

Psychology and the question of radical democracy

Theory & Psychology
1–21

© The Author(s) 2023



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/09593543231190605

journals.sagepub.com/home/tap**Nick Malherbe** 

University of South Africa

Abstract

Throughout its history, capitalism has undertaken its extractive, imperial, and expropriative operations under the sign of democracy. Psychology has played a part in the ideological consolidation of capitalist democracy, adapting people to this system while also legitimising it. However, what of radical democracy as an always-contested grassroots organisational form that stands in opposition to both capitalism and the capitalist co-optation of democracy? Radical democracy of this sort remains a psychologically fraught function of anticapitalist resistance, one that has the potential to produce fracturing among comrades building such democracy. In this article, I consider how critical psychologists can work with those undertaking the difficult work of building radical democracy into political and quotidian life. I consider what critical psychology praxis could mean for those practicing radical democracy and how critical psychology might reconstitute itself through radically democratic formations.

Keywords

capitalism, colonialism, critical psychology, liberal democracy, radical democracy

The people is [*sic*] those who, in a specific historical situation, are open to others and the other, toward the end of becoming other. (Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 184)

Democracy can be understood, broadly, as a political formation—never complete or sufficiently realised—of people governing themselves (Brown, 2019). Democracy is, however, an unstable signifier. Indeed, history is replete with struggles over democracy's signification. Wood (2016), for example, demonstrates that the democracy of ancient Greece depended in large part on slave labour, and in 19th-century Europe, the aristocratic classes took democracy to mean an unfavourable sort of governance marked by error and mismanagement. From the early 20th century, when political parties began to

Corresponding author:

Nick Malherbe, Institute for Social and Health Sciences, University of South Africa and South African Medical Research Council–University of South Africa Masculinity and Health Research Unit, Johannesburg, 7505, South Africa.

Email: malhenr@unisa.ac.za

describe themselves as democratic, evocations of democracy came to allude to a vague notion of the good and/or a mystifying conception of the *demos* (see Balibar, 2014). As such, democracy today tends to function as a vessel into which any number of conflicting political interests can be poured (Conway & Singh, 2011; Dean, 2007). As we will see, this has meant that colonialism, neoliberal capitalism, and even fascism have been able to credibly function under the sign of democracy (Ince, 2018; Mbembe, 2019; Taylor, 2019; Teo, 2022).

It would seem, then, that those committed to some sort of progressive political project—including critical psychologists—are correct to exercise caution when advocating for democracy, a signifier that has been sullied by liberal and right-wing political forces, both of which are beholden to capital (albeit in different ways and at different intensities). Yet, there exist other sorts of anticapitalist democracies that refuse a singular or static organisational form (Nunes, 2021), representing instead a struggle over forms (Laclau, 1990). Rather than offering a future programme, democracies of this sort are concerned with formations that stand opposed to capital in the here and now (Holloway, 2019). Such democracy—whose plurality can be understood as a form of forms—is able to move politics in accordance with a collectively articulated and contextually situated set of emancipatory requirements, and in so doing reconstitutes individual subjectivities via the democratic collective (Malherbe, 2023a).

How might we differentiate an anticapitalist, open democracy from other sorts of democracy that are put into the service of legitimising and consolidating capital accumulation? I wish to make the case for *radical democracy* as a suitable signifier for an anticapitalist, democratic form of forms. Although, as we will see, the tradition of radical democracy is marked by considerable ontological, political, and epistemological contestation, there are common threads within this tradition. Thus, we can understand radical democracy as an ensemble of diverse practices and discourses that are constituted by those committed to different emancipatory struggles. Radical democracy does not cohere around singular, foreclosed, or unchanging philosophical or political programmes. Rather, political commitments are struggled over under varying constraints through a plethora of means and for a variety of purposes (Conway & Singh, 2011). Radical democracy, we might say, functions to connect practices that confront or displace capitalism's structural imposition of meaning (Mignolo, 2000). As Holloway (2019) formulates it, radical democracy represents the No that makes us human; that decentres normative understandings of capitalist democracy while, at the same time, expanding the content of democracy through pluriversality (Brooks et al., 2020). We see elements of radical democracy in anarchist movements, Marxist and post-Marxist formations, feminist organising, and struggles for decolonisation (see Singh, 2019). Not all of these struggles are politically compatible with one another. However, as I hope to demonstrate, the practice of radical democracy is able to strengthen itself from within by openly acknowledging, grappling with, and engaging with its intrinsic tensions.

It is not entirely accurate to proclaim that radical democracy is, in every instance, a democracy for political radicals. Rather, it represents a radical break from that which capitalist democracy has come to signify, and in this, radical democracy strives to democratise democracy (see Koelble & Lipuma, 2008). Radical democracy is only radical in a context where capital has moved democratic ideals and mechanisms away from the

demos. From the perspective of radical democracy, a democracy that functions in the service of capital (i.e., for the very few) cannot be defended on democratic grounds. Radical democracy is a democracy founded on openness and an inherent antiessential contingency, wherein people are engaged in a struggle over the realisation of democracy. Each realisation of radical democracy is, however, self-consciously illusionary because it remains open to a continued remaking. We never stop remaking and experimenting with radical democracy; what it is, what it is not, what it could be. As we will see though, the degree of radical openness varies within the tradition of radical democracy.

Although it is certainly the case that psychologists have pathologised instances of radical democracy while, at the same time, normalising and adapting people to a neoliberal capitalist democratic order (Parker, 2011), critical psychologists can contribute (and, indeed, have contributed) to the consolidation of radical democracy by working with the demos to engage carefully with the psychopolitical elements of radical democracy; embracing radical democracy's psychically appealing and immensely agonistic facets (which, as we will see, are one and the same). In this article, I am chiefly concerned with the role that critical psychologists can play in advancing radical democracy, that is, in assisting people with the psychopolitical process of building anticapitalist, radically open democratic formations from the ground up. Put differently, I attempt in this article to advance a critique of a democracy wedded to capital, and a psychology that furnishes this sort of democracy with ideological legitimacy. I then consider what critical psychology can offer to those who seek a way out of capitalist democracy through formal resistance as well as alternative quotidian practice. Important to how I make these arguments, though, is my locus of enunciation, that is, how the knowledge contributions of this article are entwined with the politics of my location (see Mignolo, 1999). It is in writing from South Africa that much of my thinking on democracy is shaped by what Von Holdt (2013) refers to as South Africa's violent democracy, whereby the country's trajectory from colonialism, to apartheid, and finally to neoliberal capitalist democracy has done little to curb the systemic inequalities wrought by four centuries of colonial violence.

Capitalism, democracy, psychology

The positively connotated tenets of democracy (e.g., a people with a common identity, electoral institutions, shared international relations) have been used by capitalist ideological apparatuses to legitimise suffering, exploitation, and expropriation under capitalism (Fraser, 2022), all while proclaiming that such a system is, indeed, democratic (Brooks et al., 2020; Butler, 1998). Democracy, when shot through with capitalist reason, is turned from a political matter to a purely economic one; with almost everything—including conceptions of human subjectivity (Roy, 2022)—submitted to market metrics (Brown, 2019).

The capitalist appropriation of democracy has a considerable history that is far from over. Despite the plundering of lives, labours, and lands that occurred in slavocratic and colonial regimes, these regimes were understood in the imperial centres as part of the project of democratic capitalist modernity (Ince, 2018; Mbembe, 2019; Wood, 2016). Later, in the 20th century, Latin America's militarily imposed neoliberal states, tethered to the oil-fuelled capitalist democracy of the US, were celebrated by capitalist

institutions the world over as triumphs of democracy (Chomsky, 2011; Fraser, 2022). It was also during this time that neocolonial regimes throughout the African continent, foreseen by people like Fanon (1963) and Nkrumah (1965), were similarly lauded as ushering in postindependence democracies. Throughout the Cold War, anticommunist states were believed by capitalist powers to be democratic regardless of how democratic these states actually were (Hardt & Negri, 2004). South Africa's racist apartheid government was one such case, which received considerable financial support from capitalist democracies all over the world—including the US and the UK—right up until it was no longer viable to do so (Butler, 1998).

Under today's neoliberal capitalism, democracy is made to seem like a purely economic matter, with the political will of the demos subordinated to the will of finance capital (Brown, 2019). Capitalism's reliance on austerity robs the demos not only of the political power to control and manage their interests (Wood, 2016), but also access to the basic resources necessary for survival (Mattei, 2022); placing economic control in the hands of an increasingly small elite class (Fraser, 2022). It would seem, then, that the excesses and extractive violence of capitalism are able to function under the sign of democracy, with democracy today representing little other than a rule-based competition for state power, where the rules and even the power under contestation are determined by capital (Kirshner, 2022). This is certainly the case in South Africa, whose colonial past further complicates matters. Although apartheid was formally dismantled in 1994, the country remains saddled with billions of dollars of foreign debt that was accrued by the racist apartheid government for the purpose of violently subjugating the country's Black majority (Bond, 2014). Struggles for democracy in contemporary South Africa are, in many ways, struggles for deeper participation within a system from which the majority are excluded (Brooks et al., 2020).

Early bourgeois proponents of democracy confined notions of "the people" to propertied European men. This is only possible under a capitalist order that continues to confer tremendous ideological and material power onto this small group of bourgeois proponents (Wood, 2016). As was the case in the era of "classic colonialism," the democracy of our age continues to serve as a legitimising apparatus of global imperialism. All over the world the US has, for example, been involved in the oftentimes violent removal of democratically elected governments, replacing these governments with a ruling body more amendable to private investment, capitalist production, exports, and ultimately profit (Chomsky, 2011). Over the last two decades, the US has spent over \$2 billion on imperial intervention and supporting authoritarian regimes under the guise of "democracy aid" (Snider, 2022). Israel is similarly hailed for its parliamentary democracy despite continuing to occupy Palestinian land, receiving enormous military aid from the US to do so (see Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022). It a democracy of this sort to which capitalist imperial centres are committed.

Although the state under capitalist democracy is required to intervene only minimally in the lives of the demos, it is the state that is repeatedly called on to safeguard the interests of finance capital (Brown, 2019). State resources are thus relied on to sustain capitalist class power (Kirshner, 2022). In this situation, violence, death, and dying become normalised, with large swaths of the population being left to die or actively killed by state actors for violating capitalism's profit-making dictate (Teo, 2022). This

necropolitical order tends to operate under the veneer of liberal rights and freedoms, thereby keeping the system intact and justifying the use of force against those who resist it (Wood, 2016). The South African state's militarisation of its police force signifies its commitment to defending the capitalist economy over curtailing the violence that exists and structures the lives of the majority (Von Holdt, 2013). In recent years, the South African state's militarised commitment to capital has been exemplified time and time again, as observed in the Marikana Massacre of 2012, the violent suppression of the 2012–2013 Western Cape Farm Workers Strike, and the murder of protesters, such as Andries Tatane in 2011 (Iwu & Iwu, 2015).

When democratic freedoms are chained to capitalist democracy, these freedoms tend to denote the freedom to choose what we consume, at which site surplus value will be extracted from us, and which economic elite will take government office (Balibar, 2014; Rancière, 2009). There are, of course, variations within this, some of which are more progressive than others. However, by and large, within such a system, parliamentary democracy is limited to voting and/or basic civil liberties, with democratic decision-making resembling capitalist property relations and its logic of consumption (Brown, 2019). This can result in what Fraser (2022) calls “progressive neoliberalism,” whereby capitalist institutions rely on the progressive language of social movements, only to use this language to justify an exploitative social order. As such, voters—especially young voters—become disenfranchised precisely because they are not represented by a democracy of this sort, and they are unable to exert any control over the democratic process. Indeed, less than half of registered voters in South Africa are going to the polls (van der Walt, 2021). Governance under capitalist democracy is thus made into a bureaucratised system of procedural rule determined by capital flows (Springer, 2011), and decision-making is kept remote and clandestine from the majority of people (Chomsky, 2011), further alienating the demos from whom consent on all matters is assumed once the vote has been cast (Fromm, 1955). Thus, within capitalist democracies, we are more likely to find a few progressive individuals within a political party than we are a progressive political party (see Hannah, 2018).

Of course, capitalist democracies differ from one another in various ways, and some are more wedded to capital than others. Nonetheless, democracies of this sort are always driven by profit, and are quick to co-opt anticapitalist dissent. An example of this, recounted by Žižek (2007), was noted in 2003 during the mass protests that took place all over the world against the then-emerging war in Iraq. Capitalist powers, and US powers in particular, insisted that the war would ensure that the freedom to dissent that was being exercised by the protesters was only possible within capitalist democracies, meaning that the war would bring such a democracy to Iraq. Yet, as the records have shown, the war has wrought mass devastation in Iraq (see Ali, 2011). We see then how capitalist democracy is offered by the capitalist centres as the highest or most developed stage of democracy that, if need be, must be imposed by imperial means.

There is an argument to be made that capitalist democracy can lead to the conditions for fascistic politics. As Césaire (1972) famously put it: “At the end of capitalism, which is eager to outlive its day, there is Hitler” (p. 37). This is not to say that fascism should be equated with capitalism or that both pose the same level of threat in the immediate present. It is instead to assert that both are undergirded by policies that favour relentless

capital accumulation, private property, the protection of capital, unwaged expropriation, empire, austerity, and the upward distribution of wealth (Ince, 2018; Mattei, 2022). Under capitalist democracy, the individual is encouraged to take responsibility for the structural failures of capitalism. Democratic freedoms can therefore appear burdensome and terrifying. Many people, Fromm (1942) argues, seek to escape this kind of freedom through fascistic commitments that place blame for the problems of a vociferous capitalism on a disenfranchised Other, usually with the aid of racist and/or xenophobic discourse. The strong-handed fascist leader thus promises to bring stability to an increasingly unstable liberal democratic capitalist order (see Kinnvall & Kisić Merino, 2023). It should be noted, and not parenthetically, that fascist leaders the world over tend to be elected through the democratic channels that are legitimised and made possible by capitalism, usually with the assistance of a shamelessly corporatised media (Chomsky, 2011; Hardt & Negri, 2004). We see this all over the world today in the rise of fascistic ethno-economic nationalism (Brown, 2019). As such, we can reject the choice of capitalism or authoritarianism while also noting the differences between the two. Capital, under the guise of democracy, very often acts in authoritarian ways and/or lays the foundations for a more authoritarian politics (Mattei, 2022).

What of psychology and capitalist democracy? Mainstream psychology has by and large functioned as an adaptationist discipline, adjusting people to the ravages of capitalist democracy rather than challenging or reconstituting this kind of democracy (Parker, 2011). Even seemingly progressive attempts to use psychology for democratic purposes—such as consolidating so-called “democratic therapeutic communities”—have oftentimes served to adapt people to capitalist democracy so that they might endorse and participate in this limited conception of democracy (Spandler, 2006). However, psychology has also gone much further than this in consolidating capitalist democracy. In the mid-20th century, for example, Edward Bernays drew from psychoanalytic and psychological theory to create propaganda for the CIA’s efforts to remove Guatemala’s democratically elected government (Chomsky, 2011; Ewen, 1996). Psychology was also part and parcel of the “civilising missions” that sought to globalise capitalist democracy during the colonial era (Hartnack, 1987), and it remains a mode of cultural coloniality that seeks to acquiesce subjects to capitalist democracy’s imperial mandate (Ratele, 2018). Today, psychologists have played a pivotal role in refining the torture techniques that are central to the kinds of imperial intervention, normalised murder, drone warfare, and incarceration on which US “democracy aid” depends (Eidelson, 2023). The discipline has been used in efforts to legitimise fascist ideologies across Europe (e.g., attempts by Italian race psychologists to establish racialised psychic differences that would serve as the basis for fascistic white supremacy in the country; Volpato, 2000), and in naturalising the occupation of Palestine (Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022). Although mainstream psychology differs in the degree to which it has consolidated capitalist democracy (indeed, psychologists do not in every instance do this consciously), psychology remains, for the most part, a discipline of capitalist adaptation rather than anticapitalist resistance (Malherbe, 2023b).

Although capitalism does not need democracy (as we are seeing today in China’s state capitalism), just as it does not need psychology, both democracy and psychology have been drawn on ideologically to bolster and win consent for capitalism on a global scale.

Yet, if capitalist democracy can be thought of as a lost cause, what of democracy built from below; democracy as a last hope (Taylor, 2019)? There has always been a radical kind of democracy that not only exists outside of capitalism, but that has been put to work for anticapitalism (Rancière, 2009).

Radical democracy

Achille Mbembe (2019) writes that colonialism is “the very thing enabling democracy to leave itself behind, to place itself deliberately at the service of something other than that which it proclaimed in theory, and to exercise, when required, dictatorship over itself, its enemies, and those it rejected as different” (p. 117).

Koelble and Lipuma (2008) put this somewhat differently, noting that “colonialism and its aftermaths [*sic*] have altered the conceptual fabrication of democracy” (p. 5). When democracy is put to work for an oppressive capitalist system propelled by exploitation and naked colonial extraction (oftentimes being conflated with or mistaken for this system), democracy as an always-unfinished political formation in which people govern themselves is left behind. This is not to say that democracy is, in and of itself, emancipatory or even transformative. South Africa’s apartheid regime, like other colonial regimes, was and could only have been, defeated by collective struggle rather than a mythic democratic ideal (Butler, 1998). Yet, for many engaged in this struggle, democracy served as an important organisational form. A democracy of this kind—pried from capitalist institutions so that it might be wielded against them—is what we might call radical democracy.

While displaying several commonalities, the radically democratic tradition is far from monolithic or uncontested. For Laclau and Mouffe (1985), two especially influential voices in this tradition, radical democracy represents the nonfoundational, liberatory struggle to determine signifiers (e.g., “socialism,” “freedom,” “participation”). This struggle is undertaken by adversaries who represent a range of identity positions and political commitments. As Laclau (1990) writes, radical democracy makes “the radical absence of foundation the basis for a critique of any form of oppression” (p. 169). It is this absence of foundation that, for Laclau and Mouffe (1985), serves as the basis for articulating differences into a counter-hegemonic formation.

The conception of radical democracy developed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) has been challenged by many other proponents of radical democracy. Conway and Singh (2011), for example, insist that Laclau and Mouffe (1985) are unable to de-link from statism as well as liberal democratic norms and institutions (see also Dean, 2007, for further critique of how Laclau and Mouffe decentre class struggle). As such, the theoretical and pragmatic anchors on which Laclau and Mouffe rely to articulate and argue for radical democracy derive explicitly from the symbolic resources of Euro-modernity and thus also coloniality, with the global capitalist centres—and Europe in particular—very often serving as their implicit normative comparison. Indeed, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) are by and large silent on how the universalism that they advocate for derives from imperial extraction as well as the dispossession of colonised peoples and the expropriation of their lands (Singh, 2019). There are, of course, many radically democratic decolonial experiments in living and being that push back against structures of coloniality, such as

land-based traditions of governance where land is managed communally rather than being privately owned (Conway & Singh, 2011). We also see decolonial approaches to radical democracy in the struggle to defend or reclaim Indigenous traditions of living that are grounded in the pluriversality of the human experience, that is, an assemblage of democratic imaginaries (see, e.g., Esteva, 2007). In short, radical democracy need not signify attempts at instating global counter-hegemony through state structures and institutions. Decolonising radical democracy is practiced in those self-determining struggles to cherish a plurality of living, knowing, and being outside of the constraining logic and statist horizons of coloniality (Singh, 2019).

Mouffe's later work (e.g., Mouffe, 2011) has been criticised for uncritically celebrating the state's ability to ordain and contain counter-hegemony (Newman, 2011). Mouffe appears to engage radical democracy as a globalised political regime—or a statist ontology—of shared principles that are legitimised by constitutional apparatuses (Conway & Singh, 2011). In response to this, and complementing the nonstatist decolonial approaches to radical democracy, anarchists have engaged with radical democracy through their own political practices, epistemologies, and traditions. For anarchists, radical democracy is brought about through direct actions that prefigure a better, more equal, noncapitalist world in the here and now (Malherbe, 2023b), allowing always for dissent and difference within consensus (Newman, 2011). The anarchist approach to radical democracy, like the decolonial approach, does not find recognition and legitimacy within state structures. Instead, anarchists challenge the legitimacy of these structures altogether, advancing liberation against and outside of them. Springer (2011), therefore, collapses neat distinctions between anarchism and radical democracy, writing that “Radical democracy represents a disturbance of the anti-political order of sovereignty itself, and is thus, in a word, anarchy” (p. 533).

Several feminist thinkers have also pushed back against Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) influential conception of radical democracy. Roy (2022), for example, argues that although neoliberal capitalism co-opts feminist rhetoric in its statist governing technologies, democratic governance also takes place from the ground up, against the state and in ways that are guided by feminist and queer activism. Dean (2007) writes that feminism should voice “the universal truth of its political position” (p. 243) against structures of patriarchy. As such, she insists that while feminists should allow for an agonistic plurality of anticapitalist feminisms (e.g., decolonial, anarchist, Marxist feminism), those so-called feminisms committed to capital and thus, ultimately, patriarchal subjugation, should be rejected outright. Ewa (2001) somewhat similarly argues for creating intersectional solidarities between different feminisms, noting that radical democratic practices should take seriously how bodies are gendered, and should avoid collapsing different struggles into a single counter-hegemonic signifier. As such, radical democracy can progress through the recognition of how capitalist democracy relies on the same extractivist logic to degrade feminised reproductive labour, Black lives, and Indigenous lands (Fraser, 2022).

We might then conclude that radically democratic formations establish a structure that allows for different contestations, not all of which can be resolved. We can, at different strategic moments and for different political purposes, draw from the rich tradition of radical democracy to render anticapitalist struggles alive to the most urgent concerns of the moment. Radical democracy is in this regard continually remade through

always-unfinished and collectively constituted visions, political principles, and practices that draw on a variety of strategies, tactics, forms, and approaches (Nunes, 2021). In contrast to capitalist democracy, the freedoms and equalities of radical democracy are “imposed by the revolt of the excluded, but also reconstructed by citizens themselves in a process that has no end” (Balibar, 2014, p. 207). This might well be a political revolt, but it may also be a revolt in everyday life (Singh, 2019). This is crucial for challenging the liberal tenets of assumed consensus on which much capitalist democracy relies. As Newman (2011) writes, “formal neutrality and equality—where everyone is included as a ‘stakeholder’—can function in an ideological way to legitimize an already assumed economic consensus, while de-legitimizing antagonism and dissent as irrational, violent and undemocratic” (p. 358). Thus, radical democracy imbues democracy with a social and political character, refusing its status as a purely financial affair (Fraser, 2022). It is through the spaces afforded by radical democracy—spaces which always strive towards inclusivity and that demand continued agonistic engagement—that progressive politics can move in accordance with the emancipatory requirements of the moment (Malherbe, 2023a), and towards not only “civil and political rights but to socioeconomic freedoms and collective decision making” (Brooks et al., 2020, p. 21).

Radical democracy is by its nature an unsettled form that continually undermines itself by identifying illegitimacy and, subsequently, transforming itself accordingly (Rancière, 2009). Put differently, one democratic form is destroyed—either partially or entirely—in order for a new form to take root, which is then also subject to a democratic remaking. Throughout the tradition of radical democracy, a host of organisational forms are relied upon (e.g., flat structures, party structures, rotating leaderships, vanguardism, communitarianism) to respond to in situ political problems (Malherbe, 2023a). In their varying and strategic deployment, these organisational forms aim to bring about the most progressive social and political changes possible (Nunes, 2021). Those committed to advancing radical democracy are aware that liberation must be strived for and moved towards rather than definitively arrived at (Brown, 2019). It is difficult, then, to say what radical democracy is because its content is always struggled over, contested, and, for thinkers like Laclau and Mouffe (1985), remade in the image of a set of political commitments which, themselves, serve as signifiers whose content is struggled over. Radical democracy is, then, not undefined, it is antidefinitive (Holloway, 2019).

Radical democracy, as we will see, is not the only way to advance anticapitalist struggle. However, radical democracy stands explicitly opposed to the circuits and flows of capital. As Fraser (2022) puts it, this more radical notion of democracy “requires parity of participation and so, is incompatible with structural domination” (p. 153). If capital is always moving, so too must anticapitalism, and radical democracy can facilitate this movement (see Holloway, 2019). Thus, radical democracy is not radical politics as such, just as democracy is not capitalism as such. Rather, radical democracy can hold progressive anticapitalist politics accountable to the concerns of the multitude (i.e., the concerns of a heterogeneously composed demos fighting for the liberation of all; Hardt & Negri, 2004), and it is in this respect that we can understand such a democracy as radical.

Radical democracy is not found exclusively within the domain of organised politics. It can be reproduced through habit, values, aspirations, practice, norms, and culture (Xu, 2022). Such an insurgent, everyday sort of radical democracy can close the gap

between means and ends (Newman, 2011), turning away from capitalist institutions rather than confronting them directly (which, for many, is a life-threatening confrontation; Singh, 2019). Radical democracy of this kind has the capacity to spread and develop through people's quotidian activity, rather than through capitalist institutions that rely on the exploitation and expropriation of the demos. Where capitalism relies on democracy as an apparatus by which to impose capital on as many aspects of social life as possible (Brown, 2019), radical democracy seeks to bring as many elements of day-to-day life as possible under the control and management of the demos. In this, radical democracy understands popular participation as the structuring principle for the workplace, media, health and education institutions, and any number of other social sectors (Hardt & Negri, 2004).

Rather than seeking to take power from capital, radical democracy can be used to destroy the possibility of capitalism's continuation, oftentimes in the sphere of everyday life (Holloway, 2019). If solidarity is built through an awareness that the struggle of another is always also one's own struggle, radical democracy functions as a political formation within which to consolidate singularities in common, whereby the basis of this consolidation lies in the connection of different struggles (Hardt & Negri, 2004). New political subjectivities may then be evoked within radically democratic spaces that hail the individual subject through its commitment to advancing the various struggles of the collective (Martín-Baró, 1994). The everyday practice of radical democracy can, in this way, hail queer subjectivities that resist the stifling sorts of identifications made available by capitalism, identifications that require individuals to declare their position relative to capital accumulation (Singh, 2019).

It is, of course, possible that radical democracy gets co-opted. De la Torre (2019), for example, describes how several radically democratic experiments in governance in Latin America (e.g., the presidencies of Morales, Chávez, and Correa) saw presidential leaders accrue legitimacy by claiming to represent the voice of the people, all while exercising singular, nondemocratic rule. Moreover, elements of radical democracy may operate in what is sometimes called right-wing populism, which reacts against the neoliberal co-optation of antiracist, feminist, and ecological rhetoric (Fraser, 2022). Right-wing populism tends to deploy democratic channels in a highly antagonist way that constructs an enemy that is to be destroyed. Such a populism prohibits internal struggles over the meaning of democracy (Mouffe, 2011).

Radical democracy's antidefinitional ontology opens it up to several challenges, not all of which correspond to a clear rebuttal, and thus require continued reflection and collective engagement. The first, perhaps most obvious issue here is that of identification. How do we know we are dealing with radical democracy if we cannot delineate what radical democracy is exactly? While there is no resolving this, it is worth emphasising that radical democracy does not in every instance eschew all foundations. Solidarity, respect, and open communication, for example, often serve as the foundational standards—or what some theorists call “nodal points” (see Laclau & Mouffe, 1985)—of radical democracy. These foundations are, however, always developed in accordance with the democratic requirements of liberatory struggle. If, for example, a nodal point is actioned without sufficient attention to gender equity, the radical democratic form demands that this nodal point be reformulated through feminist praxis. In this, we need

not clearly distinguish radical democracy from particular anticapitalist formations (e.g., anarchism, democratic socialism), but rather seek to understand how and if radical democracy is practiced within these formations. Although radical democracy does not constitute pure contestation, disruption, and revision, no aspect of radical democracy is immune from contestation, disruption, and revision. In this, we approach radical democracy asymptotically, rather than arrive at it definitively. There is also the question of whether radical democracy can function beyond the local. There is much debate here, with some insisting that radical democracy's ultimate horizon is the development of a sufficiently unified, agonistic consensus within counter-hegemonic power (see Mouffe, 2011), while others argue that radical democracy must strive to develop a better world at the local level; prefiguratively moving people towards self-determination without coercive state apparatuses (see Singh, 2019). While a definitive answer cannot be provided here, it is worth noting that I am concerned in this article with the latter argument (see also Malherbe, 2023b); inspired specifically by the "democracy at the margins" practiced in South Africa's spaces of state abandonment (see Ngwane, 2021). Yet, I nonetheless believe that there are strategic moments, determined by the anticapitalist demos, when counter-hegemony is useful for advancing emancipatory struggle.

Radical democracy, we might say, is partial, fragile, and can be approximated through struggle as well as in the shared experiences of daily life (Taylor, 2019). As such, if radical democracy is unifying, it is a unity forged with continued questioning and contestation (Stavrakakis, 2002). We all exist within conflict just like conflict exists within us, with political and everyday struggles signifying an agonistic will to constitute ourselves as a collective becoming rather than a singular being (Holloway, 2019). Radical democracy is thus not imposed. It is forged and struggled over by the collective while, at the same time, altering the individual subjectivities that comprise the collective (Brooks et al., 2020). I will argue in the following section that the contested nature of radical democracy is where its psychic appeal lies, and if critical psychologists are to assist in consolidating radical democracy within political and social spheres, they must take seriously the psychopolitical character of such contestation.

Critical psychology and radical democracy

As we have seen, mainstream psychology has played a role in capitalism's imperial, extractive, and exploitative global project, a project that, in much of the world, operates under the sign of democracy. Critical psychology¹ has, however, been used in efforts to resist capitalist democracy. This has been observed, for example, during several US-backed dictatorships in Latin America (Martín-Baró, 1994; Polanco et al., 2021), in apartheid South Africa (Cooper, 2014; Seedat & Lazarus, 2011), and in occupied Palestine (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2014; Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022). Critical psychologists have also pushed back against psychology's complicity in torture and incarceration (Eidelson, 2023), institutionalised racism (Malherbe et al., 2021), cultural coloniality (Ratele, 2018), and ecological devastation in the Global South (Barnwell & Wood, 2022). In addition, then, to challenging capitalist democracy, I argue that critical psychology can be, and indeed has been, used to consolidate the practice of radical democracy.

Those who practice radical democracy are rightly suspicious of psychology—purportedly critical psychology and otherwise—not only because of the discipline’s affiliation with capitalist institutions, but also because so much of psychology has, throughout history, pathologised a range of anticapitalist struggles, seeking to render these struggles products of a maladaptive psyche that must be cured through a closer alignment with the values of capitalist democracy (Parker, 2011). Moreover, psychologists are by and large insufficiently versed in political theory or training and tend to work outside of grassroots politics. Nonetheless, subjectivities are made through struggle (Roy, 2022), with radical politics being built through intersubjective relations between psychological beings, each of whom is differently traumatised. There remains much that is unsaid or uninterrogated within anticapitalist movement spaces and quotidian practices (Malherbe, 2023a), and it may be useful to use psychology to address, consolidate, and build connections between these two spheres precisely because of their psychopolitical constitution. Importantly, though, it is only possible to practice a psychology for radical democracy by developing such a psychology through radically democratic practice. Critical psychology cannot, in other words, impose itself onto radically democratic collectives if, indeed, it is to be of any use to these collectives. Critical psychologists, therefore, need not concern themselves with imparting, teaching, or intervening with psychology. Nor should they uncritically utilise activist spaces to legitimise their practice. Rather, critical psychologists may be invited into radically democratic spaces (spaces that they should already be a part of), with psychology itself undertaken democratically and in accordance with collectively articulated values, principles, and/or political demands (see Malherbe et al., 2021). This is not to say that critical psychology should, in every instance, strive to be agreeable or palatable to those practicing radical democracy, but rather that it should be held accountable to the political and societal visions and principles of radically democratic practitioners. Moreover, psychology need not be the mainstay of radical democracy. If the discipline ceases to be useful for consolidating radically democratic practice, it should be abandoned.

In what follows, I consider two ways by which critical psychology can be used to consolidate radical democracy: (a) advancing a politics of desire and (b) building the democratic everyday.

Politics of desire

The psychic appeal inherent to radical democracy should not be ignored, especially by critical psychologists. Yet, at first blush, radical democracy may not seem to inhere such appeal. Fromm (1942) warns that for many, capitalist democracy brings about the sorts of psychological comforts that are derived from complying with a given ideological order. Even if one suffers under this order, psychic solace can be sought from participating in and repeating familiar or recognisable social forms. Those who support fascist politics may also attain a perverse kind of psychic enjoyment via a seemingly protective leader who bucks liberal mores and scapegoats capitalism’s systemic failures onto particular disenfranchised subjects, rendering *them* (the othered outgroup) responsible for the suffering that *we* (an imagined ingroup) experience under capitalism (Stavrakakis, 2002). Radical democracy, by contrast, might then appear psychically impotent, with

those on the political Left more likely to galvanise around signifiers like “socialism” (Taylor, 2019). While such arguments are not without merit, there is also a psychic appeal inherent to radical democracy as an organisational form (Malherbe, 2023a). This appeal is, however, structured quite differently from that of capitalist democracy.

Radical democracy’s appeal lies in how it inheres within its antifoundational form a politics of desire. The radically democratic form, as we know, refuses absolute finality, with political programmes, strategies, tactics, and demands struggled over. These struggles are, of course, not haphazard. They take place in accordance with what radical democracy means in relation to a group’s purported values and politics (themselves also open to democratic negotiation) as well as the political and social demands of the moment. These values and demands determine the political orientation of the radically democratic form in which desire is produced. As Nunes (2021) makes clear, within an emancipatory or progressively oriented politics of desire, the radically democratic collective might assume a flat structure (e.g., in implementing community aid programmes) at one moment, and a more horizontal form (e.g., in organising a strike) at another. As such, radical democracy is able to serve as a form by which to organise the social and political desires of the multitude, offering an always-incomplete space in which collectives can make and remake the project of emancipation. Desire is not, however, the de facto product of progressive politics. Capitalism, for instance, can induce within us a desire for more and better commodities, as well as the desire for upward mobility within its hierarchal social order (McGowan, 2016). Nonetheless, those who use radical democracy to organise anticapitalist political action continually encircle what emancipation is and how it can be actioned, without conclusively arriving at it (Balibar, 2014; Taylor, 2019). Emancipation is thus desired and strived for.

It is within the politics of desire afforded by the radically democratic form that solidarity can take root across differences (see Barnwell & Wood, 2022). Radical democracy means that anticapitalist politics is advanced not through mastery or fantasmatic certainty, but through recognising that the Other—including the Other within the self—is unknowable (Martín-Baró, 1994). This unknowability sustains our desire because it evades definitive knowing, compelling comrades to build political connections through a continual in-concert articulation of different and shifting emancipatory desires (Stavrakakis, 2002). As such, radical democracy broadens (and thus also makes appealing) anticapitalist political programmes via the continuous incorporation of different political desires into this programme. In other words, radical democracy allows for desires to alter political strategy and tactics, rather than have a static political programme impose itself on our desires.

Radical democracy’s politics of desire is not only appealing but also fundamentally humanising, especially in contexts of coloniality that seek to essentialise colonised populations as helpless, disempowered, and/or deserving of little other than pity (Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022). Where capitalist democracy hails colonised subjects as compliant (“good”), resistant (“bad”), or as nonhuman subjects (Conway & Singh, 2011), radical democracy does not require that subjects define themselves in a fixed manner that coheres with the given ideological order. Instead, subjects are always becoming through their commitment to an emancipatory project formed through the negotiation of their desires. In this, one’s own desires are reconstituted through the collective. By embracing

the political demands—or emancipatory desires—of the Other, subjects remain open to becoming different via different struggles. The individual subjectivities of political actors become transformed through the building of collective anticapitalist politics (Parker, 2011). As Martín-Baró (1994) writes, “The truth of the people is in the making” (p. 178). The collective nature of radical democracy’s politics of desire should not, however, remain inattentive to what Joffre-Eichhorn and Anderson (2023) refer to as Left loneliness, or the states of isolation and alienation that can have debilitating (e.g., movement fracturing) or generative (e.g., strengthened commitments through reflection) consequences. Left loneliness should be engaged with by critical psychologists and activists in a dialectical fashion, taking care to reflect on the role that loneliness and other seemingly negative affects play in advancing radical democracy.

The politics of desire institutionalised by radical democracy undoubtedly entails a kind of uncertainty—that is, a letting go of ego attachments—which, for many, represents a terrifying subjective disruption. The critical psychologist, however, can work with activists to embrace such uncertainty in ways that accord with the movement and open negotiation of radically democratic politics. Rather than pathologise desire and uncertainty—as so much psychology does—critical psychologists can assist in facilitating spaces wherein activists constitute their desires and multitudinous subjectivities as part of the organisational form in which they build their political commitments (see Sheehi & Sheehi, 2022), propelling anticapitalist politics through this form. Such organisational forms may then, in turn, accommodate feelings of joy, companionship, and even love in addition to militancy and resistance (see Roy, 2022).

Radical democracy should not be fetishised by critical psychologists. Its contested nature must be acknowledged and reconciled with. It is because we make and desire radical democracy through unfinished resolutions—rather than singular or definitive decisions (Rancière, 2009)—that building radical democracy entails considerable tension (Taylor, 2019). The radically democratic community is consolidated by its own divisions (Stavrakakis, 2002). As such, radical democracy can be a straining and even painful process (Martín-Baró, 1994). It is thus possible that radical democracy can become stifled by its inherently conflictual form, bringing about political paralysis among those who practice it (Malherbe, 2023a). However, if radical democracy is always, to varying degrees, an internally strenuous organisational form, it is because it is also strenuous without, which is to say, it puts strain on the assumed consent on which the capitalist democratic order depends (Rancière, 2009). The role of the critical psychologist is, therefore, to ensure that radically democratic collectives are propelled rather than defeated by conflict, which is to say, psychologists can work with activists to use conflict as a generative sort of self-doubt that consolidates dissident politics by rendering such a politics more expansive, ambitious, and inclusive.

Just as we need not cede democracy to fascistic leaders and capitalist overlords, we also need not cede our desires to them. We can constitute these desires democratically, using them to drive an anticapitalist politics that is subject to being reconstituted and remade by a desiring multitude. In this, changes in subjectivity, brought about through an engagement with the radically democratic collective, are linked to political change (Parker, 2011). The radically democratic space has never needed psychologists, but if permitted within these spaces, psychologists can work in collaboration with activists to

establish processes that strive to push social movements forward through their divisions, tensions, and contradictions. The critical psychologist should, therefore, not seek to impose a predetermined order or a specific frame onto this radically democratic process (especially not a psychological frame). Rather, the role of critical psychology is to facilitate the embracing of different, even contradictory, desires through which the demos can constitute their anticapitalist political commitments. The psychologist thus forms part of an internal effort that strives to ensure that conflict serves radically democratic and political ends, rather than politically stifling or purely psychological ones.

Everyday democracy

Democratic interactions are the basis for living in common, meaning that much of everyday life is already structured democratically (Hardt & Negri, 2004). Although radical democracy is by and large disallowed in the everyday of capitalist society (e.g., workplaces are hierarchically organised, just as reproductive labour tends to be feminised and undervalued), there are nonetheless examples from all over the world where everyday radical democracy is practiced anyway (Malherbe, 2023b). In other words, we find radical democracy being practiced under constraining circumstances that inhibit the flourishing of such practice (Brooks et al., 2020). These practices are experimental, in-process, and becoming (Holloway, 2019). Among many other aspects of daily life, radical democracy drives the management of the ecological commons, the running of worker co-operatives, and the domestic maintenance of egalitarian home-spaces. For many, survival under capitalism depends on this kind of democracy. Thus, we cannot look only to the political realm when confronting capitalist democracy. We must also look to the radically democratic forms and practices that are rooted in our societal matrix (Fraser, 2022). Indeed, radical democracy has never been confined to institutional political formations. It has always also represented an ethico-political way of living that permeates day-to-day life and orients subjects towards egalitarian principles and collective wellbeing (Singh, 2019). It is within the everyday that the majority of people can and do act to reclaim life, land, and governance back from capitalist apparatuses—even if only partially or momentarily (Conway & Singh, 2011). Under capitalist democracy, these small-scale, local forms and practices of radical democracy might be understood as a kind of revolution in everyday life (Newman, 2011). Importantly though, the political and the everyday contexts of radical democracy are oftentimes connected in fundamental ways (Malherbe et al., 2021). As Koelble and Lipuma (2008) put it, “measuring a democracy necessarily entails the appreciation of the creation of those visions of democratic governance by the governed, which in turn, necessitates an appreciation of the processes and conditions under which these are produced” (p. 3). Radical democracy at the micropolitical level thus need not supplant macro enactments of radical democracy—each is able to supplement the other (Newman, 2011).

When confronted with the radically democratic everyday, several social actors are likely to react with hostility. Some might insist, for example, that the workplace must be run by bosses and managers, while others may proclaim that household labour is “women’s work.” This will certainly be the case among those invested in closing off the desires of the demos as much as possible. As Brown (2019) notes, it is through this sort of

traditional morality that capitalist democracy offers itself as a stable social order opposed to the “chaos” that a truly democratic society would allow. Traditional morality of this kind indicates where radical democracy is least practiced, and thus where it is most needed, which is to say, the point at which democracy must be struggled for and taken back by the demos (see Kinnvall & Kisić Merino, 2023).

Critical psychology can attend to the kinds of passionate and even hostile conflicts around building radical democracy into everyday life. This might require assisting in the psychopolitical work of organising resistance to capitalist and rentier classes, or it may require psychologists to support the working-through of disputes between comrades. It is important to note, though, that critical psychology should not concentrate exclusively on hostile conflict. As noted earlier, building and practicing radical democracy can also entail hopeful moments where conflict fosters joy, political commitment, and egalitarianism, none of which should go ignored or unacknowledged. As such, for critical psychologists, insisting on the radically democratic everyday is not to advocate an unbearably conflictual day-to-day existence, but to understand where the desires of the demos are already remaking everyday life in egalitarian ways, and how we might fashion more of everyday reality in these ways. Using critical psychology to build on the radically democratic everyday demands a confrontation with the capitalist everyday (through, for example, organised political confrontation), while at the same time learning from and expanding the radically democratic processes that structure different aspects of people’s lives. The resources that psychologists oftentimes have access to via their institutional affiliations (e.g., funding, venues, transportation) can make work of this sort possible; and can allow psychologists to strike back at the capitalist institutions that their discipline relies on and has too often defended ideologically. Resources of this kind are crucial for strengthening collective efforts to defend against state apparatuses of enclosure, extraction, and exploitation, and in building everyday relations that turn away from the state and instead ground communities in their own traditions and histories (Conway & Singh, 2011). Regardless, it is the demos building the radically democratic everyday, and not psychologists, who must manage and/or facilitate such resources.

Rather than using psychological techniques “democratically” to adapt people to the everyday of capitalist democracy (Spandler, 2006), critical psychology’s attempts to stretch how radical democracy is practiced in people’s daily lives can be thought of as an effort to democratise psychological knowledge itself (see Barnwell & Wood, 2022). A radically democratised psychology that has been pried open with the desires of the demos (i.e., a critical psychology of the everyday) may certainly reconstitute the discipline in new—even unrecognisable—ways, whereby psychology is evoked in response to people’s quotidian concerns, rather than in accordance with predetermined psychological frameworks. These new forms and functions of psychology should be developed in everyday settings where radical democracy is being practiced.

Holloway (2019) writes that hope exists in the millions of daily actions taken by those who refuse capital’s dictates and do something different. There is a new world that exists in these radically democratic and experimental interventions into the everyday. It is from the actually existing radically democratic everyday that we might see how democracy can serve as the basis for constituent or insurrectional power, that is, the creation of social relations and institutions that comprise a new, more humanistic society (Hardt &

Negri, 2004). Critical psychology can be similarly democratised, or made part of the consolidation of radical democracy in day-to-day life. In this, we can begin the process of holding psychology accountable to—while also ensuring that psychology is shaped by—the desires of the demos.

Conclusion

We need to invent new weapons for democracy today . . . weapons capable of constructing democracy and defeating the armies of Empire. (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 347)

Democracy has been so severely recuperated by capital that for many progressive actors—including critical psychologists—it may appear to be a signifier worth abandoning. In this article, I argue that although capitalism and democracy are certainly entwined, there have nonetheless always existed radically democratic formations that strive to make democracy anew; to pry it from capitalism so that we might organise politics and everyday life through the continued and properly democratic participation of the demos (Taylor, 2019).

Radical democracy is driven by agonistic relations. This renders it a psychopolitical undertaking, one to which critical psychology—if permitted by those building radical democracy—may be of use. If critical psychology is to be used for the purposes of consolidating radical democracy though, it must be held to a politicising mandate rather than a psychologising one. I have argued in this article that the role of critical psychology in advancing a radically democratic political project lies in how the discipline is used in and for spaces wherein people engage with a politics of desire, utilise conflict in a politically generative fashion, and ensure that radical democracy structures people's everyday realities rather than select parts of it.

There are, of course, many other avenues by which critical psychology can be used to embolden radical democracy. For instance, critical psychology has been largely silent on South Africa's "democratic practices and cultures [within] 'neglected' communities that have little apparent power to influence mainstream political developments" (Ngwane, 2021, p. 17). Future work might also consider what the role of critical psychology could be in holding progressive political parties accountable to radically democratic principles; managing radical democracy between different worker co-operatives; and deploying radical democracy to disrupt unequal and gendered divisions of reproductive and productive labour. Moreover, there is work to be done with respect to how radical democracy is taught within psychology programmes. How might teachers and students of psychology look beyond their discipline when seeking to use it to consolidate radically democratic practice? No matter which direction this work takes, the point is to hold psychology accountable to radical democracy so that we might open up the discipline and ultimately break from the capitalist milieu in which it was developed and that it was intended to serve.

Author's note

This article is based in part on an invited panel discussion in which I participated at the 26th PsySSA Congress held in Johannesburg, 2022. The panel was entitled *The annihilation of democracy: Psychology, institutionalised despondency, impunity, and the rise of authoritarianism*.

Acknowledgements

The author thanks the University of South Africa Institute for Social and Health Sciences and the South African Medical Research Council–University of South Africa Masculinity and Health Research Unit for their institutional support.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was assisted by funding provided by the Institute for Social and Health Sciences, University of South Africa and South African Medical Research Council–University of South Africa Masculinity and Health Research Unit.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

This research received ethical clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. See reference number: 90237269_CREC_CHS_2023.

The author of this manuscript has complied with APA ethical principles in their treatment of individuals participating in the research, program, or policy described in the manuscript.

ORCID iD

Nick Malherbe  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4968-4058>

Note

1. Critical psychology is concerned with analysing how psychology has acted as an apparatus of control through surveillance, management, self-regulation, and psychologisation (Parker, 2011). As such, critical psychology is engaged in struggling for a better psychology; one that is put to work for progressive social change, a psychology that forms part of transforming the world rather than adapting people to it (Parker, 2007). One can take up or apply critical psychology within a range of psychological fields.

References

- Ali, T. (2011). *The Obama syndrome: Surrender at home, war abroad*. Verso.
- Balibar, É. (2014). *Equaliberty: Political essays*. Duke University Press.
- Barnwell, G., & Wood, N. (2022). Climate justice is central to addressing the climate emergency's psychological consequences in the Global South: A narrative review. *South African Journal of Psychology, 52*(4), 486–497. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00812463211073384>
- Bond, P. (2014). *Elite transition: From apartheid to neoliberalism in South Africa*. Pluto Press.
- Brooks, H., Ngwane, T., & Runciman, C. (2020). Decolonising and re-theorising the meaning of democracy: A South African perspective. *The Sociological Review, 68*(1), 17–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026119878097>
- Brown, W. (2019). *In the ruins of neoliberalism: The rise of antidemocratic politics in the west*. Columbia University Press.

- Butler, A. (1998). *Democracy and apartheid: Political theory, comparative politics and the modern South African state*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Césaire, A. (1972). *Discourse on colonialism*. Monthly Review Press.
- Chomsky, N. (2011). *How the world works*. Catapult.
- Conway, J., & Singh, J. (2011). Radical democracy in global perspective: Notes from the pluriverse. *Third World Quarterly*, 32(4), 689–706. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2011.570029>
- Cooper, S. (2014). A synopsis of South African psychology from apartheid to democracy. *American Psychologist*, 69(8), 837–847. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037569>
- de la Torre, C. (2019). Is left populism the radical democratic answer? *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 27(1), 64–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0791603519827225>
- Dean, J. (2007). Feminism, communicative capitalism, and the inadequacies of radical democracy. In L. Dahlberg & E. Siapera (Eds.), *Radical democracy and the internet* (pp. 226–245). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Eidelson, R. (2023). *Doing harm: How the world's largest psychological association lost its way in the war on terror*. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Esteva, G. (2007). Oaxaca: The path of radical democracy. *Socialism and Democracy*, 21(2), 74–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08854300701388146>
- Ewa, P. (2001). *An ethics of dissensus: Postmodernity, feminism, and the politics of radical democracy*. Stanford University Press.
- Ewen, S. (1996). *PR! A social history of spin*. Basic Books.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*. Grove Press.
- Fraser, N. (2022). *Cannibal capitalism: How our system is devouring democracy, care, and the planet and what we can do about it*. Verso.
- Fromm, E. (1942). *Fear of freedom*. Routledge.
- Fromm, E. (1955). *The sane society*. Rinehart and Winston.
- Hannah, S. (2018). *A party with socialists in it: A history of the Labour left*. Pluto Press.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2004). *Multitude*. Penguin Books.
- Hartnack, C. (1987). British psychoanalysts in colonial India. In M. Ash & W. Woodward (Eds.), *Psychology in twentieth-century thought and society* (pp. 233–252). Cambridge University Press.
- Holloway, J. (2019). *We are the crisis of capital: A John Holloway reader*. PM Press.
- Ince, O. U. (2018). *Colonial capitalism and the dilemmas of liberalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Iwu, C. H., & Iwu, C. G. (2015). A review of public order policing in South Africa: Reflections and considerable interventions. *Socioeconomica*, 4(8), 541–552. <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=569404>
- Joffre-Eichhorn, H. J., & Anderson, P. (Eds.). (2023). *Left alone: On solitude and loneliness amid collective struggle*. Daraja Press.
- Kinnvall, C., & Kisić Merino, P. (2023). Deglobalization and the political psychology of whiteness supremacy. *Theory & Psychology*, 33(2), 227–248. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09593543221138535>
- Kirshner, A. S. (2022). *Legitimate opposition*. Yale University Press.
- Koelble, T. A., & Lipuma, E. (2008). Democratizing democracy: A postcolonial critique of conventional approaches to the “measurement of democracy.” *Democratization*, 15(1), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340701768075>
- Laclau, E. (1990). *New reflections on the revolution of our time*. Verso.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Toward a radical democratic politics*. Verso.
- Malherbe, N. (2023a). A psychoanalytic case for anti-capitalism as an organisational form. *Theory, Culture & Society*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764231178648>

- Malherbe, N. (2023b). Returning community psychology to the insights of anarchism: Fragments and refiguration. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 11*(1), 212–228. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jssp.9385>
- Malherbe, N., Ratele, K., Adams, G., Reddy, G., & Suffla, S. (2021). A decolonial Africa(n)-centered psychology of antiracism. *Review of General Psychology, 25*(4), 437–450. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10892680211022992>
- Martin-Baró, I. (1994). *Writings for a liberation psychology*. Harvard University Press.
- Mattei, C. E. (2022). *The capital order: How economists invented austerity and paved the way to fascism*. University of Chicago Press.
- Mbembe, A. (2019). *Necropolitics*. Duke University Press.
- McGowan, T. (2016). *Capitalism and desire: The psychic cost of free markets*. Columbia University Press.
- Mignolo, W. D. (1999). I am where I think: Epistemology and the colonial difference. *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies, 8*(2), 235–245. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569329909361962>
- Mignolo, W. D. (2000). The many faces of cosmo-polis: Border thinking and critical cosmopolitanism. *Public Culture, 12*(3), 721–748. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-12-3-721>
- Mouffe, C. (2011). *On the political*. Routledge.
- Newman, S. (2011). Postanarchism and space: Revolutionary fantasies and autonomous zones. *Planning Theory, 10*(4), 344–365. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095211413753>
- Ngwane, T. (2021). *Amakomiti: Grassroots democracy in South African shack settlements*. Pluto Press.
- Nkrumah, K. (1965). *Neo-colonialism: The last stage of imperialism*. Thomas Nel.
- Nunes, R. (2021). *Neither vertical nor horizontal: A theory of political organization*. Verso.
- Parker, I. (2007). Critical psychology: What it is and what it is not. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 1*(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2007.00008.x>
- Parker, I. (2011). *Lacanian psychoanalysis: Revolutions in subjectivity*. Routledge.
- Polanco, F. A., Beria, J. S., Zapico, M. G., & Miranda, R. L. (2021). A comparative history of psychology during the South American dictatorships (1964–1985). In J. C. Ossa, G. Salas, & H. Scholten (Eds.), *History of psychology in Latin America* (pp. 43–61). Springer.
- Rancière, J. (2009). *Hatred of democracy*. Verso.
- Ratele, K. (2018). Toward cultural (African) psychology. In G. Jovanović, L. Allolio-Näcke, & C. Ratner (Eds.), *The challenges of cultural psychology: Historical legacies and future responsibilities* (pp. 250–267). Routledge.
- Roy, S. (2022). *Changing the subject: Feminist and queer politics in neoliberal India*. Duke University Press.
- Seedat, M., & Lazarus, S. (2011). Community psychology in South Africa: Origins, developments, and manifestations. *Journal of Community Psychology, 39*(3), 241–257. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20429>
- Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N. (2014). Living death, recovering life: Psychosocial resistance and the power of the dead in East Jerusalem. *Intervention, 12*(1), 16–29. <https://www.intervention-journal.org/article.asp?issn=1571-8883;year=2014;volume=12;issue=1;spage=16;epage=29;aulast=Shalhoub-Kevorkian;type=0>
- Sheehi, L., & Sheehi, S. (2022). *Psychoanalysis under occupation: Practicing resistance in Palestine*. Routledge.
- Singh, J. (2019). Decolonizing radical democracy. *Contemporary Political Theory, 18*(3), 331–356. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-018-0277-5>
- Snider, E. A. (2022). *Marketing democracy: The political economy of democracy aid in the Middle East*. Cambridge University Press.
- Spandler, H. (2006). *Asylum to action: Paddington day hospital, therapeutic communities and beyond*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

- Springer, S. (2011). Public space as emancipation: Meditations on anarchism, radical democracy, neoliberalism and violence. *Antipode*, 43(2), 525–562. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00827.x>
- Stavrakakis, Y. (2002). *Lacan and the political*. Routledge.
- Taylor, A. (2019). *Democracy may not exist, but we'll miss it when it's gone*. Metropolitan Books.
- Teo, T. (2022). The mentality of dieability/killability: Reflections on the special issue on law, medicine, and bioethics. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 42(4), 247–251. <https://doi.org/10.1037/teo0000205>
- van der Walt, S. (2021, November 2). CSIR Predicts 48% voter turnout for 2021 Local Government Elections. *SABC News*. <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/csir-predicts-48-voter-turnout-for-2021-local-government-elections/>
- Volpato, C. (2000). Italian race psychology during fascism. *European Bulletin of Social Psychology*, 12(2), 4–13. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Chiara-Volpato-2/publication/330564679_Article_Italian_Race_Psychology_During_Fascism_1/links/5c488baa92851c22a38ad588/Article-Italian-Race-Psychology-During-Fascism-1.pdf
- Von Holdt, K. (2013). South Africa: The transition to violent democracy. *Review of African Political Economy*, 40(138), 589–604. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2013.854040>
- Wood, E. M. (2016). *Democracy against capitalism: Renewing historical materialism*. Verso.
- Xu, B. (2022). *The culture of democracy: A sociological approach to civil society*. Polity.
- Žižek, S. (2007, November 15). Resistance is surrender. *London Review of Books*, 29(22). <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n22/slavoj-zizek/resistance-is-surrender>

Author biography

Nick Malherbe is a community psychologist interested in violence, visual methods, and discourse. He works with social movements, cultural workers, and young people. He lives in South Africa.