

Education for Freedom

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Poverty is not a fate but a condition; it is not a misfortune but an injustice. It is the result of social structures and of cultural and mental categories. It is linked to the way society is constructed in all its manifestations. It is the result of human hands; economic structures, social ornaments, racial prejudices, cultures of religious sense, all accumulated through history, economic interests each time more ambitious; so its abolition is in our hands as well (Gutiérrez cited in Ardito 2007: 166).

Abstract

This essay revisits translated elements of the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1921-1997), author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968, tr. 1970). Freire is associated with a method of teaching basic literacy and a philosophy of education. From a sketch of Freire's work in Latin America and Africa, I consider the debate around the reception and appropriation of his philosophy. Lastly I attempt to locate critical pedagogy within a humanist and enlightenment tradition that clarifies the meaning of education for freedom.

Keywords: Freire, pedagogy, politics, colonialism, Marxism, humanism, modernity, capitalism, liberation.

Introduction

In order to achieve humanization, which presupposes the elimination of dehumanizing oppression, it is absolutely necessary to surmount the limit-situations in which people are reduced to things (Freire 2005a: 103).

Paulo Freire sought to address the link between education and freedom. If '[t]he pedagogy of the oppressed, animated by authentic, humanist (not humanitarian) generosity' is to present itself 'as a pedagogy of humankind' (Freire 2005a: 54), how does education for freedom work?

Rather than see schools as components of the irredeemable Ideological State Apparatus, Freire advocated liberation through education and social activism. Successful literacy campaigns in Brazil, Chile, and Nicaragua (for which Freire won the UNESCO Literacy Award) have shown the merit of his approach¹. Teaching literacy where literacy is a requirement for suffrage gives political power to the task of facilitating the entrance of learners into the literate world. Combining an interest in existentialist Marxism, ideology critique and liberation theology, the life of faith committed to redemptive social justice claims salvation through education. Rooted in Base Ecclesial Communities and working for social upliftment, activism was spurred by claims such as: 'The Catholic who is not a revolutionary is living in mortal sin' (Camilo Torres cited in Smith 1991: 16; see Montero 2007). Unlike a theodicy which attempts a vindication of God's goodness and justice in the face of the existence of evil, a loving God is presupposed as legitimating the temporal struggle². Reflecting on 'my faith in my struggle for overcoming an oppressive reality and for building a less ugly society ... my struggle for a more people-oriented society', Freire asserts that

¹ For a sympathetic account of Freire's educational reforms in São Paulo see del Pilar O'Cadiz *et al* (1998), and Freire (1993). See Freire (1985) on adult literacy in a peasant context; and Gerhardt (1986), Taylor (1993), Manning (2004), and Baracco (2004). Kirkendall (2010: 142-3) reports that in Nicaragua the Sandinistas levelled the accusation of social egoism at those who saw the Freire's literacy campaign as political domestication. This accords with Freire's (2005a: 159-160) model of cultural revolution as re-education.

² See the concern with social responsibility and class conflict evident in the Papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891: Leo XIII) and *Centesimus Annus* (1991: John Paul II), neither of which challenged the sanctity of private property. Freire refers approvingly to the Papal Encyclical of John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (1961) (see Freire 2005a: 14, fn 14). 'Freire connects his political anthropology to the Judeo-Christian tradition' (Torres 2014: 81). See Schugurensky (2011) and Cho (2013) for reflective assessments.

salvation implies liberation: ‘as if the fight against exploitation, its motivation, and the refusal of resignation were paths to salvation’ (Freire 1998a: 104, 105).

This Christocentric movement was criticised for ultimately endorsing modernity and for trying to spiritualise secularism. Critics saw in the focus on social justice an accommodation with temporal matters traceable to the second Vatican council (1962/5) with its whiggish view of modernity as definitive progress (see Milbank 1997). Ignoring Marx’s analogy between the phantasmagoria of commodity fetishism and the illusory representations of religion, Christian Marxism embraces the redemption of man through modernity. For Freire: ‘The real Easter is not commemorative rhetoric. It is praxis: it is historical involvement’ (Freire 1985: 123)³. Locating Freire in ‘the liveliest and most interesting period of modern Brazilian history’, the early 1960s, Roberto Schwarz (1992: 132-4) describes the move away from a nationalist Marxism which specialized in discussing the invalidity of capitalism, but which took no steps towards revolution. It has been argued that Freire’s Christian socialism made a decisive contribution to changing the profile of the Catholics Church in Brazil, bringing it closer to the poor, and decisively aided Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s path to the presidency (see Christo 2007)⁴. In the words of Henry Giroux, radical pedagogy is a ‘moral and political practice’ (Giroux 2001: xxvii). How does this practice intersect with pedagogy?

³ In contrast, for Marx clear proof of the radicalism of German theory is that it takes as its point of departure the transcendence of religion, and gives rise to ‘the *categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions* in which man is debased’ (Marx 1992: 251; see Maritain 2011: 103). See also Habermas (2006) on the religious roots of the liberal state.

⁴ Freire comments on the Brazilian left’s sectarianism and dogmatism: ‘Lula knows— today much better than the average of the leftist leadership of yesterday and the representatives of a certain outdated left of today—that there is a language of historic possibility, neither falling short of nor going beyond limits’ (Freire 1998a: 59). Freire remembers the ‘verbal incontinence of the Brazilian left’ that ‘scared the right, leading it to grow stronger and prepare to stage the coup of 1964’ (66).

Critical Pedagogy

It is in this sense that I say that I have never abandoned my first preoccupation, one that has been with me since my early experiences in the field of education. Namely, my preoccupation with human nature (Freire 2001: 115).

Freire's pedagogy, with the ideal of the teacher as facilitator rather than dictator⁵, centres on the culture circle and the discussion of generative themes that have significance within the context of students' lives. 'Society in Transition' explains:

To be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world. It is to experience that world as an objective reality, independent of oneself, capable of being known. Animals, submerged within reality, cannot relate to it; they are creatures of mere *contacts*. But man's separateness from and openness to the world distinguishes him as a being of *relationships*. Men, unlike animals, are not only *in* the world but *with* the world [*Sin embargo, es fundamental partir de la idea de que el hombre es un ser de relaciones y no sólo de contactos, no solo está en el mundo sino con el mundo*] (Freire 2005b: 3)⁶.

The cooperative research of educators and students explores the contradictions of social life by decoding images and then moving to print

⁵ John Dewey also rejected imposition from above in favour of expression and cultivation of individuality and advocated learning from experience as well as from texts in preparation for improving a changing world (see Dewey 1998: 5-6)⁵. Universal access to education combined with rational pedagogy that reflects the divisions of society is seen to provide the knowledge and cultural capital necessary to open the possibility of changing the system (see Bourdieu & Passeron 2000).

⁶ 'Society in Transition' ('La sociedad Brasileña en Transición') is the opening part of Freire's first book, *Education as the Practice of Freedom (La educación como práctica de la libertad)* (1965). The Portuguese original contains references to Scheler, Niebhur, and Toynbee dropped from the English translation.

literacy. The precondition of this pedagogical narrative is that humanity is obtained through the suspension of animality:

Men relate to their world in a critical way. They apprehend the objective data of their reality (as well as the ties that link one datum to another) through reflection – not by reflex, as do animals. And in an act of critical reception, men discover their own temporality. Transcending a single dimension, they react back to yesterday, recognize today, and come upon tomorrow. The dimensionality of time is one of the fundamental discoveries in the history of human culture. In illiterate cultures, the ‘weight’ of apparent limitless time hindered people from reaching that consciousness of temporality, and thereby achieving a sense of their historical nature. A cat has no historicity: his inability to emerge from time submerges him in a totally one-dimensional ‘today’ of which he has no consciousness. Men exist in time. They are inside. They are outside. They inherit. They incorporate. They modify. Men are not imprisoned within a permanent ‘today’: they emerge, and become temporalized (Freire 2005b: 3).

Words are seen to have meaning in the context of the world in which we live⁷ as generative themes are verified ‘through one’s own existential experience, but also through critical reflection’ (97):

The adult literacy process as an act of knowing implies the existence of two interrelated contexts. One is the context of authentic dialogue between learners and educators as equally knowing subjects. This is what schools should be – the theoretical context of dialogue. The second is the real, concrete context of facts, the social reality in which men exist.

⁷ Referring to Plato’s *Apology* and the *Phaedo*, Bakhtin (1981: 130) describes an essential type of autobiography ‘involving an individual’s autobiographical self-consciousness [that] is related to the stricter forms of metamorphosis as found in mythology. At its heart lies the chronotope of “the life course of one seeking true knowledge”’.

In the theoretical context of dialogue, the facts presented by the real or concrete context are critically analyzed. This analysis involves the exercise of abstraction, through which, by means of representations of concrete reality, we seek knowledge of that reality. The instrument for this abstraction in our methodology is codification, or representation of the existential situations of the learners (Freire 1985: 51)⁸.

Freireian pedagogy is conceptualised in terms of the Socratic dialectical search for truth between co-investigating participants in which the '[t]eacher ought to be aware of the concrete conditions of the learners' world, the conditions that shape them' (Freire 1998b: 58).

Following clues for seeing, the Freireian taps into the inner necessity to know as learners make their own way from being shackled to what they immediately encounter to attain insight and human self-transformation⁹. Oppression as captivation-in-an-acceptedness-of-what-is must give way to

⁸ As an act of will, of comprehension, 'the world becomes part of the student's field of identity by being an instantiation of his or her conceptual structure. This gives the student as active agent power over the world in order to transform it. Freire's constructivist epistemology, based in freedom, is at its root an attempt to relate to the world by a totalizing relation, grasping it by means of naming' (Joldersma 2001: 136). See McLaren's (1988: 172-74) conceit of the teacher as ritual performer, 'as much a social activist and spiritual director as a school pedagogue.... a parashaman.... Teaching is a form of 'holy play'... that is more akin to the drama of hunting societies than to the theatre of agricultural societies ...'.

⁹ Even the quest for self-justification must be scrutinised: 'The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher's existence – but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher' (Freire 2005a: 72). Morrow and Torres (2002) compare Freire and Habermas in terms of Hegel's master-slave dialectic. Andy Blunden (2013) traces Freire's intellectual roots to the French interest in the master-slave narrative (via Alexander Kojève) and to a current of social theory based on interactionism and the struggle for recognition.

authentic existence as choosing oneself on purpose and determining existence primarily and chiefly starting from that choice:

As men emerge from time, discover temporality, and free themselves from ‘today’, their relations with the world become impregnated with consequence. The normal role of human beings in and with the world is not a passive one. Because they are not limited to the natural (biological) sphere but participate in the creative dimension as well, men can intervene in reality to change it. Inheriting acquired experience, creating and re-creating, integrating themselves into their context, responding to its challenges, objectifying themselves, discerning, transcending, men enter into the domain which is theirs exclusively – that of History and Culture (Freire 2005b: 4)¹⁰.

Transcendence is integral to the freedom that is unique to being human. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* quotes Karl Marx’s *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* in support of the thesis that animals produce only what they need, and cannot produce products detached from themselves, whereas humans exercise their freedom through what they produce. Because ‘people can tri-dimensionalize time into the past, the present, and the future, their history, in function of their own creations, develops as a constant process of transformation within which epochal units materialize’ (Freire 2005a: 101)¹¹. Temporalization opens man’s transcendence.

¹⁰ Referring to *The Republic*, Immanuel Kant credits Plato with maintaining that ‘however great a gulf must remain between the idea and its constitution, no one can or should try to determine this, just because it is freedom that can go beyond every proposed boundary’ (Kant 1998: 397, B374). Transcendence is integral to human being.

¹¹ See Marx (1964: 112-114); Althusser (2005) on the whole ethical and anthropological interpretation of Marx nourished by the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*; and Kain (1986) on Marx’s Kantianism. Marx’s manuscripts confirm the basic outline of Hegel’s writings of 1802/4 collected as *System of Ethical Life* and *First Philosophy of Spirit* which were unpublished in Marx’s life-time. Marx’s critique of Hegel’s idealism has been attributed to his unfamiliarity with the work of Johann Karl Friedrich Rosenkranz that covered the practical elements of Hegel’s writings (see Levine 2012: 53-66).

Freire's philosophical anthropology is central and determining. Man is the ultimate purpose of nature, the purpose by reference to which all other natural things constitute a system of purposes¹². Humans create culture while animals cannot expand their restricted world 'into a meaningful, symbolic world which includes culture and history' (Freire 2005a: 98). Literacy is essential for consciousness of temporality, and illiterate cultures do not achieve a sense of their historical nature. Only humans develop, and the transformation of an animal is not development:

The transformations of seeds and animals are determined by the species to which they belong; and they occur in a time which does not belong to them, for time belongs to humankind.

Women and men, among the uncompleted beings, are the only ones which develop. As historical, autobiographical, 'beings for themselves', their transformation (development) occurs in their own existential time, never outside it (Freire 2005a: 161).

'[T]his apparently superficial distinction' (97) between animals and humans means that there is no man without the animal; only by way of comparison with the animal does man appear. The pedagogy of the oppressed is based on the axiological subjection of the animal:

Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process *of becoming* – as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality. Indeed, in contrast to other animals who are unfinished, but not historical, people know themselves to be

¹² See Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2011: 71-104) on Freire's pedagogy of humanism. Freire is centrally concerned with 'the role of autonomous individuals and the force of self-determination', 'self-reflection and social critique' (Giroux 2004: 13, 14). The faith is that 'the pedagogical "act of knowing" reflects the liberatory goal of a socialist politics' (McLaren 2001a: 639). 'Consequently Freire often falls into a theoretical discourse which legitimates a modernist notion of the unified human subject and its attendant emphasis on universal historical agents' (Brady 1994: 143). Freire's stress on existential conditions and self-fashioning is amplified in the work of Maxine Greene that synthesises Dewey and Sartre (see Greene 1988).

unfinished; they are aware of their incompleteness. In this incompleteness and this awareness lie the very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation. The unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity (Freire 2005a: 84).

This is because '[i]f hope is rooted in the inconclusion of a being, something else is needed in order to personify it' (Freire 1998a: 106):

of the uncompleted beings, man is the only one to treat not only his actions but also his very self as the object of his reflection; this capacity distinguishes him from the animals who are unable to separate themselves from their activity and thus are unable to reflect upon them. In this apparently superficial distinction lie the boundaries which delimit the action of each in his life space. Because the animal's activity is an extension of themselves, the results of that activity are also inseparable from themselves: animals can neither set objectives nor infuse their transformation of nature with any significance beyond itself. Moreover, the 'decision' to perform this activity belongs not to them but to themselves (Freire 2005a: 97).

Animals can't take risks or make decisions, neither can they commit themselves; 'animals do not "animalize" their configuration in order to animalize themselves—nor do they "de-animalize" themselves"' (98)¹³. Lacking 'self-consciousness' the animal's life is 'totally determined' (99).

¹³ 'If, for animals, orientation in the world means adaptation to the world, for man it means humanizing the world by transforming it. For animals there is no historical sense, no options or values in their orientation in the world; for man there is both a historical and a value dimension. Men have the sense of "project", in contrast to the instinctive routines of animals' (Freire 1972: 21). That is: 'All the animals have exactly the faculties necessary to preserve themselves. Man alone has superfluous faculties' (Rousseau 1979: 81). This historically sedimented tradition of privileging man includes Marx (1976: 183-4). See Agamben (2004: 29) on the 'anthropological machine of humanism'.

Separation from and objectification of the life-world is necessary to transform it:

I shall start by reaffirming that humankind, as beings of the *praxis*, differ from animals, which are beings of pure activity. Animals do not consider the world; they are immersed in it. In contrast, human beings emerge from the world, objectify it, and in so doing can understand it and transform it with their labor.

Animals, which do not labor, live in a setting which they cannot transcend. Hence, each animal species lives in the context appropriate to it, and these contexts, while open to humans, cannot communicate among themselves (Freire 2005a: 125).

Animality is an index oppression and peasants ‘often insist that there is no difference between them and the animals; when they do admit a difference, it favors the animals. “They are freer than we are”’ (63), they say¹⁴.

Freire’s comments on the animal exemplify the tendency of modern thought to create a gulf between the human sphere of values and the non-human. In Kantian terms, freedom is the kind of causality that belongs to living beings insofar as they are rational. The universality of freedom is a concept demanding self-responsibility and ethical praxis as practical freedom to fulfil the destiny of the human being as person. Freire’s pedagogical anthropology has been described as ‘a theory of human nature, one might say a secular liberation theology’ (Aranowitz 1993: 12). Ideally the valorization of the voices, knowledge, and understanding of disadvantaged groups

¹⁴ ‘Unable to decide for themselves, unable to objectify themselves or their activity, lacking objectives which they themselves have set, living “submerged” in a world to which they can give no meaning, lacking a “tomorrow” and a “today” because they exist in an overwhelming present, animals are ahistorical’ (Freire 2005a: 98). See Kahn (2010) on Freire’s subsequent eco-pedagogical tempering of this anthropocentrism. Freire remarks of his travels through the centre of capitalist power: ‘As I said to my Brazilian and Chilean friends whom I left in Santiago, I needed to see the animal close to its home territory’ (Freire & Faundez 1989: 12).

achieves the right to assume direction of their own destiny¹⁵. The philosophical vision underlying this political and ethical perspective is as follows:

Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality.... But while both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is the people's vocation. This vocation is constantly negated, yet it is affirmed by that very negation (Freire 2005a: 43).

For Freire '[h]ope is an ontological requirement for human beings' (1998b: 44), and he presumes that hope for a better life must coincide with some form of social justice incompatible with capitalism¹⁶. The faith is that to be transformed through education is at the same time to be an agent in transforming the world in the direction of a socialist alternative to capitalism.

These principles were given concrete form in Freire's involvement in the education policy of the People's Revolutionary Government of Granada (from 1979 until 1983 when Granada was invaded by the US), a regime accused of stifling a free press and refusing to hold elections (see Gibson 1994). He implemented the literacy campaign of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), Guinea-Bissau. In 1980 the Department of Adult Education of Guinea-Bissau declared that the Freire inspired literacy campaign of the years 1976-79 involved 26, 000 students and the results were practically nil. Critics conclude that Freire based his romantic view of the complexities of the context on impressions derived from

¹⁵ The imperative of Freireian education to form subjects rather than objects echoes Freud's *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*. Freud's 'It' being the id: 'Where the id was, there ego shall be' (Freud 1973: 112). The challenge is to avoid compromise formations that, despite what they promise, block resolution in a web of hypocrisy and diversion (see Lacan 2006: 435).

¹⁶ Peter McLaren describes the bridge to this as 'a multiracial and anti-imperialist social movement dedicated to opposing racism, capitalism (both in private property and state property forms), sexism, heterosexism, hierarchies based on social class, as well as other forms of oppression' (McLaren nd.).

the writings of Amílcar Cabral¹⁷. Lack of success in Guinea-Bissau has been traced to the decision to use the colonial language (Portuguese) as the means of instruction on the literacy campaign: ‘Most African countries were too linguistically diverse and rural for Freire’s techniques to be effective there’ (Kirkendall 2010: 112).

Reflecting on the attempt to make Portuguese the national language in Guinea-Bissau, Freire concludes that where the Portuguese language has nothing to do with everyday social practice it cannot impose itself as necessary (see Freire & Macedo 1987: 162). Use of Creole (which lacks a stable written form) was Freire’s preferred option to pave the way for the eventual dominance of Portuguese as the language of the sovereign nation. He was to be more successful in São Tomé and Príncipe, a colonial creation with no indigenous population and wide use of Portuguese. Faced with the legacy of colonialism one must work with what is available: ‘What policy could be adapted which would be adequate to the concrete situation?’ (Freire 1989: 114). Freire’s account of Brazilian national liberation illuminates these issues.

In 1965, analysing the Brazilian experience of colonisation, Freire noted that Portugal had insufficient population to engage in projects of settlement: ‘Unfortunately for our development, the first colonizers of Brazil lacked a sense of *integration with the colony*’ (Freire 2005b: 20)¹⁸. In an argument that recalls the distinction in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* between

¹⁷ Facundo (1984) notes in Freire’s *Pedagogy as Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau* (1978) a lack of concern with the material circumstances of Guinea-Bissau. See also Harasim (1973); Walker (1980); Torres (1993); Nyirenda (1996); and (Okigbo 1996). For the influence of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* on *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* see Freire (1990: 36), and chapter four of *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Nyerere (1967) provides an interesting point of comparison.

¹⁸ As Hegel (1956: 84) remarks: ‘South America was conquered, but North America colonized The Spaniards took possession of South America to govern it and to become rich through occupying political offices, and through exactions. Depending on a very distant mother country, their desires found a larger scope, and by force, address and confidence they gained a greater predominance over the Indians. The North American States were, on the other hand, entirely *colonized by Europeans*’.

plain robbery and colonialism as devotion to an idea, Freire opines that the Portuguese colonists sought to exploit rather than cultivate, to leave with spoils rather than settle. Indeed Freire's intra-colonial nationalism stresses the need to locate the seat of decision within the nation rather than being subject to decisions made in the metropole (see Freire 2005a: 160-62)¹⁹.

After quoting Simone Weil in relation to personal responsibility and national, democratic destination, Freire addresses the need in Brazil to enable 'the people to reflect on themselves, their responsibilities, and their role in the new cultural climate—indeed to reflect on their very *power* of reflection' (2005b: 13). Taking into account the various levels at which the Brazilian people perceive their reality, Freire elaborates on his own analysis of the historically and culturally conditioned levels of understanding. In the 'most backward regions of Brazil' among 'circumscribed' and 'introverted' communities', '[m]en of semi-intransitive consciousness cannot apprehend problems situated outside their sphere of biological necessity. Their interests centre almost totally around survival, and they lack a sense of life on a more historic plane' (13). Such 'disengagement between men and their existence' makes 'discernment difficult': 'Men ... fall prey to magical explanations because they cannot apprehend true causality' (13).

Ideally inner transformation grounded in the phenomenology of lived experience mirrors social transformation. Dialogue between man and man enables men to become a 'transitive', 'historical being[s]' (2005b: 13-14), although this can still be naive and susceptible to the magical aspect of intransitivity, the 'irrationality and fundamentalism' (14) characteristic of mass society. The highest stage, '*critical transitivity*', consists of 'the substitution of causal principles for magical explanations ... [and] by soundness of argumentation' (14), meaning testability and openness to revision. Transition as self-affected rebirth involves 'lead[ing] a country to a democratic destination' (13), for the falsifiability indicative of critical transitivity is inseparable from democracy. These psycho-epistemological, discursive categories are also forms of politics; from tribalism to massification/totalitarianism 'where a person acts more on the basis of emotionality than of reason' (15) we eventually arrive at democracy. Genuine

¹⁹ For Peter McLaren (2001b: liv): 'In other words, I do not see the central tension as one between the autochthonous and the foreign—but between labor and capital'.

education is the vehicle of this journey from self-incurred tutelage to cognitive and political freedom: 'In this way, the Enlightenment project is called upon to live up to its name' (McLaren 2001b: liii)²⁰. A humanistic education aiming at inculcating the feasibility of observing the moral law is essential for such a challenge: to think for oneself independent of the teacher. The goal is the liberation of humanity: 'Freire's is a humanist project, *par excellence*' (McLaren & Leonard 1993: 3)²¹.

In what purports to be his last interview Freire says he understands himself more 'as a kind of epistemologist proposing a critical way of thinking and a critical way of teaching, of knowing to the teachers in order for them to work differently with the students' (Freire 1996). On the question of language and power, he remarks the duty of the teacher to recognise that wherever there is a cultivated use of language, there is one that is subordinated and uncultivated. He concludes:

I defend the duty of the teachers to teach the cultivated pattern, and I defend the rights of the kids or of the adults to learn the dominant pattern. But it is necessary in being a democratic and tolerant teacher, it is necessary to explain, to make clear to the kids or to the adults that their way of speaking is as beautiful as our way of speaking. Secondly, that they have the right to speak like this. Third, nevertheless they need to learn the so-called dominant syntax for different reasons; that is, the more the oppressed, the poor people, get command of the dominant syntax the more they can articulate their

²⁰ Ana Maria Araújo Freire (Araújo Freire in Freire 1998a: 132) foregrounds the decisive influence of the French Enlightenment on Brazilian democratic rebelliousness.

²¹ For Adorno (1973: 197), because ideology only makes sense in relation to the truth or untruth of what it refers to, the reduction of knowledge to socially necessary delusions cancels ideology. In the name of social justice the social contradictions are foregrounded, but this gesture of moral judgement is itself extracted from its own historical conditions of emergence, its own social contradictions. The relativity of cognition can only be maintained from without, a transcendental guarantee that is itself, as unconditioned, inescapably ideological. See Martin and Torres (2004: 22) on Freire as critical theorist, 'heavily influenced by the Frankfurt School'.

voices and their speech in the struggle against injustice (Freire 1996)²².

While avoiding an implacable definition of the class enemy and demurring the promotion of absolute class enmity, Freire hoped for social transformation.

The degree to which Freire called for the abolition of private property is open to question. Certainly condemnation of the greed of those who defend the privatization of every public company that turns a profit, and the lack of respect for public property (state corruption), traces these ills to ‘neo-liberal modernity’ (Freire 1998a: 54). Part of Freire’s antidote is ‘rigorous agrarian reform’ on the basis of the following interpretation:

Not one modern capitalist society has failed to conduct its agrarian reform, indispensable to the creation and maintenance of the domestic market. That is why among those democracies agrarian reform is no longer discussed, not because this process is ‘ancient’ or ‘a violation of private property’ (1998a: 54).

The goal is to strengthen the domestic market and so bolster national independence by way of reforms within the context of capitalism in accord

²² ‘[T]he existing contempt for the learners’ cultural identity, the disrespect for popular syntax, and the almost complete disregard for the learners’ baggage of experiential knowledge’ (Freire 1998a: 62) does not entail jettisoning the dominant syntax: ‘I have never said, as is sometimes believed, or even suggested that lower-class children should not learn the so-called educated norm of the Portuguese language of Brazil. What I have said is that problems of language always involve ideological questions and, along with them, questions of power’ (Freire 1998b:74). Compare this with Gramsci’s view that political progressivism demands educational traditionalism, and the oppressed class should be taught to master the tools of power and authority before they can effectively challenge the system under the guidance of the vanguard party (see Hirsch 1997; Mayo 1999; and Borg *et al* 2002). Michael Apple (2011: 15-16) also invokes Gramsci to argue against embracing intellectual suicide. For a restatement of this position in the South African context see Laurence Wright (nd).

with the development of modern society aiming at a balanced distribution of social wealth. And this indeed is how reforms in Brazil have been interpreted. The Lula government's 2002 redefinition of agrarian reform that has continued under Dilma Rousseff has been described in the following terms:

Agrarian reform was no longer part and parcel of the fight for socialism, but rather an essential economic development policy.... Emptied of its political content, agrarian reform was now subordinated to economic objectives.... It reflected the PT's [*Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party)] shift to a 'third road' strategy in the years leading up to Lula's election—neither socialist nor neoliberal. With a focus on acquiring state power, the PT came to view explicitly socialist positions as a hindrance to electoral victory. Instigated by Lula—whose three previous presidential campaigns helped build his hegemony over the party—the PT reluctantly made a shift in ideology and endorsed capitalism, seeking to retain its “socialist” credentials by embracing ‘developmentalism’. The idea was to integrate small family farming in big picture economic planning, calling [for] the inclusion agrarian reform without necessarily redistributing land (Welch 2011)²³.

Such is the result, in the context of global capitalism, of Freire's dream of ‘re-creating society’ that rejects ‘Stalinist authoritarianism’ in favour of ‘a truly democratic socialism’ (1998a: 49) as the goal of ‘a leftist party in touch with its time... making all its statements, denunciations, and announcements rigorously ethical’ (79). The goal is transformed into that of making capitalism fit for society (see Crouch 2013).

Apart from the passing rejection of ‘the myth of private property as fundamental to personal human development’ (Freire 2005a: 140), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* does not interrogate private property beyond moral

²³ Although ‘the agrarian reform constitutes one of the programs in a policy of strengthening the family agriculture (based on the small property and the family's work) integrated into the capitalist market.... since 1996, the compensation for expropriated land has ensured the existence of a real institutional land market, which benefits, *in fine*, the proprietors, banks and investors’ (Sabourin 2008).

condemnation of property distribution. Rather property is transmuted into knowledge as property. In ‘the problem-solving method’ of teaching the teacher does no regard ‘cognizable objects as his private property’, for rather than being ‘the property of the teacher’ the object of the act of cognition should be ‘a medium evoking the critical reflection of both teachers and students’ (80). This position is open to the criticism that the metaphor of property as knowledge substitutes cognition for the actuality of possession in law, displacing property from the socio-political realm to the realm of ideas (see Pierson 2013). The redistribution of knowledge and opportunity is to take place within the reformed existing system.

The appeal of Freire’s ideas on social justice and the necessity of grass-roots activism can be seen in institutes from Nicaragua, Britain, Malta, Brazil, the USA, and South Africa²⁴. Despite these achievements, which exceed the aims of adult literacy, the reception of Freire’s work has not always been inspiring.

Freire has been invoked in the comparison of teaching and sex (see Tomkins 1990), and has been claimed by business management studies aiming at liberation through efficiency rather than through any radical challenge to the capitalist system²⁵. Social activism becomes social entrepreneurship, and Freire is enlisted to promote Total Quality Manage-

²⁴ For the fates of Freire inspired projects see Brown (2013) on Kerala, and Siddhartha (nd.), The Critical Pedagogy Collective in the UK, and <http://www.Friere.org>. Blikstein (2008) argues that Freirean principles in combination with new technologies can realise education for freedom.

²⁵ In answer to Moacir’s (1996: 63) argument that the ‘aim of institutional pedagogy is to reach social self-management.... [i]t would be at the service of a project of society’, Torres (1996: xxiv) points out that this idea of autonomy as self-management sounds like the voucher system advocated in North America by neo-liberals offering greater autonomy to schools, leaving education to the whim of the market and privatization. See Kumar (1998: 2914) on the incorporation of Freireian ideas and terminology into the industry of voluntarism; also Smith *et al* (2009: 67-70). See also Roberts (2000) on the misuse of Freireian ideas, and Lange (2012); Ward (1994: 118-122); Bowers and Apffel-Marglin (2005) for criticism of Freire; and Smith *et al* (2009).

ment programme enlists Freire to improve manager adaptability (see Prieto 2011; Prieto *et al.* 2012; and Waistell 2009). The free market has been punted as essential to realising Freireian freedom (see Sing 2008). At The Paulo Freire Charter School, Newark, New Jersey learners can engage in the ‘Teacher Cadet Programme’ or ‘Bank of America Student Leaders Program’. Education for liberation becomes team-building and personal construct therapy dispensing medicinal rhetoric (see Viney 1996: 49-86). The principle categories of Freire’s conscientized literacy are repackaged as a philosophy of life and smoothly put in the service of the existing system of domination and exploitation by ‘divesting them of their essential political dimension and turning them into purely psychological categories’ (Martín-Baró 1994: 19).

It is not surprising that Freire reportedly gave up the use of the slogan *conscientização* (conscientization) when he saw that it was being employed as a ruse to mask the implementation of instrumental rationality under the guise of radical pedagogy (see Torres 2008: 8; and Lichtenstein 1985). The moral critique of capitalism, incorporated into its progressive self-criticism, enables the intractable system to offer itself as the best hope for individual freedom and economic prosperity. In addition to an agent capable of actions conducive to profit creation, the spirit of capitalism requires an agent equipped with a greater degree of reflexivity; one who judges the actions of the former in the name of universal principles, something to fire the imagination (see Boltanski & Chiapello 2007: 14).

These appropriations of Freire have led some to claim that, despite the plea ‘not to confuse modernization with development’ (Freire 2005a: 161), Freire’s assumptions and presuppositions serve the very system he claimed to want to change (see Esteva *et al.* 2005). His work has been linked to the ‘values of Western modernity’ (Bowers 2001: 71). Criticism has been levelled at the Enlightenment way of equating change with progress and of thinking of critical reflection as the primary basis for initiating change. This situation is the result of adherence to ‘a universal human nature rather than to the actual patterns of individual-community relationships ... the same modern way of thinking that is found in transnational corporations’ view of global markets’ (Bowers 2001: 73; and see MacIntyre 1988; and Losurdo 2011). Reflecting on the appropriation of Freire’s work, Giroux (nd.) notes that Freire ‘strides the boundaries between modernist and anti-colonialist discourse; he struggles against colonialism, but in doing so he often reverses rather than ruptures its basic problematic’. The goal of ‘replacing capitalist

relations of production with freely associated labor under socialism' (McLaren 2001a: 641) recedes yet again²⁶.

Peter McLaren dates the integration of critical pedagogy into a reformist strategy to the mid-1980s when corporations began to become more powerful that some nation states and neo-liberalism co-opted or extinguished hopes for educational transformation²⁷. Without the political linkage to oppositional politics education becomes therapy committed to solving a variety of partial problems within the terms of the existing system. In response, defenders of Freire have sought to move the concept of transformation from participation and integration within a democratic system commensurate with the liberal approach to include the possibility of subversion and revolution: '[b]y propagandizing the notion of social solidarity and mutual interdependence as a counter to the self-destructive tendencies of individualist pathologies' (Martin & Torres 2004: 9)²⁸. Educators committed to socialist civic virtues need to 'subordinate their work

²⁶ 'The rhetoric of freedom and equality may have intensified, but there is unassailable evidence that there is ever deepening exploitation, domination, and inequality and that earlier gains in education, economic security, civil rights, and more are either being washed away or are under severe threat' (Apple 2011: 13).

²⁷ For McLaren: 'many who claim that they are practicing a vintage form of Freireian pedagogy... have, unwittingly, taken critical pedagogy out of the business of class struggle and focused instead on reform efforts within the boundaries of capitalist societies' (McLaren 2010: 499). It seems that the belief that '[i]nsofar as schooling is premised upon generating the living commodity of labor-power, upon which the entire social universe of capital depends, it can become a foundation for human resistance' (McLaren 2003: 119) can also lead to co-option.

²⁸ Martin and Torres (2004) advocate communities of resistance within a resurgent welfare system. That is, activism is to be subsidised by a state and economic system that redistributes surplus to the poor and unemployed. Apart from consigning some to perpetual (alleviated) poverty and unemployment, such a proposal made under the banner of modernised Marxism is content to leave undisturbed the exploitative origin of surplus value.

to and in the service of popular majorities and their struggles' (McLaren & Jaramillo 2007: 115).

Inspired by Cuban socialism and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, the Citizen's Revolution in Ecuador, and indigenous revival in Bolivia, the call of revolutionary pedagogy is to abandon the university as an ineffective basis of resistance and engage in local struggles: 'We must all actively remain immersed in our communities, and where injustice is perpetrated we need to resist, take courage, and act' (Kirylo 2013: xxiv)²⁹. In the name of revolutionary learning in action rhetorical radicalism and the clenched papier-mâché fist are disavowed in the cause of uprooting capitalism through the creation of new human relations. Activist pedagogues (minus the vanguard party) ought to 'refuse to labour in the interests of capital accumulation, [such that] labour-power can therefore serve another cause: the cause of socialism' (McLaren 2006; and see McLaren & Jaramillo 2005: 137).

Lessons

According to the received modes of education, the master goes first and the pupil follows. According to the method here recommended, it is probable that the pupil would go first, and the master follow.... The adult must undoubtedly be supposed to have acquired their information before the young; and they may at proper intervals incite and conduct their diligence, but they ought not to do it so as to supersede in them the exercise of their own discretion (Godwin 1823: 70)³⁰.

²⁹ 'I am not interested in making education more effective, or efficient, or smooth-running, or successful. It is already too successful.... In its present form, education is successful at creating the conditions of possibility for capitalism to reproduce itself' (McLaren 2013). This position echoes Nietzsche's diagnosis of 'why our academic thinkers are not dangerous.... They don't frighten; they carry away no gates of Gaza Yes the university philosophy should have on its monument, "It has hurt nobody"' (Nietzsche 1911: 200-201).

³⁰ For Mary Wollstonecraft the problem with conventional education is that '[t]he memory is loaded with unintelligible words, to make a show of,

In what ways is Freireian critical pedagogy distinct from its educational predecessors? Like Plato's prisoners in the cave allegory of the *Republic*, Freire is concerned with how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened. The ensnared are caught up in misapprehension and must liberate themselves with the intervention of an outsider. But 'a free man ought not to learn anything under duress.... compulsory learning never sticks in the mind' (Plato 1974: 306, 536e). In Plato's allegory release from the shackles is only the beginning of emancipation for initially the freed prisoner wants to turn back to his illusory shadows (see Heidegger 2002: 28; and Inwood 2005)³¹.

Plato's *paedeia* leads from misrecognition to the form of the Idea, and Freire's directive learning also leads to the Good: 'And anyone who is going to act rationally either in public or private life must have sight of it' (Plato 1974: 321, 517 c)³². All our thoughts and actions back to the socio-political

without the understanding's acquiring any distinct ideas: but only that education deserves emphatically to be termed cultivation of mind, which teaches young people how to begin to think.... How much time is lost in teaching them to recite what they do not understand?' (Wollstonecraft 1996: 169). While Godwin remained suspicious of the hegemonic function of national education, Wollstonecraft saw it as the way of ensuring that teaching was not distorted by private gain (as did Kant 2007: 446-7; and see Loudon 2007: 27-50).

³¹ Bingham and Biesta (2010: 71-2) see Freire as conscientiously Platonist, while Roberts (2000: 38) argues that Freire's theory of knowledge is opposed to Platonism. See Jay and Graff (1995); and Taylor (1993).

³² For Heidegger (1998a: 181) the beginning of metaphysics in the thought of Plato is at the same time the beginning of humanism: 'human beings as animals with reason take centre stage and the drama of the liberation of their possibilities in terms of moral development, development of their reason, the awakening of their civic sense, etc., becomes of essential importance'. See Howard Eiland's (1989) discussion of pedagogy in Plato's *Laws*: 'real equality meted out to various unequals' in a community that sees to it that each citizen is assured the necessities of life, including 'equal distribution of land and houses'. In the division of 'one man to one work' there obtains common weal, 'all [being] as utterly alike as may be in all happiness',

by way of as practical wisdom (*phronesis*) that has a bearing on every-day life. Linked to politics this becomes a question of ethics and ethical judgement, of the good life and how to realise and maintain it (see Arendt 1992 and Arendt 1971; and Aristotle 1995: 1805, 1143a 20, 33-35). And of course by impressing a character on someone and guiding someone by a paradigm can avail itself of a normative proto-type. Ethology based on the principle that different circumstances produce different types of characters is always open to the charge of indoctrination³³.

The vision of learning as moral education recalls the seventeenth century humanist self-fashioning of autonomous subjects associated with the pedagogy of Erasmus and the English Renaissance that sought to counter the sovereign or political model of discipline instilled by classical education based on rote learning and grammatical drilling. Erasmus hoped to reform the behaviour of the ruling groups, and so Tudor schools were 'transformative or transitional institutions' (Halpern 1991: 26). Positing an intersubjective universal conscience grounded in knowledge of wrong as privation and defect demands that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means³⁴.

'making life, to the very uttermost, an unbroken consort, society, and community of all with all'.

³³ 'Freire has his *Republic* too. There is no way out of Plato's dilemma. Literacy always comes with a perspective on interpretation that is ultimately political. One can hide that perspective the better to claim it isn't there, or one can put it out in the open' (Gee 1989: 162). This in turn position opens the way to the following blanket criticism: 'Despite their talk about 'self-expression', today's educators have to inculcate collectivism' (Peikoff 2014: xxi). The defensive response that Freire inspires 'the kind of education [that] is non-prescriptive' (Nkoane & Lavia 2012: 67) founders on the wilful politicisation of education in the name of moral education. And anyway, isn't the claim that it is better to be non-prescriptive itself a prescription?

³⁴ See Hämäläinen's (2003: 77) claim for social pedagogy moving away from philosophical anthropology to emphasise social criticism and emancipation based on the belief that social circumstances can be changed through education: 'It aims to promote those developmental processes in people that are connected with moral values. The helping process is based on the Kantian maxim which defines every human as being of absolute and unique value and

Freires's pedagogy of the oppressed is also foreshadowed by Johann Karl Friedrich Rosenkranz's stress on the Hegelian centrality of self-estrangement (*Selbst-Entfremdung*) in his *Philosophy of Education*. Education guides man away from his animal nature: the mind must estrange itself from itself so that it may place itself over against itself and become a special object of attention, thereby removing estrangement and returning the self-conscious mind to unity with itself:

The aim of education must be to arouse in the pupil this spiritual and ethical sensitiveness which does not look upon anything as merely indifferent, but rather knows how to seize in everything, even in the seemingly unimportant, its universal human significance (Rosenkranz 1897: 31).

Recounting the influence of Rousseau, and the transformation of the French Revolution from proclaiming the liberation of humanity to pursuing the glory of the French nation, Rosenkranz argues that the philosophy of education is always political because of implementation, and teaching is always ethical because of human interaction. In passing he notes the influence of another relevant educational reformer:

Then appeared Pestalozzi and directed education also to the lower classes of society — those who are called, not without something approaching to a derogatory meaning, *the people*. From this time dates popular education, the effort for the intellectual and moral elevation of the hitherto neglected atomistic human being of the non-property-holding multitude. The shall in future be no dirty, hungry, ignorant, awkward, thankless, and will-less mass, devoted alone to animal existence. We can never rid ourselves of the lower classes by having

says that all individuals should be treated as objectives in their own right, never just as the means to achieving another person's ends (the so-called categorical imperative), the objective itself. From this point of view, one educational task of social work is to help people to attain and to maintain the experience of meaning and dignity in their life. Pedagogical questioning is closely connected with ethical themes'. However, such social criticism clearly remains embedded in philosophical anthropology.

the wealthy give something, or even their all to the poor; but we can rid ourselves of them in the sense that the possibility of culture and independent self-support shall be open to everyone, because he is a human being and a citizen of the commonwealth. Ignorance and rudeness, and the vice which springs from them, and the malevolent mind which hates civil laws and ordinances and generates crime – these shall disappear. Education shall train man to self-conscious obedience to the law, as well as to kindly feeling toward the erring, and to an effort not merely for their punishment, but for their improvement. But the more Pestalozzi endeavored to realize his ideal of human dignity, the more he comprehended that the isolated power of a private man could not attain it, but that the nation itself must make the education of its people its first business. Fichte by his lectures [*Addresses to the German Nation*, 1808] first made the German nation fully accept these thoughts ... (Rosenkranz 1897: 281-282).

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi pioneered basic literacy with a fundamental stress on the self-activity of the learner developing the power of observation (*Anschauung*), utilising pictures before letters. Pestalozzi criticised ‘our unpsychological schools [that] are essentially only artificial stifling machines for destroying all the results of the power and experiences that nature herself brings to life in [children]’ (Pestalozzi 1894: 26)³⁵. What is at stake is faith in the possibility of improving the human race.

Most strikingly Freire’s criticism of dictatorial teaching also recalls Friedrich Nietzsche’s criticism of liberal education methods. As he put it in a lecture delivered in 1872 what is called ‘culture’ (*Bildung*: self-formation) in our universities merely proceeds from the mouth to the ear:

³⁵ Pestalozzi influenced Friedrich Froebel: ‘All true educators must at each instant, in all their requirements and designs, be at the same time two-sided, – giving and taking, uniting and separating, dictating and following, acting and enduring, deciding and setting free, fixed and movable: and the pupil must be so also’ (Froebel 1885: 9). These currents flowed into traditional educational institutions. For example, Froebel influenced the Dominican Order. My own primary education was shaped by Dominican educators trained, I suspect, at the Froebel College of Education, Blackrock, Dublin (now relocated to the National University of Ireland, Maynooth).

‘How is the student connected with the university?’ We answer: ‘By the ear, as a hearer’. The foreigner is astonished. ‘Only by the ear?’ he repeats. ‘Only by the ear’, we again reply. The student hears. When he speaks, when he sees, when he is in the company of his companions when he takes up some branch of art: in short, when he *lives* he is independent, *i.e.* not dependent upon the educational institution. The student very often writes down something while he hears; and it is only at these rare moments that he hangs to the umbilical cord of his alma mater. He himself may choose what he is to listen to; he is not bound to believe what is said; he may close his ears if he does not care to hear. This is the ‘acroamatic’ [oral] method of teaching (Nietzsche 1909: 125)³⁶.

Freire’s objections to the consequences of modernity were echoed by Martin Heidegger’s reaction to the dehumanisation of man, and an education system that undermined human being as potential for change:

The teacher is ahead of his apprentices in this alone, that he has still far more to learn than they—he has to learn to let them learn. The teacher must be capable of being more teachable than the apprentices. The teacher is far less assured of his ground than those who learn are of theirs. If the relation between the teacher and the taught is genuine, therefore, there is never a place in it for the authority of the know-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official (Heidegger 1976: 15).

Heidegger saw the instrumentalisation of education as reducing learning into the efficient use of resources, whereby techniques for controlling nature are turned back on ourselves. Invoking the idea of Socratic conversation,

³⁶ Nietzsche (1982: 160): ‘I did not believe my eyes and looked and looked again and said at last: “That is an ear! An ear as big as a man!” I looked yet more closely: and in fact under the ear there moved something that was pitifully small and meagre and slender. And in truth, the monstrous ear sat upon a little, thin stalk – the stalk, however, was a man! By use of a magnifying glass one could even discern a little, envious face as well; and one could discern, too, that a turgid little soul was dangling from the stalk’.

Heidegger also stressed that in the concrete pedagogical scene the parties allow their respective identities to be thrown in doubt.

But for Heidegger the transformation of subjects into resources is not to be halted by the self-assertion of the humanistic subject since it is the representation of that subject that facilitated the framing of the calculable world that has led to the current crisis (see Thompson 2005; and Allen & Axiotis 2002)³⁷. The '*humanitas*' of the *homo humanus* and the 'human' in human being is determined by reference to an already established interpretation of history, nature, and the world. Metaphysics thinks of human beings out of a sense of what it is to be animal, not in the direction of acquiring an understanding of what it is to be human. Indeed the conception of *animal rationale* devalues man by tying him to animality: 'a thesis advanced with an invidious glance at the animal' (Adorno 1973: 124).

Freire's opposition between traditional banking (transmission) education and liberatory critical (constructivist) pedagogy, flourishing the Gradgrindian spook, serves to satisfy the desire to be on the right side righteously contributing to justice in the world. But in terms of pedagogy, the foregrounded goal of liberation introduces an always timely reminder of the complexity of the place of imitation in teaching and learning. The liberatory teacher does not need to function as empathetic role model to be identified with, for this might confirm rather than challenge the system of identification that is perpetuated by the cycle of substitution. Thus for Freire: 'I engage in dialogue not necessarily because I like the other person. I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely individualistic process of knowing' (Freire in Freire & Macedo 1995: 379). From a strictly epistemological perspective dialogue is oriented toward the delimitation of a knowledge object. You cannot realistically have a dialogue 'by simply thinking that dialogue is a kind of verbal ping-pong about one's historical location and lived experiences' (385). Otherwise there is the danger of

³⁷ Heidegger (1998b: 245) criticised the humanism of antiquity, Christianity, Marx and Sartre for determining humanity 'with regard to an already established interpretation of nature, history, world, and the ground of the world, that is, of beings as a whole' (see Hodge 1995: 80). Heidegger's own praxis involved the Nazification of the university.

blurring the structuring presence of authority³⁸. The validity of my judgement is not merely a reflection of my experience, and the conditions of belief-holding are not to be confused with those of justification. As Augusto Boal (1985: 108) notes, quoting with approval Brecht, the one who shows remains disengaged.

Ideally, then, I ought not to see myself in my teacher's place but rather see myself overturning the system perpetuated by the roles of master and student in the first place. That is why the basis of identification, social identity in term of race or class, is not essential for learning to take place. Because social identities are hierarchical and oppressive, liberation cannot be grounded on them but can at best use them as a stepping stone to their eventual overcoming. Rejecting the presupposition that because experience is always what I begin with therefore a particular judgement on my experience meets the criterion of validity, Freire stresses that justification does not rest on immediacy but on analysis. '[I]t is indispensable to proceed with the investigation by means of abstraction' (Freire 2005a: 105) which ultimately returns the investigator critically to the concrete. This is why Freire argues against the position that the unanalysed experiences of the oppressed speak for themselves or that the educator must stick with the knowledge of lived experience (see Freire 2006: 72). When the critique of privilege becomes a privilege, analysis of the social totality is reduced to a fable manned by wolves and sheep. In the process of abstraction and critical reflection learner and teacher discover their place in the world. Pedagogy, implicated in the distinction between manual and mental labour, is part of the problem to be analysed.

This is not to say that I cannot be inspired by seeing someone like me in the role of teacher, but this subjective compensation is not essential for learning. Indeed it might even foster a certain complacent expectation that, on the basis of our shared identity, I am sure to succeed or at least more likely to find favour. Permission to substitute domesticates the subversive desire to

³⁸ 'I cannot accept the idea of a facilitator who facilitates so as not to teach.... the teacher turned facilitator maintains the power institutionally created in the position ... a deceitful discourse' (Freire in Freire & Macedo 1995: 378). According to Rosa María Torres, Freire maintained that the educator who says that he or she is equal to his or her learners is either a demagogue, lies, or is incompetent (Torres cited in McLaren 2000, p. 148).

substitute as sanctioned succession. This would confirm the essential structure of what Freire (2006: 90) called ‘the introjection of the oppressor by the oppressed’ that critical pedagogy as a form of historico-sociocultural and political psychoanalysis seeks to cure.

Conclusion

Dialectically, education is not key to transformation, but transformation is in itself educational (Freire 1990b).

While the experience of islands of injustice makes up the world of oppression, Freire sees relativism as the enemy of liberation (see Freire 1990a: 387). Both the absolutising of experience and the abandonment of objective truth are refused. Freireian consciousness-raising links education and praxis to oppression and its causes by way of the narrative of liberation. While education can at best undermine a system from within or provide the knowledge to ground a strategy of action, it cannot by itself produce political change. Because an effective, or at least progressive, intervention depends on a correct interpretation of the world then the world must be correctly interpreted before it can be positively changed. Education for freedom is the heading of this ongoing process of interpretation.

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