autonomous persons capable of articulating their own interests, can take part in meaningful dialogue (cf. Lötter 1989:188-198).

Another prerequisite for meaningful dialogue is to have a clearly articulated viewpoint and in this respect Biko stated that "We have got a stance and we know what is the stance" (Biko in Arnold 1978:50). He emphasized that he would develop his standpoint which would be the platform

from which he would negotiate. Biko also realized that meaningful dialogue will involve compromises as he often refers to a synthesis which would be created as a result of meaningful political dialogue between white and black leaders (Biko in Arnold 1978:53, 190). In negotiations compromise means that "some middle situation must be achieved among the two forces" (Biko in Arnold 1978:50).

Biko had a strong commitment to dialogue, or bargaining as he refers to it, as the best method for the resolution of the political problems of the *apartheid* state and he saw no alternative to it (Biko in Arnold 1978:61). Apart from his rejection of violence and forms of confrontation (Biko in Arnold 1978:61) which he defined as "going against existing laws in order to register a protest over a particular issue" (Biko in Arnold 1978:143), his commitment to dialogue was also strengthened by other factors. One was his optimism that history is on the side of black people in South Africa, which for him meant that whites would inevitably listen to what black people had to say (Biko in Arnold 1978:173, 174). His attempts to empower black people made him believe that "we have interpreted history correctly, that the White man anyway is going to accept the inevitable" (Biko in Arnold 1978:61). This does mean that Biko thought that history moved in a logical direction, but it does not mean that black people had nothing to do. On the contrary, Biko had the view - with some Hegelian and Marxian overtones - that history "works through people and we have availed ourselves to history to work through us" (Biko in Arnold 1978:175). The way in which he wanted to work was "through peaceful means." This obviously limited the kind of protest that was possible, as Biko acknowledged when he said that "the very fact that we decided to actually form an aboveboard movement implies that we accepted certain legal limitations to our operations" (Biko in Arnold 1978:58, 59).

8. Can oppressors have a change of heart?
One might ask whether Biko seriously believed that anything could be gained by making use of dialogue with whites, i.e. whether the latter group would really listen to the political demands of blacks if they have ignored it so many times before in the history of South Africa. Biko did in fact believe this, as he cites this belief, that he has had for a very long time, "that through process of organized bargaining we can penetrate even the deafest of white ears and get the message to register that no lie can live for ever," in support of his choice "to operate openly" and not to resort to underground political activity (Biko 1976 in 1978:158). He stated explicitly that the white South African government will "inevitably" listen to black opinion and that it would eventually "accommodate the feelings of black people" (Biko 1976 in 1978:154). Therefore he sought to prepare black people to become competent participants in true and meaningful dialogue.

9. The Ideal of the Open Society
Although Biko was never very explicit about his ideal for a future just South Africa, there are some important pointers in this direction (cf. Biko in Arnold 1978: 42, 249), besides the emphasis on dialogue that has already been mentioned. He envisaged an open society which would be democratic, with equal opportunities for all people. It would be possible for every member to participate in all aspects of the society and to contribute proportionally to the joint culture that is to be created. The colour of a person's skin would be of no relevance anymore in determining his or her social position, standing, opportunities, and so on. Biko supported a non-racial approach with respect to already established institutions, believing that if they were opened up for greater

participation by black people, "it was a matter of recruitment and greater representation that would transform institutions from being predominantly white to become more representative." (Wilson in Pityana et al 1991:22).

10.   Assessment

How should Biko's intellectual contribution to the liberation of South African blacks be assessed? To what extent could one go along with the following assessment of Fatton? He says the following:

> "*...it must be recalled that his intellectual impact was checked by his banning and subsequent murder. It has to be recognized that as far as his writings reveal Biko was absorbed by the cultural and psychological aspects of black liberation; a serious analysis of class and economics was fragmentary if not altogether absent. ...however important they may have been, Biko's ideas expressed only the formative and underdeveloped conceptions of black consciousness. ...it is quite wrong to make Biko's world view **the** world view of the black consciousness movement*" (Fatton 1981:281,282).

That one has to take into account the periods during which Biko was banned - as Fatton suggests - becomes fully clear in the following quote from his testimony in court about the terms of his restriction in March 1973:

> "*Prohibiting me from attending gatherings which are described, official gatherings, and other types of gatherings, confining me to the King William's Town magisterial area, prohibiting me from entering any so-called Bantu area or Coloured area or Indian area except the one where I stay. Prohibiting me from working within - at least from entering premises of factories, press and so on. Prohibiting me from compiling, editing, disseminating any publication in which government policy is either defended or attacked. ...there was a prohibition also stopping me from associating or taking part in the activities of SASO, BPC and lately BCP* (Biko in Arnold 1978:228,229).

His banning and restriction orders had a major influence on the range of political activities open to him. They had a similar influence on the development of his political thought as well, as his access to people, books, conferences, media, and public debate was severely curtailed. If one further takes into account that Biko had no formal training in the humanities or the social sciences and that he died at the age of 31, then his writings on South African politics could only be described as remarkable. Admittedly he read a lot of books from authors all over the world, as is reflected in the quotes that one sometimes finds in his essays. However, whatever his sources may have been, he adapted and adjusted everything he read to suit the South African political context. His creative interpretation of the ideas of the Black Power movement in the USA illustrates this fully. Biko himself explained the relation between Black Power in the United States of America and Black Consciousness in South Africa as follows during his testimony in a court case:

> *What would you say about Black Consciousness and Black Power - are they the same thing?* - Well, they certainly are not. I think the end result or the

goal of Black Power is fundamentally different from the goal of black
Consciousness in this country, that is, Black Power now in the United States
where it was conceived ...

Yes? - Black Power is the preparation of a group for participation in already
established society, a society which is essentially a majority society, and
Black Power therefore in the States operates like a minority philosophy.
Like, you have Jewish power, Italian power, Irish power and so on in the
United States. The Black people are merely saying that it is high time that
they are not used as pawns by other pressure groups operating in American
society. They must themselves form themselves into a definite pressure
group, because there were common problems with Black people in the
United States, but essentially they accept that they are a minority group
there, and when they speak of bargaining - you know, which word they use
- they are talking within the American context of using the ballot box. They
want to put op the kind of candidates they like and be able to support them
using their block votes. So in that sense Black Power is a minority
philosophy in the United States. ... And the other thing which causes that:
The American Black man is essentially, you know, he is accepted, he is
truly American in many ways. You know, he has lived there for a long
time. All he is saying is that "Man, I am American, but you are not
allowing me to live like an American here in America". He has roots with
Africa ... but he does not reject his Americanness ...

Fatton (1981:225) describes in similar terms the relevance of the ideas of Black Power developed in
America to the development of Black Consciousness in South Africa. He says the following:

"...*it would be wrong to exaggerate the black American contribution to
black consciousness. What the American Black Power ideology provided
was a theoretical source for the renewal of black South African thinking. It
accelerated the development of black consciousness, helping to transform
existential feelings into ethico-political conceptions of the world. In other
words, the black South African intelligentsia discovered in Black Power
ideology the basis for generating a new theoretical paradigm, but one that
had to be adapted and reconciled with its own peculiar social conditions.*"

If one notes the way in which Biko envisaged the future of South Africa, then one could say - in
terms that he used - that whites in South Africa *did* eventually listen to the oppressed blacks and the
inevitable change in the direction of an open society *is* currently underway. In this socio-political
transformation dialogue is used as means and a new synthesis is indeed arising from the
proportionate contribution of the various groups of people to the politics and culture of the
transforming South African society. In this respect too, Biko's perspective was right. Besides
correctly valuing the political situation in South Africa, his ideas influenced a generation of leaders,
as one can "hardly find a notable leader in South Africa today who was in his or her twenties in the
early 1970s, who has not been through the Black Consciousness mill" (Pityana in Pityana et al
1991:255).

If it is further taken into account that he never set out to formulate a systematic political theory to explain the position of black people in South Africa, then one must accord Biko very high regard for the proto-political theory which he has developed in the midst of a political struggle against the oppressive *apartheid* regime. Biko's intellectual contribution to the liberation of black people in South Africa is the best that I have come across so far, as his insight, sagacity, political acumen and wisdom in connection with the position of those suffering from the radically unjust South African society was simply correct. The reason for saying this is that he identified quite correctly that black people had to undergo a psycho-social liberation from the effects of living for decades under the radically unjust *apartheid* regime. Only then does it become possible that they *themselves* can take care of the transformation of the radically unjust society into a more just society. For this reason Biko's contribution to the liberation of black people in South Africa was immense, despite the fact that - as Fatton correctly points out - he did not give a detailed analysis of the South African political economy. His focus on psycho-social and political liberation of black people in South Africa was one of the major inputs needed to bring about fundamental political change in South Africa. However, as can be seen in several of Biko's quotes, he was not conscious of sexism as a form of oppression similar to the oppression of black people in South Africa; on the contrary, even when women pointed it out to him, he tended to set it aside (Wilson in Pityana 1991:36).

In the light of the above assessment of Biko's intellectual contribution to the liberation of black people in South Africa his death at the hands of the South African Police becomes understandable, as well as why no person should ever repeat Jimmy Kruger's callous remark about Biko's death. In Biko's own terms (Biko 1970 in 1978:41), suitably adapted and rephrased, he understood the basics of the *apartheid* society, he diagnosed the problems inherent in it correctly, he identified the root causes of the political oppression of blacks and what he improvised as a remedy was what was needed to cure this condition. For an oppressive regime - such as *apartheid* South Africa - such a person is too dangerous to be alive. For oppressed people such a person is the leader from bondage into the promised land.

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