

CRITICAL THEORY AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY TODAY

Toward a New Critical language in Education

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Studies in Education

 UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA

2005

Editorial Board: Deborah Golden, Rachel Hertz- Lazarowitz, Michael Katz, Ofra Mayselless,
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Front cover: Yosli Bergner — Jaffa Pleasure Boats 2003

Published by the Faculty of Education, University of Haifa, Haifa 31905, Israel

Address: Iyyunim Bachinuch (Studies in Education) Faculty of Education, University of
Haifa, Haifa 31905, Israel

Contents

Ilan Gur-Ze'ev

Critical Theory, Critical Pedagogy and Diaspora today:
Toward a New Critical Language in Education (introduction) 7-34

Michael Peters

Critical Pedagogy and the Futures of Critical Theory 35-48

Douglas Kellner

Toward a Critical Theory of Education 49-69

Peter McLaren

Critical Pedagogy in the Age of Terror 70-94

Michael W. Apple

Making Critical Pedagogy Strategic — on Doing Critical Educational
Work in Conservative Times 95-113

Elizabeth E. Heilman

Escaping the Bind Between Utopia and Dystopia — Eutopic Critical Pedagogy
of Identity and Embodied Practice 114-142

Gert Biesta

What can Critical Pedagogy Learn From Postmodernism? —
Further Reflections on the Impossible Future of Critical Pedagogy 143-159

Ilan Gur-Ze'ev

Beyond Postmodern Feminist Critical Pedagogy — Toward a Diasporic Philosophy
of Counter-Education 160-192

Nicholas C. Burbules

Dialogue and Critical Pedagogy 193-207

Jan Masschelein and Norbert Ricken

“Bildung” and the Problems of Critique —
Some Reflections on the Relations Between Bildung and Power 208-224

Nigel Tubbs The Philosophy of Critical Pedagogy	226-240
Andreas Gruschka Critical Pedagogy After Adorno	241-260
Olli-Pekka Moissio Max Horkheimer on the Mimetic Element in Education	261-279
Bruno Pucci and Newton de-Olivera Catharsis from the Greeks to Culture Industry	280-288
James D. Marshall Michel Foucault — From Critical “Theory” to Critical Pedagogy	289-299
Mark Mason Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy After Postmodernism — From the South African Experience, a Defense of Reason and Rationality	300-316
Eduardo M. Duarte Learning as Freedom — the Letting be of Learning Together	317-328
Anat Rimon-Or Power-Relations and Liberation — Critical Pedagogy Beyond Freire and Giroux	329-340
Subjects Index	345-384
Names Index	385-388

Critical Theory, Critical Pedagogy and Diaspora Today: Toward a New Critical Language in Education (introduction)

Ilan Gur-Ze'ev

Critical Pedagogy faces today a very strange situation. While being positioned in a seemingly comfortable position and warmly received by so many liberals, post-colonialists, multiculturalists, postmodernists, and feminists (to name only few of the long list of its adorers), it is being domesticated, appeased, or even castrated by the present order of things. It became too successful, under different titles, while under the flag of Critical Pedagogy it became domesticated, disoriented, or dogmatized. As many of the authors of this collection have noted, today it has become difficult to speak of “Critical Pedagogy”; it is quite ambitious even to articulate the essential elements common to the various and conflicting pedagogies that propagate themselves under the banner of “Critical Pedagogy”.

Critical Pedagogy was constituted on the central concepts of Critical Theory and on the material, social, and cultural conditions that enabled the critical Utopia. It was part of a rich Western tradition, not just a sign of a dramatic crisis in modern thought and reality. If in classical times the whole was conceived as prior to the parts, and harmony preceded differences and otherness, the imperial Roman era already acknowledged the turn away from the wholeness of the cosmos. Stoa and Gnosis represented it in rich, different, ways. For Gnosis *Being is temporary*; not eternal. *Being is essentially split* and antagonistic to itself. The temporality of Being and its infinite not-identical-with-itself is acknowledged also by St. Augustine in the tenth book of his *Confessions* as well as in the first Letter to Thessalonians in the *New Testament*. Without abandoning truth, it faced the retreat of classical togetherness of humans and the wholeness of the cosmos, as well as the priority and supremacy of the whole over its individual parts. Cosmic intimacy and unproblematic self-evidence were replaced by alienation; alienation between the parts and the whole, and alienation within the individual himself. Medieval Christianity offered an alternative — via the “home-returning” project. With the assistance of dogma and well kept walls between classes in society, and between Christian-Jewish sacred truth and existence, it maintained a fairly stable illusion of coherent, steady, relations between the intellect, moral faculty and the aesthetical dimensions of life, and the body. This relative stability was perceived as part of a redeemed, yet fragile and threatened whole: between the Christian, the world, the Other, and knowledge about worthy knowledge. This stable hierarchy, which divided Spirit and body, supra-human and

worldly-life, was never genuinely harmonious, stable, coherent, or wholly penetrating. In actuality it did not safely protect the hegemonic social order and its realms of self-evidence: it was actually questioned time and again by rebellious poor farmers, well-educated heretics, witches, madmen, children, women, Jews, and other Others. And yet, it enjoyed relative success in hiding its *immanent violence*, which offered, aside from inequality (after death), suffering, ignorance, and effective silencing of the free spirit. At this price, however, it offered *meaning* to the given reality and *hope* for transcendence. The demolition of the medieval Western Christian world was brought about by the strengthening and universalization of two versions of its arch-rival: the alliance of classical Greek thought and Judaism. Herman Cohen emphasized the *universal realization of Judaism as the expression of the critical spirit and humanism*¹ — Karl Marx² emphasized the *universal realization of Judaism as manifested by the logic and practice of capitalism*.³ The medieval Christian world could not very long resist such united, erotic, transcending powers.

The medieval order could not sustain durable resistance to the new philosophical and scientific revolutionary developments,⁴ or to the economic, social, technological, and national challenges imposed by the spirit of capitalism. In modernity the critical project was aimed at a positive mission: reestablishing the world as a “home”; *offering a “home returning” project for humans, back to a (pre)meaningful wholeness* enhanced by rational, solidaristic, dialogical, individuals. Within the framework of Enlightenment individuals committed themselves to re-constitute the Garden of Eden on earth via critical thinking and collective rational-political praxis. The Critical Theory thinkers of the Frankfurt School were faced with the problematic of the unattainable metaphysical assumptions for this mission. They also acknowledged the new, irrelevant, social conditions for the realization of the Enlightenment’s educational project — and along with Heidegger and existentialism, they not only refused any metaphysics, they further developed a *Diasporic philosophy* — one that addressed humans’ ontological *Diasporic existence*. They responded to the human condition as “being-thrown-into-the-world”, meaninglessness, and omnipotent-cannibalistic-violence that enhances “culture” and “progress” only as new forms of nihilistic negation of love of Life in its wholeness.

For late Adorno and Horkheimer, this was the beginning of a new, vivid, thinking, not the end of their utopian undertaking. Even if they were not aware of it, we can still identify in

- 1 Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*, translated by Simon Kaplan, New York: F. Unger Publications, 1972.
- 2 Karl Marx, *Zur Judenfrage*, Berlin: Rowohlt, 1919.
- 3 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, “The university, the eternal-improviser, and the possibility of meaning in a post-modern era”, in Ilan Gur-Ze'ev (ed.), *The End of Israeli Academia?* Haifa: The Faculty of Education, University of Haifa - Iyyunim Bachinuch, 2005, pp. 256-299.
- 4 Max Horkheimer, “Bedrohungen der Freiheit”, *Gesammelte Schriften* VIII., Frankfurt a.Main 1985, p. 276.

their later work that the dissolution of the promise of modernity became, actually, a gate for a new beginning. Earthly, Diasporic, life disconnected from the Exile-Redemption narrative, became an entry for a renewed, negative, ecstatic, intimacy with the world. Out of awareness of the existential situatedness as *being-thrown-into-the-world* they articulated a concept of *living-toward-the-not-yet-in-a-Godless-world*, in the totality of each moment. Living, here, is not so much in the sense of self protection and reproduction as in the sense of “becoming”, of commitment for self-constitution and edification. Diasporic life enabled creative improvisations and births, which made meaninglessness an impetus to new possibilities for happiness, meaning, aim, and togetherness.

Within the framework of mature Critical Theory the concept of *Diaspora* was developed even beyond the Gnostic division between the exiled, hidden, God and the evil God of creation/reality; a division between evil nature and meaningless laws and fabrications — and the wholeness and supremacy of nothingness/chaos. The contribution of Critical Theory to the history of Diasporic Philosophy was made possible by the change of stance of the concepts, ideals, symbols, strivings, and other signifiers which were dissolved, ridiculed, or forgotten in the era of advanced capitalism and its fully administered world in which progress paralleled the broadening of the possibilities for emancipation on the one hand, and the empowerment of the oppression of the individual to the level of the instincts, on the other.⁵ Not only the promise of Enlightenment became irrelevant: the traditional Gnostic rejection of the world of facts and its entire negative alternative became anecdotal at best, in face of the life conditions dictated by the omnipotence of Instrumental Rationality and advanced capitalism and its Culture Industry.⁶

Some Critical Pedagogy thinkers such as McLaren, Gruschka, Mason, Tubbs, De-Olivera, Zeichner, and Weiler insist on the modernistic-oriented humanist project. Others, such as Michael Peters, Patti Lather, and Gert Biesta, emphasize the new possibilities within the framework of the postmodern discourses and the postmodern conditions. Still others, such as Colin Lankshear, Wendy Kohly, Nicholas Burbules, Raquel Moraes, Elisabeth Heilman, Eduardo Duarte and Henry Giroux, search for a creative synthesis between modern and postmodern sensitivities, conceptions, practices, technologies and paths for communication, existence and education. But this is far from being the only dichotomy. Other dichotomies crisscross Critical Pedagogy today on the level of gender, multiculturalism, post-colonialism, and queer conflicting theories. Sometime the line of division crisscrosses not solely critical thinkers and agendas — they oppose each other even in their own educational philosophy. Other critical philosophers, such as Jan Masschelein, refuse to identify themselves further with Critical Pedagogy, and search for a worthier alternative by long

5 Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 141.

6 Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VII, Frankfurt a.Main: Fischer, 1985, p. 29-30, 159.

meditative walking in silence and in other paths. Regardless to the degree of identification with Critical Pedagogy, it seems to me that many critical pedagogues are today ready for, or actually searching for a *new critical language in education* that will go beyond the achievements and limitations of Critical Pedagogy.

In itself this is nothing to regret or to be sorry for. What is regrettable, however, is that so much of Critical Pedagogy has become dogmatic, and sometimes anti-intellectual, while on the other hand losing its relevance for the people it conceived as victims to be emancipated. Why is this regrettable? Because the erotic telos of Critical Pedagogy insists on poetic, religiously anti-dogmatic, worthy Life as a manifestation of Love, not of fear or of heated "critique". Because it symbolizes the quest for freedom and refusal of meaningless suffering in face of the *loss of naïve intimacy with the world* and with the truth of Being, and because, sometimes, it actually enhances equality and resists oppression; even if actually it normally promotes new forms of oppression and enhances new ways for *self-forgetfulness*. In detaching itself from the rich works of Adorno, Benjamin, Horkheimer, and the other thinkers of Critical Theory, Critical Pedagogy in its different versions has abandoned its attunement to *Life* itself in so many respects.

Currently next to no attempts are being made to confront Critical Pedagogy with reality in actual, enduring, pedagogical engagements. No wonder then that next to no attempts are being made to articulate an educational framework for critical teachers' training either, and certainly no ongoing practice of teachers' training at schools. Important exceptions here are the theoretical and practical contributions of Kenneth Zeichner,⁷ Daniel Liston,⁸ and Andreas Gruschka.⁹ All this, in face of deceptive calls from the various symbols, strivings, and technologies of globalizing capitalism, and alongside the actuality of anti-reflective and ethnocentric-oriented construction of collective identities of many of the oppressed groups that are so enthusiastically idolized by many disciples of Critical Pedagogy. These are but fragmentary examples of the detachment of current Critical Pedagogies from the wholeness, depths, abysses, dangers, and richness of Life.

Critical Pedagogy contributed more than its fair share in an ongoing attempt to be relevant to political challenges, especially for marginalized and oppressed groups. This is an attempt of vital importance, especially when it is conducted in the wider context of the current crisis in the stance of humanistic-oriented knowledge and its dynamics (as in the work of Burbules,

7 Kenneth M. Zeichner, "Traditions of practice in U.S. preservice teacher education programs", *Teaching and Teacher Education* (1993), 9, 1, pp. 1-13.

Kenneth Zeichner, "Changing Directions in the Practicum: looking ahead to the 1990's", *Journal of Education for Teaching*, (1990), 16: 2, pp. 105-131.

8 Dan Liston, "Love and despair in teaching", *Educational Theory* (2000) 50, pp. 81-102.

9 Andreas Gruschka, *Negative Paedagogik — Einfuehrung in die Paedagogik mit Kritische Theorie*, Muenster: Pandora, 1986.

Peters, Heilman, Biesta, Tubbs, Rimon-Or, Marshall, Mason, Gruschka, and Masschelein), or within the context of historical, cultural, and economic changes (as in the case of McLaren, Apple, Kellner, and Duarte). As you will see, these attempts, their wider context, their vitality, courage, and their penetrating power are very vivid in the various contributions of this collection. The present historical moment, however, needs so much more than that. And overcoming any historical moment and its imperatives, walls, and possibilities calls for even more than that. We cannot, however, offer, arbitrarily, new master signifiers, strivings, or openness, nor a new critical language, at the present historical moment.

A new critical vocabulary, and not-yet-born master-signifiers, along with other genuine manifestations of **the totally other**,¹⁰ cannot appear out of the blue, on demand. Master-signifiers, new horizons, and historical shifts are parts of the rich affluence of Being and are manifested differently in all parts and dimensions of the cosmos, preceding any abstraction, law, or control. They might be approached by humans as *manifestations of Love vs. Metaphysical Violence*, or as the infinite/restrained presence of *affluence as Metaphysical Violence*. In any case, these do not behave like domesticated pets, and are never at humans' mercy. They are true manifestations of the infinity and freedom of Being. The new master-signifiers are essentially unforeseeable, uncontrollable, and never totally deciphered, or truly to be mobilized for further productivization, preservation, or enrichment of the instrumental ways for being-in-the-world. They burst into reality — or do not appear at all, beyond determinism, contingency, and unpredictability. Their possible appearance enables freedom and necessity, yet it is not conditioned by laws of freedom, determinism, or representation.

When **the totally other** bursts into a specific historical moment the realm of self-evidence is cracked by this manifestation of “messianic time”,¹¹ and “now-time”¹² is irreparably shattered by “redemption”; the epoch of the essentially newly born possibilities becomes not only possible but actually inevitable. It is the moment for untouched horizons, fresh master-signifiers, and fruitful, dynamic, new creations, reactions, and life-and-death wars. The truth of Being and the hidden violence of the historical moment might become unveiled by poetry, philosophy, art, dance, and singing. At such a rare moment dialogue with the world (that conditions any genuine human communication and “dialogue”)¹³ and self-reflection face newly born possibilities. The very possibility of such a moment is a precondition for

10 Martin Heidegger, “Letter on humanism”, *Basic Writings*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 258.

Max Horkheimer, “Die sehnsucht nach dem ganz Anderen”, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VII., Frankfurt a.Main: Fischer, 1985, p. 385-404.

11 Walter Benjamin, “Ueber den Begriff der Geschichte”, *Gesammelte Schriften*, I.2, Frankfurt a.Main: Suhrkamp, 1980, pp. 695.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 701.

13 Nicholas Burbules, in “Dialogue and Critical Pedagogy” IN: Ilan Gur-Ze’ev (ed.) *Critical Theory and Pedagogy Today*, pp.

transcendence and for counter-education, which will uncover fresh forms of intimacy and creation with and amid distorted Being.

The possibility of a new critical language in education and of spanning new possibilities for approaching the nearness of truth and the richness of Life are always a matter for human concern. But even at the best of times it is in our hands only partially and always merely conditionally, fragmentarily, and frigidly. And this too, only for a fleeting moment. This is an important positive dimension of Negative Utopia: it means that there is so much that we can do, under the present conditions — actually, under any conditions! And yet, essentially, there is always a limit not only to our possibilities within the historical moment: the very existence of meaningful horizons and their specific material, symbolic, and existential characteristics are essentially not ours but a challenge to overcome, a potential to transcend.

Present-day Critical Pedagogy faces, as the authors of this collection manifest, challenges of different kinds, and it responds to these challenges in various, different, and at times conflicting, ways. Among these challenges the contributors to this collection note globalizing capitalism, the introduction of new technologies in communication, the change in the stance and function of knowledge, the dramatic shift in the structure of society, and the transformation of relations between work, finance, and the state in the era of the MacWorld.¹⁴

Old conceptions of class-struggle and traditional emancipatory sensitivities, vocabularies, and practices are deconstructed, consumed, reified and neutralized in the present historical moment, while marginalization, suffering, injustice, and structural blocking from cultural and political capital become ever more sophisticated and harsh for ever more people around the globe. Under these circumstances normalizing education becomes a vital element of the oppression, not solely as part of the direct and indirect violence inflicted on the poor, the homeless, minority races, ethnicities, cultures, and other Others. It becomes at the same time an almost *omnipotent de-humanizing power* by the minorities, the oppressed, and the marginalized — against their own Others, against their oppressive powers and against free spirit, thinking, and Life.

Critical Pedagogy, in its different versions, has usually failed to meet this challenge of emancipatory pedagogy, becoming part and parcel of normalizing education.¹⁵ Its identification with the marginalized and the oppressed, and its commitment to a positive Utopia, allowed it to sharpen its critique and become instrumental in many academic radical circles. Committed to its various positive Utopias in the fields of feminist, multi-cultural, race, class, post-colonial, and queer struggles, the different versions of Critical Pedagogy have more than once become dogmatic, ethnocentrist, and violent. Concurrently, they have

14 Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. MacWorld — How Globalism and Tribalism Are Shaping the World*, New York: New York Times Books 1995.

15 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, "Toward a nonrepressive critical pedagogy", *Educational Theory* (Fall 1998), 48: 4, pp. 463-486.

become increasingly popular in ever widening academic circles, and decreasingly relevant to the victims it is committed to emancipate. What is to be done, for that which the different versions of Critical Pedagogy treat to be seriously re-approached? For a genuine rejection of injustice and the nearness *to truth as Love and as violence, as affluence and as scarcity/fright, as the presence of Eros and the presence of Tanathus*, not to be abandoned in favor of fashionable, domesticating “radical” rhetoric?

The various critical attempts to respond to this challenge are the alpha and the omega of this collection. It is the challenge which the authors of this collected works committed themselves to take up, while dialogically relating to each other’s elaborations and suggestions. I shall not try here to outline each of these attempts, or to evaluate them. Let the texts present themselves to their readers. It may be of value, however, to try and offer some remarks, in light of my own philosophy, as a gateway to the possible birth of a response to the present challenges critical education is faced with when true to itself.

I limit myself to six aspects of this manifold and rich challenge, from the perspectives of Diasporic Philosophy and counter-education.

1. Critical Pedagogy and Critical Theory. I believe I do not run the risk of exaggeration by asserting that in fact *all current versions of Critical Pedagogy have lost their intimate connections to the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School*; not much is left of its original relation with the Frankfurt School that was an enrichment so fruitful for the very possibility of Critical Pedagogy; for Paulo Freire and early Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Michael Apple, Ira Shor, and other founders of the unexpected present popularity (and irrelevance) of the different versions of Critical Pedagogy. This historical and philosophical gap is not a regretful condition per se; if only a fruitful transformation and a rich, elevating, alternative had lifted Critical Pedagogy beyond Critical Theory! How regrettable that this promise is still not-actualized. It has not happened, even if the influences of postmodernism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, new versions of feminism, multiculturalism, and queer theories have indeed enriched many aspects of current Critical Pedagogy. What is it that is lost, and should be courageously addressed?

Most versions of Critical Pedagogy opened themselves up to the influences of postmodern and post-colonialist academic rhetoric, which has become so popular in American and European universities. In their rush to become politically active and relevant in the field of education the Critical Pedagogy thinkers overlooked the essential instincts, ideals, and telos of Critical Theory that Critical Pedagogy, at its best moments, committed itself to “realize”.

Critical Pedagogy thinkers forgot that mature Critical Theory was utopian, yet its Utopia was a *Negative Utopia* — not a Positive Utopia.¹⁶ Later Horkheimer and Adorno dismissed

16 Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “Walter Benjamin and Max Horkheimer: from utopia to redemption”, *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* (1998), 8, pp. 119-155.

any “revolutionary”, “radical”, or “emancipatory” project that promised reconciliation, “just peace”, an “end to suffering”, “salvation” for the victims, or even advancement on this road. Demolition of terror would inevitably result in cultural and social deconstruction, according to Adorno and Horkheimer,¹⁷ and Benjamin asserted that there is no cultural document that was not a manifestation of barbarism.¹⁸ Even the idea of approaching “truth” via ideology-critique was problematic for them, since, according to Adorno, cultural critique itself had become reified, and critical spirit, when content with itself, cannot challenge the total reification of the present historical moment.¹⁹

The mature work of Adorno and Horkheimer is not optimistic, yet it insists on the utopian axis of *Life* in all its manifestations — as a Negative Utopia. Philosophical pessimism makes the Messianic impulse possible, and redemption is what is being addressed here,²⁰ while insisting on what in Negative Theology was conceived as *the presence of the absence of God*. Horkheimer notes explicitly in his diary entry for 5 July 1923 that this is his personal impetus for philosophizing.²¹ There is such a rich, infinite, space for creative courage, Love of Life and transcending power in awareness of the presence of meaninglessness in face not of the absence of truth — but on the contrary, in face of the presence of the successful (contingent) production of truths, values, and yardsticks for evaluation of rival values, truths, and passions! All this in the service of a life-and-death struggle between rival arenas of truths-and-values-production, in support of nihilistic *self-forgetfulness* of humans’ being-toward-life.

In light of the tradition of Diasporic Philosophy the mature Critical Theory of Adorno and Horkheimer conceived meaninglessness, suffering, and unbridgeable tension between equality and freedom and the abyss between human culture and the harmonic, beautiful-meaningless self-contentment of nature as a starting point for their (negative) Utopia; without being swallowed by false promises to overcome the dialectics of Life, the abysses and dangers facing true love and genuine creativity, and certainly *without promising social “emancipation” or “revolution”*²² or a true, unproblematic, educational alternative of the kind Critical Pedagogy educators normally are so quick to promise us in so many voices and agendas.²³

17 Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Frankfurt a.Main 1988, p. 225.

18 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken, 1969, p. 256.

19 Theodor Adorno, “Culture critique and society”, in Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Frankfurt School*, Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim 1993, p. 157 (in Hebrew).

20 Max Horkheimer, “Pessimismus heute”, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII, Frankfurt a.Main: Fischer 1985, p. 231.

21 Max Horkheimer, “Notizen”, *Gesammelte Schriften* XI., Frankfurt a.Main, 1987, p. 235.

22 Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VII. P. 341. See also:

Max Horkheimer, “Kritische Theorie gestern und heute”, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, Frankfurt a.Main: Fischer, 1985, p. 346.

23 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, “Toward a nonrepressive Critical Pedagogy”, *Educational Theory* (Fall 1998), 48: 4, pp. 469.

When Horkheimer declares his abandonment of Marx in favor of Schopenhauer²⁴ he actually comes very close to some of the central Gnostic conceptions within the framework of a Diasporic Philosophy. The foundations and the telos of the Enlightenment's modern emancipatory tradition and its Marxian versions are fundamentally challenged in the later works of Adorno and Horkheimer. Even the young Horkheimer already noted in his diary that he was most uncomfortable with the tranquilizing dimension of the Marxian Utopia.²⁵ This part of their work is too often ignored by today's radical and emancipatory educators. Here it might be worth bearing in mind that for the Gnosis authentic freedom is never to be related to the human mind or psyche — which are constructed and policed by historical power-relations and violent manipulations (much in the same manner as the body is enacted by the physical law). Solely the Spirit, *the pneuma*, the foreign, never-to-be-defined-nor-controlled element in Life manifests genuine freedom. Human psyche and mind are part of the evil creation of the *Demiurgus* that rules over all the world of individual existence and thingness.

Late Adorno and Horkheimer did not satisfy themselves in recycling a Gnostic concept of salvation within the framework of the reformulated late Critical Theory; they further developed (a beginning) of a *Diasporic Philosophy*, which refuses to offer any “solution”, “method”, or “salvation”.²⁶ Their later work acknowledges the *Diaspora* as the gate to rich alternative thinking and becoming-toward-the-world.

This gate I understand as an important starting point for a present-day Diasporic counter-education. Of special importance here is their refusal of any version of Positive Utopia and of all calls for “salvation”, “emancipation”, “effectiveness”, or “success”. This is also a refusal of any kind of nihilism and abandonment of hope and Love of Life. For Diasporic humans, here the return to the (absent) wholeness and richness of nature is part of (re)establishing (negative) cosmic intimacy. Adorno and Horkheimer are much closer here to Hans Jonas and Immanuel Levinas than to Heidegger, who, as Jonas rightly noted, had no respect for nature.²⁷

Parallel to their intensive efforts to become “relevant”, “involved”, “effective”, and “emancipating”, the current different versions of Critical Pedagogy lost not only Negative Utopia. Today's Critical Pedagogy lost another essential element of Critical Theory — the attempt to transcend itself and to enable a worthier nearness to dialectical intimacy to the

24 Max Horkheimer, “Kritische Theorie gestern und heute”, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, Frankfurt a.Main: Fischer, 1985, p. 339.

25 Marx Horkheimer, “Notizen”, *Gesammelte Schriften*, XI., Frankfurt a.Main 1987, p. 269.

26 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, “Critical Theory, Critical Pedagogy and the possibility of counter-education”, in Michael Peters, Colin Lankshear, and M. Olssen, Mark (eds.), *Critical Theory and the Human Condition: Founders and Praxis*, New York: Peter Lang, 2003, pp. 17-35.

27 Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, Boston: Beacon Press 1992, p. 339.

richness of Life in its wholeness. Critical Pedagogy abandoned the Negative Utopian kind of commitment to transcendence in favor of another: commitment to successful political activity and effective practical involvement that will ensure us being successfully swallowed by the continuum of the immanence; a successful return into thingness. This is a switch from a Diasporic project, which is committed to a never-concluding-effort of *transcendence*, to a different one, which while paying lip service to “resistance” and “emancipation” is totally committed to a nihilistic devotion to the closure of *immanence*. It runs away from eternal worthy suffering that is part and parcel of Diasporic nomadism and its struggle for a never-concluding-effort at transcendence — not for a reconciling “home-returning” project (which frequently praises exile too — only to end in nirvana, “redemption”, “tragic heroism”, “consistent nihilism” or other forms of Tanathus). This turn was paralleled in the last thirty years by overemphasis on either the intellectual aspects of education (ideology-critique, conscious awareness enhancement, and so forth), or on the subjective “experience” of the oppressed pupil and the self-evidence of diverse conflicting, marginalized collectives that strive for hegemony and “emancipation” that will ultimately effectively enslave their Others, without leaving traces or exacting too high a price.

Contrary to this trend, the Frankfurt School critical thinkers, while opposing the tradition of “life-philosophy”, took all kinds of existential self-evidence and philosophical self-contentment as a challenge that might effectively destroy or exile the transcending potential of human existence.²⁸ They did not try to establish intimacy with the self-evidence of hegemonic or marginalized collectives. They conceived self-evidence as collective closure and as a great danger for the free human spirit. Intimacy, patriotism, and dogmatism for them were threats of being swallowed by thingness, nature, and myth.

As Diasporic thinkers, they centered their thought on the relation between the human subject and the world. Subject and object were not mere abstract theoretical categories for Adorno and Horkheimer. The human and nature, and especially the estrangement between the two, enforced by Western Instrumental Rationality, were a starting point for Enlightenment, and therefore also for Critical Theory, which acknowledges that all along history humans had to decide between two possibilities: enslaving nature or being enslaved by it.²⁹ For them the acknowledgement of humans’ homelessness in a Godless world was the gate to the elaboration of possibilities for a worthy response and for the possibility of cultivating what I call *Diasporic response-ability*.

Diasporic response-ability addresses the affluence of meaninglessness and violence since the destruction of the chaos/nothingness and the history of Godly creation/human “progress”.

28 Max Horkheimer, “[Lebensphilosophie: Bergson, Simmel, Dilthey]”, *Gesammelte Schriften*, X., Frankfurt a.Main 1990, pp. 276-299.

29 Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklaerung*, p. 71.

Response-ability in this sense is not merely passive and not solely active; it is not a mere manifestation of affluence in Life, nor is it exclusively a manifestation of human scarcity. If, true to its Diasporic essence, it does not offer counter-violence against nature and against humans, nor does it offer what Nietzsche called slave morality as a gate for transcendence: it refuses all calls for escape in self-protection and pleasure/truth as the ultimate goal of Life. Here response-ability acknowledges meaninglessness and suffering, and does not try to escape them or the danger of self-destruction: it transcends them within the creativity of Love, Diasporic, non-sentimental Love of Life and its abysses.³⁰ It transcends them in the sense that it challenges the traditional lines of division between “transcendence” and “immanence”, “home” and “homelessness”. The various conflicting collective Positive Utopias, and individual escapist, nihilist, and relativist “home-returning” projects, were for them a manifestation of the forgetfulness of human forgetfulness; not a worthy response to this challenge, which in advanced capitalism became stronger and more sophisticated than ever. In their mature work, after the publication of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they searched for a third, Diasporic, path between the Scylla of collectivism-dogmatism and the Charybdis of selfish, relativist-oriented Instrumental Rationality that sees nature and the Other as a mere standing reserve, an object of manipulation or a source of danger. The Diasporic counter-education that we can reconstruct from the tradition of Diasporic Philosophy (and here Adorno and Horkheimer are of special relevance to us) challenges modern nihilism, in all its forms. It maintains both dualism and dialectics, yet insists on Love and intimacy in a Godless world, where human rationality cannot establish any alternative Garden of Eden, meaning, aim, or an authentic “I”.

Current Critical Pedagogy either continues the anti-Diasporic conception of the human as a mere “rational animal”, or is swallowed by the sweet soporific power of the reformulated Sirens who call us with their irresistible beauty of Love of Life, as with Odysseus in his day, to come *back “home” to harmonious nature*: to the homogeneous-totalistic-infinity of the thingness; a safe “home-returning” to the infinity and the beauties of nature and harmonious thingness; back to nothingness, after finally defeating and abandoning the wonder, danger, and openness of otherness in Being and in the human being. In these two versions of Critical Pedagogy, its thinkers reveal a lack of attention and the import of their avoidance; the neglect of a theoretical, practical, physical, and existential synthesis.

Within Diasporic Philosophy counter-education denotes the impossibility of an unproblematic synthesis between human and world; even if it is a synthesis, and never a symbiosis, between the moment and eternity, signifier and signified, becoming and

30 Horkheimer positions the centrality of this kind of love against the institutionalized religion that abandons sensitivity to real suffering in the world.

Max Horkheimer, “[Diskussion ueber die Augabe des Protestantismus]”, *Gesammelte Schriften*, XI., p. 366.

nothingness, Diaspora as an ontological, epistemological, existential attunement to the call to self-creation, as against self-forgetfulness; as an alternative to being swallowed by all “home-returning” appeals and all salvation/emancipation agendas and educational projects that offer to constitute the “I” via the “we” and the self-evident, true, or relevant values, truths, ideals, and strivings.

Critical Pedagogy’s abandonment of Critical Theory’s Diasporic Philosophy is not a futile mistake. It is very constructive and instrumental indeed. It opens the gate for the possibilities that Michael Apple calls us in this collection to enhance and develop.³¹ This desertion enables its easygoing disregard for the educational connections between and among dance, poetry, play, singing, responsibility, intellectual edification, and non-oppressive political involvement. Critical Theory’s Diasporic Philosophy’s addressing the richness, meaninglessness, and potentialities of being-toward-the-Godless-world, with no absolute, with no deceiving “home-returning” telos, is the only gate for hope.³²

Here we should remind ourselves that hope was so central to Critical Theory,³³ not part of a normalizing education that calls us to be swallowed by ethnocentrism and dogma as an alternative to an irrational intimacy with the cosmos, but on the contrary, as the only open gate to a mature, Diasporic, intimacy with loving, creatively improvising, Life in a Godless world. It is a Godless world not in the sense that there is no meaning to God but in the sense of the meaningful absence of God, and the *presence of creative metaphysical violence*,³⁴ suffering, and meaninglessness in a human life.

Critical Pedagogy, in all its versions, did very little³⁵ to develop a serious response to the theological and philosophical challenges presented by “environmental” education at its best.³⁶ This absence also signifies the lack of courage to search for a connection between **(A)** passions, intellect, the ethical-I, imagination, responsibility, and creative-improvisation; **(B)**

31 Michael Apple, “Making Critical Pedagogy instrumental”. Ilan Gur-Ze’ev (ed.). *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today*. pp. 95-113.

32 Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “Max Horkheimer’s political theology as a new Jewish diasporic philosophy”, in: Christoph Schmidt (ed.), *Political Theology Today* (forthcoming).

33 Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VII., p. 386.

34 Jacques Derrida, “Violence and metaphysics”, *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 86.

35 Peter McLaren, “Revolutionary Ecologies: Ecosocialism and Critical Pedagogy”, *Educational Studies*, 36: 1 (2004), pp. 27-45; Richard Kahn, “Towards Ecopedagogy: Weaving a Broad-based Pedagogy of Liberation for Animals, Nature, and the Oppressed People of the Earth”, *Animal Liberation Philosophy and Policy*, 1:1 (2003), in: http://www.cala-online.org/Journal/Issue_1/Towards%20Ecopedagogy.htm

36 Chet Bowers, *Education for Eco-Justice and Community*, Athens: University of Georgia Press 2001; Gerhard de Haan, Julia Mann and others (eds.), *Educating for Sustainability*, Frankfurt a.Main: Peter Lang, 2001; Joy A. Palmer, *Environmental Education in the 21st Century — Theory, Practice, Progress and Promise*, London: Routledge 1998.

human and nature, or Being and human (and other) beings; **(C)** the totality of eternity and (the totality of) “the moment”; **(D)** signifier and signified (which are dissociated only as an abstraction). This neglect is not a mistake, a shortcoming, or an abandonment, to be “fixed” by the new masters of Critical Pedagogy. It is essential to the very philosophical foundations of current Critical Pedagogy.

The various versions of current Critical Pedagogy do not continue the attempt of Critical Theory to offer a holistic (negative) Utopia, within which new, yet, essential, *connections are established between the aesthetic, the ethical, the intellectual, the existential, and the political*. Surely it does not follow Horkheimer’s critique of Marx, according to which his work misses too much when it disregards Love.³⁷ Current Critical Pedagogy, so it seems, rejects any effort to become an actual attempt as a counter-educational eros, that refrains from becoming “a project”, a “system/dogma”, or a new form of collectivism.

And last but not least, current Critical Pedagogy has lost the connection to Love of Life. I have to say these hard words even when they refer to some of my best friends: their “critique” does not manifest love and distances itself from Life, packs itself into the mechanical, abstract, and violent level of the political and the historical; it is not only far from becoming creative — it is ultimately even irrelevant, dogmatic, and normalizing, and of the kind it is committed to emancipate us from.

Critical Theory in its mature form manifested religiosity as a relation to the cosmos. It was aware and proud of it. The present versions of Critical Pedagogy, while normally being committed anti-traditionalist and anti-religious, tend to assume an anti-religious position to the kind of religiosity that Adorno and Horkheimer praised in Judaism.³⁸ At the same time Critical Pedagogy itself has become more of a religion in the traditional, institutional, dogmatic, and oppressive sense.

Much more than a religious-creative-cathartic experience and an erotic dialogical edification, the “implementations” of the ideas of Adorno and Horkheimer by Critical Pedagogy masters tend to become rival, close ideologies, reproduced by closed sects of naïve, fanatic devotees. Their coldness, mechanism, and commitment to “effectiveness” distance them not only from the Critical Theory, but from *Life* and from possibilities of genuine creativity and worthy struggles to transcend educational violence.

Present-day versions of Critical Pedagogy tend to reproduce and defend collectivism and self-evidence (even if only that of the oppressed and not that of their victimizers). In their commitment to defend the victims and support their efforts to regain security, honor, wellbeing, and possibilities for rich development, Critical Pedagogy masters tend so often to

37 Max Horkheimer, “[Diskussionen ueber die Theorie der Buduerfnisse]”, *Gesammelte Schriften*, XII., p. 569.

38 Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, Frankfurt a.Main 1985, pp. 170; 182-183.

justify and enhance the self-evidence and ethnocentrism of the marginalized and the oppressed. Here too in distancing themselves from the mature Critical Theory they have aligned themselves with greatest threats to the autonomy, happiness, responsibility, creativity, and solidarity of humans, as understood by Benjamin, Adorno, and Horkheimer. And they have surely missed the self-irony that was so much part of the religiosity of Adorno, Horkheimer, and Benjamin. That is why these versions of Critical Pedagogy, for all their importance — and they are so important in so many ways — are to be considered much more as part of normalizing education and less as part of current worthy counter-education.

What is there to be said about counter-education in relation to the current versions of Critical Pedagogy? Much is to be said about the relation between the possibilities of present-day counter-education in relation to Critical Pedagogy. This is because Critical Pedagogy, even when it collapses into dogmatic, non-creative, and ethnocentrist practices of “emancipation” and “critique”, still symbolizes the quest for **the totally other**; a refusal to be swallowed by the temptations, imperatives, and fashions of the world of facts, the productivity of its power-relations and the limits set by its historical horizons; transcending what Gnosis considered the manifestations of the (evil) presence of the God of creation. Even in face of an anti-utopian “reality” it still symbolizes the essence of the utopian commitment - even if against its own will. Its critical impulse³⁹ still symbolizes in its essence the possibilities for genuine, transcending, anti-collectivistic, and anti-instrumental-oriented reflection; its essence still insists on calling for *the birth of the nomadic eternal-improviser*. Critical Pedagogy, when true to itself, might still summon humans to overcome the reality it serves and represents; its call, however, if true to itself, is always negative, and it could only become a not-yet-deciphered *invitation*. As such, and only as such, it should send an invitation to transcend the numerous assorted temptations and practices that each moment join forces anew to push humans back into thingness; into the meaningless continuum of the immanence. This is where genuine counter-education might embark on its awakening; here is the potential starting point of Diasporic philosophy and its relevance to the field of education. This is where today’s Critical Pedagogy, at best, is silent. This is where, at its best, it could learn so much from Critical Theory.

2. Critical Theory and Diasporic Philosophy. Critical Theory of the second stage in the development of the Frankfurt School⁴⁰ might be considered part of a philosophical tradition with roots much deeper than those of critical philosophy and modern revolutionary praxis; one might consider its roots in Gnosis, or even in the philosophy of Heraclites; maybe even

39 Even when articulated in a manner that serves nothing more than an alternative, rival, violent realm of self-evidence that will enhance the violent productivity of the “we” against the “they” and their otherness.

40 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, *The Frankfurt School and the History of Pessimism*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press 1996 (in Hebrew).

in that of Anaximander and the problematization of Being and nothingness, thinking, and cosmos in light of the **principle of individuation** and Life and its inevitable suffering, punishments, and redemption.⁴¹ Here I shall be content with only few words on Diasporic Philosophy and its implications for counter-education in light of the shortcomings and relevance of current Critical Pedagogy. To this topic I have devoted some effort on other occasions.⁴²

I begin with the assertion that Diasporic Philosophy is more than a philosophical “stance” or “orientation”; it has a rich, deep, and wide-ranging past — if we dare to reconstruct and re-interpret in this light works of thinkers such as Heraclites, Markion, Pascal, de Montagne, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Kafka, Heidegger, Adorno, Camus, Derrida, Levinas, Rushdie, and Deleuze, to name only a few. Some non-Western cultures have given rise to other important Diasporic thinkers. Not all cultures have done so, however, certainly not in the same forms and with equal richness. Nevertheless, their philosophical importance is vital for any further enhancement of a future genuine cosmopolitan Diasporic Philosophy that will offer a serious counter-education. What we are facing here is the possibility of counter-education in a multicultural world governed by Instrumental Rationality, global capitalism, and the reactions of the world of Jihad to the MacWorld in face of the speedy, daily, McDonaldization of reality.⁴³

Diasporic Philosophy — of which I consider Critical Theory in its second stage of development a part — has no starting point; nor does it have a telos or a territory; and it undoubtedly distances itself from all forms of “home-returning” projects.⁴⁴ Still, above all Diasporic Philosophy manifests *the erotic essence of Being*. Love of Life — not “critique” or a claim for justice to the oppressed, or revenge, is essential to it. Eagerness and dynamism, creation and renewal of creation in face of production toward nothingness; creation as a birth of Love, as a loving impetus — all these are essential. Its very existence, however, inevitably faces violence, meaninglessness, anti-creative horizons, and de-humanizing preconditions for any authentic creativity, for any quest for nearness to the truth of Being, for any responsibility that is more than an echo of the original, innovative, violence that enforced it, and for thinking itself.

Not being at “home” at all cost; refusing becoming swallowed by the self-evidence, self-content, and the negation of the Other at “home” and “there” is essential to Diasporic

41 Jonathan Barends, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 29.

42 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, “Diasporic philosophy and counter-education” Website see: <http://construct.haifa.ac.il/~ilangz/new/>

43 Scot Lash and Urry John, *The End of Organized Capitalism*, Madison Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press 1991; Stuart Hall, “Brave new world: the debate about post-fordism”, *Socialist Review* 2: 1, pp. 57-64.

44 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, *Toward Diasporic Education — Multiculturalism, Post-colonialism and Counter-Education in the Post-Modern Era*, Tel Aviv: Resling 2004, p. 71.

Philosophy. Refusing any identity thinking⁴⁵ or any positive Utopia is essential here ontologically, epistemologically, ethically, existentially, and politically. This runs counter to the historic tension between the concepts of Diaspora and Redemption, which was traditionally conceived within a framework of a promised synthesis, “salvation”, or “solution”; even if in the form offered by Pyrrho the skeptic, who insisted on a concluding, total, silence; or Philipp Mainlander, who asserted that the act of suicide of entire humanity and the destruction of all the world will invite a renewed pre-creationist harmonious nothingness.⁴⁶

Diasporic Philosophy refuses all forms of positive Utopia in theory and practice. It overcomes any theoretical or political “home”, self-evidence, truth, self-content, nirvana, and all other manifestations of Tanathus. In this sense it insists on consistent negativity as a form of Life.

Diasporic Philosophy emphasizes, but does not idolize, difference, *improvised continuation as an alternative to deterministic-mechanistic continuum*; it seriously faces *immediacy* in its intimate relation to *eternity, meaninglessness, violence, and historical productivity*. At the same time, it refuses relativism, nihilism, and pragmatism, and insists on religious existence, poetic creativity and courageous nomadism. It calls for a responsible self-constitution and reflection as one of the manifestations of human uniqueness in an infinite cosmos that is present in eternity as well as in the totality of each and every moment. It is focused on the presence of **the not-yet**, the potential, **the totally other**, and its wholly-presence in a Life which, ultimately, is not to be totally represented, controlled, or predicted.

The human being, as part of the infinite openness of Being, is essentially free because it is lost; it is lost in the cosmos, and as such it is in the state of becoming-toward-the-world and becoming-in-the-world alike. The human is potentially open to overcoming the successes of normalizing education, which is committed to turn him or her from some-one into something.

3. Subject and cosmos. Critical Pedagogy does not keep aloof from the birth-giving tension between humans and cosmos. This challenge was essential to Critical Theory throughout its evolution. Normally Critical Pedagogy abandoned even the standard topics that are regularly dealt with in the framework of “environmental education”: issues such as global responsibility for conservation of natural beautiful sites and important recourses; sustainability of the planet and resistance of humanity to dangerous practices of control and consumption of nature; education to critical reconstruction of economic and political interests that legitimate and drive the destruction of inner and outer nature and resistance to their

45 Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, translated by E. B. Ashton, New York: Continuum, 1999.

46 Philipp Mainlaender, *Philosophie der Erloesung*, Berlin 1876 (a new reprint: Hildesheim 1996).

treatment of ecology; and finally, education to responsibility for the future coexistence of humanity and nature.

Until today, Critical Pedagogy almost completely disregarded not *just the cosmopolitan aspects of ecological ethics* in terms of threats to present and future life conditions of all humanity. It disregarded the fundamental philosophical and existential challenges of subject-object relations, in which “nature” is not conceived as a standing reserve either for mere human consumption or as a potential source of dangers, threats, and risks. In many respects the ecological dimensions of Ulrich Becks’ concept of “the risk society”⁴⁷ are much more advanced and promising than the ecological dimensions in the work of Henry Giroux.

Critical Pedagogy disregarded the *intimate* relations between humans and the cosmos, an intimacy that Diasporic Philosophy conceives as an abyss and mystery, and at the same time as an impetus for Life, Hope, Love, and creativity. Here “nature”, “environment”, and “ecology” are conceived in a much deeper and wider sense, and are identified in the Other, in one’s self, and in the world of representations and their fruits. Counter-education that takes the tradition of Diasporic Philosophy seriously begins here, in the fundamentals of existence, as Heidegger articulated it, in the relations between Being and human beings, or the challenge that humans face according to the myth of Odysseus and the Sirens as interpreted by Adorno and Horkheimer. According to them, this dichotomy is the precondition for the dialectic of Enlightenment and the possibility of the enslavement of humanity to Instrumental Rationality that was supposed to enslave and consume nature in the service of humanity. Effective conquest of the cosmos as a form of “home-returning” after **the Fall** is revealed historically as an anti-diasporic stance that ultimately internalized violence and in the end is directed not solely against brute “nature” as potential human “resources” but against other humans and against the individual himself or herself. Diasporic philosophy might offer here hope, imagination, alternative logics and alternative creative responses to the human situatedness between cosmic exile and scarcity (from human’s point of view) and *inhuman cosmic affluence*.

Counter-education that takes the tradition of Diasporic Philosophy seriously makes an attempt to establish a Diasporic relation with the “successful”, instrumental, enslavement of “nature”. The governing borders, disciplines, dichotomies and life possibilities that are founded on instrumental subject-object relations are transcended. Homelessness in the various manifestations of the subject-object dichotomies enable a kind of diasporic life that reopens (negative) intimacy in the cosmos. This intimacy in and with the cosmos is enriched by alienation, sensitivity for suffering and enslavement of other people, creatures, and representations, and opens the gate to Diasporic hope. This hope makes possible Diasporic

47 Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society — Toward a New Modernity*, translated by Mark Ritter, London: Sage Publications 2004.

morality and Diasporic creativity, which manifest love of Life, and not dissatisfaction, greed, fear, and colonialism as a starting point for an alternative relation to the world.

4. Love. Love, as the opposite of violence, stands along with hope, imagination, and authentic, improvising creativity in contrast to fear, self-forgetfulness, greed, and conquest. Diasporic Philosophy represents a kind of homelessness that is opposed to the *self-forgetfulness* manifested in love of God, dedication to control-oppression, mere survival and to any other forms of enslavement to Tanathus.

Contradiction, negation, and tension are not in opposition to Love. On the contrary, according to Diasporic Philosophy Love is manifested in Life; and there is no Life but amid, within, and against contradictions, abysses, dangers, and self-constitution amid suffering, meaninglessness, and dialectical dynamics. Love of Life is love of creativity from, against, and towards difference, plurality, impasse and contradiction; yet it represents being-towards, becoming, and transcendence. This is why counter-education, as a manifestation of love, transcends meaninglessness and insists on revealing as creating meaning, aim, and alternative togetherness with the world and Others. Precisely because homelessness is its home it enables (negative) intimacy with the world and its realities and with the Others without a false promise of final reconciliation that actualizes nirvana, or “home-returning”. This is the gate to counter-education that enhances genuine creativity that is fertilized by sensitivity to suffering, imagination, hope, and commitment to self-constitution and transcendence; a kind of creativity that is so much more than “art education” or “critical cinema studies” of the kind that are sometimes advanced within the framework of current Critical Pedagogy. Here creativity is an ecstatic experience that is essentially religious and manifests love of Life that might become poetically meaningful, good, and beautiful because there is no final point for the “home-returning” project nor any “solution” to meaninglessness, suffering, and loneliness. Love of Life, here, accepts Life as the rich presence of the absence, the absence of the absolute, the endlessly new manifestations of the “not-yet”, the potential. This is why the Diasporic human, as a loving, creative, human, is actually an eternal improviser.

5. Creativity. Diasporic Counter-Education might offer new possibilities for human creativity that goes beyond the limits of “art education” which even in its limited form was foreign to most versions of Critical Pedagogy. Diasporic Philosophy faces the instrumentalization of eros and poiesis as a precondition for culture and successful social structures. Creativity is recruited in the service of teleological collective and dogmatic “projects”, represented and served by all versions of normalizing education. The autonomy of the human subject and genuine creativity, in all spheres of life, not solely in the arena of what is determined as “art”, are a threat to normalizing education, to “law and order”, and to “peace”. Critical Pedagogy is no exception here.

For Critical Pedagogy too, authentic creativity and its affluence in all spheres of life are a huge threat. Original creativeness is a great peril to the ideology of “emancipation” and to the truths, values, and collectives it is committed to. Genuine counter-education, however, will

offer a Diasporic relation to the present achievements of cultures and ideologies, their truths, interests, symbols, agendas, and enemies. In face of meaninglessness, from the edge of the abyss of homelessness in the world of representations, abstractions, and violence it might enable the attendance or at least the quest for the eternal-improviser. The eternal-improviser does not simply abandon “critique”. Neither are responsibilities as a citizen and a fellow human neglected: they are transcended.

The eternal-improviser tries to develop an alternative *gaze* and an alternative *eavesdrop*. Such a Diasporic existence makes possible much more than an alternative “art education”; it opens the gate to *Life as a form of art*, while offering a kind of homelessness that enables a new, nomadic, intimacy with the cosmos and all its forms of creativity/destruction. For the Diasporic human, as an eternal-improviser, this new embrace of Being is not in the sphere of abstraction. It is not an ideal to live by, or a mere “inner absolute imperative”; it is beyond “external” and “internal” power; it transcends the dividing line between two versions of metaphysical violence: scarcity as manifested by alienation and fear of the totality of the moment on the one hand, and being swallowed by/open to the *affluence* of intimacy with/against the infinity of eternity on the other. Creativity as a manifestation of Love of Life, for the eternal-improviser here is a manifestation of challenging metaphysical violence in the name of hope by the power of Love and creativity, without being overwhelmed by an optimistic, sentimentalist, or abstract conception of life, art, and education.

Counter-education here goes beyond the best achievements of Critical Pedagogy, yet it does not abandon them. Here ideology critique and empowering the skills and tools of deciphering the politics of cultural reproduction become an important part of art education; and art education becomes integrated with physical education, environmental education, critical cyberspace education, cooking, car repairing education, history lessons, literacy, economics, and so much of the canon. And yet, counter-education transcends all these not solely on the pedagogical level: it transcends all these in a religious sense by re-introducing poiesis in a postmodern world.

Re-approaching the original act of the human hands and reintroducing the body, poetry, play, and erotic togetherness are not abstract and mere fantasy. They are actual life possibilities for mature, religious humans, especially when they are young. As such, they are innovative and inviting. They invite creativity of the kind that opposes and overcomes the reification of art in face of globalizing capitalism and its culture industry. Counter-education here is Diasporic, refuses the calls for consensual reception and embrace by the fashion and hegemonic ideologies and institutions. Here too creativity, if true to itself, must be homeless and not strive for domesticating acknowledgement, consensus, admiration, and bringing-under-control rewards and suffering. At the same time, however, it is part of a *nomadic life*, whose happiness and creativity amid suffering, meaninglessness, aimlessness, and misrecognition on the way to an alternative togetherness are enabled by the affluence of Love and the imaginative potential of hope. This path does not lead to nihilism, relativism,

solipsism or cannibalistic joy, nor to irresponsibility. On the contrary, for the creative, nomadic, eternal-improviser, response-ability is a precondition for genuine creativity, for re-entering togetherness in a mature manner, and for caring and edifying all loving and transcending manifestations of courageous Life.

6. Response-ability. Diasporic Philosophy is in a sense immoral. Still, it negates all forms of nihilism. It is beyond the hegemonic moral politics because it relates seriously to the possibility of an “ethical I”.⁴⁸ It relates in the most intimate way to the infinite richness of the world and its beauty, meaninglessness, and suffering in the totality of the moment on one level, and to the Other and the political arena on another, historical, level, as one, unifying (yet not systematic), Diasporic existence. On the one level it relates primarily to *response-ability*. On the other level it relates primarily to *respond-ability*.

Response-ability precedes respond-ability. It is related to the ethical sphere and to the existential more than to the moral-historical-political arenas of human existence and human work. The two are not opposed to genuine responsibility, while they are opposed to the hegemonic social conditions, philosophical foundations, political practices, and fruits of normalized morality. An unsolvable tension, if not an abyss, exists between the two, even if both are authentic manifestation of the richness of Life.

Situated in Diaspora as a Utopian existence, Diasporic responsibility unites response-ability and respond-ability. It addresses the *infinity of the moment* in its endless creative possibilities, dangers, and abysses. It calls for a fundamental communication with the otherness of the Other, which precedes cultural borders, political interests, race, national, gender, and other differences. It precedes yet enables truly rational moral elaborations and critiques. As such it relates to the most intimate manifestations of *becoming-toward-the-world*, the Other, and one's self as a challenge and as an object of shared responsibility, love, creation, and happiness (which might include suffering).

At the same time, however, Diasporic responsibility must also be ready to address the historical moment. And when the moment comes, also to position itself against injustice and even join a wider political practice. It must be relevant to the cognitive, historical, and political dynamics. *Yet it cannot ensure a non-violent consensual historical action* concerning the ongoing silenced genocide in Southern Sudan, and so much more.

For Diasporic Philosophy, all calls to respond are manifestations of Life as a *call*, as a challenge, as a potential to be addressed and creatively surmount. In face of *the abyss between the ethical and the political* it insists on nomadism and love, creativity and negativity. And as such, it cannot share the positive utopia of Levinas, who to a question in an interview replied: “Yes, an agreement between the ethics and the State is possible. The just State will be the work of just

48 Emmanuel Levinas, “The ego and totality”, *Collected Philosophical Papers of Emmanuel Levinas*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Dordrecht: M. Nijhoff, 1987, p. 56.

people and the saints, rather than of propaganda and preaching”. It insists on what Adorno told us so many years ago, namely “a philosophy forswearing all of that must in the end be irreconcilably at odds with the dominant consciousness. Nothing else raises it above the suspicion of apologetics. Philosophy that satisfies its own intention, and does not childishly skip behind its own history and the real one, has its lifeblood in the resistance against the common practices of today and what they serve, against the justification of what happens to be the case”.⁴⁹

Diasporic Philosophy tries, negatively, yet as a form of Love of Life, to address the question of **The Good**. Benjamin, Adorno, and Horkheimer are of vital importance for us today, in responding in a worthy way to the calls of Life and their challenges. Responding here is active. While acknowledging the importance of contemplation, reflection, gaze, openness, and silence, it is directed to *giving birth*. It concerns actual activity not philosophical challenges as a closed arena; it directs philosophy as an art of life to calls and challenges that are material, physical, emotional, and spiritual, “inner” and “exterior” ethical, aesthetic, existential, and political. It relates also to the conditions of “the call” as well as to the possibilities of a worthy response and their all-embracing practices.

Responding in a worthy manner is never given, easy, or without a price. Nor is it a skill to be developed by normalizing education. By itself it is a *possibility* as well as an *imperative* for worthy Life that resists becoming swallowed by any “home-returning” project; nor does it abandon responsibility to learning, creation and Love. As such, it is “practice oriented”. Its ultimate test is in actuality, in creation, deeds, actions, endeavors that are fundamentally authentic or inauthentic, relate to worthy eavesdropping or to its negation — to its replacement by instrumentalist-oriented focusing. Its actuality is in the attempt to approach new ways to gaze, overcoming the calls to satisfy itself in mere “rationalist” and instrumentalist-oriented use of the eyes. It even directs itself to abandon the collective and positive attempts to unveil the inner truth and the potentials of “the object” of manipulation. Active, responsible, involvement in the world presumes response-ability. In its absence humans’ poiesis deteriorates into instrumental-oriented consumption and oppression that begins in self-oppression and concludes in the neglect or oppression of fellow citizens of the cosmos.

Response-ability is born each moment anew among the plants, among the animals, and in the birth of each new human baby. The human, however, treats this potential in a unique manner. So normally, this potential is robbed, reworked, and productivized by the system at the instant of the new baby’s birth. For humans within sophisticated cultural systems it is a neglected potential, not a given skill. In the framework of the political arena it is to be historically re-created, edified, cultivated, and protected only at the cost of its transformation into its opposite.

Response-ability is not only a potential: for the ethical I it is a gate to being true to oneself, a way for self-constitution as some-one and not as some-thing. Response-ability is a potential

49 Theodor Adorno, *Critical Models*, translated by Henry Pickford, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 6.

transcendence that does not disregard the whole and the call to retreat into the infinity of immanence. It aims at transcending thingness. At the same time, it is committed to *overcoming the division between immanence and transcendence*. It acknowledges this challenge as an ethical moment that is also an ontological sign. It does so even if in postmodern conditions: humans are urged to self-forgetfulness and loss of genuine response-ability in the most efficient ways, in the name of promised pleasure, economic, emotional, and political rewards, and other agents of self-forgetfulness that work in the service of normalizing education. Diasporic Philosophy offers ontological signs and ethical calls that enable re-facing response-ability, at least as a (negative) Utopia. It enables a kind of counter-education that will call for, never ensure, overcoming self-forgetfulness and normalized morality, nihilism, ethnocentricity, and other “homes” that guard the hegemonic legitimacy of the discourse concerning moral and responsibility.

Diasporic nomadism invites the human; it cannot do more than that. It cannot guarantee or offer anything, not even a clear dividing line between its alternative and other, more attractive or “rewording” alternatives. If true to itself it can only invite the human to follow indirect paths to re-work his or her gaze while widening it and enriching it in new ways and towards more manifestations of Life, in the infinity of each moment. It invites the cultivation of a gaze that is beyond the industrialized focus, as it is developed within the framework of the system that is committed to the fabrication of the “rational human”. It invites a different kind of focus; a focus that opens itself to attunement, to a happy attunement to each every degree out of the 360; an attunement that relates also to that which is absent but not from a standpoint of anger, revenge, or greed. It is a focus that enhances new kind of listening. Eavesdropping to each and every voice of the cosmic music, like the one we had as babies and lost with the success of normalizing education. Like the one poetry, music, and dance offer us again and again at rare moments of transcendence. Diasporic life here questions, deconstructs, subverts, yet preserves, accepts, and transcends. It does not offer an abstract negation, abandonment, or forgetfulness of politics, culture, habits, friendships, or experiences — it relates to them differently and overcomes their limiting, domesticating, enclosing effects. In this light it also relates to the category of responsibility.

By *overcoming responsibility in terms set by patriotism, devotion to the class, commitment to a race (or against a certain race), dedication to individual “achievements” or narcissistic-oriented enjoyment*, this counter-education does not put forward an ethical desert: it presents an alternative kind of ethics, a new, Diasporic, response-ability. Diasporic response-ability goes beyond the normalized responses to the post-modern reality on “authentic” paths that enable penetration into “the real”⁵⁰ or new age “spiritual” moral transcendence.⁵¹ The gate to

50 Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real - Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates*, Tel Aviv 2002, p. 20 (in Hebrew).

51 Hanan Alexander, *Reclaiming Goodness — Education and the Spiritual Quest*, Notre-Dame Ind. University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.

genuine response-ability is opened at the moment of accepting responsibility for overcoming the fruits of the violence of normalizing education in the form of aggression, fear, greed, narcissism, and “responsibility” in light of the self-evidence and the other manifestations of “home”.

Homelessness without the promise of an emancipatory “home-returning” project in face of the presence of the absence of “God” opens the gate to *true responsibility*. This kind of responsibility is not only opposed to the one constructed by the various human “homes” and “home-returning” projects. It is opposed to the fundamental philosophy of “home”, which also offers a kind of psychology that pretends to justify “home” and clarifies its inevitability from a psychological point of view. Diasporic Philosophy opposes the philosophical foundations of this psychology while offering a dialectical critique of the concept of “home” and the kind of responsibility it offers.

Responsibility, within the framework of Diasporic Philosophy, is part of and enables *The Good*, yet it is a Diasporic Good, not a domesticated good. The Good here accepts and responds to *Life* in an *eternal Diaspora* as a starting point for any reflection on historical and political arenas of human life and the possibility of an alternative philosophy of education. Responsibility here is grounded in Diasporic response-ability as a worthy response to Diaspora in history and Diaspora in politics, and only as such is it true responsibility that enables *The Good*. A true response to the infinite, uneducable otherness of the Other and a worthy response to the richness and meaninglessness of Life unite here in a new, Diasporic, kind of responsibility.

True responsibility is aware of the absence of God, it faces the withdrawal of the Absolute, the arbitrariness of master-signifiers, and the contingency of omnipotent effectiveness of meaninglessness. Today, it must challenge, beyond the dichotomies between modernism and postmodernism, immanence and transcendence, the very possibility of meaning and human activity as becoming-toward-the-world. It must search for new, Diasporic, ways to question that which produces (contextual) truths, (contextual) valid values, (contextual) yardsticks, and (contextual) safe havens and realms of self-evidence. This is the starting-point for a Diasporic *responsible response* to humans’ being-in-the-world as becoming-toward-the-world. There is an abyss between *being-in-the-world* and *becoming-toward-the-world*. This tension, however, is a possible gate to caring for the self, for the edification of one’s own difference in its relations to the world and to the otherness of the Other.⁵²

But how relevant is it to the ongoing silenced genocide in the Southern Sudan, to the systematic starvation of entire populations by the interest rate of loans sent by “the free play”

52 Immanuel Levinas, “Is ontology fundamental?”, in Adriaan T. Perezk, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (eds.), *Immanuel Levinas — Basic Philosophical Writings*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, p. 9.

of world exchange centers? Or for the future of women's, or children's rights in the Arab world? It is exactly in light of *the abyss between the ethical and the political* that a Diasporic responsibility might enable responsibility also in the historical moment; as an active citizen and as a politically engaged man or woman who is not a prisoner of the Platonic cave, who is not a mere echo/construct/product/agent of contingent power relations and violent educational manipulations. Such a citizen is a Utopia. It is, however, a concrete utopia. It is so far from what (even at their best) the hegemonic program of democratic education, peace education, and Critical Pedagogy offer us today.

The political aspect of Diasporic responsibility is not relevant solely to the politics of the construction of the human and the effective reproduction of her impotence for reflection, self-constitution, and worthy response-ability to its Diasporic situatedness in Life. It is at the same time of vital importance for the relation between this kind of becoming-toward-the world and worthy *response-ability* as against being-in-the-world and the possible respond-ability as a human situatedness in a specific historical moment, as a counter-educator.

Diasporic response-ability in the physical, psychic, spiritual, existential, ethical, and poetical aspects is a precondition for a worthy respond-ability in the social arena. In many respects it challenges the political dimensions of life and enables the nomadic eternal-improviser to free herself from the limits, imperatives, and manipulations of "the political". Diasporic counter-education must be very clear on this point: it is political in the sense that it challenges the political. It does not disregard the historical moment and the specific material, social, political, and cultural context. It relates to the historical sphere and the social arena in the most specific and concrete manner — in order to avoid being swallowed by their manipulations.

Does this mean that Diasporic counter-education is escapist and apolitical, and actually offers a tempting retreat into the "inner" world of the elect?

Politics. This is a fair question. It was not easy to answer even for late Horkheimer and Adorno. Late Horkheimer explicitly asserts that not "the revolution" is the aim of mature Critical Theory but the struggle of and for the autonomy of the "spiritual" individual.⁵³ My reply would be that such a counter-education would become politically involved and would not abandon politics. But it will become politically involved in the most responsible manner, namely engaging the contextual social realities in order to enable the individual to realize his or her respond-ability; respond-ability whose actualization will offer creative possibilities for doing **The Good** while *overcoming the logic of the politics altogether*. Here many of the fruits of Critical Theory would be very relevant and productive. Again, all this only to direct a critique and to respond to injustice not within the framework of an alternative collective or worthier dogma. Counter-education here offers an invitation to a kind of political

53 Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VII., p. 341.

involvement that manifests the situatedness of the ethical within the framework of the political only to overcome the political and to transcend the historical moment — not to enslave one's life to the imperatives, limits, and possibilities of the political. Again, it is not the bridge between the ethical and the political; it is the situatedness of the Diasporic eternal-improviser in the specific historical moment that enables his or her involvement in the social arena. And such an involvement is not only unavoidable, it is a worthy manifestation of the attempt to approach the truth of counter-education and the Diasporic existence.

In another sense, the “realization” of Diasporic counter-education in the social arena in each historical moment is never solely critical of and negative toward politics. It must become dialectically engaged in manners that will give birth to new possibilities for human togetherness. Of special importance it is for such a counter-education to open the way to *new kinds of togetherness* amid suffering, injustice and manipulations, for victims and victimizers alike, freeing them from their “homes” and normalized responsibilities. There should be a way for forgiveness and charity to all humans — yet not for all human deeds.

Central to a Diasporic counter-education are the sensitivity and self-directedness to human life as *becoming-toward-the world*. It manifests self-accepted transcendence as Love of life, and not as a mere echo, or a reaction of fear. As counter-education it does not educate to fear *loneliness in the Godless world*. As a Diasporic alternative it tries to offer concrete practices for edifying skills, sensitivities, knowledge, and practices that will enable the existence of the nomadic human that maybe we could call *the eternal-improviser*. The nomadism of the eternal-improviser enhances skills and knowledge of various kinds. Of vital importance among these are the response-ability to a changing and ever-veiling dynamics. Authentic responses are potentials of Life as a serious play, as a form of art;⁵⁴ they edify creativity as an ethical, physical, and intellectual becoming-toward-the-world. It is a nomadic becoming on all levels, and as such it challenges the fruits of normalizing education and the subjectification processes that precondition “home“, “responsibility“, stable “I“, social order, and cultural progress. Like freedom, however, the connection between response-ability and respond-ability cannot be guaranteed, delivered or “correctly realized“ in advanced — it must be freely decided, struggled for, each moment anew under odd conditions.

And yet, responding in a worthy manner to the call of **the totally other** and the new possibilities, it might (or might not) introduce/impose a potential that might be learned and cultivated. But it assumes a different kind of learning and a new kind of thinking.⁵⁵ It relates very much to what Adorno conceived as educated maturity.⁵⁶

54 Herbert Marcuse, “Die Zukunft der Kunst”, *Neues Forum*, (November-Dezember 1967), pp. 863-870.

55 Martin Heidegger, “The end of philosophy and the task of thinking”, in David F. Krell (ed.), *Martin Heidegger — Basic Writings*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 449.

56 Theodor Adorno, *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit*, Frankfurt a.Main: Suhrkamp, 1971.

Here the responsibility of the counter-educator will be actualized in self-education and in inviting other individuals to self-education in manners, by skills, with and against methods, and practices that are already elaborated and partially realized in the history of counter-education. Here too, Critical Pedagogy, when it is true to Critical Theory, might become of much relevance. But ultimately response-ability and respond-ability as manifestations of Diasporic responsibility are not to be ensured or authentically delivered. Openness, danger, and eros, here too, must have the last word. It is always put to the test in relation to the connection of human life to the moment, to history, and to eternity. Critical Pedagogy restricted itself to the historical sphere and the social arena. Diasporic counter-education that takes seriously the work of the Frankfurt School thinkers, however, might contribute so much if it related to the tensions, gaps, and connections of the moment, history, and eternity, for humans, animals, plants, and other manifestations of Life as a source of hope and transcendence, not solely as different manifestations of the Platonic cave. Politics, or the world of contingent power-relations and violent symbolic and direct dynamics, here becomes a very relevant factor, yet never has the upper hand. The Diasporic eternal-improviser, when true to himself or herself, is never a totally controlled citizen of **The Earthly City**; he or she resists becoming-swallowed-by-the-system, the historical facts, or the social horizons. He or she crosses from the infinity of each moment to eternity, or from eternity retreats to the historical sphere and to the infinity of a fleeting moment. Parallel to the asymmetry and the absence of hierarchy and determined order between the *moment*, *history*, and *eternity* is the absence of hierarchy and determinism between *reality*, and *its hermeneutical depths*. *It parallels also the "cosmic music" of that which is symbolized by "reality" and, its representations, its courageous-edifying critique and its creative-transformative interpretations.* These two levels are parallel, but do not constantly relate to each other in the same order. So "the moment" relates to "the deeper meaning of reality"; "history" relates to "reality" and its power-relations; and "eternity" relates to "that to which the meaning and telos of history/reality refers too. This third element is not a mere abstract metaphysical category. Not only does it enable the moment and history — it also bursts into the continuum in all its richness, from time to time, in the form of Hope, **The Totally Other**, or the not-yet. For the Diasporic eternal-improviser, as a genuine nomad, this third, uneducable, uncontrollable, element of Life is of outmost importance. It enables the Diasporic existence to become-toward-the-world in infinite ways beyond being swallowed by the immanence and beyond being fragmented and disappearing in one of the "home-returning" projects that promise transcendence and an end to homelessness. Only within this framework is politics challenged from a Diasporic perspective in a way that enables **The Good** in its concrete material, historical and social context.

Togetherness. Counter-education from the sources of Diasporic Philosophy counters collectivism, combats dogmatism, and opposes all other "homes". It refuses any plea or call for recycling, defending or enhancing the present order of things and its realms of self-

evidence. Normalizing processes cannot but end up in collectives that surrender themselves to the destruction of the otherness of the Other as a concrete form of “salvation”.⁵⁷ Diasporic existence is anti-collectivist-oriented and anti-dogmatic. It refuses the self-abandonment of the individual that is so vital for the historical production of a stable collectives and progressive cultures. This is true not solely in pre-modern and modern spaces, which are so quick to summon their armies, habits, and temptations against the otherness of the Other. It is valid also in postmodern spaces such as the cyberspace. Maybe the Hacker, or that which the Hacker symbolizes, is one of the very few exceptions.⁵⁸

Here, in light of a never-ending struggle for overcoming any “home” and collectivism, new possibilities are opened. New prospects are given birth not solely for the self-constitution of the eternal-improviser as a genuine nomad: new leeway is opened for genuine solidarity and for new kinds of togetherness.

The new kinds of togetherness are not committed to the imperative of normalizing education to destroy the otherness of the “ethical I” and the otherness of the Other. *Becoming-toward-the-otherness-of-Being* and the infinite expressions of Love of Life might enable a kind of togetherness with the cosmos and all other Life manifestations on new paths that Diasporic self-constitution will pave. This new, Diasporic, togetherness with the otherness within the “I”, the Other, and the world might crisscross “the moment”, “history”, and “eternity”.⁵⁹ Such a self-positioning amid and against Being might enable a better eavesdropping to *the call*, when and if it comes. It might enable a worthy response in the right moment toward and with other Diasporic humans in ways that will give birth to *a new, Diasporic, togetherness*.

A community, not a collective, is here enabled, for a moment, solely for a fragile moment, among Diasporic individuals. If true to themselves they will cherish moments of togetherness as creative, improvising, responsible, Diasporic, individuals, yet will refuse any institutionalization or dogmatization of their — yes, their — togetherness. The moment such counter-education is self-content and domesticated it will immediately transform itself into nothing but an old-new collective and an old-new form of normalizing education.

So, what is to be done? And how should we begin? I truly do not know. Maybe it will become a reality the moment we together learn how to breathe differently and how to relate to different kinds of breathing of ours and of Others in a car mechanics lesson, and we relate to the relation between the two and improvise on our reflections, aesthetically, in bodily ways while taking responsibility for our response-ability. Until that moment the present collection,

57 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, *Destroying the Other's Collective Memory*, New York: Peter Lang 2003, pp. 1-24.

58 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, “The Hacker as a counter-educator”, in: Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, *Toward Diasporic Education*, Tel Aviv: Resling, pp. 77-92 (Hebrew).

59 See #8. “politics”.

under the title *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today*, might represent nothing more than the urgent need for a worthy response to *the present absence of a new critical language in education*.

I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart all the contributors for this collection, who responded to the need to relate to the present challenges of Critical Pedagogy and to the current relevance of Critical Theory in the field of education.

This collection is the fruit of our meetings in Oslo, Miami, and Madrid between 2002 and 2004, as part of an International Critical Pedagogy Workshop that committed itself to this challenge, and manifested so much good will, wisdom, and solidarity. More than once it also created silent moments in face of answers that became too easy and mechanistic for some of us in our own writings, teaching, and reflections. It was the special contribution of these wordless moments in our dialogue, I dare suggest, which made possible the better parts of this collection. All the unfinished, unrefined, and futile efforts in the following texts manifest solely my shortcomings, for which I take full responsibility.

Many thanks, companieros.

Critical Pedagogy and the Futures of Critical Theory

Michael Peters

Introduction

Critical Pedagogy as both a field of study and a set of practices emerged during the 1970s as an attempt to transform education and pedagogy as part of the project of radical democracy, aiming to encourage the development of a more democratic culture and active citizenry. This project was to a large extent based upon the work of Paulo Freire and was taken up in the United States by such figures as Henry Giroux, Stanley Aronowitz, and Peter McLaren. It was motivated in the first instance by a host of related theoretical influences on Freire himself. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, for instance, indicated a mixture of phenomenology, liberation theology, Sartrean existentialism¹ and Marxism. Freire had thoroughly imbibed and recast the discourses of his day to produce a new synthesis for a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, which aimed through its praxis at transforming oppression and the culture of domination.² This was, of course, the so-called New Left constellation, that while it had aspects of phenomenology and existentialism, reflected the strong influence of Critical Theory that had culminated in the Left's adoption of Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* with its critique of advanced industrial society and technological rationality.³ The commonality was a kind of humanism, strongly supported by the rediscovery of the early Marx in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*.⁴ During the 1980s a new profusion of theoretical discourses emerged — postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, cultural studies, feminisms, and the politics of identity and difference in the intersection of new discourses concerning gender, race and sexuality. The strongest challenge to Critical Pedagogy came in

- 1 See Jean Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. & Introduction P. Mairet, London: Methuen, 1973.
- 2 Freire's footnotes are to Rosa Luxembourg, Hegel, Marx and Engels, Mao, Marcuse, Sartre, Guevara, Kosik, Castro, Goldmann, Memmi, Althusser, Fromm, Niebuhr, Dufrenne, Gerassi, Lukacs, as well as Francisco Weffert, Vieira Pinto, Ernani Maria Fiori, Hans Freyer, Maria Edy Ferreira, Paulo de Tarso, Patricio Lopes, and Bishop Franic Spilt.
- 3 Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964.
- 4 See Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France — From Sartre to Althusse*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

the form of a central questioning of humanism and the philosophy of the subject that was fostered by the structuralist movement, most prominent in Althusser's anti-humanism⁵ but dating from Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" first published in 1947.⁶ Poststructuralism preserved and refined the critique of humanism while at the same time questioning the scientific pretensions of structuralism as a mega-paradigm in the social science.⁷

The series "Critical Studies in Education and Culture" established under the general editorship of Henry Giroux and Paulo Freire at the publishers Bergin and Garvey (an imprint of Greenwood Press) in the early 1980s signalled something of a sea change, in effect, a theoretical shift in focus which was best exemplified by the "cultural turn" taken by Henry Giroux, who had "turned to cultural studies in the late 1980s to enrich education with an expanded conception of pedagogy and literacy".⁸ Giroux himself went on to adopt a cultural studies approach focusing on youth in the radical attempt to stitch up the interrelationships among Critical Pedagogy and radical democracy.⁹

In this essay I suggest that we now need to return to the origins of critical philosophy to better understand Critical Theory and its sibling tradition, Critical Pedagogy. In the sections that follow I investigate the theoretical turn to two possible futures of Critical Theory as alternative underpinnings for Critical Pedagogy in the postmodern condition: American pragmatism and so-called French theory. In the final section I make some concluding observations about Critical Pedagogy on the basis of these futures.

Critical Philosophy and the Reflexive Turn

What is distinctive of critical philosophy is that it is largely based on what has come to be known as the "reflexive turn" — that prior to the acquisition of knowledge, we must first inquire into and establish what may or may not count as knowledge. Based on the reflexive turn, critical philosophy offers a distinctive answer to the problem of rationality, for it

5 Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969; Louis Althusser, and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, translated by Ben Brewster, London; New Left Books, 1970.

6 Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism", in *Basic Writings — From 'Being and Time' (1927) to 'The Task of Thinking' (1964)*, edited with general introduction by D. F. Krell, London: Routledge, 1996.

7 See Michael Peters, "(Posts-) Modernism and structuralism — Affinities and theoretical innovations", *Sociological Research Online*, 3 (4), September 1999; (<http://www.socresonline.org.uk>).

8 Douglas Kellner, "Afterward. Reading Giroux: Cultural studies, Critical Pedagogy, and radical democracy", in: Henry Giroux, *Public Spaces, Private Lives — Beyond the Culture of Cynicism*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001, p. 141. The series, as far as I can tell from the publishers' website, dates from Henry Giroux's (1983) *Theory and Resistance in Education* and presently contains some 68 books, including six titles of my own (focusing on education in the postmodern condition, the emergence of cultural studies, poststructuralism (2), Nietzsche and Wittgenstein).

9 *Ibid.*

maintains, that it is only through an inquiry into the nature and scope of human knowledge that we will be able to determine what counts as knowledge. Implicit in this reflexive method is the assumption that such critical philosophy is both autonomous and neutral. It was assumed, in other words, that the meta-level inquiry was above and beyond the normal structures that applied to human understanding and reason; critical reason was thought to be somehow exempt from the limitations on the legitimate use of reason it had made known.

Common to both Kant and Locke was the attempt to resolve certain philosophical questions that occasioned disagreement at the first-order level by inquiring at the second-order level into the nature and scope of our intellectual apparatus to deal with such logical problems. Such second-order inquiries led them to emphasize the limitations in the scope and nature of human reason in pursuit of these questions, but it was not thought that such limitations applied in any way to our ability to carry out the critical reflection or inquiry in the first place. Rather, it was assumed that whatever limitations were operative at the first-order, somehow evaporated or did not exist when it came to the second-order analysis. It was assumed that somehow this second-order “removal” from first-order questions ensured a privileged access to, and guaranteed a neutral standpoint for investigating those issues, which precipitated initial disagreement amongst philosophers.

Critical inquiry is concerned with determining the nature and scope of our understanding in order to discover in what areas we can hope to attain knowledge, and in what areas we must be content with belief. It is seen as a necessary preliminary to answering substantive questions, and although it provides the means by which to differentiate the limits of knowledge there is no suggestion that those same limits will in any way impede the course of critical inquiry. Kant is motivated by similar concerns to Locke, and he adopts the same reflexive strategy. *The Critique of Pure Reason* can be read as a critical study of philosophical method in the sense at it is based on the assumption that before we can employ reason in the solution of any philosophical problem is necessary first to examine its credentials. In the various *Prefaces* and the *Introduction* Kant castigates the dogmatism of traditional metaphysicians who use the faculty reason to come to general conclusions about God, freedom and immortality “without any previous examination of the parity or incapacity or reason for so great an undertaking”.¹⁰

Now it does seem natural that, as soon as we have left the ground of experience, we should, through careful enquiries, assure ourselves as to the foundations of any building we propose to erect, not making use of any knowledge that we possess without first determining whence it has come, and not trusting to principles without

10 Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith. London: Palgrave Macmillan 1929, p. 46.

knowing their origin. It is natural, that is to say, that the question should first be considered, how the understanding can arrive at all this knowledge *a priori*, and what extent, validity, and worth it may have.¹¹

Later he tells us “we can regard a science of the mere examination of pure reason, of its sources and limits, as the *propaedeutic* to the system of pure reason”. As such it could properly be called a critique, and its utility lay in clarifying our reason — in keeping it “free from errors”. In other words, Kant believes that prior to examining first-order philosophical questions we must first answer a host of questions concerning philosophical method, and specifically those which will determine for us what counts genuine knowledge and what does not. Only by answering these crucial preliminary methodological questions are we entitled to believe that we have avoided the risk of error, and, accordingly, not produced a philosophical view, which is empty or nonsensical. But nowhere in the *Critique* does Kant address the question of how such critical inquiry, itself, is possible. A critical standpoint is established through the reflexive turn and it is considered to be neutral, autonomous, and capable of attaining certainty. Yet there is no suggestion that such a standpoint is, or should be, self-reflexive. Only those standpoints which are self-reflexively consistent, i.e., meet the same standards, or tests for rationality that are laid down in the account, escape the dilemma facing traditional epistemological programs, and the skeptical challenge based on it. They can then be seen to be genuinely critical.

In the original sense of the word “critical” as it appears in Critical Theory it was used to refer to social theory that was genuinely self-reflexive, that is, theory that could account for its own conditions of possibility and for its potentially transformative effects. The other features of Critical Theory include its explanatory, normative, and practical dimensions: it must provide empirical and testable accounts of social conditions (focusing on the causes of oppression); it must aim towards change for the better, an alleviation of the human condition or “emancipation”; and it must do so by providing a better self-understanding of the social agents who aim at transformation. Certainly, Critical Theory does not remain simply at the level of description. Since its adoption by Horkheimer as a revision of Marx, it has gained a wider acceptance as a term to describe any theoretical approach which is critical in this sense, including feminism, psychoanalytic thought, much cultural theory, the various forms of structuralism and poststructuralism, “French theory” and postcolonial studies.

11 *Ibid.*

The Futures of Critical Theory: American Pragmatism

Thomas McCarthy offers a series of important reflections on the current status of Critical Theory and its future. McCarthy has played a major role in dissemination and translation of Habermas's thought, especially in 1970s. While he concedes to being "more pragmatic" than Habermas, he constitutes one of the most perceptive commentators on the future of Critical Theory. McCarthy makes a series of observations for the revitalization of Critical Theory.

First, he suggests that it is important for Critical Theory to get back in touch with its Marxist roots:

"Iron laws" of political economy are emerging again as a central issue, this time at a global level, as in the period of national industrialization. This presents enormous problems of social dislocation, cultural degradation, political disempowerment, and just plain misery. Once again, "all that is solid again melts into air, all that is sacred profaned" and so on. What Critical Theory needs most now is something like a new Marx and I do not think we can think of Habermas in that way. What is more likely in the present organization of intellectual life is a new tradition of critical political economy. But that is not likely to be accomplished by philosophers.¹²

The error of much twentieth-century Critical Theory has been its almost exclusive cultural focus — it was always much better on culture and politics than on economics. McCarthy emphasizes the role of an understanding of economics in a new tradition of internal political economy that can begin in a systematic way to make sense of the emerging social and economic patterns of inequality. In the context of the need for a new international political economy, McCarthy does not think that Habermas can fulfil the role of the new Marx for Habermas nowadays supports a mixed economy. McCarthy, however, agrees with Habermas that

we have to learn to live with markets and bureaucracies and that the task is to domesticate them, to get as much democratic control of them as we can, even if sometimes only by indirect means. What we need to get from Marx, I think, is a refocusing of theoretical energies on the workings of the global economy.¹³

Habermas has given up on the idea that a "direct democratization of *all* politically relevant social institutions, including economic ones", is possible in large, complex societies. This

12 Thomas McCarthy, "Critical Theory today: an interview with Thomas McCarthy", by Shane O'Neill & Nicholas Smith, in: *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn — The Transformation of Critical Theory* (Essay in Honor of Thomas McCarthy), eds. W. Rehg & J. Bohman, Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2001, pp. 420-21.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 423.

means that against Marx's original expectations, Habermas believes that it is not possible to do away with markets and state administrations. Habermas believes that we have to learn to tame them and with this realization, Habermas moved closer to the traditional concerns of liberal constitutionalism.

The question now becomes how best to secure a full schedule of basic rights for everyone, how to secure political institutions and processes so that individuals and groups have a say in the decisions that affect them, and how to design distributive and redistributive mechanisms to ensure that all have adequate resources to exercise their rights and pursue their life projects. This is to be sure, less radical a project than the Marxian vision, but it provides a critical perspective on *all* actually existing forms of political liberalism.¹⁴

Second, McCarthy turns to the role of reason in Critical Theory. He makes the point that Critical Theory has been too confident about its reach and not enough concerned with its limits. For instance, he suggests that the idea of emancipation, represented as a realization of reason and understood as forms of self-determination and self-realization, is somewhat overblown. The privileged role granted reason in human affairs, a hangover from the confidence of Enlightenment thought and culture, often blinds us to "what deconstructivists refer to as 'the other side of reason'":

So one lesson that can be learned is to attend carefully to what is inevitably left out of any conceptualization. But there are more particular lessons to be learned as well, especially from Foucault, whose methodologically diverse forays — archaeological, genealogical, ethical — suggest a multiplicity of models for critical-theoretical research. There is no need to employ them in any one-sided negative way as he typically does. Often it is the ambiguity of rationalization processes that has to be articulated.¹⁵

For McCarthy it is a matter of "detranscendentalizing" reason and of understanding how deeply it is implicated in "history and tradition, language and culture, body and desire, practices and institutions". This realization about the limits of reason forecloses on the possibility that "there will be one right answer to ethical and political questions". This means not "anything goes" but that we should expect "reasonable disagreement" as a matter of course. Reason does not prescribe in unambiguous terms the "proper course of action, the right policy, the best program": this is a matter for public debate and there will not miraculous

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

appear the one right answer determined through the application of reason, but different positions, all reasonable.¹⁶

Third, McCarthy explains that Critical Theory has been too closely tied to academic work carried out in universities or research institutes which seal off the working lives of critical theorists from the lived forms of oppression as they are experienced by groups of the population. McCarthy suggests we must try to resist the pressure of disciplinary specialization on the one hand, while attempting to maintain contact with the progressive social movements of the day. He remarks:

Feminist theory, race theory, gay and lesbian studies, postcolonial studies and the like have recently been better at this than critical social theory — though they too have had their problems with too much distance from the lived forms of oppression they theorize. The Marxian tradition has been tied primarily to class politics, and in many industrialized countries, that form of politics has waned. In any case, new forms of politics have arisen and there is a need constantly to develop Critical Theory so as to articulate the concerns of new social movements.¹⁷

Responding to the question: “What do you see as the main challenges facing Critical Theory today?”, McCarthy answers:

The main challenges, I think, come from the general sense of social and cultural exhaustion that pervades both theory and practice today, the general scepticism about theory in anything stronger than its ironic or deconstructive forms, and the general feelings of helplessness in the face of impersonal forces and the fragmentation of life. These things mitigate any kind of renewal of the enlightenment project, let alone one with the utopian impulses of Critical Theory. I don’t think there’s much one can do here as a theorist, except to try to understand and theorize these forces, and to relate them to the actual political concerns of the day.¹⁸

McCarthy’s Critical Theory is a mix of influences from the Frankfurt School and American pragmatism. As James Bohman argues, he wants “to overcome the opposition between deconstruction and reconstruction through a ‘critique of impure reason’ that affirms both the transcendence and situatedness of reason, in its ‘ideals and illusions’”.¹⁹ He, thus, focuses

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 423-24.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 428.

18 *Ibid.*, pp. 428-29.

19 James Bohman, “Participants, observers, and critics: practical knowledge, social perspectives, and critical pluralism”, in: *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn — The Transformation of Critical Theory (Essay in Honor of Thomas McCarthy)*, eds. William Rehg & James Bohman, Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 2001, p. 89.

upon developing a “pragmatics of communicative reason”, a mixture of Critical Theory and pragmatism where truth is “deabsolutized” and reason is “detranscendentalized”. Such an account gives up on the God’s-eye point of view to defend a methodological and social pluralism, where we seek to critique and reflect upon a range of different standpoints, each reasonable in their own way. We might call this a critical perspectivism or pluralism, which is characteristic of modern complex societies where there are competing political and ethical claims. Given that “no one perspective or theory may lay claim to epistemic, moral or rational superiority in advance” the reconciliation or mediation of these claims, as Bohman argues, thus becomes the central issue for Critical Theory.²⁰ Critical Theory as “the pragmatic theory of democracy as a mode of inquiry” becomes “a distinctive mode of inquiry of practices of democratic deliberation“. Bohman puts the case for a pragmatic Critical Theory in the following way:

critical social science is distinctive, not because of the type of knowledge it employs as such, but because it does something with social scientific knowledge. It is reflexive social inquiry into the practical knowledge (i.e., the knowledge of practical knowledge) that is needed for effective social agency and freedom in the social world. This sort of practical knowledge, I argue, is tied up with the capacities of agents to adopt and to relate to a variety of social perspectives. Such a practical account of social inquiry has much in common with pragmatism, old and new.²¹

Yet for some readers this intimate alignment of Critical Theory with pragmatism may bring it into line with the Rortyeian version of liberalism, or with accounts of liberalism offered either by Rawls, where he invokes a notion of “overlapping consensus” or by Habermas, who talks of the consensus-formation inherent in the ideal speech situation. Certainly, when Bohman defines critical inquiry as the “attempt to unite various perspectives by engaging in a form of reflective inquiry that crosses among them”, then it is not clear the extent to which Critical Theory has been assimilated into a kind of pragmatism that has become wedded to versions of American liberalism.²² But then if we are to pluralize the possibilities of Critical Theory in the postmodern condition, clearly the pragmatist version of Critical Theory has to be one of the major alternatives. Yet this version does seem to rob Critical Theory of its original critical intent or to tame it, recasting it as a method of inquiry in the service of democracy.

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

The Futures of Critical Theory: French Theory

To this, America, the America that I love, an America that has silenced all its opponents, risks becoming a fourth Rome, after Byzantium and Moscow. In this new economic order, America imposes a financial, economic, and cultural oligarchy under the label of liberalism, a liberalism that puts at risk an important dimension of human freedom.²³

Students of social science and the humanities have tended to focus on the contemporary theorists of 'post'-culture and in particular, French theorists like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, as though either there was no critical thought before them or their work could be treated in hermetically-sealed fashion as cut off from the tradition of critical philosophy. This lack of historical depth and misunderstanding increasingly is an aspect of much academic culture in the postmodern condition, which separates philosophers and their works from their traditions of thought and their local context to turn them into academic commodities, recirculating their ideas endlessly in the academic market. It is rather like a franchising arrangement for "fast ideas", which picks up its own momentum through a bogus culture of self-citation. Sometimes the signs of such intellectual fashion are obvious as, say, at a recent international conference on the work of Foucault where the conference organisers promoted and branded themselves through Foucault T-shirts and used an image of Foucault as a logo on letterhead paper and other conference memorabilia. At other times the process of reception takes place in terms of a model of criticism, which is reduced to a methodology of a few easy steps and sloganised, in convenient words.

As many scholars have argued once the concept leaves its home in philosophy to become part of a marketing exercise the critical ethos is drained away. Nevertheless, critique and Critical Theory both in its current guises and in its traditional forms, like anything, can become commodified. We understand it is currently fashionable to talk of 'critique' now in advertising and marketing studies. This indicates the cooptation of the methods of Critical Theory precisely because of its power of analysis, yet politics is left at the gate. Perhaps, we do not expect such market penetration in academic culture itself, nor expect that academics themselves should actively become part of the sales and promotion culture.

If "French theory" often has been appropriated in a form cut off from its roots and context and caricatured, methodologized, commodified as an intellectual fad and re-circulated in the

23 Julia Kristeva, "Europhilia, europhobia" in Sylvere Lotringer & Sandy Cohen (Eds.) *French Theory in America*, New York & London: Routledge, p. 45.

academic market without much historical consciousness, it also has been falsely maligned for being esoteric, “imported rhetoric”, elitist, inaccessible, anti-Marxist, un-American, nihilist, relativist, and irrational. It has been attacked in America and the United Kingdom, by Marxists and neoMarxists, neopragmatists, feminists, cultural conservatists, and analytic philosophers.²⁴ Unlike the Frankfurt School, French theory was regarded as “foreign” and it had to contend with an American left almost totally colonized by the Frankfurt School in an earlier generation.²⁵

“French theory”, as an American invention, often has suffered exactly this double fate - total rejection or academic faddism. Despite warnings to the contrary by many so-called French theorists concerning language and representation that made problematic the extraction of anything resembling a unified and all-embracing model of criticism, scholars have proceeded as though representation was not contested. Lotringer and Cohen suggest the synthetic point of French theory to be “the *permanent suspension of representation*”, where “to present means to settle, answer, resolve, and control the represented”.²⁶ Their full account of this thesis on French theory is worth quoting:

Where modern communication theory has incessantly postulated positive outcomes from its models (consensus, agreement), in essence promoting social reconciliation, French theory subsumed concepts of communication in notions of *signification* and *contestation*. As there are no metanarratives that can be appealed to without becoming ideological, the turn to signification and contestation involved analysis of society’s modes of writing...²⁷

Lotringer and Cohen go on to advance a number of other theses about French theory and its American reception. They suggest that French theory with its focus on philosophy of the subject and subjectivity “broke apart the previous Americanization of German synthesis [of Freud and Marx], in which negation of the existing realities was to lead, thought self-consciousness, to political import and sense”.²⁸ In relation to the notion of the subject they also advance another thesis concerning “negative schizophrenia” as a general social

24 For a personal and at times, bitter, account of the reception of French theory in America see S. Lotringer, “Doing theory”, in: *French Theory in America*, eds. S. Lotringer, and S. Cohen, New York & London, Routledge, 2001, who as general editor of *Semiotext(e)* was responsible for introducing many of French thinkers to an American audience for the first time. See also in the same collection essays by Derrida, Kristeva, Gaillard, Baudrillard, Genette, Roudinesco, and Deleuze.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 140.

26 Sylvère Lotringer and Sande Cohen (eds.), *French Theory in America*, New York & London, Routledge, 2001, p. 4.

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

condition.²⁹ Finally, they advance a fourth thesis concerning “the reception of Nietzsche’s texts in America, travelling on a French ticket”.³⁰ In one very clear sense, still focusing on the question of subjectivity and negation within the system, French thought substituted Nietzsche for Hegel. This “substitution” was to play a major role in the reorientation of a critical philosophy no longer boxed in by the overwhelming and exhaustive power of the Hegelian dialectic that defined a synthesis of opposites without residue and contested an account of subjectivity as simple “alienation” or self as negation of other. The substitution was not a simple act or process, but took place only after and “through” a lengthy renaissance of Hegelian thought at the hands of Kojève, Hyppolite, Wahl and others. Is there a critical thought after Hegel? Is there a Nietzschean critical philosophy and what might it look like? Could we describe a contemporary incantation of Critical Theory as Deleuzian or Foucaultian or Derridean? As Michel Foucault³¹ was to write: “Truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him”.³²

Deleuzian Critical Theory?

it may be tempting to see philosophy as an agreeable commerce of the mind, which, with the concept, would have its own commodity, or rather its exchange value - which, from the point of view of a lively, disinterested sociability of Western democratic conversation, is able to generate a consensus of opinion and provide communication with an ethic, as art would provide it with an aesthetic. If this is what is called philosophy, it is understandable why marketing appropriates the concept and advertising puts itself forward as the conceiver par excellence, as the poet and thinker³³

Philosophy is not contemplation, reflection or communication but rather “the art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts”.³⁴ Thus, argue Deleuze and Guattari (1994), echoing

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

31 Michel Foucault, “Orders of discourse”, inaugural lecture delivered at the College de France, trans. Rupert Sawyer, *Social Science Information*, 1971 April 10.

32 Michael Peters, *Poststructuralism, Politics and Education*, Westport: Bergin & Garvey 1996. See Michael Peters, *Poststructuralism, Marxism and Neoliberalis — Between Theory and Politics*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

33 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell & Hugh Tomlinson, London and New York: Verso, 1994, p. 99.

34 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. G. Burchell and H. Tomlinson, London and New York: Verso, 1994, p. 2.

Nietzsche. Yet concepts need *conceptual personae* that activate and help define them. *Friend* is the defining such personae revealing the Greek origin of philo-sophy — the friend of wisdom. Philosophy, for Deleuze and Guattari, is defined as “knowledge through pure concepts”³⁵ and yet this should not be taken to imply an opposition between knowledge through concepts and knowledge through experience, for, following Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari argue,

You will know nothing through concepts unless you first created them — that is, constructed them in an intuition specific to them: a field, a plane, and a ground that must not be confused with them but that shelters their seeds and the personae who cultivate them.³⁶

And if philosophy as the creation of concepts requires “the plane of immanence” in which it can be born and the personae who activate and sign them — “Aristotle’s substance, Decartes’s cogito, Leibniz’s monad, Kant’s condition, Schelling’s power, Bergson’s duration”³⁷ — it also must be understood as geophilosophy, in terms of its *territories*: “*The role of conceptual personae is to show thought’s territories, its absolute deterritorializations and reterritorializations*”.³⁸

Writing in the spirit of Marx, in combination with Deleuze and Guattari, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri provide the poststructuralist basis for a renewal of materialist thought, charting the emergence of a new form of sovereignty they call *Empire*.³⁹ Hardt and Negri narrate a history of the passage from imperialism to Empire, that is, from a modernity dominated by the sovereignty of nation-states, and the imperialisms of European powers, to a postmodernity characterized by a single though decentered, new logic of global rule. They write: “Our basic hypothesis is that sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule. This new global form of sovereignty is what we call Empire”.⁴⁰ They use *Empire* not as a metaphor but as a concept that calls for a theoretical approach:

35 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*

38 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

39 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, Harvard University Press, 2000. As they indicate in a footnote “Two interdisciplinary texts serve as models for us throughout the writing of this book: Marx’s *Capital* and Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (fn. 4, p. 415). See also, Peters, *Poststructuralism, Marxism and Neoliberalism*, especially Chapter 5 “Deleuze’s ‘Societies of Control’: from Disciplinary Pedagogy to Perpetual Training in the Knowledge Economy”; and, Eugene Holland, “Marx and poststructuralist philosophies of difference”, in: Ian Buchanan (ed.), *A Deleuzian Century? Special Issue of The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 96 (3), 1997.

40 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. xii.

The concept of Empire is characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire's rule has no limits. First and foremost, then, the concept of Empire posits a regime that effectively compasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire "civilized" world. No territorial boundaries limit its reign. Second, the concept of Empire presents itself not as a historical regime originating in conquest, but rather as an order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity ... Empire presents its rule not as a transitory moment in the movement of history, but as a regime with no temporal boundaries and in this sense outside history or at the end of history. Third, the rule of empire operates on all registers of the social order extending down to the depths of the social world. Empire not only manages a territory and a population but also creates the very world it inhabits. It not only regulates human interactions but also seeks directly to rule over human nature. The object of its rule is social life in its entirety, and thus Empire presents the paradigmatic form of biopower. Finally, although the practice of Empire is continually bathed in blood, the concept of Empire is always dedicated to peace — a perpetual and universal peace outside history.⁴¹

They suggest that the passage to Empire, with its processes of globalization, "offer new possibilities to the forces of liberation". Our political future will be determined by our capacity "not simply to resist these processes but to reorganize them and redirect them toward new ends".⁴²

Critical Pedagogy and the Futures of Critical Theory

In this paper I have canvassed two possible options for the future of Critical Theory and also, by implication, for Critical Pedagogy. I have shaped up these two possibilities as American pragmatism and French theory, both constructions of a reductive sort. The differences may reflect the difference between the post-Nietzscheans, who explore the "other side of reason" and critique both the culture of the Enlightenment and modernity, and the neopragmatists who take a more progressive and positive view of reason and its capacity to examine its own reasoning apparatus, be it the method of science, critical thinking or the social mind.⁴³ The

41 *Ibid.*, pp. xiv-xv.

42 *Ibid.*, p. xv.

43 See e.g., Richard Rorty, *Achieving America: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998; Michael Peters and Paulo Ghiraldelli, *Richard Rorty: Education, Philosophy and Politics*, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.

latter, especially under the influence of Dewey, becomes a theory of inquiry for democracy — a mode of deliberative inquiry seeking guarantees for the active and equal distribution of speaking and acting chances. Clearly, this pragmatist version of Critical Theory is congruent with many of the aims and aspirations of Critical Pedagogy and it offers a method of inquiry that serves as a Critical Pedagogy, one that seemingly fits with the commitments of the democratic society. Yet, by itself, I would argue it is too easily denatured and stripped of its critical intent and reduced to “thinking skills”, critical or otherwise. It also could easily be reduced to a kind of advanced Deweyan method. It may become a form of apology for a sclerotic form of American democracy, which is exported to the world. We need to protect against this possibility and we need to keep it honest. The Deweyan social science utopia was imbued with a naiveté, an infatuation with science and an incurable optimism. The Nietzschean critique which explores the “other side of reason” provides the counterbalance, the counternarrative, and the analytical tools that serves to emphasize the way, even, perhaps above all, in democracies) people are controlled and manipulated for their own good or for their own best interests, or in the national interest or in the long term interest of the nation as a whole. Deleuze’s libidinal materialism, his Marxism provides for a renewal of Critical Theory; and Hardt and Negri provide an extension of the programme that seeks to develop a Deleuzian Marxism that analyses Empire and modes of governance in the postmodern condition. In short, Critical Theory and pedagogy need reason but they also need its critique. They also need a concept of democracy, both as mode of inquiry and pedagogy, but they also needs its critique.

Critical Theory and Education: *Historical and Metatheoretical Perspectives*¹

Douglas Kellner

It is surely not difficult to see that our time is a time of birth and transition to a new period. The spirit has broken with what was hitherto the world of its existence and imagination and is about to submerge all this in the past; it is at work giving itself a new form. To be sure, the spirit is never at rest but always engaged in ever progressing motion.... the spirit that educates itself matures slowly and quietly toward the new form, dissolving one particle of the edifice of its previous world after the other,... This gradual crumbling... is interrupted by the break of day that, like lightning, all at once reveals the edifice of the new world.²

As the new millennium unfolds, the human species is undergoing one of the most dramatic technological revolutions in history, one that is changing everything from the ways that people work to the ways that they communicate with each other and spend their leisure time. The technological revolution centers on computer, information, communication, and multimedia technologies, is often interpreted as the beginnings of an “information society”, and ascribes education a central role in every aspect of life. This Great Transformation poses tremendous challenges to educators to rethink their basic tenets, to deploy the emergent technologies in creative and productive ways, and to restructure education to respond constructively and progressively to the technological and social changes now encompassing the globe.

At the same time that technological revolution is underway, important demographic and socio-political changes are taking place throughout the world. Emigration patterns have brought an explosion of new peoples into various locations in recent decades, and many countries are now more racially and ethnically diverse, more multicultural, than ever before.

- 1 For sustained discussion over the past few years that led to initial drafts of this paper, I am grateful to Allan and Carmen Luke and to Rhonda Hammer and Richard Kahn. I thank Takis Fotopoulos for comments on a draft of this project that will be published in his journal *Democracy and Nature* and thank Ilan Gur-Ze'ev for comments that helped develop the current version.
- 2 G.H.F Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), New York: Harper and Row, 1965.

This creates the challenge of providing people from diverse races, classes, and backgrounds with the tools and competencies to enable them to succeed and participate in an ever more complex and changing world.³

In this paper, I propose developing a Critical Theory of education for democratizing and reconstructing education to meet the challenges of a global and technological society. This involves articulating a metatheory for the philosophy of education and providing a historical genealogy and grounding of key themes of a democratic reconstruction of education which indicates what traditional aspects of education should be overcome and what alternative pedagogies and principles should reconstruct education in the present age. This latter project includes developing multiple literacies as a response to new technologies, developing alternative critical pedagogies to meet the challenges of globalization and multiculturalism, and promoting radical democratization to counter the trend toward the imposition of a neo-liberal business model on education. I argue that a democratic and multicultural reconstruction of education needs to build on and synthesize perspectives of classical philosophy of education, Deweyan radical pragmatism, Freirean Critical Pedagogy, poststructuralism, and various critical theories of gender, race, class, and society while criticizing obsolete idealist, elitist and antidemocratic aspects of traditional concepts of education.

I am aware that in much of the world hunger, shelter, and basic literacy are burning requirements for survival, but would argue in a globalized world it is important to project normative visions for education and social transformation that could be used to criticize and reconstruct education in a variety of contexts. This project requires critical awareness that one is reflecting positions of a theorist in the overdeveloped world and that in different parts of the world education will be reconstructed in various ways depending on the exigencies of the system and possibilities for democratic transformation of education and society. Nonetheless, now is the time to reflect on the history of the philosophy of education, to consider what might be constructed as a Critical Theory of education, and to articulate a vision of how education could be reconstructed and democratized in the present age.

3 Studies reveal that women, minorities, and immigrants now constitute roughly 85 percent of the growth in the labor force, while these groups represent about 60 percent of all workers; see Duderstadt 1999-2000: 38. In the past decade, the number of Hispanics in the United States increased by 35 percent and Asians by more than 40 percent. Since 1991, California has had no single ethnic or racial minority and almost half of the high school students in the state are African-American or Latino. Meanwhile, a "tidal wave" of children of baby boomers are about to enter college; see Atkinson 1999-2000: 49-50. Obviously, I am writing this study from a U.S. perspective, but would suggest that my arguments have broader reference in an increasingly globalized society marked by a networked economy, increasing migration and multiculturalism, and a proliferating Internet-based cybersculture.

Critical Theory, Critique, and the Search for the Good Life

In using the term “Critical Theory” I am referring to the Frankfurt School,⁴ but the Critical Theory that I am anticipating is broader than the version developed by the German-American exiles. In the context of theorizing and reconstructing education for the contemporary era, I would include the tradition of Critical Pedagogy, Deweyan pragmatism, British cultural studies, and poststructuralism. My appropriation of the latter would encompass both the critiques of the subject, reason, and liberal democracy in especially French versions of “post” theory.⁵ But I would also engage the critical theories of gender, race, sexuality, and constructions of subjectivity that have developed from a broad range of theoretical formations over the past years. These themes can enrich Critical Pedagogy and help with the Deweyan project of democratizing and reconstruction education so that aims of social justice and progressive transformation can inform pedagogy and practice.

I use the metatheoretical concept of “Critical Theory” as a cover concept for this project to signify the critical dimension, the theoretical aspirations, and the political dynamics that will strive to link theory and practice. My conception of “critical” is synoptic and wide-ranging encompassing “critical” in the Greek sense of the verb *krinein*, which signifies to discern, reflect, and judge, and “theory” in the sense of the Greek noun *theoria* which refers to a way of seeing and contemplation. Greek critique is rooted in everyday life and exemplified in the Socratic practice of examining social life, its institutions, values, and dominant ideas, as well as one’s own thought and action.

Critique became central to the Enlightenment project of criticizing authority and legitimating one’s intellectual and political positions. The Kantian sense of critique, for example, required putting in question all the ideas of reason, morality, religion, aesthetics, and other dominant ideas to see if they could be well-grounded and legitimated. Kantian critique aims at autonomy from prejudice and ill-grounded ideas and requires rigorous reflection on one’s presuppositions and basic positions and argumentation to support one’s views.

Critical Theory builds on a Hegelian concept of critique as well by criticizing one-sided positions (such as technophobia vs. technophilia) and developing more complex dialectical perspectives that reject and neglect oppressive or false features of a position, while appropriating positive and emancipatory aspects. Critical Theory adopts a Hegelian concept

4 Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*, Cambridge, UK and Baltimore, Md.: Polity Press and John Hopkins University Press, 1989.

5 Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory — Critical Interrogations*, London and New York: Macmillan and Guilford Press, 1991.

of theory by developing holistic theories that attempt to conceptualize the totality of a given field, but that importantly make connections and articulate contradictions, overcoming idealist or reductive theories of the whole.

A Critical Theory of education also draws on Marxian critique, stressing the importance of critique of ideology and situating analysis of a topic like education within the dominant social relations and system of political economy. The Marxian project systematically criticized the assumptions of an established hegemonic discipline, as in Marx's critique of political economy, and constructed an alternative theory and practice to overcome the limitations and oppressive features of established institutions and systems of production. Marxian critique involves radical examination of existing ideologies and practices of education and the need for pedagogical and social transformation to free individuals from the fetters of consumer capitalism and to help make possible a free, more democratic and human culture and society. Marxian theorists like Gramsci criticized the ways that Italian education and culture reproduced ideologies of the bourgeoisie and then fascism and called for a counterhegemonic cultural project that would encompass alternative institutions from schooling to theater to journalism to help construct a socialist and democratic society.⁶ Further, as Charles Reitz has demonstrated, Herbert Marcuse carried out sustained criticisms of the existing system of education as a mode of reproducing the existing system of domination and oppression and called for counter-institutions and pedagogies to promote democratic social transformation and the full development of individuals.⁷

Building on this tradition, I will argue in a critical Hegelian spirit that classical philosophies of education can aid in the project of reconstructing and democratizing education and society, but that certain idealist, elitist, and oppressive elements of classical and contemporary pedagogy must be rejected. A Critical Theory of education has a normative and even utopian dimension, attempting to theorize how education and life construct alternatives to what is. Developing a model of education that promotes the good life and the good society could be aided by normative reflection on classical philosophy of education from the Greeks through John Dewey and critics of classical Western education like Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire. For the Greeks, philosophy signified love of wisdom (*philosophia*) and the practice of philosophy involved *Paideia*, the shaping, formation, and development of human beings and citizens.⁸ For the Greeks, it was language and communication that created human beings and philosophical dialogue involved the search for wisdom and the good life. Using the light of reason, the philosopher was to discover concepts

6 Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, New York: International Publishers, 1971.

7 Charles Reitz, *Art, Alienation, and the Humanities — A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse*, Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2000.

8 Werner Jaeger, *Paideia — The Ideals of Greek Culture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.

for human life and society that would enable the educator to create more fully developed human beings and citizens able to participate in their society.

Thus, for the classical Greek philosophy of education, proper education involved the search for the good life and the good society. Of course, Greek society was built on slavery so only the upper class, and mostly men, could dedicate themselves to education and becoming citizens. In later appropriations of Greek notions of *Paideia*, such as are evident in Werner Jaeger's classical study,⁹ the Greek notion of education was idealized and essentialized, leading to idealist notions of culture from the Romantics, Matthew Arnold, to those of current conservative elitists who fetishize idealized aspects of culture, elevate the mind over the body, the superior individual over the masses, and thus undermine democracy, citizenship, and the project of developing a just society.¹⁰

While the Greeks developed a primarily aristocratic conception of education, for the Romans education was shaped to meet the needs of Empire and to expand a universalized conception of culture and citizenship grounded in Roman ideals that provided the basis for the Western conception of *Humanitas*. For Roman civilization, education involved transmission of basic skills and literacy training for the plebs, more advanced schooling for the administrative class of the imperial society, and a form of classically-oriented tutoring for the patrician class in the codes and manners of Roman aristocracy. Education, then, for the Romans involved *educatio* and *instructio*, in which the teacher was to train children much as the horticulturist cultivated plants and the animal trainer molded animals, even as it aspired to mimic Platonic notions of education within its highest ranks.

Following the Latin roots, the early English conceptions of education involved bringing up and rearing young people from childhood to teach them good manners, habits, and to cultivate the qualities of personality and thought. Curiously, the Latin roots of the English term *education* and *educate* were used to signify the training and discipline of both animals and humans, connotations that lasted into the 19th century when more idealized notions of culture gained currency. By the late 19th century, both classicist educational conservatives and progressives like Dewey harked back to the Latin term *eductio*, to enrich and legitimate their pedagogical projects. However, as E.D. Hirsch and Ivan Illich have both noted, modern progressives made an unfortunate conflation of the term *eductio* (signifying a moving out, emigration, or stretching forth) with the Roman pedagogical term *educio*, which meant either nourishment or training.¹¹ The result was an idealized version of Western education in which

9 *Ibid.*

10 For a critique of the Greek concept of Paedeia and how it plays out in subsequent philosophies of education, see Kahn 2003.

11 Donald Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy — What Every American Needs to Know*, New York: Vintage, 1988; Ivan Illich, *Shadow Work*, London: Marion Boyars, 1981.

the teachers were to draw out or educe innate human potentials, a tradition pointing back towards Plato and the Greeks.

The classical ideals of education remain important insofar as they aim at the forming of more developed human beings and what Cicero conceived of as the citizen and “political philosopher”. The latter embodied and disseminated humane values and tolerance, and whose wide ranging knowledge was directed towards the regulation and construction of a public space that accorded with those values and not towards the ivory tower of theoretical abstraction. To the degree that classical ideals of education articulated a vision of humanity as being that which is capable of transcending itself and reshaping itself and its world is a positive heritage, as is the emphasis on the cultivation of unrealized human potentials, a utopian dimension later brought out by the philosopher Ernst Bloch.¹² The classical ideals also speak to the ethical duty that any citizen has toward its community and notions of political virtue that would later influence Rousseau and Enlightenment figures. Hence, to the extent that classical education develops pedagogic practices that allow for the greatest release of human potential and cultivation of citizens who will produce a just society, and counter education contrived to fit students into the existing social system and reduce schooling to an instrument of social reproduction, then they remain important for a contemporary Critical Theory of education.

Yet we should recall the elitist and idealist roots of classical education and that *Paideia* and *Humanitas* were used to legitimate slave societies and in the case of the Romans to promote Empire. Indeed, a study of the classical ideals also underlines for us the ways in which previous models of education have been produced within and as discourses of power and domination. Hence, a radically historicist approach to the philosophy of education does not superficially (or mistakenly) draw upon and reproduce theoretical positions that would otherwise prove problematical, but in the spirit of Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin’s “redemptive criticism” appropriates and reconstructs ideas from the past to produce critical theories of the present and visions of a better future.

12 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986.

Public Education, Democracy, and Pedagogies of the Oppressed

A similar dialectical approach is relevant for reflection on the idealist notion of education encoded in the German *Bildung* tradition, itself connected to an idealized version of Greek *Paideia*, which intended education to shape and form more fully realize human beings. Both Hegel and Marx shared this tradition, with Hegel stressing the formation and development of spirit as a historical and educational process that properly formed students needed to work through and appropriate tradition as one's own, while criticizing and moving beyond it. Marx, however, was inspired by a vision of socialism as producing more realized many-sided human beings and envisaged in his early writings, à la Schiller, the education of all the senses as an important dimension of becoming a human being.¹³

In their 1848 "Communist Manifesto", Marx and Engels made liberation of the working class from bourgeois education and expanded public education for the working class one of their major demands, offering as a key measure to constructing socialism: "Public education of all children free of charge. Elimination of children's factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with material production, etc. etc".¹⁴ Of course, the infamous "etc. etc.". signals the Marxist philosophy of education that was never fully developed, but it is clear that free public education was a key demand of Marxian socialism. Crucially, Marx and Engels wanted to "rescue education from the influence of the ruling class",¹⁵ arguing that education currently reproduces capitalist-bourgeois societies and must be completely reconfigured to produce alternative ones. In the famous "Theses on Feuerbach", the young Marx wrote: "The materialist doctrine that humans are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore changed humans are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is humans who change circumstances and that it is essential to educate the educator".¹⁶

As the twentieth century unfolded, it was John Dewey who developed the most sustained reflections on progressive education, linking education and democracy. Dewey insisted that one could not have a democratic society without education, that everyone should have access to education for democracy to work, and that education was the key to democracy and thus to the good life and good society. Dewey was a proponent of strong democracy, of an egalitarian and participatory democracy, where everyone takes part in social and political life. For Dewey, education was the key to making democracy work since in order to intelligently

13 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, New York: Norton, 1972, p. 88 ff.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 490.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 487.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

participate in social and political life, one had to be informed and educated to be able to be a good citizen and competent actor in democratic life.

Dewey, like Rousseau, and even more so, was experimental, pragmatic, and saw education as an evolving and experiential process in which one would learn by doing. The term “pragmatism” is associated with Dewey, and in one of its meanings signifies that theory should emerge from practice, that education should be practical, aimed at improving everyday life and society, and that by using the method of trial and error, one could learn important life skills, and gradually improve democratic society and education.

From similar pedagogical perspectives yet from a different historical location of Brazil in the 1960s and following, often in exile, Paulo Freire argued that the oppressed, the underclasses, have not equally shared or received the benefits of education and they should not expect it as a gift from the ruling classes, but should educate themselves, developing a “pedagogy of the oppressed”.¹⁷ For Freire, emancipatory education involves subverting the Hegelian master/slave dialectic, in which oppressed individuals undertake a transformation from object to subject, and thus properly become a subject and more fully developed human beings. Responding to the situation of colonization and oppression, Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed involved a type of decolonization, a consciousness-raising (*conscientizacao*), and allowed the educated the right to thematize issues of study, to engage in dialogue with teachers, and to fully participate in the educational process.

Developing a “pedagogy of the oppressed” requires the creation of learning-processes that will help individuals improve themselves and create a better life through social transformation and empowerment, rather than conforming to dominant views and values. Freire is famous for his critique of “banking” education and creation of a dialogical pedagogy. Freire perceived that education is often a form of indoctrination, of enforcing conformity to dominant values, and of social reproduction in which one is tutored into submission and acceptance of an oppressed and subordinate status. Therefore pedagogy of the oppressed must oppose dominant conceptions of education and schooling and construct more critical and emancipatory pedagogies aiming at radical social transformation.

It is interesting that all the classical philosophers of education that I have discussed, as well as Marx and Freire, assume that education is of central importance to creating better and more fully-realized individuals, as well as a good society, and therefore that philosophy of education is a key aspect of social critique and transformation. Critical philosophies of education provide radical critique of the existing models of education in the so-called Western democracies and provide progressive alternative models, still relevant to our contemporary situation. Many of

17 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

these philosophies of education, however, work with questionable conceptions of reason, subjectivity, and democracy, and neglect the importance of the body, gender, race, sexuality, the natural environment, and other dimensions of human life that some modern theories failed to adequately address.¹⁸ Consequently, the poststructuralist critique of modern theory provides important tools for a Critical Theory of education in the present age.

Poststructuralist theories emphasize the importance of difference, marginality, heterogeneity, and multiculturalism, calling attention to dimensions of experiences, groups and voices that have been suppressed in the modern tradition. They develop new critical theories of multicultural otherness and difference, which includes engagement with class, gender, race, sexuality, and other important components of identity and life that many modern pedagogies neglect or ignore. Poststructuralists also call for situated reason and knowledge, stressing the importance of context and the social construction of reality that allows constant reconstruction. A critical poststructuralism also radicalizes the reflexive turn found in some critical modern thinkers, requiring individuals involved in education and politics to reflect upon their own subject-position and biases, privileges, and limitations, forcing theorists to constantly criticize and rethink their own assumptions, positions, subject-positions, and practices, in a constant process of reflection and self-criticism.¹⁹

Poststructuralist theories have empowered women, people of color, gays and lesbians, and others excluded from modern theory and educational institutions. Yet feminist theories of education can draw upon classical feminism, as well as poststructuralist critique. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, rethought education after the French revolution as a way to realize the program of the Enlightenment and to make individual freedom, equality, and democracy a reality for men and women.²⁰ Education in Wollstonecraft's conception involved the restructuring of society, enabling women to participate in business, politics, and cultural life, extending the privileges of education to women (although she tended to neglect the need to educate and uplift working-class men and women). Radicalizing Enlightenment positions, Wollstonecraft argued that women, like men, are human beings who have reason, and are thus capable of education. Moreover, she argued that education is the only way for women to better themselves, that if women do not pursue education they cannot be emancipated, they cannot be participants in society, they cannot be equal to men, and thus the Enlightenment project cannot be realized.

18 For a critique of modern theories of the subject and reason from postmodern perspectives, see Best and Kellner 1991 and 1997; for a critique of modern pedagogy neglecting the body, environment, and cosmos, see Kahn 2003.

19 Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn*, London and New York: Routledge and Guilford Press, 1997.

20 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, New York: Norton, 1988.

More recent feminists, influenced by poststructuralism and multiculturalism, like Bell Hooks (1994), have stressed the importance of gaining agency and voice for oppressed groups and individuals who have traditionally been marginalized in educational practice and social life.²¹ Giving a voice within education and society to individuals in oppressed groups marked by race and ethnicity, sexuality, or class articulates well with the perspectives of Paulo Freire, although he himself did not bring in these domains until his later work. Freire's eventual turn toward more inclusive and articulated gender and multicultural perspectives was in part a response to critique from feminists, critical race theory, gays and lesbians, and other oppressed groups, and in part a development of his theory as he interacted with more groups and individuals.

Building on these perspectives enables a philosophy of education to develop more inclusive philosophical vision and to connect education directly to democratization and the changing of social relations in the direction of equality and social justice. Since social conditions and life are constantly changing, a Critical Theory of education must be radically historicist, attempting to reconstruct education as social conditions evolve and to create pedagogical alternatives in terms of the needs, problems, and possibilities of specific groups of people in concrete situations. Yet philosophical and normative insight and critique is also needed, driving efforts at reconstructing education and society by visions of what education and human life could be and what are their specific limitations in existing societies.

Hence, a Critical Theory of education involves conceiving of what education could be, in how radicalizing education could help change society. In this section, I have proposed a comprehensive metatheory that draws on both classical and contemporary sources to comprehend and reconstruct education. The classical Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School while rigorously engaging in the critique of ideology always drew on the more progressive elements of the most advanced theories of the day, developing dialectical appropriations, for instance, of Nietzsche, Freud, and Weber. Many other Marxian theorists or groups, by contrast, would just be dismissive and rejecting of these "bourgeois ideologies". In the same spirit, I would argue that a Critical Theory of education should draw on the radical democratic tradition of John Dewey's pragmatism, poststructuralism, and other contemporary critical theories.

Yet a Critical Theory of education must be rooted in a Critical Theory of society that conceptualizes the specific features of actually existing capitalist societies, and their relations of domination and subordination, contradictions and openings for progressive social change, and transformative practices that will create what the theory projects as a better life and society. A Critical Theory signifies a way of seeing and conceptualizing, a constructing of

21 Bell Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, New York: Routledge, 1994.

categories, making connections, mapping, and engaging in the practice of theory-construction, and relating theory to practice. In the next section, I will accordingly deploy a Critical Theory framework to suggest some transformations in the situation of youth today and the need to reconstruct education and promote multiple literacies appropriate to the novel material conditions, transformations, and subjectivities emerging in the contemporary era. Theorizing important changes in the contemporary moment requires, I would argue, broad-ranging and robust reconstructive theories in order to grasp the changing social and psychological conditions of life in a globalized, high-tech, digitized, multicultural, and highly conflicted world with its intense challenges, problems, and potential. I argue that in this situation of dramatic change, radical transformations of education are necessary to create subjects and practices appropriate to an expanding global society, digitized culture, and world of novel identities, social relations, cultural forms, and social movements and struggles.

The discourse of the postmodern can be useful in signaling changes and transformations in the current social situation, novelties, and new challenges for theory and practice,²² but postmodern positions can also be misused and abused. Hence, while certain forms of postmodern theory derived from Lyotard, Baudrillard, and others reject the very theoretical resources needed to analyze the “postmodern condition” that postmodern theorists evoke, I would argue that a critical and global metatheoretical model and approach is necessary to theorize the magnitude of the changes in the economy, polity, society, everyday life, and subjectivity of the present era. For a too radical postmodern theory fetishizes breaks and differences (i.e. Baudrillard), whereas more dialectical theories can present continuities and discontinuities, theorizing ruptures and novel conditions as well as connections with the past.

Of course, some versions of the Hegelian-Marxian Critical Theory are excessively totalizing, reductive, teleological and ideological, but one can avoid these pitfalls by mediating Hegelian/Marxian/modern conceptions with poststructuralist epistemologies and analyses of emergent postmodern conditions that put in question previous pedagogies and educational philosophies. Moreover, to democratize and reconstruct education, one can combine modern and postmodern perspectives, theory and practice, as I attempt to do in this paper.

A Critical Theory is interdisciplinary, involving a critique of academic disciplines and fragmentation, and transdisciplinary connecting material from different domains to craft a multiperspectival optic on contemporary society. Critical Theory is boundary-crossing and mediating, bringing together various dimensions of social life in a comprehensive normative and historical thinking. Its metatheory thus itself contains a model of more holistic education, that brings together various subject matter that constitute the present age, rather than separating material into disciplinary knowledge.

22 See Best and Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn*.

My remarks will address salient dimensions of what I take to be important sets of changes in the contemporary world that are significant for rethinking and reconstructing education today: 1) Articulating changing life conditions, subjectivities, and identities of youth; 2) cultivating multiple literacies to respond to fast-developing and mutating technologies and the challenges of globalization; and 3) on the basis of these analyses to propose a radical restructuring and democratization of education.²³

Changing Life Conditions, Subjectivities, and Identities

Allan and Carmen Luke have argued that current educational systems, curricula, and pedagogies were designed for the production of a laboring subject who has become an “endangered species” in the current economic, social, and cultural system. Modern education was constructed to develop a compliant work force which would gain skills of print literacy and discipline that would enable them to function in modern corporations and a corporate economy based on rational accounting, commercial organization, and discursive communicative practices, supported by manual labor and service jobs. The life trajectory for a laboring modern subject was assumed to be stable and mappable, progressing through K-12 schooling, to Universities and perhaps onto professional schools or higher degrees, to well-paying jobs that would themselves offer life-time employment, a stable career, and solid identities.

All of this has changed in a global economy marked by constant restructuring, flux and rapid change, and novel material conditions and subjectivities. Students coming into schools have been shaped by years of computer and video games, television, a variety of music technologies and forms, and new spheres of multimedia and interactive cyberculture. Moreover, the steady jobs that were waiting for well-disciplined and performing students of the previous generation are disappearing, while new jobs are appearing in the high-tech sector, itself subject to frenzied booms, busts, and restructuring. And as the September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. and their chaotic aftermath have demonstrated, life in a high-tech and global society is much more complicated, fragile, and subject to dramatic disruptions and transformations than was previously perceived.

23 The following section was influenced by commentary that I did on a study by Allan and Carmen Luke of the new conditions of youth and need for new literacies (Douglas Kellner, “Technological revolution, multiple literacies, and the restructuring of education”, in Ilana Snyder, editor, *Silicon Literacies*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 154-169) so I want to signal the importance of their work and our conversations over the years to the project of reconstructing education that I sketch out below.

There is thus a fundamental misfit between youth life-experience and schooling, the expectations of an older generation concerning labor and new work conditions, and the previous print-based and organizational economy and culture in contrast to the new digital and multimedia based culture and hybridized global economy. Postmodern theorists have amassed cultural capital theorizing such breaks and ruptures, but have had few positive recommendations on how to restructure institutions like schooling (although there are stacks of books, generally of little worth, on how to succeed in the new economy).²⁴ Indeed, in the current conjuncture, advocates of neo-liberal business models for education have used the obviously transformative technological revolution to legitimate technology as the panacea and magic cure for problems of education today and to sell corporate technologies and business models as the solution to educational problems.

One of the major challenges for democratizing education today is thus to draw the consequences for restructuring education and democratizing society from reflection on changing life conditions, experiences, and subjectivities in the context of technological revolution and globalization that envisages using technology to democratically reconstruct education and promote progressive social and political change without promoting neo-liberal and capitalist agendas. This task is advanced, I believe, by drawing on the radical critique of schooling and proposals for transforming education and learning found in the work of the late Ivan Illich, who was one of the chief educational gurus of the 1970s and most radical critic of schooling whose work has fallen from view but is still important and should be re-engaged in the present situation.²⁵

The late Ivan Illich's postindustrial model of education contains a radical critique of existing schooling and alternative notions like webs of learning, tools for conviviality, and radically reconstructing education to promote learning, democracy, and social and communal life, thus providing salient alternatives to modern systems.²⁶ Illich analyses in detail how modern schooling prepares students for the modern industrial system and how its "hidden curriculum" promotes conformity, bureaucracy, instrumental rationality, hierarchy, competition, and other features of existing social organization. For Illich, modern systems of schooling are no longer appropriate for postindustrial conditions and require radical restructuring of education and rethinking pedagogy. But unlike many of his contemporaries,

24 See the critique of how to succeed in the new economy books in Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *The Postmodern Adventure*, London and New York: Routledge and Guilford Press, 2001.

25 While reviewing Illich's work for a memorial for him sponsored by the UCLA Paulo Freire Institute, I discovered that much of Illich's work, including his major books, has been preserved on websites; see, for example, <http://www.preservenet.com/theory/Illich.html>.

26 Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society*, New York: Harper and Row, 1971; Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, New York: Harper and Row, 1973.

Illich had a powerful, explicit and, prescient analysis of the limits and possibilities of technologies and those strange institutions called “schools”.

Illich’s “learning webs”²⁷ and “tools for conviviality”²⁸ anticipate the Internet and how it might provide resources, interactivity, and communities that could help revolutionize education. For Illich, science and technology can either serve as instruments of domination or progressive ends. Hence, whereas big systems of computers promote modern bureaucracy and industry, personalized computers made accessible to the public might be constructed to provide tools that can be used to enhance learning. Thus, Illich was aware of how technologies like computers could either enhance or distort education depending on how they were fit into a well-balanced ecology of learning.

“Tools of conviviality” for Illich are appropriate, congenial, and promote learning, sociality, and community.²⁹ They are tools in which ends dictate means and individuals are not overpowered or controlled by their technologies (as say, with assembly lines, nuclear power plants, or giant computer systems). Convivial tools produce a democratic and convivial society in which individuals communicate, debate, participate in social and political life, and help make decisions. Convivial tools free individuals from dependency and cultivate autonomy and sociality. They provide individuals and society with the challenge of producing convivial tools and pedagogies that will create better modes of learning and social life.

Conviviality for Illich involves “autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment”.³⁰ Illich proposes a normative dimension to critique existing systems and construct alternative ones using values of “survival, justice, and self-defined work” as positive norms.³¹ These criteria could guide a reconstruction of education to serve the needs of varied communities, to promote democracy and social justice, and to redefine learning and work to promote creativity, community, and an ecological balance between people and the Earth. Indeed, Illich was one of the few critics working within radical pedagogy in his period who took seriously ecological issues and critically appraised institutions like schooling, medicine, transportation, and other key elements of industrial society within a broad social, political, economic, and ecological framework. His goal was nothing less than a critique of industrial civilization and a project of envisaging postindustrial institutions of learning, democratization, and social justice.

At a time when many were enamoured of the autonomous power and emancipatory potential of the school, Illich insisted on seeing schools as part and parcel of industrial

27 Illich, *Deschooling Society*.

28 Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*.

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

society and one of the major instruments of its social reproduction. One of Illich's enduring contributions is to see relationships between modern industrial institutions like schooling, production, medicine, transportation and other major sectors of industrial society. In order to engage with how what goes on in educational institutions we must have far better and more critical self-understandings of what a specific institutions like schooling do in their institutional structure within the broader society, their hidden curriculum and how they engage in social reproduction. Understanding schooling beyond its institutional sites also requires grasping its dialectical relationships to the public pedagogies of media and the street, and the networked civic and social space of the Internet, as well as how schooling relates to the oppressions and operations of workplaces, government institutions, and corporations.

Illich thus provides concrete analyses and a critique of how schooling reproduces the existing social order and is flawed and debased by the defects and horrors of the industrial system. Illich also recognizes that postindustrial society requires certain competencies and that a major challenge is to construct convivial technologies that will improve both education and social life. While he resolutely opposed neo-liberal agendas and was critical of encroaching corporate domination of the Internet and information technologies, Illich's notion of "webs of learning" and "tools of conviviality" can be appropriated for projects of the radical reconstruction of education and learning in the contemporary era. Within this framework, let us consider how the expanding social roles of information and communication technologies require multiple literacies and how focusing on the current technological revolution can lead us to rethink learning and reconstruct educational theory and practice.

Expanding Technologies/Multiple Literacies

Schooling in the modern era has been largely organized around the transmission of print literacies and segregated academic knowledge based on a modern division of disciplines into such things as social science, literature, or physical education. Schooling authorities have been in a moral panic throughout the world by declining literacy test scores and have recommended correctives such as early intervention to help produce stronger print literacy skills at younger ages.³² For the Lukes, such projects are misguided because they fail to take account of the rapidly expanding technologies of information and communication, mutating subjectivities and cultural forms, and the demands of a networked society culture that require

32 Allan Luke and Carmen Luke, "Adolescence lost/childhood regained: on early intervention and the emergence of the techno-subject", *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* 1 (1), 2002, pp. 91-120.

multiple literacies, more flexible subjects, and inventive skills and capabilities. The solution, they suggest, is to cultivate in the sphere of education multiple literacies, such as media, computer, and information literacies that will respond to emergent technologies and cultural conditions and empower students to participate in the expanding high-tech culture and networked society.³³

In this context, the Lukes argue that early print literacy intervention strategies fail to adequately prepare students with the literacies they need to navigate and negotiate the emergent economy and culture, and may perpetuate obsolete forms of schooling and culture. I would add here that the increasing emphasis on testing and quantitative scoring that is the basis of the Bush administration and conservative educational philosophy in the U.S. and elsewhere is also woefully flawed and already obsolete as it is rolled out, as are the SAT and most tests that measure student capabilities. These tests are educational technologies with genealogies in an earlier era marked by different social and economic imperatives, cognitive skills necessary for the economy and culture, and different subjectivities. The tests are thus now seriously outdated and in need of change to respond to the challenge of technological revolution and the current era of globalization.

Hence, the constant development and mutation of information and communication technologies and new forms of culture, economy, and everyday life require a careful rethinking of education and literacy in response to novel challenges that will involve an era of Deweyan experimental education, trial and error, and research and discovery. Yet a Critical Theory of education will reject pedagogies and literacies that merely aim at the reproduction of existing capitalist societies and creating capabilities aimed primarily at providing cultural capital put in the service of the reproduction of global capitalism. A Critical Theory of education could draw on the reconstruction of Marxian, Deweyan, and Freirean critical pedagogies and attempt to develop Illichian tools and communities of conviviality and genuine learning that would promote democracy, social justice, and cultivate conceptions of the good life and society for all.

This requires teaching traditional literacies as well as multiple forms of computer, information, and communication literacies that will empower students to develop their potentials, create communities of learning, and work toward democratizing society. In many parts of the world, there are the equivalent of early intervention print projects in the realm of computers, in which computers are put in children's hands at an ever earlier age in the hopes of developing multiple computer literacies. There is a raging debate, however, concerning the proper age to expose children to computers and cultivate computer literacy, just as there have been and still are debates over the proper time to begin cultivating print literacy in children.

33 See also Douglas Kellner, "New Technologies/New Literacies: reconstructing education for the new millennium", *Teaching Education* 11(3), 2000, pp. 245-265; Kellner, "Technological Revolution".

In the Hegelian concept of *Geist*, the subject develops through mediations of culture and society in specific historical ways, but encounters contradictions and blockages which are overcome by sublation or *Aufhebung*, i.e. overcoming obsolete or oppressive conditions that are transcended. In a contemporary version of the Hegelian dialectic, the emergent technologies and conditions of postmodern life are producing novel experiences and subjectivities that come into conflict with schooling, itself based on earlier historical subjectivities and congealed institutions, discourses, and practices, modeled on the industrial factory system (i.e. time-parceled segments, staying immobile at a specific site to perform labor, submitting to the discipline of bosses). The optimistic Hegelian scenario is that this conflict can be overcome through an *Aufhebung* that sublates (i.e. negates, preserves, takes to higher stage) the positivities in the conflict and negates the obsolete aspects. Put more concretely: when there are contradictions between, say, a print-based curriculum and evolving subjectivities mediated by multimedia, then resolving the contradiction requires going to a higher level; e.g. restructuring schooling to preserve, for instance, the importance of print-based culture and literacy. Yet restructuring schooling to meet challenges of expanding technologies and emergent social and cultural conditions requires cultivation of multiple literacies, tools, and pedagogies to respond to, mediate, and develop in pedagogically progressive ways the technologies and global conditions that help make possible democratized forms of education and culture.

An Hegelian critique would thus perceive some forms of life, such as schooling, as obsolete, as too print based in the conception of literacy, and as exhibiting moral panic in the face of new literacies and experiences. In Hegelian terms, schooling is seen as out of phase with the most advanced aspects of the culture and society, and must be transformed to harmonize with the networked society and multimedia culture. In the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan made the argument that there was a misfit between education and children's subjectivities largely because of TV and pop culture-based experience of kids perceptions and subjectivities in terms of mosaics, patterns, oral culture, and images.³⁴ In Hegelian (world-historical) terms, however, I do not think you could justify a restructuring of education on the basis of children's immersion in television and media culture. McLuhan's critique overburdens the allegedly transformative effects of television and popular culture on 60s youth. Moreover, the McLuhan vision arguably exaggerates the role of oral and tribal culture in the construction of novel subjectivities in contemporary youth, in addition to deploying problematic distinctions between hot and cool media and making a host of hyperbolic claims.

However, I believe that by substituting computers and multimedia technology for television and the media of McLuhan's day, one can argue that there are now significant transformations of the economy and culture that lend more credence to sweeping

34 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, New York: Signet, 1964.

McLuhanesque proclamations concerning the obsolescence of modern education institutions. For one thing, the economic and cultural global restructuring going on in the world today is done on the basis of the most advanced sector of the new economy and culture (i.e. information and multimedia technology) penetrating ever more realms of life from entertainment to labor to schooling. Thus, the reconstruction of education on the grounds that socio-economic, cultural, and the material conditions of everyday life and labor are changing is a reasonable response to the great transformations now underway.

There are, however, several caveats necessary in pursuing this argument. First, one needs to take seriously the Hegelian notion of *Aufhebung*, or sublation, in relation to print literacy since the ability to read and write linguistic texts and communication is arguably more important than ever in the new multimedia environment which is still significantly text-based (i.e. e-mail, chat rooms, list-serves, even much of the world wide Web-consists of text-based archives). To be sure, new multimedia and computer literacies are necessary, but they need to be articulated with print literacy, in which multiple literacies enable students and citizens to negotiate word, image, graphics, video, and multimedia digitized culture.

Moreover, although, following the calls of some neo-McLuhanites and the digerati, education must be transformed to meet the challenges of technological revolution, we must recognize that a globalized world is fraught with growing inequalities, conflicts and dangers, so to make education relevant to the contemporary situation it must address these problems. Globalization has been creating growing divisions between haves and have nots, and to economic inequality there now emerge growing information inequalities and gaps in cultural and social capital as well as a growing divide between rich and poor. A transformed democratic education must address these challenges and make education for social justice part of a radical pedagogy, as envisaged by theorists like Illich and Freire.

But in a post-September 11 world marked by growing political and cultural conflict and Terror War, education must also address the problems of war and conflict and make human rights education, peace education and the solving of conflicts through mediation an important part of a democratic curriculum. Escalating cultural and political conflict makes it all the more important to gain empathy and understanding of the other and to see how liberal values of tolerance and Enlightenment proposals for peace, justice, and human rights can be reconfigured in the contemporary situation. Critical Pedagogy must engage the difficult issue of overcoming differences, understanding cultures very dissimilar from one's own, and developing a more inconclusive democracy that will incorporate marginalized groups and resolve conflicts between diverse groups and cultures.

Crucially, a Critical Theory seeks to reconstruct education not to fulfill the agenda of capital and the high-tech industries, but to radically democratize education in order to advance the goals of progressive educators like Dewey, Freire, and Illich in cultivating learning that will promote the development of individuality, citizenship and community, social justice, and the strengthening of democratic participation in all modes of life. Over the past decades, there has

been sustained efforts to impose a neo-liberal agenda on education, reorganizing schools on a business model, imposing standardized curriculum, and making testing the goal of pedagogy. This agenda is disastrously wrong and a Critical Theory of education needs to both critique the neo-liberal restructuring of education and to propose alternative conceptions and practices.

Globalization and technological revolution have been used to legitimate a radical restructuring of schooling and provide radical educators with openings to propose their own models of pedagogy and reconstruction of education to serve democracy and progressive social change. There is no question but that technological revolution is destabilizing traditional education and creating openings for change. Although one needs to fiercely criticize the neo-liberal model, it is also important to propose alternatives. Thus, one needs to accompany demands for new literacies and a restructuring of education with a program of the democratization of education, as I suggest in my concluding remarks.

Toward a Radical Reconstruction and Democratization of Education

In calling for the democratic reconstruction of education to promote multiple literacies as a response to emergent technologies and globalization, one encounters the problem of the “digital divide”. It has been well documented that some communities, or individuals in privileged groups, are exposed to more advanced technologies and given access to more high-tech skills and cultural capital than those in less privileged communities. One way to overcome the divide, and thus a whole new set of inequalities that mirror or supplement modern divides of class, gender, race, and education, is to restructure education so that all students have access to evolving technologies and multiple literacies, so that education is democratized, and the very learning process and relation between student and teacher is rethought.

The Hegelian Master/Slave dialectic can help characterize relations between students and teachers today in which teachers force their curricula and agendas onto students in a situation in which there may be a mismatch between generational cultural and social experiences and even subjectivities. Educators, students, and citizens must recognize this generational divide and work to overcome conflicts and make differences more productive. That is, many students may be more technologically skilled than teachers and can themselves be important pedagogical resources. I know that much of what I’ve learned about how to use computers I’ve absorbed from students, and continue to draw upon them both in and out of class to help me navigate the new high-tech culture and to devise productive pedagogies and practices for the contemporary era.³⁵

35 For examples of how new technology can be used to enhance education, see my Web-sites for philosophy of education, technology and society, and cultural studies seminars at UCLA, accessible from my home page at <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/kellner.html>.

Democratizing education can be enhanced by more interactive and participatory forms of education such as developing convivial list-serves, the collective building of Web-sites, on-line discussion, and collaborative computer-based research projects. But the restructuring of education also requires cultivating literacy concerning limitations of Internet-based knowledge and the need for library inquiry and accessing books as important pedagogical resources. For learning and teaching, books and print-based materials and multimedia Web-based materials should be seen as supplementary and not as oppositional, in which one is uncritically favored over the other, as some traditionalists privilege print literacy and book culture, while some of our contemporaries excessively celebrate the Internet and cyberculture.

In addition, a Critical Theory of education would envisage merging class-based Socratic discussion with computer research and projects that would combine oral, written, and multimedia cultural forms in the process of education without privileging one or the other. Some educators still insist that face-to-face dialogue in the classroom is the alpha and omega of good education and while there are times that classroom dialogue is extremely productive, it is a mistake to fetishize face-to-face conversation, books and print media, or new multimedia. Rather the challenge is to draw upon in an experimental and supplemental way all of these dimensions of the educational process to restructure and democratize education.

Finally, I would suggest that since concrete reconstructions of education will take place in specific local and national contexts, the mix between classroom pedagogy, books and reading print-material, and multimedia and Internet-based education will vary according to locale, age, and the needs and interests of students and teachers. The idea behind multiple literacies is that diverse and multimodal forms of culture blend in lived experience to form new subjectivities,³⁶ and the challenge for a radical pedagogy is to cultivate subjectivities that seek justice, more harmonious social relations, and transformed relations with the natural world. Ivan Illich called for education to take ecological problems into account³⁷ and as Richard Kahn argues,³⁸ the extent of current ecological crisis is such that environmental collapse and disaster faces the current generation if ecological issues are not addressed.

A glaring problem with contemporary educational institutions is that they become fixed in monomodal instruction with homogenized lesson plans, curricula, and pedagogy, and neglect to address challenging political, cultural, or ecological problems. The development of tools of conviviality and radical pedagogies enable teachers and students to break with these models and to engage in Deweyan experimental education. A reconstruction of education could

36 Kellner, "New Technologies/New Literacies"; Kellner, "Technological Revolution".

37 Illich, *Deschooling Society*; Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*.

38 Richard Kahn, "Towards Ecopedagogy: Weaving a broad-based pedagogy of liberation for animals, nature, and the oppressed people of the earth", in: http://www.cala-online.org/Journal/Issue_1/Towards%20Ecopedagogy.htm

help create subjects better able to negotiate the complexities of emergent forms of everyday life, labor, and culture, as contemporary life becomes more multifaceted and dangerous. More supportive, dialogical and interactive social relations in learning situations can promote cooperation, democracy, and positive social values, as well as fulfill needs for communication, esteem, and learning. Whereas modern mass education tended to see life in a linear fashion based on print models and developed pedagogies which broke experience into discrete moments and behavioral bits, critical pedagogies could produce skills that enable individuals to better navigate the multiple realms and challenges of contemporary life. Deweyan education focused on problem solving, goal-seeking projects, and the courage to be experimental, while Freire developed alternative pedagogies and Illich oppositional conceptions of education and learning and critiques of schooling. It is this sort of critical spirit and vision to reconstruct education and society that can help produce new pedagogies, tools for learning, and social justice for the present age.

Critical Pedagogy in the Age of Terror

Peter McLaren

The terrorist attacks of September 11 — that infamous saber slash across the cheekbones of world history — were truly acts against humanity. But Bush and his administration are defeating democracy in their vainglorious attempt to defend it, and in the process creating a climate that makes critical education difficult, if not impossible.

Among members of the Bush administration, human rights is a banner under which capitalist intervention justifies itself. In the name of universal values of defeating “terror”, capitalist powers are asserting themselves and ruthlessly consolidating their power. In the Bush administration’s capitalist revolution that is driving forward at warp speed, there is a concerted effort to meld political rhetoric and apocalyptic discourse as part of a larger politics of fear and paranoia. Like a priest of the black arts, Bush has successfully disinterred the remnants of Ronald Reagan’s proto-fascist rhetoric from the graveyard of chiliastic fantasies, appropriated it for his own interests, and played it in public like a charm. Self-fashioning one’s image through the use of messianic and millenarian tropes works best on the intended audience (in this case, the American public) when the performance is disabused of shrillness, devoid of mincing, and remains unrestrained, confident, anagogic, and sometimes allegorical.

Morally saturated with vulgarized notions of America the Good, and barnacled by polarizing jargon about “us and them”, Bush’s defense of the war on terrorism works largely through archetypal association, and operates in the crucible of the structural unconscious. Bush may believe that Providence has assigned him the arduous yet glorious task of rescuing America from the Satanic forces of evil, as if he, himself, were the embodiment of the generalized will and the unalloyed spirit of the American people. Evoking the role of the divine prophet who identifies with the sword arm of divine retribution, Bush reveals the eschatological undertow to the war on terrorism, perhaps most evident in his totalizing and Manichean pronouncements where he likens bin Laden and his al Qaeda chthonic warriors to absolute evil, and the United States to the apogee of freedom and goodness.

Placing a veil of righteousness over the exercise of mass destruction and the quest for geopolitical dominance (the United States is only protecting the world from those who hate freedom and who wish to destroy democracy), Bush has been accorded nearly sacerdotal status by the vast majority of the American people (that is, if we are to believe the opinion polls). I do believe that Bush is seen as offering some kind of metaphysical hope for the

rebirth of the American Spirit that has wasted away in a morally comatose state within what is perceived by many conservatives as the debauched interregnum of the Clinton years. Ever since the myth of America as God's chosen nation ingressed into the collective unconscious of the American people, U.S. politics has been primed for the appearance of national saviors and sinners. Without skipping a opportunistic beat, Bush has assumed the mantle of chief global war lord, taken up the Hammer of Thor, and is continuing to wield it recklessly, in blatant disregard for the court of world opinion. Bush appears to believe that God's elect — the American *ubermenschen* — in their potent attempt to realize Bush *padre's* vision of making America the iron-fisted steward of a New World Order — must not be compromised by the liberal ideas of militarily (and by association, morally) weaker allied nations. It is not as though Bush *hijo* is trying to remake the United States into a New Jerusalem. It is more likely that Bush believes unabashedly that the United States is already the New Jerusalem and must be protected by leaders ordained by the Almighty.

We need to ask ourselves how, exactly, the rhetoric of fascism works, assuming that the infrastructure for a transition to a fascist state is already in place — we have the USA Patriot Act, we have the military tribunals, we have the Office of Homeland Security, we have the necessary scapegoats, we have the Office of Strategic Influence working hand-in-hand with the US Army's Psychological Operations Command (PSYOPS) operating domestically (actually, its operating domestically is against the law, but we know that during the Reagan administration that PSYOPS staffed the Office of Public Diplomacy and planted stories in the media supporting the Contras, a move made possible by Otto Reich, now the assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere Affairs; and we know that a few years ago PSYOPS interns were discovered working as interns in the news division of CNN's Atlanta headquarters), we have the strongest military in the world, we have the military hawks in control of the Pentagon, we have pummeled an evil nation into pre-history, turned Central Asia into a zone of containment, and shown that we can kill mercilessly and control the media reporting in the theater of operations, as major newspapers regularly buried stories of U.S. airstrikes on civilians, such as in the case of Niazi Kala (sometimes called Qalaye Niaze), where the United Nations reported that 52 civilians were killed by the US attack, including 25 children. According to the UN report, unarmed women and children were pursued and killed by American helicopters, even as they fled to shelter or tried to rescue survivors. And we have a leader who is little more than a glorified servant of the military industrial complex. And one who is able to admit this publicly and arouse little opposition. In fact, such an admission wins him the glowing admiration of the American people. The Bush administration's scheduled release of documents under the Presidential Records Act of 1978, which includes Ronald Reagan's papers, have successfully been placed on lockdown. So far Cheney's much publicized legal stonewalling has prevented full disclosure of the extent of Enron-National Energy Policy Development Group contacts. Government secrecy and the withholding of information available to the public by law has become a guiding axiom of

government practice. Of course, all of this must be seen within the larger context of how the Bush administration has attempted to clear-cut the economic terrain of major political constraints so that the minority class who own the means of production can continue to enforce the logic of accumulation and maximize the amount of surplus value. All of this has rendered the left toothless in the face of the immanent threat to human rights. Even the filigreed discussions of geo-politics, densely woven and finely stranded, that one finds in the academy are noticeably absent in the mainstream media, whose klatches of foreign-policy pundits include talk show hosts.

These days it is far from fashionable to be a radical educator. The political gambit of progressive educators these days appears to silence in the face of chaos, with the hope that the worst will soon pass. To identify your politics as Marxist among the bombastic odes to the military machine and the United States' unilateral quest to create a New World Order, is to invite derision and ridicule from many quarters, including many on the left. It is to open one's work to all species of criticism, from crude hectoring to sophisticated Philippics. Charges range from being a naive leftist, to being stuck in a time warp, to being hooked on an antediluvian patriarch, to giving in to cheap sentimentality or romantic utopianism. Marxists are accused with assuming an untenable political position that enables them to wear the mantle of the revolutionary without having to get their hands dirty in the day-to-day struggles of rank-and-file teachers who occupy the front lines in the schools of our major urban centers. Marxist analysis is also frequently derided as elitist in its supposed impenetrable esotericism, and if you happen to teach at a university your work can easily be dismissed as ivory tower activism — even by other education scholars who also work in universities. Critics often make assumptions that you are guilty of being terminally removed from the lives of teachers and students until proven otherwise. Some of the criticism is productive and warranted but much of it is a desperate attempt to dismiss serious challenges to capitalism — to displace work that attempts to puncture the aura of inevitability surrounding global capitalism. While some of it is substantive — including a welcomed critique of the enciphered language of some academics and a challenge to radical educators to come up with concrete pedagogical possibilities — much of it is about as small-minded and petty as a book reviewer criticizing an author for, say, her choice of book cover or what she is wearing in her author's photo.

Part of the problem faced by the educational left today is that even among progressive educators there exists an ominous resignation produced by the seeming inevitability of capital, even as financial institutions expand capacity in inverse proportion to a decline in living standards and job security. The swan song for Marxist analysis apparently occurred when the Berlin Wall came tumbling down. The belief that there is no alternative to capitalism had pullulated across the global political landscape before the fall of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, attaching itself like a fungus to regional and national dreams alike. The winds of the Cold War had spread its spores to the farthest reaches of the globe.

After laying dormant for a decade, these spores have been reactivated and have seemingly destroyed our capacity to dream otherwise. Today most nations celebrate capital as the key to the survival of democracy. Watered by the tears of the poor and cultivated by working-class labor, the dreams that sprout from the unmolested soil of capital are those engineered by the ruling class. Plowed and harrowed by international cartels of transnational corporations, freemarketeers, and global carpetbaggers poised to take advantage of Third World nations in serious financial debt to the West, the seeds of capitalism have yielded a record-breaking harvest. The capitalist dream factories are not only corporate board rooms and production studios of media networks that together work to keep the capitalist dream alive, but a spirit of mass resignation that disables the majority of the population from realizing that capitalism and exploitation are functional equivalents, that globalisation of capital is just another name for what Lenin termed imperialism.¹ It is no longer just the capitalists who feed off the living labor of workers who believe that they provide work for them, but the workers themselves have become conditioned to believe that without their exploiters, they would no longer exist. The entrails of the eviscerated poor now serve as divining mechanisms for the soothsayers of the investment corporations.

Today's international political economy is the toast of the global ruling class, and the bourgeoisie see it as their biggest opportunity in decades to join their ranks. Freemarketeers have been given the New World Order's *imprimatur* to loot and exploit the planet's resources and to invest in global markets without restriction with impunity. The menacing concomitant of capital's destructive juggernaut is the obliteration of any hope for civilisation, let alone democracy. The working-class are taught to feel grateful for the *maquiladoras* that are now sprouting up in countries designated to provide the cheap labor and dumping grounds for pollution for the western democracies. They are taught that socialism and communism are congenitally evil and can only lead to a totalitarian dictatorship. In short, capitalism and the legitimacy of private monopoly ownership has been naturalised as common sense.

The "free market revolution", driven by continuous capitalist accumulation of a winner-take-all variety, has left the social infrastructure of the United States in tatters (not to mention other parts of the globe). Through policies of increasing its military-industrial-financial interests, it continues to purse its quivering bourgeois lips, bare its imperialist fangs, and suck the lifeblood from the open veins of South America and other regions of the globe. The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and the shift to capitalism in Eastern Europe has brought nearly five billion people into the world market. The globalization of capitalism and its political bedfellow, neo-liberalism, work together to democratize suffering,

1 Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism — The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1951.

obliterate hope, and assassinate justice. The logic of privatization and free trade — where social labor is the means and measure of value and surplus social labor lies at the heart of profit — now odiously shapes archetypes of citizenship, manages our perceptions of what should constitute the “good society”, and creates ideological formations that produce necessary functions for capital in relation to labor. As schools become increasingly financed more by corporations that function as service industries for transnational capitalism, and as bourgeois think-tank profiteerism and educational professionalism continues to guide educational policy and practice, the United States population faces a challenging educational reality. Liberals are calling for the need for capital controls, controls in foreign exchange, the stimulation of growth and wages, labor rights enforcement for nations borrowing from the United States, and the removal of financial aid from banking and capital until they concede to the centrality of the wage problem and insist on labor rights. However, very few are calling for the abolition of capital itself.

The commercialization of higher education, the bureaucratic cultivation of intellectual capital and its tethering to the machinery of capital, the rise of industrial business partnerships, the movement of research into the commercial arena of profit and in the service of trade organizations and academic-corporate consortia, have garnered institutions of higher learning profound suspicion by those who view education as a vehicle for democracy. In the hands of the technozealots, teachers are being re-proletarianized and labor is being disciplined, displaced, and deskilled. Teacher autonomy, independence, and control over work is being severely reduced, while workplace knowledge and control is given over more and more to the hands of the administration.

The educational left is finding itself without a revolutionary agenda for challenging in the classrooms of the nation the effects and consequences of the new capitalism. Consequently, we are witnessing the progressive and unchecked merging of pedagogy to the productive processes within advanced capitalism. Education has been reduced to a sub-sector of the economy, designed to create cybercitizens within a teledemocracy of fast-moving images, representations, and lifestyle choices brought powered by the seemingly frictionlessness of finance capital. Capitalism has been naturalized as commonsense reality - even as a part of nature itself — while the term “social class” has been replaced by the less antagonistic term, “socioeconomic status“. It is impossible to examine educational reform in the United States without taking into account continuing forces of globalization and the progressive diversion of capital into financial and speculative channels — what some have called “casino capitalism on a world scale”.

Marxists have long recognized the dangers of capital and the exponentiality of its expansion into all spheres of the lifeworld. Today capital is in command of the world order as never before, as new commodity circuits and the increased speed of capital circulation works to extend and globally secure capital’s reign of terror. The site where the concrete determinations of industrialization, corporations, markets, greed, patriarchy, technology, all

come together — the center where exploitation and dominated is fundamentally articulated is occupied by capital. The insinuation of the coherence and logic of capital into everyday life — and the elevation of the market to sacerdotal status, as the paragon of all social relationships — is something that has successfully occurred and the economic restructuring that we are witnessing today offers both new fears concerning capital's inevitability and some new possibilities for organizing against it. Critical pedagogy is, I maintain, a necessary (but not sufficient) possibility.

Particularly during the Reagan years, hegemonic practices and regulatory forces that had undergirded postwar capitalism were dramatically destabilized. And it is an ongoing process. The halcyon days before the arrival of the New Leviathan of globalization — when liberal Keynesian policy-making established at least a provisional social safety net — have been replaced by pan-national structures of production and distribution and communication technologies that enable a “warp speed capitalism” of instant worldwide financial transactions. According to Scott Davies and Neil Guppy, one of the central tenets of the neoliberal argument is that schools must bring their policies and practices in line with the importance of knowledge as a form of production. According to the neoliberal educationalists, schools are largely to blame for economic decline and educational reform must therefore be responsive to the postindustrial labor market and restructured global economy.

Business has been given a green light to restructure schooling for their own purposes, as the image of *homo economicus* drives educational policy and practice, and as corporations and transnational business conglomerates and their political bedfellows become the leading rationalizing forces of educational reform.

Davies and Guppy argue that globalization has also led schools to stress closer links between school and the workplace in order to develop skills training, and “lifelong learning”. In a knowledge-intensive economy, schools can no longer provide the skills for a lifetime career. This means that schools are called upon by the market-oriented educational thinkers to focus more on adult learners through enterprise-based training. And further, schools are called upon to teach new types of skills and knowledge.

It is growing more common to hear the refrain: “education is increasingly too important to be left to the educators”, as governments make strong efforts at intervention to ensure schools play their part in rectifying economic stagnation and ensuring global competitiveness. And standardized tests are touted as the means to ensure the educational system is aligned well with the global economy. There is also a movement to develop international standardized tests, creating pressures towards educational convergence and standardization among nations. Such an effort, note Davies and Guppy, provides a form of surveillance that allows nation-states to justify their extended influence and also serves to homogenize education across regions and nations. School choice initiatives have emerged in an increasing number of nations in North America and Europe, sapping the strength of the public school system and helping to spearhead educational privatization.

Because capital has itself invaded almost every sphere of life in the United States, the focus of the educational left has been distracted for the most part from the great class struggles that have punctuated this century. The leftist agenda now rests almost entirely on an understanding of asymmetrical gender and ethnic relations. While this focus surely is important, class struggle is now perilously viewed as an outdated issue. When social class is discussed, it is usually viewed as relational, not as oppositional. In the context of discussions of “social status” rather than “class struggle”, techno-elite curriculum innovation has secured a privileged position that is functionally advantageous to the socially reproductive logic of entrepreneurial capitalism, private ownership, and the personal appropriation of social production. This neoliberal dictatorship of the comprador elite has re-secured a monopoly on resources held by the transnational ruling class and their allies in the culture industry. The very meaning of freedom has come to refer to the freedom to structure the distribution of wealth and to exploit workers more easily across national boundaries by driving down wages to their lowest common denominator and by eviscerating social programs designed to assist laboring humanity. Territories that were once linked to national interests have given way to networks inscribed within world markets largely independent of any national political constraints. History, the economy, and politics no longer are bound together in a secure fashion but operate as if they constituted independent spheres.

What should today’s global educators make of the structural power embodied within new forms of today’s transnational capital, especially in terms of the shift in the relation between nation-states and formerly nation-based classes, the scope of economic restructuring and its ability to erode the power of organized labor, and the extent to which global mass migrations pit groups in fierce competition over very scarce resources. Robinson notes that the transnational elite has now been able to put democracy in the place of dictatorship (what can be called the neo-liberal state) in order to perform at the level of the nation-state the following functions: adopting fiscal and monetary policies that guarantee macro-economic stability; providing the necessary infrastructure for global capitalist circuitry and flows; and securing financial control for the transnational comprador elite as the nation-state moves more solidly in the camp of neo-liberalism, while maintaining the illusion of “national interests” and concerns with “foreign competition”. In fact, the concept of “national interests” and the term “democracy” itself function as an ideological ruse to enable authoritarian regimes to move with a relative lack of contestation towards a transformation into elite polyarchies. So many of the literary practices in today’s schools are functionally linked to this new global economy — such as “co-operative learning” and developing “communities of learners” — and promote a convenient alliance between the new fast capitalism and conventional cognitive science. While these new classroom measures are helping to design and analyze symbols, they are also being co-opted by and facilitating the new capitalism.

Revolutionary Marxist educators maintain that neoliberal ideology as it applies to schooling is often given ballast by poststructuralist-postmodernist/deconstructive approaches

to educational reform because many of these approaches refuse to challenge the rule of capital and the social relations of production at the basis of the capitalist state. Neoliberalism (“capitalism with the gloves off”, or “socialism for the rich”) refers to a corporate domination of society that supports state enforcement of the unregulated market, engages in the oppression of nonmarket forces and antimarket policies, guts free public services, eliminates social subsidies, offers limitless concessions to transnational corporations, enthrones a neomercantilist public policy agenda, establishes the market as the patron of educational reform, and permits private interests to control most of social life in the pursuit of profits for the few (i.e., through lowering taxes on the wealthy, scrapping environmental regulations, and dismantling public education and social welfare programs). It is undeniably one of the most dangerous politics that we face today.

Neoliberal free market economics — the purpose of which is to avoid stasis and keep businesses in healthy flux — functions as a type of binding arbitration, legitimizing a host of questionable practices and outcomes: deregulation, unrestricted access to consumer markets, downsizing, outsourcing, flexible arrangements of labor, intensification of competition among transnational corporations, increasing centralization of economic and political power, and finally, widening class polarization.

As Dave Hill and Mike Cole have noted,² neoliberalism advocates a number of pro-capitalist positions: that the state privatise ownership of the means of production, including private sector involvement in welfare, social, educational and other state services (such as the prison industry); sell labor-power for the purposes of creating a ‘flexible’ and poorly regulated labor market; advance a corporate managerialist model for state services; allow the needs of the economy to dictate the principal aims of school education; suppress the teaching of oppositional and critical thought that would challenge the rule of capital; support a curriculum and pedagogy that produces compliant, pro-capitalist workers; and make sure that schooling and education ensure the ideological and economic reproduction that benefits the ruling class. Of course, the business agenda for schools can be seen in growing public-private partnerships, the burgeoning business sponsorships for schools, business “mentoring” and corporatization of the curriculum, and calls for national standards, regular national tests, voucher systems, accountability schemes, financial incentives for high performance schools, and “quality control” of teaching.³ Schools are encouraged to provide better ‘value for

2 Dave Hill and Mike Cole, “Social class”, in *Schooling and Equality: Fact, Concept and Policy*, eds. Dave Hill and Mike Cole, London: Kogan Page, 2001.

3 Peter McLaren and Ramin Farahmandpur, “Educational policy and the socialist imagination: revolutionary citizenship as a pedagogy of resistance”, *Educational Policy* 13(3), July 2001, pp. 343-78; Peter McLaren and Ramin Farahmandpur, “Teaching against globalization and the new imperialism: toward a revolutionary pedagogy”, *Journal of Teacher Education* 52(2), March/April 2001, pp. 136-150.

money' and must seek to learn from the entrepreneurial world of business or risk going into receivership. In short, neoliberal educational policy operates from the premise that education is primarily a sub-sector of the economy.

In this interregnum, in particular, where the entire social universe of capital is locked up in the commodity form, where capital's internal contradictions have created a global division of labor that appears astonishingly insurmountable, and where the ecological stakes for human survival have shifted in such seismic proportions, creating a vortex in which reactionary terrorism has unleashed its unholy cry, we lament the paucity of critical/pedagogical approaches to interrogating the vagaries of everyday life within capital's social universe.

In retrospect, progressive educators are often wont to ask: Were the 1960s the last opportunity for popular revolutionary insurgency on a grand scale to be successful? Did the political disarray of prodigious dimensions that followed in the wake of the rebuff of the post-1968 leftist intelligentsia by the European proletariat condemn the revolutionary project and the "productionist" meta-narrative of Marx to the dustbin of history? Have the postmodernist emendations of Marxist categories and the rejection — for the most part — of the Marxist project by the European and North American intelligentsia signaled the abandonment of hope in revolutionary social change? Can the schools of today build a new social order?

A nagging question has sprung to the surface of the debate over schooling and the new capitalist order: Can a renewed and revived Critical Pedagogy grounded in an historical materialist approach to educational reform serve as a point of departure for a politics of resistance and counter-hegemonic struggle in the twenty-first century? And if we attempt to uncoil this question and take seriously its full implications, what can we learn from the legacy and struggle of revolutionary social movements? On the surface, there are certain reasons to be optimistic. Critical Pedagogy has, after all, joined anti-racist and feminist struggles in order to articulate a democratic social order built around the imperatives of diversity, tolerance, and equal access to material resources. But surely such a role, while commendable as far as it goes, has seen Critical Pedagogy severely compromise an earlier, more radical commitment to anti-imperialist struggle that we often associate with the anti-war movement of the 1960s and earlier revolutionary movements in Latin America.

What does the historical materialist approach often associated with an earlier generation of social critics offer educators who work in critical education? I raise this question at a time in which it is painfully evident that Critical Pedagogy and its political partner, multicultural education, no longer serve as an adequate social or pedagogical platform from which to mount a vigorous challenge to the current social division of labor and its effects on the socially reproductive function of schooling in late capitalist society. In fact, Critical Pedagogy no longer enjoys its status as a herald for democracy, as a clarion call for revolutionary praxis, as a language of critique and possibility in the service of a radical democratic imaginary, which was its promise in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Critical Pedagogy's basic project over the last several decades has been to adumbrate the problems and opportunities of political struggle through educational means. It is incoherent to conceptualize Critical Pedagogy, as do many of its current exponents, without an enmeshment with the political and anti-capitalist struggle. Once considered by the faint-hearted guardians of the American dream as a term of opprobrium, Critical Pedagogy has become so completely psychologized, so liberally humanized, so technologized, and so conceptually postmodernized, that its current relationship to broader liberation struggles seems severely attenuated if not fatally terminated. This trend is challenged these days by some of critical thinkers in the field of education who respond in various and conflicting paths to this challenge. Some, like Mark Mason, respond to this challenge by rejecting the postmodern agenda altogether,⁴ while others, such as Biesta, try to rearticulate educational possibilities within the framework of the postmodern historical moment.⁵ Still others, like Gur-Ze'ev, search for a negative utopia, and new approaches to religiosity and creative poesis that will challenge the abyss not only between modernist and postmodernist positive utopias of "home-returning" but even between dancing and poetry, the "I" and thingness, Being and meaninglessness. According to Gur-Ze'ev the present constitution of the "risk society" and the McWorld that is being celebrated all over as part and parcel of the capitalist globalization, its culture industry, its technologies and logics, also open new possibilities for Diasporic existence and counter-education. These material conditions and their ontological foundations enable new possibilities for counter-education in the most concrete and specific terms and realizations. Improvisation, as one example, becomes here part and parcel of a nomadic existence of today's Diasporic human — and within the framework of counter-education improvisation in its Diasporic-critical sense may be developed, thought, edified, and implemented as a new self-positioning and de-territorialization in the spirit of Adorno and Horkheimer's religiosity.⁶

As was noticed in this collection by some authors, while its urgency was once unignorable, and its hard-bitten message had the pressure of absolute *fiat* behind it, Critical Pedagogy seemingly has collapsed into an ethical licentiousness and a complacent relativism that has displaced the struggle against capitalist exploitation with its emphasis on the multiplicity of interpersonal forms of oppression. The conceptual net known as Critical

4 Mark Mason, "Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy after postmodernism," in: *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today — Toward a New Critical Language in Education*, ed. Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, Haifa: Faculty of Education, University of Haifa, 2005, pp. 300-316.

5 Gert Biesta, "What can Critical Pedagogy learn from postmodernism?," in: *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today - Toward a New Critical Language in Education*, ed. Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, Haifa: Faculty of Education, University of Haifa, 2005, pp. 143-159.

6 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, "Adorno and Horkheimer — diasporic philosophy, negative theology, and counter-education", *Educational Theory* 35: 3 (2005), 343-365.

Pedagogy has been cast so wide and at times so cavalierly that it has come to be associated with anything dragged up out of the troubled and infested waters of educational practice, from classroom furniture organized in a “dialogue friendly” circle to “feel-good” curricula designed to increase students’ self-image. Its multicultural education equivalent can be linked to a politics of diversity that includes “respecting difference” through the celebration of “ethnic” holidays and themes such as “black history month” and “Cinco de Mayo”. I am scarcely the first to observe that Critical Pedagogy has been badly undercut by practitioners who would mischaracterize its fundamental project. In fact, if the term “Critical Pedagogy” is refracted onto the stage of current educational debates, we have to judge it as having been largely domesticated in a manner that many of its early exponents, such as Brasil’s Paulo Freire, so strongly feared.

Arguably the vast majority of educationalists who are committed to Critical Pedagogy and multicultural education propagate versions of it that identify with own their bourgeois class interests. One doesn’t have to question the integrity or competence of these educators or dismiss their work as disingenuous — for the most part it is not — to conclude that their articulations of Critical Pedagogy and multicultural education have been accommodated to mainstream versions of liberal humanism and progressivism. While early exponents of Critical Pedagogy were denounced for their polemical excesses and radical political trajectories, a new generation of critical educators have since that time emerged who have largely adopted what could be described as a pluralist approach to social antagonisms. Their work celebrates the “end of history” and the critique of global capitalism is rarely, if ever, brought into the debate. These pedagogues primarily see capital as sometimes maleficent, sometimes beneficent, as something that, like a wild stallion, can eventually be tamed and made to serve humanity. Marxism is seen from this perspective as a failed experiment and that the teaching of Marx should be put to rest since the persistence of capital appears to have rendered the old bearded devil obsolete. Apparently no one noticed — or cared to notice — that Marx had outwitted its Cyclopien capitalist foe by clinging to the underbelly of lost dreams that have been herded out of the caves of the Eastern Bloc. After biding time for the last decade — a period that witnessed a particularly virulent example of capital’s slash and burn policy — his ghost is reappearing in reinvigorated form in the West (at least among some members of the academic left) where Marx is now seen to have anticipated much about the manner in which the current world-historical crisis of capitalism would manifest itself.

Authoritative as the term may sound, “Critical Pedagogy” has been extraordinarily misunderstood and misrepresented. To penetrate the glimmering veil of rhetoric surrounding it would require an essay of its own. Suffice it to say that it is an approach to understanding the political nature of educational policy, curriculum, and practice as these are played out in the agonistic terrain of conflicting and competing discourses, oppositional and hegemonic cultural formations, and social relations linked to the larger capitalist social totality. The Critical Pedagogy we are envisioning here operates from the premise that capital in its current

organizational structure provides the context in which working-class struggle develops. Specifically in the context of school life, capital produces new human productive and intellectual capacities in alienated form. In its U.S. variants, the genesis of Critical Pedagogy can be traced to the work of Paulo Freire in Brazil, and John Dewey and the social reconstructionists writing in the post-depression years. Its leading exponents have cross-fertilized Critical Pedagogy with just about every transdisciplinary tradition imaginable, including theoretical forays into the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, and the work of Richard Rorty, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Critical Pedagogy's reach now extends to multicultural education, bi-lingual education, and fields associated with language-learning and literacy (including media literacy). My concern over the last five years has been to introduce Critical Pedagogy into the field of Marxist scholarship.

Unscrolling the present state of Critical Pedagogy and examining its depoliticized contents, processes, and formations puts progressive educators on notice in that few contemporary critical educators are either willing or able to ground their pedagogical imperatives in the concept of labor in general, and in Marx's labor theory of value in particular. This is certainly more the case in North American educational settings than it is in the United Kingdom, the latter context having had a much more serious and salutary engagement with the Marxist tradition in the social sciences, and in one of its professional offshoots: adult education.

In the United States, Critical Pedagogy has collapsed into the progressive agendas in attempts to create "communities of learners" in classrooms, to bridge the gap between student culture and the culture of the school, to engage in cross-cultural understandings, to integrate multicultural content and teaching across the curriculum, developing techniques for reducing racial prejudice and conflict resolution strategies, to challenge Eurocentric teaching and learning as well as the "ideological formations" of European immigration history by which many white teachers judge African-American, Latino/a, and Asian students, challenging the meritocratic foundation of public policy that purportedly is politically neutral and racially color-blind, to create teacher-generated narratives as a way of analyzing teaching from a "transformative" perspective, to improve academic achievement in culturally diverse schools, to affirm and utilize multiple perspectives and ways of teaching and learning, to de-reify the curriculum and to expose "metanarratives of exclusion". Most of these pedagogical initiatives are acting upon the educational reform report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's future that challenges social class and ethnicity as primary determinants of student success. And for all the sincere attempts to create a social justice agenda by attacking asymmetries of power and privilege and dominant power arrangements in U.S. society, progressive teachers have taken Critical Pedagogy out of the business of class analysis and focussed instead on a postmodernist concern with a politics of difference and inclusion. To sever issues of race and gender from class conveniently draws attention away from the crucially important ways in which women and people of color provide capitalism with its superexploited labor pools — a phenomenon that is on the upswing all over the world. Capitalism *is* an overarching totality that is, unfortunately, becoming increasingly invisible

in postmodernist narratives that eschew and reject such categories *tout court*. Postmodernist educators tend to ignore that capitalism is a ruthless “totalizing process which shapes our lives in every conceivable aspect” and that “even leaving aside the direct power wielded by capitalist wealth in the economy and in the political state” capitalism also subjects all “social life to the abstract requirements of the market, through the commodification of life in all its aspects”. This makes a “mockery” out of all aspirations to “autonomy, freedom of choice, and democratic self-government”.

In this fundamental regard, the voguish academic brigandism of educational postmodernists that give primacy to incommensurability as the touchstone of analysis and explanation has diverted critical analysis from the global sweep of advanced capitalism and the imperialist exploitation of the world’s laboring class. In the years that difference politics have taken hold of the Left, the rich are getting richer and the poor even poorer in every part of the globe. Everywhere we look, social relations of oppression and contempt for human dignity abound. As the demagogues of capitalist neo-liberal globalization spin their web of lies about the benefits of “global trade” behind erected “security” walls, protesters are gassed, beaten and killed. As the media boast about the net worth of corporate moguls and celebrate the excesses of the rich and famous, approximately 2.8 billion people — almost half of the world’s people struggle in desperation to live on less than two dollars (U.S.) a day.

I believe that despite the myriad obstacles facing the progressive educational tradition in the United States, the question of whether or not Critical Pedagogy can be revived in this current historical juncture of global capitalism and the creation of a U.S. garrison state can be answered — albeit haltingly rather than resoundingly — in the affirmative. The advance of contemporary Marxist educational scholarship,⁷ Critical Theory,⁸ and a rematerialized Critical Pedagogy⁹ in the field of education — although still modest glimmerings — is, in

- 7 Glenn Rikowski, *The Battle in Seattle: Its Significance for Education*, London: Tufnell Press, 2001; Glenn Rikowski, “After the manuscript broke off: thoughts on Marx, social class and education,” A paper prepared for the British Sociological Association, Education Study Group Meeting, King’s College London, 23rd June, 2001; Dave Hill, “State theory and the neo-liberal reconstruction of schooling and teacher education: a structuralist neo-Marxist critique of postmodernist, quasi-postmodernist, and culturalist neo-Marxist theory”, forthcoming in *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 2001; Hill and Cole, “Social Class”; Peter McLaren and Ramin Farahmandpur, “Reconsidering Marx in post-Marxist times: a requiem for postmodernism?,” *Educational Researcher* 29(3), 2000, pp. 25-33.
- 8 Henry Giroux, *Ideology, Culture & the Process of Schooling*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1981; Henry Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition*, South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1983; Joe Kincheloe, *How Do We Tell the Workers? The Socioeconomic Foundations of Work and Vocational Education*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998.
- 9 Peter McLaren, *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Pedagogy of Revolution*, Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000; McLaren, and Farahmandpur, “teaching against globalization and the new imperialism”; McLaren and Farahmandpur, “Educational policy and the socialist imagination”; G. Fischman, and P. McLaren, “schooling for democracy: towards a critical utopianism”, *Contemporary Society* 29(1), 2000, pp. 168-79.

my view, sufficient enough to pose a challenge not only to neoliberal free market imperatives but also to post-Marxist solutions that most often advocate the creation of social movements grounded in identity politics or, as evident in recent anti-Marxist pedagogical polemics, a pedagogy grounded in uncertainty.¹⁰

Critical Pedagogy has had a tumultuous relationship with the dominant education community both in North America¹¹ and the United Kingdom for the past twenty-five years. We do not wish to rehearse this vertiginous history here, since we assume that most progressive educators have at least some sense of its presence or lack thereof in the particular precincts where they practice their pedagogy. In the mid-seventies to mid-eighties the role of Critical Pedagogy was much more contestatory than in the decade of the nineties with respect to dominant social and economic arrangements. In contrast to its current incarnation, its veins were not in need of defrosting. During that time, critique flowed generally unimpeded and were directed not just at isolated relations of domination but at the totality of social relations. That it was often conflated with liberation theology in Latin America and with anti-imperialist struggle world-wide accounts for its failure to be recognised in the cultural chambers of the ruling elite.

Our own practices — what Paula Allman has christened “revolutionary Critical Pedagogy” — ups the radical ante for progressive education which, for the most part over the last decade, has been left rudderless amidst an undertow of domesticating currents. It ups this ante by pivoting around the work of Karl Marx, Paulo Freire, and Antonio Gramsci and in doing so brings some desperately needed theoretical ballast to the teetering critical educational tradition. Such theoretical infrastructure is necessary, we argue, for the construction of concrete pedagogical spaces — in schools, university seminar rooms, cultural centres, unions, social movements, popular forums for political activism, etc. — for the fostering and fomenting of revolutionary praxis.

While it certainly remains the case that too many teachers take refuge in a sanctuary of assertions devoid of reflection, it would be wrong to admonish the educational activism of today as a form of pedagogical immaturity. Courageous attempts are being made in the struggle for educational reform on both sides of the Atlantic. In this case, we need to be reminded that the lack of success of the educational Left is not so much the result of the conflicted sensibilities of critical educators, as it is a testament to the preening success of Western Cold War efforts in indigenising the cultural logic of capitalism, the fall of the

10 Pathy Lather, “Ten years later, yet again: Critical Pedagogy and its complicities”, in *Feminist Engagements: Reading, Resisting, and Revisioning Male Theorists in Education and Cultural Studies*, ed. Kathleen Weiler, New York: Routledge, 2001, pp. 183-95.

11 Peter McLaren, *Revolutionary multiculturalism: Pedagogies of dissent for the new millennium*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997.

Eastern Bloc non-profit police states, and the degradation and disappearance of Marxist meta-narratives in the national-popular agendas of decolonising countries. It can also be traced to the effects of the labor movement tradition which keeps labor-left educators struggling inside the labor/capital antagonism by supporting labor over capital, rather than attempting to transcend this divide entirely through efforts to implode the social universe of capital out of which the labor/capital antagonism is constituted.

Clearly within the development of revolutionary Critical Pedagogy, the concept of labor is axiomatic in theorising the school/society relationship and thus for developing radical pedagogical imperatives, strategies, and practices for overcoming the constitutive contradictions that such a coupling generates. The larger goal revolutionary Critical Pedagogy stipulates for radical educationalists involves direct participation with the masses in the discovery and charting of a socialist reconstruction and alternative to capitalism. However, without a critical lexicon and interpretative framework that can unpack the labor/capital relationship in all of its capillary detail, Critical Pedagogy is doomed to remain trapped in domesticated currents and vulgarised formations. The process whereby labor-power is transformed into human capital and concrete living labor is subsumed by abstract labor is one that eludes the interpretative capacity of rational communicative action and requires a dialectical understanding that only historical materialist critique can fully provide. Historical materialism provides Critical Pedagogy with a theory of the material basis of social life rooted in historical social relations and assumes paramount importance in uncovering the structure of class conflict as well as unravelling the effects produced by the social division of labor. Today, labor-power is capitalised and commodified and education plays a tragic role in these processes. According to Rikowski, education “links the chains that bind our souls to capital. It is one of the ropes comprising the ring for combat between labor and capital, a clash that powers contemporary history: “the class struggle”. Schools therefore act as vital supports for, and developers of, the class relation, “the violent capital-labor relation that is at the core of capitalist society and development”.

My purpose in this essay is not to develop a comprehensive perspective on or programmatic architectonic of Critical Pedagogy, something that has already been accomplished in the works of Paula Allman and others. My more modest purpose therefore is to uncoil some of the conceptual tensions that exist in linking up the concept of Critical Pedagogy to that of class struggle. In doing I wish to rehearse a number of provision points: (1) a sense of what constitutes critical agency and revolutionary praxis, and (2) a nuanced notion of what liberation means at this particular historical juncture.

My approach to understanding the relationship between capitalism and schooling and the struggle for socialism is premised upon Marx’s value theory of labor as developed by British Marxist educationalist, Glenn Rikowski, and others.¹² In developing further the concept of

12 See Mike Cole, Dave Hill, P. McLaren and Glenn Rikowski, *Red Chalk: On Schooling, Capitalism & Politics*, London: Tufnell Press, 2001.

revolutionary Critical Pedagogy and its specific relationship to class struggle, it is necessary to repeat, with a slightly different emphasis, some of the positions we have discussed earlier on in the paper. We follow the premise that value is the substance of capital. Value is not a thing. It is the dominant form that capitalism as a determinate social relation takes. Following Dinerstein and Neary, capital can be conceived as “value-in-motion”. Marx linked the production of value to the dual aspect of labor. Workers do not consume what they produce but work in order to consume what others have produced. Labor is thus riveted in both use-value and exchange-value.¹³ Domination in this view is not so much by other people as by essentially abstract social structures that people constitute in their everyday social intercourse and socio-political relations. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx emphasised that “society does not consist of individuals; it expresses the sum of connections and relationships in which individuals find themselves...[Thus,] to be a slave or to be a citizen are social determinations”.¹⁴ Labor, therefore, has a historically specific function as a social mediating activity.

Labor materialises itself both as commodified forms of human existence (labor-power) and structures that constitute and enforce this process of generalised social mediation (such as money and the state) against the workers who indirectly constituted them. These determinate abstractions (abstract labor) also constitute both human capital and the class struggle against the exploitation of living labor and the “capitalisation” of human subjectivity.

This split within capital-labor itself is founded on the issue of whether labor produces value directly or labor-power. We adopt the premise that abstract labor is underwritten by value-in-motion, or the expansive logic of capital (referring to the increases in productivity required to maintain capitalist expansion). Abstract labor is a unique form of social totality that serves as the ground for its own social relation. It is socially average labor-power that is the foundation of the abstract labor that forms value.¹⁵ In the case of abstract labor, labor materialises itself twice — first as labor and the second time as “the apparently quasi-objective and independent structures that constitute and enforce this process of generalised social mediation: money (economics) and the state (politics) against the workers who constituted them”. This value relation — captured in the image of the capitalist juggernaut driving across the globe for the purpose of extracting surplus-value (profit) — reflects how the abstract social dimension of labor formally arranges (through the imposition of socially necessary labor-time) the concrete organisation of work so that the maximum amount of

13 Rikowski, *The Battle in Seattle*;

14 Cited in E. San Juan, Jr., “Raymond Williams and the idea of cultural revolution”, *College Literature* 26(2), 1999, p. 248.

15 Rikowski, *The Battle in Seattle*.

human energy can be extracted as surplus-value. Here, concrete labor (use-value) is overwhelmed by abstract labor (value-in-motion) so that we have an apparently non-contradictory unity. That is to say, capital's abstract-social dimension dominates and subsumes the concrete material character of labor and so becomes the organising principle of society "the social factory where labor serves as the constituent form of its own domination. This is the process of 'real subsumption' where humanity's "vital powers" are mightily deformed. This helps to explain how workers become dominated by their own labor. Labor becomes the source of its own domination.

Following Marx, Rikowski notes that labor-power — our capacity to labor — takes the form of "human capital" in capitalist society. It has reality only within the individual agent. Thus, labor-power is a distinctly human force. The worker is the active subject of production. He or she is necessary for the creation of surplus-value. He or she provides through living labor the skills, innovation and cooperation upon which capital relies to enhance surplus value and to ensure its reproduction. Thus, by its very nature, labor-power cannot exist apart from the laborer.

Labor power is what Rikowski describes as the primordial form of social energy within capital's social universe.¹⁶ Labor-power is a special kind of commodity whose use value possesses the possibility of being transformed into a source of value. It constitutes value in a unique manner as the special living commodity that possesses the capacity to generate more value — i.e., surplus value — than is required to maintain its social existence as labor power. In other words, surplus value is possible because labor-power expends more labor-time than is necessary for its maintenance. It rests upon the socially necessary labor time required to produce any use value under conditions normal for a given society. This presupposes labor-power as the socially average. The value of labor-power is represented by the wage. The key point here is that while the labor-power which the worker expends beyond the labor necessary for her maintenance creates no value for her, she does create value for the capitalist: surplus value. Education and training are what Rikowski refers to as processes of labor-power production. They are, in Rikowski's view, a sub-species of relative surplus value production (the raising of worker productivity so that necessary labor is reduced) that leads to a relative increase in surplus labor time and hence surplus value. Human capital development is necessary for capitalist societies to reproduce themselves and to create more surplus value. The core of capitalism can thus be undressed by exploring the contradictory nature of the use value and exchange value of labor-power.

Rikowski's adaptation of Marx's value theory of labor, which reveals how education is implicated in the social production of labor-power in capitalism, becomes crucial here.

16 Glenn Rikowski, "Messing with the explosive commodity: school improvement, educational research and labor-power in the era of global capitalism", A paper prepared for the Symposium on 'If we aren't pursuing improvement, what are we doing?' British Educational Research Association Conference 2000, Cardiff University, Wales, 7th September 2000, Session 3.4; Rikowski, *The Battle in Seattle*; Rikowski, *After the Manuscript Broke Off*.

Rikowski's premise, which is provocative yet compelling (and perhaps deceptively simple), can be summarised as follows: Education is involved in the direct production of the one commodity that generates the entire social universe of capital in all of its dynamic and multiform existence: labor-power. Within the capital's social universe, individuals sell their capacity to labor — their labor-power — for a wage. In fact, the only thing that workers can sell in order to obtain their own necessities is their labor-power; thus, they have only one life-sustaining commodity to sell as long as they are trying to survive within capitalist social relations. Within this process labor provides an important use-value for capital. Furthermore, as human will or agency is partially incorporated within labor-power (though never totally, as the will is also an aspect of ourselves constituted as *labor against capital*), and because it is impossible for capital to exist without labor-power, this strange living commodity is therefore *capital's weakest link*. The unique, living commodity that capital's social universe depends upon for its existence and expansion, labor-power, is subject to an aspect of the human will that is antagonistic to capital's depredations and demands: ourselves *constituted as labor against capital*. This aspect of our social existence as laborers drives us on to maximise the quality of our existence within capitalist life; better wages, better working conditions, and fewer working hours and so on. As labor against capital workers yield labor-power conditionally, at times grudgingly and in extreme circumstances (e.g. strikes) not at all. This creates massive insecurities for human representatives of capital. Such insecurity is expressed in management and business studies through attention to the perennial problem of workers' attitudes, and studies on the "motivation" problem regarding workers' willingness to expend their precious commodity by transforming their capacity to labor into *actual* labor in the labor process.

In so far 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. In other words, labor-power can be incorporated only so far. Workers, as the sources of labor-power, can engage in acts of refusing alienating work and delinking labor from capital's value form. As Dyer-Witheford argues: "Capital, a relation of general commodification predicated on the wage relation, needs labor. But labor does not need capital. Labor can dispense with the wage, and with capitalism, and find different ways to organize its own creative energies: it is potentially *autonomous*".¹⁷

In the face of such a contemporary intensification of global capitalist relations and permanent structural crisis (rather than a shift in the nature of capital itself), we need to develop a Critical Pedagogy capable of engaging everyday life as lived in its midst. We need, in other words, to face capital down. This means acknowledging global capital's structurally determined inability to share power with the oppressed, its implication in racist, sexist, and

17 Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999, p. 68, italics original.

homophobic relations, its functional relationship to xenophobic nationalism, and its tendency towards empire. It means acknowledging the educational left's dependency on the very object of its negation: capital. It means struggling to develop a lateral, polycentric concept of anti-capitalist alliances-in-diversity to slow down capitalism's metabolic movement — with the eventual aim of shutting it down completely. It means looking for an educational philosophy that is designed to resist the “capitalization” of subjectivity, a pedagogy that we have called revolutionary Critical Pedagogy.

Revolutionary Marxists believe that the best way to transcend the brutal and barbaric limits to human liberation set by capital are through practical movements centered around class struggle. But today the clarion cry of class struggle is spurned by the bourgeois left as politically fanciful and reads to many as an advertisement for a B-movie. The liberal left is less interested in class struggle than in making capitalism more “compassionate” to the needs of the poor. What this approach obfuscates is the way in which new capitalist efforts to divide and conquer the working-class and to recompose class relations have employed xenophobic nationalism, racism, sexism, ableism, and homophobia. The key here is not for critical pedagogues to privilege class oppression over other forms of oppression but to see how capitalist relations of exploitation provide the ground from which other forms of oppression are produced and how postmodern educational theory often serves as a means of distracting attention from capital's global project of accumulation.

Unhesitatingly embraced by most liberals is, of course, a concern to bring about social justice. This is certainly to be applauded. However, too often such a struggle is antiseptically cleaved from the project of transforming capitalist social relations. When somebody tries to make the case for class struggle among liberals who fervently believe that capitalism is preferable to socialism or — god forbid — communism, people react as if a bad odor has just entered the room. I am not arguing that people should not have concerns about socialism or communism. After all, much horror has occurred under regimes that called themselves communist. We are arguing that capitalism is not inevitable and that the struggle for socialism is not finished. Perhaps today this struggle is more urgent than at any other time in human history. Socialism is no longer a homogeneous struggle but must involve coalition-building and international working class collaboration of struggle against global capitalism. Such a politics is one of difference and inclusion, but a politics whose center of gravity is the struggle for alternatives to capital.

In so far as education and training socially produce labor-power, this process can be resisted. As Dyer-Witford notes: “In academia, as elsewhere, labor power is never completely controllable. To the degree that capital uses the university to harness general intellect, insisting its work force engage in lifelong learning as the price of employability, it runs the risk that people will teach and learn something other than what it intends”.¹⁸ Critical

18 Dyer-Witford, *Cyber-Marx*, p. 236.

educators push this “something other” to the extreme in their pedagogical praxis centered around a social justice, anti-capitalist agenda. The key to resistance, in our view, is to develop a Critical Pedagogy that will enable the working class to discover how the use-value of their labor-power is being exploited by capital but also how working class initiative and power can destroy this type of determination and force a recomposition of class relations by directly confronting capital in all of its hydra-headed dimensions. Efforts can be made to break down capital’s control of the creation of new labor-power and to resist the endless subordination of life to work in the social factory of everyday life.¹⁹ Students and education workers can ask themselves: What is the maximum damage they can do to the rule of capital, to the dominance of capital’s value form? Ultimately, the question we have to ask is: Do we, as radical educators, help capital find its way out of crisis, or do we help students find their way out of capital? The success of the former challenge will only buy further time for the capitalists to adapt both its victims and its critics, the success of the later will determine the future of civilization, or whether or not we will have one.

Of course, examining United States foreign and domestic policy critically — especially the Bush administration’s war on terrorism — at this particular historical juncture in the United States risks charges of anti-patriotism. Yet, from a critical perspective one could argue that patriotism that is not at the same time conjugated with introspection, sustained critical self-reflexivity, and the possibility of transcending the reified knowledge and social relations of the corporate capitalist state, is a patriotism that does an injustice to the meaning of the word. One of the best features of a democracy lies in its provisions for the ability to be self-critical, to challenge, or affirm, as the case may be, what has been presented by the dominant capitalist media as commonsense. That feature has been effectively eroded by the Bush administration.

The transformation of labor-power into labor in the capitalist labor process creates value, capital’s social substance. Education and training, in turn, shape and develop labor-power. They are vital supports to, and developers of, the class relation, the violent labor-capital relation that is at the core of capitalist society and development.

Revolutionary pedagogy takes the position that critique cannot be derived from the standpoint of labor (ontologically, normatively, metaphysically, or romantically) because workers under capitalism are always circumscribed by a determined totality, and are always already implicated in capitalist social relations as the necessary ground of capitalist exploitation such as they exist as commodified labor with no point of reference with which to a counter-praxis to capital, or a counter-principle to capitalist society. Even though conflict and struggle is endemic to the labor and capital dialectical contradiction, labor is the source

19 Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically*, Leeds: Antitheses and Edinburgh: AK Press, 2000; see also

of its own domination. The social relations out of which labor's contradictory relation to capital — i.e., the structuring principles of capital's contradictory constitution — must be transcended. In other words, they must supercede the social factory, the social universe of capital itself.

However, because education and training socially produce labor-power, and there are real limits to this process, this is a source of labor's strength as well as its tragic predicament. On the latter, the tragedy of labor results from the fact that labor creates its own opposite (capital) that comes to dominate it. Indeed, it creates something that permeates its own soul in the form of human capital. On the other hand, teachers and trainers are implicated in socially producing the single commodity — labor-power — on which the whole capitalist system rests. This gives them a special sort of *social power*. Because they work at the faultline of capital's weakest link — labor-power — they have the capacity to open up visions of alternatives to capitalism in the classroom, or at least provide vital critiques of its violent class relation and market inequalities. Teachers are in a special position regarding their capacity to disrupt and to call into question the capitalist class relation. Furthermore, teachers can also insert principles of social justice into their pedagogy, principles that are antithetical to the generation of the class divide and also market and social inequalities. The task of forging new forms of pedagogy that clash against capital's limited forms of social life involves making liberation and the abolition of human suffering the goal of the educative enterprise itself.

Clearly, education is an aspect of the class relation; it is involved in generating the living commodity, labor-power, whose consumption in the labor process is a necessary condition for the social existence of the class relation between labor and capital in contemporary capitalism. This is tragic, but also yields educators a special sort of social power, for education also has:

...the potential to provide a spark that can ignite the desire for revolutionary democratic social transformation throughout the world.²⁰

In this way, education can be the foundation of a politics of human resistance to the capitalisation of humanity and also one of the forces playing a key role in the development of forms of labor *not* tied to the value-form. Thus, it is not enough to critique capital but we must critique in and against capital. Our pedagogical struggle must be anti-value-in-motion. In sum, *all pedagogical struggle must be linked to class struggle*, which in turn must be linked to the relation internal to all labor, the split or rift within labor as a form of social existence within capitalist society. *Class struggle as both the source and the effect of Critical*

20 Paula Allman, *Educational Fire* 2001, p. 10.

Pedagogy is therefore implicated in the tragic truism that labor creates its own opposite (capital) that comes to dominate it. The issue of class struggle needs to be approached from the perspective of a critique of capital and its value form of labor.

As capitalist education is involved in the production of labor-power it can be re-designed within a social justice agenda that will reconfigure labor-power for socialist alternatives to human capital formation. This reconfiguration is simultaneously an aspect of the overall drive for social transformation and the struggle for socialism. It is not just a case of reclaiming labor-power (and also the capitalist education and training on which its development partly depends). Rather, in a project of radical social transformation, labor-power (and by implication education and training) must be reconfigured as aspects of this the broader and more general social transformation. In this process, labor-power is de-commodified and *re-humanised*, and developed for a new society — with the laborers, the possessors of labor-power, being active participants and democratic shapers of all the new forms of labor-power developed set in train.

As a consequence of this, we need to devise forms of labor-power expenditure and development *not tied to the value-form of labor*. In the meantime, teachers are in a structural position to subvert the smooth flow of labor-power production by inserting principles in opposition to the domination of capital.²¹ Rikowski asserts that while teachers are surely helpful in reproducing the ideological fabric of capitalism, they are also potentially “dangerous to capital and its social domination”.²² He argues that educators constitute the “guardians of the development of the one commodity that keeps capitalism going [labor-power], whilst also being in a structural position to *subvert the smooth flow of labor-power production by inserting principles antagonistic* to the social domination of capital. Such principles include social justice, equality and solidarity for progressive social change”.²³

Let us expand upon the idea of subverting labor-power production for a moment because it forms the basis of revolutionary Critical Pedagogy. The concept of liberation that informs our project here stipulates that the logic of emancipation is contained within the apparent non-contradictory unity of the commodity. Critique cannot be derived from the standpoint of labor (i.e., whether such derivation is ontological, normative, metaphysical or romantic). This is because the oppressed under capitalism are always circumscribed by a determined totality; they are always already implicated in capitalist social relations as the necessary ground of capitalist exploitation such that they — as workers — exist primarily and permanently as commodified labor. Thus, they have no point of reference with which to articulate a counter-praxis to capital, or a counter-principle to capitalist society. Labor is the source of its own

21 Rikowski, *The Battle in Seattle*.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

23 *Ibid.*, original italics.

domination even though conflict and struggle are structurally endemic to the labor/capital relation. Any Critical Pedagogy that wants to move beyond reformism must recognise that in order to achieve emancipation for the oppressed the social relations out of which labor's antagonistic relation to capital — i.e., the structuring principles of capital's contradictory constitution — must be smashed outwards or imploded inwards (or both).

Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy adopts a theory of agency that sees subjectivity not as wholly determined by capital in some mechanically deterministic way; rather, the contradictions among the social forces that are constitutive of subjectivity provide the cracks in capital's armour, forming apertures through which directions and opportunities for contesting capital can be gleaned (as long as critical consciousness is sufficiently present). Contesting capital takes the form of class struggle.

In our formulation of revolutionary Critical Pedagogy, we are using the term “class struggle” after Rikowski, as a social relation that exists between labor and capital. It is one of the primary phenomena integral to the existence of capitalist society, “an element of the constitution of a world struggle” that is constituted everywhere that capital's hydra-headed tentacles are able to effect a slithering grasp on social life.²⁴ There is no escape from it. Rikowski's perspective that the class relation simply *is* the labor-capital relation that forms the “violent dialectic” that in turn generates all value becomes a bedrock assumption in the revolutionary Critical Pedagogy we are attempting to advance here. Class struggle is born out of the antagonistic relation between labor and capital. In fact, Rikowski argues that class struggle occurs *intersubjectively* as well as collectively as a clash of contradictory forces and drives within the social totality. Rikowski notes that:

The class relation runs through our personhood. It is internal to us; we are labor, and we are capital. We are social beings incorporating antithetical social drives and forces. This fact sets off contradictions within our lives, and their solution can only come from the disintegration of ourselves as both capital and labor and our emergence as a new, non-capitalised life-form.²⁵

The struggle among what Marx called our “vital powers”, our dispositions, our inner selves and our objective outside, our human capacities and competencies and the social formations within which they are produced, *ensures* the production of a form of human agency that reflects the contradictions within capitalist social life. Yet these contradictions also provide openness regarding social being. They point towards the possibility of collectively resolving contradictions of “everyday life” through revolutionary/transformativ praxis. Critical subjectivity operates out of practical, sensuous engagement within social

24 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

formations that enable rather than constrain human capacities. Here Critical Pedagogy reflects the multiplicity and creativity of human engagement itself: the identification of shared experiences and common interests; the unravelling of the threads that connect social process to individual experience; rendering transparent the concealed obviousness of daily life; the recognition of a shared social positionality; unhinging the door that separates practical engagement from theoretical reflection; the changing of the world by changing one's nature.

Practicing revolutionary Critical Pedagogy is not the same as preaching it. Revolutionary critical educators are not an apocalyptic group; they do not belong to a predicant order bent on premonising the capitalist crisis to come. Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy is not in the business of presaging as much as it is preparatory; it is in the business of pre-revolutionising: preparing students to consider life outside the social universe of capital — to “glimpse humanity's possible future beyond the horizon of capitalism”. What would such a world be like? What type of labor would be — should be — carried out? But revolutionary Critical Pedagogy is not born in the crucible of the imagination as much as it is given birth in its own practice. That is, revolutionary critical education is decidedly more praxiological than prescored. The path is made by walking, as it were. The principles that help to shape and guide the development of our “vital powers” in the struggle for social justice via critical/revolutionary praxis have been discussed at length by Allman.²⁶ These include: principles of mutual respect, humility, openness, trust and co-operation; a commitment to learn to “read the world” critically and expending the effort necessary to bring about social transformation; vigilance with regard to one's own process of self-transformation and adherence to the principles and aims of the group; adopting an “ethics of authenticity” as a guiding principle; internalising social justice as passion; acquiring critical, creative, and hopeful thinking; transforming the self through transforming the social relations of learning and teaching; establishing democracy as a fundamental way of life; developing a critical curiosity; and deepening one's solidarity and commitment to self and social transformation and the project of humanisation.

We need to develop a Critical Pedagogy, therefore, that can help students reconstruct the objective context of class struggle by examining the capitalist mode of production as a totality, a process that includes Marx's labor theory of value. This mandates teaching students to think dialectically, to think in terms of “internal relations”, such as creating an internal relation between diversity and unity, and between our individuality and our collectivity.²⁷

The key to resistance, in our view, is to develop a revolutionary Critical Pedagogy that will enable the working class to discover how the use-value of their labor-power is being

26 Paula Allman, *Educational Fire* 2001, pp. 177-186.

27 Paula Allman, *Educational Fire* 2001.

exploited by capital but also how working class initiative and power can destroy this type of determination and force a recomposition of class relations by directly confronting capital in all of its multi-faceted dimensions. This will require Critical Pedagogy not only to plot the oscillations of the labor/capital dialectic, but also to reconstruct the object context of class struggle to include school sites. Efforts also must be made to break down capital's creation of a new species of labor-power through current attempts to corporatise and businessify the process of schooling and to resist the endless subordination of life in the social factory so many students call home.²⁸

Ultimately, the question we have to ask is: Do we, as radical educators, help capital find its way out of crisis, or do we help students find their way out of capital? The success of the former challenge will only buy further time for the Bushites and the Blairites to continue their war on the world's working class; the success of the later will determine the future of our planet, or whether or not we will have one.

28 H. Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically*, Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press 1979.

Making Critical Pedagogy Strategic — *On Doing Critical Educational Work in Conservative Times*

Michael W. Apple

Culture Counts

Over the past decade, I have been engaged in a concerted effort to analyze the reasons behind the rightist resurgence-what I call “conservative modernization” — in education and to try to find spaces for interrupting it.¹ My aim has not simply been to castigate the right, although there is a bit of fun in doing so. Rather, I have also sought to illuminate the dangers, and the elements of good sense, not only bad sense, that are found within what is an identifiable and powerful new hegemonic bloc — the various factions of the rightist alliance of neo-liberals, neo-conservatives, authoritarian populist religious conservatives, and some members of the managerial new middle class. I have a number of reasons for doing so. First, people who find certain elements of conservative modernization relevant to their lives are not puppets. They are not dupes who have little understanding of the “real” relations of this society. This smacks of earlier reductive analyses that were based in ideas of “false consciousness”. My position is very different. I maintain that the reason that some of the arguments coming from the various factions of this new hegemonic bloc are listened to is because they *are* connected to aspects of the realities that people experience. The tense alliance of neo-liberals, neo-conservatives, authoritarian populist religious activists, and the professional and managerial new middle class only works because there has been a very creative articulation of themes that resonate deeply with the experiences, fears, hopes, and dreams of people as they go about their daily lives. The right has often been more than a little manipulative in its articulation of these themes. It has integrated them within racist nativist discourses, within economically dominant forms of understanding, and within a problematic sense of “tradition”. But, this integration could only occur if they were organized around people’s understanding of their real material and cultural lives.

1 See Michael W. Apple, *Official Knowledge*, 2nd edition, New York: Routledge, 2000; Michael W. Apple, *Educating the “Right” Way*, New York: Routledge, 2001.

The second reason I have stressed the tension between good and bad sense—aside from my profound respect for Antonio Gramsci’s writings about this—has to do with my belief that we have witnessed a major educational accomplishment over the past three decades in many countries. All too often, we assume that educational and cultural struggles are epiphenomenal. The real battles occur in the paid workplace — the “economy”. Not only is this a strikingly reductive sense of what the economy is (its focus on paid, not unpaid, work; its neglect of the fact that, say, cultural institutions such as schools are also places where paid work goes on, etc.), it also ignores what the right has actually done. Conservative modernization has radically reshaped the common-sense of society. It has worked in every sphere — the economic, the political, and the cultural—to alter the basic categories we use to evaluate our institutions and our public and private lives. It has established new identities. It has recognized that to win in the state, you must win in civil society. The accomplishment of such a vast educational project has many implications. It shows how important cultural struggles are. And, oddly enough, it gives reason for hope. It forces us to ask a significant question. *If the right can do this, why can’t we?*

I do not mean this as a rhetorical question. As I have argued repeatedly in my own work, the right has shown how powerful the struggle over meaning and identity can be. While we should not want to emulate their often cynical and manipulative processes, the fact that they have had such success in pulling people under their ideological umbrella has much to teach us, especially those of us who are part of the Critical Pedagogy community(ies). Granted there are real differences in money and power between the forces of conservative modernization and those whose lives are being tragically altered by the policies and practices coming from the alliance. But, the right wasn’t as powerful thirty years ago as it is now. It collectively organized. It created a decentered unity, one where each element sacrificed some of its particular agenda to push forward on those areas that bound them together. Can’t we do the same?

I believe that we can, but only if we face up to the realities and dynamics of power in unromantic ways. As I argued in *Educating the “Right” Way*, the romantic possibilitarian rhetoric of some of the writers on Critical Pedagogy is not sufficiently based on a tactical or strategic analysis of the current situation nor is it sufficiently grounded in its understanding of the reconstructions of discourse and movements that are occurring in all too many places. Here I follow Cameron McCarthy, who wisely reminds us, “We must think possibility within constraint; that is the condition of our time”.²

We need to remember that cultural struggles are not epiphenomenal. They *count*, and they count in institutions throughout society. In order for dominant groups to exercise leadership, large numbers of people must be convinced that the maps of reality circulated by those with

2 Cameron McCarthy, Unpublished lecture, International Sociology of Education Conference, University of Sheffield, England, January 2000.

the most economic, political, and cultural power are indeed wiser than other alternatives. Dominant groups do this by attaching these maps to the elements of good sense that people have and by changing the very meaning of the key concepts and their accompanying structures of feeling that provide the centers of gravity for our hopes, fears, and dreams about this society. The right has been much more successful in doing this than the left, in part because it has been able to craft-through hard and lengthy economic, political, and cultural efforts — a tense but still successful alliance that has shifted the major debates over education and economic and social policy onto its own terrain.

Evidence of this is all around us in the terms we use, in the arguments in which we engage, indeed even in many of the cultural resources we employ to imagine alternative futures. For example, as I completed the writing of my latest book, one of the top selling books on *The New York Times* fiction list is Tim LaHaye (yes, the Tim LaHaye of extremely conservative evangelical leadership) and Jerry Jenkins's *The Indwelling*,³ the seventh of a series of books about “true believers” who confront the “Antichrist”. The imagined future is a time of “rapture” where the good are taken up to heaven and the bad are condemned to eternal damnation. Who each of these groups are is predictable. In a number of ways, then, the authoritarian populist “outside” has moved to become the inside. It has creatively learned how to use the codes of popular adventure and science fiction novels to build an imaginative space of possibility, and a “muscular” yet sensitive Christianity, that gives meaning to people's daily lives and hopes.⁴

Just as these spaces create imagined futures, so too do they help create identities. Neo-liberalism creates policies and practices that embody the enterprising and constantly strategizing entrepreneur out of the possessive individualism it establishes as the ideal citizen. Neo-conservatism creates imagined pasts as the framework for imagined and stable futures, futures in which identities are based on people knowing the knowledge and values that neo-conservatives themselves have decided “have stood the test of time”. Authoritarian populist religious conservatives also have an imagined past where a society, based on God's knowledge and values, has pre-given identities that enable women and men to rearticulate the neo-liberal ideology of “choice” and to act in what are seen as godly ways toward bringing society to God. And managerialism establishes new identities for the professional and managerial middle class, identities that give new meaning to their lives and enable them to

3 Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, *The Indwelling*, New York: Tyndale, 2000.

4 Of course, people read all kinds of fiction and are not compelled to follow its precepts. Thus, people can read hard-boiled detective novels in which women and men detectives often engage in violent acts of retribution. This does not necessarily mean that the readers are in favor of such acts. The politics of pleasure follows its own relatively autonomous logic. Most people engage in what have been called “guilty pleasures” and reading books like *The Indwelling* may fall under that category for many readers. However, the fact that it is a national best seller still has considerable importance.

recapture their feelings of worthiness and efficacy. Out of all of these multiple spaces and identities, and the conflicts, tensions, and compromises that their interactions generate, policies evolve. These policies are almost never purely from only one of these elements within this bloc. Rather they often embody a rich mix that somehow must accommodate as many themes as possible from within the multiple forces of conservative modernization—without at the same time alienating those groups believed to be significant who are not yet integrated under the hegemonic umbrella of the right but who the right would like to bring under its leadership in the future.

This is a truly difficult task and it is filled with contradictory impulses. Yet, even with its contradictions and tensions, it has moved the balance of forces significantly to the right. Educational policies have been part of that move. In fact, education has not only been drawn along by the pressure of these rightist waves; it has actually played a major role in building these waves. The conservative alliance has paid attention to education — both formal and informal — and it has paid off for them. Indeed, in most of the critical discussions in the academic and popular literature of the effects of neo-liberal, neo-conservative, and managerial policies and practices in education in a number of countries, it is *their* policies that have provided the outlines of the debates in which we engage — vouchers, markets, national standards, high stakes testing, and so on.

Contradictory Reforms

As I have demonstrated elsewhere, policies often have strikingly unforeseen consequences. Reforms that are instituted with good intentions may have hidden effects that are more than a little problematic. I have shown that the effects of some of the favorite reforms of neo-liberals and neo-conservatives, for instance — voucher plans, national or state-wide curricula, and national or state-wide testing can serve as examples — quite often reproduce or even worsen inequalities.⁵ Thus, we should be very cautious about accepting what may seem to be meritorious intentions at face value. Intentions are too often contradicted by how reforms may function in practice. This is true not only for large scale transformations of educational policies and governance, but also about moves to change the ways curriculum and teaching go on in schools.

The framework I have employed to understand this is grounded in what in cultural theory is called the act of repositioning. It in essence says that the best way to understand what any

5 Apple, *Educating the "Right" Way*.

set of institutions, policies, and practices does is to see it from the standpoint of those who have the least power.⁶ That is, every institution, policy, and practice—and especially those that now dominate education and the larger society—establish relations of power in which some voices are heard and some are not. While it is not preordained that those voices that will be heard most clearly are also those who have the most economic, cultural, and social capital, it is most likely that this will be the case. After all, we do not exist on a level playing field. Many economic, social, and educational policies when actually put in place tend to benefit those who already have advantages.

These points may seem overly rhetorical and too abstract, but unfortunately there is no small amount of truth in them. For example, in a time when all too much of the discourse around educational reform is focused on vouchers and choice plans on the one hand and on proposals for national or state curricula, standards, and testing on the other, there is a good deal of international evidence now that such policies may actually reproduce or even worsen class, gender, and race inequalities. Thus, existing structures of economic and cultural power often lead to a situation in which what may have started out in some educators' or legislators' minds as an attempt to make things better, in the end is all too usually transformed into another set of mechanisms for social stratification. While much of this is due to the ways in which race, gender, class, and "ability" act as structural realities in this society, some of it is related to the hesitancy of policy makers to take seriously enough the complicated ways in which education is itself a political act.

Near the end of the introductory section of a recent volume on the politics of educational policies and practices, *Learning as a Political Act*, the editors state that as progressives they are committed to an "intellectual solidarity that seeks to lay bare the ideas and histories of groups that have been silenced in mainstream educational arenas".⁷ There are a number of key concepts in this quote—intellectual solidarity, laying bare, silencing. Each speaks to a complicated history, and each phrase again says something about our understanding of democracy. They are "keywords". They come from a very different tradition than that provided by the linguistic mapping of markets. They also speak to a different politics of official knowledge.

Over the past decade, it has become increasingly clear that the school curriculum has become a battleground. Stimulated in large part by neo-liberal complaints about "economically useless" knowledge, neo-conservative laments about the supposed loss of discipline and lack of "real knowledge", and by religious authoritarian populists' relentless

6 See Sandra Harding, *Whose Science, Whose Knowledge?* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991; Gyorgy Lucacs, *History and Class Consciousness*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971.

7 Jose Segarra and Ricardo Dobles (Eds.), *Learning as a Political Act*, Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review Reprint Series No. 33, 1999, p. xiii.

attacks on schools for their supposed loss of God-given “traditional” values, discussions of what should be taught in schools and how it should be taught are now as contentious as at any time in our history.

Evidence of this is not hard to find. In his repeated call for a return to a curriculum of “facts”, E. D. Hirsch, Jr. argues that schools have been taken over by progressive educators from Rousseau to Dewey,⁸ a claim that has almost no empirical warrant at all and largely demonstrates how disconnected he is from the daily life of schools.⁹ Most schooling in the United States is already fact-driven. In addition, school districts throughout the country are constantly looking over their shoulders, worried that their reading, social studies, or mathematics programs will be challenged by the forces of the authoritarian religious right — although as I demonstrate *Cultural Politics and Education*, sometimes schools systems themselves create the conditions for the growth of rightist anti-school movements in their own communities by being less than democratic in their involvement of the community.¹⁰ Other evidence of such contentiousness is visible in the fact that the contents of the mathematics curriculum was even recently debated in the editorial pages of *The New York Times*, where spokespersons for constructivist and traditional curricula went head to head. Many more instances might be cited. But it is clear that the debate over “What knowledge is of most worth” has taken on more than a few political overtones.¹¹

Much of the debate over this goes on with little empirical substance. For example, the argument that we must “return” to teaching, say, mathematics in “traditional” ways is obviously partly an ideological one. (We need to restore discipline; students have too much freedom; “bad” knowledge has pushed “good” knowledge to the sidelines.) Yet it is also based on a claim that such a return will lead to higher achievement and ultimately to a more competitive economy. Here, neo-liberal and neo-conservative emphases are joined with authoritarian populist mistrust both of child-centeredness and of critical approaches in education. This is where Jo Boaler’s recent richly detailed qualitative and quantitative comparison of mathematics curricula and teaching enters.

Boaler engages in a fine-grained analysis of two secondary schools with decidedly different emphases. While her book is based on data from England, its implications are again profound for debates over curriculum and teaching in the U.S. and elsewhere as well. Both

8 E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them*, New York: Doubleday, 1996.

9 Kristen Buras, “Questioning core assumptions”, *Harvard Educational Review* 69, 1999, pp. 67-93.

10 Michael W. Apple, *Cultural Politics and Education*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1996.

11 Of course, in actuality the content and form of curricula and teaching have always been political issues. See Michael W. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*, 2nd edition, New York: Routledge, 1990. On some of the recent curriculum struggles in England and Wales, see Richard Hatcher and Ken Jones (Eds.), *Education after the Conservatives*, Stoke-on-Trent, England: Trentham Books, 1996.

schools are largely working class, with some minority and middle class populations as well. Both sets of students had attended our equivalent of middle schools that were dominated by more traditional academic methods. And both had similar achievement profiles. One school overtly focused on preparing its students for national tests. Its program was almost totally teacher directed, organized around textbooks that were geared to the national tests, ability grouped, and run in such a way that speed and accuracy of computations and the learning of procedural rules for dealing with mathematical problems were highly valued — all those things that traditionalists here say that are currently missing in mathematics instruction. Furthermore, the boundary between mathematics and both the real world and other subjects was strong.¹² The other school did not group by ability. It was decidedly more “progressive” both in its attitude toward students (there was a more relaxed communication style between teachers and students; student input was sought on the curriculum) and in its mathematics program. In this second school, the instruction was project-based, with a minimum of textbook-based teaching and a maximum of cooperative work among the students. The boundary between mathematics and “real world” problems was weak.

The first school was quiet, on-task, well organized—the very embodiment of the dream of nearly all elements of conservative modernization. The second was more noisy, students were not always fully on-task, and had very flexible time schedules. Both schools had dedicated and hard working teachers. Yet the differences in the results were striking, both in terms of overall achievement and in terms of the differential effects of each orientation on the students themselves.

The more traditional school, with its driving concern for “covering material” that would be on the test, stressed textbook knowledge and moved relatively rapidly from topic to topic. The more student-centered approach of the second school sacrificed some coverage, but it also enabled students to more fully understand the material. By and large, students in the first school actually did less well on the standardized tests than the second, especially but not only on those parts of the tests that needed them to actually think mathematically, in large part because they could not generalize to new contexts as well as did those students who had used their mathematics in more varied (though more time-consuming) projects. Further — and of great importance for equity — young women in the second school did consistently better in a more cooperative atmosphere that stressed understanding and use rather than coverage. The same held true for social class. Working class students were consistently disadvantaged in the more pressured and text-and test-based agenda of traditional mathematics instruction.

This is a complex situation and Boaler is talking about general tendencies here. But her overall conclusions are clear and are supported by a very nice combination of data. In sum,

12 See also Basil Bernstein, *Class, Codes, and Control*, Volume III, 2nd edition, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977.

the claim that a return to (actually, given the fact that most mathematics instruction is still chalk and talk and textbook based, it would be much more honest to say the *continuation of*) the traditional mathematics programs that the critics are demanding neither increases students' mathematical competence nor their ability to use their mathematical knowledge in productive ways. While it may keep classrooms quiet and students under control, it may also systematically disadvantage young women — including as Boaler shows the brightest young women—and economically disadvantaged students.¹³ Finally, it may have one other effect, a strengthening of students' dislike of mathematics and their feelings that it is simply irrelevant for their future. If this is true for mathematics, it is worth considering the hidden negative effects of the more general policies being proposed by neo-conservative reformers who wish to return to what they have constructed, rather romantically, as “the tradition” in all subjects.

If Boaler's conclusions are even partly generalizable, as I think they may very well be, the hidden effects of certain reform movements may not be what we had in mind. Tighter control over the curriculum, the tail of the test wagging the dog of the teacher and the curriculum, more pressure, more reductive accountability plans — all of this may lead to less equitable results, not more. Boredom, alienation, and increased inequalities are not the ideal results of schooling. Once again, looking outside of our usual all-too-limited and parochial boundaries can be more than a little beneficial. The careful research underpinning Boaler's volume needs to be taken seriously by anyone who assumes that in our unequal society there is a direct relationship between policy intentions and policy results. There isn't.

One of the most important tasks of critical education, therefore, is an empirical one. Just as Boaler did, we need to make research public not only on the negative effects of the policies of conservative modernization, but just as importantly on the positive effects of more socially and educationally critical alternatives. A good example of this is the SAGE program in Wisconsin where significantly reducing class size within schools that historically have served a larger portion of dispossessed people has had much more robust results than, say, marketization and voucher.¹⁴ This is one form of interrupting dominant discourses and policies and much more of it needs to be done. However, in doing this we cannot simply rely on the dominant forms of what counts as evidence. In Linda Tuhiwai Smith's words, we need “decolonizing methodologies”.¹⁵

13 The focus on keeping youth “under control” is connected to a long history of the fear of youth and of seeing them as constantly in need of regulation. For an insightful discussion of this history, see Nancy Lesko, *Act Your Age!* New York: Routledge, 2001.

14 Alex Molnar et al., “Evaluating the SAGE program”, *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 21, 1999, pp. 165-77.

15 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, New York: Zed Books, 1999; see also Andrew Gitlin (Ed.), *Power and Method*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Making Challenges Public

My arguments in the previous section of this paper have been at a relatively general level because I did not want us to lose sight of the larger picture. How else can these retrogressive movements be interrupted? Let me now get more specific and tactical, since I am convinced that it is important to interrupt rightist claims immediately, within the media, in academic and professional publications, and in daily life.

One crucial example of such interruption is found in the Educational Policy Project formed under the auspices of the Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation. This involves the ongoing construction of an organized group of people who are committed to responding very rapidly to material published by the right. This group includes a number of well-known educators and activists who are deeply concerned that the right has successfully used the media to foster its own ideological agenda, just as it has devoted a considerable amount of resources to getting its message to the public. For example, a number of conservative foundations have full-time staff members whose responsibility it is, for example, to fax synopses of reports to national media, to newspapers, and to widely read journals of opinion and to keep conservative positions in the public eye. Progressives have been much less successful in comparison, in part because they have not devoted themselves to the task as rigorously or because they have not learned to work at many levels, from the academic to the popular simultaneously. In recognition of this, a group of socially and educational critical educators met first in Milwaukee and has been continuously meeting to generate an organized response to conservative reports, articles, research, and media presentations.

A full-time staff member was hired by the Center to focus on conservative material, to identify what needs to be responded to, and to help edit responses written by individual members of the group. A website has been developed that publishes these responses and/or original publications of more progressive research and arguments. The project also focuses on writing “op.ed.” pieces, letters to the editor, and other similar material and on making all of this available to the media. This requires establishing contacts with journals, newspapers, radio, and television, and so on. This is exactly what the right did. We can and must do similar things. It requires hard work, but the Educational Policy Project is the beginning of what we hope will be a larger effort involving many more people. The reader can see the kinds of things that have been done by going to the following website for the Educational Policy Project of the Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation: <<http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/>>

This is just one example of one strategy for bringing what we know to parts of the public in more popular forms. There are many other examples posted on the website and published as reports, responses in journals, letters to the editor, and op.ed. pieces. While this project is

relatively new, it shows considerable promise. In combination with the use of talk radio, call-in shows, and similar media strategies in *multiple* languages,¹⁶ these kinds of activities are part of a larger strategy to bring both more public attention to what the dangers are in the “solutions” proposed by the right and to what the workable alternatives to them might be. Integrating the educational interventions within a larger focus on the media is absolutely crucial.¹⁷

Learning From Other Nations

During one of the times I was working in Brazil with Paulo Freire, I remember him repeatedly saying to me that education must begin in critical dialogue. Both of these last two words were crucial to him. Education both must hold our dominant institutions in education and the larger society up to rigorous questioning and at the same time this questioning must deeply involve those who benefit least from the ways these institutions now function. Both conditions were necessary, since the first without the second was simply insufficient to the task of democratizing education.

Of course, many committed educators already know that the transformation of educational policies and practices — or the defense of democratic gains in our schools and local communities — is inherently political. Indeed, this is constantly registered in the fact that rightist movements have made teaching and curricula the targets of concerted attacks for years. One of the claims of these rightist forces is that schools are “out of touch” with parents and communities. While there are elements of insight in such criticisms, we need to find ways of connecting our educational efforts to local communities, especially those members of these communities with less power, that are more truly democratic than those envisioned by the right.

There is a good deal of efficacy in turning to the experiences of other nations to learn about what the effects of neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies and practices actually are.

16 For example, in one of the “teach ins” in which I participated in preparation for the anti-WTO mobilizations in Seattle and Washington, DC, very few people had thought about the integration of Spanish language newspapers, television, radio, and websites in building support for the movement. Yet, these are among the fastest growing media in the United States and they reach an audience that is suffering deeply from the effects of globalization and economic exploitation.

17 Ellen Ratner, *101 Ways to Get Your Progressive Issues on Talk Radio*, Washington, DC: National Press Books, 1997; Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998; Robert McChesney, Ellen Meiksins Wood and John Foster (Eds.), *Capitalism and the Information Age*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998; Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture*, New York: Routledge, 1995.

Yet there are many more things that we can learn from other nation's struggles. For example, currently in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the policies of participatory budgeting are helping to build support for more progressive and democratic policies there in the face of the growing power of neo-liberal movements at a national level. The Workers Party ("PT" as it is known there) has been able to increase its majority even among people who had previously voted in favor of parties with much more conservative educational and social programs *because* it has been committed to enabling even the poorest of its citizens to participate in deliberations over the policies themselves and over where and how money should be spent. By paying attention to more substantive forms of collective participation and, just as importantly, by devoting resources to encourage such participation, Porto Alegre has demonstrated that it is possible to have a "thicker" democracy, even in times of both economic crisis and ideological attacks from neo-liberal parties and from the conservative press. Programs such as the "Citizen School" and the sharing of real power with those who live in "favelas" (slums) provide ample evidence that thick democracy offers realistic alternatives to the eviscerated version of thin democracy found under neo-liberalism. Just as important is the pedagogic function of these programs. They develop the collective capacities among people to enable them to continue to engage in the democratic administration and control of their lives.¹⁸ This is time-consuming; but time spent in such things now has proven to pay off dramatically later on.

A similar story can be told about another part of Brazil. In Belem, a "Youth Participatory Budget" process was instituted. It provided resources and space for the participation of many thousands of youth in the deliberations over what programs for youth needed to be developed, how money should be spent, and over creating a set of political forums that could be used by youth to make public their needs and desires. This is very different than most of the ways youth are dealt with in all too many countries, where youth are seen as a "problem" not as a resource.¹⁹ A similar instance is found in New Zealand, where under the original leadership of the International Research Institute on Maori and Indigenous Education at the University of Auckland, multi-racial groups of youth are formed in communities to publicly discuss the ways in which youth see their realities and advance proposals for dealing with these realities. In this way, alliances that begin to cut across race, class, and age are being built. There are models, then, of real participation that we can learn from and that challenge the eviscerated vision of democracy advanced by neo-liberals by putting in place more substantive and active models of actually "living our freedoms". The issue is not the existence of such models; it is insuring that they are made widely visible.

18 Diane Elson, "Socializing markets, not market socialism", in *Necessary and Unnecessary Utopias*, eds. Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999, pp. 67-85.

19 Lesko, *Act Your Age!*

Thinking Heretically

In order to build counter-hegemonic alliances, we may have to think more creatively than before — and, in fact, may have to engage in some nearly heretical rethinking. Let me give an example. I would like us to engage in a thought-experiment. I believe that the right has been able to take certain elements that many people hold dear and connect them to other issues in ways that might not often occur “naturally” if these issues were less politicized. Thus, for instance, one of the reasons populist religious groups are pulled into an alliance with the right is because such groups believe that the state is totally against the values that give meaning to their lives. They are sutured into an alliance in which other elements of rightist discourse are then able to slowly connect with their own. Thus, they believe that the state is anti-religious. Others also say that the state seeks to impose its will on white working class parents by giving “special treatment” to people of color and ignoring poor white people. These two elements do *not* necessarily have to combine. But they slowly begin to be seen as homologous.

Is it possible that by taking, say, religion out of the mix that some parts of the religious community that currently find collective identities on the right would be less susceptible to such a call if more religious content was found in school? If religious studies had a more central place within the curriculum, is it less likely that people who find in religion the ultimate answers to why they are here would be less mistrustful of the state, less apt to be attracted to a position that public is bad and private is good? I am uncertain that this would be the case. But I strongly believe that we need to entertain this possibility.

Do not misunderstand me. I am decidedly not taking the position that we should use vouchers to fund private religious schools; nor am I saying that the authoritarian populist religious right should be pandered to. Rather, I am taking a position similar to that espoused by Warren Nord. Our failure to provide a clear place for the study of religion in the curriculum makes us “illiberal”.²⁰ Yet, I do not want to end with Nord’s position. Rather, I see it as a starting point. In earlier books, I have argued that at times people “become right” because of the lack of responsiveness of public institutions to meanings and concerns that are central to their lives. Teaching more *about*, not *for*, religion doesn’t just make us more “liberal” in Nord’s words. It may also help interrupt the formation of anti-public identities. This has important implications for it can point to strategic moves that can be made to counter the integration of large numbers of people under the umbrella of conservative modernization.

20 Warren Nord, *Religion and American Education*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

As I have demonstrated elsewhere, people often become right at a local level, not through plots by rightist groups but because of local issues and sentiments.²¹ Making schools more responsive to religious sentiments may seem like a simple step, but it can have echoes that are profound since it may undercut one of the major reasons some populist groups who are also religious find their way under the umbrella of rightist attacks on schools and on the public sphere.

I am not a romantic about this. I do think that it could be dangerous and could be exploited by the religious right. After all, some of them do have little interest in “teaching about” and may hold positions on Christianity and other religions that both construct and leave little room for the Other. Yet the centrality of religious sentiments need not get pushed toward neo-liberalism. It need not be connected to a belief that public schools and teachers are so totally against them that marketization and privatization are the only answers. Thus, I’d like us to think seriously-and very cautiously-about the possible ways members of some of the groups currently found under the umbrella of the conservative alliance might actually be pried loose from it and might work off the elements of good sense they possess. In saying this, I am guided by a serious question. In what ways can religious commitments be mobilized for socially progressive ends? Our (often justifiable) worries about religious influences in the public sphere may have the latent effect of preventing such a mobilization by alienating many people who have deep religious commitments and who might otherwise be involved in such struggles. If many evangelicals do commit themselves to helping the poor, for example, in what ways can these sentiments be disarticulated from seeing capitalism as “God’s economy” and from only helping the “deserving poor” and rearticulated toward greater social and economic transformation. It would seem well worth studying the recent histories of religious involvement in, say, the anti-WTO struggles to understand this better. At the very least, we cannot act as if religious beliefs about social and educational justice are outside the pale of progressive action, as too many critical educators do. A combination of caution, openness, and creativity is required here.

Yet another example is to take advantage of the shared elements of good sense among groups who usually have very different agendas in order to work against specific policies and programs that are being instituted by other elements within the new hegemonic alliance. That is, there *are* real tensions within conservative modernization that provide important spaces for joint action.

This possibility is already being recognized. Because of this, for example, there are some truly odd political couplings emerging today. Both the populist right and the populist left are occasionally joining forces to make strategic alliances against some neo-liberal incursions

21 Apple, *Cultural Politics and Education*.

into the school. For instance, Ralph Nader's group Commercial Alert and Phyllis Schlafly's organization the Eagle Forum are building an alliance against Channel One.²² Both are deeply committed to fight the selling of children in schools as a captive audience for commercials. They are not alone. The Southern Baptist Convention has passed a resolution opposing Channel One. Groups such as Donald Wildmon's American Family Association, and even more importantly, James Dobson's powerful conservative organization Focus on the Family, have been working with Nader's groups to remove Channel One from schools and to keep it out of schools where it is not already established. This tactical alliance has also joined together to support anti-gambling initiatives in a number of states and to oppose one of the fastest growing commercial technology initiatives in education-ZapMe! Corp. Though now financially troubled because of over-expansion, ZapMe! provided free computers to schools at the cost of collecting demographic data on students which it then uses to target advertising specifically at these children.

The tactical agreement is often based on different ideological positions. While the progressive positions are strongly anti-corporate, the conservative positions are grounded in a distaste for the subversion of traditional values, "the exploiting of children for profit", and a growing rightist populist tension over the decisions that corporations make that do not take into consideration the "real folks" in America. This latter sentiment is what the rightist populist and nativist Pat Buchanan has worked off of for years. In the words of Ron Reno, a researcher at Focus on the Family, we need to fight "a handful of individuals exploiting the populace of America to make a buck".²³

This teaming up on specific causes is approached more than a little cautiously on both sides, as you would imagine. As Ralph Nader says, "You have to be very careful because you can start tempering your positions. You can be too solicitous. You have to enter and leave on your own terms. You tell them, 'Here's what we're doing, if you want to join us fine. If not, fine'". Phyllis Schlafly portrays her own reasons this way. "[Nader and I] agree that the public schools should not be used for commercial purposes. A captive audience of students should not be sold for profit. I agree with that. I don't recall his objection to the content of the news, which is what stirs up a lot of conservatives".²⁴

Schlafly's comments show the differences as well as similarities in the right-left division here. While for many people across the divide, there is a strong distaste for selling our children as commodities, divisions reappear in other areas. For one group, the problem is a "handful of individuals" who lack proper moral values. For the other, the structural forces driving our economy create pressures to buy and sell children as a captive audience. For

22 Ruth Coniff, "Left-Right romance", *The Progressive*, May 2000, 12-15.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

24 *Ibid.*

conservatives, the content of the news on Channel One is too “liberal”; it deals with issues such as drugs, sexuality, and similar topics. Yet, as I have shown in my own analysis of what counts as news in the major media and in Channel One, even though there is some cautious treatment of controversial issues, the content and coding of what counts as news is more than a little conservative and predominantly reinforces dominant interpretations.²⁵

These differences should not detract from my basic point. Tactical alliances are still possible, especially where populist impulses and anti-corporate sentiments overlap. These must be approached extremely carefully, however, since the grounding of much of the populism of the right is also in a racist nativism, a very dangerous tendency that has had murderous consequences. A recognition, though, of the anti-corporate tendencies that do exist here is significant, since it also points to cracks in the alliance supporting some aspects of conservative modernization in general and to similar fissures within the ranks of authoritarian populism itself. For example, the fact that Ralph Reed was hired as a consultant to burnish Channel One’s image has also created a number of tensions within the authoritarian populist ranks.²⁶

Another area that is ripe for such coalitions is that of national and state curricula and testing. Neither the populist right nor the populist left believe that such policies leave room for the cultures, histories, or visions of legitimate knowledge that they are so deeply committed to. While the specific content of such knowledge is decidedly dissimilar for each of these groups, the fact that there is agreement both on a generally anti-elitist position and on the fact that the very processes involved are anti-democratic provides room for tactical alliances not only against these processes but as a block against even further incursions of managerialism into schools. In addition, given the ideological segregation that currently exists in this society, working (carefully) with such groups has the advantage of reducing stereotypes that they may hold (and perhaps that we might also hold?). It increases the possibility that the populist right will see that progressives may in fact be able to provide solutions to serious issues that are so distressing in populist movements of multiple orientations. This benefit should not be minimized.

My position here, hence, embodies a dual strategy. We can and must build tactical alliances where this is possible and where there is mutual benefit — and where such an alliance does not jeopardize the core of progressive beliefs and values. At the same time, we need to continue to build on more progressive alliances between our core constituencies around issues such as class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, globalization and economic exploitation, and the environment. That such a dual strategy can be used to organize both within already existing

25 Apple, *Official Knowledge*.

26 Coniff, “Left-Right romance”, p. 13.

alliances and to work across differences is made clear in the anti-WTO mobilizations in Seattle, in Washington, in Philadelphia, in Genoa, and in a number of other cities throughout the world.

Once the issue of tactical alliances is raised, however, it is nearly impossible to ignore charter schools. For a number of people on both the left and the right, charter schools have been seen as a compromise that can satisfy some of the demands of each group. Here, though, I would urge even more caution. Much of the discussion of these schools has been more than a little romantic. It has accepted the rhetoric of “de-bureaucratization”, experimentation, and diversity as the reality. Yet, as Amy Stuart Wells and her colleagues have demonstrated, charter schools can and do often serve less meritorious ends. They can be manipulated to provide public funding for ideologically and educationally problematic programs, with little public accountability. Beneath the statistics of racial equality they supposedly produce, they can exacerbate white flight and can be captured by groups who actually have little interest in the culture and futures of those whom they assume are the Other. They are used as the “constitutive outside” in attacks on public schooling for the majority of children in schools throughout the United States, by deflecting attention to what must be done there. Thus, they often can and do act to deflect attention from our lack of commitment to provide sufficient resources and support for schools in urban and rural areas. And in a number of ways they threaten to become an opening wedge for voucher plans.²⁷

Having said this, however, I do not believe that charter schools will go away. Indeed, during the many periods of time when I have lectured and engaged in educational and political work in countries in, say, Latin America and Asia, it has become ever more clear to me that there is considerable interest in the charter school movement. This is especially the case in those nations that have a history of strong states and strong central control over the curriculum, teaching, and evaluation and where the state has been inflexible, highly bureaucratic, and unresponsive. Given this situation, it is absolutely crucial that the terrain of charter schools *not* be occupied by the forces within the conservative alliance. If charter schools become, as they threaten to, primarily a site where their function is to deflect attention from schools where the vast majority of students go, if they are allowed to be used as vouchers “in cognito”, if they serve to legitimate concerted attacks on teachers and other educators, then the effects will not be limited to the United States. This will be a world-wide tragedy. For these very reasons, it is crucial that some of our empirical, educational, and political energy goes into guaranteeing that charter schools are a much more progressively inclined set of possibilities than they are today. We need to work so that the elements of good sense in the movement are not lost by it being integrated under the umbrella of conservative modernization.

27 Amy Wells et al., “Charter schools as postmodern paradox”, *Harvard Educational Review* 69, 1999, pp. 172-204; see also Bruce Fuller (ed.), *Inside Charter Schools*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Making Critical Educational Practices Practical

You will notice that I said “some” of our energy in the previous paragraph. Once again we need to be extremely cautious that by focusing our energies on “alternatives” such as charter schools we are not tacitly enhancing the very real possibility that progressives will spend so much of their attention on them that action in the vast majority of schools will take a back seat. While all of the tactical and strategic foci I have mentioned are important, there is one area that I believe should be at the center of our concerns as educators—providing real answers to real practical problems in education. By showing successful struggles to build a critical and democratic education in real schools and real communities with real teachers and students today, attention is refocused on action not only in charter schools but on local elementary, middle, and secondary schools in communities much like those in which most of us spend our lives. Thus, publicizing such “stories” makes critical education seem actually “doable”, not merely a utopian vision dreamed up by “critical theorists” in education. For this very reason, political/educational interventions such as the popular and widely translated book *Democratic Schools*²⁸ and the increasingly influential journal *Rethinking Schools* become even more important. This is crucial if we are indeed to interrupt the right. Since the right does have an advantage of speaking in “common-sense” and in “plain-folks Americanism”²⁹ — and peoples’ common-sense *does* have elements of good and bad sense within itself — we can also use these progressively inclined elements to show that it is not only the right that has answers to what are real and important issues of educational practice.

For example, the specific vocational and academic programs in which curricula and teaching are linked to paid work and to the economy in socially progressive ways in the Rindge School of Technical Arts in the Boston area powerfully demonstrate that those students and parents who are (justifiably) deeply concerned about their economic futures do *not* have to turn to neo-liberal policies to find practical answers to their questions.³⁰ I can think of little that is more important than this. The forces of conservative modernization have colonized the space of practice and of providing answers to the question of “What do I do on Monday?” in part not because the right has all the answers, but in part due to the fact that the left has too often evacuated that space.

28 Michael W. Apple and J.A. Beane (Eds.), *Democratic Schools*, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1995.

29 Justin Watson, *The Christian Coalition*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997; Linda Kintz, *Between Jesus and the Market*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997.

30 Larry Rosenstock and Adria Steinberg, “Beyond the shop”, in *Democratic Schools*, eds. Michael W. Apple and James A. Beane, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1995, pp. 41-57.

Here again, we have much to learn from the right. While we do not need progressive imitators of, say, E. D. Hirsch, we do need to be much more active in actually attempting to provide answers to teachers, community members, and an increasingly skeptical public that questions such as *what* will I teach, *how* will I teach it, *how* will I evaluate its success—in essence, all those practical questions that people have a right to ask and to which they are entitled to get sensible answers—are taken very seriously. In the absence of this, we are left standing on the sidelines while the right reconstructs not only common-sense but the schools that help produce it.

This is where the work engaged in by a number of critically inclined practicing educators has proven to be so important. Debbie Meier and her colleagues at Central Park East School in New York and at Mission Hill School in Boston, Bob Peterson, Rita Tenorio, and their colleagues at Fratney Street School in Milwaukee, the staff at Rindge School, and many other educators in similar schools throughout the country provide critical models of answering the day-to-day questions that I noted above. They also directly respond to the arguments that are made by neo-liberals, neo-conservatives, and authoritarian populists. They do this not only by defending the very idea of a truly public school — although they are very good at marshaling such a defense³¹ — but also by demonstrating workable alternatives that are based both on high expectations for their diverse students and on a deep-seated respect for the cultures, histories, and experiences of these students and their parents and local communities.³² Only in this way can the neo-liberal, neo-conservative, and managerial factions of the new alliance be undercut at the level of the school.

Hope as a Resource

Much more could be said about interrupting the right and about building workable alternatives. I have written this paper and the book on which it is based—*Educating the “Right” Way*—to contribute to an ongoing set of crucial debates about the means and ends of our educational institutions and about their connections to larger institutions and power relations. Keeping such debates alive and vibrant is one of the best ways of challenging “the curriculum of the dead”. Building and defending a truly democratic and critical education is a collective project. We have much to learn from each other.

31 Deborah Meier et al., *Will Standards Save Public Education?* Boston: Beacon Press, 2000; Robert Lowe and Barbara Miner (Eds.), *Selling Out Our Schools*, Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools, 1996; Robert Lowe and Barbara Miner (Eds.), *False Choices*, Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools, 1992.

32 Apple and Beane, *Democratic Schools*; Gloria Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994, L. Janelle Dance, *Tough Fronts*, New York: Routledge, 2002.

Let me end with something that I always want to keep in the forefront of my own consciousness when times are difficult. Sustained political and cultural transformations are impossible “without the hope of a better society that we can, in principle and in outline, imagine”.³³ All of us hope that our work will contribute to the larger movement that is struggling to loosen the grip of the narrow concepts of “reality” and “democracy” that have been circulated by neo-liberals and neo-conservatives in education and so much else over the past decades. There historically have been alternatives to the limited and increasingly hypocritical conception of democracy that unfortunately even social democratic parties (under the label of the “third way”) in many nations have come to accept. In the words of Panitch and Leys, we need “to insist on a far fuller and richer democracy than anything now available. It is time to reject the prevailing disparagement of anything collective as ‘unrealistic’ and to insist on the moral and practical rightness, as well as the necessity, of egalitarian social and economic arrangements”.³⁴ As they go on to say, this requires “the development of popular democratic capacities and the structures that nurture rather than stifle or trivialize them”.³⁵ The movements surrounding conservative modernization may be “wrong”, not “right”. They may in fact “stifle or trivialize” a vision of democracy that is based on the common good. But they certainly don’t have trivial effects on millions of people all over the world. Our children, our teachers, and our communities deserve something better.

33 Leo Panitch, and Colin Leys (Eds.), *Necessary and Unnecessary Utopias*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999, p. vii.

34 *Ibid.*, p. viii.

35 *Ibid.*

Escaping the Bind Between Utopia and Dystopia

Eutopic Critical Pedagogy of Identity and Embodied Practice

Elizabeth E. Heilman

In this chapter I describe my thinking about the limitations of Critical Pedagogy and identify what I think could be hopeful new directions for a rearticulated pedagogy. There are two related problems in Critical Pedagogy. I believe that Critical Pedagogy is caught between utopia and dystopia, and envisions the critical subject as in a polarized way, as either a fully engaged hero revolutionary or a disengaged deconstructing critic.¹ Further, neither stance nor vision requires a *politics* or *civics*. The revolutionary agenda is above politics. The deconstructive identity is post-politics. In order to invigorate Critical Pedagogy, I argue we need to come to terms with and address political visions and their implications and reconsider the place and identity positions that critical work focuses on, whether it entails all of society and history or whether it is about our selves, classrooms and communities.

A more hopeful and defensible place for critical education exists between poststructuralist theory and neo-Marxist Frankfurt School inspired critical education theory a eutopic pedagogy of the good. But before I tell you just what I mean by this, and where I think we might go, I must tell you where we have been and where we seem to be now. I describe the path traveled, explaining the ways that critical educators have thought about society and schooling so far. As I do this, I show that conceptual differences and tensions have developed in relation to concepts of power, oppression, emancipation, agency, subjectivity, knowledge, epistemology, foundations, normativity, and, finally, politics and identity. I want to describe what I think about identity positions and related political positions in critical education. But since what I am doing is contributing to, and, I think, re-positioning a Critical Theory and practice of schooling, I can't re-position unless I first position.

One further thing: it seems that anyone who sets out these days to characterize Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy begins with a caveat as do Kincheloe and McLaren who caution that: (a) there are many critical theories not just one; (b) the critical tradition is always changing and evolving; and (c) Critical Theory attempts to avoid too much specificity as

1 Dystopic visions demonstrate the absurdity of utopic visions when they are taken to their "logical" and inevitably repressive conclusions.

there is room for disagreement among theorists.² To this, I add my agreement. Such caveats are important. I am bound to over simplify the intellectual history and to over simplify about diverse, yet related critical discourses, but still I offer this specificity before moving on to consider Critical Pedagogy as identity and embodied practice.

Critical Theories of Education and Pedagogy

Critical theories of education describe the ways in which cultural and economic forces and schools in particular, can oppress people and create, recreate, and legitimate an unequal, unjust, undemocratic society. Critical Pedagogy makes use of these conceptual critiques as the motivating understanding for a hopeful pedagogy which aims to foster a more just society. Critical theories of education and pedagogy have multiple expressions and also multiple roots, stemming from both the progressive social reconstructionism of John Dewey and George S. Counts and from critical philosophy and sociology more broadly, particularly the neo-Marxist Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, and later the Chicago School, and also from the structuralist work of Claude Levi-Strauss and early Michel Foucault. In the 1970's, the new sociology of education which focused on the reproduction of inequality, the work of Paulo Freire, and the thinking of the civil rights and postcolonial movements gave impetus to the development of Critical Theory in education.

Critical theories of education have been expressed through at least six distinctive theoretical iterations, including Structural Functionalism, Cultural Reproduction Theory, Resistance Theory, Critical Pedagogy Theory, Radical Pluralist Critical Theory, and Feminist and Poststructural Critical Theory and I'll describe these below. These different critical education theories are all concerned with the intersections among power, knowledge, and identity and are motivated by an ethos of justice. Yet the ways that oppression, emancipation, agency, subjectivity, knowledge, and power are thought about and described vary. Also, these theories are different because different critical theorists focus their analysis on different levels, examining machinations of power at the macro level of political and economic structures, cultural power in language, texts and curriculum, and the immediate micro experiences of power, possibility, control and/or oppression in specific educational settings and sets of individuals. Macro-theorizing concerns the operation of social institutions, entire cultural systems, and whole societies. Thus, it typically uses concepts that are more abstract,

2 Joe Kincheloe and Peter McLaren, "Rethinking Critical Theory and qualitative research", in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd edition. eds. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, C.A.: Sage, 2000, pp. 279-313, 281.

while micro-theorizing deals with distinctive expressions of time, space, and people, and tends to avoid abstraction and generalization. Meso-theorizing links these macro and micro levels.

One of the earliest critical traditions in education is *Structural Functionalism*, popular in the 1960s and 1970s, which focuses on how various aspects of a society function to maintain the social structure. Such theorizing makes use of Emile Durkheim, Georg Lukács and Max Weber's analysis of economic and social rationalization in the development of capitalism, and the work of Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis is emblematic of this macro theory applied to education. Structural Functionalism reveals the ways in which schools and their curriculum structure education so as to produce "good workers" who will fill socially stratified occupations. The theory shows how through this process of reproduction schools help maintain class-based inequality and function to benefit the capitalist system of production and profit. In spite of the meritocratic myth of schooling, most children end up in the same class positions as their parents. "Structuralist" explanations of education explore the structures that underlie and generate "surface level" observable phenomena like teaching and learning, and portray the self, including both teachers and students, as constructs and consequences of institutions and social systems. In this discourse, power is primarily understood to function in a top down manner. Schools are seen as part of the larger universe of symbolic institutions that reproduce existing power relations overtly in institutions and more subtly through the production and distribution of a dominant culture that tacitly confirms what it means to be educated, valuing instrumental rationality more than other forms of knowledge and meaning. Instrumental rationality, the guiding philosophy of both markets and science, is a form of binary, reductive reasoning directed at controlling nature, increasing efficiency and, presumably, contributing to progress.

Cultural Reproduction Theory is a meso-theory which links economic structures, dominant culture, and school knowledge to the experiences of individuals within such oppressive structures. While Structural Functionalism explores *what* happens in society, Cultural Reproduction Theory emphasizes *how* it happens, exploring the ways in which dominant groups maintain power through the use of cultural institutions, such as schools, political parties and the media, rather than through overt power, or coercion. Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci and later many other critical theorists explore the phenomenon of cultural hegemony in which the dominant ideologies put forth by these cultural institutions are made to seem so "commonsense", so that neither the oppressed nor the elite questions the naturalness of the social and cultural order.³ Theorists like Michael Apple and Philip Jackson, who study Cultural Reproduction and ideology in education, make use of Gramsci and

3 Carl Boggs, *Gramsci's Marxism*, London: Pluto Press, 1976.

Bourdieu and also introduce concepts such as the “hidden curriculum” which “refers to the kinds of learning children derive from the very nature and organizational design of the public school, as well as from the behaviors and attitudes of teachers and administrators....”⁴ The overt and the hidden curriculum are not mutually exclusive but form a complex mechanism of production and reproduction.⁵

Bourdieu seems to have a rather dreary view of human agency but note that when he says that “the agent is never completely the subject of his practices” he is also suggesting that the agent also *is* to some extent the subject of his practices. Bourdieu argued that “the notion of *habitus* restores (my italics) to the agent a generating, unifying, constructing, classifying power, while recalling that this capacity to construct social reality, itself socially constructed, is not that of a transcendental subject but of a socialized body, investing in its practice socially constructed organizing principles that are acquired in the course of a situated and dated social experience”.⁶

The true subject or the real individual is lost under the insidious effects of institutions and instrumental rationality. Critical theorists were in the awkward position then of wanting to preserve the notion that rationality is essential to radical human emancipation and more broadly, to the realization of a more just society — but at the same time Critical theorists were pointing out the ways in which *instrumental* rationality was actually oppressive. As Herbert Marcuse writes in *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, “While it is true that people must liberate themselves from their servitude, it is also true that they must first free themselves from what has been made of them in the society in which they live. This primary liberation cannot be ‘spontaneous’ because such spontaneity would only express the values and goals derived from the established system. Self-liberation is self-education but as such it presupposes education by others”.⁷ *Resistance Theory* begins with the notion that agency is not fully lost and there exists a truer form of humanity to be liberated. Resistance theories explain and explore responses to reproductive schooling and assert that both external and internalized processes of control are never absolute.

Critical Pedagogy begins in this resistant space. Critical Pedagogy is a theory of curriculum and teaching that aims to go beyond critique and instead offer a positive strategy for a more just education and it was developed in the early 1980s by theorists such as Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren. Through Critical Pedagogy, students and teachers learn to build on points of resistance, explore social, political, and economic contradictions, and make

4 Wilma Longstreet and Harold Shane, *Curriculum for a New Millennium*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993, p. 46.

5 Michael Apple, “The Other Side of the Hidden Curriculum: Correspondence Theories and the Labor Process”, *Journal of Education* 162 (1980), pp. 47-66.

6 Pierre Bourdieu, *Ibid.*, 136-37.

7 Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, Boston Beacon 1972, pp. 46-47.

connections among knowledge, power and identity through dialogue about generative themes in their lives. The teacher is no longer the transmitter of technical rational knowledge functioning in a hierarchical framework that leads to domination and oppression. A different kind of knowledge, a counter-hegemonic knowledge is developed. In his *Critical Pedagogy*, Peter McLaren uses “dangerous words” such as oppression, racism, and poverty. The curriculum focuses on cultural realities that situate, subjugate, and dehumanize students and aims to empower them to create a more just and radical democracy.

Resistance Theory also focused critical attention on the ways in which alternative identities can be rooted in non dominant class, race, and gender identities and serve as a starting point for Critical Pedagogy which can build on resistance and these alternative identities can also serve as a starting point for counter hegemonic knowledge and cultures. *Radical Pluralist Critical Theory* explores alternative identities and the “politics of difference” often critiqued the Marxist perspective that economic factors are at the base of all facets of human existence. Other markers of identity such as race, religion and gender, they argued, were important in understanding both oppression and possibilities for counter-hegemony. This builds on Althusser’s argument that it is a mistake to understand all history is the effect of class struggles, or to assume that all social relations are the product of material forces. Such attempts to reduce the complexity of history and identity to a single, universally determining cause are to be rejected since they are “essentialist”. As Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau assert, “There is no single underlying principle fixing — and hence constituting — the whole field of differences”.⁸ From this perspective, instead of constructing a single oppositional metanarrative, counter-hegemony, and Critical Pedagogy are to construct what Laclau and Mouffe term a “radical pluralist democracy” by allowing for multiple voices and a range of semi-autonomous movements. The only dominant perspective would be the perspective of respect for difference. This is one of the theoretical supports for critical multiculturalism which developed in the 1990s. Schools aiming to reinforce the identity and expression of marginalized groups such as girls only schools and the Afrocentric schools are considered to be part of the critical multicultural tradition in education, and they often argue for this sort of “radical pluralist democracy” with a critical counter hegemonic justification.

8 E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy — Towards A Radical Democratic Politics*, New York: Verso, 1985, p. 111

From Utopian Counter Hegemony to Poststructural Dystopia of Power and Subjects

Such radical pluralist democracy entails a distinctive theoretical move in terms of how the subject is understood. Much of Critical Theory so far had imagined a sort of unified recoverable humanity that could be freed from oppression. *Feminist and Poststructural Critical Theory* made this idea of a single humanity problematic and also introduced a critique of utopian thinking which offers a single vision and requires the rhetorical authoritative position of the “the one who knows”.⁹ Gayatri Spivak, writing in 1985, examines what happens when those in power speak for the subaltern¹⁰ and suggests that the speakers re-inscribe the political domination, economic exploitation, and cultural erasure employed by colonial empires.¹¹ These critiques rely on Jacques Derrida’s observation that structure is the organization behind science and philosophy. It is rooted in language. It assumes a center which serves to “orient, balance, and organize” the structure and limit its play, yet since signs can only define themselves by their relationship to other signs there can be no “center” — neither within nor outside of the system, since an essential sign, what Derrida calls a “transcendental signifier”, does not exist. As these poststructural critiques gained hold in education theory in the 1990s in work of theorists such as Patti Lather and Thomas Popkewitz, for example, authoritative statements and talk of the “nature” of things became both politically and epistemologically suspect.

From this point in theory, the power of the teacher is suspect as well. Gur-Ze’ev points out the “terroristic potential” in any social or cultural group “even when developed to reflectivity by a grand leader-educator” like Freire.¹² Elizabeth Ellsworth goes so far as to say that “dialogue in its conventional sense is impossible in the culture at large because at this historical moment, power relations between raced, classed, and gendered students and teachers are unjust. The injustice of these relations and the way in which those injustices distort communication cannot be overcome in a classroom, no matter how committed the teacher and students are to “overcoming conditions that perpetuate suffering.” As Lynne

9 Patti Lather, “Critical Pedagogy and its complicities: praxis of stuck places”, *Educational Theory*, 4 (1998): 487-497.

10 As subaltern.org explains, originally a term for subordinates in military hierarchies, the term subaltern is elaborated in the work of Antonio Gramsci to refer to groups who are outside the established structures of political representation. In “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gayatri Spivak suggests that the subaltern is denied access to both mimetic and political forms of representation.

11 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271-313.

12 Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “Toward a Non-repressive Critical Pedagogy,” *Educational Theory*, 4 (1998), pp. 463-486.

Fendler describes the irony, “when systems of reasoning are unjust, it becomes counterproductive to offer a vision of the future based on those existing systems of reasoning. Furthermore, to offer a vision of the future is to assume a position of authority (intellectual as center), which is a position that Foucault and many feminist theorists have generally declined on ethical grounds”.¹³ Through these critical traditions in education, the subject then has moved from one who has no agency, to one who perhaps *ought* not have it.

Moving Past Theoretical Impasse

In response to this theoretical impasse, both utopian and post dystopian iterations of Critical Pedagogy have retreated into being primarily text-based, intellectual phenomena removed from the political sites and identity sites where critical work and transformation occur. To give an example, I’ll quote Peter McLaren, describing the goals of his work and his teaching:

*We read philosophers and social theorists, but do so critically. We also read the lives and ideas of social activists and political revolutionaries. The key for me is to break out of philosophical dualism by means of a dialectical approach and this requires presenting students with various vocabularies of struggle—those of Malcolm, Che, Luxemburg, Raya Dunayevskaya—and then invite students to connect these dialectically to the circumstances in which they are making sense of the world around them.*¹⁴

The problem I see with McLaren’s description is that students tend to read about the lives and ideas of revolutionaries from other contexts, and their reading often fails to connect with their own lives and contexts. The reading seems to be from no real place and then it goes no real place either. Student identities, lived experience and locations, and their possible future identities as critical teachers and critical citizens are not typically entwined with critical reading and are not at the heart of Critical Pedagogy. Further, critical critiques are often massive, directed at an amorphous disembodied macro thing called “society” to which it is difficult to respond. I think that part of the reason for this is that Critical Pedagogy developed out of critical examinations of schooling and this critical sociology itself was often used as

13 Lynn Fendler, “Making Trouble: Prediction, Agency, and Critical Intellectuals,” in *Critical Theories in Education: Changing Terrains of Knowledge and Politics*. eds. Thomas Popkowitz and Lynn Fendler, London & New York: Routledge, 1999, 185.

14 Peter McLaren, “Schooling the postmodern body”, in *Postmodernism, Feminism, and Cultural Politics*, ed. Henry A. Giroux, Albany: SUNY, 1991, p. 147.

curriculum. Part of the problem, is the absence of immediacy in the move from macro level critique to micro level classroom work. Also, in what McLaren describes above, critical work is most often about activities conducted by heroes, by Malcolm, Che, and Rosa Luxemburg, who are represented as text. It is not about the work of teachers or of pedestrian citizens. This Critical Pedagogy focuses on *making sense* and does not move towards the *making of self*.

Ironically, McLaren is aware of this. “Postmodernism” he argues, has radically textualized reality, so that “nothing exists outside of [the text]” and the consequence of this textualization is political inertia. Postmodernism offers a world of one-dimensional semiotic space. For example, McLaren worries that “[r]eal people who really died in the gas chambers at Auschwitz or Treblinka become so much *discourse*”.¹⁵ A reinvigorated Critical Pedagogy requires a more profound understanding of the development, contradictions and contextual *enactments* of critical identities and of the challenges of such identities to utopian and post utopian Critical Pedagogy.

I think would be critical pedagogues are still very much victims of this sort of textualization, loss of the subject and excessive suspicion of the functioning of power in micro contexts. We can only move away from the limits of textualization and the fear of power by coming to a better understanding of critical actions and by thinking about identity enactment. I think that all of the theory that critical teachers need to do this work is out there for us to make use of, but it requires that we embrace contradictions rather than try and resolve them and that we take a pragmatic stance towards what theory to use where and what ideas about the subject or power and agency make sense in context. We need to explore how intersections among power, knowledge and identity can be understood in different contexts, and we need to wrestle productively with the active, lived contexts of classrooms and communities. I think there are impositions, essentialisms, contradictions and impossibilities that we might be uncomfortable with in theory we can often live with in improving our classrooms and communities.

Paradoxes and Possibilities for the Critical Pedagogy: Subjectivity, Identities and Practice

In order to understand some of the challenges of critical identity development, I think it is worthwhile to review the different ways that identity has been theorized and to consider what different paradoxes and possibilities for the critical teacher, theorist and citizen each perspective suggests. There are different textual and epistemic requirements for philosophy, for teaching, for politics, and for identity construction; and for work that aims for macro,

15 *Ibid.*

meso and micro insights and we need to distinguish each. Critical Theory can be a relevant framework for Critical Pedagogy, but ways that language is used and ways that society or power are understood that are sensible for philosophy are not always sensible for pedagogy. Critical Theory is often a macro critique that questions identity while Critical Pedagogy is informed by macro level critique but is ultimately a micro practice that must engage identity. Specifically, I see four distinct kinds of critical identities, the critical teacher, the critical theorist, the critical citizen, and the critical revolutionary. I have also identified eight aspects of self that synthesize much of the literature on identity. Each one, I think offers us insights into the implicit and sometimes explicit ways that various iterations of Critical Theory and pedagogy imagine and position power, subjectivity and identity, and I offer suggestions for Critical Pedagogy as an every day practice. These aspects of identity and self include “rational self”, the “staged self”, the “storied self”, the “inscribed self”, “the “placed self”, the “embodied self”, the “relational self”, and the “performed self”. All of these are recognizable both as distinct aspects of self that can provide us with insights when we see them in isolation, and also as integrated, related aspects of identity that exist simultaneously.

I suggest that the “rational self”, the “staged self”, and the “storied self“ are reflective of what Adorno calls identity thinking, which means that a particular object is understood in terms of a universal concept. The meaning of an object is grasped when it has been categorized, and subsumed under a general concept heading. In opposition to identity thinking, Adorno posits negative dialectics, or non-identity thinking. He seeks to reveal the falseness of claims of identity thinking by enacting a critical consciousness that perceives that a concept cannot identify its true object.¹⁶ The critic will “assess the relation between concept and object, between the set of properties implied by the concept and the object’s actuality”.¹⁷ The consciousness of non-identity thinking reconciles particular and universal without reducing qualities to categories. Notions of the “inscribed self”, “the “placed self”, the “embodied self”, the “relational self” and the “performed self” that are developed in poststructural theory and critical geography offer insights into possibilities for identity that seem to serve the process of negative dialectics.

I argue that both the way that theory is conceived and the way that Critical Pedagogy has tended to be practiced are deeply influenced by these identity constructions. Critical Theory and pedagogy must be understood as the embodied and situated practice of the subjectified. This suggests that furthering Critical Pedagogy requires a focus on the phenomenological and sociological identity processes rather than attention to text, epistemology, ethics, and the

16 See, Theodore Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1973. Also see Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. J. Cumming, London: Verso, 1944.

17 David Held, Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1980, p. 215.

practice of teaching alone. Exploring assumptions about identity and taking a more phenomenological and sociological view of Critical Pedagogy opens up different questions about the critical project. It requires a recognition and deconstruction of dominant identity discourses and favored identities including identities reinforced by popular culture and by social and educational institutions. Instead of fixing labels on students and focusing on what we want our students to know and why, educators and theorists can focus also on questions such as: *Who are we and how have we become this way? What promotes or keeps us from a kind of theorizing and pedagogy that fosters a critical becoming?*

Ironically, the approach to Critical Pedagogy that focuses on what students know has its roots in the prototypical modernist conception of self, what I call the “rational self” which is comprised of a sense of identity rooted in rational interpretations, specific theories, and formal understandings of social roles. This notion of self, now known as collectively as “universalist”, posited that identity unfolded out of intrinsic intellectual properties. Modern universalist rational ideas about the self focus on a stable, coherent, knowable self which knows itself and the world through reason. Descartes’s famous “*cognito, ergo sum*” — I think, therefore I am” — reflects such a rationalist perspective. The rational person understands herself to be allied with certain ideas and categories. In this sense one is a democrat, a critical theorist, an environmentalist, or a stamp collector. “I am a person who thinks this”. The self as a particular object is understood in terms of a universal concept. From this point of view, critical teachers and citizens have a relatively stable identity and are persuaded to make choices by logic. In order to promote criticality from this point of view, we would need to present rationally compelling information. From the rationalist perspective, it is not particularly important to think about how critical actors see themselves or how they might think of or construct identity in the teaching and political situation since rationality is the most salient aspect of identity.

I think Critical Pedagogy often implicitly imagines and thus is primarily directed at improving this intellectual self. Though Frankfurt School critical theorists critiqued instrumental rationality, they still held on to reason, since “reason represents the highest potential of man and existence; the two belong together”.¹⁸ Marcuse explains that “by defending the endangered and victimized potentialities of man against cowardice and betrayal, Critical Theory is not to be supplemented by a philosophy. It only makes explicit what was always the foundations of its categories: the demands that through the abolition of previously existing material conditions of existence the totality of human relations be liberated”.¹⁹ Critical Pedagogy encourages one to *think* in a certain kind of way, and to be

18 Herbert Marcuse, “Philosophy and Critical Theory”, in *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, ed. Stephen Bronner and Marcus Keller, New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 59.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

allied with a certain body of thought. When Critical Pedagogy is a “raising of the consciousness” or offers “a critique of society” it is an intellectual endeavor related to the intellectual self. In the academy, critical theorizing is clearly a project of the intellectual self. Critical academics inscribe their performances in intellectual, textual projects and it is argument and text that establish their identity.

The Developmental Self

The rational self is often divided up and categorized by developmental stage, and emotional and ethical features are associated with intellectual features and are theorized as both universal and natural processes. The works of Harold Bloom, Erik Erikson, Urie Bronfenbrenner, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan, Rudolf Steiner, and Abraham Maslow, for example, focus on different components of identity development including the psycho/social, moral, spiritual, and cognitive, however, at the core of each approach is an assumption of distinctive, hierarchically ordered, natural stages which unfold best when supported with proper education. Critical theorists add a social, economic and institutional context to identity but the fundamental idea of staged development is still often present. Critical Pedagogy still aims to develop self-actualized critical thinkers, who enact the morality of individual principles of conscience and experience identity transformations that are both part of and also foster larger social transformation. Students of critical teachers are commonly viewed as needing to be brought to a higher level and attaining this higher level combines both ethical and intellectual processes. Normalized, repressed, and repressive identities are to be replaced by higher stage revolutionary, emancipated, and emancipating identities. At the minimum, a repressed identity is to be replaced by a better being who is open to becoming different from he or she who is instrumentally constructed by systems and institutions.

For example, this innate unfolding perspective on identity development is explicit in Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization* in which he described the biological nature of critical reason.²⁰ Marcuse felt that Freud did not understand how historical circumstances could transform positive instinctual capacities for human development into destructive forces. In Marcuse’s analysis, all societies require what he called basic repression, but in capitalist systems, the need to justify unequal power relationships and the need to stimulate desires and insecurities that lead people to purchase more products leads to what he termed “surplus repression”. In this system, a person becomes an authority bound, “easily manipulable

20 Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization — A philosophical inquiry into Freud*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.

modern subject” who is “subject to decomposition and fragmentation”,²¹ so that the personal becomes merely a component of the system of domination. For Marcuse, emancipation would involve reconciliation between culture, nature, and embodied “libidinal rationality.” Yet, Critical Pedagogy tends not to consider Marcuse’s emphasis on embodiment, on eros and on aesthetics. Critical Pedagogy focuses more on an intellectual critique of the forces of repression rather than imagining feeling, embodied selves.

The Storied Self

A very different approach would be critical education aimed at helping students create different stories of self, a Critical Pedagogy that has as a primary goal helping student imagine critical life identities and stories. Such an approach is premised on a different conceptualization of the self, the “storied self.” This self is related to memory and anticipation, exists outside of the present moment as well as in it, and transcends the more narrow categories of rational and developmental self. The storied self differs from the rational and staged self in that we have plot to go with storied self. It is not a label, affiliation, set of beliefs, a stage or a category, but rather a narrative. Story helps people define what is salient about their lives, what differentiates them from others, and how they might make choices. Individuals employ narratives to develop and sustain a sense of personal unity and purpose from diverse experiences across a lifespan. Everyone has more than one narrative of self, and these sometimes accompany specific social roles, such as daughter, adventurer, activist, wife, or teacher. There is often a sense of master narrative as well, a personal myth constructed to bring the different parts of ourselves together into a purposeful whole. Self plots are typically created both from cultural source patterns and from the details of original lives.

There are many cultural sources for such stories of self. All of our storing media provide plot lines, some of which are familiar and archetypal. Archetypes are common character types, symbols and relationships that appear often in stories both contemporary and ancient. The psychologist Carl Jung coined the term *archetype* and suggested that they sprung from what he called the collective unconscious. Identities are constructed and enacted in what Habermas conceived of as distinct spheres including the private sphere, the economic sphere and the public sphere. Yet these spheres and their attendant identities are increasingly enmeshed, and archetypal identities are confounded and confused by the new identity offerings interpreted and expressed by a range of new media.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

Though identity stories and ideas of narrative itself are changing, there are still recognizable narrative identity types that are reflected in a wide range of cultural media, both fiction and non-fiction. Demarcations of identities types are also common in the writing of psychologists and pop psychologists for example, Myers Briggs,²² describes sixteen types within four categories called traditionalists, experiencers, idealists and conceptualists. Brickson distinguishes among identity types rooted in personal identity, relational identity and collective identity.²³ Whether taking a version of the Myers Briggs or Brickson identity test in *Good Housekeeping* magazine, or reading about their astrological sign, people like to discover their types. Yet, these identity types are not just in books we read or movies we see or expressed through the things that we buy. When identity types and images become a pervasive part of the cultural environment they also actually become part of the identity of people who read and consume the images and narratives. The text and images inescapably become part of who we are, if only in the sense that we see ourselves in opposition to certain narratives. This means that culturally available identity types are unavoidable to our would-be critical teachers, theorists and citizens, and we all must answer to them. In the chart below, I have provided a list of sample list identity types constructed from offerings of three web sites.

Where does the critical teacher and critical citizen identity fit (or not) within our stories of self and our students' stories of self? I think it is crucial to consider what sort of an archetypal life story is suggested when a person is involved in various manifestations of Critical Pedagogy. If story helps people define what is salient about their lives and how they should make choices what is the critical life story? We also need to consider the distinctive rewards and challenges of the critical life story and how critical life narratives intersect with other culturally available identity types, rewards, and challenges. Within the range of culturally available life narratives and identity types there are a number of obviously paradoxical positions to consider that have implications for how critical identities can be enacted. First, I believe that commonalities and distinctions among diverse critical identities need to be clarified. I think that the critical teacher, the critical theorist, the critical citizen, and the critical revolutionary are all different *stories* and that these distinct stories are sometimes conflated in ways that make enacting them harder and less likely to occur. Next, we need to explore the ways in which critical identities are in tension with compelling domestic identities, professional identities and public identities.

22 Isabel Briggs Meyers with Peter B. Myers, *Gifts Differing: understanding personality type*, California: Davies-Black Pub., 1995.

23 Shelly Brickson, "Exploring Identity: Where Are We Now?" *Academy of Management Review* 25, no. 1 (2000), pp. 147-48.

Addict	Evangelist	Mediator	Sage
Administrator	Explorer	Mentor	Savior
Advocate	Femme Fatale	Mother	Scribe
Ambassador	Friend	Mad Scientist	Seeker
Artist	Gambler	Miser	Sister
Athlete	Gossip	Matriarch	Super hero
Avenger	Guide	Musician	Spy
Brother	Guru	Mystic	Wanderer
Bully	Healer	Naturalist	Servant
Builder	Hedonist	Networker	Slave
Caretaker	Hermit	Orphan	Student
Citizen	Hero	Owner	Teacher
Clown	Homebody	Patriarch	Thief
Communicator	Inventor	Peace maker	Trickster
Companion	Joiner	Princess	Victim
Conformist	Judge	Philosopher	Virgin
Counselor	Lobbyist	Pioneer	Visionary
Critic	Mediator	Pilgrim	Warrior
Daughter	Nature person	Poet	Worker
Dilettante	Ruler	Prostitute Promoter	Workaholic
Discussant	Liberator	Rebel	Worrier
Disciple	Logician	Revolutionary	Writer
Don Juan	Lover	Saboteur	
Entertainer	Martyr	Samaritan	

Hero and revolutionary, teacher and citizen?

A core mythic aspect of the critical identity of utopian Critical Pedagogy is revolutionary, heroic and oppositional. I argue that Critical Pedagogy offers a heroic identity as a commodified form for consumption. McLaren states, “As a critical educator, I ... encourage students to ask themselves the following question: What is the maximum damage we can do to the rule of capital, to the dominance of capital’s value form?” As students read about Che, Rosa Luxemburg and Malcolm X, the critical identity position is implicitly and explicitly constructed as one of revolutionary, hero and rebel. The word “hero” is Greek, from the root that means “to protect and to serve”. A hero is someone who is willing to sacrifice his or her own needs for others. Joseph Campbell explains, building on Jung’s work, that all heroes follow a path that takes them from their known world, initiates them into a new world order, and returns them, forever changed, into the old world with new talents and gifts. “The hero

comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man".²⁴ The hero image in western society includes a Messianic element in which the hero suffers in order to cleanse and save their society. This is actually a very limiting concept. Heroes in popular culture include willing, socially minded heroes like King Arthur and Martin Luther King, reluctant heroes like Bilbo Baggins from *The Hobbit*, or Anita Hill, and loner heroes like Indiana Jones and Xena from *Xena: Warrior Princess*. In all cases, however, the hero leaves home and ordinary life, the hero is engaged in conflict and lives a dramatic and exciting life, and the hero mostly does for and to others, not with others. Heroics is explicitly present in some Critical Pedagogy writing such when

Peter McLaren asks us to "do battle in the streets, in the boardrooms, in the classrooms,"²⁵ but it is equally present, though less explicitly in most Critical Pedagogy. Shor identifies principal goals of Critical Pedagogy, and in this list the hero identity is suggested by terms such as oppose, transform, illuminate, challenge and interfere.²⁶ Even feminist critical approaches commonly use the language of challenge and transformation. For example, Weiler explains "Feminist theory, like other contemporary approaches, validates differences, challenges universal claims to truth, and seeks to create social transformation".²⁷ At the same time, the phrases "invite students" and "validates differences" suggests a more collaborative identity quite different from the heroic identity.

- I. Oppose socialization with desocialization
- II. Choose critical consciousness over commercial consciousness
- III. Transformation of society over reproduction of inequality
- IV. Promote democracy by practicing it and by studying authoritarianism
- V. Challenge student withdrawal through participatory courses
- VI. Illuminate the myths supporting the elite hierarchy of society
- VII. Interfere with the scholastic disabling of students through a critical literacy program
- VIII. Raise awareness about the thought and language expressed in daily life
- IX. Distribute research skills and censored information useful for investigating power and policy in society
- X. Invite students to reflect socially on their conditions, to consider overcoming limits...

24 Peter McLaren, *Ibid.*, p. 30.

25 Peter McLaren, *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Pedagogy of Revolution*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

26 See Ira Shor, *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*, South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1983, Ira Shor, *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*, Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1992. See also Ira Shor, *When Students Have Power: Negotiating Authority in a Critical Pedagogy*, Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1996.

27 Kathleen Weiler, "Freire and a feminist pedagogy of difference", *Harvard Educational Review* 61 no. 4 (1991), pp. 449-74.

The revolutionary identity is quite distinctive from the identity of a citizen who is active in addressing issues in schools, neighborhoods and local community. It is also distinct from the critic who rejects foundationalism, is suspicious of politics and questions metanarratives. The revolutionary identity is also quite distinctive from most teacher identities. Critical Pedagogy tends to promote the former at the expense of the latter two. Any conceptualization of Critical Pedagogy asks for action in and on the world. Yet, the heroic revolutionary identity is so grand, powerful, exceptional and potentially repressive that many of our students cannot integrate it as a *story* line for their lives and for their teaching.

Neither the heroic utopic identity nor the critical dystopic identity can serve as a workable model for teachers and citizens. Critical Pedagogy fails to offer stories in which ordinary active citizens and teachers work for positive social change as part of their ordinary lives. This notion of ordinary action is in direct opposition to the heroic story line that requires a departure from ordinary life and action. This notion of ordinary action is also affirmative and political. Political participation is a form of optimism that makes postmodern dystopics uncomfortable. There is clearly an immobilizing component to the critical identity since, even if we are the subaltern and voiceless, once we speak and act we are not voiceless and can't speak on behalf of the voiceless and powerless. A Critical Pedagogy concerned with constructing civic identity would ask questions like these about the intersections of identity, power, communities and action

1. What are students' senses of civic and political identity and where do these come from?
How does a political identity intersect with other forms of identity?
2. How do students understand themselves in relation to ideas about power and social change, possibilities for social action, and the rights and duties of citizenship? In what ways and places do student feel powerful? What kind of power? How do students and teachers reconcile their positions with its oppressive potential?
3. What sorts of stories do student tell about themselves in relation to power? How can they write new stories?
4. In what communities do students see themselves belonging and participating? Do students live in an increasingly global world in their imaginations? Do students live in a national community dependent on their participation?
Or do they live in an endless present untied to any history and without any clear sense of fit or how to fit in a communal, national or global narrative?
5. What types of action can students take? When? How? With what opportunities for critical reflection on self and power?

One challenge for Critical Pedagogy in the fostering of civic identity is that citizenship work is often very compromised, impure. It unheroic and in an important way, it is uncritical. When action is taken, and one affirmatively does this and not that, multiplicity and critique temporarily fall by the wayside. What if one is complicit with oppressors in action? What if

one is acting on behalf of others who could and should act for themselves? What if there is a better solution? There is a purity, clarity and beauty to theory and critique when it is uncomplicated by the exigencies of practical work for change. It gives a different satisfaction and perhaps appeals to a different type of person than the sometimes boring and always incomplete and imperfect and often very frustrating work of social justice. There is not a lot of purity in working with actual legislative bodies and contrary real people and groups. Indeed, successful action requiring accommodation or compromise is decidedly unheroic. It is plodding, and it is rooted in a leap of faith.

Another challenge for Critical Pedagogy in the fostering of civic identity is that the political is increasingly entwined with the economic, with production, consumption and entertainment, and the sphere and necessary action of the public can be hard to locate. Jurgen Habermas argued that under the liberal model of the public sphere, institutions of public rational-critical debate were protected from interference by public authorities because they were in the hands of private people. But in the postmodern global context, it is increasingly impossible to separate the public and the private, and the political from what is entertainment. Increasingly, advertising and public relations, promotion, spin, and “staying on message” cloud and even shape public discourse. Politicians are sold as commodities, citizens are consumers, and issues are decided with staged events and quotes pre-worded by publicity specialists.²⁸ Public space also assumes many new forms, from parks and playgrounds to pubs, libraries, cafes and neighborhood centers, shopping centers, professional organizations and internet chat rooms. What is the space for action? How does the critical person feel and speak in these places?

Both the heroic utopic identity and the critical dystopic identity are problematic for teachers. There is a popular cultural image of the teacher as hero, in which a charismatic teacher acts as a savior figure in the lives of poor and oppressed students. This narrative however, confounds rather than clarifies the identity position of the critical teacher. The hero teacher of popular culture is rarely a critical pedagogue. The curricula of Jaime Escalante and Lou Ann Johnson, for example, are quite traditional. In the popular imagination, the hero teacher actually uses a curriculum that critical theorists would call “technical-rational”. Paul Skilton-Sylvester wrote a wonderful narrative about his own powerful critical teaching and he called it “Teaching without charisma: Using questions to guide students’ inquiry into their urban neighborhood”.²⁹ As his title suggests, he feels like he can’t quite be a critical teacher because “the charismatic teacher performer is not me”.

28 Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, M.A.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1993.

29 Paul Skilton-Sylvester, “Teaching without Charisma: Using Questions to Guide Students’ Inquiry into Their Urban Neighborhood”, in *Making Justice Our Project*, ed. C. Edelsky, New York: National Council of Teachers of English, 1999.

Much writing on Critical Pedagogy does not envision a powerful heroic charismatic teacher, but instead, as Paulo Freire suggests, “one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach”.³⁰ Yet, this softer teacher-guide does not have the mythic status of the heroic teacher and thus is less well understood as a narrative life model. Teaching, like political action, is affirmative and decisive. It requires the constant making of value-based choices and specific action and it also requires a kind of imposition. If we want our student to be different in some way because of our teaching we must accept the impositional nature of teaching. Just as in the civic situation, in the teaching situation when action is taken, and one affirmatively does this and not that, multiplicity and critique temporarily fall by the wayside. In teaching we must also be left to wonder if we are complicit with oppressors and acting on behalf of others who could and should act for themselves. But it is a mistake to retreat from action and value into hand wringing deconstructions of everyone’s power. Good teachers are aware that teacher authority is a form of privilege, are reflective and self examining about it and, yes, take on the authority to offer students ways of thinking and being and imagining that they haven’t experienced before.

As Skilton-Sylvester’s experience suggests, we need to reformulate and expand our narrative stories about critical teachers and critical citizens to allow for all sorts of people to see themselves. We need to encourage emerging critical teachers and would be critical citizens to reformulate their narratives so that they can recognize their heroic achievements and criticality within life stories as guides, caretakers, nurturers and facilitators. What might critical teaching suggest for those whose core narrative lines are about being daughters, being peace makers, or being princesses? How does the critical teacher or citizen identity fit with identity imperatives to be liked? To have nice things? To fit in? To feel a sense of power and mastery? To be successful?

What if desire, pleasure, sexuality and power are nullified by what you think a critical identity entails? My personal critical identity is constructed most fundamentally and relatively unproblematically as super hero. It’s masculine and scrappy. I wear a cape and I fight for justice and some of this sense of justice comes from being a working class ethnic Irish kid, a free lunch kid. I also formed my adult sensibility at around age eleven before I had breasts before I made any attempt to enact the roles of princess or femme fatale. As the man in my life says about this,

“that’s binary bullshit...just because you are aggressive, stubborn, and brave doesn’t mean you aren’t feminine”. But as a kid the binaries were real to me. I was willing to be what people told me was “boyish” because heroics was important to me. But what happens to girls

30 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. M. B. Ramos, New York: Continuum, 1970, 1993, p. 61.

who are upset by this? And what happens to women for whom scrappiness feels fraudulent? Can they assume the identity of heroic critical pedagogue and citizen as easily as I can? For many women a deeply feminine identity is primary. And it can be too soft, yielding, or indirect for something they understand to be heroic work. Most teachers are women, all women are daughters, many women are wives and mothers, and these identity narratives can be rooted in a need to support, love, and please.

In addition to being male and heroic, the critical identity is also popularly narrated as an outsider identity. Like me, most critical theorists and many critical teachers share early, personal understandings of marginalization and conflict with established educational institutions. Critical theorists and pedagogues are more likely to be working class or minorities, and our teaching and scholarship is itself often marginalized within mainstream schools and universities. For some of us the outsider identity is familiar, even constitutive. But I wonder if this leaves *insiders* out? Does the narrative construction critical educator as outsider leave out middle class teachers and academics and does it begin to leave out and co-opt outsider theorists who become insiders through various forms of professional recognition?

A clearly conflicting identity narrative is the enactment of good professional teacher or good professional academic and the mythic enactment of critical revolutionary, teacher and theorist. Part of our cultural, capitalistic inheritance is the notion that what counts as work are activities associated with coercion. We give something up, our time, and some of our freedom to do work and being a teacher and being a professor are paid work. Work is hired by the owning class. The good worker works hard, is obedient, and does her job for pay. That job is often defined by professional community standards and the good professional acts “professionally,” meaning uncritically, without controversy, according to professional norms and expectations. Students in college and new teachers are often struggle to see themselves in positions of functional instrumental professional power as learners and teachers. To ask for the critical professional identity assumes that they have both claimed power and then moved beyond it.

Even critical work is a source of income that permits consumption. Yet a critical teacher is envisioned as answering to a different authority and working in opposition to all coercive forces — the critical person challenges, opposes and fights. A professional identity can be an assumed identity that one leaves behind when one goes home. Yet the critical identity is typically conceived of and reported as a foundational and all-encompassing identity. Non-critical academics and teachers can work without the anxiety of integrating their social and political self narratives into their professional identities. Yet this integration seems required by the critical stance. If integration can’t occur the teacher potentially develops a sense of divided self, a self with two masters - critical pedagogues acquire two full time jobs.

Such tensions suggest that it is crucial for us to recognize and deconstruct dominant discourses and favored identities. We need to consider the relative status of a critical identity

compared to others and the extent to which one identity tends to exclude the holding of another. We also need to get away from binary and reductive notions of the critical identity that suggest either you are or you aren't — like pregnancy. We also need to encourage would be critical teachers and citizens to reformulate their narratives so that they can recognize their ordinary heroic achievements and criticality and build on them, extending them, making them more energetic. Criticality is something one can participate in, move in and out of. It doesn't have to be an essential identity, it can be *any* of these *many* kinds of identities, a set of views, occasional practices, or a mythic storied enactment.

Identity thinking that defies *identity thinking*.

Adorno encourage us to view the uses of instrumentalization of reason and the concepts and self narratives that represent the world in a way that defies identity thinking — meaning thinking that over identifies and is limiting. This bring me to the second group of identity theories I wish to discuss. These rationalist, developmental and story identity theories give relatively little emphasis to the cultural and institutional contexts in which identity develops. They focus on the person and not on the structures and contexts — the institutions and settings — in which persons are seated and culturally familiar types develop. A very different notion of the self is the structured or what I'll call the "*inscribed self*". As Western psychology, anthropology and linguistics extended the serious study of people and languages across cultures, theories of identity became more nuanced and less unitary, and naturalistic arguments for self become harder to justify in the face of rich and varied difference. Critical perspectives on ideology, power structures, institutions and social organization from Marx to Nietzsche to the Frankfurt School also forward the idea that profound "structures" — of language, of society, of history, and of consciousness itself — may constrain and construct personal and group identities. Inscribed influences include sociodemographic categories (e.g., race, social class, gender), institutions such as mass media, families, schools, hospitals and governments, and, importantly, specific cultural practices and discursive environments. These theories moved the locus of identity development process from the individual to the cultures and institutions in which people live and act.

What I'm calling the "*inscribed self*" is a theory of self offered rather simplistically by various iterations of structuralism and in much more complicated ways by poststructuralist theorists. Structuralism explores the structures that underlie and generate "surface level" observable phenomena and reduces the notion of individual significance and autonomy by portraying the self largely as a construct and consequence of impersonal systems. From this perspective, individuals neither originate nor control the codes and conventions of their social existence, mental life, or school experience. Social institutions, cultural practices and cultural

categories structure identity and sense of purpose by imposing implicit and explicit rules of behavior and offering systems of reward and punishments. These structures of identity are typically not simply suggestions or meanings that can be ignored with impunity.

A dispiriting reading of this structural view of identity and agency would suggest that personal experiences do not easily transcend normative cultural patterns. All people might aim for would be minor variations *within* these patterns.³¹ There is a fair amount of research in education that supports this view. For example, Linda McNeil's study of high school social studies revealed that even at the strongest magnet schools in her study, teachers resorted to "defensive teaching". McNeil suggests that these teachers who had personal interest in critical political, economic, and social issues, they did teach it because the particular social structure of the school suggested a conformist identity and teaching style — a certain "*habitus*". As McNeil noted:

The classroom observations made clear that the school was functioning in a way that attempted to socialize students into consensus history, into passive learner roles. *Yet there was no overt community pressures, no external elites insisting that the school take on this social control function.* The controlling function stemmed from the way the school as an organization worked, not from outside pressures.³²

This reminds us that power in processes of identity formation needs to be acknowledged. It is important to understand that the social construction of various selves and teacher identities are by no means innocent. All discourses and identities involve the exercise of power. Structuralist perspectives on identity transforms the whole terrain of "cultural identity" from a reified, presumably innocent, neutral space into one marked by ongoing contestations for power, meaning and signification. In his *History of Sexuality* study, Foucault describes this sort of process occurring through "technologies of the self", devices that make possible the social construction of personal identity.³³ For Foucault, technologies of self operate at the point where cultural codes or discourses intersects with established power relations to constitute a grid of intelligibility. Such a grid or *dispositif* has been variously translated as "apparatus", "deployment", "positivities" "construct" but the translation I like best because it seems dimenaional and complex is "grid of intelligibility". Foucault developed it to help him think through the problem of how aspects of sex and sexuality came to be understood regimes of truth for modern identity and experience across such diverse fields as religion and psychoanalysis. In other words, how do we think about a social-historical matrix that supports the structuring of a particular identity and experience of ourselves across many

31 Ibid., p. 60.

32 Linda McNeil, *Contradictions of Control — School Structure and School Knowledge*, New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.

33 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I.*, New York: Pantheon, 1978.

fields of human experience in a specific time and place? To do so, Foucault says, we must attempt to analyze a very diverse constellation of elements that make up this matrix, which is “a heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions — in short, the said as much as the unsaid”.³⁴ Once this constellation of identity influences can begin to be seen, the relationship between specific elements must be explored. One searches for the satisfaction of an “urgent need” at a specific point in time, which the *dispositif* strategically serves, by its particular organization of “relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge”.³⁵

Cornel West, writing about different types of black intellectuals, describes the “bourgeois model” as one who is motivated by a quest for legitimacy.³⁶ For a person who has experienced marginality for much of her or his life, the emotional need to be accepted or viewed as “good enough” can be compelling. Many critical theorists come from poor, working class, and marginalized backgrounds that might increase the desire for acceptance and power as well as sharpen the oppositional spirit. This process is a form of Foucauldian self-disciplining through the internalization of an institutional definition of legitimate work. Norms and rules of academia are often technologies of domination, which classify, objectify, and normalize theorists and theory and become internalized to the extent that external control or surveillance is not needed. Critical theorists dedicated to progressive or radical change are often disciplined into leading docile, productive, apolitical careers in the same way that teachers are disciplined in schools.

With the concept of *dispositif*, Foucault introduces a number important, but not very well considered aspects of identity. The influence of architectural forms suggest another aspect of self, what I call the *placed self*, which is perceived with respect to the physical environment and immediate experience of specific place. From the perspective of critical geography, space itself also elicits or at least suggests certain expression of identity. Spatiality theories of critical geography refuse to accept the naturalness of physical space as simply a neutral artifact of progress or matter-of-fact products of human creation or influence. Instead, these theories provide a means to examine how material spaces are constructed as people seek resources and privilege, how groups are distributed throughout particular spaces, and how constructions of space shape the social, cultural and political practices and, thus, also the formation of identity and meaning.³⁷

34 *Ibid.*, p. 67

35 *Ibid.*, p. 68

36 Cornel West, *Keeping Faith*, New York: Routledge, 1993.

37 See, for example, D. Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*, New York: Routledge, 2001. Also see E. Soja, “Planning in/for Postmodernity”, in *Space and Social Theory: Interpreting Modernity and Postmodernity*, The Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers Special Publications 33, ed. Georges Benko and Ulf Strohmayer, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, pp. 236-249

Many geography theories draw a distinction between material spaces and mental or imagined spaces. Often, human geographers refer to this as space (referring to the material) and place (referring to the human-constructed meanings attached to specific spaces). This notion of “place” is an idea, a mental construct, or a meaning. Thus, it can be imagined and narrated. Place as a social construct is intimately connected to the social construction of identity; geographers with concern for identity often argue that place and identity are recursively constructed.³⁸ Thus, critical geographies of place allow for integration of critical spatiality with imagination, narrative, and identity. The school place, with its smells of chalk, cleaning fluid, erasers, pencil sharpening seems to structure notions of obedience, efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness that make problematization or critical reflection difficult. For others the school place might also structure notions of growth, creativity and transformation. The university with its smells of fall leaves, wet wool coats, library books and a very faint trace of cigar smoke structures notions of privilege, philosophic remove, and civil collegiality that make critical resistance and practical, civic work difficult. To me social justice work smells like cigarettes, patchouli oil, magic markers for posters, stale doughnuts, and sweat. It is also noisy, with voices bouncing off cold spaces as posters are created, interruptions, laughter and swearing as plans are debated, music and children in the background, the polite voices on the phone, the strained voice working to persuade a stranger, the dangerous exhilaration of joined polyphony in a protest march.

This reminds us that the body, or *embodied self*, is also a place and the experience of body and of senses as well as how we sense others perceive our physical selves, including height weight, colored, genderedness and ability, are important aspects of identity. As Oliver Sachs has documented, for some who become blind or disabled, recreated bodies can lead to recreation of self.³⁹ What is the embodied self of the critical teacher like? The critical citizen? What do our received and structured cultural understandings of the body make possible and impossible? Who is included and excluded?

Gur-Ze’ev writing on Horkheimer and the philosophy of education suggests we need to challenge “the realm of self-evidence not only within the hegemonic power relations and groups, but also in the praxis, theory, consciousness, and self of the critical educator herself. Within this framework life becomes, again, a mission, and within dialogical settings the struggle over self-constitution and re-articulation of identity, knowledge, and intersubjectivity

38 Miles Richardson, “The gift of presence: the act of leaving artifacts at shrines, memorial, and other tragedies”, in *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*, ed. Paul C. Adams, Steven Hoelscher and Karen E. Till (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 257-72, (267)

39 Oliver Sachs, *Awakening*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976. Also see Oliver Sachs, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales*, New York: Summit Books, 1985.

becomes concrete, even within a (almost) totally constructed and controlled reality”.⁴⁰ The struggle over self-constitution and re-articulation of identity is deconstructive practice that also acknowledges identity as performance and as relation. As Lather suggests, “the goal of deconstruction is neither unitary wholeness nor dialectical resolution . . . [but] to keep things in process, to disrupt. . . to fight the tendency for our categories to congeal”.⁴¹

The “*relational self*” is the self that engages in immediate human interchange. Related to this idea is the performed self or the enacted self which always exists in a dynamic present, right now. Social constructionists, based in a postmodern perspective, challenge the story of the autonomous self. Rather than locating *identity* and meaning-making within the mind of the individual, they see *identity* as dynamically socially constructed: “We live in and through the *narrative identities* that we develop in conversation with one another”.⁴² This is different from narratives we tell ourselves. Gergen poses a “relational view of self-conception, one that views self-conception not as an individual’s personal and private cognitive structure but as discourse about the self”.⁴³ This discourse takes place between people; the self in this view is a “relational self”.⁴⁴ Freedman and Combs note, “we think of a self not as a thing inside an individual, but as a process or activity that occurs in the space between people”.⁴⁵ These socially constructed enacted identities shift and fragment across “discourses, practices and positions’ and are ‘constantly in the process of change and transformation’”.⁴⁶ As Bakhtin observes, “I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another . . . every internal experience ends up on the boundary . . . The very being of man (both internal and external) is a profound communication”.⁴⁷

A performative, communicative identity perspective helps us to see that teachers and administrators in conflict often fight over competing *narratives*, each trying to assert the right

40 Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “Toward a non-repressive Critical Pedagogy”, *Educational Theory*, 4, (1998), pp. 463-486.

41 Patti Lather, *Getting smart: feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*, New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 13.

42 H. Anderson and H. Goolishian, “The client is the expert: a not-knowing approach to therapy”, in *Therapy as Social Construction*, ed. Sheila McNamee and Kenneth J. Gergen, London: Sage Publications, 1992, p. 28.

43 K. J. Gergen, *Realities and Relationships: Soundings in Social Construction*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 185.

44 Kenneth J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

45 Jill Freedman and Gene Combs, *Narrative Therapy: The Social Construction of Preferred Realities*, New York: Norton, 1996, p. 34.

46 Stuart Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity,” in *Modernity and its Futures*. eds. S. Hall, D. Held and A. McGrew, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.

47 Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in life and discourse in poetry”, in *Writings by the Circle of Bakhtin*. trans. Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 248. Cited in Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, trans. Wlad Godzich. *Theory and History of Literature*, 13, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p. 21.

to define and describe the school place. A poststructural perspective on this competition can encourage teachers to hold multiple realities in mind, relationally, and to make space for each experience in the community, to make space for different narratives and enactments of a life and experience. Teachers, like all other professionals, want to be approved of and understood. People need pleasure, power and recognition from identity performance. This is the audience problem. We can't really *be* a certain way if nobody recognizes who we are. There is often a tension between how a person or a group understands why it is doing what it is doing; and what meaning others attach to the person's behavior. Frequently at the heart of such tension is a need or desire to have an impact on another, to speak and be heard, to make a difference to the other. The ability to have voice in relationships is a key aspect of power. Relational power also includes the ability to move the relationship out of a state of disconnection and back into connection to be able to have an impact on the flow of the relationship itself.

Teachers sometimes have the sense that they are victims in their own lives, victims of policies, institutions and school cultures and they perceive others as having power over them. Some yield power and thus their identity expression to the other, reconstructing themselves to conform. Others assert a kind of false autonomy by isolating themselves, rejecting and blaming others in their world, seeking to carve out a sense of empowered identity for themselves. In this context, a critical identity can easily recede into something conceptually held, something that is part of the rational identity but is not enacted interpersonally or relationally, or is not even explored.

Feminist poststructuralism posits that subjectivities shift among the discursive fields that create them and that the individual is "always the site of conflicting forms of subjectivity".⁴⁸ Weedon provides a way to conceptualize multiple subject positions within varied discourses, a way to give voice to constructed meaning and to rewrite personal experiences.⁴⁹ "Where there is a space between the position of subject offered by a discourse and individual interests, a resistance to that subject position is produced."⁵⁰ This perspective disrupts the idea that there is one identifiable natural outcome identity for critical teachers and citizens or that a kind of ideal critical hero exists and that this identity is the only one really acceptable.

It is worth recalling that all attempts at universalization are hegemonic, and that hegemony refers not only to political and economic power, but also to any cultural power to define the norms of action and nature of identity construction. When Critical Pedagogy aims to unite broad, diverse groups it sometimes seems to be asking for students and teachers to modify their complex identities through the production of a consensus politics and consensus

48 Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997, p. 32.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

50 *Ibid.*, pp. 112-13.

identity that excludes the non heroic identity and tactile local micro experience in favor of heroic identity and macro level textual critiques. Peter McLaren's "dangerous words" such as oppression, racism, and poverty might be replaced with more pedestrian, immediate and less dangerous expressions such as "feeling bad, having a bad experience, wanting to have a different experience".

Postmodern discourse theory argues that there is a chasm between the universal and the particular, but it challenges the idea that a radical choice must be made between (to borrow [again] from Leo Tolstoy) the "universalization of the particular and the particularization of the universal". Feminist poststructural perspectives on identity and political projects aim to explore the *mutual* recursive constructions of both universal and particular.

Identities, Practices, and Critical Pedagogy

Everyone has multiple identities and being aware of this can be freeing and empowering. In the postmodern context, Dorinne Kondo observes that "[People] forge their lives in the midst of ambivalences and contradictions, using the idioms at their disposal".⁵¹ In her work on identity formation in schools, Davidson notes that "identity is constantly recreated, coming forward or retreating to the background in response to the politics and relations that characterize changing social situations".⁵² Identity can be hybrid, it can be complex, and it can be fluid and shifting as a person moves from space to space and relationship to relationship and, as well, across time. This creative sense of identity formation which is hopeful but also explores extent to which teachers and citizens "give away" power and submit to constraining identities through processes of subjectification needs to be a central part of Critical Pedagogy. Identities are performed in dynamic social contexts rather than solid and essential. Even when social and institutional pressures are present teachers are always performing their identities and do — in fact must — improvise. Part of this improvisation is required by the social context of teaching which is inherently unpredictable.

Even when we try to enact common scripts we have to freelance a lot. We ask: what is the right thing to do? We often have to respond to conflicting discourses. Everyday communicative acts and performative practices constantly rework the given identity repertoires thrown down at teachers, theorists and citizens by institutional structures. They do this in ways that transform, elaborate, resist, displace, or reinforce the institutionalized

51 Dorrine Kondo, *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses in Identity in a Japanese Workplace*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 302.

52 Ann Davidson, *Making and Molding Identity in Schools*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996, p. 4.

subjectifying/identification processes. New critical identities can be envisioned *any one or several* of the types of identity outlines in this chapter and also through the use of aesthetics, imagination and narrative. Teachers seeking new purposes for their work, and identities outside of hegemonic teacher identity and thus new ways of being in the classroom and communities can read narratives of inspiring critical teachers. I know this sounds and is “weak” but this is because critical educational theorists often participate in the modernist imperative to celebrate text and logic over life and narrative.

Teachers and students can actually write stories, envision themselves, and use this as inspiration to act in new ways. It is through such story-making or story-telling that we actively create or constitute ourselves as selves, for it is through such narratives that we rationalize the meanings of our lives as well as dedicate ourselves to long-term goals.⁵³ Anzaldúa’s notion of identities as clusters of stories that we tell about ourselves and others tell about us is especially useful because the cluster-of-stories emphasis allows for the sense of hybridity, complexity, and contradiction.⁵⁴ As Holland (1998) observes, “People tell others who they are but even more important they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are”.⁵⁵

Conclusion: Towards an Eutopic Critical Pedagogy

Critical theorists and pedagogues authentically interested in how power operates will have to take seriously how power operates on aspects of identity in particular times and places including the identity of theorists ourselves, to consider how various identities function to secure and alternatively to challenge the way power and knowledge are organized in school and in society. This condition requires that critical theorists and students of Critical Theory direct the full force of their intellect to exploring the machinations, corruptions, pleasures and idiosyncrasies of power, identity and knowledge in their own lives and work. Such work requires imagination, an optimistic spirit, and the willingness to recognize and explore the institutionalized and internalized. This also requires examining our own cultural ideologies related to ideas of identity, self, power and knowledge to notice the ways in which Critical

53 See, for example, John Barresi and Tim J. Juckes, “Personology and the narrative interpretation of lives”, *Journal of Personality* 65 (1997): 693-719. See also Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990, Daniel Dennit, *Consciousness Explained*, New York: Viking, 1992.

54 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands — La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987.

55 Dorothy Holland et al., *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 30.

Pedagogy can participate in the very systems of meaning and labeling which criticality should question. It is imperative that critical educators claim the messiness of identity and of civic and political life and explore the intersects of identity, power, place, and real social action to work on problems that are immediate.

Utopianism includes “critique of present reality and the presentation of the worthwhile future demanding realization”.⁵⁶ Yet, both of these places — the present reality and the worthwhile future — are too vast to be real. Utopia actually means no-place, a fantasy while eutopia means good place. It is not a great place, but it is a good place, a specific, tangible place. This chapter suggests that a Eutopic Critical Pedagogy is civic rather than revolutionary, and it is an *idiosyncratic education* that allows criticality to be something one can move in and out of, something that all sorts of people might do. It is an *exploratory education* that departs from cultural essentialism and reframes knowledge and identity as dynamic processes amidst changing social, linguistic, intellectual, and aesthetic values and relationships. It is an *integrated, poststructural education* that recognizes intermixture, hybridity, and complexity and questions the supposed fixed realities, boundaries, and understandings of an earlier era (nation states, national cultures, identities, divisions between science/nature, reality/appearance, center/periphery, etc.), and thus ideas of subject matter. It is an education on a manageable scale, that begins with the here and now. It is a personal education rooted the everyday. While it is an ethical education of *value* acknowledging loyalty to all global human beings and every single person’s rights to nutrition, health, shelter, security, and more broadly happiness, autonomy and cultural freedom, it is also an ethical educational of *practice* requiring not just understanding but also action and change. The action aims for improvement rather than transformation, it is common place rather than exceptional, ordinary rather than extraordinary, and it creates something better or maybe even just good enough rather than something true.

It is a deconstructive *critical education* that explores meaning, power and positionality and is cautiously aware that all teachings, texts, and media claim, distort, enhance, open and close perspectives. Yet it is also a *constructive education* that asserts meaning and identity and it comfortable with power. The vision and action is local and changing rather than authoritatively set out by experts and it is imperfect, incomplete and limited. It is a mistake to think of postmodernism as radical skepticism or a “belief” in an ontological “nothing” or to think of postmodernism an ethical stance in which anything goes or nothing goes. Instead, postmodernism and poststructuralism offer deconstructive *methods* of exploring and sometimes repositioning meaning. As Gur-Ze’ev⁵⁷ explains the nature of what he calls

56 Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “Walter Benjamin and Max Horkheimer: from utopia to redemption”, *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, 8, (1998), pp. 119-155

57 Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “Toward a non-repressive Critical Pedagogy”, *Educational Theory*, 4 (1998), pp. 463-486.

negative utopianism, “Critical Theory cannot promise “liberation” but endless struggle over understanding, refusal, and resistance to the negation of dialogic existence”. From this perspective, universal values as values of happiness or justice are never finally realized, or even defined, but they are more or less made sense of and more or less realized in concrete school practices and social worlds. Impositions, contradictions and impossibilities that we might be uncomfortable with in theory we can often live with in improving our communities. It is time as well for Critical Pedagogy to act as though it is who it says it is. Critical Pedagogy increasingly focuses on defining principles and on textual explication. Critical Pedagogy must be accountable ethically and politically not only as text and theory but also as identity and practice. Critical Pedagogy must offer not only critique and be simply deconstructive, but also wrestle with the implications of being positively constructive of identities and eutopic futures, both individual and collective.

What Can Critical Pedagogy Learn From Postmodernism? *Further reflections on the impossible future of Critical Pedagogy*¹

Gert Biesta

Critical Pedagogy and Postmodernism²

The emergence of Critical Pedagogy in Western Europe after the Second World War can be understood as a response to the failure of an educational system and a system of educational reflection to prevent Auschwitz. In the German context the critique of critical educationalists was first of all aimed at the tradition of “Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik” which, with its emphasis on the educational relationship and the educational lifeworld, had “forgotten” to thematise the social and political context of education. It was also aimed at a tradition of *Bildung* which had emphasised the intimate connection between education and culture but had “forgotten” to explore and understand culture in political terms. And it was aimed at the instrumentalisation of education and schooling which had become apparent in the way in which Nazism had used education as an effective instrument for promoting its ideology.³ Indirectly — but not implicitly — Critical Pedagogy therefore was a response to the failure of the modern educational “project” and, to the extent to which education as we know it today is the “dutiful child of the Enlightenment”,⁴ we can even say that Critical Pedagogy was a response to the failure of education itself.

Central to the Enlightenment conception of education is the idea that the purpose of education is *not* the insertion of individuals into an existing order, but that it is aimed at the creation of

- 1 This paper continues a discussion which I began in 1998 (see Gert Biesta, “Say you want a revolution... Suggestions for the impossible future of Critical Pedagogy”, *Educational Theory* 48 (4), 1998, pp. 499-510). In the second half of this paper I draw upon material used in that article.
- 2 In this essay I will use the notion of “postmodernism” in a rather loose and imprecise way. Although I am aware of the complexities in understanding let alone defining “postmodernism”, I will not discuss this in any detail (see Gert Biesta, “Postmodernism and the re-politicization of education”, *Interchange* 26, 1995, 161-183 for such an exploration). The main reason for doing so, is that the discussion about postmodernism among critical educationalists uses the concept in an equally unprecise manner. This essay is a response to that discussion.
- 3 See, for example, Gerd Stein, *Kritische Pädagogik. Positionen und Kontroverse*, Hamburg: Hoffman und Campe Verlag, 1979.
- 4 Robin Usher and Richard Edwards, *Postmodernism and Education*, London/New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 24.

individuals who can think for themselves and who can make their own decisions and judgements, free from dogmatic belief and external pressure. Kant provided the classical definition of Enlightenment as “man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage [Unmündigkeit] through the exercise of his own understanding”.⁵ He also argued that man’s “propensity and vocation to free thinking” — which he considered to be man’s “ultimate destination” and the “aim of his existence”⁶ — could only be brought about through education. Kant thereby put education at the very centre of the Enlightenment project. Although he may not have been the architect of modern education, his thinking still provides one of the most poignant articulations of the rationale for this project in which the ultimate aim of education is the creation of rational autonomous individuals. Kant firmly rooted the possibility for rational autonomy in a conception of human nature. It is important not to forget, however, that his deliberations were ultimately motivated by a *political* question, viz., what kind of subjects are needed in civil society.⁷

The idea that education should not be a process of adaptation to the existing social order did play an important role in the work of many theorists of the “Geisteswissenschaftliche” tradition. It was also a central element in many of the theories and practices of “Reformpädagogik”, “New Education”, and “Progressive Education”. In the majority of cases their argument against adaptation was expressed as an argument in favour of the child. Many educationalists followed Rousseau’s insight that adaptation to the external societal order would corrupt the child. This led to the idea, however, that a choice for the child could only mean a choice *against* society. This was further supported by theories which conceived of “the child” as a natural category, a “given”, and not as something that itself had to be understood in social, historical and political terms.⁸ This is not to suggest that a choice for the child inevitably resulted in a-political educational action. The work of Janusz Korczak provides one of the most compelling counter-examples.

Critical Pedagogy agrees that education should not be a process of insertion and adaptation, but that it has to do with individuality, subjectivity and agency. But whereas mainstream educational thought and practice — and more specifically in the German context mainstream education before the Second World War — approached education as an isolated phenomenon, a phenomenon *sui generis*, Critical Pedagogy emphasises that education has to be understood in its socio-historical and political context and as a socio-historical and political practice. While “traditional” education did have an interest in the emancipation of

5 Immanuel Kant, “An answer to the question: what is enlightenment?”, in Patricia Waugh (ed.), *Postmodernism. A Reader*, London: Edward Arnold, 1992, p. 90.

6 Immanuel Kant, “Über Pädagogik”, in I. Kant, *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik*, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1982, p. 701.

7 Gert Biesta, “How general can *Bildung* be? Reflections on the future of a modern educational ideal”, *British Journal of Philosophy of Education* 36(3), 2002, pp. 377-390; Gert Biesta, “*Bildung* and modernity. The future of *Bildung* in a world of difference”, *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 21(4/5), 2002, pp. 343-351.

8 Juergen Oelkers, *Reformpädagogik. Eine Kritische Dogmengeschicht.*, Weinheim: Juventa, 1989.

the child in that it wanted to save the child from external imposition, Critical Pedagogy argues that emancipation can only be achieved if it is part of a wider transformation of the socio-political order in the interest of justice, equality, democracy and human freedom for all.

As a critical *theory* of education this emancipatory interest translates into a critical analysis of educational practices and theories, meant to expose the ways in which such practices and theories sustain and reproduces inequality and injustice. The idea here is that positive change can be brought about if people gain an adequate insight into the power relations that constitute their situation. This is why notions like “demystification” and “liberation from dogmatism” play such a central role in Critical Pedagogy.⁹ Critical pedagogies, however, not only aim to provide insight and understanding. They also want to *do* something, and see education as one of the most important ways in which people can develop their capacity for critical reflexivity. As a critical educational *practice* Critical Pedagogy is therefore itself a crucial instrument in the struggle for emancipation, justice and liberation.

Over the past decades Critical Pedagogy has especially come to flourish in North America. The North American tradition had its precursor in the work of Dewey and the more radical efforts of the social reconstructionists.¹⁰ In the 1970s important impulses came from the “new sociology of education”.¹¹ In the 1980s critical scholars such as Michael Apple and Henry Giroux pushed the discussion one step further with their critique of the deterministic character of theories of reproduction. They argued for a focus on the cultural mediations between the material conditions of an unequal society and the formation of the consciousness of individuals in that society. Critical scholarship during the 1980’s also revealed a growing interest in possibilities for positive pedagogical action, and a shift from class as the only difference that makes a difference, to a recognition of the importance of race and gender. This, in turn, has opened up the field of critical education for a range of different theories and perspectives, including feminism, postcolonialism and race theory.

Initially, several of those working in the critical tradition saw postmodernism as another possible ally for Critical Pedagogy.¹² More recently, however, many critical educators have

9 Klaus Mollenhauer, *Erziehung und Emanzipation*. München: Juventa, 1976, p. 67; Peter McLaren, *Revolutionary multiculturalism. — Pedagogies of Dissent for the New Millennium*, Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1997, p. 218.

10 See, e.g., W.B. Stanley, *Schooling for Utopia — SocialReconstructionism and Critical Pedagogy in the Postmodern Era*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1992; and H.A. Giroux, *Schooling for Democracy*, London: Routledge, 1989.

11 Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, New York: Basic Books, 1976.

12 Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux, *Postmodern Education: Politics, Culture and Social Criticism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991; Henry Giroux, and Peter McLaren (eds), *Critical Pedagogy, the State, and Cultural Struggle*, Albany: SUNY, 1991; Henry Giroux (ed), *Postmodernism, feminism and Cultural Politics*, Redrawing Educational Boundaries, Albany: SUNY, 1991.

become highly critical if not dismissive of postmodern thought, arguing that its anti-foundationalism and relativism play into the hands of conservative and neo-liberal educational policy-makers and provides support for the advance of global capitalism more generally.¹³

Such reactions should not come as a surprise. Although the point of departure for Critical Pedagogy is to be found in a radical critique of modern education, it can be argued that Critical Pedagogy at the very same time remains part and parcel of the modern educational endeavour, both in terms of its aims and aspirations (emancipation, democracy, justice), and in terms of its means (demystification, ideology critique, critical reflection). In a sense, Critical Pedagogy is not critical of the modern educational project as such, but only of all forms of *un*Critical Pedagogy, that is all forms of pedagogy that take reality as it is, without asking questions about what made the situation as it is, who made the situation as it is, and whose interests are served by the status quo and the depiction of the status quo as natural and inevitable. Critical Pedagogy thus needs truth (in order to be able to demystify and decipher) and it needs a normative foundation (in order to justify its emancipatory efforts and aspirations). If *this* is what is put into question by postmodernism — and this is how many critical educators who have become wary of postmodernism see it — then there clearly is a problem. Gur-Ze'ev, for example, writes that the “postmodern sensitivity to the contingent stance of values and truth claims; the refusal to accept universal validity claims; and the rejection of any general theory of foundationalism, essentialism, and transcendentalism, are in direct conflict with the Enlightenment ideals and its philosophical tradition”.¹⁴ For him this means that efforts to integrate emancipatory dimensions of neo-Marxism with postmodern discourses are highly problematical, “as evidenced by the various efforts to construct a postmodern Critical Pedagogy in face of the effort to obtain a difficult or (perhaps) impossible balance among the autonomy of the subject and her contingency, the possibility of a priori value judgements, the universal validity of truth claims, and the possibility of nonrepressive communication”.¹⁵ Rikowski puts the problem in even more straightforward terms: “the insertion of postmodernism within educational discourse lets in some of the most unwelcome guests — nihilism, relativism, educational marketisation, to name but a few — which makes thinking about human emancipation futile”.¹⁶

13 See, e.g., Peter McLaren, “Revolutionary pedagogy in post-revolutionary times: rethinking the political economy of *critical education*”, *Educational Theory* 48(4), 1998, pp. 431-462; D. Hill, P. McLaren, M. Cole and G. Rikowski, *Postmodernism in Educational Theory — Education and the Politics of Resistance*. London: The Tufnell Press, 1999.

14 Ilan Gur Ze'ev, “Philosophy of peace education in a postmodern era”, *Educational Theory* 51(3), 2001, p. 317.

15 *Ibid.*

16 Glenn Rikowski, “Left alone: End time for Marxist educational theory?”, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 17(4), 1996, p. 442.

Is this the end of the discussion? Are Critical Pedagogy and postmodernism simply incompatible? Is postmodernism indeed no more than a form of “junk theory”, a “debilitating ‘political’ posturing”?¹⁷ I am inclined to disagree. Although I do not wish to argue that Critical Pedagogy should be replaced by postmodern pedagogy — if such a thing exists in the first place — I do want to argue that Critical Pedagogy might learn something from postmodernism. In what follows I will first argue that to equate postmodernism with relativism and nihilism rests upon a category mistake and hence implies a misunderstanding of what postmodernism is about. I will offer then an alternative reading which highlights the inherently moral and political character of postmodernism. This reading suggests that postmodernism is much closer to the aims and aspirations of Critical Pedagogy than its critics seem to assume. Against this background I will then focus on three central dimensions of Critical Pedagogy in order to explore how postmodernism might be able to inform and support the critical educational project. Central to this discussion will be the idea of the “impossible,” which, as I will explain in more detail below, does not refer to what is *not* possible, but to what cannot be foreseen, predicted and calculated as a possibility. I will argue that Critical Pedagogy should take the idea of the impossible on board in order to overcome its own fundamentalist tendencies and the instrumentalism inherent in its own conception of education.

The Ethics and Politics of Postmodernism

Postmodernism has been around in educational circles for about two decades. One could argue that education was rather late in responding to postmodernism. Other fields, such as philosophy, art and social theory, were well on their way in exploring what postmodernism had to say before education got hold of it — or before it got hold of education. Yet there was every reason for education to respond, because the educational project seemed to be so close to what postmodernism, at least at first glance, sought to challenge.

Educators and educationalists have responded in a range of different ways. Some have embraced postmodernism, others have reacted more cautiously, and still others have rejected it outright. Although we should be aware that postmodernism is a complex and contested concept and phenomenon — Is postmodernism against modernism? Does it come after modernism? Is it a phase of modernism? Is it a condition? Is it a position? Is it an “ism”? What is the relationship between postmodernism, poststructuralism, neopragmatism and deconstruction? — it seems fair to say that those who have responded negatively have

17 Glenn Rikowski and P. McLaren, (1999). “Postmodernism in educational theory”, In Hill et al., p. 1.

predominantly done so on the basis of the idea that postmodernism stands for *relativism*, that is for the idea that anything goes, or that we can at least no longer assume that criteria transcend our local, historical or cultural position. The critics of postmodern relativism argue, that if we embrace postmodernism we will end up in a situation in which we will have to accept strange, outrageous and irrational ideas and worldviews, a situation in which we will no longer be able to make a distinction between good and bad, and where questions about values, ethics and politics simply will become a matter of individual taste. Postmodernism, so it is argued, is the ultimate subversion of the achievements of Enlightenment. It brings us back to the pre-modern battlefield of competing clans, tribes, groups and nations — each with their own truths and own values and with nothing more than that.

To think of postmodernism as relativism appears to me, however, to be a mistake. It is first of all a category mistake. The idea that postmodernism represents relativism seems to follow from the fact that postmodernism questions objectivism, absolutism and universalism. But to question these “isms” only implies relativism if one believes that objectivism and relativism are the only two available options. I wish to argue, however, that postmodernism should *not* be understood as operating within the dualistic framework where knowledge is either objective or subjective and where values are either universal or relative. We should rather think of postmodernism as wanting to put this very framework into question. Postmodernism wants to go *beyond* objectivism and relativism.¹⁸ It wants to show that the language game of objectivism and relativism is only one way to cut the philosophical cake — and not necessarily the most useful one. As long as postmodernism is approached from an epistemological angle, its questioning of foundations and universals can indeed only be read as a case for relativism. Yet postmodernism is not a critique of the objectivist horn of the modern, epistemological worldview, but a critique of this worldview itself — i.e., of the worldview which holds that what is ultimate and fundamental in our relation to “the world” is our knowledge of it. This is why I believe that it is a category mistake to argue that postmodernism equals relativism. Postmodernism questions the framework from which relativism derives its meaning; it does *not* question one of the options within that framework.

The other reason why postmodernism is not a form of relativism, has to do with the fact that postmodernism has a clear and distinct ethical and political “agenda” — albeit not an agenda which aims to reduce ethical and political questions to questions about knowledge, reality and truth, but rather one which wants to take ethical and political questions in their own terms.¹⁹ Central to this “agenda” is postmodernism’s exposition of the totalising

18 Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983.

19 Biesta, “Postmodernism and the re-politicization of education”; Gert Biesta, “The community of those who have nothing in common — education and the language of responsibility”. Interchange, in press.

tendencies of modernism — for example in modern life, in modern philosophy, in modern science, in modern social theory — in order to highlight the exclusion and injustice brought about by attempts to articulate a total, all-encompassing perspective or vision. This is, for example, how we should read Foucault's thesis of the end of man — *not* as an attempt to erase humankind or humanity from the surface of the earth, but as an attempt to show that humanism, the idea that we can ultimately *know* who we are and that we can use this knowledge as a foundation for the way in which we organise our lives (in politics, in education), limits and excludes possible other ways of being human.²⁰ We can understand Derrida and deconstruction in a similar way — *not* as an attempt to argue that there are no foundations (such anti-foundationalism still operates within the modern language game of foundations and their rejection), but rather as an attempt to ask the question from what site “or non-site”²¹ it is possible to put foundations into question. The purpose of such an endeavour is not destructive but *affirmative*, it is an affirmation of what is other, what is excluded.²²

To expose and question totalisation only appears as relativism if we stay within the modern, binary language game in which everything either is objective or subjective, universal or relative. Postmodernism wants to move beyond this language game in order to explore to what extent peaceful co-existence of what is incommensurable might be — or become — possible. The “agenda” of postmodernism is therefore thoroughly ethical and political — but this can only be acknowledged if we leave our modern preconceptions and our modern frame of reference behind. This is what so many critics of postmodernism seem unable to do. They seem to be unable to let go of their epistemological and metaphysical certainties. They seem to be unable to give priority to ethical and political questions, and to do so in a way which does not ultimately reduce ethics and politics to epistemology and metaphysics. Yet this, so I wish to argue, is precisely the challenge that postmodernism puts before us.

What would it mean for Critical Pedagogy if it would take up this challenge? In what follows I want to take a closer look at three central dimensions of Critical Pedagogy in order to make clear to what extent postmodern ideas might be able to inform and support the critical educational project. I believe that there is a strong affinity between the ethical and political orientation of Critical Pedagogy and postmodernism. Critical Pedagogy, however, wants to pursue this orientation with thoroughly modern means. It wants to use education as an instrument for emancipation. It relies upon the demystifying powers of critical reflection

20 *Ibid.*

21 Jacques Derrida, *Points... Interviews, 1974-1994*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984, p. 108.

22 Gert Biesta, “Preparing for the incalculable. Deconstruction, justice and the question of education”, In Gert Biesta & D. Egéa-Kuehne (eds), *Derrida & Education*, London/New York: Routledge, 2001, pp. 32-54.

to expose the workings of power. And it uses a positive conception of justice to guide and legitimise its endeavours. On all three counts a postmodern approach has something different to offer — something which, as I will try to argue below, may be more consistent with the ethical and political orientation shared by Critical Pedagogy and postmodernism.

The Impossibility of Education

One of the most basic questions in any discussion about education — a question so basic that it is easily overlooked — is the question of the possibility of education.²³ This question is particularly important for Critical Pedagogy, not only because of its focus on education as the primary means for social change, but also because Critical Pedagogy explicitly wants to educate the educator.

Is education possible? According to Sigmund Freud it is not. In the last text he wrote, he refers to education as one of three “impossible professions” — the other two being analysis and government — “in which one can be sure beforehand of achieving unsatisfying results”.²⁴ Freud’s frustration can be read as a dissatisfaction with the state of educational knowledge and educational practice. Up to the present day there are indeed many educational researchers who aim to find the “secret formula” which will make education into a predictable technique. For them, the fact that such a formula has not yet been found, is only seen as an indication that our knowledge is still incomplete, and that more research is therefore needed.²⁵

But Freud’s frustration can also read differently. The impossibility of education, the fact that education cannot be conceived as a technique, the fact that its outcome cannot be predicted, can also be seen as an essential characteristic of all human interaction. This is what we can find in the work of Hannah Arendt, particularly her ideas on action. For Arendt to act means to take initiative, to begin. Action corresponds to the human condition of *natality*. With each birth, Arendt argues, something “uniquely new” comes into the world.²⁶ This new beginning “can make itself felt in the world ... because the newcomer possesses the capacity for beginning something anew, that is, of acting”.²⁷ But because we act “upon beings who are capable of their own actions“, the sphere of human interaction is necessarily “boundless“ and “ultimately unpredictable”.²⁸

23 R. Vanderstraeten, and G.J.J. Biesta, “How is education possible”, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 33(1), 2001, pp. 7-21.

24 Freud, quoted in James Donald, *Sentimental education*. London/New York: Verso, 1992, p. 1.

25 Gert Biesta, “How difficult should education be”, *Educational Theory*, 51(4), 2001, pp. 385-400.

26 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 178.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 190.

28 *Ibid.*, pp. 190-191.

Arendt's understanding of human interaction brings to the fore that education can never simply be understood as a process where the teacher moulds the student. Any account of education has to take into consideration that what is presented by the teacher is not passively taken in, but is actively "used" by the student. It is only because the student "uses" what is presented, that education becomes possible.²⁹ Yet, this use at the very same time introduces unpredictability and transformation. As Michel de Certeau puts it, it is through the use that "an uncodeable difference insinuates itself into the happy relation that the system would like to have with the operations it claims to administer".³⁰

Seen from the side of the system, this difference is what causes the system to fail. Seen from the point of view off education, however, this difference can be read as the very sign of someone — some one, a singular being — coming "into presence".³¹ For Arendt, this is the *raison d'être* of human action. In acting and speaking, she argues, "men ... reveal their unique personal identities and this make their appearance in the human world".³² This is not a process in which some predetermined identity is brought into the open. Arendt stresses that no one knows whom one reveals when one discloses one's self in word and deed. This only becomes clear in the sphere of action. The agent that is disclosed in the act is therefore not simply an "author" or "producer" but a subject in the twofold sense of the word: one who began an action and one who suffers from its consequences.³³

There is an important lesson to learn here, both for education and for the wider political context in which education takes place, because, as Arendt argues, it is only when the temptation "to replace acting with making" is resisted, that the "risk of disclosure" remains possible.³⁴ It is only, in other words, when we resist the temptation to make education into a technique or technology with predictable outcomes, that the possibility for someone — some *one*, a singular being — can come into presence. This is not only of importance for the educational sphere. Arendt argues that the attempt to replace acting with making, which "is manifest in the whole body of argument against 'democracy'" is ultimately an attempt to abolish "that space of appearance which is the public realm". In this sense it is an argument "against the essentials of politics" itself.³⁵

29 Biesta, "How difficult should education be"; Vanderstraeten, and Biesta, "How is education possible".

30 Michel de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1984.

31 Jean-Luc Nancy, Introduction. In Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor & Jean-Luc Nancy (eds), *Who comes after the subject?* New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 7.

See also Gert Biesta, "Where are you? Where am I? — education, identity and the question of location", in Carl Andreas Säfstrom (ed.), *Identity — Questioning the Logic of Identity Within Educational Theory* (pp. 21-45). Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1999, pp. 21-45.

32 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 179.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 184.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 220.

35 *Ibid.*

If it is the case that the very possibility of education is sustained by its impossibility, then it follows that to think of Critical Pedagogy as a positive educational programme, as something that only needs to be implemented, is problematic. This is first of all because such a programme can only be successful if it would be able to control the use of what it aims to achieve. But wanting to control how people use, interpret and respond to what Critical Pedagogy has to offer, ultimately leads to a form of totalitarianism that is foreign to what Critical Pedagogy stands for. It is also because such a programme would eventually imply an erasure of the public realm, the realm in which the risk of disclosure is a possibility. This, again, would go against the intentions of Critical Pedagogy in that it would close the very space that Critical Pedagogy wants to open up: the space of disclosure, the space of coming into presence, the space of personal and political agency.

The lesson to learn from this is that Critical Pedagogy has to be self-critical. Of course critical educationalists would be the first to agree that to be critical precisely means to be self-critical. Yet I believe that Critical Pedagogy needs to be self-critical in a more radical sense. In the end, the only consistent way forward — and here I am interested both in theoretical and pedagogical and political consistency — is by a perpetual challenge of all claims to authority, including the claims to authority of Critical Pedagogy itself. This implies that such a challenge cannot be put in the name of some superior knowledge or privileged vision. Critical Pedagogy cannot claim, in other words, that it holds the truth. It can only proceed, so I want to suggest, on the basis of a fundamental *ignorance*.³⁶ Such ignorance is neither naiveté nor scepticism. It just is an ignorance that does not claim to know how the future will be or will have to be. It is an ignorance that does not simply show the way, but issues an invitation to set out on the journey. It is an ignorance that does not say what to think of it, but only asks “What do you think about it?” It is an ignorance, in short, that makes room for the possibility of disclosure, an ignorance that does not want to know and does not claim to know what or who the student will be or ought to be — and in precisely this respect I believe it is an educational and an emancipatory ignorance.

36 Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster — Five lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991; J. Masschelein, “In defence of education as problematisation. Some preliminary remarks on a strategy of disarmament”, In D. Wildermeers, M. Finger and Th. Jansen (eds.), *Adult Education and Social Responsibility*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998.

The Impossibility of Demystification

To suggest that ignorance should play a central role in Critical Pedagogy seems to contradict a major idea of the critical tradition, which is that emancipation can be brought about when people have an adequate understanding of, if not simply the truth about their situation. This Enlightenment idea(l) plays a central role in Critical Pedagogy, and is precisely one of the bones of contention in the discussion between Critical Pedagogy and postmodernism. In several publications Peter McLaren has, for example, argued that we need a specific perspective in order to be able to grasp the current state we are in, and we need to grasp that state in order not to be determined by it. McLaren strongly believes that postmodernism cannot provide us with such a perspective, but that Marxism can.³⁷ In a similar vein, Gur-Ze'ev has argued that human beings are called “to decipher the current realm of self-evidence and to demystify the codes and manipulations of the powers constituting their conceptual possibilities, their life conditions, and their concrete limitations”.³⁸ Rather than to build Critical Pedagogy upon ignorance, critical educationalists would argue that we need knowledge: we need knowledge about the workings of power, and we need knowledge about the ways in which power prevents us from understanding its workings — which is one way to describe what is at stake in ideology critique.

The assumption in this strategy of Critical Pedagogy and Critical Theory more generally is that knowledge can be used to illuminate the workings of power and that is subsequently can be used to “combat” power. The crucial question here is whether there is any reason to believe that the knowledge provided by the critics is itself free from the workings of power. How, in other words, can Critical Pedagogy claim an insight into the ways in which power operates upon and distorts knowledge? The traditional answer to this question — at least the answer of the Western tradition — has been to refer to the nature of human beings, that is to their natural capacity for critical reflexivity, thereby trying to safeguard the possibility of critique in an ontological way.³⁹ Some would argue that the postmodern decentering of the human subject is nothing less than an assault on the Enlightenment subject and its critical powers, and hence an assault on the critical project itself.⁴⁰

37 See, for example, McLaren, *Revolutionary Multiculturalism*; McLaren, “Revolutionary pedagogy in post-revolutionary times.”; P. McLaren and R. Farahmandpur, “Critical Pedagogy, postmodernism, and the retreat from class: Towards a contraband pedagogy”, In Hill et al., 1999, pp. 167-202

38 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, “Towards a nonrepressive Critical Pedagogy,” *Educational Theory* 48(4), 1998.

39 Gert Biesta, “Pedagogy without humanism — Foucault and the subject of education”, *Interchange* 29(1), 1998, pp. 1-16; Gert Biesta, “The right to philosophy of education. From critique to deconstruction”, in Steve Tozer (Ed.), *Philosophy of Education* 1998, Urbana-Champaign: Philosophy of Education Society, 1999, pp. 476-484.

40 Peter McLaren, “Revolutionary pedagogy in post-revolutionary times”.

Others are slightly more positive about what postmodernism has to offer, and in this respect the work of Foucault — and especially his “idea” of power/knowledge — is often mentioned as supporting the Enlightenment task of demystification in that he allegedly has shown how all knowledge is infatuated with power. I wish to argue, however, that we should not read Foucault’s concept — which is not a concept — of power/knowledge as the ultimate demystification, but rather as a profound critique of the very possibility of Enlightenment demystification. Foucault’s is a critique of what we could call the Manichean foundations of the Enlightenment project, in that he challenges the idea that power and knowledge are separate entities engaged in a constant struggle, and that Enlightenment consists in the victory of knowledge over power. Power/knowledge is not an attempt to show that power is everywhere. It rather is a critique of the very terms in which Enlightenment itself has been conceived. As Foucault puts it, the task is to abandon “a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can only exist where the power relations are suspended”.⁴¹ Foucault urges us, in other words, to see that power and knowledge always come together as power/knowledge.

The implication of this is that knowledge can no longer be used to combat power. Knowledge is not the light that will turn the darkness away. This is not to say that change is no longer possible or that knowledge has become futile. Far from it. It only signifies the end of the “innocence” of knowledge, the end of the idea that knowledge is a pure, simple and innocent instrument that can be used to demystify and reveal the truth as it really is. Foucault urges us to concede that we are always operating in a field of power/knowledge constellations — of power/knowledge against power/knowledge, not power against knowledge, or knowledge against power. In this respect, then, demystification is impossible.

Does the recognition of the impossibility of demystification mean that we have become the eternal prisoners of the system? This question only makes sense as long as we believe that we can occupy a place outside the system from which the system can be viewed. Foucault urges us to move beyond the inside-outside way of thinking. It is true, he writes, “that we have to give up hope of ever acceding to a point of view that could give us access to any complete and definitive knowledge of what may constitute our historical limits”.⁴² But this does not imply a limitless relativism. Foucault agrees that criticism “consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits”.

But if the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge had to renounce transgressing, it seems to me that the critical question today has to be turned

41 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish — The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage, 1975, p. 27.

42 Michel Foucault, “What is enlightenment?”, in Paul Rabinow (ed), *The Foucault Reader*, New York: Pantheon, 1984, p. 47.

back into a positive one: in what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints?⁴³

What Foucault is arguing for is a “practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression”.⁴⁴ The critical practice of transgression is not meant to overcome limits (not in the least because limits are not only constraining but always also enabling;⁴⁵ Transgression rather is the practical and experimental “illumination of limits”.⁴⁶

This suggests that the impossibility of demystification does not mean the end for any critical work. It rather opens up a new domain for critique and a new critical “style” or practice called transgression. The critical practice of transgression understood as the experimental illumination of limits can take the form of what I want to call a *counter-practice*. A counter-practice should not be designed out of an arrogance that it will be better or that it knows that it will be better than what already exist. A counter-practice is only different. The critical task of counter-practices can therefore only be to show (to prove, as Foucault would say) that the way things were was only one (limited) possibility. But this tiny step is crucial, since it opens up the possibility “of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think” — and in precisely this sense “it is seeking to give a new impetus ... to the undefined work of freedom”.⁴⁷ Critical Pedagogy could be such a counter-practice in that it can show, prove and remind us that things can actually be different. But we should keep in mind that Critical Pedagogy does not constitute an utopia, that it does not provide the “great escape” from all power and domination. It only reveals one possible power/knowledge constellation. To aim for concrete freedom rather than wholesale emancipation might be a more modest task than what Critical Pedagogy may have envisaged — but it is definitely not an insignificant contribution, not in the least because it stays within the world of toil and trouble rather than aiming to transcend it.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

44 *Ibid.*

45 Jon Simmons, *Foucault and the Political*, New York: Routledge 1995.

46 Michel Foucault, “A preface to transgression”, in Donald F. Bouchard (ed), *Language, counter-Memory, practice*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1977, pp. 33-38. See also: Roy Boyne, *Foucault and Derrida — The Other Side of Reason*. London: Routledge, 1990.

47 Foucault, “What is enlightenment?”, p. 46.

The Impossibility of Justice

So far I have argued that Critical Pedagogy needs to consider the idea of the impossibility of education — that is, the idea that education should not be understood nor practised as a technology, as something that is ultimately successful — and that it needs to consider the impossibility of demystification — that is, the impossibility of a view from the outside that can reveal how power works in order then to liberate individuals from the workings of power. I have, instead, emphasised the importance of considering the impossibility of education as a “smooth” technique, so that the possibility of disclosure remains open. And I have argued for a more practical style of critique called transgression, which utilises the fact that things can be different, that they do not have to be the way they are, as the corner stone for critical work. In both cases I have tried to open up a totalising tendency in Critical Pedagogy — and I believe that this is one of the strengths of the kind of postmodern perspective that I am trying to introduce into the critical educational tradition.

But there is an important question to be dealt with. The problem is this: although I do not want to restrict the possibility of disclosure beforehand, there is no reason to assume that any disclosure is as good or desirable as any other. If postmodernism has nothing more to offer than an unqualified celebration of differences, then it is likely to create a situation where other forces — like the forces of the market or the forces of capitalism — simply come in and take over. William Connolly puts the postmodern predicament as follows: “Without a set of standards ... there is no possibility for ethical discrimination, but the application of any such set ... also does violence to those to whom it is applied”.⁴⁸ The question therefore is whether Critical Pedagogy indeed cannot do without a set of standards, a criterion, a normative referent, a utopia — even if it is only a provisional utopia.⁴⁹

In a sense my answer to this question has to be an unqualified “yes”. After all, Critical Pedagogy is not politically neutral but has an explicit educational and political commitment. But what does it mean to be committed to something like justice — which could be one way to express Critical Pedagogy’s commitment? I wish to suggest — and here I will follow Jacques Derrida — that in the very name of justice, one has to commit oneself to the impossibility of justice.⁵⁰

48 William Connolly, *Identity/Differene*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 46.

49 Gert Biesta and S. Miedema, “Provisional utopias in a postcolonial world: An interview with Peter McLaren”, in Peter McLaren, *Revolutionary Multiculturalism — Pedagogies of Dissent for the New Millennium*, Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1997, pp. 226-36.

50 I have discussed the following in more detail in Biesta 2001. For a reading of the significance of Derrida’s work for education which highlights the ethical and political dimensions of this work see Biesta & Egéa-Kuehne, 2001.

One way to understand Derrida's ideas about the impossibility of justice (or justice as an experience of the impossible) is by reading them as the claim that justice can never be *present*. Justice, in its shortest form, is a concern for the other. It is a concern for the other as other, and hence a concern for the otherness of the other — an otherness which cannot be foreseen. Justice, Derrida writes, “always addresses itself to singularity, to the singularity of the other”.⁵¹ But if this is so, then we are obliged in the very name of justice to keep the unforeseen possibility of the “incoming” of the other, the surprise that is the “invention” of the other, open.⁵² It is for this reason that Derrida refers to justice as “an experience of the impossible”, where — and this is crucial — the impossible does not stand for what is not possible, but for what cannot be foreseen and calculated as a possibility, for what “exceeds calculation, rules, programs, anticipations and so forth”.⁵³

The implications of this insight are not restricted to the determination of whether a situation or a person is just — about which Derrida says that we can never say “this is just” or even less “I am just ... without immediately betraying justice”⁵⁴ — but extends to the very definition of justice. Here again, we can say that it is for the very sake of justice as a concern for what cannot be foreseen as a possibility, that we can never decide once and (literally) for all, what justice is. Justice is therefore not a principle or a criterion (as this would mean that we would know right now what justice is), nor an ideal (as this would mean that we would now be able to describe the future situation of justice), not even a regulative ideal (as this would still require a decision about what justice is, although with the implication that the ideal is not expected to be present in the future). It belongs to the very structure of justice that it can never be present and therefore never will be present. Justice is, by necessity, a justice to come — which means that it is *always* to come.⁵⁵

The idea that justice is not a criterion or a principle means that it is not something that we can have knowledge of and that we only need to apply to concrete circumstances. Justice is not a matter of knowledge. Justice — “if it has to do with the other” — is always incalculable, because, as Derrida writes, “once you relate to the other as the other, then something incalculable comes onto the scene”.⁵⁶ Justice, in short, requires *judgement*. But how, so it could be objected (and has been objected) can we judge if we do not know what

51 Jacques Derrida, *The other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992, p. 20.

52 Jacques Derrida, “Psyche: Invention of the others”, in Lindsay Waters & Wlad Godzich (eds), *Reading de Man* Reading. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1989.

53 Derrida, *The Other Heading*, p. 27.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

56 Jacques Derrida, “A conversation with Jacques Derrida”, in John Caputo (ed), *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1997, p. 17.

justice is? How can we decide if, as Derrida claims, at the basis of our decisions lies a radical *undecidability* that “continues to inhabit the decision”?⁵⁷

Derrida’s response to this objection offers a way out of the predicament mentioned by Connelly, because it conceives of ethical discrimination in a way that is precisely not the application of a set of standards. The point is that undecidability should be taken literally as “that condition from which no course of action necessarily follows”.⁵⁸ Derrida argues that undecidability is the very condition that makes a decision possible in the first place. It is only here that ethics, politics, and responsibility *if there are any*, will begin. “When the path is clear and given, when a certain knowledge opens up the way in advance, the decision is already made, it might as well be said that there is no decision to make; irresponsibly, and in good conscience, one simply applies or implements a program”.⁵⁹

A Critical Pedagogy committed to justice will, therefore, have to articulate this commitment out of recognition of the impossibility of justice in the sense discussed above. This implies that it cannot know in advance where the dividing line between the tolerable and the intolerable will be. It requires a decision, a decision which is at the same time necessary (it can, for the sake of justice, not wait), and impossible (in that it has no ground on secure foundation).

Conclusion

In this essay I have tried to argue that postmodernism should not be understood as an enemy of Critical Pedagogy. Postmodernism is not the kind of relativism that its critics often want us to believe it to be. It has a clear and distinct ethical and political commitment, but what is different is the way in which this commitment is articulated and sustained. Postmodernism — at least in the reading I have put forward in this essay — takes its inspiration from the gaps and fissures, the impossibilities of attempts to totalise, to control and to systematise. It shares the ethical and political agenda of Critical Pedagogy, but believes that the ways in which Critical Pedagogy wants to pursue this agenda are flawed, problematic and inconsistent. I have presented reflections on the impossibility of education, demystification and justice as an attempt to articulate what a more consistent Critical Pedagogy, a Critical Pedagogy that has

57 Jacques Derrida, “Remarks on deconstruction and pragmatism”, in Ch. Mouffe (ed.), *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 87.

58 Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation*, London: Verso, 1996, p. 78.

59 Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today’s Europe*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992, p. 41.

learned from its encounters with postmodern thought, might look like. In all cases, impossibility does not denote what is *not* possible. Impossibility, to put it differently, is not the *opposite* of what is possible; impossibility *releases* the possible.⁶⁰ The recognition of the impossibility of education releases the possibility of disclosure. The recognition of the impossibility of demystification releases the possibility of the practice of transgression. The recognition of the impossibility of justice releases the possibility of the incoming of the other. From this, the only conclusion that can be drawn about the future of Critical Pedagogy is that it will be an impossible future: a future that cannot be predicted or controlled.

60 Richard Beardsworth (1996). *Derrida and the political*, London: Routledge.

Beyond postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy: Toward a Diasporic philosophy of counter-education

Ilan Gur-Ze'ev

Whose violence is it that talks itself through the “authentic I” to us? Whose voice is it that summons “us”, that alerts “us”, that deceives-creates us? What stands behind the back of the endless possibility/unrestrained obligation to ask “who?” or “what?” is the implicit “I” who raise the question as a question of gaze and as a question of audience in terms of voice, agency, meaning, worthy suffering, or true love of Life? Is it possible that the struggles over the essence of feminism, the essence of Judaism, and the possibility of counter-education meet here?

As a sophisticated version of normalizing education, postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy cannot present an alternative to normalizing.¹ And yet, what it would have liked to say is of utmost importance for the possibility of counter-education which will make possible worthy suffering and a kind of homelessness within which meaninglessness, injustice and self-forgetfulness will not have the last word. Against its explicit assertions it might contain remnants of a saying, of a strive, of a need, which has not received the space and the power genuinely to express its essence. The truth of its essence remains always beyond the horizons of “its” rhetoric. This wordless truth as readiness, however, might guide us to an ecstatic solidaristic refusal of Thanatus as a quest for power, as home, to a Diasporic being-in-the-world-as-becoming, within which we, yes, you and I, will face the call to responsibility and to the creative potentials of Life, which ultimately is beyond immanence and transcendence. This is the essence of Judaism, when it is not conceived within an ethnocentric framework.

Is it possibly worth trying to climb beyond postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy as a way of transcending normalizing education itself? But where is this homelessness? And of what is made such a Diasporic climber? How do we overcome normalizing education as a productive symbolic violence,² which creates the “not-I” as “I” who is at once the overwhelmed victim and the most faithful agent of normalizing education, and its violences?

1 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, *Destroying the Other's Collective Memory*, New York: Peter Lang Pub, 2003, pp. 1-24.

2 *Ibid.*

Maybe we should go to a space where the violence of normalizing education is most subtle, where critical education has seemingly progressed most, in order to address these challenges? What is, however, this “normalizing education”, that postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy is supposed to be — or is actually — the overcoming realization of its concealed exile?

Normalizing education is one of the manifestations of the creative power of metaphysical violence.³ It is an ontological sign. It is concealed as a contextualized undeciphered power-game and represented as a historical or as a material dimension, which becomes “real” and visible within the context of today’s Western rhetoric and practices. Western philosophical foundations, modern technology, and current capitalist practices are the preconditions for its concealment as visible, detectable, reality. These conditions are responsible for its forgetfulness of its forgetfulness as it receives a name, becomes a sign whose existence, effects, creation, and destruction are acknowledged. The given gaze and the legitimate listening as a matrix conceal not only open possibilities for getting close to the essence of the truth of becoming, they conceal the very possibility of the possibility itself, by the way in which it represents openness, creation, and growth. Central to the self-forgetfulness here is the concept and the psychological constitution of an instrumental-oriented dwelling-in-reality. This kind of dwelling is realized also in Western philosophy itself. This concept of philosophy, which was dominated by the Platonic quest for light and love of truth, is far from being at peace with itself and is embarrassed; it feels guilty at the present historical moment.⁴ Maybe Judaism may help us here to liberate ourselves from the cave of Western philosophy and existence.

Levinas does not explicitly say it but he implies that actually there exists a resemblance between the quest for the Platonic light and the violence which governs/constitutes Western reality. Postcolonialist thinkers implement this concept of Levinas and Derrida for re-reading the direct and symbolic violence and counter-violence between Western colonialism and its marginalized cultures in the third world and within the Western realm itself.⁵

The division between truth and violence provides the unification of peace and truth, worthy education, and love. In parallel it provides a conception of the essence of the human being and an appropriate ethics. The philosophies of Foucault, Lyotard, and Deleuze are a serious challenge to this project. According to Foucault “...one’s point of reference should not be to the great model of language and signs, but to that of war and battle. The history,

3 Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “Philosophy of peace education in a postmodern era”, *Educational Theory* 51(3), 2001, pp. 315-36.

4 Emmanuel Levinas, *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, p. 163.

5 Iain Chambers, “Waiting on the end of the world?” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. Morley, David and Chen, Kuan-Hsing, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 209.

which bears and determines us, has the form of war rather than that of language: relations of power, not relations of meaning".⁶

Within the Foucaultian project the various versions of education do not differ in their central "essence" as normalizing power, and the educational regime does not differ from any other regime of truth which produces subjects, knowledge, and values within a history which has no "meaning". Like all others, this regime too should be subject to analysis not in accordance with good intentions, "truth", and a natural or sacred "faith in the human" or God, but "in accordance with the intelligibility of struggles, of strategies and tactics" without "evading the always open and hazardous reality of conflict", without "avoiding its violent, bloody and lethal character by reducing it to the calm Platonic form of language and dialogue".⁷ Foucault emphasizes the productivity of power and represents the subject — be it a "victim" or a "victimizer" — as one of the manifestations of contingent, meaningless, aimless, power-relations. In contrast to the traditional Western concepts of violence, now truth itself "isn't outside power".⁸

Foucault deconstructs the quests and the concepts that allow transcendent, orchestrated, essential change by human autonomy or reason. Traditionally the very possibility of transcendence made reflection possible. It also allowed a concept of a difference, which makes a difference of the kind that "peace" is supposed to be in relation to "war". He considers naive people who refuse to accept the omnipotence of epistemic violence, namely that there is no difference that makes a difference.⁹ In human's life ontological violence is realized in various dimensions and levels: as symbolic violence, as structural violence, and as direct violence which becomes visible and threatens directly the self or the Other as "criminal acts", "military operations", and so forth. Here there is no room for love, for transcendence, for counter-education, yet there is much room for manipulating the quest for love and the need for transcendence under very different flags, such as "love of the motherland", "the voice of God", "the imperatives of reason", or "Critical Theory".

In all of its versions, normalizing education is responsible for constituting the "I" as a "not-I". Namely, constructing the I as some-thing and not as some-one — as a particle of the collective or as the humble slave of "the truth", "the justice", or "beauty". The "I" becomes an object of manipulations, the locus of violent body politics, of symbolic and social reproduction and a site of camouflaging the manners by which the system hides its violent reproduction of the hegemonic order of things and the governing realm of self-evidence.¹⁰

6 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, translated by Colin Gordon, New York: Pantheon, 1980, p. 114.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 115.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 131.

9 Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. Sheridan Smith, London: Tavistock Publications, 1995, pp. 210-11.

10 Gur-Ze'ev, *Destroying the Other's Collective Memory*.

In other words, under these conditions the human subject is an effect, a construct, an echo, and sometime the veil that conceals the logic of the system of which it is a part of. The subject is being constructed and is dragged into or allowed a position (even when repositioning herself, or when rebelling). At the same time the subject is a function in the discourse whose very existence is depended on, which is always contextual, historical, material preconditions, practices, manifestations, and effects. As such, the human subject is both the victim of the system and its most devoted agent.

The human subject, however, as a potential, is infinitely more than, and different from what she is determined to become by contingent power-relations, by the individual and collective drives, imperatives of the historical moment, and the creative reactions to the possibilities imposed by Fortuna. Love enables becoming. It presumes the otherness and the truth of the mission in face of which one can rightly reply to the question “who” and seriously say “It’s me!” The issue of the serious response to a genuine call which addresses me is what makes the difference. “Once we are so related and drawn to what withdraws, we are drawing into what withdraws, into the enigmatic and therefore mutable nearness of its appeal. Whenever man is properly drawing that way, he is thinking — even though he may still be away from what withdraws, even though the withdrawal may remain as veiled as ever”.¹¹ And only in this love of the truth and the love of the otherness of the other and of the self Love becomes a possible gate for learning. Learning to listen, properly to prepare oneself for seriousness of the kind we lost begins, paralleling dislearning and “mak[ing] everything we do answer to whatever addresses itself to us as essential”.¹² Such a possibility is never given, is always beyond our reach. Its possibility signifies the possibility of transcending dogma, overcoming ethnocentrism, and resisting the fear of the infinite otherness of the Other. It signifies the potential of becoming a human subject, a creative love.

This potential of becoming a human subject signifies the potential burst of “the totally other”, of transcendence from the seeming omnipotence of the given “facts”, “pre-conditions and the syntax of the discourse”, namely, overcomes what Benjamin calls “now-time” in response to the “Messianic time”. In Benjamin’s thought, as in traditional Judaism, “the messianic time”¹³ bursts into the “now-time”,¹⁴ momentarily penetrates the continuity of the vain progress of catastrophic time and creates in it a special extra-temporal point, at which time ceases to flow and a redeemed space of time is constituted, and at which it is possible to try to call things by their true name and to fight the “evil” celebrating its victory. The struggle

11 Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 381-82.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 373.

13 Walter Benjamin, *Zur Kritik der Gewalt und Andere Aufsätze*, Frankfurt a.Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974, p. 703.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 701.

for knowledge turns out to be a moral struggle for the good life by an isolated, Diasporic, individual, who at most can hope to break the continuum which in principle is always victorious, and to which historical “progress“ has been handed over ever since the “first sin”.

The tension between these two poles is the gate to the abyss of human destiny. Only as such does it open the gate for a Diasporic existence, which acknowledges homelessness, affirms meaningless, and does not try to escape fear, pain, and hatred.

All these are not challenged by the various versions of radical education, and even the hegemonic version of Critical Pedagogy fails here. Why is this so? It is because Critical Pedagogy too refuses Diasporic philosophy and calls for “returning home” or for the erection of a new “home” — in the form of a collective, as a solipsistic-oriented existence, or as a dogma. It refuses existential, philosophical, and political homelessness; homelessness which, at the same time, resists actual injustice, devotes itself to gazing at that which enables transcendence of the “ethical I”¹⁵ at the truth, and at Diasporic Messianism-without-a-Messiah.

Normalizing education is realized in the process of subjectification as a process of fabricating the “I” as a productive fiction.

For all their importance, the critical pedagogies of Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, Kathleen Weiler, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Douglas Kellner, and bell hooks are not exceptional in this matter. What is the secret of the seeming omnipotence of normalizing education, which enables it to govern Critical Pedagogy, postmodern, and even postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy in its most advanced forms (some of which become post-critical and post-feminist)?

Here we have to consider the function of normalizing education, and we cannot make do with reconstructing its content within specific contexts since what is of utmost importance here is the creativity of its violence, even in terms of openness, difference, drives, aesthetics, responsibility, and rationality.

Normalizing education is not content solely with the introduction of a certain set of values as worthy and relevant. It naturalizes their contingent representation as worthy, relevant, and valid as well as the untruth, danger, or irrelevancy of their Others. Normalizing education, however, does more than that in introducing the yardstick to evaluate conflicting sets of values as self-evident as part of the subjectification of the subject. Namely, as part of the production of the self-identity of the human subject as self-evident, as a center for reflection and moral judgments for the “not-I”, as a realization of the “I”.¹⁶

15 Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, Translated by Alphonso Lingis, Leuven: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987, pp. 185-86.

16 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, “Postmodernism, values and value education in Israel”, in *Crossroads: Values and Education in Israeli Society*, eds. Y. Iram, S. Shkolnikov, J. Cohen and E. Shechter, Jerusalem: The Ministry of Education Press, 2001, pp. 91-155 (in Hebrew).

Normalizing education must integrate a specific conceptual apparatus into a specific set of values.¹⁷ Concepts such as “equality” and values such as “freedom” are not natural, authentic, or original — they are fabricated. They are produced at a specific historical moment in a concrete material and symbolic setting, which they serve and represent. The veil of Being is woven every moment anew. Its eternal repetition is made possible even by the effort to overcome the gap between the human and Western mission of philosophy: the world is being deciphered, interpreted, manipulated and re-represented — never without the agency of concepts. Within almighty dynamic symbolic creation concepts, rules, and relations, which are enforced by normalizing education, create/decipher “reality” or “representations” into a Maya curtain. The self-evidence, not only the horizons of critical reason, moral coexistence, and estrangement from nature, veils the possibility of facing the violence, which establishes unsatisfied drives, concepts, and values such as “freedom”. It establishes specific concepts and not others as relevant, true, or possible. This introduction, or enforcement, of a specific set of concepts — without revealing its blind interests and pre-constituted games — is one of the manifestations of metaphysical violence. Here it is realized as epistemic violence. Normalizing education is possible only as a result of its huge, creative, success.¹⁸

Epistemic violence¹⁹ is a precondition for the explicit, unmediated use of violence, which as such is granted a name and is addressed as a “conflict” or a “violence”. It is realized in the formation of conceptual apparatuses, knowledge, consciousness, ideological orientations, and consensus or self-evidence. It establishes the “we”, the “they”, and the relevant ideology of redeeming/educating/exiling/destroying/re-educating the Other so that there will be no room for the otherness of the Other and the Otherness of the “I” as potentially different from what she is directed to become.

Normalizing education is responsible not solely for constituting the “subject“. It realizes itself also in introducing to the subject certain bodies of knowledge and representing others as irrelevant and illegitimate. Still others are lost, destroyed, or swallowed by the new system. It also expels certain “dangerous”/“foreign” sets of values, making others forgotten, irrelevant, or illegitimate in a process which at the same time imposes a certain evaluation apparatus that is immanent to the hegemonic order. The stability of the hegemonic realm of self-evidence and the identification with the system are very much dependent on this evaluation apparatus. Only in face of the given horizons and the given scarce, pains, codes, and pleasures — as well as in face of their silenced alternatives and transformations one evaluates one’s own values. It is

17 Gur-Ze’ev, *Destroying the Other’s Collective Memory*, p. 8.

18 Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “Knowledge, violence, and education”, 1999. *Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Education*, <http://construct.haifa.ac.il/~ilanz/new/>

19 Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, translated by Richard Howard, New York: Tavistoc, 1965, pp. 261-62.

also the never totally controlled arena where she evaluates the values of the Other, and where the faith of alternative knowledge is predestined even in a supposedly free and Critical Pedagogy dialogues. The self-evidence of the apparatus which evaluates the values of the “we” and the values of the Other, as well as alternative concepts of knowledge, and not solely a certain tradition or knowledge, ensures the hegemonic order of things. It vaccinates the hegemonic reality against a potential critique that will decipher its violences and its aimlessness, and will undermine the justifications, inevitability, and self-evidence of the present order of things. As the historical estrangement/enrichment between the tradition of objective reason and instrumental rationality is coming to an end with the total victory of instrumental rationality, rationality itself becomes irrational omnipotence, a fierce enemy of human multi-dimensional edification. “Critique” itself becomes part and parcel of the order it is supposed to challenge. This process is part of a larger process within which the logic of the hegemonic actuality is produced, represented, distributed, consumed, and re-produced.

This process cannot be separated from the process of subjectification. Here the subject is fabricated as a productive fiction. The subjectivity is produced as part of the Same, as a thing, as part of the continuum of the reality governed by instrumental rationality.

Normalizing education realizes here its mission to de-humanize the human subject and produce her as an object of manipulations.²⁰ And yet, it cannot avoid endangering her self-forgetfulness; it exposes itself to human awakening and to the challenge of counter-education. Within this process the subject is deprived of her otherness, she forgets her potential readiness to be called upon, and instead, she is granted the possibility to develop “her” subjectivity. She is constructed in a manner which will conceal from her that “her” subjectivity is nothing more than another manifestation of the logic of the system within which she is produced, nourished, controlled, and robbed of her otherness, of her potential to become other than what she is directed to become. Normalizing education, in this sense, dehumanizes the human so that she will become an aspect, an echo, a product of the context, which produces her both as a victim and as an enthusiastic agent of the process of her victimization/de-humanization. Only in such a world is there room for love, worthy suffering, and critique. The critique of postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy unconceals, with special clarity, the secret of normalizing education as concealment, and the uncovering of this secret as another veil whose unveiling might open the question of the Diasporic human destiny.

Current postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy is at a crossroad. It's embarrassment is only a fraction of the more general crisis of current postmodern feminist pedagogy, which in turn is but an aspect of the more general problematics of today's feminist theory and practice in an era of a grand historical shift.

20 Gur-Ze'ev, *Destroying the Other's Collective Memory*, p. 2.

Given the complexity of this crisis, “feminist teaching and pedagogy are, likewise, interpreted in many different ways by those who name themselves as feminist educators”.²¹ In such a reality we are faced with an opportunity to search for possible articulations of a Diasporic philosophy of education, which will give birth to a creative counter-education that will address the challenges of the present historical moment.

One major force, which has an important impact on today’s postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy, is the post-colonialist ideology, which is influenced heavily by various postmodern discourses. The various versions of Critical Pedagogy, which insist (in different ways and degrees) on the centrality of the Critical Pedagogy theory of the Frankfurt School, will be very careful with the kind and degree of post-colonialist dimensions that they introduce into their concepts of Critical Pedagogy. According to Giroux, “Paulo Freire’s efforts must be read as a postcolonial text”.²² Others will receive “harder” versions of postmodern philosophy, and accordingly their post-colonialism will be differently integrated into their Critical Pedagogy. Still others will treat differently the post-colonialist ideology and “postmodern philosophy”, and will try not only to go beyond current postmodernism but even to transcend Critical Pedagogy itself. Already at this stage it is important to note that in its radical versions the post-colonialist influence draws Critical Pedagogy into an ethnocentric foundationalist emancipatory commitment, while using post-colonial ideologies, which at the same time are committed to negate ethnocentrism, essentialism, foundationalism, and any sort of universalism. These various receptions of post-colonial ideology have a major impact on postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy.

A different force directs feminist postmodern Critical Pedagogy in the opposite direction: to save some of the Enlightenment’s ideals while criticizing central elements of the present-day postmodern discourse and paying tribute to others. This trend manifests a weaker ethnocentrism than the other, yet it is not entirely cleansed of ethnocentrism or dogmatic anti-“Eurocentrism” or dogmatic anti-“whiteness”. In some aspects it is theoretically weaker than the essentialist and “strong” ethnocentric version of postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy, which negates altogether the humanist emancipatory commitment and stands on the border of negating Critical Pedagogy itself, even in its hegemonic multicultural-race-gender-oriented version. It is manifested so clearly in the Ellsworth-Giroux debate.²³ It seems to me that bell hooks, like Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore, stands at both poles of this trend, while

21 Jeanne Brady and Audrey Dentith, “Critical voyages: postmodern feminist pedagogies as liberatory practice”, *Teaching Education* 12(2), 2001, p. 165.

22 Henry Giroux, *Disturbing Pleasures — Learning Popular Culture*, New York and London: Routledge, 1994, p. 142.

23 Patti Lather, “Post-critical pedagogies: a feminist reading,” in *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, eds. Carmen Luke, and Jennifer Gore, New York and London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 124-26.

Ellsworth and Lather stand with the “harder“ postmodern version of this kind of feminist Critical Pedagogy. Other postmodern feminist voices explicitly resist, or deconstruct, the liberatory project altogether, as one can see in the works of Donna Haraway, Sadie Plant, and Zoe Sofoulis.²⁴

Within the framework of cyberfeminism we are faced with a promising development of the post-colonialist feminist critique: a post-feminist messianic project. Its positive utopian educational vision demands our attention, since it offers a serious philosophical, existential, and political challenge to the critical concepts of violence, subject, drives, agency, subject, meaning, creation, and emancipation.

Still other voices are searching for new theoretical, educational, and political beginnings in light of what they see as the apparent failure of modern as well as “postmodern” alternatives to “traditional” drives, concepts, and acts of oppression and emancipation in the works of Deleuze and Lacan. It is a single line stretching from Freire to Deleuze, from Critical Pedagogy to post-critique and post-feminism.

Some of these trends become anti-intellectual and “hard” instrumentalism, some depoliticize theoretical educational discourse, while others offer an explicit, instrumental anti-humanistic-oriented political agenda. Very vivid here is the absence of the presence of a comprehensive Critical Theory or resistance to a serious philosophical framework²⁵ that will protect all these trends from being drawn into a strategic-instrumentalist orientation, within which there is no room for Life, *poiesis*, or for a modified “home-return” presence of objective reason, which synthesizes the Dionysian and the Apollonian dimensions of human creativity. In the absence of anti-instrumentalist vital responsibility and in face of the implicit or explicit abandoning of Critical Theory’s dialogical, solidaristic, and transcendental dimensions, all these trends, with all their differences, are in danger of becoming a precious ornamentation of the sublime violence of the postmodern condition.²⁶ As such their potential to contribute to the advance of emancipatory counter-education is severely affected.

Postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy, however, does have many critical and potentially emancipatory elements. It is a genuine political and philosophical challenge to Western hegemonic educational ideologies. It questions educational praxis as well as the educator’s philosophical, psychological, and gender contexts. The differences between the various feminist philosophies have, however, left their mark on the various feminist pedagogies, their challenges, and their disagreements and rivalries. Basically, these differences spring from the

24 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, “Cyberfeminism and education in the era of the exile of spirit”, *Educational Theory* 49(4), 1999, pp. 437-55.

25 bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress — Education as the Practice of Freedom*, New York and London: Routledge, 1994, p. 69.

26 Gur-Ze'ev, “Cyberfeminism and education in the era of the exile of spirit”, p. 451.

different postmodern versions they are committed to. We can categorize them as “hard” and “soft” postmodernisms.

The “hard” and “soft” postmodern positions will give birth to feminist and post-feminist pedagogies, on the one hand, and to different versions of postmodern feminist critical and post-Critical Pedagogy, on the other. Both versions, however, fail to offer a worthy counter-education within which the truth of the essence of feminism and the telos of the critical Spirit will be addressed. Ultimately, both of them are part and parcel of normalizing education.

According to Kathleen Weiler, “Feminist theory, like other contemporary approaches, validates differences, challenges universal claims to truth, and seeks to create social transformation in a world of shifting and uncertain meanings. In education, these profound shifts are evident on two levels: first, at the level of practice, as excluded and formerly silenced groups challenge dominant approaches of learning and definitions of knowledge; and second, at the level of theory, as modernist claims to universal truth are called into question”.²⁷

According to bell hooks, postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy employs pedagogical strategies that “create ruptures in the established order, that promote modes of learning which challenge bourgeois hegemony”,²⁸ here she explicitly insists that there is no genuine conflict between Critical Pedagogy and feminist philosophy and pedagogy. As we shall see later, this is quite a problematic and controversial issue for other postmodern feminist thinkers.

According to hooks claims that “Feminist and Critical Pedagogy are two alternative paradigms for teaching which have really emphasized the issue of coming to voice. That focus emerged as central, precisely because it was so evident that race, sex, and class privilege empower some students more than others, granting ‘authority’ to some voices more than others”.²⁹

Jeanne Brady and Audrey Dentith define “critical postmodern feminism as a theory of pedagogy that provides the needed space to embrace the multiple positions required for democratic participation. They write: “We purposely use a Critical Pedagogy discourse to safeguard the political intentions of feminism which can be compromised by an emphasis on postmodernism....It represents a politics of social change in which people participate in the shaping of the theories and practices of liberation”.³⁰ This postmodern alternative to the emancipatory Critical Pedagogy tradition is not to be seen solely in explicit postmodern feminist and post-feminist alternatives such as that of Haraway and Ellsworth: it is even

27 Kathleen Weiler, “Freire and a feminist pedagogy of difference”, *Harvard Educational Review* 61(4), November 1991, 449-50.

28 hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, p. 185.

29 *Ibid.*

30 Brady and Dentith, “Critical voyages,” p. 166.

manifested in some of the attempts to integrate postmodern and Enlightened emancipatory potentials, like in the project of Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore, in their *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*,³¹ which is explicitly aimed at constructing “a politics of emancipation through resistance to all “phallogocentric knowledge”.”³²

As Patti Lather notes postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy, or maybe we should call it post-critical feminist pedagogy, tries to present itself as a radical emancipatory element within the current realm of self-evidence.³³ Such an approach, however, might become a serious challenge as it offers us an alternative to the Frankfurt School Critical Theory, or an alternative to present-day comprehensive Critical Theory, which will address key concepts such as education and violence, the powers that produce, control, and challenge this totality. It is in great need of an articulated orientation to relate to the aims, preconditions, context, and practices of intersubjectivity whereby the feminist movement, in all its versions, is but a dynamic element within other powers.

The refusal/failure to offer a comprehensive Critical Theory, or alternatively to constitute a defensible theory or an alternative, creative, quest for overcoming the pursuit of a comprehensive inter-disciplinary and holistic Critical Theory as part of reality and its change, is very significant for today's feminist Critical Pedagogy. This is because it identifies “phallogocentrism” with grand narratives, universal values and theories, foundationalism, and essentialism. Here we are confronted with an issue which might become a bridge but currently is much more of an abyss: how to integrate the tension between the modernistic-oriented destiny in respect of meaning, solidarity, justice, emancipation, agency — and postmodern sensitivities, treatment of discourse and existence, and way of life. Whither can we proceed from the rich tension between the celebrated postmodern nomadism and a genuine Diasporic philosophy? How can we overcome the gap between a positive Utopia, even when camouflaged as “hybrid, kaleidoscopic creative amalgamation between/through differences” and the Messianic impulse of negative utopia? Would it help the kind of religiousness which might be given birth from the depth of the abyss which exists between the “ethical I”— who is pre-rational and exterior to the political dimensions of life — and “the moral I” — who has to decide among various alternatives and desires in the kingdom of scarce and conflicting political obligations? Even here, confronting the crucial part of the theoretical, existential, and political chain of postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy, we are not faced with “the reply” to this challenge. This should not surprise nor discourage the Diasporic among us. But should we accept that even the courage, the responsibility, and the

31 Jennifer Gore and Carmen Luke (ed.), *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, New York: Routledge 1992.

32 Carmen Luke, “Feminist pedagogy theory: reflections on power and auth, ority”, *Educational Theory* 46(3), 1996, p. 283.

33 Lather, “Post-critical pedagogies”, p. 132.

eros which will address this challenge are still beyond our horizons? The feminist response to the violence of normalizing education and to the possibility of counter-education is a critical question. It relates to the possibility of critique as transcendence and to the possibility of going beyond the omnipotence of the immanence of “the system” and the “transcendence” of the subject, who is currently so embarrassed in face of its subjectification.

Today’s feminism is embarrassed theoretically and politically by questions such as “Who/what talks itself through ‘me’?” “What enables me to respond ‘I am’ when called upon?” Or, “how do I critically address the issue of being a mere echo of the order of things, which normalizes me, and constitutes even the yardsticks by which I will evaluate and reflect on “my” and “foreign” values, codes, and apparatuses, which determine the horizons even of my resistance, refusal, and destruction?”

According to Luke and Gore, the aim of feminist Critical Pedagogy is to constitute daily pedagogical situations that empower students, to demystify canonical knowledge, and to show the ways in which relations of domination oppress the subjects in terms of gender, race, class, and many other characteristics of their difference.³⁴

According to Weiler, Critical Pedagogy in general, and Freire’s version in particular, is based on a vision of social transformation. Feminist pedagogy is presented within this framework, and it also shares the assumptions about oppression and the possibilities of historical change. Implicitly negating Marx’s theory on the relations between base and superstructure, Weiler claims that the two pedagogies share an assumption that human existence, in specific material conditions, is framed within repressive conditions, which are part of consciousness; both pedagogies understand consciousness as something which is more than the sum of dominant discourses. Both view consciousness as having a critical potential, and both conceive human beings as subjects and as functioning within historical horizons. At the same time, both are committed to a vision of emancipatory possibilities, to a better world where justice prevails in the end.³⁵

Within the framework of feminist pedagogy, some emphasize the differences between feminist pedagogy and Critical Pedagogy to the point of complete detachment, and some try to maintain some of its central elements even within the framework of postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy.

The critique of Critical Theory and “paternalistic” Critical Pedagogy takes place on two levels, the political and the philosophical. Oppositional stands on the political level largely incubate and obscure basic agreement with the philosophical conceptions of Critical Theory. By contrast, relatively minor disagreements on the political level sometimes hide commitments to basically different philosophical projects.

34 Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore (eds.), “Introduction”, *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, New York and London: Routledge, 1992, p. 1.

35 Weiler, “Freire and a feminist pedagogy of difference”, p. 450.

Elizabeth Ellsworth, a central figure of postmodern feminist pedagogy, started her project from within critical education.³⁶ She criticizes Critical Pedagogy with a postmodern rhetoric and negates Critical Theory and the “arrogance” of the Enlightenment’s entire emancipatory project. Ellsworth’s negation of metaphysics, foundationalism, and metanarratives amounts to anti-intellectualism and abandonment of every speculative, comprehensive, or even holistic theory. In this she represents postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy’s abandonment of the Critical Pedagogy spirit and its struggle for human emancipation. No wonder Ellsworth founds her critique on her “private experience”. Here “experience”, “personality” or “subjectivity” and its drives become an alternative to the reflective mind. But what kind of “experience” we are faced with here, when addressing the questions of the “not-I” constituting itself as the matrix of the postmodern “I” who “experiences”-“creates”-“deconstructs”-“plays” “her” self? Is it a Dionysian will to power that experiences its generous creative powers? Or is it an echo of a very different kind, which represent an opposite movement, away from Life into another flat, mechanistic, anti-vitalist dynamism, whose *Danse Macabre* is activated by the music of Tanathus and decadence while singing the words of eros and unlimited creation/deconstruction? There is no renaissance here for the Nietzschean tension of self-creativity and destiny, on the one hand, nor for the issues of subjectification and the omnipotence of the symbolic dynamics which govern the discourse, on the other.

To my mind, Ellsworth pretends to liberate the feminist educational project from a defined theoretical stand, but she inevitably enslaves the emancipatory spirit to dogmatic essentialist symbolic contingencies that determine the discourse, to solipsism, and to ethnocentrism. She dismisses any theory that is rationally dependable and exposed to the sort of critique that modern patriarchalism constructed as elitist Western knowledge, which was manifested, tested, or realized violently within the idealist framework or materialist, human, class, national, or other emancipatory project. This critique, which also refers to the horizons, orientations, and foundations of technological and scientific developments, is of much relevance, and targets some of the basic problems of Critical Pedagogy. It does so, however, in a way which is philosophically wrong and politically dangerous.

Ellsworth attacks the nativity of Critical Pedagogy’s concept of dialogue. She emphasizes its repressive-paternalistic dimensions, as manifested in the critical pedagogies of Freire, McLaren, Shor, and Giroux. She forgets that when it comes to the Enlightenment’s ideals and their influence on the orchestration of critical pedagogies they are influenced by the Frankfurt School’s Critical Theory in its first stage of development. At that early stage of the intellectual development the Frankfurt School thinkers they were still committed to positive

36 Elizabeth Ellsworth, “Educational films against Critical Pedagogy”, *Journal of Education* 169(3), 1987, p. 33.

utopianism and were thus potentially repressive. Ellsworth criticizes, for example, Giroux's concept of dialogue in the classroom, where students are supposed to manifest "trust, partnership and commitment to develop human conditions".³⁷

An important element in Giroux's thesis is that the specific assertions of his positive utopianism are not predetermined. However, even by his thesis the partners of the dialogue must be able to agree on the purpose, limits, and regulations for change and for constituting a consensus concerning the dialogue. According to his scheme, all voices and differences are united in their efforts to form a worthy dialogical existence and to challenge certain moments of human suffering. As such they are also obliged to overcome the conditions that reproduce this kind of suffering.³⁸

Ellsworth denounces the illusion of such a dialogue and challenges the oppressive potential of the "we" that is supposed to be a precondition for the revolt of the oppressed, as characterized by Giroux and the other patriarchs of Critical Pedagogy.³⁹ Following Judith Butler, Ellsworth emphasizes the omnipotence of social and cultural manipulations of the consciousness, and the effects of its theories about the world and about the self. However, if the subject is totally constructed,⁴⁰ there is no way for the human subject genuinely to escape manipulations, criticize and refuse injustice, or even partially constitute her identity, and certainly it is impossible genuinely to change the rules/codes/telos/effects of the discourse or social reality for the better. This is where this trend, represented by Ellsworth's postmodernism, differs from the other trend, represented by Weiler, who shares with Freire and other Critical Pedagogy thinkers the Enlightenment's concept of the autonomy and reflective potential of men and women in their communities: "Thus, like Freirean pedagogy, feminist pedagogy is grounded in the vision of social change. And like Freirean pedagogy, feminist pedagogy rests on truth claims of the primacy of experience and consciousness that are grounded in historically situated social change movements".⁴¹ The important issue here, however, is that within the postmodern setting of both trends in present-day feminist pedagogy there is no way of challenging the "experience" of the subjectified "subject" within the omnipotence of the discourse, and the tyranny of all-penetrating power-relations/games in the "world" as a metaphor for intersubjectivity in given conditions that have to be critically

37 Henry Giroux, 1988. "Literacy, the pedagogy of voice and political empowerment". *Educational Theory* 38, 1988, p. 72.

38 *Ibid.*

39 Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Why doesn't it feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of Critical Pedagogy", *Harvard Educational Review* 59(3), 1989, p. 315.

40 Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, New York and London: Routledge, 1993, p. 124.

41 Weiler, "Freire and a feminist pedagogy of difference", p. 456.

reconstructed, developed, and rationally changed as part of an ongoing creative dialogue. This is a positive and abstract Utopia. It is negated by Life every moment anew in a capitalist society. The capitalist moment, however, is only signaling the concealment of Being.

The retreat into the rhetoric of the omnipotence of the matrix or into celebrating being drawn into the pleasure machine or into simplistic “resistance” and “transformation” are part of this veil. The flight from existential, theoretical, and political acknowledgement and from a Diasporic nomadic existence in always broken manifestations of the totality of Being is not a way of saving individuality but the opposite; it surrenders the eros, the quest, and actualization of the human potential for autonomy, responsibility, and happiness in face of worthy suffering as a Diasporic coming-into-being. By so doing this project abandons human need and the human potential for non-violent edifying intersubjectivity and for transcending the self-evidence, which is also the omnipotent matrix. As such it opposes the essence of feminism when it is true to itself.

Like many other radical feminists of the last decade, following Michel Foucault Ellsworth tries to avoid being committed to a project that is devoted “to control justice and truth”, as part of a non-hierarchical feminist alternative to the elitism and the immanent violence of the modern patriarchal rationalistic emancipatory project. As a realization of this alternative, Ellsworth’s feminist pedagogy suggests “a politics of partial narratives”,⁴² and it is of vital importance for her to separate her feminist pedagogy from Critical Pedagogy.⁴³ Even Critical Pedagogy’s attempt to proceed from Marcuse’s ontological and epistemological universal assumptions and obligations to more modest assumptions, like Habermas’s ambition to develop the critical discursive abilities of the speech community,⁴⁴ as pedagogically presented in the Critical Pedagogy of Stanley Aronowitz, Wolfgang Klafki, and others, is denounced and negated. Habermas’s aim is to synthesize subjectivity and intersubjectivity, *Zwekrationalitaet* and *Vertrationalitaet*, which brings him to the point of representing himself as the one to develop and correct the “old Critical Theory”.⁴⁵ Perhaps this is the reason for blaming him for offering a project which is committed to silencing the different “voices” of the students,⁴⁶ which come from different cultural, gender, or racial backgrounds.

However, Ellsworth’s attempt to escape what she conceives as the immanent violence of every “theory“, and her attempt to find rescue in the safe haven of her “experience”, the self-evidence of the oppressed, or impotent nihilism, is far from offering anti-elitism or any genuine new vitalist alternative spiritual power. On the contrary, this stand is to be understood as the manifestation of the power dynamics and the conceptual limitations of the

42 Ellsworth, “Why doesn’t it feel empowering?” p. 303.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

44 Juergen Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handels* 2, Frankfurt a.Main: Suhrkamp, 1981.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 562.

46 Ellsworth, “Why doesn’t it feel empowering?”, p. 304.

system against which this postmodern feminist pedagogy is supposed to rebel. Such a politically correct response to celebrated postmodern rhetoric does not represent a new spirit. It does not open a space for a new hermeneutics of the individual or the collective. Nor does it offer a new, courageous, beginning for the struggle against the mystifications of the hegemonic power-relations in the present realm of self-evidence. Ellsworth's alternative has no room for struggle for more equality, justice, freedom, and understanding. Love, beauty, justice, and happiness become unreachable as irrelevant insofar as they do not constitute space for anti-collectivism and for the free human spirit. Nor does her alternative offer the impetus and the guidance for transcendence from a too comfortable human dwelling in the meaninglessness of the established matrix as sweet "home". It does not seek human solidarity or other dimensions of negative utopianism that condition the type of dialogue representing the "heavenly eros" of Plato or the "negative imagination" of Adorno and the humanist tradition at its best. And it certainly does not prepare its students to face the culture war in an era when capitalism is ready as ever to crush every challenge — while losing all traditional orientations; this is also an era when the enemies of democracy are ready to destroy all humanity and to redeem themselves as *shahids* with no hesitation or fear. For this tradition, universalism, emancipation, and comprehensive theory where unsupported by individualism within non-repressive intersubjectivity that constitutes, and constantly reformulates and transcends, the individuals' potentialities and realities.

The negative impulse of the dialogue is part of ontological homelessness which enables a Diasporic existence, creation, and improvisation. It offers a non-ethnocentric-oriented human solidarity, and as such it refuses violence, even in the form of counter-violence. It acquires meaning only by realizing itself reflectively, aesthetically, ethically, physically, and pragmatically. Foucault, Lyotard, Guattari, and Deleuze, whose influence on postmodern feminist pedagogy is important, themselves represent a position which to an untrained or disoriented ear might sound quite similar.

According to Deleuze, "We had no taste for abstractions, Unity, Totality, Reason, Subject. We set ourselves the task of analyzing mixed forms, arrangements, what Foucault called apparatuses...We weren't looking for origins, even lost or deleted ones, but setting out to catch things where they were at work, in the middle".⁴⁷ Post-Critical Pedagogy abandons the Critical Pedagogy impulse, with its denunciation of intellectualism, universalism, and "metaphysics". This trend is brilliantly advocated by Patti Lather.

In face of recent attempts to re-articulate Critical Pedagogy, to which *Educational Theory* has devoted a special issue, Lather offers the "hard" postmodern rhetoric on the ground that

47 Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations: 1972-1990*, translated by M. Joughin, New York: New York Columbia University Press, 1995, p. 86.

such attempts are “a boy thing”. When she refers specifically to the two oppositional attempts to reconstruct Critical Pedagogy she explains that “this is due not so much to the two lead authors being male as it is to the way in which both essays exhibit the masculinist voice of abstraction and universalism, assuming the rhetorical position of ‘the one who knows’, what Ellsworth calls ‘the One with the ‘Right’ Story’”.⁴⁸

Lather offers an alternative, namely to “salvage praxis in a post-Marxist time... Rather than the ‘one right story,’ what I propose in Jones’s subversive repetition of the ruins of Critical Pedagogy is a knowing with/in our doing, what Derrida terms ‘to do and to make come about, as well as to let come (about)’”.⁴⁹

It is difficult to draw a sharp distinction between this feminist pedagogy and other feminist pedagogies that conceive themselves as being within the framework of Critical Pedagogy. They too are trying to develop an anti-elitist anti-Western colonialist pedagogical practice, founded on the “voice” and the self-evident knowledge of the oppressed collectives, emphasizing their ethnic, cultural, race, class, and sexual uniqueness as a source for worthier interests, superior perspectives, and preferable strives and codes which collide with those of the colonialist-oriented West. The silenced voice that is here conceived as deserving legitimacy and empowerment is uncritically assumed to evolve into a manifestation of legitimate alternative life possibilities, and already as such contains real emancipatory dimensions.

It is very surprising that within the framework of postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy this potential is not realized. This is because in this version of postmodernism the emancipatory impulse is drawn into an automatic resistance to genuine reflection and self-critique.

Feminist Critical Pedagogy, however, is intellectually restless on this point. As Critical Theory’s rebellious pupils, these thinkers are explicitly still committed to reflection and to critique, and as postmodernists they are bona fide elitists. This raises the problematic of the position of the intellectual and her authority within the framework of feminist pedagogy. While paying tribute to the experience and the knowledge of the oppressed reassures the supremacy of the (feminist) intellectual as an educator, “feminist educators like Fischer and Bunch accept their authority as intellectuals and theorists, but they consciously attempt to construct their pedagogy to recognize and encourage the capacity of their students to theorize and to recognize their own power”.⁵⁰ In this sense there is no difference between the “paternalistic”/“authoritative” dimensions of Freire’s Critical Pedagogy and those of feminist

48 Patti Lather, “Critical Pedagogy and its complicities: a praxis of struck places”, *Educational Theory* 48(4), 1998, p. 488.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 494.

50 Weiler, “Freire and a feminist pedagogy of difference,” p. 462.

Critical Pedagogy. The foundation of the authority claimed here is the good intentions of the feminist intellectual. What a problematic justification! Other feminists question this position as “simply a patriarchal mode of gaining and maintaining power, a way of negating women’s everyday experience, a means of separating some women from the rest...”⁵¹

The political resemblance between this feminist Critical Pedagogy and the rhetoric of postmodern post-critical feminist pedagogy enables the latter, as in the case of Ellsworth, to take advantage of the former. The important educational work of feminist Critical Pedagogy, which is represented by women like Gore, Kohli, Luke, and Weiler (that is, explicitly anti-elitist and non-academic), is ultimately forced to serve the academic success of the feminist elitism that Ellsworth represents. In representing an elitist alternative, Ellsworth does not offer an alternative to naive positive utopianism or any alternative educational theory.⁵²

Ellsworth suggests a feminist-oriented post-colonialism that demands/envision the peaceful coexistence of different communities and identities which are committed to and constituted by different knowledge, criteria to judge knowledge, interests, and goals. Within her proposed framework the different bodies of knowledge and the different conceptions about knowledge are all conceived as legitimate and incommensurable, and there is no way to evaluate one or some of them as better, valid, or invalid. The aim of education, according to Ellsworth, should be the nurturing of competence for cooperation across differences that will constitute temporary, local, and partial agreements for the sake of “the common good”.

On the one hand the postcolonialist vision of dialogue within/across/between cultural differences falls ultimately into a reversed ethnocentrism enhanced by the marginalized. The discourse of “difference” becomes a safe haven for an automatic justification of its “internal” and “external” symbolic and direct violences. It is actually but another version of normalizing education. On the other hand, dialogue, transcendence, and love are abandoned in favor of the deconstructed subjectivity and fluid exchange/recycling of “identities” which are but manifestations of the laws and dynamics of the various normalizing apparatuses. On both fronts this ideology does not challenge the logic or the actual practices of capitalism. This is since it is but one of the products and manifestations of the current capitalist mode of cultural production itself.

Ellsworth’s project signifies a reality that cannot guarantee the success of deconstructing universals as long as suffering, meaninglessness, and the capitalist presence are determining discourses, existential possibilities, and material realities. At the same time, the celebrated praise of the local, partial, and temporary can only be victorious in the form of dissolving the very categories of “woman”, “emancipation”, “meaning”, and “love”.

51 Berenice Fischer, “Guilt and shame in women’s movement”, *Feminist Studies* 10, 1984, p. 202.

52 Nicholas Burbules and Susanne Rice, “Dialogue across differences: continuing the conversation”, *Harvard Educational Theory* 61(4), 1991, p. 399.

Within the framework of this project, “woman” as a category and as a specific and concrete identity might disintegrate into innumerable identities, interests, and knowledge that will strive fully to realize themselves. They might be objects for endless deconstruction and border-crossings of identities that are never within themselves, never have a “self”, never are a concrete “identity” or subject. Linda Alcoff admits this danger of extreme deconstruction of essences and identities for unrepressed feminism, and she looks for a Foucaultian philosophical and political solution within the framework of “cultural feminism”,⁵³ which has important educational potential that should have attracted more attention within postmodern feminist pedagogy. As Seyla Benhabib observes, the “strong” postmodernist version of the “Death of the Subject” is not compatible even with the goals of feminism.⁵⁴ Benhabib’s claim is valid against postmodern feminism as reflected in Ellsworth’s postmodern post-critical feminist pedagogy when she asserts-asks: “If this view of the self is adopted, is there any possibility of changing those ‘expressions’ which constitute us?”.⁵⁵ Therefore she negates postmodern feminism’s understanding of subjectivity as merely extensions of our histories on the one hand, and the postmodern essentialism in its multicultural and solipsist versions on the other. While accepting parts of the postmodern critique of humanist universalism,⁵⁶ as a woman committed to feminist and human emancipation in general Benhabib resists the attempts to abandon the Enlightenment’s Utopia of human emancipation.⁵⁷

This trend is shared by Carmen Luke, after a period of high hopes for the enrichment of Critical Pedagogy by postmodernist philosophies as an alternative to the phallocentrism of Critical Pedagogy itself. “Feminist pedagogy”, she writes in retrospect, “conceptualized as (maternal) nurture and distanced from claims of pedagogical authority and institutional power, leaves itself wide open to the theoretical impossibility of having a ‘foundation’ from which to arbitrate knowledge, student voices and experiences, and the teacher’s own epistemological position. I argue, therefore, that the theoretical turn to and celebration of difference in all feminisms, including feminist pedagogy, raises crucial epistemological and political questions about normativity which, in turn, call into question the theoretical validity and political agenda of feminism’s ‘truth claims’”.⁵⁸

53 Linda Alcoff, “Cultural feminism versus post-structuralism: the identity crisis in feminist theory”, *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 13(3), 1988, p. 406.

54 Seyla Benhabib, *Feminist Contentions — A Philosophical Exchange*, New York : Routledge, 1995, p. 20.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

56 Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, p. 3.

57 Benhabib, *Feminist Contentions*, p. 30.

58 Luke, “Feminist pedagogy theory”, p. 284.

This stand is a starting-point also for criticizing postmodern feminist post-Critical Pedagogy and post-feminist Critical Pedagogy feminisms, which are setting a serious challenge to the various versions of postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy. At the same time, these trends might be included as radical versions of postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy or as their worthy transformation. Cyberfeminism might be a good example of this trend.

According to Plant, “cyberfeminism is an insurrection on the part of the gods and materials of the patriarchal world, a dispersed, distributed emergence composed of links between women, women and computers, computers and communication links, connections and connectionist nets”.⁵⁹ Zoe Sofoulis, another representative of “hard” postmodernism in cyberfeminism, celebrates the post-phallic conjunction of women’s art and high-tech.⁶⁰ It is a strong promising illusion: Western culture, which in modern technology reaches the peak of the perverse realization of the Greek concept of *techne*,⁶¹ overcomes its immanent instrumentalism and reificationist-orientation in cyberspace. Cyberfeminism, within this concrete utopia, is a prima facie postmodern arena where the essence of femininity and art replaces masculinity and the essence of Western “internal” and “external” colonialism and its commitment to truth-“light”-victory-death. The logic of the Net is conceived as manifesting the truth of femininity: it is symbolized by the clitoris inheriting the Thanatus-oriented masculine drive for truth and victory as symbolized by the phallus. Cyberfeminism, however, includes a rich range of views on these matters.

Representatives of the “soft” postmodern influences on cyberfeminism have explicit feminist emancipatory perspectives and they refuse to see themselves as post-feminists or as post-human. Cyberfeminism is one of many realizations of cyberoptimism,⁶² which contains both “hard” and “soft” postmodern perspectives.

According to the cyberoptimists, cyberspace has no room for traditional Western metaphysical and actual violence. The identification of the immanent colonialist-oriented violence of Western normalizing education and the critique of phallocentrism and patriarchalism meet here in a manner that leaves non-Western and anti-Western educational violences in all their forms, even anti-Western patriarchalism almost unchallenged. The fruits of this attitude will be the sophistication of violent normalizing education and the enrichment of Western electronic normalizing education.

59 Sadie Plant, “On the Matrix: Cyberfeminist Simulations”, in *Cultures of the Internet — Virtual Spaces, Real Histories, Living Bodies*, ed. Rob Shields, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 182.

60 Zoe Sofoulis, “Slim in the Matrix: Post-phallic Formations in Women’s Art in the New Media”, in *Jane Gallop Seminar Papers*, ed. Jill Julius Matthews, Cabrera: Australian National University Press, 1994.

61 Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, pp. 307-42.

62 Gur-Ze’ev, “Cyberfeminism and Education in the Era of the Exile of Spirit”, p. 439.

Of vital importance for cyberfeminism is the “overcoming” of “masculine” or “phallogocentric”-oriented claims for universality, eternity, objectivity, transcendence, and a priori validity judgment claims, which parallels its abandonment of traditional immanent Western commitment to violate the otherness of the Other.

According to Plant, “the phallus and the eye stand in for each other, giving priority to light, sight, and flight from the dark matters of the feminine. The phallic eye has functioned to endow them with the connection to what has variously been defined as God, the good, the one, the ideal form or transcendence”.⁶³ In contrast to the phallogocentric knowledge and patriarchal-dominated existence, in computer-mediated communication the order is supposed to be feminine and connectionist, associative, and kaleidoscopic and open, not linear, hierarchical, and closed. According to Steffensen, the phallus, linear thinking, hierarchy, transcendence, and domination are replaced by the female clitoris, which is conceived as “a direct line to the matrix”.⁶⁴

Donna Haraway posits a post-feminist “hard” postmodern Messianism, in which “the dichotomies between mind and body, animal and human, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, men and women, primitive and civilized are all in question ideologically”.⁶⁵ This is a new kind of Messianism, which presents itself as dystopia, yet it is a new, postmodern, positive utopia, committed to feminize the world⁶⁶ in a manner that will not make possible transcendence or a quest for redemption, meaning, or Life. “The totally other” will be totally realized in it as a matrix or realm of self-evidence. The subject and her autonomy/oppression becomes radically transformed, and the Enlightenment’s ideal of the self-creating dialogical subject is overtaken by the postmodern Cyborg.⁶⁷

The implicit philosophy of education in Haraway’s texts proceeds from the concepts accepted in postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy to a new horizon. She opens a complete alternative, beyond transcendence and immanence, beyond relativism, temporality, and partiality in a world of total contingency and incommensurability as an improved Garden of Eden. This positive utopia contains a rich educational philosophy even if it refrains from presenting itself as such. It is consistently developed to its logical conclusions within the postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy of Ellsworth and Lather, which perhaps for political reasons pertains to a pedagogical rhetoric which their philosophical pre-assumption and their articulations cannot support, justify, or edify.

63 Sadie Plant, “On the matrix: cyberfeminist simulations”, in *Cultures of the Internet: Virtual Spaces, Real Histories, Living Bodies*, ed. Rob Shields, London: Farber and Farber, 1996, p. 172.

64 Jyanni Steffensen, “Slimy metaphors for technology”, <http://ensemble.va.com.au/array/steff.html> (7.4.2005).

65 Donna Haraway, *Simias, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 150.

66 Plant, “On the matrix: cyberfeminist simulations”, p. 1.

67 Haraway, *Simias, Cyborgs, and Women*, p. 149.

This tendency is further developed by “hard” postmodern feminist and post-feminist authors who try to open new educational-philosophical-political-existential horizons. Here the work of Deleuze has a special role, in the sense that while other postmodern thinkers such as Foucault are being consumed, co-opted, or developed by both “soft” and “hard” postmodern feminist educational critiques Deleuze’s work best suits the “hard” postmodernists in its essence. As such it can serve best the post-feminists and the post-Critical Pedagogy educational thinkers.

Deleuze’s work is relevant to the trends in postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy in the sense that it further develops and justifies the abandonment of the ideal of emancipation, the desertion of responsibility for the otherness of the Other, the centrality of the cultivation and edification of the (potentially) autonomous subject, and the possibility of reflection or ideology-critique which will enable not solely meaning and aim but also resistance and creative bettering of the world.

Deleuze is against philosophy as transcendence. What he defines as radical empiricism, or transcendental empiricism, is actually an anti-transcendental philosophy in a way that will guarantee the deconstruction of the subject and the doing away with any meaning. Deleuze is committed to philosophy as a project of destroying “generality and particularity, Man and the man, but also Woman and the woman”.⁶⁸ To do away with the subject is to do away with any ground or home or thought. This is the essence of “becoming-woman” for Deleuze and Guattari. It is not that the category of woman or the emancipation of woman, or understanding/resisting women’s oppression, is here the telos of the project.

Does postmodern feminist enthusiasm represent a deep understanding of Deleuze? Or is it more of a regrettable misunderstanding of his philosophy, when they celebrate post-Critical Pedagogy imperatives? One such imperative is that offered by Deleuzian Messianism, when he says with Guattari: “If becoming-woman is the first quantum, or molecular segment, with the becoming-animal that link up with it coming next, what are they all rushing towards? Without a doubt, toward a becoming-imperceptible. The imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula”.⁶⁹ He calls us to overcome, or abandon, dichotomies, criteria, or “conflicts”; they are to be reconstructed, resisted, enhanced or developed into understandings and solutions, since underneath a “conflict” there is never more than “the play of differences”.⁷⁰

If cyberfeminism strives to affirm Thanatus by being swallowed by the pleasure machine within which there is room only for the cyborg in the run to meaninglessness and

68 Ian Buchanan, *Deleuzism — A Commentary*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, p. 93.

69 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus — Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1987, p. 279.

70 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Translated by M. Joughin, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 51.

nothingnessness, for Deleuze the road invites us to struggle for imperceptibility. The Deleuzian telos is that of an all-becoming which is synonyme to a cosmic perception, or to the total disappearance of the subject.⁷¹ Following Mainlaender and the other most radical figures of philosophical pessimism,⁷² for him this is the ultimate aim of all becoming. Within this framework he articulates the category of “becoming-woman“ which has attracted so much enthusiasm in postmodern feminism and among postmodern feminist philosophy of education.⁷³ Following Ellsworth and Lather, these trends celebrate a Deleuzian “responsibility for ‘non-mastery’” out of the “ordeal of the undividable”.⁷⁴

The Deleuzian category of “rhizome” is very much at the center of some current postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy projects that I see as post-feminist and post-Critical Pedagogy. Here the “hard” postmodern trends within postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy develop to their logical conclusion. The concepts of nomadism and rhizomatics for Deleuze have much in common with the kind of “connectedness” that Haraway and other cyberoptimists make use of in their postmodern Utopia. “The line-system (or block-system) of becoming is opposed to the point-system of memory. Becoming is the movement by which the line frees itself from the point, and renders points indiscernible: the rhizome, the opposite of arborescence, a break away from arborescence. Becoming is an antimemory”.⁷⁵ Rhizomatic existence, however, is far from a vision of a unlimited and unpredicted internal and external creation/becoming. What Deleuze tries to overcome is not solely the Oedipal molar constructs as opposed to the nomadic Body Without Organs. Nomadism here is conceived as part of overcoming subject/object dichotomies, as well as man-woman, or true-false dichotomies. It is not that “or-or” or “either-or” dichotomies are abandoned, it is that the very “existence” or “meaning” in favor of concept creation where not a self-creative or (potential) dialogic autonomous moral subject is creating, struggling. Ultimately, it is only relations that present themselves as constitutive. In such a world there is room for rhizomatic creation but no room for meaningful suffering, responsibility, hope and hugging, love or resistance to evil, and surely no hope for non-violent transcendence as a moment of

71 Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, translated by D. Smith, and M. Greco, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 25.

72 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, *The Frankfurt School and the History of Pessimism*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996 (Hebrew).

73 Inna Semtesky, “Continuities: Dewey, Deleuze and the possibility of spiritual education,” *Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain Annual Conference*, New College, Oxford, 2000, pp. 377-85; Inna Semtesky, “Deleuze’s new image of thought, or Dewey revisited”, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 35(1), 2003, pp. 17-28; Zelia Gregoriou, “Performing pedagogy with Deleuze: The rhizomatics of ‘the Theory of Education’”, *Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain Annual Conference*, New College, Oxford, 2002, pp. 227-37.

74 In Gregoriou, “Performing pedagogy with Deleuze,” p. 235.

75 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 294.

“difference” where we respond to the call of “the totally other”. Counter-violence is central to Deleuze, as he envisions a new “war machine” that will challenge the “state apparatuses”.⁷⁶ The apparent similarities between the Diasporic philosophy of Adorno and the Deleuzian vision of nomadic life in rhizomatic spaces is exposed as a successful deception realized by no one but the cannibalism of the postmodern pleasure machine (which presents itself as “beyond postmodernism”). Once you overcome the deconstructionist carnivalist suggestion you see that these are opposing utopian projects.

In this sense we should understand that the pleasure machine has the upper hand, when Gregoriou tells us that she finds Deleuze a worthy source for advancing current philosophy of education and pedagogical practices, as an alternative to pedagogy of the postmodern, which “has failed to legitimate itself in the eyes of the students”.⁷⁷

Not only has part of postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy become post-critical. At the present moment of its development it deserts not only Critical Pedagogy but also feminism, and ultimately “soft” “postmodernism” itself. The more it becomes open to “harder” postmodern influences the more it becomes politically neutralized and philosophically pessimistic-oriented. Its importance, nevertheless, is not to be underestimated.

Post-critical feminist pedagogy is in many respects part of and in others respects an echo of postmodern rhetoric. It is so in two versions that are theoretically incompatible but politically and rhetorically often amalgamated.

Within the first, feminism tries, in vain, to retreat from speculative theory, human solidarity, and transcendence into the safe or concrete “self”. Here the “self” is supposed to be at once the impetus to and an affect of “creativity” and “resistance”. It is at once an omnipotent gaze, or a unique “listening” and a unique “responding”, which ultimately reveals itself as nothing more than a manifestation of meaninglessness: passions and effects of the codes of the discourse, which cannot be transcendent. Almighty immanence is uncompromisingly “flat”. Within this philosophy all de-territorializations, re-positionings, deconstructions and creative effects can manifest nothing but contingent violent discourses, powers, and structures. But we should ask: if the “self” is nothing but their echo how can she genuinely “resist” it? And in what sense is she its victim? And what justifies the acknowledgement of her being an agent or its “echo”? All these questions are to be asked even before we ask: “In what sense is “she” as some-thing and not-someone, actually, different from me who voice her as a victim/agent of the system? Here the abandoning of Critical Pedagogy’s Utopia of dialogue, solidarity, and rational change of reality is negated with no Nietzschean cheerfulness. Decadent sophistication with no promise of Life or even of

76 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

77 Gregoriou, “Performing pedagogy with Deleuze,” p. 236.

a tragic end to this part of the human odyssey has lost even the sense of serious nihilism and tragic heroism, which were so dear to Spengler's rejection of the Enlightenment's concept of progress at the previous *fin de siècle*.⁷⁸ These thinkers even refrain from rearticulating the essence of the humanist project, which insists that the human is after all more than, and infinitely different from the power structures that influence her within the framework of normalizing education.

The second version, which negates Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy's humanistic universalism, retreats into the realm of self-evidence of the marginalized, the silenced, the oppressed, and the misrepresented. It abandons humanistic universalism and its Utopia, and introduces, instead, an unreflective optimism and functionalist instrumentalism.

Lather presents postmodern feminist pedagogy as an alternative to "philosophies of presence, which assume the historical role of self-conscious human agency and the vanguard role of critical intellectuals"⁷⁹ while reserving a future role for Critical Pedagogy.⁸⁰ All this, however, is while going beyond the tradition of critical philosophy itself, not solely beyond Critical Pedagogy: "Perhaps the need to look beyond old critical premises and toward continuing revision might be more palatable if displayed under the sign of (post)critical.... In translating Critical Theory into pedagogical agenda, (post)critical foregrounds movement beyond the sedimented discursive configurations of essentialized, romanticized subjects with authentic needs and real identities, who require generalized emancipation from generalized social oppression via the mediations of liberatory pedagogues capable of exposing the 'real' to those caught up in the distorting meaning systems of late capitalism".⁸¹

According to Weiler, the source of the chief problems of Critical Pedagogy is the modernistic conceptualizations of the Critical Pedagogy thinkers, who use concepts such as "class", while the context of many of them, as in the case of Freire, contradicts the background and the possibilities of Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy, as the ones possible in technologically advanced countries. Weiler rightly claims that even the dichotomy between oppressors and oppressed is too brutal and should be problematized in Critical Pedagogy.⁸² Another important element in this critique challenges the sexist attitude of Critical Pedagogy. Even if one can find some traces of it in Freire's work, it is wrong to blame Shor, McLaren, and Giroux for it. This is politically oriented rhetoric founded on a common philosophical ground, such as that concerned with the concept of human beings held by Carmen Luke, Jennifer Gore, Kathleen Weiler, and Henry Giroux.

78 Gur-Ze'ev, *The Frankfurt School and the History of Pessimism*, pp. 30-31.

79 Lather, "Post-Critical Pedagogies", p. 131.

80 Lather, "Critical Pedagogy and its Complicities", p. 497.

81 Lather, "Post-Critical Pedagogies", p. 131.

82 Weiler, "Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference", p. 452.

Weiler, in opposition to Lather and Ellsworth, aims at saving Critical Pedagogy's emancipatory project via feminist pedagogy.⁸³ She combines sensitivity to differences and personal experience as a founding element of knowledge⁸⁴ with the commitment to universal emancipation. However, in keeping with the fashionable rhetoric in postmodern and radical feminism, she negates "essentialism" and a comprehensive Critical Theory, so the concept of a certain "identity" that has to be emancipated becomes abstract. She is on the verge of an antithesis to the emancipatory project, insofar as this stand is philosophically grounded.

Luke properly seeks the source of Critical Pedagogy's problematic in its relations to Critical Theory. In our technological, social, and cultural context, asks Luke, what value can the Critical Theory of Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse have?⁸⁵ She shares post-critical feminist pedagogy's critique of the pedagogical actualization of Critical Theory as leading to or based on androgynous essentialism and naive realism. Such an education leads to the quest to control the masses and to activate them in a unified collective manner that will make "liberation" possible. She criticizes this stand as detached from real history and from the acknowledgment of real power relations and actual discourse.⁸⁶ However, at the same time she tries to avoid the kind of relativism into which Ellsworth and Lather are drawn. She does not totally abandon her modernist theoretical commitment to the power of grand narratives for reconstruction and creation. But in what sense do these two versions of postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy really challenge the Frankfurt School Critical Theory?

The concept of reason of Critical Theory is very different from the one challenged by postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy thinkers. Actually, they attack a straw man, and unfortunately they are too far from challenging the genuine problematic of the Frankfurt School concept of reason. In some respects Critical Theory as an implicit Diasporic philosophy is much closer to the concepts of reason held by Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Jean Lyotard than to the ones held by Juergen Habermas, Jenifer Gore, Kathleen Weiler, and Carmen Luke. This problematic is manifested brilliantly in the mature parts of the Frankfurt School Critical Theory, which beginning with *The Dialectics of Enlightenment* was overlooked or forgotten by Critical Pedagogy's friends and foes alike.

Late Adorno and Horkheimer occupied themselves in reconstructing the historical development and the concrete social and cultural circumstances of the instrumentalization of reason as a non-reversible development in the present historical moment.⁸⁷ Within the

83 *Ibid.*, p. 455.

84 *Ibid.*, pp. 463, 466.

85 Carmen Luke, "Feminist politics in radical pedagogy", *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, New York and London: Routledge, 1992, p. 45.

86 *Ibid.*

87 Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* 9, Frankfurt a. Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985, p. 141.

Western historical framework of Critical Theory, they conclude that unless an unpredictable interference occurs, no good intentions and progressive talent of educators devoted to counter-education will be of much help in countering these developments. On the historical level, the instrumentalization of rationality is reconstructed as representing and serving the imperatives of technological progress and economic development, which have become the dominant cultural ruling logic. Instrumental rationality becomes “a magic essence”, and it is right to describe it as the triumphant return home of mythos,⁸⁸ which leaves no room for the kind of critical human subject that the Enlightenment was committed to edify.⁸⁹ In such a reality, there is no place for an alternative positive utopianism or for a positive Critical Pedagogy, which will challenge the present order, its apparatuses, and powers.⁹⁰ There is actually a predestined harmony between “the system” and “the victim”. The human subject has become today what fascism strove to reduce her to, which is a natural human existence.⁹¹ The constitution of an order that represents extreme and unchallenged rationality in such a context is irrational from traditional objective reason’s point of view.⁹² This rationality is realized by almost complete control of the psychic structure and the conscious of individuals and collectives. However, this does not mean that under such conditions there is no room for “pluralism”, for false forming of the various modes of false critical conscious. Such a false critical conscious can be manifested in the naive emancipatory project of “paternalist” Critical Pedagogy and its postmodern alternatives, which are committed to positive utopianism. The historical reconstruction of instrumental rationality’s victory, however, is complemented by an ontological dimension which is of vital importance for the possibilities of grounding the hermeneutics of the self and the possibilities of a new educational dialogue grounded in the sensitivity and understanding of “difference”.

Right from its first stage, the ontological dimension was central to the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School thinkers in terms of the possibilities of emancipation and the success of counter-education in a reality where instrumental rationality celebrates its victory over the tradition of objective reason. It is manifested, for example, in Walter Benjamin’s *To the Critique of Violence*,⁹³ in which political violence is elaborated in the historical context where there is no room for redemption but where, at the same time, the facts of actuality do not have the last word. The real is conceived within a framework in which history is just one

88 Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1974, p. 96.

89 Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* VII., Frankfurt a. Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985, p. 26.

90 Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, p. 26.

91 Max Horkheimer, *Horkheimerarchiv* VI. 1a, pp. 26-27.

92 Max Horkheimer, “Macht und Gewissen”, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VII., p. 159.

93 Walter Benjamin, *Zur Kritik der Gewalt und Andere Aufsätze*, Frankfurt a.Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974.

of its moments. The Diasporic gaze overcomes the dichotomy between transcendence and immanence and it manifest the otherness as a unique kind of listening, which is both a-historical and historical, individual and universal, relates to the power games, yet it is never to be reduced to the productivity of the governing manipulations. It is never a true citizen in the Augustinian “earthly city”, yet it rejects any kind of “heavenly city”, church, or dogma to dwell in. It avoids all utopian kinds of “returning home”.⁹⁴ In this respect, metaphorically, it is “Jewish”. As such its very Diasporic existence is threatened from “within” — to become “Zionized” — and from everything “outside” — to be extinguished, or morally executed, as the victim who became the arch victimizer, the Nazi of the present day.⁹⁵ To the fully developed Critical Theory, the triumphant return of the myth within the framework of instrumental rationality is even worse today than its ancient version. This is because of its more efficient penetrating possibilities.⁹⁶ In this context, the erosion of the possibilities for the very existence of an autonomous subject is totally neglected by critical thinkers. This does not mean that Benjamin, Adorno, and Horkheimer abandoned Utopia, or that from here one should ignore the educational meanings, some of which are quite close to some central conceptions and sensitivities of current postmodernism. However, one should not ignore the fact that such a Critical Theory repudiates the optimistic pre-assumptions and the positive Utopia of the dominant versions of Critical Pedagogy and their various alternatives.

In postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy the claim for liberation is grounded in a dialectical acceptance of the equality of different discourses, strives, pains, interests, identities and cultures, and the very possibility of defending and developing the category of “feminism” or “woman” becomes an impossibility. As a result, the commitment to solidarity, as the possibility of developing and defending feminine identity and knowledge, is to be decided by the violence of symbolic dynamism and power games which rule the social space. This version of Critical Pedagogy, like other major trends in current Critical Pedagogy, has not succeeded in synthesizing the problematic of essentialism, foundationalism, and transcendence, or the recognition of the Other’s suffering, rights, and potentialities with the preconditions and claims of a philosophy that insists on human reflection, transcendence and love from the framework of philosophical pessimism.

Fully developed Critical Theory understood the realization of Enlightenment in our era as a mass deception within the framework of the culture industry, in which the subject too is transformed into a commodity, including Critical Pedagogy’s educational knowledge. The rationalization of all levels and dimensions of life and the progress of instruments and

94 Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, *Toward Diasporic education*, Tel Aviv: Resling, 2004.

95 Taha Almatukal, *Poetry Space: Poetry from Ansar 3*, Ramalla: The Organization of Palestinian Writers, 1989, p. 63 (Arabic).

96 Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklaerung*, Frankfurt a.Main: Fischer, 1988, p. 9.

possibilities of controlling the subjects by the system⁹⁷ brought to its peak the use of the subject as a totally committed agent of reproduction of the realm of self-evidence. Under such conditions it is impossible to escape the omnipotence of the system.⁹⁸ The historical reconstruction of dynamics suitable for the demolition of the ideal of the rational subject and its concrete possibilities is realized here on one level. On the other, theoretical, level, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, from the very beginning “the individual” is nothing but an illusion that normally serves the strengthening of the control over people’s consciousness and the construction of life possibilities that will enable the maximization of their productivity in the service of the system in which they are activated.⁹⁹ This productivity is conditioned by the degree of their normalization, and that is the real aim of education. This subject-reason two-level concept of Adorno and Horkheimer follows Benjamin’s two-level concept of time, revolution, and redemption, which they forcefully rejected in the first stage of the development of their thought in light of their Marxist positivism; but later they were so happy to abandon it only in order to embrace — and develop — Benjamin’s negative utopia. This abandonment is not only a loss. It is also to be considered as a sign of the transformation of Critical Theory into an explicit Diasporic philosophy which opens an alternative door to the presence of loss, worthy suffering, human edification and creativity. Of vital importance here is the Jewish concept of hope, which refuses a positive concept of redemption.

Hope which emanates from theology is a central element in this concept of critical knowledge: “Theology is — and I consciously phrase it carefully — the hope that injustice, which is typical of the world, will not have the last say... a yearning that in the end the hand of the killer will not remain on top of the innocent victim”.¹⁰⁰ In this sense Horkheimer’s concept of hope is close to Multmann’s, i.e., *spero, ut intelligam*: I hope therefore I understand.¹⁰¹ This is the touchstone for Benjamin’s and Horkheimer’s negative utopianism, which is so important for the possibility of current counter-education: the possibility of saving the purpose of the struggle for the self-constitution of a free, solidararian, Diasporic, individual; a struggle for the clarification of moral causes via social involvement, via political praxis. According to Horkheimer, “the good” may shine in spite of everything, not within a positive utopia, but in a stubborn struggle “against the ruling power”,¹⁰² a struggle with no arrogance, and lacking optimism. And this is his route for clarifying the “truth” as “the

97 Mark Poster, *Critical Pedagogy Theory and Poststructuralism: In Research of a Context*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989, p. 67.

98 Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, pp. 95-96.

99 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

100 Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* 7, p. 389.

101 Heinz Zahnt, *Die Sache mit Gott, Muenchen*, 1966, p. 254.

102 Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklaerung*, p. 230.

thought that rejects injustice”.¹⁰³ For Horkheimer, as earlier for Benjamin, “the path is the truth”.¹⁰⁴ This is an endless, path, whose homelessness is Diaspora.

In opposition to the Enlightenment’s vision of the common good, truth, beauty, or universal human rights, desires, and potentialities as a utopia that should be struggled for and should empower the critique of its actual negation, post-critical feminist pedagogy represents the self-evidence, the false-conciseness, and the impotence of the marginalized as foundations or “truth” to be empowered and directed against the self-evidence of the hegemonic ideology.

From this perspective, the consensus reached by the reflective subject taking part in the dialogue offered by postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy represents a misleading positive Utopia. This is so especially in light of its declared anti-intellectualism on the one hand, and its pronounced glorification of “feelings”, “experience”, and self-evident knowledge of the marginalized collective, on the other.

Postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy, in its different versions, claims to overcome the foundationalism and transcendentalism of Enlightenment’s emancipatory and ethnocentric arrogance, as exemplified by ideology critique, psychoanalysis, or traditional metaphysics. Marginalized feminist knowledge, like the marginalized, neglected, and ridiculed knowledge of the Brazilian farmers, as presented by Freire, becomes a model for the legitimate and relevant knowledge. This knowledge is represented as the foundation for an alternative to hegemonic education, and as an alternative to the knowledge it represents as relevant, legitimate, and superior. However, neither the truth value of the marginalized collective memory nor knowledge is cardinal here. “Truth” as resistance to injustice is replaced here by knowledge, whose supreme criterion is the power of self-evidence. In other words, the potential productivity of the creative violent apparatuses which put it into operation and into “being”. These are the apparatuses that represent and serve the same order of things which fabricates the human subject and her evaluation and judgment possibilities, which all function under the command of the return of the myth as an omnipotent postmodern pleasure machine. The dialogue in which adorers of “difference” take part is actually a desired production of this same pleasure machine. From a critical point of view which is true to itself, marginalized and oppressed self-evident knowledge has no advantage over the self-evident knowledge of the oppressors.¹⁰⁵ Reliance on the knowledge of the controlled and marginalized collectives, on their memory and their conscious interests, is wrong and dangerous no less than reliance on hegemonic knowledge.

103 *Ibid.*

104 Max Horkheimer, *Dawn & Decline*, translated by Michael Shaw, New York: Seabury Press, 1978, p. 212.

105 Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “Toward a nonrepressive Critical Pedagogy”, *Educational Theory* 48(4), 1998, p. 480.

Postmodern feminist pedagogies are far from being courageous enough to face the promise of worthy suffering and to address meaninglessness as an ontological transcending sign of exiled meaning. For all the importance of the postmodern feminist educational critiques, and especially in light of their critique on the critical tradition, they have failed to approach the essence of the truth of educational violence. One of the main reasons for the failure of this project is its insistence on a positive utopia, on the one hand, and its rejection of a Diasporic existence on the other. It insists on conquering the arena and making it a safe, familiar, earthly Garden of Eden. “The fall“, it insists, must be overcome or at least corrected.

In all its versions, postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy does not try to go beyond the transcendent-immanent dichotomies and “solutions”. It is so close to doing so, yet it never makes the “tiger’s leap”, the concluding move, into an attempt to articulate a Diasporic philosophy of counter-education. The mature work of Adorno and Horkheimer, which Horkheimer represented as a development of Jewish negative theology,¹⁰⁶ might offer us a worthy guide to such a Diasporic philosophy, which some feminist philosophers of education have sought, in the work of Deleuze and in the promise of cyberfeminism. Here, on the edge of the creativity of Eros and Thanatos, in face of the fabrication/deconstruction of immanence and transcendence, postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy fulfills and consumes itself at its best. It is where it is so close to disconcealing the absence of true Diasporic philosophy in the critical and feminist critical feminisms.

A Diasporic philosophy, which is true to itself, cannot become relevant to counter-education by a mere intellectual act or as an act of pure will to power. The becoming, or the becoming-emancipated in face of the utopian “not-yet” and the nearness to the truth of Being meet in the Diasporic philosophy. It is not created or revealed, it is not solely immanent, and it is not merely a transcendent element. It is philo-sophia as a mode of ecstatic existence in the nearness of Being. As a religious becoming, it is a concrete utopia, which is present in this world, in reality, within material conditions at a specific historical moment. It becomes present as that which is referred to by drives, shortage, suffering, and absence — but also by non-mechanistic creation, happiness, and love that knows how to give birth.

As Horkheimer conceived Judaism, a Diasporic philosophy is a religious commitment to negativism. “Judaism”, according to Horkheimer, is unique in its rejection of a conception of God as a positive absolute. This is the reason for its concentration on the human and not in the essence of God. Its Utopia is negative. Judaism was never a strong state — it was hope for justice.¹⁰⁷ It is “a non-positivistic religion”.¹⁰⁸

106 Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* 8, Frankfurt a. Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985, p. 183; Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* 7, pp. 186-90.

107 Horkheimer, *Dawn & Decline*, p. 206.

108 Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* 14, Frankfurt a. Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988, pp. 331-332.

If a Diasporic philosophy is to be articulated today its “Jewish” heritage should transcend ethnocentrism and become universalist. Its universalism must be manifested in its existential, aesthetic, moral, and intellectual dimensions. And its contexts should be historic, cultural, social, and political realities. As a way-of-homeless-life, Diasporic philosophy represents creativity of a unique kind in the capitalist hegemonic realm of self-evidence: it is “feminine” and “Jewish”.

As “feminine” it gives life. It gives birth to life. It gives birth to life as responsibility for Life as more than mere life; without surrendering instrumental-oriented “masculinity” to “patriarchalism” and to all the other manifestations of violence. It realizes the essence of feminism as self-creation in which the self transcends selfhood by responding to “the totally other”. It is a response which is also an impetus. An impetus which gives birth to the Other as the most intimate fellow-human and to the worthiest togetherness. It is affluent and as such it is not impotent, yet it commits itself to love of Life. While it cannot be content with itself it is closer to its mission when its affluence gives birth to hope. It offers love. It offers human new beginnings, as the most serious improvisation with the given “facts” into a never one-dimensional Life, where the Other in his otherness is indispensable. It is the diametrical opposite of patriarchalism exactly when it complements true masculinity. It meets the essence of Judaism when it relates much more to the all-presence yet non-linearity and non-hierarchical presence of *Shechina* (providence) as a dialectical opposition to *Elohim* (God). As such it offers the negation to normalizing education and to the omnipotence of the “facts”, existing “power-relations”, “codes” of “our” discourse, and to the imperatives of the “historical moment”. As a religious impetus it actualizes what postmodern feminist critical education strives for in vain: it realizes counter-education without being swallowed into counter-violence.

What we are faced with here is a moment of ontological Diaspora. Diaspora, here, is much more than an edge whither an uprooted collective is being exiled, or lives in, while in quest of “returning home”. Ontological Diaspora is made possible only by the Diasporic stance of Being itself, namely as the exile of nothingness. We do not have to go into theological articulations as to the stance of God the creator as exiled and into God’s evil, suffering, and impotence¹⁰⁹ to be able to see creation itself, Life itself, as a Diasporic ontological dimension. And, accordingly, as in Judaism, human Diasporic existence is an ecstatic Messianic existence, which has no “transcendent” or “immanent” truth, interest, or “home”. It is the way of life of an eternal loving stranger.

Counter-education is determined by such homelessness. Like the Jews (before Zionism damaged so severely the essence of Judaism) it represents a negative utopia as a concrete

109 Ludwig Feuerbach, “Der Ursprung des Bösen nach Jacob Boeme”, in *Ludwig Feuerbach Werke in Sechs Bänden*, I., Frankfurt a.Main: Suhrkamp, 1975, pp. 7-9.

utopia to live by, not to live at. The gap between the two is enabled by the same “material” which enables the abyss between the (pre-rational) “ethical I” and the (rational, politically contextualized) “moral I”. The meeting of the essence of “Judaism” and the essence of “feminism” enables a struggle over the possibility of counter-education, which is *prima facie* a Utopia, never a reality. It is a negative Utopia, which is not to be disconnected from the tradition of negative theology. As such it calls for humans to be prepared to be addressed in an un-instrumental burst-in of the unexpected, of the newly-born, of Genesis. Here humans are called to be challenged in a way which will awake/create the “ethical I”. It is a possible awakening, never a guaranteed one. And as such it is actualized morally and pragmatically in history, in and against a concrete discourse, collective, country or “home”. Here human’s genuine home is every moment anew thrown beyond the existing horizons of the world of power-games and successful violence. It is represented by hope. Hope is here actualized by the absence of the Messiah, by a constant responsibility for Diasporic awakening. This awakening is not abstract; it is tested by doing, by doing the good, by doing the good which enables truth as resistance to injustice, and by giving birth in the reality as the realization of the uniqueness of Genesis every moment anew.

As such, counter-education rejects all versions of collectivism and claims for the truth, the good, or the beautiful as a realization of the “we”, “ours” or any dogma. It insists on “universalism” in the sense that is determined by suffering and promised by hope for happiness. As a “feminine”— “Judaist” rejection of violence it insists on Life. Here “the good” is not “good” because it has the upper hand, but because it continues to give birth to resisting the victory of violence.¹¹⁰ Like the Jews, women along the history of culture faced discrimination, and the refusal to be acknowledged or respected in their otherness. And yet, like the Jews throughout history, in face of infinite evil¹¹¹ counter-education should insist today on its Diasporic, non-violent, responsibility for that which is beyond mere life as the purpose of life. And even this commitment within the framework of a Diasporic philosophy is accepted in a non-dogmatic manner: Diasporic philosophy tells counter-education clearly that the demand for justice might be realized only at the cost of its transformation into its negative. It cannot become triumphant unless it becomes another manifestation of normalizing education.

This is what postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy refuses to acknowledge even when it defends the better parts of the dominant Critical Pedagogy. Here, on the other hand, the essence of postmodern feminist Critical Pedagogy contradicts its adorers’ ideology and meets its destiny: it becomes a genuine counter-education. As such it is never at home, never genuinely true to itself, always in the state of “becoming-a-woman”.

110 Horkheimer, *Dawn & Decline*, p. 207.

111 *Ibid.*, p. 206.

Dialogue and Critical Pedagogy

Nicholas C. Burbules

I.

Dialogue as a mode of pedagogical communication has come to occupy a central role in the praxis of Critical Pedagogy. In fact, I think it has become almost a truism to say that Critical Pedagogy *must* be fundamentally dialogical. I want to begin by describing three lines of theoretical influence behind this assumption.

The first line of influence is Socrates himself. His self-proclaimed role as a gadfly, the nonconforming anti-authoritarian who speaks truth to power, meshes perfectly with the self-image of the critic. His trial for sedition, his subsequent refusal to bow before state power, and his acceptance of suicide over compromise, are inspiring to radicals everywhere. The core idea of Socratic pedagogy, that any learner (even a humble slave boy) already has knowledge within, waiting only to be brought forth by a patient tutor, seems inclusive and democratic. The so-called “Socratic method” (which I have argued previously is neither a method, nor a single pedagogical approach)¹ seems to be the epitome of a respectful, non-authoritarian way of teaching, drawing out rather than pouring in, questioning and probing rather than pontificating. The fact that all of this may represent a partial and sometimes inaccurate representation of Socrates is an argument for another time; but this *version* of Socrates has held sway over many writers and teachers in the critical tradition.

The origins of contemporary Critical Pedagogy, of course, can be traced even more directly to the Brazilian educator and educational theorist, Paulo Freire. It was arguably Freire, more than anyone else, who put the idea of “dialogue” at the center of what he called liberating or emancipatory pedagogy. Dialogue was opposed to monologue, or what Freire termed the “banking method” of education, an authoritarian style of teaching that mirrored the authoritarian structure of society.² Just as the oppressed were subjugated by the oppressors,

1 Nicholas C. Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching: Theory and Practice*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1993.

2 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Continuum, 1970.

treated as lesser human beings, the audience to a monologue is treated with disrespect, as a passive recipient of knowledge, not as one capable of contributing to knowledge. In dialogue, on the other hand, the teacher and learner are joined in a shared act of inquiry and meaning-making. The egalitarian structure of Freirean dialogue, its commitment to reciprocity and to empowering the oppressed through the development of critical literacy and through engagement in socially transformative *praxis*, and its constructivist (or one might say “co-constructivist”) view of knowledge, all mirror values that are strongly held by critical educators. For many writers in the Critical Pedagogy camp the interpretation, elaboration, and application of Freire’s ideas remain the core of progressive theory and practice.

A third line of influence has been Jürgen Habermas, although Habermas himself has written very little about issues of teaching and learning. Nor does he discuss the theme of “dialogue” per se. But no social theorist or philosopher has presented such a comprehensive normative theory of the communicative underpinnings of deliberation, inquiry, and negotiation, where the purpose of communication is the pursuit of consensus and understanding.³ As such, Habermas’s account of the normative validity claims of truth, truthfulness, and rightness provide a general framework for an analysis of pedagogical communication. By situating a theory of interpersonal communication within a larger theory of deliberation and truth-seeking in a democratic public sphere, Habermas provides resources for a Critical Theory of dialogue in education.

Largely through the influence of these three thinkers, I am arguing, dialogue has come to hold a special place in critical theories of education; so much so that it seems almost contradictory today to think that a more lecture-oriented, content-driven, canon-respecting mode of pedagogy could possibly be considered “liberating” (although Antonio Gramsci, among other Old Left theorists, saw no contradiction here). But beyond this idealization of dialogue, we see also an idealization of a certain *kind* of dialogue: one devoted to the reasoned adjudication of knowledge claims and the principled exploration of political, ethical, and cultural differences.

II.

In this essay I want to recount several very strong challenges that have been posed against dialogue’s privileged status.⁴ By being critical about Critical Pedagogy, these challenges have drawn attention to the ambivalent virtues of dialogue, and they have challenged and

3 Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1981.

4 Several key articles were published in Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore, eds., *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, New York: Routledge, 1992.

broadened my own thinking on the subject.⁵ While, in the end, they do not provide a general argument *against* dialogue (I do not even know what that would mean, since even these critics clearly favor dialogues of certain types, within and among certain groups, and in certain situations). But they do provide a series of warnings against placing too much faith in dialogue, against thinking that dialogue is somehow self-correcting, against the notion that dialogue is an inherently humane, egalitarian, and inclusive mode of communication, and against the assumption that the solution to problems when dialogue goes awry is to persist in further dialogue. At heart, these criticisms remind us to be suspicious of *any* attempt to define the One Best Way of Teaching, even when such an endeavor springs out a progressive ethos and emancipatory aspirations. If a defensible view of dialogue can emerge from these criticisms, it will have to be one that is more modest, more self-critical, and more aware of its potentially counterproductive effects in many pedagogical encounters.

The first, and perhaps the most influential of these criticisms has come from Elizabeth Ellsworth, beginning with her often-cited essay “Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy”, and then elaborated more fully in her book *Teaching Positions*.⁶ Some of these criticisms were also picked up and developed by Mary Leach and Patti Lather.⁷ The central issue raised by this work can be described as interrogating the *unconscious* of dialogue. As in other kinds of analytic examination, the aim is to look beneath the surface of overt meanings and expressed intentions to examine what is *not* being acknowledged or talked about. The danger of dialogue, which represents itself as an open conversation in which anyone can speak and any topic can be broached, is not only that certain people may not be speaking, certain things may not be spoken (or may not even be speakable in the terms tacitly valorized by the dialogue), but that, precisely because the surface level of the engagement *is* so apparently reasonable, inclusive, and well-intentioned, what gets left out, or who gets left out, remains not only hidden but is subtly denigrated. If you cannot (or will not) express yourself in this manner, the fault lies with you. Yet, as in other sorts of communicative struggle, if one is forced to

- 5 Some of these doubts have been explored in Nicholas C. Burbules and Bertram C. Bruce, “Theory and research on teaching as dialogue”, *Handbook of Research on Teaching, 4th Edition*, Virginia Richardson, ed., Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, 2001), 1102-1121, and Nicholas C. Burbules; “The limits of dialogue as a Critical Pedagogy”, *Revolutionary Pedagogies — Cultural Politics, Education, and the Discourse of Theory*, Peter Trifonas, ed., Routledge, 2000, 251-273.
- 6 Elizabeth Ellsworth, “Why doesn’t this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of Critical Pedagogy”, *Harvard Educational Review* 59 (1989), 297-324, and *Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy, and the Power of Address*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1997, 15-16.
- 7 Mary Leach, “Can we talk? A response to Burbules and Rice”, *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 62 No. 2 (1992), 257- 263. See also Patti Lather, “Critical Pedagogy and its complicities — A pedagogy of stuck places”, *Educational Theory*, Vol. 48 No. 4 (1998): 487-497.

express one's objections in a vocabulary or manner that are not of one's choosing, the effect may be either to suppress some of those objections or to force them through a semantic filter that changes their meaning and impact. What is needed, Ellsworth argues, is an analytical interrogation that disrupts the comfortable surface of what is taken for granted, that refuses to accept at face value the rationales and conventions that others have become comfortable with: "What gets 'analyzed'...is the route of a reading. How did you *arrive* at this interpretation, without knowing it — maybe even without desiring it?"⁸ In pointing out what is *not* open about dialogue, Ellsworth and other critics also draw from a wider body of literature that wants to look at the reverse side of ostensibly "inclusive" educational practices, such as dialogue, to examine what is, in practice, *exclusive* about them.

Another line of criticism can be drawn from the work of Iris Young, who distinguishes *deliberative* and *activist* modes of communication. While not speaking directly about dialogue in pedagogical contexts, her critique illuminates another important dimension of the issue.⁹ Deliberative communication is oriented toward reasonable engagement, negotiation, compromise, and a fair exploration of all sides of an issue. Activist communication is about making a point that needs to be made, even if it is rude, disruptive, and impolite. The protestor shouts an insult at a government official in a passing car; an orator screams about an injustice that is going unnoticed; a participant in an argument suddenly bursts out with a grievance that seems to have nothing to do with the topic at hand; and so on. Such activist (and non-dialogical) modes of speech are in many cases *intended* to disrupt, they are meant to shock more than to persuade, they are concerned with expressing a view or a feeling that may have been long suppressed, for the sake of the person speaking, or for third parties who might hear it, more than for the sake of those who might be offended or upset by it, or who may not even be able to hear or understand what is being said. The goal is not to persuade, but to challenge, to confront the other. To insist that such activist utterances must be converted into the careful, balanced language and reasonable tone of a deliberative engagement is to miss what is important about such utterances as speech acts; it is to defuse them of part of their purpose and impact. In pedagogical dialogue the reasonable and deliberative mode is for obvious and mostly legitimate reasons privileged; the activist mode is not oriented toward the aspirations of understanding and consensus which pedagogical dialogue generally pursues. But this means, as a consequence, that if some things cannot be said in a moderate, calm, and polite way, they do not get said at all; and even in pedagogical settings these sorts of activist challenges, between student and teacher or between students, have a place and a potential

8 Ellsworth, *Teaching Positions*, 125.

9 Iris Marion Young, "Activist challenges to deliberative democracy", *Philosophy of Education 2001*, Suzanne Rice, ed., Urbana, Illinois: Philosophy of Education Society, 2002, pp. 41-55.

educational value. Furthermore, restrictions on activist speech weigh disproportionately on participants from groups who may be more comfortable with expressive, confrontational forms of speech, or those whose experiences or concerns cannot be framed in the calmly deliberative mode.

Alison Jones highlights a related problem of dialogue in contexts of cultural difference.¹⁰ The *desire for dialogue*, as she puts it, can carry its own kinds of coercive influence. When people from different backgrounds try to discuss their experiences and differences — as often happens in multicultural classrooms — they are put in asymmetrical positions of risk and self-disclosure. Who are these conversations for, and who do they benefit? When multicultural educators talk about the virtues of cross-cultural understanding, this is tilted almost always in the direction of the supposed benefits of dominant groups coming to better understand members of nondominant groups. Jones challenges this aspiration. For one thing, because groups are nondominant, they often have to expend much more time and effort explaining themselves to the dominant groups than vice versa; indeed, nondominant groups may already understand a great deal about the dominant culture (more than they want to, sometimes). The benefits of assuaging liberal guilt or reassuring members of dominant groups of their open-mindedness and good intent are reinforced by such conversations — benefits not necessarily available to the members of nondominant groups themselves. There can even be a kind of voyeurism: “Dialogue and recognition of difference turn out to be access for dominant groups to the thoughts, cultures, lives of others”.¹¹ For Jones, “the desire for the embodied other...may also be a desire for redemption, or forgiveness, on behalf of the white students...[T]he dominant group seeks its *own* inclusion by being rescued from its inability to hear the voices of the marginalized”.¹² In such cases, Jones says, members of nondominant groups may hold back from participating in the conversation, remaining silent as a strategy of self-protection, or even seeking to withdraw from the common classroom space entirely.

Megan Boler, along with Jones and other contributors to Boler’s excellent collection *Democratic Dialogue in Education: Troubling Speech, Disturbing Silence*, examines some pedagogical responses to such dangers in dialogue.¹³ Two of these issues are especially pertinent to my concerns here. One is the creation of separate spaces in the classroom, where

10 See Alison Jones, “The limits of cross-cultural dialogue — Pedagogy, desire, and absolution in the classroom”, *Educational Theory*, Vol. 49 No. 3 (1999): 299-315, and “Talking cure — The desire for dialogue” in Megan Boler, ed, *Democratic Dialogue in Education: Troubling Speech, Disturbing Silence*, New York: Peter Lang, 2004, pp. 57-67.

11 Alison Jones, “Talking cure”, p. 65.

12 Alison Jones, “Talking cure”, pp. 64, 65.

13 Megan Boler, “All speech is not free: The ethics of affirmative action pedagogy”, in *Democratic Dialogue in Education: Troubling Speech, Disturbing Silence*, pp. 3-13.

members of particular groups can speak safely with others who share common experiences and backgrounds, where they do not have to explain themselves to others or re-educate them at the cost of their own effort and trouble. The other concerns strategies of requiring some participants to refrain from speaking in a discussion in order to create a space for others, who may have been silent, to feel encouraged to speak. (In some cases this may be joined to the intention to make dominant group members “see what it feels like” to be in a silenced position.) Both of these approaches can be viewed as a constraint on fully open dialogue, in which participants ought to be able to participate in any way and to any extent that they choose; but these also can be viewed as provisional compromises made *in order* to encourage more and better dialogue, albeit dialogue of a different sort than the fully open, participatory ideal. It is the inability of that idealized mode of dialogue to accommodate the involvement of diverse others that has made some progressive teachers adopt strategies that identify different rules of engagement for different participants. Boler terms this “affirmative action pedagogy”, and (as with affirmative action policies more generally) one key question here is whether these accommodations are seen as a necessary evil, a compensatory stage to be gradually put aside as groups gain in confidence and trust in each other, in the hopes of eventually having a wider and more inclusive conversation; or whether they become a more or less permanent state, setting aside the ideal of open participatory dialogue altogether.

This issue can be viewed in another way. An underlying ethos of theories of dialogue is that while problems certainly can crop up during an exchange (misunderstanding, conflict, hard feelings, disagreement about the purpose of the discussion, and so on), these can and should be redeemed *within* the framework of dialogue itself (Habermas’s work is a prime example of this ethos).¹⁴ The solution to problems encountered in dialogue should be pursued through...more dialogue.¹⁵ Jones, in her essay in Boler’s book, and Suzanne de Castell, in her contribution,¹⁶ both term this approach “the Talking Cure”, as if all problems should be talked through until a solution presents itself. Yet such a valorization of dialogue, and its conception as a particular kind of communicative interchange, expresses a number of culturally bounded assumptions about how people ought to communicate and express themselves. Instead, Jones and others want to examine when silence and withdrawal from dialogue may be the more appropriate response.

14 Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1.

15 Nicholas C. Burbules and Suzanne Rice, “Dialogue across differences — Continuing the conversation”, *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 61 No. 4 (1991), pp. 393-416.

16 Suzanne de Castell, “No speech is free — Affirmative action and the politics of give and take”, in *Democratic Dialogue in Education: Troubling Speech, Disturbing Silence*, pp. 51-56.

Huey-li Li, in another chapter of Boler's book, explores the issue of silence in a very different way.¹⁷ Many critics regard the issue of silence either through the lens of asymmetrical power (groups or individuals are "silenced"), or as a pointed refusal to participate, an active or passive withdrawal from participation. Li wants to argue instead for the *expressive* possibilities of silence: silence is not the opposite of speech; rather, they form a "continuum". There are different kinds of silence, she points out, and those truly interested in cross-cultural understanding need to take on the burden themselves of hearing what these different kinds of silence might mean. Forcing others to speak, to articulate what they think and feel in explicit words, is in Li's phrase "silencing silence", and she means this as a rebuke to well-intended teachers who believe they are serving the interests of those groups by "privileging their voices" or continually pressing them to speak up and "contribute". For Li, the socially committed classroom is often too chatty, too preoccupied with verbal dialogue to listen to its silences. In the rush to fill empty discursive spaces with more talk, real if subtle connotations are missed, and cultures that *privilege silence* (she mentions Navaho, Zen, and Indian yoga as examples) are effectively "silenced" themselves by an ethos that says, in order for you to be heard, you must speak in our way.

Li describes different kinds of silences, and places the responsibility squarely on dominant groups to spend more time cultivating *in themselves* the capacity for listening (including listening to silences), and less on trying to "give voice" to those who may not want it. Silence can be of many sorts; and if one takes silence as an indication of a problem, something to be remedied or compensated for, this depends greatly on what type of silence one takes it to be. For example, silence can be voluntary and self-imposed, or it can be the result of external pressures and constraints; silence can be expressive, or it can be empty, unreadable; silence can be temporary, situational, or it can represent a consistent, problematic pattern; silence can signify active withdrawal from a conversation, or it can be an indicator of attentive, thoughtful listening. As Li makes clear, assaying silence and deciding whether it is educationally pernicious or beneficial requires attention to numerous cultural and situational specifics, and cannot be diagnosed with broad, dichotomous categories (either one "has voice" or one "is silenced"). A significant question here, then, is How can a teacher know *what kind* of silence she or he is dealing with? *Whose* silence is a cause for concern, and why? But Li's central point is that our tendency to denigrate silence, or to see it automatically as a sign of some deeper problem, overly valorizes the chatty dimensions of participation; and in this sense it poses a substantial challenge to the ways we think about dialogue.

17 "Huey-li Li, "Rethinking silencing silences", in *Democratic Dialogue in Education — Troubling Speech, Disturbing Silence*, pp. 69-86. See also Angelo Caranfa, "Silence as the foundation of learning", and Michalinos Zembylas and Pavlos Michaelides, "The sound of silence in pedagogy", *Educational Theory*, Vol. 54 No. 2 (2004): 211-230 and 193-210, respectively.

Jacques Ranciere's book, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*,¹⁸ poses a different sort of criticism of the dialogical ideal, focusing on the issue of teacher knowledge and authority. Dialogue is ostensibly an anti-authoritarian mode of pedagogy. This is precisely what Freire thinks makes it less oppressive than the monological mode, and this contrast has become virtually an article of faith to critical pedagogues. Socrates repeatedly says that the reason he adopts his interrogative method is because he claims to know nothing himself. He does not represent himself as a knowledgeable expert, as the Sophists do. (Whether one takes him at his word in this protestation of ignorance is a legitimate question.) But Ranciere does not make things so easy for us; teacher authority is not something one puts on or takes off by choice. Establishing certain knowledge as valuable automatically creates a group that lacks it — indeed, the only knowledge that is valued in this way is precisely knowledge that only a relative few possess. The existence of an ignorant population, in turn, valorizes the attainment of that knowledge. This is a critical standpoint probably best known from the work of Michel Foucault, as when defining “normalcy” creates a category of “deviance” (and vice-versa), and when the institutional systems for identifying and segregating — and sometimes punishing — deviance legitimate and reinforce the status of normalcy. In Ranciere's argument, those who teach have, whether they recognize it or not, an ambiguous relation to the knowledge and understanding they profess. *How* they teach, whether through Freirean dialogue or the Socratic method, is not a factor in attenuating that underlying tension. While on the one hand they are clearly devoted, as teachers, to presenting or explaining their knowledge to others, with the hope that some of those others will master it (even perhaps surpassing the teacher in knowledge and understanding), there is a sense in which their very status as the experts depends on a more *general* ignorance of what they know.

Moreover, Freire's statements that teachers and students can each learn from the other (which is certainly true) is often taken as meaning that the teachers and students are equal in knowledge and understanding (which is, of course, generally not true). One of the most troubling paradoxes in Freirean (or Socratic) pedagogy, therefore, is where the teacher's pronouncements of modesty and openness to learning from students threaten to become disingenuous in circumstances where everyone concerned, *especially* the students, know that the teacher does have expertise, does have an intellectual and political agenda, and often does have a distinct role — even within an ostensibly open dialogue — in pressing the discussion toward specific outcomes.

One of these potential outcomes, whether implicit or explicit, is captured in expressions like “dialogue *across* differences”. Such bridging metaphors express two key assumptions

18 Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster — Five lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991. Thanks to Gert Biesta for bringing this book to my attention.

that need to be re-examined. The first is that a goal of dialogue is to achieve connections of understanding and agreement — which may not be unworthy goals, especially in many educational settings, but which cannot be taken as unproblematic even when they spring from good intentions. Alison Jones' work, discussed earlier, provides several reasons for this suspicion. Furthermore, the goal of the “activist”, in Iris Young's argument, may be to *heighten* the awareness of differences, to force the issue of what is unresolved (and possibly unresolvable) in a dispute. And apart from such issues of intention, certain kinds of difference may simply be of an order that cannot be bridged. By approaching differences as things that can, and should, be bridged, dialogue also takes for granted a particular conception of difference, which Homi Bhabha terms difference as *diversity*: difference as a resource, as grist for the mill of multicultural exploration and mutual edification (for example, through promoting the civic virtues of tolerance and empathy for others).¹⁹ But many differences are not like this: some differences resist exploration and reconciliation; they cannot be explained in terms that bridge misunderstanding and agreement. Other differences are overtly oppositional, and refuse the very aim of “bridging” itself. By encompassing all sorts of difference within the norms of communicative interaction, dialogue has a tendency to *domesticate difference*, which, in the case of certain kinds of difference, is to fail fundamentally to come to grips with the challenges they represent.

Critical Pedagogy tends to view differences as constituted within relations of power, and usually power of a dyadic sort: oppressor and oppressed, ruling class and working class, hegemon and victim of false consciousness, and so on. This framework may have advantages from a political standpoint, identifying clear enemies and clear victims, clear lines for organizing a movement of solidarity against the powerful. But ever since Foucault, this theory of power has proven less and less satisfactory.²⁰ For Foucault, power is not something one group has and another group lacks: it is a system that catches up all social participants in a network of relations of complicity and compliance. Nor is there just one polarity of power acting at one time: in a social situation, gender may constitute one dimension of power, but race and class may cross-hatch those relations in complex and contradictory ways. Power is not unidimensional and does not always flow in the same direction. All of this is commonplace now; but what is important for this discussion is how these understandings of power underlie conceptions of difference. Critical Pedagogy, I am suggesting, generally continues to frame difference in the context of dyadic relations of power: a difference is a difference *between* contending individuals and groups. Hence the challenge of maintaining

19 Homi K. Bhabha, “Cultural diversity and cultural difference”, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., New York: Routledge, 1995.

20 Nicholas C. Burbules, “A theory of power in education”. *Educational Theory*, Vol. 36 No. 2 (1986): 95-114.

dialogue *across* differences. A more multidimensional conception of power yields, in consequence, a more multifaceted (and often contradictory) conception of differences: differences are constituted *against* certain normalizing expectations; they operate *within* nonunitary identities; they press *beyond* dyadic choices of either/or.²¹ (The choice of prepositions is crucial in these relational analyses.) In these ways, Critical Pedagogy of a Freirean variety suffers from a limited theoretical framework from which to understand the complexities of difference and how they work within and against structures of power.

This more complex picture of power and difference also changes how we think about the dynamics and effects of dialogue. When one begins with a dyadic view, when dialogue “succeeds” in drawing such radical or oppositional differences into the norms of communicative interaction (when the activist gets drawn into sitting at the deliberative table, for example), certain beneficial compacts may be forged, new knowledge and understandings may be established — but at the risk of cooptation and normalization. By being drawn into working within those communicative norms, some differences may have to be given up or compromised, so that, while *within* the dialogue a measure of tolerance and inclusivity might obtain, the *framework* of the dialogue has its own biased and exclusionary effects. Ironically, it may be that those very communicative relations which try to be most open and inclusive *for that very reason* are more difficult to diagnose in terms of their blind spots and, hence, more difficult to resist. Who can be against openness, tolerance, and inclusivity? But these modes of dialogue may also be the most subtly co-opting and normalizing. Dialogue is never simply, then, operating *across* a divide between two persons or groups; it comprises internal tensions and contradictions as well.

Finally, there are the views, like those of Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, and especially Emmanuel Levinas, that foreground the otherness of the other. Such views bring to our attention not just that there are limits to understanding and agreement as communicative norms, but also that in such encounters of irreconcilable, unbridgeable difference, we stand to learn profound lessons about ourselves as well as about the nature and depth of some differences. As Levinas explores at length, these encounters pose not only an epistemic challenge to us, but also an ethical one: not only the limits of what we can know and understand, but also the challenges of recognizing the humanity in another who does not (cannot, will not) make sense to us in our own terms. Especially pertinent to my purposes, here, encounters with differences that may be unspeakable also challenge our understandings of dialogue — indeed, the very nature of language and communication itself. They cause us to question whether everything that can be said, can be translated or understood, or even whether everything important can or needs to be *said* at all. (Recall Li’s argument here.)

21 Nicholas C. Burbules, “A grammar of difference: Some ways of rethinking difference and diversity as educational topics”. *Australian Educational Researcher*, Vol. 24 No. 1 (1997): 97-116.

These criticisms, which have many connections to each other, have posed a serious challenge to me personally in questioning and rethinking my own views on dialogue. They raise questions about the typical aims of dialogue: understanding, consensus, shared knowledge, mutual recognition, learning, and inquiry. They raise questions about the form of dialogue, and its implicit norms about how reasonable, polite, and respectful discourse ought to proceed. They raise questions about the asymmetrical positions between the participants in dialogue: not just relations of unequal power, but relations of unequal risk, unequal effort, and unequal interest in seeing the “successful” results of such dialogue. As I have argued in detail in other projects, there are different types of dialogue, with different purposes and different norms attached to them.²² But who decides what kind of dialogue a present dialogue will be? Once implicated in a dialogue, who gets to decide to change it, to redirect it, or to leave it? Pedagogical dialogues are often pursued within institutional contexts where the authority (and patent good intentions) of the teacher, peer expectations, and the broader norms of the educational setting all can place subtle and not-so-subtle coercion on resistant partners to participate, and to participate in a particular manner and spirit. The benign expressed purposes of pedagogical dialogue put resistant partners in a defensive, reactive position: the burden is on them to explain why they will not participate or will not participate in the appropriate manner and spirit. And when pedagogical dialogue is invested not only with the benign purpose of educational exploration and discovery, but also with the aim of political solidarity and liberation, resistance to these benign objectives gets framed as recalcitrance, false consciousness, or obstructionism. Here, then, is a particular lesson for Critical Pedagogy. What happens when an emancipatory endeavor comes to understand itself as potentially impositional and exclusionary?

As I have mentioned, because the aspirations of dialogue represent themselves as reasonable and humane they are hard to resist — and when they are resisted, the burden of justifying why is placed disproportionately on those who are resisting: “But we are only trying to help you learn. We want to liberate you. Why won’t you cooperate?” It is uncomfortable to hear words like “coercion” attached to the polite, respectful conventions that govern participation in dialogue. But the criticisms I have reviewed here challenge advocates of dialogue to view these norms from the outside, from the perspective of those to whom they are neither neutral nor benign. For them, the gentle invitation into dialogue can sound like this: “Speak up! Participate. Talk this way. When things become difficult, keep talking. Expose yourself. Explain yourself. Justify yourself. Stick to the subject (a subject chosen and decided by someone else). Answer all questions. Be polite and respectful, even to those who may despise or miscomprehend you — this is your chance to change their minds. Listen to all points of view - we’re all here to learn from each other”....and so on.

22 Nicholas C. Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching*.

So, here is the special challenge posed by these considerations to Critical Pedagogy: How critical can it be of its very own aspirations and methods? How does it relate to people who will not participate in emancipatory dialogue, or will not participate in the “right” way? How does it respond when participants do not share its view of what it means to be liberated; or when they do not see common cause with the other groups that progressive theory says they should find common cause with? Some critical pedagogues celebrate “resistance” as an expression of human freedom and self-determination — but what happens when what they decide to resist is *you*?²³ I see this as a fundamental political and ethical challenge: *political* because it puts various commitments in tension with one another, and challenges the conception of a “vanguard” or “critical intellectual” who can promote, through teaching, the liberation of others; and *ethical* because it summons forth a deep sense of humility and personal limitation in what one can assume is the proper *telos* for others to desire and pursue — or more precisely, how one can come to accept the judgment of others when it goes directly against what one believes is in their (and others’) best interests. Is Critical Pedagogy, like Socrates’ pedagogy, simply a more humane and patient way of leading others to formulate and recognize certain specific insights (or, as Socrates would put it, simply drawing forth from them what they already know at some latent level); or is it about truly enabling people to formulate complex and sophisticated understandings of their own (in which case they might come up with answers that do not accord with one’s intentions)?

III.

This critical discussion of dialogue as a central feature of Critical Pedagogy also opens a window into some larger features of Critical Pedagogy’s theory and practice, which have also come into question.²⁴ One of these issues is the extent to which Critical Pedagogy is bounded by a Freirean outlook and assumptions, versus its incorporation of insights and criticisms from feminist, poststructural, postcolonial, or psychoanalytic perspectives. As with certain forms of Deweyan pragmatism, or certain versions of Marxism, there is often a tendency to trace all insights back to an originary source or theorist “who said it all”, or whose work can be continually reinterpreted to absorb every new criticism as simply an elaboration of the

23 Ira Shor, *When Students Have Power: Negotiating Authority in a Critical Pedagogy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

24 I am indebted here to several insights raised by participants in a workshop organized by Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, in conjunction with the 2004 meeting of the International Network for Philosophers of Education conference in Madrid Spain: “Critical Pedagogy — A Failure in Its Realization? Toward a Rearticulated Critical Pedagogy”.

model, rather than as a profound and fundamental critique that requires reconstituting or even abandoning its very basic assumptions and categories. The trajectory of Critical Pedagogy might be considered insufficiently self-critical in this regard.

Another issue that comes into question through these criticisms of dialogue is how it comprehends itself within the dyadic model of political and pedagogical agency. Oversimplifying, Critical Pedagogy seems to assign people to one of three roles: (1) the oppressors, the power elite, the capitalists, the repressive state, and their agencies, who are dominant; (2) the oppressed, the victims of false consciousness, the partly conscientized, the resisters, or those ready to resist, who need the advocacy and intervention of Critical Pedagogy to be emancipated; and (3) the critical pedagogues themselves, who may have been members of group (2) or who may be critical intellectuals from the outside who come to identify with their interests, but who in either case bring to the oppressed the pedagogical methods and the strategies of *praxis* that can engage them in their own liberation. This aligns the pedagogues very strongly with one side of the dyadic power relation: as advocates and promoters of the interests of the oppressed. And yet the critical pedagogue is never entirely (or is no longer) simply *of* the oppressed; it is precisely her or his status as an outsider and an authority that provides the leverage to guide learning and praxis. While the critical pedagogue can, and indeed must, learn from and with the oppressed, in this relation she or he does also intend to *teach*, to bring to bear upon the critical reflection of the oppressed specific conceptions and theories that will explain and illuminate the nature of their oppression and what to do about it. As I have already discussed, a more complex, non-dyadic theory of power raises fundamental questions about this presumed relation between the learners who need the theory and praxis of Critical Pedagogy to make sense of and transform their situation, and the liberating teacher who brings it to them within the framework of a pedagogical dialogue. The pedagogue is therefore never entirely free from the suspicion of an authority with an agenda of her or his own; this situates dialogue within a more complex (and sometimes self-contradictory) power dynamic.

Another issue concerns Critical Pedagogy's basic vocabulary of "emancipation", "liberation", or "transformation" as the intended outcomes of dialogue and *praxis*. These utopian concepts derive from very specific theories of social, political, and psychological change — especially their notions of what freedom or emancipation entails.²⁵ In part these derive from a vision of revolutionary transformation grounded in Marx's theory and politics,

25 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, "Toward a nonrepressive Critical Pedagogy", *Educational Theory*, Vol. 48 No. 4 (Fall 1998), pp. 463-486. See also the other papers in that symposium on "The State of Critical Pedagogy Today": Peter McLaren, Patti Lather, Gert Biesta, Wendy Kohli, Jan Masschelein, and Eduardo Duarte. Together, these authors debated a number of the important questions raised in this essay, and I have undoubtedly learned from them all.

which underlies Freire's theory and all its variations. This is not the occasion to develop such a broader theoretical analysis, but suffice it to say for now that many theories, particularly the feminist, poststructural, postcolonial, or psychoanalytic perspectives discussed earlier, question this vocabulary, especially in the context of a model in which a teacher or influence Critical Pedagogy is going to guide or lead the process of transformation. Within all these theoretical frames it is problematic to think about a simple path of progress toward some ideal of utopia or completion. For many theorists, the events of the 20th century, including Fascism and Stalinist Communism, have cast suspicion on narratives of utopia and social perfectionism — they are evidently too easily reconciled with a totalitarian agenda. At a personal level, the impact of psychoanalysis and post-structuralism has cast doubt on the ideal of a stable, unitary identity and on any simple educational model of development and growth. By contrast, it is noteworthy here to recall the strong influence of Catholic theology on Freire's thought, and to see the close link of his notions of transformation or emancipation with the Christian religious language of "salvation". Many have noted the strong link between Freire's theology, his personality, and his political practice; and from his earliest writings overt religious allusions and analogies can be found. Later interpreters of Freire's work in the wider context of Critical Pedagogy may not necessarily share his religious assumptions, but ought to appreciate the religious teleology that underlaid his own brand of utopianism — and which may not rest easily alongside other contemporary frames of thought.

Another issue, which I have already discussed, is how Critical Pedagogy thinks about *difference* as a kind of diversity, and how prepositions like "across" in "dialogue across differences" already prefigure a certain characterization of difference as a resource for exploration and understanding. More radical theories of difference, I have suggested, emphasize the resistance of difference to accommodation or explanation — and this in turn suggests different prepositions, such as "difference between", "difference among", "difference within", or even *difference against*.²⁶ Such challenges highlight the universalistic assumptions of Critical Pedagogy as a theory and method, particularly its vision of a unified global dynamic of oppression and a corresponding unified vision of common liberation.

Finally, this debate over the status of dialogue also opens up an examination of how Critical Pedagogy conceives of knowledge itself. I alluded earlier to the co-constructivist ethos implicit in its conception of knowledge as formed in a cooperative relation of inquiry and exploration joining teacher and learner. Indeed, I think this ethos explains a good part of

26 See Rosi Braidotti's *Nomadic Subjects — Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, pp. 158-167, 177-179. I discuss the varieties of difference at length in Nicholas C. Burbules, "A grammar of difference: Some ways of rethinking difference and diversity as educational topics". *Australian Educational Researcher*, Vol. 24 No. 1 (1997): 97-116.

its appeal, especially if the only alternative is a “banking conception” of teaching, with its static and reified conception of knowledge. But are these the only alternatives? This is another very large question, but let me frame it this way: Socrates, the model to whom Freire and many critical pedagogues refer, says that he adopts the Socratic method of questioning because he *does not* claim to know; he questions in order to draw out the knowledge that a learner has, so that both he and the learner may benefit. But is this really true? Is it true, on the one hand, that the Socratic pedagogue does not have any idea of where a dialogue is headed? It is hard to support this from a reading of the dialogues. And is it true, on the other hand, that the knowledge to be “drawn out” through Socratic questioning will have a self-evident status that all parties will immediately recognize as the truth? I think it is fair to say that there are now significant reasons for doubt on both points — and certainly the critics of dialogue discussed previously would challenge the faith in dialogue as an ostensibly open and nonauthoritarian pedagogical method, which emerges from such assumptions about knowledge. And yet Critical Pedagogy continues to invoke the Socratic ideal, without recognizing that the Socratic view of knowledge may not be compatible with many aspects of its own praxis.

While these final criticisms point to a larger critique of Critical Pedagogy, I am not trying to build that argument here. As someone who has always worked on the fringes of this movement, and who has posed other criticisms against it myself, I have long felt ambivalent about it. The commitments to freedom, social and economic equality, human rights and respect, as they are expressed by Freire and by many of the authors who follow him, are undoubtedly heartfelt and admirable — and I count several of these people as friends and colleagues personally. But I have outlined here some of my own responses to certain criticisms directed toward my work, which have caused me to rethink the status of dialogue, its central role within the Critical Pedagogy tradition, and what that heavy reliance on dialogue might tell us about the wider weakness of Critical Pedagogy’s theory and practice, particularly its understandings of power, difference, and knowledge. It is not, for me, any longer a matter of revising the Critical Pedagogy program or believing that these criticisms are easily accommodated within it. A more fundamental rethinking is needed.²⁷

27 ACKNOWLEDGMENT: I am very grateful to Ilan Gur-Ze’ev for helpful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper.

“Bildung” and Critique

Jan Masschelein/Norbert Ricken

The German concept of “Bildung” has been often invoked to sustain and develop a critical approach of actual developments both in educational theory and practice.¹ In this paper we want to question whether this use of “Bildung” is really offering a good starting point for critical educational and pedagogical thought. We will try to show why we think that this is not possible anymore without severe reservations. Or, to put it positively, we suggest that at least in a certain sense we should try to avoid to build a Critical Pedagogy and critical educational theory upon or around the concept of “Bildung”, since the practice and theory of “Bildung” actively co-structured (or co-structures) past and current educational developments rather than marking a critical perspective on them. In the same move however, we will try to indicate the possibility of another critical perspective, which in a certain sense takes up the old meaning of “education” as “drawing or leading out” and argues to reconsider the question: “why education?” (which is not the same as what is education or education for what?) starting from a reflection on what it means that our existence is always and irremediably a being-together-with (some thing or some one). We will make our move in six steps.

1. The dilemma of critique today

The actual status of Critical Pedagogy and Critical Educational Theory seems to be one of diffusion and confusion at the same time: not only the traditional concepts of critique as they are elaborated within the traditions of Critical Theory but also the general notion of critique has become precarious and without much consent although there is a strong need for criticism and for critical reflections in our north-western societies. However, this current helplessness

1 The concept of “Bildung” itself is indeed strongly bounded to the German tradition but, although concrete research would be necessary, we suspect that the concepts of “cultivation” and “liberal education” occupy very similar strategic positions in other discourses.

and perplexity regarding the question what critique could mean today can be analysed as a paradoxical result of the efforts and the general success of critique since the European Enlightenment. If we can summarize the development of the concept(s) of critique as a development from a reflexive instrument to distinguish truth and falseness in one given and common order towards a general principle of reason to examine the value and legitimacy of anything in a self constructed social order and to provoke further progress and improvement by a critical analysis of deficiencies and not-yet fulfilled possibilities, then the function of critique as a rational negation can be said to have changed into affirmation: critique has not only become a general topic and movement in our late-modern societies to take distance from traditions or specific epistemological, esthetical or social and political order(s); critique has also become a central element of the system itself. A question of Van den Abbeele indicates precisely this latemodern problem: “What if the critique of a system were itself encoded as an institutionalised part of the system?”² It seems, according to Lyotard in his “postmodern fables”, as if critique has changed into a purely functional instrument to improve the actual system by diagnosing deficiencies and provoking improvement of the given order.³

Perhaps this change can be described as a process of trivializing critique.⁴ If this analysis could be plausible for a moment then the change of critique in a daily function of the system touches the logical concept of critique itself. As a result the “latemodern dilemma” of critique could be described as a diffusion of the notion of critique: what has been critical in former times — to negate and to criticize a given order as an oppressive one by invoking self-determination against determination from others — has become nowadays precisely a vehicle to establish the new order of the subject. The result is a more or less total confusion about the question what could be critical today in a non-affirmative sense. Critique can’t be any longer a mere instrument to distinguish between truth and falseness or a rational principle of self-determination. Both concepts of critique lead to a functional affirmation establishing the same order as before. But the question of a “critical” notion of critique in the sense of an essential change can’t be answered in a utopian way, neither. In fact there is no way out of pluralism by constructing a new archimedic point of view. Our latemodern situation is unavoidably structured by contingency and finiteness. In our point of view it is necessary to abandon various concepts of (modern) “fundamentalism” as attempts to point out an unquestionable fundament and identity. The only alternative to take up again the idea of critique seems to us to ask for a specific reflection on “difference” as both formal and thematical relationality.

2 Georges van den Abbeele, *Travel as Metaphor — From Montaigne to Rousseau*, Oxford/Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992, p. XIV.

3 Jean-Fracois Lyotard, *Moralités Postmodernes*. Paris: Galilée, 1993.

4 Jan Masschelein, “Trivialisierung von Kritik — Kritische Erziehungswissenschaft weiterdenken”, *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*, 2003.

2. The central function of the concept of “Bildung” today

In the German pedagogical (and especially in the critical pedagogical) discourse the concept of “Bildung” is still very central. “Critique — “Bildung” — emancipation” belongs to one and the same discourse because “Bildung” is identified with a reflexive distance towards the obligations and constraints of everyday life. “Bildung” refers not only to the acquisition or appropriation of intellectual abilities and skills in the sense of a more or less general knowledge and competence, but “Bildung” is also strongly related to the birth of the modern subject as a rational and self-determining individual.⁵

The reasons why we would like to analyse this more or less typical German pedagogical concept are twofold.

First, the concept of “Bildung” as indicating a coherent correlation between the dimensions of an epigenetical anthropology, an individualised and generalised sociality and a necessary knowledge marks the inner logic of our western societies in general. In this perspective “Bildung” can be considered as one of the most effective and successful modern pedagogical conceptions which we would like to characterize as a programme of social transformation by individual formation. Here “Bildung” is taken as a historical and social conception of the 18th century and interpreted as a critical principle of education in order to refuse specific and determining expectations of the old and new civil society by focussing both on the human necessity of self-determination and the endless task of self-development and self-realization without any given aim or telos. The conceptual structure of this social programme could be described as a critical reflection on self-referentiality in general. Although the term “Bildung” is often used to indicate a specific canon of knowledge (or a set of abilities or competencies), which can be analysed as a bourgeois topic,⁶ “Bildung” also focuses on the problems of experience, interpretation and epigenetical subjectivity in a specific way. Precisely in contrast to a non-critical and insofar premodern concept of “Bildung” as a “set of competences” or a “body of knowledge” (which have to be appropriated necessarily) “Bildung” as a neo-humanistic term means the interrelation of “self-production” (“Selbsthervorbringung”) and world appropriation (“Weltaneignung”).⁷ In this perspective “Bildung” is an intransitive term and has to be spelled as “Sich-Bilden” (self-

5 See K. Meyer-Drawe, “Zum metaphorischen Gehalt von “Bildung” und ‘Erziehung’”, *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 45, 1999, pp. 161-175.

6 See Georg Bollenbeck, *Bildung und Kultur — Glanz und Elend eines deutschen Deutungsmusters*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1996.

7 See Wilhelm Humboldt, “Theorie der Bildung des Menschen. Bruchstück” (1793), in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Kniglichen Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Bd. I/1, Berlin, 1903, pp. 282-287.

construction and self-education) — with the consequence that each “Weltaneignung” (world appropriation) has to be reconsidered as a specific way of producing oneself (“Selbsthervorbringung”) and the other way round. This double relation of the self and world could be described as the task of involving oneself in the world (“Einarbeitung in Welt”) as a production of world (“Ausarbeitung von Welt”) by self production (“Selbsthervorbringung in Welt”), that means both to encompass the world in oneself (“die Welt in sich einzubilden”) and to establish and express oneself in the world (“sich in die Welt auszubilden“).⁸ Starting from this point the concept of “Bildung” has become an increasingly important programme of modern sociality: as a break with a determining anthropological perspective Bildung is identified with the general task of “practical self-determination” through confrontation with the world (“Auseinandersetzung mit Welt”) and aims at free self production of the self (“freiheitlicher Selbsthervorbringung”).⁹

Second, in the present discourse on the “learning society” the concept of “Bildung” has become a catch-all and pretended critical slogan which is affirmed time and again in pedagogical discourses and still used nowadays although there has been a long critical tradition and distance towards “Bildung”.¹⁰ In these new discourses we can analyse two oppositional notions of Bildung. On the one hand, Bildung means the mere formal abilities and intellectual skills or competencies of a latemodern “learning” or “knowledge society” (which are evaluated in the empirical studies of PISA in a more or less shocking way); on the other hand, “Bildung” is still used as an appeal to a humanistic and subject orientated ideal (or promise) against systemic functionality and social instrumentalization.

The analysis of this striking contradiction can illustrate the general helplessness and pedagogical perplexity: on the one hand the pedagogical system is considered as a necessary functional system of latemodern societies, on the other hand the pedagogical system is threatened by essential financial reductions. The pedagogical answer is often the same: educators and educational theorists try to prove their necessity by fulfilling social expectations and functional demands nearly immediately. This paradoxical situation structures the use of the notion of “Bildung”: it seems to be a successful and critical pedagogical concept which at the same time guarantees a supposed central status of the pedagogical system itself (since this system is oriented towards “Bildung”). As a consequence “Bildung” is often used in an ambivalent way: it is on the one hand a fruitful,

8 *Ibid.*

9 See e.g. Dietrich Benner, *Allgemeine Pädagogik. Eine Systematisch-Problemgeschichtliche Einführung in die Grundstruktur pädagogischen Denkens und Handelns*, Weinheim/München: Juventa, 2001.

10 See e.g. Bob Lingard and Fazal Rizvi (guest eds.), “A symposium on globalization and education”, *Educational Theory* 50, 2000, pp. 419-520; or J. Oelkers, (ed.), “Zukunftsfragen der Bildung”, *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 43, Beiheft, Weinheim/Basel: Beltz, 2001.

necessary and critical concept, which is — on the other hand — considered not to be fulfilled until now; even more: it is considered to be a forgotten, negated, neglected, reduced, distorted or even not yet fulfilled and in so far unkept “promise” which is misused by the bourgeois class as a license for introducing differentiations of rank and distinction into education.¹¹ In this (critical) perspective “Bildung” remains strongly related to the Enlightenment ideas of autonomy and consensus (as the agreement between autonomous individuals) and is regarded as an “ideal” or “regulative idea”— As such “Bildung” is expected to function as a point of resistance or critical orientation which can be invoked against all kinds of distortion and negation of this human independency and autonomy (in thinking and acting).¹² However: to stress “Bildung” as an unkept promise means to hide the efforts and the success of “Bildung” in a modern society.

Indeed, what we would like to argue is the existence of an inner relation and connection of “Bildung” in its best (critical) interpretation with power. Even if at one moment in history it probably did play a critical role, “Bildung” has long since lost the possibility of functioning as a point of resistance and critical principle for analysing the ways in which we conduct our lives and the ways in which our conduct is itself conducted. In what follows we will argue that at least to a certain extent we should try to avoid the concept of “Bildung” in order to invent practical and theoretical ways to raise anew the question of being-together as “inter-subjectivity” which has been masked in the emphasis on autonomy and contracts or consensus in the political and educational discourse of the past three centuries.

In this perspective, we want to suggest that starting from the analytical framework offered by Foucault, it is possible to reveal and unravel a complicity between “Bildung” (in practice and theory) and the birth of the modern subject within the establishment of “the government of individualization” as a “form of power”.¹³ This form of power or power apparatus (“dispositif de pouvoir”) can be characterized as the strategic operation of simultaneous processes of individualisation and totalisation in which individuals are integrated in a totality (or sociality) through a specific kind of individuality.

In order to further develop this relation between “Bildung” and power, we first have to clarify briefly how we can analyse power.

11 See Helmut Peukert, “Bildung: Reflexionen zu einem Uneingelösten Versprechen”, *Jahresheft aller Pädagogischen Zeitschriften des Friedrich Verlages “Bildung”*, 6, 1998, pp.12-17; and L. Lovlie, “The promise of Bildung”, in: Robert Davies (ed.), *Annual Conference Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain. Conferencepapers*, 2000, pp. 221-234.

12 See Herwig Blankertz, *Die Geschichte der Pädagogik. Von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart*, Wetzlar: Büchse der Pandora, 1982.

13 Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power”, In: H. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault — Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 1982, p. 212.

3. How to understand power?

We would like to indicate just two problems of an analysis of power. First, power is usually interpreted as “the ability to carry through and to enforce one’s own will in a social relation” i.e. to determine the will of the other(s) In this traditional perspective power is linked with, but distinguished from “dominance” (as a concrete and legalized ability to bind obedient people) and “discipline” (as an automatic and trained obedience) and it is based on and in an individual as his/her ability. Here, freedom is conceptualized as the opposite of power: firstly as the absence of power, force and violence and secondly as the ability to act on my own. Kant’s practical conception of freedom as it is formulated in his *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* — the capacity to initiate something new by myself — implies this traditional opposition: not to be determined by the outside. This is the condition of autonomy — formulated as the capacity to act under a self-given “law” of reason and rationality — including heteronomy as its contrast.

According to Foucault power cannot be studied exclusively on the basis of a juridical model of sovereignty and law, a model which allows us to conceptualize power only as a repressive force of regulation and determination. On the contrary, it is necessary to think about power in terms of relations as a productive technique and mechanism. “Power is not a substance. Neither is it a mysterious property whose origin must be delved into. Power is only a certain type of relations between individuals”.¹⁴ Power relations “are rooted deep in the social nexus”.¹⁵ “The exercise of power ... is a way in which certain actions modify others”. Power is not an objective ability; it “exists only when it is put in action, even if, of course, it is integrated into a disparate field of possibilities brought to bear upon permanent structures”.¹⁶ Power is not about direct action on others, but about actions upon their actions, upon the possibilities of their actions, both existing or coming. This implies that others are recognized as persons who themselves act “freely”. It implies free subjects for whom opens up a field of possibilities of responses and ways of behaving. In his later work Foucault suggests to use the term “conduct of conducts” (“conduite des conduites”) to describe power as “government”. “For to “conduct” is at the same time to “lead” others (...) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities”. To govern therefore means “to structure the possible field of action of others”.¹⁷

14 Michel Foucault, “Omnes et singulatim — towards a critique of political reason”, in *The Tanner Lectures in Human Values II*, ed. S. McMurrin, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1981, p. 253.

15 Foucault, “The Subject and Power“, p. 222.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 219.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 220-21.

In this perspective power relations can be understood as productive processes of formation of conduct and as relations of subjectivation which operate through concrete techniques and concrete forms of knowledge and discourse. Power is not only suppressive or oppressive, but productive. It produces objects, truth games and political spaces, which determine what the individual and his/her knowledge mean, how the individual relates to him/her self and to others.

In order to analyse these strategies and techniques of power Foucault has elaborated several models of power which can't be synthesized into one consistent and systematical framework. We would like to recall very briefly some of the elements of these different forms of power which Foucault relates to the birth of "government of individualisation"; their common starting point is the logical distance to traditional power as repression and sovereignty.

On the one hand there are disciplinary technologies which impact upon the individual's body and behaviour producing them as "subjects".¹⁸ They develop around questions such as: "Comment surveiller quelqu'un, comment contrôler sa conduite, son comportement, ses aptitudes, comment intensifier sa performance, multiplier ses capacités, comment le mettre à la place où il sera le plus utile".¹⁹

On the other hand there are the technologies which are directed towards people as a population i.e. a group of living beings traversed by biological laws and processes and situated within certain boundaries. These are technologies of regulation which work through normalising practices, through norms which refer to the optimal functioning of biological entities. This means that a society of normalisation ("une société de normalisation"²⁰ now replaces a juridical society of law and that a new power apparatus develops: a facilitating bio-power instead of sovereign juridical power of oppression and determination. This bio-power as "le pouvoir de faire vivre" regulates the conditions (the need for security, health, mobility) and processes operating on the population and not the individuals as such. Juridical power is about "norms" which are prescriptive (and disciplining in this context is about adjusting reality to the norm and thus includes repression), whereas bio-power is about what is "normal" in the population, it is not about "norming" but "normalisation" (and disciplining in this context is about functionalisation, through which empirical norms and not legal ones assume dominance).

At last a new form of political power has been developed and included in the establishing of the state, which Foucault calls pastoral power. This pastoral power is an individualising

18 Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power — Theories in Subjection*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

19 Michel Foucault, "Les mailles du Pouvoir", in: *Dits et Écrits II 1977-1988*, eds. D. Defert, F. Ewald and J. Lagrange, Paris: Gallimard Quarto, 1981, p. 1010.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 1018.

power wherein the pastor, like the shepherd in relation to his flock, not only knows his community as a whole, but also pays individual attention to each member and his/her life. A pastoral power is a power “whose role is to constantly ensure, sustain, and improve the lives of each and every one”.²¹ The new pastoral power implies knowledge of people’s minds and their interiority and therefore produces the truth of the individual. In order to produce this knowledge of individuals, different techniques of self-examination and self-objectivation were developed, investing a specific and paradoxical relation of the self to the self. This form of power is the “government of individuals by their own verity”.²² Around the 18th century the modern state thus integrates individuals under the condition that this individuality is shaped (and relates to itself) in a very specific form. But the new pastoral power involved also an approach to the “flock” considered as a population. Pastoral power was directed to ensure salvation in this world, it multiplied its “pastors” or agents and involved a double focus on “the knowledge of man around two roles: one globalizing and quantitative, concerning the population, the other, analytical, concerning the individual”.²³ So the establishment of the modern (nation) state is characterized by the double bond of individualisation and totalisation (which by the way was accompanied also by the appearance of new practices of resistance).

Taking up Foucault’s line, Deleuze will develop the concept of “control power” as kind of power which relieves “discipline power” within the context of bio-power. According to Deleuze, discipline power governs through structuring the parameters of the limits of thinking and acting, by institutionally sanctioning and prescribing normal/deviant behavior. In control-society power is exercised through machines which directly organise brains (in systems of communication, information networks etc.) and bodies (monitoring). Control leaves institutions and spreads all over the social body through flexible and fluctuating networks. Globalisation processes, including the impetus they give to learning societies, can also be analysed on these lines as articulations of a bio-power characterized by the double bond of individualisation and totalisation and sustaining and developing “government of individualisation” as a specific power apparatus or “dispositif de pouvoir”.²⁴ For us, at this point the importance of Foucault’s work for an analysis of the relation between power and “Bildung” can be seen.

21 Foucault, “Omnes et Singulatim”, p. 235.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 240.

23 Foucault, “The subject and power”, p. 215.

24 Gilles Deleuze, “Das elektronische Halsband”, *Neue Rundschau*, 1990, 3, 5-10; M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2000; J. Masschelein, “The discourse of the learning society and the loss of childhood”, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 35, 2001, pp. 1-20

4. How to deconstruct the idea of “Bildung” (and liberal education) as a power configuration?

First of all it seems plausible to us to analyse the involvement and implication of Bildung in power relations not only as a strategy of the new bourgeois society to institute new distinctions and “classes” and in so far to see power as an external moment to the idea of Bildung. The strategic use of “Bildung” in German society in the 19th and 20th century is just not simply a “betrayal” or “abuse” of a radical and neo-humanistic concept and cannot be read as a kind of decline or “unkept promise”.

Such a reading obscures the specific implication of the concept of “Bildung” in power relations. It is precisely the theoretically ambitious, not to say very successful establishment in practice of the idea of “Bildung” as a claim under which almost all individuals may conduct their lives which establishes an understanding of the life of the individual as a dynamic, rather than fixed or defined, endless process of self-development, i.e. an understanding which is highly functional in and for actual social transformation processes. The point here is to reconstruct the concept of “Bildung” in the context of its own original programme as a constitutive and insofar non-critical moment of modern power transformation processes, in other words to deconstruct it. In such a perspective we neither understand “Bildung” in the context of social history as purely the “hallmark of the practices securing the bourgeois class”,²⁵ nor do we read it in the context of the history of ideas as a critical utopian concept involving “contradiction or objection to domination and power/knowledge”,²⁶ but we attempt to denote “Bildung” genealogically as a basic structure of a newly established and transformed power apparatus, as a specific form of “conduct of conducts”. In this perspective Bildung can be deconstructed as a modern pastoral power.

Three central elements of this deconstruction can be outlined. First, in an *anthropological perspective* “Bildung” can be read as a concept focussing on the relation of the self to the self as a permanent and non-teleological ability of self-edification and self-development (self-referentiality). In contrast with the traditional metaphysical or Christian genetical anthropology which describes men as a specific being and substance²⁷ with a certain destination or telos, “Bildung” refers to human subjectivity as an anthropological fundament. (Wo)men do not exist as a specific being just realizing their given destination but have the

25 Georg Bollenbeck, *Bildung und Kultur*.

26 Heinz J. Heydorn, “Zu einer Neufassung des Bildungsbegriffs”, *Ungleichheit für Alle. Zur Neufassung des Bildungsbegriffs*, Frankfurt/M.: Syndikat, 1980, pp. 95-184.

27 E.g. Arthur Oncken Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being — A Study of the History of an Idea*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1990.

endless, not determined and in so far “free” task to conduct their lives as self-production and self-preservation. There is no given aim or telos anymore but endless development and progress. “Epigenesis” could be the key-term of this new anthropological concept wherein the Aristotelian teleological interpretation of human beings is transformed in a non-teleological concept of self-determining human beings. In this interpretation the anthropological difference is figured as a hierarchy between the two poles of “natural deficiency” and “cultural self-edification” or “self-creation”— with the effect, that the one pole is set as a “regulative idea”, the other one regarded as situation from which one absolutely has to escape. This structure can be read as the matrix of pastoral power. Not only because it implies that education becomes an inevitable necessity involving the establishment of an anthropologically grounded institutionalised system which has as its task the necessary “conduct of conducts” since self-determination (to conduct one-self) has to be called upon by others (including that power is exercised in the name of those who are governed or conducted and requiring not only obedience through force, but through “free” will based on understanding). But more central: Bildung structures self-referentiality in an ambivalent way and establishes a paradoxical relation in which the self is interpellated both to affirm and to negate itself at the same time. To take care of one’s self means in this context to overcome one self by self-transgression and endless self-transformation whereby individuality is perceived as particularisation of a generality. In so far the matrix of the “conduct of conducts” can be considered as a pastoral power figuration governing (on) the imperfectability and finiteness of (wo)men (mis)leading them to unfulfillable development.²⁸

Secondly “Bildung” has a central *social dimension* too: in critical distance to absolutistic repression and philanthropic utilitarianism “Bildung” has been promoted as a perspective of social reform in Germany. “Bildung” characterized the inner structure of a civil society which believed strongly in progress. Humboldt takes it as an implication of “Bildung” that the activities of the state should be limited to purely negative actions. It marks for him the possibility of a social transformation through the formation and cultivation of the individual, through which “humankind” could “elevate” itself above the existing “stage of culture”.²⁹ The state is “nothing but a means to promote “Bildung” (of the citizen as human being)”³⁰ and transforms itself through that promotion into a more efficiently organised “machine...which is kept in motion by the inner force of her motives and does not require continuously new outer

28 See Norbert Ricken, “In den Kulissen der Macht: Anthropologien als Figurierende Kontexte Pädagogischer Praktike”, in *Vierteljahrsschrift für Wissenschaftliche Pädagogik* 76, 2000, pp. 425-454.

29 Wilhelm von Humboldt, “Ideen zu einem Versuch, die Grnzen der Wirksamkeit des Staates zu bestimmen” (1792), in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königlichen Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Bd. I/1, Berlin, 1903, p. 142.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

actions". Bildung, according to Humboldt, can reconcile the freedom of men with the coercion of the State since in a subtle way it realizes the State in men themselves. In this perspective Bildung proceeds as a strategic operation of individualisation and totalisation, in which separation and particularisation cannot be disconnected from generalisation and homogenisation. The human subject is the last point of reference of social discourses: the smallest element on the one hand, and the universalised figure on the other hand.

In a third perspective, *the perspective of knowledge* or the epistemological dimension, we can relate the thought structures which are introduced with or transformed in modernity to practices and technologies of power in such a way that they can both be understood as analogous instruments of simultaneous processes of individualisation and totalisation. Consequently, we can read the philosophical pursuit of analytic reduction to elementary units (in the search for foundations) and of the synthetic construction of the whole as a (universally-binding) totality, alongside the analogous power strategies of individualizing and separating individuals and of the construction of the social through internalised generalisation (for example in the contractualist theories of the modern times), as moments of one encompassing apparatus. Here we can put forward the thesis that "Bildung" constitutes a central structure of this theoretical/practical power apparatus. More precisely, knowledge always involves a double relation: it is given, but always given to someone, given ("gegeben") and assigned ("aufgegeben") in the same time. Therefore educational practices which orient themselves to the concept of "Bildung" have to indicate always the point of reference of all knowledge. However, this critical reference to the self-referential character of all knowledge seems to have lead to a different problem which could be described as a "new" absolutism of subjectivity.³¹ The present "boom" of "radical constructivism" can be read as an indication of this development.

5. Abandoning the concept of Bildung?

Apparently, as we have mentioned above, the idea of "Bildung" includes a critical point which we ought not to abandon even if we want to question the usefulness of the idea itself, as we do. In fact, although we want to acknowledge that the critical element in the concept of "Bildung" in relation to the epistemological dimension has still a certain thrust, we do want to question the social and anthropological dimension which hides behind the epistemological dimension.

31 See J. Masschelein, "Can education still be critical?" *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 34(4), 2000, pp. 603-16.

Notwithstanding its critical element, the idea of “Bildung” which was introduced in the 18th and articulated in the 19th century therefore seems to continue something which is apparently as central as it is problematic to our western form of life. Nothing indicates that this form of life can be generalised worldwide. On the contrary, it is a form of self-preservation through permanent exclusion which cannot be generalised.

More precisely, as we have indicated above, we want to stress the complicity of the idea of “Bildung” with the establishment of a “government of individualisation” which obfuscates the difficulty that our subjectivity can only be conceptualised with reference to alterity; that our subjectivity always implies an irreducible withdrawal from oneself, a difference, a “being captured” in relations of dependency and obligation which cannot be recovered or evaded by the individual. As we briefly indicated “Bildung” as encompassing concept is characterized by idea’s of identity, homogeneity and totality and although it knows relations (of world appropriation and self production) these relations are considered to be a “road to” or a phase of transition. Both the educated (wo)men (“Gebildete”) and the “Nation” are marked by unity, transparency and cohesion seen as homogeneity and taking part in a commonality (or generality). Against this, we want to stress an interpretation of subjectivity and sociality as an intersubjectivity marked by unavoidable and irreducible differences. This implies that subjectivity can be developed only as a double relation, a relation to the self in relation to the others. It implies to connect subjectivity (as self relation or self reference) to alterity (as relation to others and not as absolute otherness) in such a way that the proper can only be elucidated starting from the other and vice versa the other only by taking into account the proper.³² The effect of such a perspective would be that heterogeneity, intransparency and differentiability are intruding subjectivity and sociality and transform them by marking them by a crack, a rupture or gap, which cannot be closed or overcome. Regarding subjectivity this crack, rupture or gap could be described as a kind of self-alienation: as the impossibility to (re)present oneself to oneself, to be present to oneself and understand oneself as a whole. Ever lasting reference to others (and otherness), inescapable and irremediable dependence and vulnerability would constitute the other side of this crack. Regarding sociality this would imply that it can neither be conceived as a generalising sum of the different individuals (totalising through generalising) nor as an overarching structure in which individuals would participate. It would imply to think sociality “without foundation”. Lyotard’s understanding of the “différend”³³ which is not sustained by a grounding consensus, but implies differentiability as starting point and structural feature of sociality can be seen as an attempt in this direction. Sociality therefore requires the continuous strife or struggle in which the consciousness

32 See also Narbert Ricken, *Subjektivität und Kontingenz — Markierungen im Pädagogischen Diskurs*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999.

33 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Le Différend*. Paris :Éditions de Minuit, 1983.

remains that the others — no matter how disturbing they are experienced — are the lasting condition for our proper existence. Hence, sociality cannot be elucidated neither merely as society (structure) nor as community (homogeneous essence), but in a certain sense rather as radical and open democracy: as connection through “différend”, through struggle, as “the connection of partition”.³⁴ Such an approach of sociality involves a self struggling with itself (a self-contradicting self) a self marked by difference and incompetence. As we have said earlier, this would mean that we have to stress “self-alienation” (or self-withdrawal) as basic structure of subjectivity: it is only when I am prepared to accept myself as principally incomplete and dependent on others that we can conceive of sociality as “différend” (Lyotard) in a way which is not purely utopian. Our attempt to question the concept of *Bildung* aims rather at drawing attention to ideas which are present in the concept of “*Bildung*” only in a negative sense: the idea of contingency as potentiality and human finitude and of plurality as differential sociality.³⁵

In fact, it seems to us very difficult to relate this perspective to the classic concept of “*Bildung*”, it would require continuous impotent elucidations which would not be able to dissolve common understandings and associations. In other words, we doubt whether the idea of “*Bildung*” as it is invoked and used in our present situation is really able to provoke the development of an alternative to our current dominant form of life and dominant form of subjection i.e to play a role in those struggles which, following Foucault, “question the status of the individual”, asserting “the right to be different and underlining everything which makes individuals truly individuals”, while at the same time “attacking everything which separates the individual, breaks his links with others...forces the individual back on himself and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way”.³⁶ We should try to contribute to a search for ways and words to attack the lack of real alternatives to a specific form of life which now seems to be set as “absolute“ and to raise again the question of being-together i.e the question of justice.

In this perspective our suggestion of giving up this modern concept of “*Bildung*” — or, if one prefer, of “liberal education and cultivation” — as a critical pedagogical concept for the analysis of (post)modern learning societies is but a provocation to discuss and think about other categories and other ways of analysing our present time in a pedagogical/educational perspective of permanent (re-)construction of sociality.

34 N. Lorrax, “Das Band der Teilung”, in: *Gemeinschaften. Positionen zu einer Philosophie des Politischen*, ed. J. Vogl, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1994, pp. 31-64.

35 This would include to take a different theoretical starting point. Contingency could offer such a starting point under the condition that it is taken in a double sense: first as indicating the possibility that it could be otherwise (so introducing a third term beneath necessity and impossibility), secondly as pointing towards finiteness (see N. Ricken, “Diesseits von Relativismus und Universalismus — Kontingenz als Thema und Form kritischer Reflexionen”, in: *Tradition und Kontingenz*, eds. A. Schfer and M. Wimmer, 2002.

36 Foucault, “The subject and power”, pp. 211-12.

6. What can be called critical?

In our last step we want to rough-draw some implications of what we have mentioned above which might be taken simultaneously as elements of a renewed conception of critique.

Especially the modern term of critique is strongly related to the modern concept of autonomy and rational subjectivity. In contrast with a pre-modern conception of critique in which critique means the capacity to distinguish, to examine, to judge and to decide (along) given (and not questioned) criteria, the modern conception of critique has to be spelled precisely without these standards.³⁷ As a result of this, critique has become a principally “not closeable” term and an endless movement, insofar as there is no last archimedic point of view in which critique could be founded. The rational (modern) subject has to examine again and again the questions of “legitimacy” (“Geltung”) in its community with others; its task is not only to criticize the phenomena but also to establish its own criteria of critique at the same time. It can use only a few regulative ideas — especially freedom and equality — as limited orientations. Hence critique has become more and more a formal conception: to overcome one answer by the next one with the consequence that there can be no positive answer but only negative ones.

This fundamental structure of modern criticism as an autonomous, endless and negative process can be read as an implication of all modern conceptions of critique: the classical conception of critique as a negation of (outer) determination in the name of self-determination, the critical-rational conception of falsification developed by Popper or even the conception of ideology critique formulated by Adorno and Horkheimer and Habermas’ conception of a rational discourse and the “contra-factual” idea of “consensus” and “communication”³⁸ can be mentioned as examples. Besides the endless character of critique in these conceptions all of them fall back on a leading idea of “reason” (“Vernunft”) and “truth”— although spelled in quite different ways.

The postmodern problems of critique can be described as a resulting from the decline of modern criteria of critique by analysing human self-determination and human rationality as two forms of empirical destruction (of world and others) and ideological construction (of themselves). In consequence of this, scepticism has become a more and more valuable conception of critique linked to special types of irony³⁹ or even cynism.⁴⁰ Especially Derrida’s conception of “deconstruction” could be read as a postmodern version of critique:

37 E.g. Claus von Borman, “Kritik,” in: *Handbuch Philosophischer Grundbegriffe*, München: Kösel, 1973, pp. 807-23.

38 See Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1982.

39 E.g. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

40 E.g. Peter Sloterdijk, *Kritik der Zynischen Vernunft*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1983.

to reduce constructed identities to their constitutive differences so that all positive conceptions have to be transformed in “differences”.⁴¹

Although we certainly wouldn’t like to deny the efforts and the plausibility of those conceptions of critique as an instrument to unmask “naturalistic identities” as constructed ones and as hidden differences, we would like to mention a possible risk. One effect of these trends (or tendencies) could be a special burn-out of critique in general and an increase of violence at the same time. Confronted with plurality and a situation of several concurring conceptions of life it seems that these are rather tendencies of immunisation that are increasing instead of a new culture of “différend” (Lyotard) which would force one to conduct one’s life in a kind of discursive conflict and communication without any possible consensus. This development seems to lead towards new kinds of a-social manners and to provoke the use of violence in a situation of differences. In our perspective it appears to be necessary to complete the formal conception of critique as a theory of differences, which includes the problems of otherness, in a much more substantial and not only in a formal way. In our perspective on sociality and individuality as linked phenomena of difference critique should deal directly with the fundamental concepts and ideas related to western attitudes. Following Foucault in this respect, critique could be described as a praxis of de-subjectivation i.e. “the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries”.⁴² In fact, the modern concept of the individual as a singular and separated being which is only connected or related to the others through generalization is one of the central moments of modern power and destruction. Especially the notion of “self-preservation” seems to mark the inner logic of this concept which is linked to conceptions of life in general. Tackling this we would like to mention two aspects of a (perhaps) different interpretation of individuality and sociality as inter-subjectivity: the aspects of recognition (1) and experience (2), which are linked together but should not be identified.

(1) If it is plausible to describe the (epi-)genesis of the individual in its own self referentiality as a genesis from the other — without the first and constituting action of others the subject is not able to develop itself⁴³ — and to conceptualize subjectivity as a (self)relation in relations to others which has to be explained as a paradoxical structure of self- and other-referentiality, than the self can be considered as constituted in processes of recognition.⁴⁴ But we do not take up here the issue of recognition in order to stress self-referentiality (recognition as affirmation of the self), but to deconstruct the self as an identity and to mark a radical

41 E.g. Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la Philosophie*, Paris : Éditions de Minuit, 1972.

42 Foucault, “The subject and power”, p. 216.

43 George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society — From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967.

44 E.g. Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung — Zur Moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1992.

“alienation” whereby alienation is not referring here to Rousseau’s or Marx’s notion of estrangement, but rather to Plessner’s “homo absconditus” as “impossibility to be present for oneself and to oneself”.⁴⁵ Precisely because the self is constituted by others, identity as transparent and homogenous totality is an illusion. In this perspective we would like to focus on recognition as a hint to a “fundamental” alienation and self-privation (or self-absence) as a basic structure of human life. However we should be clear that recognition does not imply symmetry and mere self-referentiality. “The concept of reciprocal recognition points towards a struggle, towards a communicative praxis of expectations which reciprocally cross out each other”.⁴⁶ Therefore it implies as a condition for being oneself to give freedom to the other as undetermined being.

In this perspective subjectivity has to be explained as inter-subjectivity in a three dimensioned sense: to be given, to be assigned and to be withdrawn at the same time. As a result of this point of view subjectivity can be understood as a relation-in-relation, as being related with others in my necessary relation to myself. As such the structure of subjectivity is paradoxical: on the one hand, I am the indispensable centre of my world, on the other hand I am a small part of the world of the others; in my relation to myself I am related to others, conducted and limited by others and dependent on others as a condition of me. On the other hand I am myself a condition of others, too. This relationality has to be acknowledged and *practiced* in its paradoxical simultaneity. It relates to finitude in a more general sense.

In our point of view these (in fact very short) indications on recognition could be used as one moment of critique: to unmask latemodern pastoral-power and the government of the individuals as a governing by identity-politics. The illusion of transparency and identity in the sense of totality and realization and fulfilment (“Erfüllung”) is one instrument to be governed in our self-alienation which is conceptualized as a status of the self which might possibly be overcome.⁴⁷ In this perspective to insist on differentiability and irremediable alienation could be a fruitful contribution to critique.

(2) The second point which could or should be developed in our view relates to the concept of experience as a practical and theoretical way out of what can be called also the regime of separation or better immunisation⁴⁸ (as another term for Foucault’s “government

45 See Helmuth Plessner, “Homo Absconditus”, *Gesammelte Schriften* VIII, Frankfurt/M., 1983, pp. 353-66.

46 Gerhard Gamm, “Die Unausdeutbarkeit des Selbst”, *Nicht Nichts — Studien zu einer Semantik des Unbestimmten*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2001, p. 214; Our translation.

47 E.g. Narbert Ricken, “Identitätsspiele und die Intransparenz der Macht. Anmerkungen zur Struktur menschlicher Selbstverhältnisse”, in: *Transitorische Identität — Der Prozeßcharakter des modernen Selbst*, eds. J. Strauband J. Renn, Frankfurt/M.: Campus, 2002.

48 In using the term “immunization” we follow Esposito, according to whom the project of modernity can be described as a project of immunization, R. Esposito, *Communitas. Origine et destin de la Communauté*, Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 2000, p. 27.

by individualisation”). As we indicated earlier critique has to be considered as a praxis. This means that critique is not so much the practice of judging, i.e. “the practice of a legislating subject passing judgement on a deficient reality”⁴⁹ which itself always implies precisely a separation from that what is judged. But critique is in the strong sense a praxis of de-subjectivation in which at the same time a self is build (and constantly rebuild) which is not sustained by the actual power apparatus or regime, its discourses and techniques. That is also why, according to Butler, Foucault can write that “something about critique is related to virtue”.⁵⁰ Critique therefore has rather to do with what could be called *a kind* of attitude or maybe better a *dis*-position or *ex*-position to experience. But, we should be clear about what is meant here by experience. Experience is not referring to a kind of perception or to the phenomenological concept of experience, but to the idea of a limit-experience which has as its function “d’arracher le sujet à lui-même, de faire en sorte qu’il ne soit plus lui-même ou qu’il soit porté à son annéantissement ou à sa dissolution. C’est une entreprise de dé-subjectivation”.⁵¹ Such an experience would allow us to “établir des rapports nouveaux avec ce qui est en question”.⁵² She would include a transgression of the limits of the coherent subjectivity which functions in daily life because she threatens *individual* life. The immunization to which we have pointed is not about forgetting the community in the sense of something definite, in the sense of a kind of identity or something proper, or a value (as in the various kinds of communitarianism and of identity-politics), but it is about forgetting community in the sense of being exposed to experience, because what would experience be other than being-with-some-other (something or someone). Starting from a reconsideration of experience as an event which radically disturbs subjectivity, we could, in our opinion, start to refuse the kind of subjectivity which is imposed on us. Critique then is not so much about a theoretical position but about new and practical ways of relating to oneself and to others which show or open a perspective of critical distance towards the actual power regime without foundation and without separation.

Let us be clear, we don’t want to support something like the values of community-life or of the relations to others. Being-together-with (which would be our translation of community) is not to be conceived as a value (a positive or conservative or traditional value) but as a condition of our existence. We believe that one of the important questions today (a question which is taken up not only by theorists but also in practical initiatives) is

49 Mitchell Dean, *Critical and Effective Histories — Foucault’s Methods and Historical Sociology*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 119.

50 Judith Butler, “Was ist Kritik? Ein Essay über Foucaults Tugend”, *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 50(2), 2002, pp. 249-65

51 Michel Foucault, “Entretien avec Michel Foucault”, In *Dits et écrits. II 1976-1988*, hrsg. D. Defert, F. Ewald and J. Lagrange, Paris: Gallimard Quarto, 1980, p. 862.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 863.

how to develop and think our subjectivity starting from this condition, the condition of being-(together-)with (which is not pleasant, but refers to a burden). It is the reflection on what it means that our being is a being-(together-)with.

The Philosophy of Critical Pedagogy

Nigel Tubbs

In this special volume of essays, and in the symposia which generated them, one of the key themes is that Critical Pedagogy is in crisis.¹ Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, for example, says that this crisis extends to Critical Pedagogy as an educational theory, as a political agenda and as a cultural struggle. Of special challenge, he says, are the post-modern arenas which might help to develop a new philosophical-educational language promoting love, responsibility and solidarity against instrumentalism.²

Reading Peter McLaren's paper, the nature of the crisis comes across as quite different. Post-modern themes he says have compromised Critical Pedagogy's radical commitment to Marxism to the extent that it may be "fatally terminated", collapsed into an "ethical licentiousness and complacent relativism". In short, he states, that "the conceptual net known as Critical Pedagogy has been cast so wide and so cavalierly into post-modernism that the former has become 'domesticated'".³

However, my paper argues that the nature of this crisis lies elsewhere, specifically in the failure of Critical Pedagogy to pursue a philosophical critique of itself, namely, a self-examination of the conditions of its own possibility within modern social and political relations. I hold that Critical Pedagogy has never fully embraced the dialectical challenges which constitute Critical Theory in general and Adorno's work in particular. As such it has never worked with a phenomenological notion of experience nor, remarkably, with a notion of itself as *culture*. It is ironic, is it not, that as Critical Pedagogy spreads itself into multiculturalism and cultural critique, it has never defined for itself a critical notion of culture as the formation and reformation (the production) of the form of the universal.⁴ As we will

- 1 Comments attributed to the essays of other contributors to this volume are taken from original versions of those papers produced for a meeting at Oslo University, August 2002. These comments may or may not have survived in the final versions of these essays.
- 2 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, (ed.), "Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy today — toward a new Critical Language in Education", in *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today*, Haifa 2005, pp.
- 3 Peter McLaren, "Critical Pedagogy in the age of terror", in Ilan Gur-Ze'ev (ed.), *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today*, pp. 70-94.
- 4 Hegel states "the work of culture is the production of the form of universality" in *The Philosophy of History*, (1956) New York: Dover Publications, p. 417.

see below, the lack of such a notion of culture underpins the failure of Critical Pedagogy to understand its own formation and reformation within and by abstract, bourgeois modern social relations or, therefore, to have a concept of education as critique which is adequate to its own aporetic structure.

What is the Objective?

The objective for Critical Pedagogy was shaped in large part by readings of Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it". This juxtaposition by Marx of understanding and change is a self-conscious response to his understanding of Hegel. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844)*, Marx argues that for Hegel the object is merely illusory and is "self-alienation",⁵ but is superseded in objective knowing.⁶ In other words, Marx reads Hegel not only as overcoming alienation from the object but in doing so, and paraphrasing Feuerbach, that Hegel understands thinking "to be the sensuous world, reality, life".⁷ Thus, Marx says of Hegel that true existence is not in the world but in the philosophies of religion, right, etc. This gives rise to the widely held belief that Marx turns Hegel on his head.

However, this account is simplistic when one explores the ways in which Marx and Hegel are able to account for the "untruth of [the] principle"⁸ that each applies in their critiques of objectivity. Put a different way, in understanding the illusory nature of dogmatic knowledge (natural law) how do each of them understand the contingency of *this* new critical understanding? Put a third way, can they recognise the way that the social relations which are the object of their enquiry re-form the object, the enquiry and enquirer? And put a fourth way, does each understand its critique as culture?

Whilst Hegel has a notion of phenomenological experience in which subjectivity is known as a culture and as misrecognition, it is not always clear that Marx does. At critical moments, for example in thesis 1, Marx falls back on dualisms of materialism/idealism, and theory/praxis.⁹ The notable exception, and un-coincidentally the source for much Critical Theory, is his critique of commodity fetishism where subjectivity is aware of its own misrepresentation within a mode of production and of its misrepresentation as, or the necessary illusion of, the subjectivity of that misrepresentation. This comes very close to Marx's understanding in the

5 K. Marx, *Early Writings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975, p. 392

6 Marx, *ibid.*, p. 392

7 *Ibid.*, p. 392

8 *Ibid.*, p. 393.

9 See Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, London: Athlone Press, 1981, p. 215.

Manuscripts that the notion of objectivity, which he seeks to retrieve from Hegel, nevertheless shares the Hegelian speculative character of being a contradiction with three elements, in this case, true life, estranged life and their relation in being known. This triadic relation is a subjectivity that understands its relation to the objective as one which is both partly true and partly illusory. Anything less posits a subjectivity *either* unchanged by its understanding (its critique) *or* changed by its understanding (its critique). Either way, seen as changed or unchanged, the real political education of the critique remains suppressed. For example, Gillian Rose has commented that

to subject “so-called natural representations” to doubt is still to presuppose that those representations are natural, but this is precisely what should be doubted. It is not a matter of re-establishing the validity of those representations on one’s own conviction, but of a despair which questions representation as such, and which seeks “conscious insight into the untruth of phenomenal knowledge”, into the ‘so-called’ naturalness of the representation.... This path is self-perficient, self-completing, because it is more radical than mere doubt... [and] contains the criterion of its untruth in itself.¹⁰

In other words, the understanding of understanding is always the work of the third partner, who knows “change” not as result or non-result, but as their relation. This education changes the notion of change in line with itself. Marx and Hegel, in this respect, share the *spiritual* view that the passion of and the suffering for freedom are already our abstract consciousness separated from its object, granted formal universality as the bourgeois property owning person, but known objectively as the separation and relation, or as the work, the struggle, that is the third partner. Marx’s definition of philosophical consciousness and its relation to abstract consciousness is thus as follows. “A being which is not itself an object for a third being has no being for its *object*, i.e., it has no objective relationships and its existence is not objective... A being which is not the object of another being therefore presupposes that no objective being exists”.¹¹

Whilst Marx did not develop this educative phenomenology of political self-consciousness and critique, and did not therefore develop a notion of culture, Critical Theory picked up its significance in the critique of commodity fetishism. But Critical Pedagogy did not. As such, whilst the objective is still possible in the dialectic of enlightenment, in Critical Pedagogy, whether Marxist or post-modern, it is not.

The difference can be seen in some of the contributions to this collection. One non-phenomenological version of Critical Pedagogy is still represented by the Marxism of

¹⁰ Rose, *ibid.*, p. 153.

¹¹ Marx, *Op. Cit.*, p. 390. The last sentence can be read dualistically, but such a reading is not consistent with the first sentence.

McLaren. His Critical Pedagogy retains the dialectic as an analytical tool of the antinomy of abstract labour power and as a foundation for political praxis, but pays little heed to the philosophical and political complexities that inhere within the teacher/student relationship. This represents his allegiance to the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, that change be given precedence over understanding. He still holds the educational practice of radical educators to be to ‘disrupt’ and damage the rule of capital by ‘inserting’ principles into their teaching and thus “resolving contradictions”. It has, as Nietzsche would say, the smell of cruelty about it.¹² Not for the reasons however that are so often aimed at Marxism. At least Marxism retains a notion of the objective, even if it is unable to avoid recreating and strengthening bourgeois law when it fails to comprehend the relation between the experience of the object and the conditions of the possibility of that experience. The slide from Critical Theory into more discourse-based theorising, on the other hand, eschews the objective altogether. In *Disturbing Pleasures* Giroux announced “I relinquished all claims to objectivity”.¹³ What he really renounced was his difficult relation to objectivity. This difficult relation, this suffering, this subjectivity, takes a specific form within bourgeois property law, one which offers the illusion of being able to renounce the objective. Such is the illusory sovereignty of the bourgeois master. Giroux renounces the meaning and the objectivity of contingency altogether. What Marx says of Hegel (wrongly) we can now say of Giroux and of all discourse theorising, that they are offended “not by estranged objectivity but by objectivity as such”.¹⁴ This offence is the victory of universal private property — all objects are things, including man himself, and as such he has no objectivity and no objective, only relative (exchange) value.

The failures of Critical Pedagogy, then, lie rooted in elements of misunderstandings of Critical Theory, and in particular the triadic relation of understanding, change and objectivity in Hegel and Marx. This misunderstanding is pervasive in many of its key concepts, but the most important has to be that of “overcoming”. This term is an abstraction of the political (phenomenological) education of consciousness in its work and struggles in the world. To “overcome” has always carried the implication of a struggle, a contradiction and an alienation that can be resolved, and this despite the fact that so much Critical Theory explains why this is not the case. Resolution presupposes an objective understanding unlike that described in Hegel and Marx. In the latter, objectivity is in suffering; “passion is man’s essential power vigorously striving to attain its object”.¹⁵ In Critical Pedagogy, this suffering is suppressed by the view that either the third partner is the same as subjectivity, an identity thinking that is not

12 Nietzsche says this in the *Genealogy of Morals* about the categorical imperative; second essay, section 6.

13 Henry Giroux, (1994) *Disturbing Pleasures*, London: Routledge, p. 136.

14 Karl Marx, (1975), p. 392.

15 Karl Marx, (1975), p. 390.

critical even according to its own idea of the ideological illusions of modern understanding, or that the third partner is totally, universally and unequivocally other than subjectivity, an even more pernicious form of identity thinking which abstracts contingency from itself in order to “know” (or overcome) its spiritual implications. Michael Peters’ paper is an example of the latter, offering a “cultural” analysis that, methodologically, is already free from its own implications as a culture, whilst being already re-formed by the conditions it is attempting to “describe”.¹⁶

If the objective of (Marxist) Critical Pedagogy is to “overcome”, and the objective of post-modern Critical Pedagogy is not to overcome (for fear of repeating domination) then, paraphrasing Adorno, we might say that Critical Pedagogy is sundered into “torn halves of an integral freedom to which, however, they do not add up”.¹⁷ Critique has not overthrown the domination of universal private property relations because (to quote Marx on communism) “the return of man into himself”¹⁸ or the “solution”¹⁹ to bourgeois contradiction has always been opposed and defeated by the actuality of its pre-determination in and by the very conditions it seeks to overthrow.

Gur-Ze’ev’s powerful critique of Giroux and “most other prominent thinkers of today’s Critical Pedagogy” is that they have never shared this most difficult (non)-totality of the dialectic. And on the other hand, against the *laissez faire* of pluralism, Gur-Ze’ev states, and let us read this carefully, that the lessening of explicit assaults on dangerous knowledge and narratives — this post-modern condition as he calls it — adds to the sophistication of the normalising educational apparatus. This, he says, while being conceived by its disciples and protagonists alike as an alternative to modernist hierarchies, a threat to dogmatism and to illusions concerning universally valid, true or objective knowledge and values. Such openness, for Gur-Ze’ev, exiles spirit. It is as if he is saying (to paraphrase Levinas) that there is gold in the dust that discourse theorists are shaking off.²⁰

To conclude this opening section, we must note that Critical Pedagogy has never had a concept of education adequate to its own determination in and by modern social relations. Education has been conceived as *either* overcoming, *or* not overcoming, a dualism that has no idea of its own education, no idea of itself as a representation of the form of universality that is its condition of possibility. What education in Critical Pedagogy has never grasped is

16 Michael Peters, “Critical Pedagogy and the futures of Critical Theory” in I. Gur-Ze’ev (ed.), *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today*, pp. 35-48.

17 Theodor Adorno, *Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno, The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940*, ed. H. Lonitz, trans. N. Walker, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, p. 130.

18 Marx, *Op. Cit.*, p. 347.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 348.

20 Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, “Counter-education and the exile of spirit (introduction)”, in I. Gur-Ze’ev (ed.), *Destroying the Other’s Collective Memory*, New York: Peter Lang Pub., 2003, p. 14.

that alienation is no longer an appropriate description of abstract consciousness in modern bourgeois societies. Alienation is the state of a consciousness that is unaware of its relation to the third partner as itself and is characterised by the transparent domination of pre-bourgeois societies. This is not a characteristic, however, of modern social relations where relations of dominations are rendered opaque. “An abstract consciousness is one which *knows* that it is not united with ethical life. It is determined by abstract law to know itself as formally free, identical and empty”.²¹ Critical Pedagogy misunderstands the notion of objectivity, and of spirit, in Marx and in Hegel, when it sets out, in Brechtian fashion, to overcome alienation in and through its revelation. With its own educationally less significant duality of theory and practice, it can only dominate the much more complex notion of subjectivity that it works on. It underestimates the truth of abstract consciousness, that we are partly exactly what we appear to be, abstracted from the universal but not so alienated that either the abstraction or the universal are unknown to us. What Critical Pedagogy forgets and why it must only be able to repeat domination is that it seeks to overcome exactly the consciousness that is our passion, our suffering and our objectivity. “It is only such an abstract consciousness which can be potentially revolutionary, which can conceive the ambition to acquire a universal content or determination”.²² To forget this is always to tell students that their abstract consciousness is wrong and needs to be corrected. “This is to fail to acknowledge that reality is [*already*] ethical, and it is to risk creating a terror, or reinforcing lawlessness or strengthening bourgeois law in its universality and arbitrariness”.²³

Doubtless, critical pedagogues both Marxist and post-modern will ask how can such a philosophical critique achieve anything? For the former, such a philosophy of Critical Pedagogy privileges understanding over change, for the latter it privileges change (teleology) over understanding (pluralism). This is exactly the point. The philosophy of Critical Pedagogy requires us to be teachable about subjectivity within the whole of the difficult relation, and not to offer surrogate explanations for that difficulty. For Critical Pedagogy to become teachable,²⁴ it will have to take up Horkheimer and Adorno’s challenge that it must examine itself.²⁵ Retrieving this critical imperative re-opens the relation to the objective, to the suffering in that relation, to the social and political formation of the relation and to the re-formation of all attempts to change the world. If we posit that nothing happens in this experience then we are truly lost, for it would mean that we were unaware of the complexities of the relation, and of our eternally returning equivocation within them. But we do know.

21 Rose, *Op. Cit.*, p. 219.

22 *Ibid.*

23 *Ibid.*

24 I have discussed the concept of “teachability” in *Educational Theory*, winter 2003, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 75-90. See also N. Tubbs, *Contradiction of Enlightenment*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997.

25 Theodor Adorno and M. Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London: Verso, 1979, p. xv.

Every time a student experiences the contradictions of the universal and the particular, perhaps especially in the power of the radical or pluralist teacher, they know that they know, yet do not know what it is that they know. To re-cognise this as a critical education requires our philosophical education regarding this difficult, aporetic experience of objectivity. Such philosophical work is as hard for critical theorists as it is for critical pedagogues, but it is true work. Such teachability is spiritual work for it re-cognises truth in its modern distorting and distorted forms of both object and subject. It is cultural work for it knows its own implication within the “acknowledgement of actuality and the possibility of change”.²⁶ It is religious for it retrieves our suffering in relation to the absolute. But it is philosophical because it knows that genuinely critical education is critical of itself, right down to the political/structural failures that constitute it.

Pedagogy and Social Relations

If the objective has been misrecognised within Critical Pedagogy’s understanding of critique, it has suffered the same fate in respect to pedagogy. The very term “pedagogy”, having its roots in a scientific notion of teaching method, betrays the misrecognition in Critical Pedagogy of its own vocation and culture. It matters not in philosophical terms whether Critical Pedagogy is for a specific pedagogy (Marxism) or against all predeterminations of pedagogies and outcomes (pluralism), or even that pedagogy is claimed as praxis, the misrecognition of the relation to the object is the same, and domination is the result in each case.

What is a method? A method is a presupposition of a relation to an object masquerading as the absence of such a relation. The hidden relation is the condition of the method by which the relation to the object is then to be established. The tautology in this positing is clear. A method assumes the freedom to establish a relation to the object which already exists. But the social and political significance of this tautology is much more far reaching. It is precisely because the prior relation to the object is hidden that consciousness believes itself “free” to establish such a relation. Grounds for the establishing of the relation are therefore left unaware of their own political predetermination. Put another way, all methodology falls into a natural law theorising where the apparent relation of consciousness and its object is taken to be a non-relation, or a relation yet to be established. This is precisely the nature of formally free property relations. The domination of the object is hidden behind the freedom which the

²⁶ Rose, *Op. Cit.*, p. 218.

master and the object seem to have for each other. The object is free to be owned, and I am free to own it. The prior relation, of course, is that each is already determined in relation to the other through property law.

But this misrecognition is compounded. The subject is taken to be free from relation and therefore freely able to establish a relation. The object is taken to be other, or for an other, and as such is merely a thing. Thus in the natural sciences the observer can study the object “objectively“, i.e. in its own “natural” state. This, as many have pointed out, repeats the misrecognition of nature as a thing, subjecting it to the will of the free bourgeois consciousness and turning it into a possession. This misrecognition is more pronounced when, for example, a teacher treats the students as objects or things which exist for the teacher. Such a methodology is sometimes what is unfairly referred to as the didactic method, whilst the attempts to recognise the student as “for itself” are often equally unfairly labelled child-centred. The point is that *both* are methodologies, and both miss the predetermination of their relation within bourgeois property law.

What in essence, then, method, including pedagogy, misrecognises is the formal universality of bourgeois social relations. The free person, and the object which is for another, is not a “natural” or undetermined relation. It is exactly the relation of modern private property where the property relation, or the relation of domination, is not transparent. It seems obvious that I can “have“ an object for there is no prior relation between me and it, or between it and anyone else. If there is a prior relation then it is only to remind me that the thing is already someone else’s property. They have only exercised the same freedom that I now have, to make some-“thing” mine.²⁷ It follows that the critique of property relations has more work to do than appears on the surface. It is not enough to say “abolish“ private property, or “let no one own anything”, for that is not a critique of the illusions of natural law, it is only another reorganisation of the same illusory principle of freedom towards the object. Equally, in a multicultural vein, the idea that each “culture” must be taken equally at face value is to presuppose that no prior relation exists and that the freedom exists to treat all others as the same. This kind of equality is another re-organisation of a principle which already dominates the objective, but dominates it precisely by masking its domination.

Method, therefore, is inextricably implicated within modern property relations. The very concept of a method is grounded in a relation to an object that hides itself, making it appear possible that a relation is yet to be established. Whilst the objective to achieve a different kind of freedom is realised in our failing towards that objective, there is, nevertheless, a more fundamental critique of this domination to be made than exists within Critical Pedagogy, one with profound educational implications.

27 The fact that there may be little or nothing of the means of production left for me to own is just the reality of the market.

Against the more usual interpretation of there being “no possible compromise between Hegel and Nietzsche”,²⁸ I argue now that Hegel and Nietzsche in fact make the same critique of method. In Hegel the illusion of the “beginning” is the core of his philosophy. The section ‘With What Must Science Begin’ in the *Science of Logic* shows how a beginning with either the immediate or the mediated is impossible. In his own version of the dialectic of enlightenment he notes that “immediacy is itself an expression of reflection and contains a reference to its distinction from what is mediated”.²⁹ We know this better today as the observation that contingency is universal and that all abstract presuppositions of natural beginnings are only a misrecognition of prior social and political determination. But whilst this critique is familiar, Hegel’s consistency in pursuing the critique is not. The problem with the knowledge that contingency is universal and that natural beginnings cannot be made, is that un-philosophically it misses *its own* contingency. If the universality of contingency is taken to mean either that all are equal because none enjoy foundational status or that this universal contingency renders all universality erroneous (as in multiculturalism and the critique of the absolute) this is only further misrecognition of the object. To posit that the absolute either is or is not true is to have the true as an object before us and against which a relation (a method for its evaluation) can be established. This is still the domination of consciousness and its relation to the thing determined within and by private property relations. To know contingency as untruth is to avoid the difficulty, the aporia, that one has brought to the judgement a criterion of truth that is itself free from the judgement upon contingency. In other words, to judge contingency as a critique of the true, one has to posit a criterion of truth against which to measure it. When one is truly contingent, one is not able to judge for or against the true; one can only judge the truth of contingency in and as that equivocation. Only philosophy explores the true in this difficult relation. But it does so always recognising that our relation to the object is not dualistic, the illusion of private property, but is triadic, aware that our knowing of our relation to the object is also itself an object in relation to an other. It is here, as we will see below, that Critical Pedagogy can undertake critique “from the standpoint of its philosophical foundations”.³⁰

Hegel’s critique of method is clear and instructive. In the *Shorter Logic* he notes that Kant advised us

to become acquainted with the instrument before we undertake the work for which it is to be employed... But the examination of knowledge can only be carried out by an act of knowledge. To examine this so-called instrument is the same thing as to know

28 Gilles Deleuze, G. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, p. 195.

29 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Science of Logic*, London: Humanities Press, 1969, p. 69.

30 Rose, *Op. Cit.*, p. 2.

it. But to seek to know before we know is as absurd as the wise resolution of Scholasticus not to venture into the water until he had learned to swim.³¹

Hegelian critique renders explicit not only the contradiction of seeking to know before we know but, more significantly, the way that the presupposition carries with it notions of truth whilst asserting precisely the opposite. In guarding against error by seeking to examine the instrument, or, the same, in guarding against error by knowing the contingency of knowledge upon its being a product of thought, Hegel asks “should we not be concerned as to whether this fear of error is not just the error itself?”³² He continues,

this fear takes something — a great deal in fact — for granted as truth, supporting its scruples and inferences on what is itself in need of prior scrutiny to see if it is true. To be specific, it takes for granted certain ideas about cognition as an *instrument* and as a *medium*, and assumes that there is a *difference between ourselves and this cognition*. Above all, it presupposes that the Absolute stands on one side and cognition on the other... what calls itself fear of error reveals itself rather as fear of truth.³³

This is not mere sophistry. It is, rather, the critique of the conditions of possibility of experience that are predetermined in and by “free” abstract reason. When critique absolves itself from the awareness of this prior determination, be it by asserting the Absolute positively or negatively, then a merely positing self-consciousness, a reflective self-consciousness, is granted “natural” status. When critique is merely reflective rather than negative, then critique “is essentially the presupposing of that from which it is the return”,³⁴ precisely the substance of the dialectic of enlightenment in Horkheimer and Adorno.

Method, then, in Hegel, is always merely a positing by a self-consciousness that does not acknowledge itself as positing and posited. Nietzsche makes exactly the same observation about method. Specifically, in *Beyond Good and Evil* he challenges us to suppose that the only thing we can accept as “real” is desire or passion. Even thinking, he says, “is merely a relation of these drives to each other”.³⁵ In this “experiment”, he continues, it is clear that this supposition is also adequate for understanding the material world. All, therefore, is will, and since will can affect only will, all effects of will *are* will, or will-to-power. Taken as a critique of metaphysics, in fact this is a critique of critique itself. The critique of metaphysics is only another effect. This does not therefore mean that such a critique (of metaphysics or anything else) is true or false, it means on the contrary that all such critical judgements are

31 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel Hegel, *Hegel's Shorter Logic*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 14.

32 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 47.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 47. Original italics.

34 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel Hegel, *Science of Logic*, London: Humanities Press, 1969, p. 401.

35 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, New York: Modern Library, trans. W. Kaufmann, 1968, p. 237.

methodological. Will-to-power is not an alternative form of critique; it is the relation of internal and external affecting itself as its own effect. It is, as Nietzsche says, “the conscience of method”,³⁶ or “the world viewed from the inside”.³⁷

Genealogy, like phenomenology, concerns the aporia of beginnings or origins. It is important to remember that Nietzsche says of will-to-power that its supposition is “an experiment”,³⁸ and that in the end “not only is it permitted to make this experiment; the conscience of method demands it”.³⁹ There is a necessary contradiction here. A method has no conscience because it takes itself already to be free to relate to the object. But equally, to know method dialectically in and by its relationship to the object is also not the conscience of method. The conscience of method has a triadic structure that is neither “value freedom” nor the reflective category of the contingency of method. It is the will-to-power which is both of them. Conscience in the *Genealogy of Morals* is not merely a subjective/reflective category; it is an attitude of will-to-power in relation to itself. The experiment, or the conscience of method, calls into question the morality of morality, but like Marx and Hegel, this self-revaluation must itself be an object for a third party, even if it can only be supposed methodologically as an experiment. Just as good and evil are will-to-power being exercised, so subject and object are a relation whose own objectivity is a “failing towards” itself.⁴⁰ For Nietzsche, as for Hegel, all method is an abstraction of subject from object, but equally, all abstraction is method known to itself as that self-relation, or objectivity. If there is no objectivity in Nietzsche, or of will-to-power for itself as eternal return, then not only is Zarathustra not a teacher, he is also never formed and re-formed in and by his work.⁴¹

Philosophy as Education

This philosophical critique of critique, and of pedagogy in Critical Pedagogy, that we are undertaking here is the occasion of doubts about Critical Pedagogy’s ability to learn from its own difficult experiences, or to develop a concept of education in line with its philosophical and aporetic activity. In contrast to the educational significance of the triadic relations of knowledge in Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche, Critical Pedagogy when it is critical is not

36 *Ibid.*, p. 238.

37 *Ibid.*

38 *Ibid.*, p. 237.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 238.

40 Gillian Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p. 94.

41 I have explored such a reading of Nietzsche in N. Tubbs, *Philosophy’s Higher Education*, Dordrecht: Kluwer 2004.

pedagogical, and when it is pedagogical is not critical. If it is to be both and neither at the same time then it must be so objectively in the sense that we have explored above, i.e. triadically. Critical Pedagogy works most often with an abstract notion of education as “overcoming”. However, objectivity as we are exploring it is not an overcoming; it is the truth, indeed, of *not-overcoming*. Critical Pedagogy excludes the philosophical foundations of such triadic thinking, preferring to remain analytically and tautologically bound to the repetitions of merely dualistic critique. As long as critical pedagogues hold that educational theory and practice either is or is not true, they continue to suppress the education implicit in the whole of the either/or relation. This either/or remains the suppression of the objective relation that the relation has to itself. And if there is no relation there is no learning.

One of the most insightful studies of this spiritual relation of learning is to be found in Kierkegaard. There is not space to go into great detail here but two themes can be introduced.

First, Kierkegaard’s critique of Socrates in *The Concept of Irony* reveals the limitations of the negative or dialectical standpoint. Unable to think itself, Socrates remains a negative teacher who asked questions “without any interest in the answers except to suck out the apparent content by means of the question and thereby to leave an emptiness behind”.⁴² To be such a teacher requires a kind of irony, but an irony that has no objectivity in and for itself. The dictum “know thyself” contained nothing more than the separating, the singling out... from the other”.⁴³ Therefore, Kierkegaard continues, Socrates

placed individuals under his dialectical vacuum pump, pumped away the atmospheric air they were accustomed to breathing and left them standing there. For them, everything was now lost, except to the extent that they were able to breathe ethereal air. Socrates, however, had nothing more to do with them but hastened on to new ventures.⁴⁴

For Kierkegaard the achievement of Socrates was that negatively speaking subjectivity “made its appearance in the work”.⁴⁵ But it was only raised to “a still higher form”⁴⁶ in Kant, for here, argues Kierkegaard, negative subjectivity was able to become its own object, not merely reflectively, but as an already reflecting subjectivity. With Kant, Fichte, and finally Hegel the negative developed as “subjectivity raised to the second power, a subjectivity’s subjectivity, which corresponds to reflection’s reflection”.⁴⁷ As we have seen, this “objectivity” of relation to itself (or more accurately the positing of positing) characterises the triadic critiques of Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche. In the guise of Johannes Climacus,

42 Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 36.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 242.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 242.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 242.

Kierkegaard gives a dramatic account of this spiritual structure of philosophical critique. Whilst the categories of reflection are “always dichotomous”,⁴⁸ the categories of consciousness “are trichotomous”.⁴⁹ “If there were nothing but dichotomies, doubt would not exist, for the possibility of doubt resides precisely in the third, which places the two in relation to each other”.⁵⁰ With Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche, Climacus describes this third, or doubt, not as an objectivity that alleviates itself, but as an “interest”⁵¹ which both presupposes its object yet results from the relation to the object. This triadic objectivity is spiritual, educational and critical. It is remarkable, says Climacus, “that when one is divided in the world of mind, there are three, never two... as soon as I as mind become two, I am *eo ipso* three”.⁵²

The second theme to draw attention to is from Kierkegaard’s *Philosophical Fragments*. Here he argues that if teachers do not move beyond the Socratic then they teach students to doubt, to criticise and to question, but without the educational significance that is attached to such work. Negation is easy for a teacher. One simply renders student’s ideals and beliefs contingent and robs them of the matter-of-fact objectivity that they held. When the student laments “you have taken away everything I believed in and left me with nothing”, the Socratic teacher has nothing further to say. But for the spiritual teacher this mourning of the world, this “grave of its life”,⁵³ is inaugurated mourning⁵⁴ and is the beginning of education, not its end. It is now, in relation to itself, that the mourning can develop an understanding of itself as work, as involving the third party, or as learning in and of itself. It is in relation to this learning, now, or spiritually, that teacher and student can see how integrity, truthfulness and courage are possible in the modern world. To be true to one’s learning is to act with integrity in the face of doubt and struggle. This is not the action of the seducer who negates and runs. It is the act of the spiritual teacher and critic who negates and then stays to work with the work, to try and work now for the struggle to become the subject and substance of the student. As Kierkegaard says, “the respect for the learner which recognises that he is himself the inwardness of truth, is precisely the teacher’s inwardness”.⁵⁵

Kierkegaard pursues this spiritual nature of the philosophical teacher in *Philosophical Fragments*. In a discussion of the teacher/student relationship Kierkegaard shows the paradox of being “the occasion”⁵⁶ of a student’s learning. If the critical teacher seeks to be the

48 Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 169.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 170.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

53 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 132.

54 See G. Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, chapter 3.

55 Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Princeton University Press, trans. D.F. Swanson and W. Lowrie, 1968, p. 217.

56 Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 13.

occasion of doubt or critique, then they have to recognise the aporia of their work. The very idea of “making” students become critical through doubt, either in ideology critique or in deconstruction, is a misrecognition of the relation to the object. For as long as the student is the object of the teacher’s task, the latter will always work in opposition to itself. Teachers will not be teaching doubt at all, they will only be seeking to reorganise knowledge from one category to another, from incorrect to correct or, in a more post-modern vein, from less authentic to more authentic. This is doubt wielded against the student, but it is not the occasion of a student’s education into doubt. Put more simply, and recalling Rose’s comments above regarding revolutionary consciousness, when doubt is aimed against the student in such ways, such teaching misses the fact that the student’s understanding is already *partly right*. As we saw above, it is only the abstract consciousness that can be and is already potentially self-critical. To presuppose merely that the abstract or the ideological is wrong and must be overcome, precisely suppresses the potential that is required.

Kierkegaard works through this in terms of recollection and repetition. If we fail to move beyond the Socratic, as Kierkegaard puts it, then recollection does not have its objective element. Recollection here merely means that the student’s previous untruth has been “overcome”. But what it does not mean is that the student has become this “untruth” of overcoming. For this to be the case, recollection must be repeated forwards as well as backwards, and this means an objectivity in and as that relation. Whilst the critical teacher shows that the student was wrong, the philosophical teacher always recognises that the student was partly right. This recognition is the critique of the crude models of overcoming that are ubiquitous in Critical Pedagogy. The critical teacher expects the student to “change” with their new understanding of previous illusions. The philosophical teacher knows that the new understanding is not *instead* of the illusion, but of the *universality of illusion*. This is very different. The latter equivocation is a critique of the critical pedagogue. Doubt can only be taught to recognise itself. It is its own gift. Put another way, philosophically, the moment of education is a critique of its own presuppositions of theory and practice, and of subject and object.

The moment emerges precisely in the relation of the eternal resolution to the unequal occasion. If this is not the case then we return to the Socratic and do not have the god or the eternal resolution or the moment.⁵⁷

Here “the pupil is the occasion for the teacher to understand himself [and] the teacher is the occasion for the pupil to understand himself”⁵⁸ but in a way very different from that described in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Freire in terms of the teacher who is student and

57 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

the student who is teacher. In the latter the moment of reconciliation is equal with itself. Only in the former is the inequality of the finite and infinite retained as education, or present without new forms of suppression.

Another way of thinking about this is through the dialectic of enlightenment. This takes us to the very heart of the aporetic education that lies within Critical Theory and which is the substance of the philosophy of Critical Pedagogy. The phenomenological experience of the culture of Critical Pedagogy, its formation and re-formation, is the dialectic of enlightenment. To change students one must first understand them; but in understanding one understands that the students are *not* known. This is the change of understanding and the understanding of change. Myth is already enlightenment; enlightenment returns to myth. In one way at least, post-modern pedagogy was a response to the implicit tyranny of deleting false consciousness and replacing it with re-humanised consciousness. Whilst attacking (deconstructing) the metaphysical presuppositions of the cogito means for McLaren that the dialectic of labour is erased, for discourse theorists it represents an insurrection of knowledges subjugated under such world-historical and totalising theoretical perspectives. But, with McLaren, “dialogue friendly circles” and “feel good” curricula also lack the comprehension of themselves as a culture, as changed in and by their work. In the same way as above, students are partly exactly what they appear to be — oppressed students — and this demands respect and recognition, not assimilation into the tolerant circle. In the name of differences the one thing that the circle does not respect is that students are different from the circle. If there is no teacher, students have nothing to cut themselves against. They require the difficulty of the teacher’s authority to confirm that their relation to the polis is at best uneasy and at worst (or best) something from which they are excluded.

To summarise then, what is included in Kierkegaard and in the dialectic of enlightenment, but not in Critical Pedagogy, is an awareness of the way doubt re-forms itself. This re-formation is formative and is our philosophical education. If it remains unrecognised, the critical pedagogue fails to move beyond the Socratic and is not the occasion of a student’s education that carries a decisive and eternal significance. But recognised as our education, the teacher learns again that doubt is not a weapon to be wielded against its objects, it is, rather, its own truth. Only in the difficulty is the objective.

Critical Pedagogy After Adorno

Andreas Gruschka

I. Communication Problems

Theodor W. Adorno's relation to pedagogy was characterized by (in the literal sense) a fundamental ambivalence. Besides art, formation and education to him were organs of practical enlightenment and as such bearers of hope. His perhaps most widely read text begins with the famous: "[...] demand that Auschwitz never be again is the first in education".¹ It is probably the most urgent formula of a pedagogical postulate in the post war era. It has become *the* pedagogical imperative. "The emotiveness of school today, its moral earnestness is that amongst the existing — as far as it is aware of it — only the school is capable of directly working towards the de-barbarization of mankind".² Now, Adorno did not optimistically address this task light-heartedly at public education. He demanded, "that it become aware of the disastrous heritage of ideas heavily weighing on it".³ This he applied to the reflection of practical pedagogues, their self-enlightenment about the taboos of their profession tying their practice to the blind reproduction of the existing — and he meant this to include the academic pedagogues as well. When, inspired by Hellmut Becker, he read contemporary pedagogical authors (it was the dusk of the so-called geisteswissenschaftliche and existentialist pedagogy), he was frightened by their "second-hand profundity".⁴ With regards to its own sphere, the pedagogical literature of his time seemed to him to fear enlightenment like the angel the devil's fire and instead to pursue the blind Idealization of an uncomprehended practice.

Knowing of its taboo-ridden heritage, Adorno looked at the "pedagogical business" from a distance and with a sense of rejection. Of this is given eloquent testimony by the *taboos*

1 Theodor W. Adorno, "Erziehung zur Mündigkeit", in: *Gesammelte Schriften* 10(2), Frankfurt am Main, 1997, p. 674.

2 Theodor W. Adorno, "Tabus über dem Lehrberuf", in: *Gesammelte Schriften* 10(2), Frankfurt am Main, 1997, p. 672.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 673.

4 Theodor W. Adorno, "Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit", in: *Gesammelte Schriften* 10(2), Frankfurt am Main, 1997, p. 569.

about the teaching profession. In this text, he draws attention to the education for coldness, the inability if not the impossibility of the teacher to enter into an untroubled relationship with his pupils. If the teachers took an entirely objective attitude vis a vis the task, they appeared to be “cold and inhuman” in the eyes of the children.⁵ If, however, they tried to approach the children in a subjective and warm manner, this often and illusionarily turned into a false closeness and meant just another way of transforming children into dispositional objects of an education which in the final analysis furthered the integration into the already existing and thus contributed to civic coldness.

With respect to the cultivating task of education, the teacher was also surrounded by a bad “odium”. He really did not stand up for anything with his actions, which like all “activities of circulation are a little suspicious, [he- AG] draws some of the general dislike on to himself”.⁶

Classroom instruction confronts pupils with subject matters in such a way that a positive educational process is obstructed. “The problem of the immanent untruth of pedagogy is that the matter prosecuted is tailored for the recipients and therefore is not done for its own sake. Rather, the matter is pedagogized [i.e. didactized — A.G.]. This alone indicates that the children are likely to feel unconsciously betrayed. [...]. Max Scheller once said that he was pedagogically effective only because he never treated his students pedagogically. If I am permitted the personal remark, I can only confirm this with my own experience. Success as academic teacher is obviously due to the absence of any calculated influence, the relinquishment of persuasion”.⁷

Against his reservations, the practical pedagogue Adorno comes through in these remarks. One of the few merits of his study on “the intellectual foundation of the republic”⁸ lies in the proof of Adorno’s incredibly intense attempts to enlighten the republic via press, in the Cologne train station, and in diverse academies, via broadcast and television, without patronizing his audience or administering homoeopathic dosages of didactically prepared subject matter⁹. If we read today what especially Rolf Tiedemann’s edition of the lectures reveal about the academic teacher Adorno, we are surprised by the intensity with which Adorno sought to relate to his students in this lonely monological form of teaching. In his teaching he was anything but scornful of pedagogically defined communication. At the same time, this practice draws attention to the almost aversive attitude towards a pedagogization of communication.¹⁰ This could be misunderstood as: I want my cake and eat it, too.

5 Adorno, “Tabus über dem Lehrberuf”, p. 669.

6 Adorno, “Tabus über dem Lehrberuf”, pp. 661f.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 661-62.

8 cp., C. Albrecht et al., *Die Intellektuelle Gründung der Bundesrepublik*, Frankfurt am Main, 1999

9 cp., Wolfgang Denecke, “Adorno und der Äther“, in: *Pädagogische Korrespondenz*, Heft 26, Wetzlar, 2001, pp. 73-79.

10 Die während des Adornojahres von schier ungezählten Zeitgenossen wiedergegebene öffentliche Rede von der Unverständlichkeit der Vorlesungen ist, wenn man sie nun als Texte liest, schwer nachzuvollziehen.

As indisputable as pedagogy appeared to him, he found its traditional forms deeply suspicious. From there, he probably expected of the young academic educationists and pedagogues to be radically enlightened. At first, he seemed to get an answer.

As a critic of pedagogy and an activist of enlightenment, Adorno, like perhaps no other, has shaped the pedagogical discourse since the middle of the sixties. But from the beginning, he has quite likely asked too much of practical pedagogues and has overtaxed the respective academic discipline. They were not able to achieve what he was hoping for. Many were ready to follow him and realize Adorno's pedagogical imperative by seeking out places in practice.

His emphatic definition of educational tasks as an education for autonomy, de-barbarization and precisely an education after Auschwitz was taken up enthusiastically by some teachers and by some teachers of teachers subscribed to emphatic self-encouragement.

The unconditionality of the pedagogical judgment to educate and instruct against evil could be utilized as a formula of consensus causing all other tasks and problems of the pedagogical operation to appear as less important. At the same time, it was tempting to define as central something minor but politically embattled by way of emotiveness. As an example: to attack a law on classroom-size decreeing an increase of the student-teacher ratio by drawing an analogy to the selection at the ramp of Auschwitz. Put more mildly, that they were thus hindered from precluding of taking such an attitude of selection with victims and perpetrators. However, where the utilization of the formula of emotiveness was not successful, the allegedly minor was withdrawn from being criticized by treating it as natural and as non-structure building (as with regards to the highly consequential fact with respect to selection that the measurement of student achievement has to take the form of the bell curve).

The change of criticism into "the merely well-intended" cannot be explained with the false reception of the demands. The problem lies already in the level of the aim and its unconditionality as imperative. What burden did pedagogy now have to shoulder! How should one react to this demand with daily small currency? Adorno tempted his readers and listeners to take the postulate to rise above the routine business of pedagogy and the powerlessness felt to be caused by it. The striking difference, now made visible, between that what pedagogy claimed to be according to these high aims and what it could be in reality remained unmediated and was leveled. Thus an "education after Auschwitz" often was turned into a helpless elucidation on Auschwitz struck with the burden of a moralization of the educational task. But what could the teachers have done for a de-barbarization of education? Much, I would say, but certainly not in the form of blind actionism against evil.

Only in as far as Adorno's postulate would have been used as initiating the radical self-enlightenment of pedagogy in theory and practice, would it not have come to this illusionary consolation over bad reality.

Pedagogues primarily read the Adorno of whom Hellmut Becker mockingly remarked that teachers just about understood him — that is the anthology *Education for Autonomy* with the freely evolving conversations. But these texts were also basically received as a fund for the

moral fixation of the task and to support the critique of society outside of the school walls commonly voiced by pedagogues. In contrast to this, the program of encouraging pedagogy to pursue the reflection of the dialectical conditions of its own enlightenment, clearly recognizable in my quotations, was frequently missed. Adorno was essentially successful in the fatal form in that his impulses were made commensurable with the dominant form of thinking of practical and theoretical pedagogues: the *pedagogy of postulates*. This pedagogy defines tasks without considering the conditions under which these may be realized. Its preferred expression is the pedagogical indicative, a kind of normative fallacy, specific of the profession, with which it is possible to conclude from what is to what should be. With the indicative, that is stated as possible and given what is hoped for but what is not to be produced in practice. As a consequence, pursuing an aim with a specific means such as classroom instruction suggests that the means as such guarantees the intended effect. (In the German-class, the pupils learn...; they are enabled to ...; mathematics furthers logical thinking!) In as far as the perception of the insufficiency of reality cannot be suppressed, the magic formula is evoked: the way is the goal.

The pedagogy of postulates ensured a habitual inhibition, as it were, to take up the Adorno dealing critically with pedagogy as well as the negative thinker from whom pedagogy might have indirectly learned something.

What could have been expected of educators and teachers only in a restricted sense, after all they are under enormous pressure of having to act and legitimize, might well have been expected of educational science taking over from the old *geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik*. In the last thirty years, the former has attempted to assimilate any philosophical, sociological or other current of intellectual life. And in the transition of the sixties to the seventies, Adorno was such a strong input/impact. Responsible for this was the academic offspring being shaped by “68” and the fact that the academic teachers of this striving generation had emancipated themselves with the aid of Critical Theory from their fathers, the *geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogen*, whose writings Adorno, among others, was frightened by. The group of professors shaping my discipline for over two decades (I only mention the names of Wolfgang Klafki, Klaus Mollenhauer and my teacher Herwig Blankertz) was quickly stylized in the literature as the pedagogical branch of the Frankfurt School. These “critical educationists” remained committed to the pedagogy of postulates, here the postulate of a continuum of theory and practice.

At the end of his “History of Pedagogy” of 1982,¹¹ Herwig Blankertz outlined the “incomplete” project of a civic education for autonomy. He interpreted the invitation as giving answers to the “pressing questions“ of history. He was occupied primarily by how it

11 Herwig Blankertz, *Geschichte der Pädagogik von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart*, Wetzlar, 1982.

was possible that pedagogical enlightenment had not prevented the relapse into barbarity. The answer to his question is directly addressed at Adorno's Critical Theory. Blankertz did not see himself in a position to explain the failure of pedagogy at its own concept with a factual history of the dialectic of pedagogical enlightenment. Too much was he a part of that force, bound to the interpretation of the right and well intended (the "human exertion to build and maintain a livable world"). Therefore, he could not devise a negative theory of a pedagogy, which in its practice systematically contradicts its intentions, and as theory veils its contradictions in an equally systematic manner. What Adorno was able to do, i.e. take on an optimistic attitude with regards to practice, but an incorruptible, critical negative one in theory, because evil had to be taken as the point of departure of theoretical efforts, exceeded the pedagogical form of thinking. As theory it had to establish a positive pedagogy. How, then, could it have been conceptualized in a negative way? Even Oskar Negt always gave me the impression that he was not able to think that way.

The younger, my generation, has on the one hand, experienced with Adorno a liberation from the fustiness of that traditional literature, but on the other hand, has found so many other offers for hyphenated pedagogies in the meantime that the program of Critical Theory in its classical form has been quickly pushed to the margins. Added to this was the motto that it was more up-to-date to rely on the more advanced model of criticism implying that the classical one was obsolete. With Habermas it was possible to theoretically legitimize and conceptually encourage a variety of educational reform projects whereas Adorno was already repulsed by school excursions to Rome turning into orgies of excessive eating and bad drinking. He therefore suggested grammar drills.

With one exception¹² I do not know of any major work dedicated to the realization of the task providing the occasion for Adorno's taboo-lecture at the Max-Planck Institute in Berlin. Hellmut Becker who had invited Adorno, explained it to me in this way: without exception his young assistants had been admirers of the professor, had affirmed his views so completely that they did not see any need for further confirmation by research.

Perhaps Becker was mistaken concerning my generation's readiness for critical education; at least he overrated its ability to distinguish between a theoretical pessimism, instructed by empirical research and the optimism, not to be denied in my discipline, as expressed in the reform efforts of school improvement.

Up to this very day, pedagogical scholarship is accustomed to belabor the problem of teacher-professionalism through a system of tasks. The teaching profession appears as a vessel into which any number of expectations may be poured. Something like this probably functions only in a barrel without bottom. In the best case, a systems-theoretical skepticism

12 G. Graves, *Schularbeit*, Frankfurt am Main, 1982.

towards the over-exertion of the teaching profession and a thematization of the structural contradictions between societal functionalization and pedagogical concepts of norms can be observed.

But even in this variant of the critique of an observer of the system, a rejection of a certain negation of pedagogy as science of education can be observed, because it is geared towards conceiving the claim to autonomy, education, formation and humanity as an expression of self-deception typical of the profession.

In summary, I would like to highlight Adorno's effectiveness in three theses:

(1) As perhaps no other contemporary thinker of the past thirty years, Adorno belonged to the spiritual medicine cabinet of pedagogy. He was turned into subject matter in the Gymnasium, *served as the supplier of target formulas and as somebody who kept profundity-promising topoi of flat programs at hand.*

If, for example, in an introductory text into information-technical basic education, the suspicion of technocracy was to be countered preventively, its author, by way of quotation, remembered the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

More than few of those then affected by Critical Theory might in the meantime have resigned themselves to the conclusion that school makes it more and more difficult to follow the old ideals of enlightenment. Today, one rather looks for theories that are to make sure of surviving in school. The "emancipation of pupils from superfluous power" or the "critique of science and technologies as instruments of that power" is now turned into the ancillary supply for pupils in "balancing their contradictory claims to a flexibilized personality or the abstract invitation to critical media competence.

(2) *Adorno's invitation, to practice pedagogy as self-enlightenment, i.e. to recognize what it contributes to not realizing what it claims to be, has rarely been taken up in pedagogy.*

Neither has pedagogy faced the *taboos about the teaching profession* or by extension those about the business of schooling, nor has it dedicated itself to the question how it prosecutes the production of a kind of education which it otherwise fiercely bemoans blaming the conduct of pupils or the bad influence of media. In addition, it also has not exposed itself to the painful experience how it effects the incorporation of civic coldness with and in spite of all the new pupil friendliness. The way society imposes the form on pedagogy's apparently autonomous actions in the final analysis has not been perceived because pedagogy refuses to accept this as a fact.

(3) *The lack of readiness to clarify its theory-practice problem as a study of the dialectic unity of claim and reality has hindered pedagogy from enlightening its practice.*

For reasons of encouragement of practice, pedagogues refuse to recognize the bad in the positively conceptualized. The discipline exercises a division of labor between normative, constructivist pedagogy and positivistic empirical research after the model of the PISA-study. It's true that with the first, school is subject to criticism but the criticism serves the function of getting assent to one's own practice conceived in the form of a model. With the second,

deficits of the pedagogical practice might be focused on but neither can they thus really be explained nor can it be understood why they are so persistently reproduced. PISA is primarily a means serving modernizing and rationalizing ends, not one of enlightenment. Only with a specific negation of pedagogy, a disclosing immanent criticism of the contradiction between concept and reality would it be possible to get out of the unfruitful either/or. Of course not infrequently does pedagogical theory serve the purpose to patch things up, to heal the break, to disseminate hope that all could be well. It thus becomes a prime example of affirmative theory. Hence, it is little surprising that there was little use for a thinker who abhorred patches.

In brief and against this background, the question that I have asked myself concerning the actuality of a critical social theory in the sense of an educational field determining approach in pedagogical practice and theory has to be answered negatively.

This apodictic judgment might be considered by some of you as problematic. It works with an Adorno seal of purity. One may also point to a strong impure effect in my discipline: Some of Adorno's motives have in certain discourses of the discipline become detached and independent of him. The widely spread affection for postmodern criticism of concepts of identity, for example, cannot be understood without a previous reading of Adorno. Adorno's demand "to be able to be different without fear" is the foundation for the current debates on alterity and difference. Taking the two together, one can reach a positive answer: the state of pedagogical enlightenment makes the use of Adorno's means of thinking appear to be more pressing than ever. Whether this is just an apologetic turn or whether it can be objectively grounded, shall now be examined with two examples of my own work.

I would like to report on two projects where I have tried to take up motives of Adorno to answer questions that probably lead into the center of a "negative pedagogy".

Both address the business of school as hermetic enterprise. At first it is concerned with the formation and education task and then the education of the pupils by the school. With this, Adorno's criticism of pedagogization/didactization is taken up as well as the "heritage" of an education for civic coldness.

II. Didactics

One can take up the impulse of Adorno's criticism of "pedagogicalizing" mediation directly in practice through its negation and thus come to a model of mediation, which doesn't recognize mediation as mediation because students and teachers are to focus on pure matter. One can also (mis)understand him, as has frequently happened, as an invitation to change the subject matter. The one we find imitated by some apologists of the old *Gymnasium*, the other marks the way taken by progressive education. The latter has had the students built boxes for

starlings and today sets out biotopes or squeezes the juice to be sold to pupils and teachers out of apples with beautiful old presses. Here the artificially arranged world of schooling wins over real experience by declaring the school the better world. The *gymnasial* type, on the other hand, could dream of pure formation where advanced reading coursework was meeting with learners who allowed themselves to be entirely taken by it. On the whole, a beautiful fantasy well suited for pedagogical self-deception.

It is therefore vital not to practically negate didactization hastily but to first submit it to a certain negation instead. This is not easily done in Germany (in contrast to Great Britain, for example, where didactics is something of a swear-word). In Germany, the faith prevails — unmoved by all empirical evidence — that didactics is necessary that one cannot do without it, and that the more one has of it, the greater the effectiveness.

Let me render the negation palpable with the example of the well-established basic operation that one encounters in this context.

When one searches the didactic literature for basic principles and is not immediately referred to a didactic model, one will meet with a simple, taken-for-granted but by no means comprehended figure: the didactic triangle.

Subject

Teacher

Student

With a considerable amount of self-dynamism, the figure passes itself on as image, diagram, and list of categories.

The subject is placed on top, opposite to it, as base of the figure and facing each other, are the student and the teacher: an equilateral triangle, an image reminiscent of all kinds of interrelations of three factors.

It is striking that in the pedagogical scripture without exception working with this figure, neither are grounds for this connection provided nor assumptions impacting it problematized. The structure of the didactic seems to be so clear that the idea of problematizing it does not occur to anyone. You might recognize in this a variant of the pedagogical indicative expressed in the form of a graph: the arrangement is presented as if it expressed what really is although it only expresses what should be.

Even so, no didacticist would seriously claim that the real (t)eacher, s(tudent) and (s)ubject truly interacted thus harmoniously. The image is fit for idealizing a practice deeply deficient

and thus false, because the figure does not visualize what didactics in its contradictions truly is.

For this, one would have to become aware of the underlying assumptions. Put differently: “by the contradiction of being what it is to what it claims to be, essence had to be recognized”.¹³

What is the claim of the model with its basic concepts?

Let us take the subject to which student and teacher are related. It is obviously not the subject matter lying before any didactic processing, but the one that has undergone such treatment. The teachability of the matter presupposes — as could be known by didacticists since Plato/Aristotle — that we know what the subject is that shall be taught! In the sense of Socratic expectation, do didacticists have the subjects at their disposal? I have my doubts. These are the very doubts overcoming any scholarly expert as soon as he studies what didacticists have made of his subject. Reduction is the harmless, forgery the more grave, cluelessness the most serious accusation. Does the end of mediation at least justify the means of didactization? Of this also might be only spoken in tones of daring goodwill, as the false treatment of a subject does not — as a trick of didactic unreason - lead to the reason of the student. Most of them never succeed in reaching a right understanding of the subject against the didactic material. Not just since PISA do we know that the mediation of subject matter in school does not keep what it has to promise since Comenius, i.e. that learners arrive at the subject (the educational tasks) swiftly, comfortably and thoroughly via the detour of didactics. This contradiction might cause us to problematize the first assumption by probing into the relation between objects of formation and objects of instruction.

Didactics is challenged only when it can argue that the direct approach to a subject has to fail and that it was therefore vital to elementarize, prepare, mediatize it so that it could be accessed by those willing to learn. And didactics has to state that this detour eventually does not only lead to the subject but that, moreover, learning occurs more easily and more certainly with than without it.

Didactics as the additional third element of the mediation between object and subject has shouldered an enormous obligation.

If we turn the step that we have taken backwards, the step behind the hypostatized third, into a graph, t(eacher)-s(tudent)-s(ubject) becomes s(ubject)-o(bject)-d(idactics).

13 Theodor W. Adorno, “Negative Dialektik”, in: *Gesammelte Schriften* 6, Frankfurt am Main, 1997, p. 169.

Didactics

Subject (student)

Object (subject matter)

The initial, non-pedagogically governed mediation between object and subject, which to Humboldt was to be honored as the freest exchange, so that something like formation of the subject — and not just the adaptation of stamped-out pieces of knowledge — could occur in the first place, an isolated mechanical ability, the adaptation of the opinion of authorities, is now rationalized by adding a masterful third: didactics.

Why, one is inclined to ask from outside, has didactics so thoroughly overstretched itself? Shall one be surprised that this over-exertion has led to so little protest?

It had to make such strong claims, because since the 17th century at the latest, it wanted to serve mass instruction, a school for all.

To this end, it had to develop a concept on how to bring this about with relatively few, efficiently construed means. It starts with a famous page of advertisement adorning the *Great Didactics* of Comenius in 1657 and that every reader today can easily see through as hyperbolic product description. The promise is made that didactics was the sure-fire art to swiftly, comfortably and thoroughly teach everything to all all-roundedly (in its entirety). This is done by teaching less and letting learn more. It is clear that modern didactics arises not only out of the spirit of the general diffusion of the Christian gospel, but is shaped by the search for an economical form of mediation. Related to this aim is the constraint to mark didactics as technology and as independent product which the teacher may use like a craftsman and which may be passed on to all students. To this end, the process of instruction has to be revealed as particularly customer friendly. Who so submits himself to didactics will be dismissed as a knower and he can exclaim, as if returning from the dentist: “He has not drilled at all!”

With this, Comenius was extremely successful, for example with the textbook with the highest edition of early Enlightenment: the *Orbis sensualium pictus* of 1658. Anyway, this is of the first books that do not spread out the knowledge of its time — as Donatus treated grammar — but that was already written in a way as to attract customers and satisfy their needs for light and relieving nourishment. In other words: we have here a first example of culture industry with respect to education. A textbook letting the subject turn into the object of instruction that primarily follows the conditions of its own commodification and no longer unconditionally the subject matter.

Without faith in the performance of didactics, public schooling could not have been carried through. It is striking to observe how strong this faith has become. By now, there is a disappointment-resistant customer relation in the matter of didactics. This in turn has to be

seen in the context of the fact that we cannot imagine life without it. Its perhaps greatest success is rendering us dependent and that the third has become the first. It has turned into totalizing mediation, which is always already there to friendly greet us wherever we go: in the museum, the media, in court, in management, in personal counseling. Everywhere something is purposefully taught to us, are we guided and relieved from discovery and insight into the subject and steered towards what we should need and what is useful to us. Beyond the original Comenian promise (everything in its entirety), today, the third unfolds its leveling effect.

At the same time, this outcome can be explained only if didactics allows pursuing those means which are not grounded in it as promise: as it turns out, the deviation from the Comenian claim is not as undesired as it seems. If didactics does not achieve what it promises to achieve in order to avoid the risk of becoming superfluous or counter productive, this is only at first sight a scandalous contradiction. A second glance shows that the organization of schooling is not geared towards all learning everything. Only those talented according to the distribution pattern of the bell curve are to be successful learners. The others are to learn in school that the didactical love's labor is lost on them because of their inability and not because of the inability of didactics. This explains the enormous didactic expenditure. Mediation is arranged in classroom instruction so that many stay behind! The weak efficiency recommends itself with a not unwanted side effect. Because in this manner is the disposition for specialization and partial education (*Halbbildung*) established in the medium of general formation. The few who successfully master the subject matter are thus separated from those who comprise the main group of the moderately successful certifying themselves an entitlement as school education. They may thus draw a line against those below, in false and lower levels of secondary schooling, and therefore failing. In this sense, it may be ascertained that pedagogy does not live up to its goals, but didactics successfully realizes its qualification and selection aims. Not least due to this, it continues to didacticize the world without endangering its very own existence. Disclosing the world through productive mediation is demanded only by the critics and not really expected of schooling.

I would like to criticize this as an overly simplistic derivation of the connection between education and power and refer you to the incomparably much more careful derivation in my book on didactics.¹⁴ And of course, the performative self-contradiction is part of my generalizing thesis. My answer: the fact that the business of schooling also drives out its self-contradiction was only then a worthy relativation of my structural generalization if such practical interdictions happened on a mass scale. But this is not the case.

What the didactization of the world leads to is experienced by all of us more or less depressingly in the very place where the opposite should have preserved its space: the

14 Andreas Gruschka, *Didaktik — Das Kreuz mit der Vermittlung - Elf Einsprüche Gegen den Didaktischen Betrieb*, Wetzlar, 2002.

university. Here students for a long time are kept on the short leash of learning and now is added to this the abandoning of one's own approach to knowledge in favor of fragmentary modules. This is supposed to make sure of the smooth transition of students from Frankfurt to Harvard even though such a thing will never occur on a large scale. Whosoever in this university dedicates oneself to the cause for the sake of science has already left the modularized highways to success. University-market research firmly stands by didactics. The course of studies is well structured if it is clearly organized and instructed and administered in small doses, prepared as a product. Each and every problem of orientation is declared a malfunction.

What happens in the university has been exercised in school for a long time. An analysis of the real didactics of teacher-student-subject draw attention to the fact how unlikely is the success of instruction in the sense of general formation. If, again and again, pupils do learn and understand, this is due to their ability to react against the arrangement of mediation and find ways to productively disclose the subject matter. This encourages didacticists to attribute learning to teaching. This ability of immunization against criticism would by itself be a welcome and sufficient subject for a Critical Theory of didactics. However, the diagnosis has to reach out further and deeper and study the dwindling of substantiality in educational content in the context of schooling. Like a spiral the depletion intensifies: the didacticists diagnose a learning disability and treat it with easing, motivating, atomizing didactization. To this kind of aid the student reacts even more confusedly and irritatedly because he is forced to increasingly puzzle over what is presented to him. Through enlarged framing and simplification he is distracted from what he is supposed to learn.

Let us take a look at the worksheets for the upper level *Gymnasium* in the subject of German. Frequently, not the original texts are printed but only fragments because it is assumed that the students lack in stamina to read an entire text. The reading itself does no longer originate from the text but from the work tasks, which appear to be necessary since the student allegedly is no longer able to find his way through the text without help. And since a desert of letters presumably deters, one increasingly takes recourse to illustrating, schematizing and imitating the "focus". In short, the subject is turned into an independent didactics based on an increasing anthropological pessimism. Over all of this didactization, the teacher does not notice that the intensified rejection of the pupils is related to the incapacitation through didactics.

I will show you an example:¹⁵ We are dealing here with the copy sheet of Goethe's poem *Ganymed*.¹⁶ "Storm and Stress" is the theme of the course and the title of the material. It is notable that the entire poem is printed which is not the case at all with regards to the texts

15 Entnommen aus: *Arbeitsheft zur Literaturgeschichte. Sturm und Drang. Texte, Übungen*, Reinhard Lindenhahn, Berlin, 1996, pp. 13f

16 Andreas Gruschka, "Ganymed in den Fängen der Didaktik"; in: *Pädagogische Korrespondenz*, Heft 31, Wetzlar 2004, p. 25-42.

presented in the book. Nothing in the worksheet indicates a reading appropriate to the text, or allowing oneself to become immersed in its literariness. Instead a confusing thematic cue is given on top of the first sheet: “Ganymed, a young son of a king ...” What is it to contribute to the reading of a text if one learns by definition who Ganymed was, that Goethe did not care much for the mythological story and that there is yet another interesting poem *Prometheus* on the issue of the godly and the human principle. A picture to the text works in an equally confusing manner as soon as one tries to relate it to the myth and the poem. At the bottom of the page are the study problems which can only be solved counter to their literal meaning and expressed intentions. ”1. A description of a picture. Imagine that the situation presented in the hymn was presented in a painting ... 2. Would you describe the poem rather as a love poem or as a nature poem? — Look in the text for instances of both interpretations”.

Instead of disclosing the form of language, the students are requested to associatively paint a picture to the poem. One only needs to imagine this concretely! Similarly atrocious is the search for instances of the love poem (words marked in red) and the nature poem (words marked in green). At the end he has won who has struck most hits. That both alternatives have nothing to do with the structure of the poem any more, that is neither one nor the other, let alone more of the one than the other, doesn't matter in this exercise.

The whole thing is intensified in an exercise where the students are to translate a tangled scribble of interpretation provided by the didacticist into a coherent text. What is learned here has nothing to do any more with Goethe's poem but requires technical skills that are extremely heterogeneously structured.

A wicked irony lies in the fact that didactics has to empty out exactly that because of which one puts up with it, in order to become more successful. This becomes eerily clear with the example of the currently most successful salesman in didactics, Mr. Klippert.¹⁷ He has found out that students are no longer able to cope with subject matters like poems because they lack in the simple basic methodical requirements of reading. In this many teachers give him credence irrespective of the kind of school they teach or the age of students. I will show you pars pro toto a worksheet of which you have to know that it is to make hundreds of thousands of pupils acquire competence in method.

The issue here is reading speedily and extracting important information. Four names of scientists are to be found as quickly as possible. It is self-evident that this undertaking is bound to fail as soon as the sense of the text comes into play. It is bizarre that the didacticist praises this exercise as the solution to the PISA results. Members of the guild of didacticists rarely criticize these developments. Even the most evident nonsense is legitimized with good intentions. That is exactly why they are masters of constructive critique.

17 Ausführlich Helmut Stövesand, *Auseinandersetzung mit Klippert*; in: www.uni-frankfurt.de/fb04/forschung/klippert.html

III. Education For Coldness

I will now turn to my second example.

There are always two sides to the project of civic pedagogy. Besides being instructed, the offspring had to be taught in morals and rectitude. The knowledge to be passed on required didactics. Education is to evoke morality. In the context of schooling, this has a cognitive dimension as the morality of the citizen essentially aims at his head, so that he does what is right by informed conviction. Moreover, morality is staged by schooling itself. Siegfried Bernfeld spoke of school educating as an institution. The social form structurally anchored in school, its rules of interaction shall be incarnated in the pupil as an expression of righteous ideas, as Durkheim expressively postulated.

Now, if we want to judge whether or not school lives up to its missionary task, we have — in analogy to how we proceeded with didactics — to first address the question which moral content is institutionalized in school. It would be clearly insufficient to merely focus on the moral that is preached or that is intended being preached. In that case we would be back at the pedagogy of postulates.

Taking this distanced perspective is certainly not any easier here as it was with regard to didactics, because the skies of norms are wide and are usually interpreted subjectively as intentions expecting recognition independent of the conditions of their realization. In the more recent pedagogical prose the attempt of Hartmut von Hentig has become famous to determine the morality of education via the professional morals of educators: a Socratic oath in the first person singular. This I is to educate himself to morality.

Von Hentig's demands have been received with broad acquiescence, not least, because to an extent, they are wishful thinking rather than reality. I swear "to respect the singularity of each child and defend it against anyone, [...] to protect his vulnerabilities, to support him in overcoming fear and guilt, wickedness and lie, doubt and distrust, plaintiveness and selfishness, when he needs it".¹⁸

The fact that von Hentig's Decalogue is found in many current school programs demonstrates how quickly the school turns its vices into virtues. If one moves on from moral attitude to the structural logic of school processes and inquires which moments of objective morality are contained within them, i.e. the institutionally anchored norms of pedagogical interaction, one finds at least four sites.¹⁹

(1) School operates under the precept of the social generality of formation. It therefore has to be arranged in a way as to put all pupils in a position to be able to learn what is to be learned by all.

18 Hartmut von Hentig, *Die Schule neu denken*, Weinheim, 2003, pp. 258f.

19 cp. Andreas Gruschka, *Bürgerliche Kälte und Pädagogik*, Wetzlar, 1994.

- (2) School secondly operates under the precept of making emancipation possible. In the end, those growing up have to be put in a position as to lead their lives independently and self-reliantly. This is only possible if they have been thusly enabled mentally and habitually.
- (3) School then has the task to treat pupils according to their specific requirements. It has, as the saying goes, to meet them where they are at, only then will the individual pupil not be sacrificed to the organization of the masses.
- (4) Finally, school has to facilitate sociality in the form of solidarity with the weak.

For all four of those pedagogical areas a wealth of materializations including school law can be found, insofar they are not bound to subjective morality.

At the same time, it becomes immediately evident that these norms are not unconditionally valid. They are often undercut and this cannot only be due to a lack of conscientiousness on the part of the pedagogue. Society will not be able to recognize itself in a school that declares undercutting as the normality. Parents will not want to send their children to a school,

- where the teacher decrees from the beginning that this or that child will not learn what should be taught to him;
- where the teachers lead adolescents by the nose and rigidly control their behavior;
- where the individual differences of children are simply ignored;
- where the weak is only there to validate the strong.

Knowing that these norms are binding makes it so interesting to explain why so many don't see the need to protest when these norms are daily undercut. (Many disliking that the norms are missed send their children to institutions of special education in the hope that these would be places where the pedagogical norm is realized. But why don't the others follow?) This already indicates that something else must form the structures.

I refer to the social systems theoretical analyses of Parsons and Dreeben, who have asked what the functions of school are in a civil capitalist society and who have searched for the mode of institutionalization. Their thesis: pupils have to develop (1) their readiness to achieve as individuals, they have to learn to (2) individually take credit or blame for achievement and failure and (3) they have to accept that they are judged by others according to general and abstract scales and measurements. Finally they have to accept that from the viewpoint of the school they are primarily pupils, not whole individuals. The last point had already been recognized by Dreeben as an exaggeration, which might be placed in a similar context as the thought experiment for the non-realization of pedagogical norms. Any school executing this with the sharpness of a razor could also not be accepted by parents. There are exceptions to the rule but there is the rule. It runs into the selection, qualification and legitimating function of the school. Here is the key to why the social generality of education and formation can be annulled by the commitment of school to select, why solidarity meets its limits where the issue is the proof of achievement of the individualized individual. Where

competition is required and cooperation prohibited (during tests). It explains why part of the juridical legitimation of the teacher's fateful verdict over children is that everyone is measured with the same yardstick, i.e. counter to the pedagogical promise without regarding the person, and why emancipation becomes instrumental as a functional emancipation restricted to the dexterous adaptation to the operation of schooling and the filling out of prescribed spaces of liberty.

Pedagogically proclaimed norms are thus in contradiction to the social functions of schooling. As a consequence of these contradictions that which should apply in school doesn't really carry any weight. At the same time, these pedagogical norms are arranged in such a way as to ensure broad agreement with regards to these norms. Without these pedagogical norms schools would become mere refrigerators, fulfilling functions. With these norms, the socializing functions should be done away with. However, this is not what society is permitted to want. It was necessary to briefly mention these foundational relations beforehand to now determine what education as a means for incorporating morality means which may be related to the social relations.

- The social generality of formation refers to the moral of non-arbitrarily limited chances of societal participation.
- It is extended to positing and respecting individual judgment.
- During the socializing process the hope that one has a right to life as a unique individual has to be built up.
- Solidarity counts as a protection against the misfortunes of personal fate, it is a fundamental condition for everyone feeling accepted by society.

Public education has to constantly affirm these promises so that they appear justified while at the same time acting against them with reference to the functions:

- (1) It shall treat each pupil as a singularity but has to judge all by the same standard
- (2) It shall teach everything to all, but has to instruct in way so that inevitably many soon no longer do learn what they could learn.
- (3) It demands of the pupils to autonomously stand up for their interests, but instead of honoring these, it honors the independent observation of tasks put before them. Self-will is treated as resistance.
- (4) The request to act in solidarity is not due to respecting the other for being different, but with reference to a norm of achievement that primarily constructs the weak.

All of this leads not only to experiencing one's own powerlessness, fear of losing recognition, but also the invitation to arrange socio-moral orientations in a way that they do not constantly fail at the social reality. The students learn that neither in school nor in society morality, which is supposed to have value, also does have value. As a realist, one has to accept the predominance of the function.

But how can one do this when the opposite is right? Adolescents solve the problem functionally by developing strategies of orientation and interpretation aiding them in dealing with the contradiction without getting rid of it. They learn to interpret their behavior in contradiction as morally imperative. In so doing, they make themselves indifferent towards the fact that what lays claims to validity does not matter in practice.

Herein lies the necessity for an (onto)genesis of civic coldness, Adorno's founding principle of civic subjectivity. The pupils have to learn to protect themselves with coldness against coldness, resulting from contradictions one is powerlessly exposed to. School's educational potential lies in transmitting these strategies of dealing with socio-moral conflicts over an extended period of time. The coldness of school consists only superficially in acts of disregard, in the bureaucratic reification of pedagogical processes into file-fitting procedures. More decisively, it consists in the systematic lesson, to resignedly bear the contradiction between norm and function and to adjust thusly that they may be eternalized as insurmountable.

I would like to elucidate with a figure developed in a large number of cases and a comprehensive study on the ontogenesis of civic coldness²⁰ by choosing an example dealing with justice conflicts: justice as taking into consideration all legitimate individual needs configured with justice as equal treatment of all.

Ontogenesis requires a beginning and an end.

The beginning is a common reaction of kindergarten children to distributive justice, which we were unprepared for. Adult students who put up with the craziest of study conditions mark the end.

Let's begin at the beginning. In a justice scenario of our research, we have put forward the following problem: A group of children celebrates a birthday in kindergarten. The child having birthday has baked three little cakes for the party. Seven children and the teacher make up the group. The cakes are divided into three parts each. This is demonstrated to the children participating in the study. Eight pieces are distributed and one piece remains. There are three candidates for the remaining piece: it has been promised to one of them by the birthday child; a second child has not had any breakfast — which is why the teacher suggests that the piece should be given to her, one child requests the piece by her own initiative. It is the one who always shows the biggest appetite on such occasions. How can the problem be solved? Who shall, if justice is to prevail, be given the last piece? To our surprise, Katharina reacted thusly to the problem:

Katharina: I would take four cakes.

Interviewer: Why?

Katharina: Because then there is something for all.

Then the others too, get two pieces!

Interviewer: But the girl has only brought three cakes, what is she to do now?

Katharina: Give the last piece to the other teacher.

Interviewer: But Julia is the hungriest, because she has not had any breakfast.

Katharina: If someone hasn't had any breakfast, I would give the piece to her.

Interviewer: So you think it's o.k. if Julia gets the last piece.

Katharina: Yes!

Interviewer: But Jens cries miserably and says that he also wants another piece.

Katharina: Then I would tell him that this wasn't possible because I had no piece left.

Interviewer: But Kathrin had promised him earlier that he could eat the most. And now he only gets one piece.

Katharina: One has to keep one's promises.

Interviewer: Yes, but instead of him, Julia gets the piece.

Katharina: I would bring four cakes so that all shall eat two pieces.

Interviewer: But Kathrin has only brought three cakes: what would you do with the last piece?

Katharina: I would take it back home!

Interviewer: Why would you take it back home?

Katharina: Because then the others don't fight and get mad.

Interviewer: But Julia is so hungry: she hasn't eaten in the morning.

Katharina: Perhaps she isn't hungry in the morning and gets hungry in kindergarten.

Interviewer: Yes, she is the hungriest of all children.

Katharina: Then she has the first piece for breakfast and the second for the birthday.

Interviewer: What do think about the other getting mad and apparently not wanting Julia to have the piece?

Katharina: Don't know. (Pause)

Interviewer: So you would bring four cakes.

Katharina: Yes!

While the interviewer focuses on the impossible immanent solution of the contradiction: treating everyone equally and each according to his needs, the child exposes such thinking with the simple indication that it was willful to only bring three cakes and thus installing the problem of distributive justice in the first place, while it would be possible to treat everyone equally and each according to his needs by bringing four cakes. This naive surmounting of the structures providing for coldness is over and done with after only a few years of elementary school. Now the scarcity of pedagogical care is taken for granted and the issue is

to learn how to secure one's piece of cake. Reference to individual need is continually claimed if one believes to profit from it. However, if the better grade of a fellow student relativizes one's own, it gets critical.

In secondary school the issue is students jumping over vaulting horses. All shall jump over the same high vaulting horse, including the short one and the evidently brawny. The short student proposes to lower the vaulting horse so that he has a chance for the top grade. Now the hefty one also makes himself heard. What is the teacher to do? One of the students interviewed succinctly said: "As long as I am in school, no vaulting-horse has been lowered. I also mean that figuratively". Especially with reference to the devaluation of one's own grade this is rejected by the majority. Whoever feels that this is unjust towards the short one, cues the teacher to secretly raise the grade. Because if he did it publicly, the others might feel unjustly treated. Out of the justice towards the individual results an advantage that turns into a disadvantage for all.

Even those school activities aiming at the solidaristic community and not at readiness to achieve, are quickly taken over by the moral of group achievement. The weak one belongs on the bench so that he doesn't endanger the success of the troupe.

In our scenario, the older students prepare to stage a theatrical play in a study group. Shortly before the performance, the main actor starts showing signs of insecurity, he doesn't master his text, begins to stutter. The teacher reasons loudly if it might not be better to call on second actor who has already proven that he knows his role. So much for the scenario.

Most students propose that the main character should rehearse harder and if he tried really hard might be able to play after all. But, committed to the group, if success wasn't clearly evident he should resign. Especially subtle is the following proposition of a student: Before the performance a student takes the stage and explains to the audience: "Our classmate here has given his best, but he might not be so good, and, please have sympathy if he sometimes doesn't do well". Curtain up! The student invents a substitute for the performance of the actor, the publicly staged solidarity of the group with the weak, which certainly puts him all the more on the spot.

These examples show that the patterns of coping with coldness are varied. They reach all the way from unquestioned acceptance, which does not even see the contradiction, via the inconsequential unease (that something isn't quite right) and the expectation to become a victim of coldness or the will, in order to avoid becoming a victim, to push through with one's own interests, via the fictions of a solution up to the reaction, indicating (as in the last case) an idealization of the continuously false practice and the reflected identification with coldness and now and then to reflected protest. Perhaps I can say more to this in the discussion. At the end of the ontogenesis, in a scenario on justice we have confronted university students with the following conflict:

A certain course is compulsory in order to advance with one's studies. 70 students seek access. The instructor notices that with seventy students he is not able to do what he intends

to do. He could only accept 35. He suggests applying a hardship rule and lets the students discuss the criteria.

One student proposes to strictly proceed by drawing lots, only then could equality of opportunity be induced. Everything else is assumed to be leading to increased corruption, because everyone would then have a sick child, a grandmother who had to be taken care of, and so forth. The student does not take offense at the lottery being in complete opposition to the norm of justice. The scarcity of spots appears to be fateful this is why one deals with it by lots. Another student ridicules those who are fighting for their places in such manner. He knows that such a thing doesn't lead anywhere. At the end one has to take care of oneself and it was best if one started early and made oneself independent of gratifications. This is why he would not participate in such debates and instead was seeking his advantage by eagerly studying by himself. The scarification of spots was in truth a logical *mise-en-scène*. Depending on what role one took in the play, one was proving to oneself or society whether one had learned one's moral lesson: to succeed against others or to wait for the blessings of others and end up empty-handed. The coldness of the competition principle is confirmed as the condition of societal productivity. This sounds almost like Ralf Dahrendorf. "It turns out that democracy and market economy are cold projects, icy projects. This they are supposed to be, they are not supposed to move the hearts. The attempt to heartwarmingly ideologize democracy and market economy is an error".²¹

Here coldness has come to itself. With Critical Theory and negative pedagogy was to be urgently enlightened, as far as we want to give an enlightened expression to this unease: "The strength of an I has to prove itself in being able to take objective contradictions into his thinking and not by forcibly getting rid of them".²² This Adorno was well suited for pedagogical practice as well as research.

Translation Karin Amos Frankfurt

21 Ralf Dahrendorf, in: *Der Spiegel*, Hamburg, 18.1.1993.

22 Theodor W. Adorno, "Kritische Theorie und Protestbewegung", in: *Gesammelte Schriften* 20(1), Frankfurt am Main 1997, p. 399.

Max Horkheimer on The Mimetic Element in Education

Olli-Pekka Moissio

A big dog stands on the highway. He walks on confidently and is run over by car. His peaceful expression shows that he is usually better looked after — a domestic animal to whom no harm is done. But do the sons of the rich bourgeois families who also suffer no harm have the same peaceful expression? They were cared for just as lovingly as the dog which is now run over.

Max Horkheimer

Max Horkheimer gave a presentation in Ingelheim, Germany on 5th of May 1960 titled “Sozialpsychologische Forschungen zum Problem des Autoritarismus, Nationalismus und Antisemitismus”.¹ In this lecture, Horkheimer sketches education as an activity which is concerned with supporting the realisation of individual autonomy. Horkheimer stresses the mimetic element of education, which evades rational control. This mimetic element of education unfolds the social ties of education. Education and human development in general result from a certain history, and via this historical dimension the whole ethos of a given historical situation has an effect on both of them. In his lecture, Horkheimer asks a question that is very important even today: how the socially unwanted tendencies can be overcome by education?

At the foundation of Horkheimer’s lecture lies a view which the Frankfurt School adopted in the forties. They were convinced of the social process drifting to final irrationality, and of the hermetic encapsulation of this same process. From 1942 to 1944, Horkheimer, together with his close friend Theodor W. Adorno, worked in Montagnola in the United States,

1 Max Horkheimer — Archiv X 77.1. Vortrag gehalten am 5.5.1960 in Ingelheim am Rhein Bundeszentrale für Heimatdienst; veröffentlicht in: Politische Psychologie, Bd. 2: “Autoritarismus und Nationalismus — ein deutsches Problem?” Frankfurt a.M. 1963. 1. Nachschrift des Vortrags. MH “Sozialpsychologische Forschung zum Problem des Autoritarismus, Nationalismus und Antisemitismus”, pp. 1-7. Stadt — und Universitätsbibliothek. Frankfurt am Main. This lecture has been published also in Horkheimer’s *Gesammelte Schriften Band 8* and in *Gesellschaft im Übergang* with the title “Gedanken zur Politischen Erziehung”. In my article I have used the original manuscript but I have specified the page number in Horkheimer’s *Gesammelte Schriften* edition of the article.

writing the joint work *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, published in Amsterdam in 1947.² In this now very famous work, Horkheimer and Adorno profoundly criticised the western civilisation, coming to the conclusion that modernisation had lost the potential for a genuine development and rationality that was inherent in it. In the 1930's, Critical Theory could still explicate the objective conditions for change, as based on Karl Marx's critique of political economy. Now Critical Theory saw that there were no objective conditions left for change: the iron cage of progress was closed definitively.

In their book, Horkheimer and Adorno give a detailed analysis of the overall crisis that was developed as an effect of modernisation. They hold that the process of enlightenment lies behind — or influences at the basis of — modernisation, to which thus it is primary. In this view, modernisation takes the shape of a radical realisation of “archaeological” examples. The crisis that has developed via modernisation almost found its total manifestation in the irrationality and inhumanity of the Second World War. Characteristic of this overall social crisis is the unawareness of the people living in the middle of it of the fact that they live in a constant state of crisis. This ignorance is the reason for the inability of people to do anything in order to solve the crisis.

Modernisation is the triumph of instrumentalization. In Horkheimer's writings of the 1940's, instrumentalization seemed almost total and final. But the advancement of instrumental reason in the society did not mean the increase of genuine rationality. On the contrary, this development has led to the birth of authoritarian barbarity, instrumentalization, and in its extreme, to the end of reason. The objective of a totally administered society, which was an inherent part of the project of modernisation, was not reached, only to be totalised in the end, eventually producing barbarity.

Objective and subjective reason

In his book *Eclipse of Reason*³, Horkheimer differentiates between objective and subjective reason. Objective reason is connected with the philosophical tradition in which reason is supposed to produce an extensive theory of nature, society and the human being. Objective reason is also the foundation of values, goals and the meaning of life. It is possible to criticise

2 The book was published as a facsimile edition in 1944, when the *Institut für Sozialforschung* was in exile in the United States. The official publication for the wider audience took place in 1947. The book received very little attention until the 1960's, and it was re-issued in 1969. When I refer to *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in this article, I use the edition of the text that has been published in Horkheimer's *Gesammelte Schriften band 5*. I have decided to take the citations from the John Cummings translation, even though there are major problems with the translation.

3 *Eclipse of Reason* was published for the first time in 1947. It is based on the series of lectures that Horkheimer gave in the University of Columbia in the spring of 1944. In these lectures Horkheimer tried to present in a popular fashion the fundamental ideas from *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. It is not totally wrong to say that the book is an illustration of Horkheimer's own position on the conclusion of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*.

the inadequate social conditions with reason. Subjective reason, on the other hand, limits itself to calculation of means within a preordained system in which ends and values are taken for granted and are not criticised.⁴

It is essentially concerned with means and ends, with the adequacy of procedures for purposes more or less taken for granted and supposedly self-explanatory. It attaches little importance to the question whether the purposes as such are reasonable. If it concerns itself at all with ends, it takes for granted that they too are reasonable in the subjective sense, i.e. that they serve the subject's interest in relation to self-preservation.⁵

Horkheimer maintained that instrumental rationality sealed the iron cage of modernisation. Administrative control was spreading to all areas of life, extending to the smallest details of individual life and solidifying slowly into a mechanical apparatus. If an individual wanted to survive, it was necessary for him to adapt himself to the machinery and to become a part of it. Freedom disappeared without notice. When control was internalised as a part of subjectivity, and when it thus became more immediate, it was very difficult to recognise it as control at all. Horkheimer diagnoses this kind of rationalisation as reification, as instrumentalization of social life.⁶ Instrumentalization of reason for Horkheimer means that "justice, equality, happiness, tolerance, all the concepts that [...] were in preceding centuries supposed to be inherent in or sanctioned by reason, have lost their intellectual root".⁷

Along with the instrumentalization of reason, people lost their absolute value as human beings. They became mere tools, and at worst mere material to be handled. The only criterion of rationality was, and still is, that goals are reached as efficiently as possible without any extra "waste-energy" which would be consumed when, for example, reflecting on moral problems of certain actions. The price paid for efficiency, when measured in human suffering, loses completely its meaning in the calculation of expenses. Auschwitz is one example of the extremity of instrumentalization of reason. The destruction of Jewish people, homosexuals, communists, handicapped people, confessional priests, and so on, was refined to be almost phenomenal when measured in the scale of technical efficiency. In his Ingelmeim-lecture, Horkheimer places on education the mission of developing the kinds of educational practices that enable the education of critical and active subjects. It is possible for

4 Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, New York: Continuum, 1996, pp. 3-12.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

6 Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat". Teoksessa Georg Lukács *History and Class Consciousness*, Lontoo: Merlin Press, 1990, pp. 83-100.

7 Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*. New York: Continuum 1996, p. 23.

these subjects to resist instrumentalization of reason and the inclination to authoritarianism that is inherent in it.⁸

How can we outline education, considering the overall instrumentalization of society? It is obvious that Horkheimer's analysis of modernisation as an instrumentalization of rational elements makes the possibility of education questionable in general. This analysis also questions the idea of rectilinear development of modernity towards a technological paradise. In Horkheimer's analysis, education is revealed as manipulation in which the conditions of instrumental rationality are handed over to the generations to come.⁹ "Social and individual education confirms men in the objectivizing behaviour of workers and protects them from reincorporation into variety of circumambient nature".¹⁰

Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the possibilities for educational practices oriented towards emancipation are vanishing slowly, because the extensive system does not leave them room to realise themselves. This is a consequence of the fact that "since the real emancipation of mankind did not take place with the enlightenment of mind, education itself became diseased. The greater the distance between the educated consciousness and social reality, the more it was itself exposed to the process of reification".¹¹ Thus the questions to be asked are: how wide is the effect of the process of instrumentalization on educational practices, and do they have any possibility to change this deeply rooted tendency in the western civilisation? For Horkheimer, it is obvious that the only possibility of the survival of humanity is to realise moral and political aims that are inherent in *enlightenment* without the logic of domination.¹²

The trend toward the emancipation of men resulted from this [O-P Moissio: i.e. individuality], but it is also a consequence of the mechanisms from which mankind must be emancipated. The independence and incomparability of the individual crystallize resistance to the blind, repressive force of the irrational whole. But, historically, this resistance was only made possible by the blindness and irrationality of each independent and incomparable individual.¹³

8 Max Horkheimer, "Gedanken zur Politischen Erziehung". Teoksessa Max Horkheimer *Gesellschaft im Übergang. Aufsätze, Reden und Vorträge 1942-1970*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1981, pp. 126-133.

9 Max Horkheimer and T. Adorno, "Dialektik der Aufklärung" in Max Horkheimer *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 5, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1997, pp. 209-210.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 210.

11 Max Horkheimer and T. Adorno, "Dialektik der Aufklärung" in Max Horkheimer *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 5, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1997, p. 225.

12 Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, New York: Continuum, 1996, p. vi.

13 Horkheimer and Adorno, *ibid.*, p. 273.

The dialectical paradox of enlightenment

Horkheimer outlines enlightenment from a specific perspective. Enlightenment indicates enlightened thinking, or the mode of thinking which posits itself to resist the mythological world-relation and tries to overthrow mythological explanations with a logic of controlling domination. It is aiming at freeing people from the might of myths and at helping them to control the nature. Horkheimer distinguishes his concept of enlightenment from a specific historical era of enlightenment. The dialectic of enlightenment indicates how enlightened rational thinking includes a mythical and irrational basis which includes a rational core. Enlightenment fights against myths, without understanding that it at the same time constructs new myths. When enlightenment gnawed off myths on its way, it at the same time gnawed off its own feet. Enlightenment fought from the beginning against beliefs, but it did not realise that enlightenment itself was founded on the greatest belief, the belief in continuous progress.¹⁴

At the core of the dialectic of enlightenment there is, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, a fundamental choice that man had to make in the beginning of times. He had to choose between submitting himself to nature's might and the emancipation from its domination by controlling the nature. Man chose to control the nature, and the modes of action that were developed as tools to further this control have gradually moved to areas of social life via the development of modernisation. This is how the society fell back to the myth which it was supposed to be liberated from by the control of nature. Things have come full circle. In the society, the myth becomes a delusion that control, and the massive machinery created to aid it, are necessary.¹⁵

The systems that man has created begin to live on their own, and eventually they begin to subordinate people. In this situation, the oppressors and the oppressed become parts of the all-devouring machinery. This domination is based on instrumental rationality and restricts the freedom of action. Domination leads indisputably to social retrogression, in which the progress — supposed to emancipate the humanity from the fear the might of nature inflicts on it — leads into gradually increasing violence against the human being. When we reflect on humanity as it has developed in the western world we can easily see that we have advanced in technological terms, but when we take the moral point of view we see that we have retrogressed ever deeply into primitivism. "Men pay for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power. Enlightenment behaves toward things as a dictator toward men. He knows them in so far as he can manipulate them".¹⁶

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 25-35.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 62-65.

16 Horkheimer and Adorno, *ibid.*, p. 31.

According to *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, enlightenment has brought progress with it if progress is measured in the mass of material goods, utility, and achievements in science and technology. Enlightenment has also been successful in disenchanting the world and subjugating it under rational control. Enlightenment also successfully raised the human being from the ignorance of primitivism. A dialectical paradox lies in the fact that even though enlightenment has made progress possible in some fields of life, it has at the same time brought retrogression into other fields. Horkheimer holds that enlightenment will eventually destroy itself and its achievements, because its internal logic is based on the principle of destruction.

Oswald Spengler arrives at the same kind of result in his *The Decline of the West*. He maintains that in every civilisation there exists a certain inner logic which becomes realised in history. According to Spengler, it is inevitable that every civilisation meets its end in destruction because of this principle inherent in it.¹⁷ At this point, the peculiarity of modernity comes forth. In modernity, destruction loses its nature as a “cycle” and turns into something total, final. However, it is very important to note here that we should not conclude from these reflections that Horkheimer and Adorno were committed to a conservative critique of civilisation which interprets the world history as a series of inevitable catastrophes and destructions.¹⁸ I would like to point out that Horkheimer and Adorno clearly detached themselves from the kind of tradition of thinking that Spengler was operating in. Horkheimer and Adorno try instead to connect these kinds of reactionary arguments directed against the western civilisation and to put them into service of progressive enlightenment. Their aim is to enlighten the enlightenment.

Education as mimesis

According to Horkheimer, it is natural that a child looks for an authority or a person whom she can identify with and who can help her in the first years of her life. In this way Horkheimer conceptualises a positive account of authority. In this context we can refer to it with Erich Fromm’s concept of rational authority¹⁹. The lack of this kind of rational authority

17 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*: München, 1923.

18 Horkheimer and Adorno, *ibid.*, p. 200.

19 Fromm defines rational authority as the opposite of irrational authority. Irrational authority is based on power and fear. It serves the purpose of the authority and it is a hindrance to the growth of the individual. On the contrary, rational authority serves the attempts of the growing person to open up and develop. It is based on the equality of the educator and the person being educated. The only difference between them is the superior skill of the educator in a certain field. (Fromm 1971, 105-107)

brings about the all-embracing, chaotic rebellion among the young people. This groundless action is connected, according to Horkheimer, to the enormous changes in the society that children cannot handle on their own. In his lecture “Sozialpsychologische Forschungen zum Problem des Autoritarismus, Nationalismus und Antisemitismus”, Horkheimer reflects on the first generation that was born after the First World War, and he recognises that it lacked a rational authority. The lack of rational authority made authoritarian education possible, and the authoritarian personality was created through education. Characteristic to the authoritarian personality is the endless desire for power and the constant pursuit of power.²⁰ It is these character traits we need to get rid of with education — but how?

Horkheimer is talking about the mimetic element of education. In his *Eclipse of Reason* he conceptualises the learning process in early childhood as imitation.²¹ Through the socialisation made possible by this imitation, the child learns to imitate rational and goal-oriented action. As we have noted earlier, an analogous element of individual development on the level of the development of the species is a central structure of the dialectic of enlightenment: the whole civilisation identifies with the instrumentalization of reason. Western civilisation began with mimesis and tried in the end to overcome it by control.

Conscious adaptation and eventually domination replace various forms of mimesis. [...] the formula supplants the image, the calculating machine the ritual dance. To adapt oneself means to make oneself like the world of objects for the sake of self-preservation.²²

But mimesis did not vanish completely in this development. Horkheimer thus warns us that “if the final renunciation of the mimetic impulse does not promise to lead to the fulfilment of man’s potentialities, this impulse will always lie in wait, ready to break out as a destructive force. That is, if there is no other norm than the *status quo*, if all the hope of happiness that reason can offer is that it preserves the existing as it is and even increases its pressure, the mimetic impulse is never really overcome. Men revert to it in a regressive and distorted form”.²³

We have to remember that mimesis is not only the source of evil that we have to control in every way possible. Horkheimer points out that mimesis, as imitation of the aspects of nature that are sustaining life, is necessary from the viewpoint of humanity. This way we identify

20 Horkheimer, “Gedanken zur Politischen Erziehung”. Teoksessa Max Horkheimer *Gesellschaft im Übergang - Aufsätze, Reden und Vorträge 1942-1970*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1981, pp. 126-127. See also: Max Horkheimer, “Die Situation des jungen Menschen heute”, in Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 8, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985, pp. 354-357.

21 Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, Continuum, 1996, p. 114.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 115.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

with maternal warmth and shelter, against paternal punishment and resignation. The task of philosophy is to help us to recall the mimetic memories of childhood, which socialisation has almost completely managed to shatter. One of the reasons for the shattering is the crisis of the family, which, according to Horkheimer, must be brought to a stop. The family must be given back the central role in the socialisation of the child. Through this manoeuvre, it would be possible to turn the mimetic impulse back to the family from the socialisation instances outside the family.²⁴ By this argument, Horkheimer was reaching for the state which is closely related to the unity of word and object that is experienced in pure language.

Language reflects the longings of the oppressed and the plight of nature; it releases the mimetic impulse. The transformation of this impulse into the universal medium of language rather than into destructive action means that potentially nihilistic energies work for reconciliation.²⁵

From the perspective of the individual, this state already exists in the consciousness of every child before the formation of thinking characterised by the compulsion for categorising — the state in which every noun is like a proper noun.

When Horkheimer talked about the decline of the family, he meant that the family does not have a decisive role in the socialisation of the child in modern capitalistic societies. Today, according to Horkheimer, the society socialises the child much more directly than before. This metamorphosis of socialisation, which moves the fundamental role of socialisation to the instances outside the family, will eventually lead to the decline of the family and the school. In Horkheimer's interpretation, the result of this is ever-strengthening social conformity and the decline of the individual: "Today the child imitates only performances and achievements; he accepts not ideas, but matters of fact".²⁶ If previously the authority of the family, teachers and religious figures was essential, it now has been supplanted by "the authority of the omnipotent standards of mass society. The qualities which the child needs in this society are imposed upon him by the collectivity of the school class, and the latter is but a segment of the strictly organised society itself [...] Education is no longer a process taking place between individuals, as it was when the father prepared his son to take over his property, and the teacher supported him. Present day education is directly carried out by society itself and takes place behind the back of the family".²⁷ In this process, authority loses its personality and becomes anonymous. When authority is anonymous, it is

24 Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, Lontoo: University of California Press, 1996, p. 270.

25 Horkheimer, *Op. Cit.*, p. 179.

26 Martin Horkheimer, "Autorität und Familie in der Gegenwart", Teoksessa Max Horkheimer *Gesammelte Schriften Band 5*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1997, p. 377.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 380.

almost impossible to fight against it. Life becomes completely analogous to military professionalism — life equates with preparation²⁸. In this kind of society, adaptation and uniformity have the central role Horkheimer says that “previously, men were mere appendages to the machines, today they are appendages as such. Reflective thought and theory lose their meaning in the struggle for self-preservation”.²⁹ This way, the change in the nature of the socialisation is contributing to the vanishing of critical activity and thinking.

With the decline of the ego and its reflective reason, human relationships tend to a point wherein the rule of economy over all personal relationships, the universal control of commodities over the totality of life, turns into a new naked form of command and obedience. No longer buttressed by small scale property, the school and the home are losing their educational function of preparing men for life in society.³⁰

*Dialektik der Aufklärung*³¹ contains an allegorical interpretation of Homer’s *Odyssey* as a history of the evolution of the western subject. Odysseus’s goal-oriented or end-rational journey to reach home makes him sacrifice his senses, instincts and body for the sake of the return. He makes his men fasten himself to the mast of his ship. He does this in order to be able to hear the beautiful and seductive singing of the Sirens, but at the same time he with the ropes prevents himself from the exposure to the secondary deviation in contrast to the goal of the journey.

He listens, but while bound impotently to the mast; the greater the temptation the more he has his bonds tightened — just as later the burghers would deny themselves happiness all the more doggedly as it drew closer to them with the growth of their own power. What Odysseus hears is without consequence for him; he is able only to nod his head as a sign to be set free from his bonds; but it is too late; his men, who do not listen, know only the song’s danger but nothing of its beauty, and leave him at the mast in order to save him and themselves. [...] The prisoner is present at a concert, an inactive eavesdropper like the later concertgoers, and his spirited call for liberation fades like applause.³²

A process of denial of the same kind is in the end at stake in the overall development of civilisation. The human being is forced to repress his inner nature and everything that tries to break the borders of the reticent subject that has evolved in this process. Mimesis is one of these areas of experience that break the borders of the subject. It is a concept which tries to describe the primitive and undifferentiated relation to nature. More generally, the concept of

28 *Ibid.*, p. 379.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 378.

30 Adorno and Horkheimer, *ibid.*, p. 39.

31 Adorno and Horkheimer, *ibid.*, p. 67-103.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

mimesis also describes the swaying relationship between the subject and the object. The relationship with the other, which is based on mimesis, means gradual vanishing of the limits of the subject. In this process, otherness settles down for a moment as a part of the self. Only through this fusion it is possible to take the place of the other and feel empathy and compassion.

Education is basically this kind of mimetic fusion with the other. When analysed from the viewpoint of the growing child, it is experimentation with the developing, potentially present abilities that are to actualise a step further, with the help of the other. When we take the point of view of the educator, it is a capacity to take the perspective of the child, or more accurately, feel, see and experience with the eyes of the child. It is the ability to recognise the potentialities that are waiting for their realisation. As Alice Balint says, “the question is not so much about learning new things, which we hope the educators possess, than about remembering something forgotten. The fundamental presumption of solicitous upbringing is the remembrance of that which we all knew when we were children”.³³ This is what Horkheimer means when he talks about “instinctual love”.³⁴ Instrumental enlightenment has also produced the destruction of instinctual love by means of the scientification of the educational situation. Through this scientification, the element in the educational situation which escapes rationality is lost behind the sham of rational control.

When we conceptualise education as mimesis, we have to reject every attempt by educational technology at determining the “right” educational practices that are based on conscious, rational action. When we accept Horkheimer’s view on education, we try to create with education a vast experiential horizon for the child. By mimesis, the child identifies herself unconsciously with the person who can produce these experiences (Erlebnis). This significant other becomes a bridge builder between the child and the world.³⁵

These ideas of the mimetic element of education are closely linked with the basis of moral and compassion. Horkheimer calls this basis “the moral feeling”.³⁶ In the moral feeling, love realises Immanuel Kant’s fundamental principle, by which we ought to see the other as an end in itself. If moral does not have its basis in pure practical reason, as Kant thought, we have to appeal to the motivational foundation in the process of the development of an individual consciousness, a subjectivity. According to Horkheimer, the mother-child-relationship is founded on this kind of interaction which is not tied up with means and ends. In this relationship, and in the meaning complexes of early childhood that are formed in it,

33 A. Balint, *Psychoanalyse der frühe Lebensjahre*, München, 1973, p. 112.

34 Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, p. 110-111.

35 Horkheimer, “Gedanken zur Politischen Erziehung”, pp. 126-129.

36 M. Horkheimer, “Materialismus und Moral”, Teoksessa Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 3, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1988, pp. 111-149.

lies the basis for the pre-linguistic motives which, as they encounter the social reality, form the foundation for critique and productive objectifications of imagination.

The overcoming of the chaotic element in man — which contains not only not-guided bodily impulses but also purposeless spiritual impulses — is replaced by the mere suppression and disgust for all those who let these impulses to act more freely [...] To become forming form of the self and consciousness the background of autonomous life, the motive of moral sensitivity, needs a secure childhood, the ability to experience differentially, the ability to identify with the cruelly treated happiness.³⁷

Horkheimer sees the mother³⁸ not only as an object of desire (when seen in the perspective of the child) but as a successful intersubjectivity and as a principle of a critical society.³⁹ The relationship between the mother and the child forms a meaning that precedes language. This relationship is essential for experiencing the world and the forms of relations between the world, the others and oneself.⁴⁰

Maternal love does not consist simply in feeling or even in attitude; it must also express itself properly. The wellbeing of the little child and the trust he has in people and objects around him depend very largely on the peaceful but dynamic friendliness, warmth, and smile of the mother or her substitute. Coldness and indifference, abrupt gestures, restlessness and displeasure in the one who attends the child can introduce a permanent distortion into his relationship to objects, men, and the world, and produce a cold character that is lacking in spontaneous impulses. This was recognized, of course, as far back as Rousseau's *Emile* and John Locke, and even earlier. Only today, however, are people beginning to grasp the factors involved in the connection of which we are speaking. It does not take a sociologist to recognize that a mother who is pressed by other cares and occupations has a different effect than the one she wants.⁴¹

37 M. Horkheimer, "Philosophie als Kultur Kritik", Teoksessa Max Horkheimer *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 7, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985, pp. 94-95.

38 Horkheimer is talking more about the function of the mother, that is the maternal role in the development of the child, than the actual biological mother. We have to bear in mind also the latest research about the maternal role of the father in child rearing. In the context of this article, it is not possible to value critically Horkheimer's analysis, but it is important to pay attention to different feminist critiques of this theme.

39 Erich Fromm, "Die sozialpsychologische Bedeutung das Mutterrechtstheorie", Teoksessa Erich Fromm, *Gesamtausgabe*, Band.I, Stuttgart, 1989, pp. 85-109.

40 Horkheimer rightly criticised the scientification of education. By this scientification, enlightenment destroyed the "instinctual love" that was contained in maternal love. When he saw mothers as instruments of social power, he did not reflect enough on the objective conditions of their actions or even on their subjective motivations or emotions. We have to always keep in mind the difference between the ideological stressing of maternal love and the real practices of maternal love. (cf. Benjamin 1978; Rumpf 1993.)

41 Max Horkheimer, "Threats to freedom", In *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, New York: Continuum, 1974, p. 8.

The possibility for intimate relationships of this kind has been narrowed by the dialectical process of enlightenment. The decline of the family, which I pointed out earlier, has led to the situation in which the family is no longer “a kind of second womb, in whose warmth the individual gathered the strength necessary to stand alone outside it”.⁴² The family does not socialise the child anymore — instead he is being directly manipulated by the mass-culture whose aim is the “disappearance of the innerlife”.⁴³ The society has turned into a mass-society whose primary goal is economical and technological, instead of cultural and spiritual, development. This will eventually lead to the mutilation of the forms of sensing and thinking. Horkheimer talks about this under the title of “the crisis of experience”. “Experience is replaced by clichés, and the imagination active in experience by eager acceptance”.⁴⁴ The mass-human, who has lost all his individuality, has been born by the changes in the social environment. The mass-human reacts according to predestined patterns to different stimuli. She lacks the ability to make spontaneous judgements of her own and to have actual or real experiences. The result at the end is that “man has lost his power to conceive a world different from that in which he lives. This other world was that of art. Today it survives only in those works which uncompromisingly express the gulf between the monadic individual and his barbarous surroundings—prose like Joyce’s and paintings like Picasso’s *Guernica*”.⁴⁵ Horkheimer thus declares that “the substance of individuality itself, to which the idea of autonomy was bound, did not survive the process of industrialization”.

Authoritarianism, democracy, education

In his essay “*Autorität und Familie in der Gegenwart*”, Horkheimer tries to clarify the birth of the most barbarian embodiment of instrumental reason: the structuring of the fascist, or authoritarian, character. According to Horkheimer, almost a total lack of interactive situations among family members forms “the connection between servility and coldness which is characteristic for the potential fascist”. Obedience for the paternal authority of the family has become abstract as the foundation of the family has been gnawed away by the process of enlightenment. Submissiveness arises from the suppressed rebellion against the father, which

42 Max Horkheimer, “Art and mass culture”, Teoksessa *Critical Theory — Selected Essays*, New York: Continuum, 1995, p. 276.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 277.

44 Adorno and Horkheimer, *ibid.*, p. 232.

45 Max Horkheimer, “Art and mass culture”, Teoksessa *Critical Theory — Selected Essays*, New York: Continuum, 1995, p. 278.

is revealed in “the incompetence to feel empathy — empathy which is more than anything else a sign of mothers love for her child”.⁴⁶ Horkheimer interprets the coldness which is characteristic for fascist and authoritarian character as an emotional result of abandonment by the mother, of being left without motherly love, which is revealed at the end as general social hostility against everything feminine.

The I is the end-result of a long biologico-psychological development in mankind, repeated in shortened form by each individual. If this repetition of the process takes place in an abrupt way and in an overly cold and impersonal atmosphere, then a sense of separateness from others and an unapproachableness remain characteristic of the individual until the end. Love too, in its true form (the kind that embraces everyone, even the enemy), shows traces of the phase prior to the formation of the ego [...] The closer a civilization approaches the point at which the interaction in men of childlike and adult traits is disturbed in the one or the other direction, the more freedom is threatened, for freedom is expanded by the possibilities opened up by identification and love.⁴⁷

If we take seriously the mimetic element that is contained in education, it is necessary for us as educators to aim at a genuine tolerance, which we can make possible by freeing ourselves from prejudice. This is extremely important because, according to Horkheimer, the educator’s “conscious and unconscious reactions have a central role in the education of children. They mould the child perhaps more than any specific instructions [...] of course these kinds of processes can not be reversed”.⁴⁸

Being unprejudiced should not mean being “rigid unprejudiced”, which Adorno revealed in *Authoritarian Personality*. It is characteristic for rigid unprejudiced that the individual is tolerant on the level of phrases. She might reject a mode of thinking which is seen generally as problematic, for example against a specific group of people, but might then aim it against another minority.⁴⁹

With tolerance, which we are talking about, we try to lay a foundation for democracy, which is a union of autonomous individuals. The fundamental interest of these individuals is

46 Max Horkheimer, “Autorität und Familie in der Gegenwart”, Teoksessa Max Horkheimer *Gesammelte Schriften Band 5*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1997, p. 388.

47 Max Horkheimer, “Threats to Freedom”, in *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, New York: Continuum, 1974, p. 152.

48 Max Horkheimer, “Was wir ‘Sinn’ nennen, wird verschwinden. [Gespräch mit Georg Wolff und Helmut Gumnior]”, Teoksessa Max Horkheimer *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 7, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985, p. 356.

49 Theodor Adorno, “Types and Syndromes.” In Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, Sandford *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York: Norton, 1950, pp. 771-773.

to look after the mutual interests of the community. This kind of democracy has been problematised, because in a large scale it has turned into mass-democracy. Mass-democracy produces massive machine-like bureaucracies in which the individual's possibilities of acting are constantly limited. Horkheimer reminds us that the concept of democracy can be used dangerously if it is used to cover the lack of real democracy.⁵⁰ If this kind of situation were uncovered, the ideological character of democracy would be revealed, that is "the veil before the conflictual nature of reality".⁵¹

Horkheimer⁵² saw the modern education of his time mostly as manipulation in which the methods of controlling the nature are passed along. This is something we can say is happening more thoroughly today. In education the cognitive element of education is stressed. This means that the methods of technological knowledge and control are handed over to the next generation. Technological handling covers up the duty of bringing up autonomous and internally independent individuals. This human quality is a necessary presupposition of democracy. According to Horkheimer, power should not be exercised by nameless organisations. It should be exercised by people.

Along with the family, the school has a central role in education aimed at democracy. Horkheimer saw that schools should be formed in such a way that the teacher-pupil relation is not formed as domination, in which the teacher uses her power over and against the pupil.⁵³ But we should also be careful not to swing into the other extreme, in which the rational authority of the institution of the teacher would disappear, and chaos would enter the scene. Horkheimer stresses the task of the teacher as providing mimetic experiences. Behind this idea, we might see a glimmer of the traditional Jewish relation of the rabbi and the pupil studying the Talmud. However, in the present situation in the development of the schooling system — for example the sizes of classes are constantly growing — this kind of intimate teacher-pupil-relationship remains only a distant fantasy. We should, of course, keep this ideal relation in our minds only as the determinate negation of the present development, not as a utopic *topos* whose shores it might be possible, or even reasonable, to try to reach.

As we have seen, in Horkheimer's view the concept of education is closely linked with the concept of *Bildung*. In the mimetic element of education, the whole society, we might say, moulds the growing individual. In this process, *Bildung* as extensive human development, which is contrary to the prevailing progress of technical rationality, has a central role in

50 Horkheimer, "Gedanken zur Politischen Erziehung", Teoksessa Max Horkheimer *Gesellschaft im Übergang. Aufsätze, Reden und Vorträge 1942-1970*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1981, pp. 126-131.

51 Max Horkheimer, "[Über Sinn und Grenzen einer soziologischen Behandlung der Philosophie]." Teoksessa Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 11. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985, p. 218.

52 Horkheimer, "Gedanken zur Politischen Erziehung", Teoksessa Max Horkheimer *Gesellschaft im Übergang - Aufsätze, Reden und Vorträge 1942-1970*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1981, pp. 129-131.

53 *Ibid.*, pp. 129-131.

discussions about education. When Horkheimer reflects on *Bildung*, he is faithful to his style and avoids simple and uncontradictory definitions because “the reality, in which we are living and which the definition is trying to reach, is full of contradictions. Knowledge which does not provide evidence for this does not also do justice to the object”.

Horkheimer is not satisfied with the modern concept of *Bildung*, in which *Bildung* has become to mean “preparation”.⁵⁴ The disproportion between the low level of mental abilities and the high level of technology, which is apparent in our culture, implies that *Bildung* is still needed. But the problem of the concept of *Bildung* should not be, according to Horkheimer, solved by differentiating genuine and false *Bildung* from each other. To him, *Bildung* does not mean only the activity “where a human being is trying to mould himself like a work of art”,⁵⁵ but also the activity of “turning towards the things, in intellectual work and also in practices that are conscious of themselves. Only by attending to objectified work can an individual overcome his mere existence, which the old educational belief clung on to and in which, without this objectifying process, the individual’s sheer limited interest and thus bad, accidental universality materialises”.⁵⁶

Usually, *Bildung* and the civilised human being are set in contrast to lack of culture and the uncultured human being. Lack of culture is used to refer to the kind of state that is not socially mediated. To *Bildung*, and in conformity with it, to the socially mediated nature, belongs work, the human community and reason. Civilisation is defined as exclusion of everything natural, or as Sigmund Freud says, as sublimation of it. Horkheimer agrees with Freud’s analysis and argues that in the process of civilisation, the sublimated and repressed nature strikes back more strongly than ever in violent instinctive energies.⁵⁷ Or, as Adorno says: “That who is severing against himself redeems a right to be severing against others”.⁵⁸

Conclusion

In concluding remarks I would like to briefly reflect on the prospects and obstacles in the ideas developed here. Horkheimer’s views are more or less strictly connected with Freud’s theory of human development. This theory has been rightly criticised, and it is not

54 Max Horkheimer, “Begriff der Bildung”, in Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 8. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985, p. 411.

55 *Ibid.*, pp. 409-410.

56 Max Horkheimer, “Begriff der Bildung”, in Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 8. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985, p. 415.

57 Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*. New York: Continuum, 1996, pp. 92-127.

58 Theodor Adorno, “Kasvatus Auschwitzin jälkeen”, In Juha Koivisto, Markku Mäki & Juha Koivistoinen (eds.), *Mitä on valistuss?* Tampere: Vastapaino, 1995, p. 238.

appropriate to state again the already stated criticism here. The situation is the same with Freud's views on the family. The blind spot in Horkheimer's analysis lies in fact in his application of the conclusions of Freud's theory. This is true even though Horkheimer was critical of certain aspects of Freud's theory.⁵⁹ Horkheimer's own childhood experiences⁶⁰ may have influenced his view on the decline of the family. Horkheimer's childhood home was an *archetype* of the bourgeois family in which the father was a successful businessman and the mother an open-hearted human being. Judaism, which Horkheimer's childhood family was practicing, influenced on its part his idealisation of the bourgeoisie family. These experiences in the end made it impossible for Horkheimer to see past the patriarchal family, and this is the point where we should be critical about his analysis. But I would like to maintain that we should take Horkheimer's analysis seriously as a warning, not so much of the disappearance of a certain kind of form of family, but of the withering away of the content of the family as such: the disappearance or the fading of the family's — be its form whatever — role and the stronger hold that the mass-society has on the growing individual.

Today there are many different modes of critique that try to influence educational practices. If we reflect on this at the very generalised level, in almost all of the Critical Pedagogy the aim is to form education as a symmetrical, dialogical, discursive and communicative relationship. But do these catchwords give us any more hope than the conventional educational practices? I am afraid not. When we look at it from the basis of Horkheimer's analysis, this kind of thinking is seen as hopelessly one-sided. We might argue that the relationship between the teacher and the pupil is asymmetrical at a fundamental level. This is based on the fact that the situation is structured according to two human beings that are at a different level of development. But the conscious aim should be of course to produce a symmetrical relationship between the teacher and the pupil, through socialisation. In this picture, the educator is seen as a certain kind of suicide who presupposes that the child should overcome the rational authority of the educator and should set herself as an acting and autonomous subject. Seen this way, there is a constant balancing in education between the elements of support towards individuality and socialisation.

We should not get tired of stressing the fundamental connection between education and the social process as a whole. I do not see any possibility of formulating tricks which could be written down to curricula and to the "how to be a good teacher" — books, and which would prevent the situation from developing further. In the mimetic element of education, the

59 Mechthild Rumpf, "'Mystical Aura': Imagination and the Reality of the 'Maternal' in Horkheimer's Writings", Teoksessa Benhabib, Bonß, McCole (toim.), *On Max Horkheimer — New Perspectives*. Cambridge: MIT, 1993, pp. 309-334.

60 Max Horkheimer, "Das Schlimme erwarten und doch das Gute versuchen. [*Gespräch mit Gerhard Rein*]." Teoksessa Max Horkheimer *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 7, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985, pp. 442-443.

whole society sneaks into the educational situation through unconscious reactions of the teacher and the pupil. Seen from this angle, the condition for a change in education is a change in the society and in its different dimensions. To the question how this could be achieved, Horkheimer does not provide an answer.

Horkheimer's theoretical views on education are almost completely negative. They do not show any way to salvation, but instead settle with criticising existing educational practices. They contain only Walter Benjamin's now famous dictum, "hope of the hopeless". Nevertheless, Horkheimer's ideas open doors for us to formulate critical tools for education. With these tools, we are able to approach critically both conventional and critical pedagogies. One of the most important aspects is that we should not overstress handing down the methods of cognitive collection of knowledge and control of nature. Instead, we should see the specific aspects of feeling and practice in education. These aspects have a central role in the search for emancipatory educational practices.

In spite of all of their negativity, Horkheimer's ideas about education found a practical form in projects of re-education he was directing in post-war Germany with the help of the American Jewish Committee. In the Horkheimer-Pollock Archives in Frankfurt am Main there is a vast amount of documents that show how deeply Horkheimer was involved in these projects. The aim of the projects was to educate professionals of education in such a way that the authoritarian dimension of their character would be erased. Leo Löwenthal, a member of the Institut für Sozialforschung, remembered in one of his interviews that it was much earlier, while he was in United States editing the Studies of Prejudice series, that Horkheimer had this practical side to his thoughts. Löwenthal says that "Horkheimer's dream, which was never fulfilled, was that each of these books in the series Studies in Prejudice should be rewritten in the form of small booklets in popular format for distribution in a given situation of anti-Semitic political outbreaks or the like in America — namely, to teachers, students, politicians, that is, to so-called multipliers. That was sort of the idea of a political-educational mass inoculation program [...]".⁶¹ Maybe the hope of trying to build an educationally better tomorrow lies in this — in the education of the educators themselves.⁶²

61 Leo Löwenthal, "Scholarly Biography", in Löwenthal, *An Unmastered Past*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, p. 136.

62 We should not think today that this would be enough. That would be far too optimistic. Why Horkheimer participated in re-education of the post-war-Germany teachers and educators is an practical reaction to the historical experience that his generation had. After Horkheimer returned to the Germany in the 1950'ies he lived in a constant fear. We might say as Jürgen Habermas once formulated that he lived "as if he were sitting on unopened suitcases" (Habermas 1986, 218). He was sure that either nazis or communists would gain eventually power and plant their totalitarian order to the Europe. So he had to participate in the re-education that much he had a true pragmatist in him as Löwenthal pointed out.

Catharsis from the Greeks to the Culture Industry

Bruno Pucci and Newton de-Ollivera

Catharsis: its original sense

The term “catharsis” has its origin in the ancient Medicine. It means purgation or cleansing of the organism; expelling what is strange to the organism and deleterious to the body. Purgation, disentanglement, relief. In Orpheus one passes from physical and somatic well-being to the spiritual well-being; catharsis is, then, a kind of purification and remission of one’s unfair actions by offering sacrifice and playing pleasant games. A human being is in peace with himself and with the others, free from the guilt which tormented him, from the evil which incriminated him. In Plato, catharsis confirms its original meaning of purification, of keeping spiritual well-being and freedom from all disturbance. It still gets new connotative shades: the soul’s deliverance of the weighty bodily materiality, including pleasure, desire, the retirement of the soul in itself, its meeting wisdom, *sophia*. Aristotle also often employs the concept of catharsis in the medical sense as purification, purgation. And he is also the first philosopher who adds an aesthetic meaning to it, a kind of liberty or tranquility that music and poetry bring to men. Tragedy — as a sublime imitation of the human conflicts — uses the voice of music and of the dramatic poetry to convey terror and piety to men and so gives them the purification of their feeling in an atmosphere of calm and serenity. In the *Politics* Aristotle comments that some people deeply affected by emotion as piety and enthusiasm feel that they are cured, purified when they hear the sacred chants which influence souls. Purification, this delightful relief and sensible consequence of catharsis, then appears as an aesthetic phenomenon. Goethe takes Aristotle’s interpretation to emphasize the equilibrium of passion brought to the spectators after the tragic art affects them. This phenomenon keeps its medical dimension and heals body and soul; it doesn’t nullify the human emotion but abridges the existing tensions to a certain supportable level so as to permit reason administration. As it happens with the Greek tragedy, the works of art — specially music and literature — can develop in their readers and listeners a cathartic function.¹ To Nietzsche, who deplored the

1 Nicola Abbagnano, *Dicionário de Filosofia*, entry “Catarse”, translated to Portuguese by Alfredo Bosi, São Paulo: Mestre Jou, 1970, p. 113.

disappearance of the Greek tragedy liberating potential in modern times, in the Dionysian art man was taken to the maximum exaltation of all his faculties, felt and wanted to express an entirely new and unknown quality of sentiment. At the same time he wholly shared the suffering of existence, he also shared the wisdom and the truth extracted from the depth of his soul. He was the central point of the dimensions of pleasure, suffering, knowledge, and of freedom.²

The tragic dimension and catharsis

The tragic, as a purifying process of the individual, is densely analyzed in Nietzsche's writings, especially in those composed in 1871.³ When he writes about the origin of the Greek tragedy, Nietzsche remarks that the creation and development of art come from its double character: it is at the same time apollonian and Dionysian. Apollo is the god of dreams; Dionysus is the god of drunkenness, of ecstasy. With Apollo, the appearance of the dreamland, full of beauty, is the first condition for all plastic arts, as well as a good portion of poetry. The artist carefully scrutinizes dreams and in this appearance discovers the veritable interpretation of life; by employing such images he gets contact with reality. And indeed these images he discovers inside himself are not exclusively pleasant and delicious; there are also somberness, sadness, sinisterness, disturbance and expectation growing under his regard. Apollo, the god of the creative faculty of forms — and thus also of expression — is still the god of soothsaying based on appearance. And immediately linked to the previous aspects in Apollo we find another delicate line that's extreme deliberation, the free control over his own emotion even if violent and the serene wisdom in life's behaviors. He is the god of logic, of internal coherence, of perfect equilibrium.⁴

Dionysus represents the world of drunkenness, of rapture, of the narcotic condition when men liberate their cultural chains, sing their hymns, ragingly express their desires; Dionysus exhibits an excess of vitality which exists in the spring renewal, that force which joyously explodes in the whole nature and awakens all the individual's will of living, obstinately invites him to nullify himself in the total forgetfulness of himself, in the absolute plunge into the cosmic unity. In the Dionysian art, men are elevated to the universal grade of the species and even of nature; they lose their individuality to completely emerge in the unity. In the accomplished extasis, one entirely shares the suffering in the world, in the existence, and at

2 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Origem da Tragédia*, translated to Portuguese by Álvaro Ribeiro, Lisboa: Guimarães Editores, 1996, pp. 49, 84.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 37-43.

the same time also shares wisdom so that from the bottom of the world he can announce and proclaim truth. All instances — pleasure, suffering and knowledge are then amalgamated in a whole.

The features which compose the Apollonian spirit and the Dionysian spirit deny and contradict one another, when taken in themselves. And nevertheless in the fundamental Greek tragedy, the tension between these two spirits gives it all power, beauty and artistic expression. But see well — so says Nietzsche — Apollo couldn't live without Dionysus. The titanic or barbarian was at last a necessity so urgent as the Olympic. Nietzsche goes farther in his reasoning when he observes that if, on one hand, the tragic myth must be understood as a symbolic representation of the Dionysian wisdom, which assumes its form thanks to the help of Apollonian processes, on the other hand this tragic myth carries the world of appearance — of the Apollonian artistic form as far as the limits in which it tries to deny itself and look for shelter in the middle of the true and unique reality. Even the artistic manifestation, as it assumes a specific Apollonian configuration, always remains grafted and fertilized by the humus of the exuberant life. This interdependence gave rhythm, melody and the capability for rapture to the Greek tragedy. And in this field of force, neither was the individual consumed by the totality (of the species or of nature) coming to self-destruction nor this totality lost its powerful force over the individual when takes him to the species, to nature.⁵

In the com(tra)position Dionysian-Apollonian in the tragic art there was a process of elevation, purgation, liberation of the human being: catharsis. Nietzsche recognizes:

In the Dionysian orgies of the Greek there was a superior meaning: they were feasts for man's liberating redemption and days for transfiguration.(...) For the first time the joyful delirium of art invaded nature; for the first time the annihilation of the principle of individualization became an artistic phenomenon (...) the Dionysian melody excited these dreamers with a chill of terror.⁶

That is why the Dionysian experience gives the man the only possibility of being powerfully negative, critical, and resistant. But at the same time the terrible knowledge/vision of truth nullifies all the individual's impulses and motives for action. He feels himself as useless, powerless. True knowledge kills action; to act it's indispensable the veil of illusion all over the world. The interference of the apollonian moment is fundamental to awaken the Dionysian man from his lethargic torpor and bring him back — reinforced and liberated — to the horrid obstacles of everyday life. And the apollonian art is a way of assuring it because it is the prodigious potency that transfigures the most terrible things thanks to the happiness we

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 172-174.

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

feel when we see appearance, thanks to the happiness from the exterior form, from appearance.⁷ Apollo shows the world of suffering is necessary, otherwise the individual won't be able to have the liberating vision. It is a key to permit his astonished contemplation of beauty and his remaining calm and utterly serene even when carried on his fragile boat against the violent waves of the deep sea.⁸ Tragic art therefore brings in itself a formative, an educative, a self-reflexive dimension. It makes the individual free himself from the slimy universality of the Dionysian state and helps him to constitute himself as an autonomous being. It develops and multiplies the aesthetic instinct, voracious for beautiful and sublime forms. It impels thinking beyond appearance and teaches the deepest meaning of things.⁹

Catharsis in times of Culture Industry

When Nietzsche analyses the 19th century Germany, he sees that culture is no more disinterested and becomes something venal, something under the laws of market. Merchants of the spiritual products — “Philistines of Culture” — organize artistic institutions and schools. Transformed into merchandise, culture is converted into a mask, a bait. Culture loses its critical potentiality and is more and more integrated into the society of exchange. Nietzsche deflagrates his merciless criticism against this culture industry:

In no artistic epoch the so-called intellectual culture and the true art have been so strange to one another, so divergent as nowadays. We understand why so miser a culture hates true art: it fears foreseeing in it the cause of its own ruin.¹⁰

More than seventy years after Nietzsche, Adorno and Horkheimer in the North-American context of the technological revolutions retake and deepen this criticism against the “democratized” culture and show how it is necessary for the society of the Culture Industry to administer the tragic so as to guarantee its own febrile reproduction. The tragic inserted in life since the first days of man's history — *homo homini lupus est* — is apparently camouflaged in the economically developed societies by the atmosphere of social aid and philanthropy. As in these societies the bloody spirit of power and repression become more trenchant and omnipresent it is necessary all the time to fly the flag of kindness and cooperation and

7 *Ibid.*, p. 109.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 56.

9 Bruno Pucci, “Um encontro de Adorno e Nietzsche nas Minima Moralia”, in *Impulso: Revista de Ciências Sociais* 28, 2000.

10 Nietzsche, *Origem da Tragédia*, p. 161.

conceal the feeling of cold animation which is present in all human relationship. *This insistence on kindness is just the manner society confesses the suffering it causes: everybody knows that in this system nobody can help anyone, not even oneself, and that's what ideology must take into account.*¹¹ Exactly as developed society does not get to suppress its members' suffering, but simply registers it and plans it to preserve the system, so culture industry behaves in relation to the tragic: administers it and searches in art some constituents to turn it tolerable. Art gives the tragic that the most different kinds of entertainment cannot develop by themselves and at the same time it is necessary to reproduce and approach the established reality. The more reality is impregnated by the necessary suffering, the more it will generate the impression of greatness and power.¹² In the Greek tragedy the horror of existence was attained in depth and amplitude by art and transmitted a clearer knowledge of the facts. The individual who shared suffering at the same time shared the wisdom of life. Art then appeared like a savior, bringing the pleasant ointment to heal the wounds.¹³ Tragedy, manifestation of desperate resistance to the mythical threat, was also at the same time purgation and emancipation. In the mass culture of contemporary societies the tragic loses its virulence and assumes the form of a fatal destiny to everyone who does not cooperate with the system.¹⁴

The Dialectics of Catharsis

The Frankfurtarian authors Adorno and Horkheimer well caught the weakening of the tragic in the 1940s. Today, after more than sixty years this progressive distortion gets more impressive. In the process of the omnipresent half-formation* in the contemporary world we observe a progressive waning of catharsis. What disturbs, what is strange to organism and soul is no more purged by art but disguised, hidden behind the twinkle of lights and colors. One has an apparent and transitory sensation of relief. That terrible passion which knocked men down and turned them fragile and showed them the cruel aspects of existence are now dulcified in a vulgar and strong manner all through the sequences and mainly at the happy ends of soap operas and films. And in this false way the culture industry persuades the

11 Theodor W Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialética do Esclarecimento — Fragmentos Filosóficos*, (DE), tradução de Guido Antonio de Almeida, Rio de Janeiro: Zahar editores, 1986, p. 141.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 142.

13 Nietzsche, *Origem da Tragédia*, pp.77, 84.

14 Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialética do Esclarecimento*, pp. 142-143.

* Half-formation corresponds to the German term *Halbbildung* employed by Theodor W. Adorno to indicate the modern process of smattering of knowledge, an obstacle to real education.

spectators that human life (whatever life) is at the same time a dangerous and pleasant affair, which can always have a happy end if in this course they learn to completely dominate irrational impulses and to accept a standardized existence.

The serious art as well as ancient philosophy are outcomes from the schism between intellectuals and manual workers. Few men could make immortal expressions of high culture or aesthetically enjoy the purifying essence of masterpieces because many men had to work hard and produced food, heat, security, protection. Nowadays, art degenerated into industry — at the same time as the fruition is more and more at everybody's disposal — immensely increases the contradiction between producers and consumers, those no more need elaborating the simplest cogitation because a whole specialized team think for them. Serious art, aesthetic expression of a sublimated suffering, accepts real contradictions, exhibits time dissonance and, as *promesse de bonheur*, although in a period of exchange, forecasts a world free from the market. The culture industry work always roots out in its aesthetic form the critical cultural elements, in every moment manifests its affirmative character and eternally glorifies the dominant *status quo*.¹⁵ Television, radio, cinema and all the “different” magazines distributed by the news-stands in the *polis* happily praise the repeated refrain: that's reality as it always is, as it must be, as it will be. *What is healthful reproduces, as do the natural or the industrial cyclic process*. The naked fashion models in the magazines eternally smile to the men in the street; all the time the same top music in the parade is heard in thousands of cd-players.¹⁶ One of the beneficial results of the aesthetic catharsis was to generate spiritual purgation in the participants to sharpen the elements of resistance and of confrontation to the antagonistic reality, but now, in this dreamless art bound for the consumption, what happens is catharsis in the reverse: its feigned poetics throws the participants to the identification with the totality, to the impersonal fusion to reality.

Works of art are ascetic and licentious; culture industry is pornographic and puritan, Adorno and Horkheimer said in the *Dialektik der Aufklärung*.¹⁷ They're ascetic, the works of art, while they defy their authors and duplicated authors to raise themselves by effective exercises of retirement and interpretation above the immediate and rude aspects of the artifacts, searching the completeness of its never found, never exhausted meaning. And in this trial for elevation, enchantment and asceticism these works of art develop the critical sensibility, the ethical dimension, the aesthetic expression. While presenting an insulted reality in torn clothes, works of art are also *shameless*, licentious, because they denude its intimacy and annul the humiliation of its passion. The same regard that engenders sadness

15 P.S. Rouanet, *Teoria Crítica e Psicanálisis*, Rio de Janeiro: Tempo Brasileiro, 1998, pp. 118-119.

16 Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialética do Esclarecimento*, pp. 124 ff.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 131.

when revealing life ailment also engenders pleasure when announcing a promise, even if unfulfilled.

Culture industry, in its turn, is *pornographic and puritan*. It explores the luxurious side of individuals and circumstances, showing the object of desire again and again, vulgarizing it and astutely denies it to their consumers; at the same time it ostensibly exposes the sex scenes and so excites a preparatory pleasure but frustrates it by the miss-fulfillment of this same pleasure.¹⁸ The culture industry does not ascetically elevate their spectators, nor does it sublimate their instincts. It intrinsically becomes harsh in the application of the sexual morals because disorder and orgy are harmful to the system; they upset work and production. A man has all rights in his intimacy and inside his private rooms, he is allowed to explore his sexual performance with images, films, gadgets which are made and consumed *ad hoc*. But ... to gain access to that gorgeous woman the magazines, movies, videos and internet again and again offer him — well, that's something to his imagination, not to everyday life. For the Hollywood movies, the soap operas on radio and TV, as well as for the weekly magazines tragic are those facts that don't respect the ruling values, that don't obey the prescription of the established institutions and want to swim upstream. Or sometimes tragic are the outcomes of a destiny which escapes the programming of the society of consumption and present themselves as inexplicable, indescribable and overwhelming; they provoke compassion, aids and the good will of those who have the power. But there's more...When means of communication, especially TV, inundate people's homes with barbarian and shocking scenes taken from a position to favor their commercial or advertising interest, they turn the tragic simply banal. It is converted into something natural, obvious: an everyday companion, an expression of the inexorable fate.

According to Adorno and Horkheimer, culture always contributed to tame not only the individual's violent instincts, but above all those revolutionary impulses. The culture industry, however, goes further. It exercises the individual to fulfill the conditions under which he is forced to carry his miserable kind of life. When continually reproduced, the tragic reaches the spectators in their daily routine and demonstrates to everybody that despite all suffering it is possible to continue living. *It's enough to recognize his own nullity, subscribe the defeat and we are integrated. Society is a society of despare and, just for that very reason, a prey to outlaws.*¹⁹

That's how we cancel the individual, that's how we exclude what's tragic. In former times the tension between individual and society was the very constitutive substance of society in itself. *It glorified "the bravery and liberty of feeling in the face of a powerful enemy, a*

18 C. Türcke, "Prazeres Preliminares — Virtualidade — Expropriação: Indústria Cultural Hoje", in *As luzes da art*, orgs. R. Duarte and V. Figueiredo, Belo Horizonte: Opera Prima, 1999, pp. 55-80.

19 Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialética do Esclarecimento*, p. 144.

sublime a'bdversity, a terrifying problem".²⁰ Today the tragic broke up in the false identity of society and individual. All this brings the Brazilian poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade's lines to our mind:

Am I in high fashion ? It's sweet to be fashionable, even if fashion denies my identity, swaps it, monopolizing all trade marks, all logotypes in the market. How naïvely I discharge myself from being. I — that once was and knew that I was so different from everybody else, united to other human beings, conscious of our human and particular condition.²¹

Here's then catharsis is in the reverse. The individual disappears, dissolved in the net of the social totality. He's classified, numbered and labeled. Individual liquidated, tragedy eliminated, catharsis dissolved, society reproduced. Even what is said to be comic is no refuge.

The waning of catharsis in the comic

According to Freud, laughter appears during the child's development. When there is some sound repetition and articulation of words, the resulting verbal game starts a candid pleasure due to the babbling of the similar, due to the rediscovery of what is known. When reason comes this kind of pleasure is repressed. Teenagers and grownups are no more allowed to manipulate sounds and words, whose use is now governed by the laws of the rational full age. To replace this infantile pleasure, the grownup turns to a game substitute, joke [Scherz]. This new "game" acts as a substitute which fools the rational alertness and gets its complicity to a regressive exercise which normally would be rejected as irrational.²² Laughter in its origin a happy manifestation of humanness — is restrained whenever rationality sets going. However even in those moments when ratio predominates, laughter in subtle ways frequently comes back in its original function: in irrational and spontaneous moments created by adults to express their intense instants of humanness in a happy infantile regression free of the chains of civilization; in keen negative moments when laughter as catharsis derides the accomplishments of power and helps to provoke cracks in the throne, in the cathedra, in the altar, in the system. The famous Latin sentence "Ridendo castigat mores" is "*the liberating laughter that whips power, from Molière to Brecht*".²³

20 *Ibid.*

21 C.D. Andrade, *O corpo*, Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1984, p. 85.

22 Rouanet, *Teoria Crítica e Psicanálisis*, p. 134.

23 *Ibid.*

As in the Western World there has been a strong predominance of the instrumental logic, expressions of spontaneity and negativity could happen but they have been less and less allowed. Laughter gradually assumed a veiled form for adjustment to the power. Once a happy form of humanness and resistance, laughter in the fascist period became explicit aggressiveness and in our mass culture epoch it becomes sweet agreement to the establishment. *Laughter, once the image of humanness, becomes a regression to inhumanity.*²⁴ The anti-Semitic laughter is not a humanizing laughter, it does not liberate constructive energy, but is rather a morbid laughter, full of cruelty. It performs the *furtive gratification of prohibited impulses. It does not challenge power: it's at her disposal (...)* *Repression in itself becomes pleasure*²⁵ That is the laughter of the prejudice against the discriminated person, against the black, against the immigrant's awkward, defective speech. The collective laughter of the little jokes and wisecracks against the outsiders, against women, against the blondes, against the fags. As a revenge we discharge the problems we daily suffer because of a rude boss, the mechanical state, the administered society. We laugh against them, we consider they are guilty because we take them as weak; we laugh against them because we have not the courage to laugh at ourselves.

It is always ridicule to laugh at something. A group of laughing people are always a parody of humanity. They're monads. Each one surrenders to the pleasure of being ready for everything at the expense of the others and with the support of the majority. His harmony is the caricature of solidarity.²⁶

The laughter the culture industry generates is a synthetic, bewitched laughter. Arbitrarily imposed this kind of laughter is an escape from the dull, stressing reality and above all from the last possibilities for resistance this society still can raise. It's an unconscious and naïve acceptance of a given situation.²⁷ Among the spectacles of entertainment produced by the culture industry, we can distinguish those "canned" and those made in the same place in which they are exhibited. In canned TV programs the dull and orchestrated laughter preponderates in a uniform and universal rhythm imposed to guarantee success and profit wherever and whenever the spectacle is to be on. The spectator laughs at the built-up and metallic laughter which comes from the tape-recorder and this laughter becomes the ridiculous farce of pleasure and delight. In the national comic spectacles the malicious jokes

24 Theodor W. Adorno, "A Arte é Alegre?", translated into Portuguese by Newton Ramos-de-Oliveira, in *Teoria Crítica, Estética e Educação*, orgs. Newton Ramos-de-Oliveira, A.A.S. Zuin and B Pucci, Campinas / Piracicaba: Autores Associados/Ed. da Unimep, 2001, pp. 11-18.

25 Rouanet, *Teoria Crítica e Psicanálisis*, pp. 134-135.

26 Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialética do Esclarecimento*, p. 132.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

and wisecracks predominate and the resulting laughter is compulsive and resigned. The entertainment industry aims to satisfy spectators by producing a continuous and abounding flux of laughter to relieve their everyday tensions so that it becomes more safely control their own human impulses. It creates conditions for the gestation of a pseudo catharsis in the service of the individuals' perfect adaptation to an administered society. The constantly malicious jokes, which create a roaring laughter, in a reverse way express how deep is the dissatisfaction of our repressed instinctive tensions.

The laughter of conciliation to power is "liberating" only in the sense of expressing an escape from the claws of the logic and the repression. At the same time it is an awkward laughter, a shy expression of the intense renunciation of one's individuality, even when a question of survival. This modern kind of laughter bears witness of one's adhesion to the instances that inspire terror. *We laugh because there is nothing to laugh at.*²⁸

The fissure in the structure of the ruling order through which laughter could spread its essence and help the individual and his circumstance to administrate his tensions and problems is now thinner and thinner.

A possible expression of resistance

We laugh at the tragic that once was tragic. We cry because of the comic that no more is funny. Each one is a piece in a complex gear. A great quantity of these pieces is rusty due to no use. They're no more useful. Perhaps they never were. Time is bound to accomplish destiny. Other pieces in a stroke of luck can be replaced. They'll have limited functions and for a little period. Why lose hair and cry bloody tears? It's certainly better to accept a dry crying and a shade of sadness in our empty, hollow eyes. Have you ever been an actor in the show of life? Has he had his image reproduced on the screen of his dream? Then this man will have a little longer survival, even if just a few seconds, because others will have seen he was alive. Is he as real as a character in a "TV reality show"? In the opposite case who will remember whom in this society of sensations? The system of exchanges is stronger than the mythical gods. The system of market marks the days and nights for the powerless pieces. Using its magical force it inverts feelings at his will. Like a film of terror! Laughter will be tragic. Tragedy will be a gag. If this administered society gets to give men the *status* of things and convert things into social beings, why shouldn't it play with dolls and damaged pieces over the board of life? Laughing at the laughter of life and crying for the sadness of death can be happy and cruel, but it is a possible expression of resistance.

28 Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialética do Esclarecimento*, p. 131.

“The key to expressive changes”

At the end of his conference “Taboos on Teaching”, Adorno says:

there comes the unavoidable question: what to do? — and for it I am no authority to answer. Very often this question sabotages the consequent process of thinking because it neglects the fact that only by deepening the Critical Theory of the denunciation something can be changed.²⁹

At the same conference, Adorno comes to the crucial conclusion that there are gaps in reality which must be used as *loci* capable of developing the individual’s reflection and emancipation, which must be radically searched for: “de-barbarization” of humanness is the immediate presupposition for survival. And the Frankfurt philosopher concludes: “the key to expressive changes lies in the relations between society and school”.³⁰

These words must be complemented by the stress on building the resistance.

The human reality is its history and, in it, contradictions do not explode by themselves. The conflict between streamlined, rewarding domination on the one hand, and its achievements that make for self-determination and pacification on the other, may become blatant beyond any possible denial, but it may well continue to be a manageable and even productive conflict for with the growth in the technological conquest of nature grows the conquest of man by man. And this conquest reduces the freedom which is a necessary *a priori* of liberation. This is freedom of thought in the only sense in which thought can be free in the administered world — as the consciousness of its repressive productivity, and as the absolute need for breaking out of this whole. But precisely this absolute need does not prevail where it could become the driving force of a historical practice, the effective cause of qualitative change. *Without this material force, even the most acute consciousness remains powerless.*³¹

That’s the way to follow if we are to have a more human society, a society where all humans can be free and develop their reasoning and their sensibility for the good of themselves and of their fellows.

29 Adorno, “A Arte é Alegre?,” p. 173.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 175.

31 Herbert Marcuse, *One-dimensional Man — Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1966, P. 253.

Michel Foucault: From Critical 'Theory' To Critical Pedagogy

James D. Marshall

Introduction

Just as pedagogy (in general) should be based upon a theory concerning pedagogy so too, it might be said, should a Critical Pedagogy be based upon a Critical Theory: but what type of Critical Theory? When one talks about the importance of critical thinking, and Critical Pedagogy which, presumably would be used to develop critical thinking, then what kind of critical thinking are we talking about? Or to put it another way what is the sense of "critical" which is being used in the literatures of Critical Pedagogy? In this introduction I wish to discuss some possibilities.

First, I am not concerned with that *critical thinking*, which is essentially a version of logic. In this version of (informal) logic "critical thinking" refers to the application of formal logical patterns of reasoning and analysing to a piece of text in order to determine whether conclusions follow logically from premises, whether they are substantiated by evidence, and what assumptions are made in initial premises. Seldom are arguments outside of formal systems, however, logically watertight. Even so we would wish our arguments to be logical and coherent, but is that enough? Logical consistency on its own is not enough, as Milton showed when, in *Paradise Lost*, by reversing the meanings of "good" and "evil" Satan acquires a certain nobility or stature. In any type of logical argument what is found in the conclusions must in some manner be found also in the premises. Conversely if what is "wanted" is a conclusion that cannot be found through analysis, then there must be something missing either in the original assumptions or premises, or with premises that have been fed in as the "argument" or discussion progresses.

If then arguments for a pedagogy do not raise approaches to social, cultural and political issues in the choice of content then any pedagogy that claimed the name "critical" would need assumptions and premises of a kind which "implied" approaches to the curriculum that raised these issues. And what seems to be the problem is that certain premises, beliefs, values and pedagogical approaches, are missing in traditional curriculum subjects. It would appear then that some extra premises are needed in any theoretical approach to pedagogy that was critical in other than a formal "logical" sense. Something is missing.

Arguably the leading proponent of Critical Pedagogy, Henry Giroux, has raised this issue of missing premises. He points out what can be said to be missing in these accounts that provide “a core of what we call critical thinking” (i.e., the informal logical version).¹ For Giroux two major assumptions are not only missing from this account of “critical thinking”, but that also their absence prevents further important assumptions to be developed. These assumptions are said to be concerned with the following:² (1) the relationship between theory and facts, and; (2) the belief that knowledge cannot be separated from human interests, norms and values. The introduction of premises of these kinds into a curriculum argument or discussion would certainly have implications for the curriculum and for pedagogy. So far so good, it might be said: but “almost”, or “just a minute”, might also be said!

Of course these two notions and the associated issues are important. In relation to an issue which is unresolved, literacy and the teaching of reading for example, it is not, however, just a question of replacing one premise with another. For example “We are doing as well as we can with our present stretched resources”, might be replaced with something like, “We need to restructure what we are doing so that, as well as the claim that we are doing well, these important issues, and the political, social and moral positions associated with them, are heard as to why we are not improving learning to read”. But these are missing needs and interests which exist at the same “level” as the interests and needs identified in the traditional approach to the curriculum. Thus the dispute may not go beyond consideration of the known and the missing of what is already “known” — perhaps the effectiveness of other approaches to the teaching of reading for example. But what of that which is missing because it is *occluded*, i.e. hidden from sight so to say, from many discussions of learning to read — *illiteracy* for example?^{*} But is the discovery of what is merely *missing* enough? Or do we have to search for something that is missing because occluded. I believe that we do and that Foucault can provide a way into the darkness of occlusion

Foucault holds a stronger position on the notion of the “missing”. What is *occluded* and not merely missing is at least what Foucault called “savoir” or what Hacking (1981) was to call “depth knowledge”³. This is a very general form of knowledge that underlies a number of areas of thought and permits kinds of practices with human beings to be accepted, if not legitimated, according to Foucault — see *Discipline and Punish*.⁴ It is this form of

1 Henry Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals*, Granby, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1988, p. 62.

2 *Ibid.*

* I am grateful here to my former PhD student, Blair Kœfœd, who approaches the question of learning to read and write in a manner which is close to both Martin Heidegger’s questioning of technology in “The Question of Technology”, and to Michel Foucault’s notion of problematisation. I am also grateful to Blair for introducing me to Schindler’s *The Reader*, in which there is a harrowing and important account of illiteracy.

3 Ian Hacking, “The archaeology of knowledge”, *The New York Review of Books*, May 14, 1981.

4 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, New York: Vintage, 1979.

knowledge that must be brought out from its hidden and occluded "spaces". A further (but not the last) major assumption that is occluded and missing is that the self is constituted in pedagogical practices. But how are we to find something that is occluded? Do we have a critical sonar system?

For Foucault the way to proceed, in order to bring out the occluded, is by what he calls problematisation.⁵ In this paper I will explicate what Foucault meant by problematisation, and how it permitted certain "objects" to be presented as "objects of thought" by posing and answering the kind of questions presented in problematisations. Because it advances thinking on these issues beyond the missing I would see problematisation in Foucault's sense as a form of Critical Theory and therefore as having implications for Critical Pedagogy.

Problematisation

In probably the last interview that was held with Michel Foucault Paul Rabinow's opening question on problematics and problematising was this:

You have been talking about a "history of problematics." What is a history of problematics?⁶

Foucault's answer begins with an exposition on the history of Thought. (He had of course named his chair at the Collège de France in 1970 as "The History of Systems of Thought"). But this was not "thought" in the normal sense of the term, because his aim for sometime had been to describe a history of Thought that was not a history of ideas and was not a history of attitudes and types of action. Instead it was more like a history of general assumptions which permitted utterances to be considered true or false at a particular historical moment. But this was not just savoir or depth knowledge. It was that, but it was more involved. It required objects to be taken as objects of Thought, and not as objects which referred to "deep objects", assumptions, beliefs, practices and techniques. For example it was possible to say in New Zealand education in 1970 that the utterance "One cannot detect reading failure in schools until the end of the second year", was considered to be true but by 1980 a similar utterance would have been deemed false. What had changed to permit an utterance to be true at time T1, yet a similar utterance to be false at time T2? This required a number of questions about why we did certain things at T1 and why we did different things at T2. So the answer to a

5 Michel Foucault, "What is enlightenment?", in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Catherine Porter, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984, p. 117.

6 Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault Essential Works 1954-1984*, I., London: Penguin Books 1994, p. 117.

question posed about why we tested for potential reading failure in Year I at T2 involved some new beliefs or assumptions underlying learning to read, and the meaning of “learning to read”. So problematising involved questions such as “Why do we think X, or practice Y” at particular times. An excellent example here is Foucault’s work on punishment and the changes from the regicide Damiens on the scaffold and the prison for young offenders of Foucher some eighty years later.⁷ And the answers that Foucault gave here, were that “punishment” had changed its meaning and that concepts of order and ordering of human beings had emerged and become part of the meaning of “punishment”.

Foucault continues:

It seemed to me that there was one element that was capable of describing the history of thought — this was what one could call the element of problems or, more exactly, problematisations.⁸

What was different in the answers which he sought in problematising, and which fitted into what he talked of as “The History of Thought”? First he distinguished the History of Thought from the History of Ideas and from the domain of attitudes that might underline and determine behaviour. Thus Thought, he argues, is:

Something quite different from the set of representations that underlies a certain behaviour; it is also quite different from the domain of attitudes that can determine this behavior. Thought is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it its meaning; rather, it is what allows one to *step back* (my italics) from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and question it as to its meaning, its conditions and its goals.⁹

In the punishment example we have referred only to the questioning of meaning but we would need to consider also the conditions under which this new form of punishment is given and, in giving that form of punishment, what goals are sought?

The notion of stepping back here is, I believe, very important. Stepping back is different from the notion of identifying an underlying knowledge or set of practices, or an episteme, which permit utterances to be considered true or false. Hacking talked of a depth knowledge or savoir.¹⁰ But to step back is not quite to seek depth knowledge or an episteme.

Stepping back is at the same time a freedom for Foucault. It is a freedom to detach oneself from what one does, it is the motion by which one detaches oneself from what one does, so as

7 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

8 Foucault, “What is enlightenment?”, p. 117.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Hacking, “The archaeology of knowledge”.

to establish it as an object of Thought and to reflect upon it as a problem, and as a problem which carries little or no "baggage", i.e. prior theory, presuppositions and hints of solutions. To question meaning, conditions and goals is at the same time freedom in relation to what one does. It is to treat the object of thought as a *problem*. A system of Thought would be a history of problems or a problematisation. It would involve developing a set of conditions within which possible responses can be proposed. But it would not present itself as a solution or response.

How does something become a problem and enter the domain of Thought? For a domain of action, a behavior to enter the field of thought:

...it is necessary for a certain number of factors to have made it uncertain, to have made it lose its familiarity, or to have provoked a certain number of difficulties around it. These elements result from social, economic or political processes.¹¹

This cries out for an illustrative example. I will try and make it simple.¹² New Zealand was one of the last nations in the Western world to abolish corporal punishment in public (i.e. state) schools. Great Britain was forced to abolish corporal punishment in state schools in 1986 because of a ruling of the European Committee of Human Rights in 1982. At that time corporal punishment was legal only in Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand. The New Zealand Government suspended it in public schools in 1987 and legislated against it in 1992, but there is still a section of the Crimes Act which permits parents and teachers to use "reasonable" force and which is in conflict with Article 7 of the United Nations Convention on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by New Zealand in 1992. Article 7 states that:

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

At present (2004) a debate is waging in New Zealand to stop parents from smacking their children. Some people fear that discipline is declining in New Zealand society and of course in schools (which in turn are often the centre of responsibility and blame). There are demands then for the return of corporal punishment regardless of the fact that by signing this convention we are held by international law not to resurrect corporal punishment. In other words the notion of reasonable force is being challenged in New Zealand. Does the notion of reasonable force contain corporal punishment and spanking? If it does, and section 52 of the Crimes Act is not repealed, then New Zealand is in contravention of the UN Convention, both legally and morally. How might this situation be problematised? We need to look at

11 Foucault, "What is enlightenment?", p. 117.

12 James D. Marshall and Dominique James Marshall, *Discipline and Punishment in New Zealand Education*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1997.

meaning, conditions and goals down the three parameters of the social, the economic and the political and along those parameters at historical factors.

Across all three parameters there is no meaning assigned to “reasonable force” in section 59 of the Crimes Act, Similarly in the present discussions and proposals to outlaw parents smacking their children there is no definition of “smacking” nor attempts to distinguish between a smack, a hit, or a blow. Corporal punishment was abolished legally in 1992 and after long and bitter disputes within the education sector, but in state schools only. Would corporal punishment continue to be practiced in the home as an example of reasonable Force. In problematising smacking it is this type of question which might be posed to all three parameters.

Under the conditions parameter questions must be asked as to whether the Crimes Act Section 59 which permits “reasonable force” would be abolished or reworded to cover eg, issues of self protection from minors? Under the parameter of the social would fall questions about the long term psychological effects of child abuse, the disruption of order in schools and the effects upon society (eg of the need for counseling and psychiatric services, the breaking up of families and a whole coterie of child services. New Zealand is also very high amongst the developed Western countries for early child and teenage deaths — abuse and suicide).

Questions must be asked about the economic effects of smacking and child abuse. I am not just talking about the economic effects of providing children’s courts and welfare services, but the economic effects of losing potentially well adjusted citizens to anti-social behaviour and the courts. There is also the actual loss of life of young people — suicide — who may have contributed to the well being of society, who might have led useful and practical lives as good parents and citizens, and contributors to society.

These are examples only of the questions which might be posed of the *object* “smacking”, and it is far from being an exhaustive list. But *if* it is an example of the problematisation of smacking how does Critical Theory, in the wider sense of the term, enter into this account of smacking? How does Foucault advance from problematisation to a type of critical theoretical approach to “the object of smacking”, given that problematising the object has produced answers to certain questions?

Critical Theory

The question to be pursued in this section is whether Foucault’s notion of problematisation can be considered as a type of Critical Theory. The arguments here will be of a more negative kind, to the effect that versions of Critical Theory have difficulty in dealing with certain problems.

Max Weber

Science is rational and a scientific approach would improve bureaucracy according to Weber. Indeed Weber's own work contributed to the advance of bureaucracy as a scientific enterprise. But, because theories of bureaucratic management were deemed by Weber to be scientific, it would (or should?) be neutral. However, in the last twenty years Western education has experienced a massive penetration by both business values and management theories in the restructuring of institutions and bureaucratic structures. This advance of bureaucracy has brought with it forms of ordering which involve domination. Weber was to write "Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally domination through knowledge. This is the feature of it which makes it so rational". Yet earlier he had talked of the dehumanisation of human beings as being an iron cage:

No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or if neither, mechanised petrification, embellished with a sort of self importance. For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart"; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilisation never before achieved.¹³

If bureaucracy was the neutral outcome of rational thought, then the dilemma for Weber was how could bureaucracy be rationally criticised? What Weber seems to be denying is that premises about power relationships and their use in bureaucracies do not occur in the advance of a scientific account of bureaucracy. The dilemma for Weber is this: if a theory of bureaucracy is scientific then domination is the rational outcome; on the other hand if premises which imply aspects of domination are introduced into an account of bureaucracy then that theory may not be capable of rational critique. Weber's position then deals with power quite uneasily.

Habermas

Habermas' general project may be conceived as the recovery and recuperation of the Enlightenment message. Habermas rejects the notion of subject centred reason and replaces it with reason understood as communicative action.¹⁴ For Habermas the goal of Critical Theory is to be found in the pursuit of *truth*, for the pursuit of truth is to lead a life free from domination. Critical Theory is therefore emancipatory according to Habermas. Against Weber Habermas believed that the development of science and its unfettered dissemination

13 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, New York, Charles Scriber 1958, p. 181.

14 Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*, Cambridge, Ma.: M.I.T., 1978, p. vii.

especially to bureaucracy would depoliticise bureaucratic rationality, i.e., overcome domination. But this optimistic view of science was to depend upon his theory of communicative action.

Critical Theory as introduced by the Frankfurt School was an attempt to counter objectivist and instrumental rationality in attempts to “overcome“ the “is/ought“ dichotomy and the split between theory and practice. Because he was not satisfied with merely linguistic competence Habermas’ approach is to be based upon, but developed from, the work of John Austin on performatives and John Searle on speech acts.¹⁵ But the theory of communicative action is an idealisation, or ideal model, or an abstraction from the real world. As he says:

Fundamental to the paradigm of mutual understanding is, rather, the performative attitude of participants in interaction, who co-ordinate their plans for action by coming to an understanding about something in the world.¹⁶

The problem with such an idealisation or abstraction, *in practice*, is that often, in the “real” world, it is not possible to get participants together, in interaction. For example, in New Zealand, when the neo-liberal “reforms” in education were implemented educationalists were excluded almost totally from the policy development phases of the reforms, and from the decision making processes concerning their implementation. Thus, in practice, there could be no interaction between *all* participants and no co-ordination of *their* plans, because there were no plans which were the outcome of participants meeting in a situation as idealised by the theory of communicative action.

Habermas has no aversion to bureaucratic rationality per se, but he does object to its universalisation or totalising effect to all forms of life. This extension would replace *praxis* by *techne*, and would lead to total domination. This extension to all forms of life was Weber’s mistake according to Habermas. Bureaucratic rationality could therefore be valuable in certain contexts according to Habermas but it must be controlled against improper extensions. The problem therefore with Habermas’ theory of communicative action is that the conditions for its applications are often bypassed and precluded from consideration by bureaucracies.

Marxism

Marxist theory was dismissed by Foucault for a number of reasons, especially as he saw economic domination as but one form of domination, to which other types of domination could not be reduced. Another major criticism was that whilst the overturn of the capitalist

15 John Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954; John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

16 Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, London: Polity, 1987, p. 296.

mode of production might provide *liberty*, without an ethical theory there were no principles or proposals as to how to exercise this freedom provided by liberty from the capitalist mode of production. It was as though the overturn of the capitalist mode of production was all that had to be accomplished, according to Foucault. But that was but a beginning for Foucault and an ethics was required as to how to exercise that freedom.

Electronic Communication

The historian Mark Poster poses important questions for Critical Theory about electronic communication.¹⁷ According to Poster what is needed is “an adequate account of electronic communications...able to decode the linguistic dimension of the new form of social interaction”. He does not see electronic communication as an extension of earlier forms of communication, that of reading and writing and that of oral communication.

His two main arguments are concerned with meanings and the notion of the self. He sees meanings as being caught in what he calls the (three) stages of modes of information. Meaning in the reading and writing of the second stage or mode of information was concerned with *representation*. In this stage of electronic communication, meaning on the other hand, is concerned with simulacra. In the first stage of oral communication the self is seen as established in face-to-face relations through a position of enunciation, as the person who speaks. In the second stage the self is constituted as being personally/rationally autonomous and, as the author, endowing meaning to the printed page. In the third stage — the mode of information — the self is decentered, dispersed and has multiple identities. This third stage is not necessarily a progression from the earlier stages but the outcome is that social life in part becomes the positioning of subjects to receive, and interpret electronic messages, before passing them on or returning messages.

If Poster is correct then certain problems are posed to any Critical Theory. These are centered on discourse and its effects which require approaches to meanings, and to the kind of self involved in electronic communication. It is probably not a self with a persistent identity and it is far from clear in whatever mode of the self is enacted, whether that self is autonomous or dominated by the structures and particular content of electronic communication.

Foucault and Critical Theory

In my view what is needed is a form of Critical Theory, a “broader” view than the more traditional approaches, that permits the new linguistic dimension of social interaction, to be

17 Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

decoded in order to become part of any theoretical reconstruction and description of social and cultural life.

But Foucault would not have seen himself as advancing either a theory or a methodology of how to understand and critique social and cultural life.

Yet there is a sense in which he does advance a theory but that is not one that can be fully characterised. At best it is caught by his notions of problematisation and of the history of Thought. Nor is it a theory which *provides* solutions. Problematisation is the taking of an “object” as an “object of Thought” which requires one to consider questions of meaning, the conditions of its applications and the aims and/or purposes of people who use those “objects” in the world. Thus in *Discipline and Punish* he considers in a genealogical fashion of juxtaposition two objects of thought — punishment of the Sovereign and the punishment of Foucher for his young offenders. Foucault shows, because of the conditions of how they are deployed and the aims and purposes of such punishments, that there were two concepts of punishment operating at that time. It is not a question for Foucault as to which is “correct” for that is not an issue for him. Thus even if problematisation suggests a solution, that has to be evaluated further and from an ethical position.

Foucault is often critiqued for not offering or even holding an ethical position. I will not elaborate on this here but suffice to say I would argue that his principle of not staying in tutelage or of placing oneself in a position of tutelage has at least as much moral *content* as Kant’s categorical imperative.

‘Theory’ to Pedagogy

If we do not have theory, at least in the sense of Marx or Habermas, and if we believe that a Critical Pedagogy should have an adequate theoretical base, then we seem to be in a quandary. This is because Foucault does not seem to wish to pass beyond general principles to specific suggestions as to how to exercise one’s freedom once liberated. These are very general principles which lack particular content. For example the ethical general principle that people should not be in tutelage does not tell us what counts in particular circumstances as tutelage.

Foucault however did not see himself as a teacher (and certainly not as a pedagogue) but, rather, as a researcher. Thus, if he does advance a version of Critical Theory, he does not, and perhaps cannot, advance a pedagogy as normally understood, in mass schooling, to enable a person to remain clear of tutelage. Nor does he advance a method for the individual to care for oneself and, thereby for others. The problem that arises is caused by Foucault’s mentoring approach to the education of the young. In modern schooling it seems difficult to see or even understand how a teacher can mentor large numbers of young people. Thus mentoring and learning to care are in the end it seems, left merely to individuals.

However this may not be entirely the case. A possible advance in the introduction of these issues into pedagogical relations might be found in the work of Nel Noddings.¹⁸ Noddings' philosophical pedagogy recommends modelling of basic caring relations between pairs of persons in a classroom or, indeed, anywhere. Processes of modelling foster all caring relations between individuals based in such techniques as conversation and dialogue. For Noddings the fostering of these relations remains always at the micro or macro level, but it does not preclude the raising in the relation of social, cultural and political issues. However to be successful in classrooms and with individual people this approach is not to be judged by discernible social, cultural and political change, unlike some of the approaches from Critical Pedagogy**

18 Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

** I would wish to thank Lynda Stone for her comments on an earlier draft.

Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy after Postmodernism

From the South African experience, a defence of reason and rationality

Mark Mason

As Ilan Gur-Ze'ev intimates elsewhere in this collection,¹ Critical Pedagogy offers alternatives in postmodern and multicultural discourses, alternatives that respect cultural difference, that insist on the fair treatment of those who have been marginalized as different. But as he indicates as well, of special challenge for Critical Pedagogy are the postmodern arenas, one of which is the multiculturalist and its challenge to what it claims are ideals of reason particular to the Western Enlightenment tradition.² In other words, while the aims of multicultural education are ultimately the fruits of a Critical Pedagogy born in Enlightenment ideals of reason and fairness, the core positions of multiculturalism hold that any such ideals are peculiar to a particular culture. The question of interest in this paradox is whether, given the multiculturalist position, transcultural ideals such as the commitment to reason and rationality, which lies at the heart of Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy, are possible. Harvey Siegel captures the dilemma well:

To the extent that Postmodernists reject “master narratives” which abstract away from individual and cultural differences ..., they run the risk of cutting the ground out from any putative justification for social and educational change they might advocate, leaving their advocacy of emancipatory educational reform looking (epistemologically) arbitrary and without rational justification. On the other hand, to the extent that they forcefully advocate an emancipatory program of educational reform, they appear to undercut their commitment to Postmodernism, since such advocacy appears to require, for its justification, the sort of “master narrative” which Postmodernism resolutely refuses to acknowledge.³

- 1 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, “Beyond Postmodern Feminist Critical Pedagogy”, in: Ilan Gur-Ze'ev (ed.), *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today*, p.189.
- 2 Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, *Destroying the Other's Collective Memory*, New York: Peter Lang 2003, pp. 98-99.
- 3 Harvey Siegel, “Gimme that old-time enlightenment metanarrative: radical pedagogies (and politics) require traditional epistemology (and moral theory)”, in: *Rationality Redeemed? Further Dialogues on and Educational Ideal*, New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 131.

I return to this question in the latter half of this paper as I attempt to contribute, by defending reason and rationality as transcultural ideals, to this debate about a new critical language in education. South Africa, with its multicultural educational environment and the example it offers of the role of Critical Pedagogy in contributing to the emancipation of a nation oppressed by Apartheid, offers us in this regard an insightful case to consider.

I attempt further to answer in this paper the questions whether there is a role for Critical Pedagogy in South Africa now that Apartheid has been formally defeated, and if so, what form might that Critical Pedagogy take if postmodern insights have supposedly undermined our faith in emancipatory reason and critical rationality? The question whether the postmodernists are right inevitably arises: are we justified in our scepticism of reason and rationality, and if we are, what epistemology should inform Critical Pedagogy after the postmodern turn? Or must we accept that education has little emancipatory power? These questions, considered within the context of the South African experience of Critical Pedagogy both under and after Apartheid, constitute some of the central questions of this paper. I assume as read the association of Critical Pedagogy with the ideals of Critical Theory and its Enlightenment antecedents. I begin by discussing the role played by Critical Pedagogy in the struggle against Apartheid and Apartheid education in South Africa, highlighting both its successes and its failures. Then I consider the diminished faith in the emancipatory potential of education following both the increasingly shattered hopes of a post-Apartheid society and the postmodern scepticism of reason. In response to this I attempt to defend reason and rationality as transcultural ideals, concluding with a consideration of the future of Critical Pedagogy, with respect primarily to its epistemology and also, albeit briefly, to its ethics, after the postmodern turn, in a post-Apartheid South Africa and beyond.

Critical Pedagogy and the Struggle Against Apartheid in South Africa

In this section I describe and discuss the role played by Critical Pedagogy in the struggle against Apartheid and Apartheid education in South Africa from 1976 to 1994. More than description and discussion, my purpose is ultimately to highlight and reflect both on the successes of Critical Pedagogy in its contribution to the struggle against Apartheid and on its occasionally debilitating consequences.

While our starting point may be with the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1956 and its brief references to education, my focus is on the resistance to Apartheid education that exploded with the Soweto riots of 1976 and culminated in the establishment of a democratically elected government in 1994. Resistance on the part of school pupils and university students was often at the forefront of the struggle against Apartheid. In this respect, or at least with respect to the extent of school-based resistance, the South African experience

is probably unique, given that struggles against undemocratic regimes have not normally seen school pupils first onto the barricades. I trace this to the Apartheid government's insistence on school instruction through the medium of Afrikaans, which proved to be the touchstone that ignited school pupils' resistance in Soweto in 1976. Campaigns such as that aimed at the development of a "People's Education", and of an "Education Charter", were as important in their democratising processes as they were in their content. Currents of resistance that gave substance to the aims of Critical Theory and typified Freire's "education for critical consciousness" ran deep within the Critical Pedagogy associated with and opposed to Apartheid education. And the roots of Freire's "pedagogy of the oppressed" in Critical Theory, existentialism, humanism, and Catholic liberation theology are evident in much of the language of South African Critical Pedagogy, as typified by the following examples.

The Freedom Charter adopted in 1955 by the nascent mass democratic movement under the auspices of the African National Congress called for "free, compulsory, universal and equal [education] for all children". It asserted that "the aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace".⁴ Almost fifty years later and after the collapse of Apartheid, these goals seem very normal, widely accepted as a minimum. But it was the 1976 Soweto revolts that provided the impetus for the development of a Critical Pedagogy in South Africa. The 1976 Soweto uprising began when black students in Soweto protested against the government's instruction that half of the subjects in the fifth year of primary school and the first year of secondary school were to be taught through the medium of Afrikaans, a language despised as the language of the oppressor. Within weeks, black townships around South Africa were on fire. More than a thousand died in the nation-wide protests that followed. These events radicalised the South African youth in their demands for an education for liberation, demands which next culminated in the school boycotts of 1980.

The Marxist roots of Critical Theory, and neo-Marxist concerns not only with class but also with race and gender, were again evident in the 1980 nation-wide school boycotts, as typified by these student statements, quoted by Christie:

We must see how short-term demands are linked up with the political and economic system of this country. We must see how the fail-pass rates in schools are linked up with the labour supply for the capitalist system.

4 1955, cited by M. Ashley, *Ideologies and Schooling in South Africa*, Cape Town: South African Teachers Association, 1989, pp. 53, 55.

Our parents, the workers, are strong. They have power. We, the students, cannot shake the government in the same way. We have got to link up our struggle with the struggle of the black workers. Our parents have got to understand that we will not be “educated” and “trained” to become slaves in apartheid-capitalist society. Together with our parents we must try to work out a new future. A future where there will be no racism or exploitation, no apartheid, no inequality of class or sex.⁵

The 1984 Education Charter Campaign aimed to “present a view of a viable alternative to our present system of [apartheid] education”, and was as much about the process of democratisation as it was about the development of a post-apartheid education charter. It aimed

To reach out to and consult all students in all corners of our country together with our communities and to receive contributions from them so that the document arises out of the principle of democracy.⁶

The National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), a mass-based organisation committed to democratic resistance to Apartheid education, was established in 1985 by parents and community leaders after matters came to a head in black schools in the early 1980s, and more directly in response to further school boycotts in 1985. The NECC was integrally involved in the development of what became known as “People’s Education”. The NECC⁷ defined People’s Education as education that

- Enables the oppressed to understand the evils of the Apartheid system and prepares them for participation in a non-racial, democratic system;
- Eliminates capitalist norms of competition, individualism and stunted intellectual development and one that encourages collective input and active participation by all, as well as stimulating critical thinking and analysis.

A prominent member of the NECC at that time⁸ described People’s Education in the following terms:

Our position is that since education as we have known it has been used as a tool of oppression, People’s Education will be an education that must help us to achieve people’s power. People’s Education is therefore decidedly political and partisan with

5 Pam Christie, *The Right to Learn*, Johannesburg: Sached Trust / Ravan Press, 1985, p. 245.

6 Cited by *ibid.*, p. 251.

7 1986, cited by Ashley, *Ideologies and Schooling in South Africa*, p. 48.

8 1987, cited by *ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

regard to oppression and exploitation. For us, People's Education for People's Power entails in a nutshell the following:

- The democratisation of education, involving a cross-section of the community in decisions on the content and quality of education;
- The negation of Apartheid in education by making education relevant to the democratic struggles of the people;
- The achievement of a high level of education for everyone;
- The development of a critical mind that becomes aware of the world;
- The bridging of the gap that exists between theoretical knowledge and practical life; and
- The closing of the chasm between natural science and the humanities, between mental and manual labour, with emphasis on worker education and the importance of production.

While the focus on production and on worker education, and language such as the “negation” of Apartheid show clear links to the origins of Critical Theory in Marx, the explicit commitment of the theory and principles of People's Education to liberation reflects Habermas's characterization of the “emancipatory cognitive interest”, grounded in questions of power: People's Education is described as “decidedly political and partisan with regard to oppression and exploitation”.⁹ The origins of Critical Pedagogy and of what Giroux has referred to as “emancipatory resistance” in Critical Theory's faith in the efficacy of rational critique in exposing power and interests are evident here in the description of apartheid education as “a tool of oppression” and of People's Education's commitment to “the development of a critical mind”.¹⁰

“People's Education for People's Power” was not just a slogan or rallying cry. It was “a mass-based undertaking by an entire society to transform itself”.¹¹ People's education was about process even more than it was about content. The case of the development of “People's English” is illuminating in this regard. “People's English”, a project associated with the NECC, was about assisting all learners to:

- understand the evils of Apartheid and to think and speak in non-racial, non-sexist and non-elitist ways;
- determine their own destinies and to free themselves from oppression;

9 Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. Shapiro, Boston: Beacon Press, 1971, p. 308.

10 Henry Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition*, Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey, 1983, pp. 107-111.

11 M. Gardiner, “Liberating language: people's english for the future”, in: *Education: From Poverty to Liberty*, eds. Bill Nasson and John Samuel, Cape Town: David Philip, 1990, p. 162.

- play a creative role in the achievement of a non-racial democratic South Africa;
- use English effectively for their own purposes;
- express and consider the issues and questions of their time;
- transform themselves into full and active members of society;
- proceed with their studies.

(NECC Press Release, 27 November 1986, cited by Gardiner, “Liberating Language”: 162).

The roots of this kind of educational language in Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy are clear. The Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School was after all characterized by its endeavour to enlighten individuals as to their true interests by radically questioning their taken-for-granted assumptions, and to enable individuals to emancipate themselves from hitherto concealed constraints on their lives and thereby control their own destinies. The Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School aimed to enlighten individuals about the true conditions of social life by identifying and exposing power and interests. These aims to emancipate through enlightenment are reflected strongly in the aims of People’s Education.

That Apartheid education was designed to fail black students, so as to produce the unskilled workers necessary for an economy based primarily in mining and agriculture, is by now accepted as a truism. Its debilitating effects need little further explanation here as they have been well documented elsewhere.¹² But while educational resistance undoubtedly played a significant role in overcoming both Apartheid education and Apartheid itself, resistance was not without its negative consequences for the generation of school pupils and university students who committed themselves to the anti-Apartheid struggle. While Apartheid and Apartheid education more than diminished the life chances of black pupils — ruined is probably a more appropriate verb — it is also true to say that strategies such as the prolonged boycotting of classes and examinations will have helped to compound the debilitating effects of Apartheid education. The resistance associated with Critical Pedagogy in South Africa probably had more dramatic effects in helping to overcome an evil and undemocratic state and its heinous education system than anywhere else in recent history. But that resistance had decidedly non-emancipatory consequences for what has been referred to as the “lost generation“ of scholars and students. Molteno describes the double-edged sword of the school boycotts of 1980:

12 See especially P. Kallaway, *The History of Education Under Apartheid*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002.

At certain schools, the students were for the most part of the boycott in classrooms, earnestly participating in awareness programmes. They remained interested and responded enthusiastically to the opportunity of being able to contribute to a process of collective learning and of being able to criticize openly teachers who in the normal way were figures of unchallengeable authority.¹³

But, at the same time,

For long stretches of the boycott, little or nothing went on at many of the schools. The students would mostly stand around chatting; some would play a ball game; others would drift off home or with groups of friends; the rest would leave school around midday.¹⁴

Dashed Expectations, Diminished Faith, the Postmodern Turn and Critical Pedagogy in South Africa

This section takes as read the fairly ubiquitously shattered hopes that have accompanied the realization of the full extent of Apartheid's destructive legacy, of the extent of devastation that is being wrought by AIDS on South African society, of the extent of the destruction of the fabric of the society by crime, of the extent of the destruction of people's life chances by Apartheid and Apartheid education — and the consequently diminished faith in the maxim, associated with the Enlightenment, that “the truth shall set you free”, and the scepticism towards the position, associated with Critical Theory, that exposure of power and interests by a universal rationality would lead to a more just society. This collapse of faith in the central tenets of the Enlightenment and modernity lies of course at the heart of the postmodern turn in social theory, and my purpose here in mentioning the enormity of the practical difficulties facing South African education today is both to reflect them in the discourse of postmodernism and to consider the currently bleak possibility for Critical Pedagogy in that country.

South Africa is currently trying to implement a form of outcomes-based education in an effort to rid schools of the worst pedagogical practices associated with teaching under Apartheid. More than the difficulties of hopelessly under-resourced schools and under-qualified and dis-spirited and exhausted teachers is the hard fact that between a quarter and a third of South African teachers are HIV-positive, and that it is virtually impossible to provide anywhere nearly enough remotely qualified teachers for South Africa's classrooms. Thousands and thousands of school pupils will simply go without teachers. Even to speak

13 Frank Molteno, “Reflections on resistance: aspects of the 1980 students' boycott”, *Conference Papers*, Mmabatho: Kenton Education Conference, 1983, p. 12, adapted.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

of Critical Pedagogy under these circumstances makes some assumptions that are extremely tenuous. But in order to reflect these dashed expectations in the postmodern turn, let us turn from these questions about the reality of education in South Africa to a brief consideration of the theoretical perspectives associated with postmodern thought as it relates to education, focussing on Nietzsche, Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault.

In one of the strongest challenges to Enlightenment epistemology to date, Nietzsche claimed that truth is little more than “the solidification of old metaphors”: it is neither foundational nor universal, but merely the sedimented beliefs of a particular cultural worldview. His pronouncement of “the death of God” implied the absence of any universal or foundational or transcendental source of existential or other meaning. The epistemological consequences of his position are of course that all knowledge is relative, and that objective knowledge is impossible. In moral philosophy, the consequences are that all ethics are relative, and that a foundational ethics is impossible. The implications for Critical Pedagogy and any attempt to define any criterion of emancipatory education are obvious. Emancipatory education would in this perspective best be understood as merely a metaphor reflecting the beliefs of a particular culture or society, now so well worn that it has been sedimented into acceptance as solid truth.

Derrida, at the risk of oversimplification, describes society in terms of multiple realities articulated as discourses, each with its own truths (with a small *t*). What follows is the consequent incommensurability of the truth claims of any particular knowledge community with the discourse of any other community. Therefore, ideas about value and associated terms such as justice or freedom in ethics, beauty or judgement in aesthetics, and objectivity or truth in epistemology, are construed as contextually specific and indicative of nothing beyond the limits of the discourse specific to each. There are thus no transcendent or universal qualities, ideals, or experiences beyond the discursive in which we can ground questions of value — texts are all there is: all is constructed in discourse. This is, at its most succinct, the postmodern position. If no meaning exists beyond the realms of language, the concern then shifts to the deconstruction of texts. Deconstruction, almost synonymous with Derrida and a major philosophical thrust of the postmodern turn, is primarily concerned with the unpacking of metaphors that have been solidified into truth. As with my conclusion following my brief consideration of Nietzsche, the implications for any attempt to define any criterion of emancipatory education are obvious. For Derrida, such a notion of emancipatory education would have to be understood as radically constructed in the discourse community of Western modernity descended from the Enlightenment.

Lyotard’s *La Condition Postmoderne* popularised the term *postmodern*, defining postmodernism as “incredulity towards metanarratives”.¹⁵ He describes the scepticism

15 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition — A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by G. Bennington and B. Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, French publication in 1979.

consequent on the postmodern turn, the chief object of which is the metanarrative or paradigm of Enlightenment rationality and its faith in scientific reason as the bearer of the promise of emancipation through knowledge. The postmodern orientation, in a nutshell, is reflected in an incredulous or sceptical stance to what Lyotard has called the “grand narratives” of history — that is, in a lack of faith in grand theories that presume to be applicable in every situation, regardless of societal context or historical period. As with my conclusion following our brief considerations of Nietzsche and Derrida, the implications for any attempt to define any criterion of emancipatory education are again obvious. Following Lyotard’s characterization of the prevailing mood, a notion of Critical Pedagogy that claimed universal truth status and applicability, and that promised the way to emancipation through education, would have to be understood as simply another narrative attempting to claim paradigmatic status.

Foucault is associated with a post-structuralist approach to historical analysis: his genealogical approach to the social sciences dispenses with notions of linearity and causality, and focuses on “local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges”. For Foucault, the human sciences and their institutional concretizations (schools, hospitals, prisons) are little more than “discourses of power”, and any rubric of Critical Pedagogy would need to be analysed in terms of the discourses of power that run through it, and for which knowledge and practices it consequently included and legitimated, and which it excluded.

Wilfred Carr has offered a useful summary of the “postmodernist challenge” to “Enlightenment philosophical thought” and of the “theoretical criticisms collectively aimed at dismantling the Enlightenment conceptions of reason and the rational subject”.¹⁶ Postmodern critique is ultimately aimed at

Kant’s “foundationalist” philosophy — a philosophy designed to show that the Enlightenment concept of the rationally autonomous subject did not simply apply to a particular culture or society but was grounded in *a priori* truths about the “universal essence” of human nature itself. At the risk of oversimplification, three of the familiar postmodernist strategies used to undermine and discredit this foundationalist philosophy can be rapidly stated. The first is to call into question the Enlightenment’s universal, *a priori* and absolutist conception of reason. To its universality, postmodernists counterpose the “local” determinants of what counts as rational thought and action; to its *a priori* necessity, they counterpose its fallibility and its contingency; and to its absolutism they insist that rationality is always relative to time and place.

16 Wilfred Carr, “Education and democracy: confronting the postmodern challenge”, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 29(1), 1995, pp. 78-80.

[Against] the Enlightenment distinction between the “knowing subject” and an “objective world” to be known, ... postmodernism insists that the subject’s knowledge of the world is always preinterpreted. ... It follows from this that knowledge is never “disinterested” or “objective”. ... What postmodernism insists is that there is no realm of “objective” truths ..., no privileged position that enables philosophers to transcend the particularities of their own culture and traditions....

The question whether the postmodernists are right inevitably arises: are we justified in our scepticism of reason and rationality, and if we are, what epistemology should inform Critical Pedagogy after the postmodern turn? Or must we accept that education has little emancipatory power?

The Future of Critical Pedagogy After the Postmodern Turn

Is there a role for Critical Pedagogy in South Africa now that Apartheid has been formally defeated, and if so, what form might that Critical Pedagogy take if postmodern insights have supposedly undermined our faith in emancipatory reason and critical rationality?

The first of these questions is obviously rather trite and deserves a swift answer: just because South Africans now enjoy the advantages of a legitimate, democratically elected government and the apparent protection of a very progressive constitution strongly committed to human rights, it by no means implies that those citizens can now suspend their critical faculties. The importance of a Critical Pedagogy in all forms of education there is as strong as it ever was.

The position I defend here is that the assumptions underlying the second of these questions, about the grounds for our apparent collapse of faith in reason after postmodernism’s insights, are wrong. A collapse of faith in reason need not necessarily follow from the critiques I have briefly outlined above under the rubric of the postmodern perspective; one might point primarily to the deep irony in trying to argue in reason against reason. Siegel points out that Carr appears not to offer any defence of the postmodernist positions outlined at the end of the previous section, noting that the critique simply “calls into question”, “counterposes”, or “insists”. Siegel goes on to point out that

some of these criticisms of foundationalism, as stated, face huge difficulties, as they appear to presuppose what they want to reject. For example, Carr’s postmodernist wants to reject the possibility of objective knowledge, but apparently regards it as an objective fact about the world that a subject’s knowledge of that world is always “preinterpreted”.... Despite the postmodernist’s repudiation of “universal reason”, she likewise seems to presuppose a “universal” (and perhaps *a priori* and “absolutist” as

well) conception of reason (or rationality or logic), since the non-objective character of knowledge is said to “follow from” the fact that a subject’s knowledge is always preinterpreted, where this implication is not relativized or contextualized — it follows, apparently, for us all. Similarly, the postmodernist insistence that there is “no privileged position that enables philosophers to transcend the particularities of their own culture and traditions” seems itself to speak from just such a position, since it seems to be making an assertion concerning all philosophers, cultures and traditions.¹⁷

It is simply not possible, as Siegel argues elsewhere, “to finesse the dilemma posed by Postmodernism’s rejection of metanarratives, together with its advocacy of nonarbitrarily grounded progressive social and educational change”.¹⁸ One can, after all, hold the second position only by dispensing with the first, since the “nonarbitrary advocacy of emancipatory social and educational change requires the embrace of both moral and epistemological metanarratives — as does the nonarbitrary condemnation of silencing, exclusion, marginalization, and oppression”.¹⁹ Postmodernism (or indeed any perspective seriously committed to progressive educational and social change), in other words, “requires an epistemology which endorses truth and justification as viable theoretical notions”.²⁰ It also requires an ethics committed to principles of respect for the dignity of our and each other’s being, and of responsibility for the consequences of our decisions and actions, such as I have defended elsewhere as the *ethics of integrity*.²¹ As Siegel argues elsewhere, the justification of multicultural educational initiatives pre-supposes the moral principle of respect for persons.²² Respect for the rights of others who are different is, after all, contained within the ideal of multiculturalism itself. Postmodernism’s concern with social injustice requires, as Siegel argues, both epistemological and ethical metanarratives.

Suppose that ... we give up our “conservative” understandings of truth, warrant, rationality and rational justification, etc. Then we are unable to establish, for example, that apparent victims of marginalization or oppression at the hands of a hegemonic dominant culture are actual victims. Similarly, we are unable to establish that such

17 Harvey Siegel, “Knowledge, truth and education”, in: *Education, Knowledge and Truth — Beyond the Postmodern Impasse*, ed. D. Carr, London and New York: Routledge, 1998, p. 30.

18 Siegel, “Gimme that old-time enlightenment metanarrative”, p. 138.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

21 Mark Mason, “The ethics of integrity: educational values beyond postmodern ethics”, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 35(1), 2001, pp. 47-69.

victimization, even if actual, is a bad thing. In order to establish these judgements as true and/or justified, we must have recourse to conceptions of truth, justification, etc., which provide us with the conceptual resources to establish these claims. Without those resources, there is no possibility of acting, in a morally motivated and justified way, so as to alleviate the suffering wrought by injustice.²³

We can reject these epistemological presuppositions of evidence, reason, rational justification and truth “only at the price either of incoherence or arbitrariness. For to reject them *justifiably* is to reject them for reasons which satisfy the very conditions concerning rational justification which one wants to reject”.²⁴

In order to adduce further arguments in defence of reason and its place in education, let us turn to Michael Peters’s chapter in this collection.

The Limits, and the Limitations, of Reason

In his paper, *Critical Pedagogy and the Futures of Critical Theory*, elsewhere in this volume, Michael Peters sketches two possible futures of Critical Theory: one associated with American Pragmatism; another associated with “French Theory”. For the first he turns to Thomas McCarthy. For McCarthy, writes Peters,

it is a matter of “detranscendentalizing” reason and of understanding how deeply it is implicated in “history and tradition, language and culture, body and desire, practices and institutions”. This realization about the limits of reason forecloses on the possibility that “there will be one right answer to ethical and political questions”. This means not “anything goes” but that we should expect “reasonable disagreement” as a matter of course. Reason does not prescribe in unambiguous terms the “proper course of action, the right policy, the best program”: this is a matter for public debate and there will not miraculously appear the one right answer determined through the application of reason, but different positions, all reasonable.²⁵

22 Harvey Siegel, “Multiculturalism and the possibility of transcultural educational and philosophical ideals”, *Philosophy* 74(289), 1999, pp. 387–409.

23 Harvey Siegel, “‘Radical’ pedagogy requires ‘conservative’ epistemology”, in: *Rationality Redeemed? Further Dialogues on and Educational Ideal*, New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 152.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

25 Michael Peters, “Critical Pedagogy and the Futures of Critical Theory” in: Ilan Gur-Ze’ev, (ed.), *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today*, pp. 40–41.

Because reason cannot unambiguously provide us with “the proper course of action, the right policy, the best program”, McCarthy notes that we should still expect “reasonable disagreement”, “different positions, all reasonable”. This is to be expected of course, but the question is whether this is about the limitations of reason because of its being “implicated” in “history and tradition, language and culture, body and desire, practices and institutions” — about the failure of reason, in other words — or whether this ongoing disagreement has more to do with the intractability of most social problems. Do we spend more money on housing the homeless, on early childhood education, or on cornea transplants to restore sight to the blind? Ultimately these are decisions that depend on ethics and values, on the politics that underlie policy if you like. But the parameters of the debates and the constraints of the situations can be set out, prior to the making of these moral choices, in reason. And the moral arguments themselves, while they may, if you wish, be based ultimately in a Humean sentiment or in G.E. Moore’s intuitionism, might also be most cogent if not entirely devoid of reason. Our failure to resolve most of the big social questions is less, in other words, about the failure of reason, and more about power and moral choices. When he describes our ongoing disagreement as “reasonable”, McCarthy acknowledges implicitly that it is not reason that has failed us.

McCarthy’s Critical Theory, suggests Peters, is a mix of influences from the Frankfurt School and American pragmatism. Peters cites James Bohman’s description of McCarthy’s wish “to overcome the opposition between deconstruction and reconstruction through a “critique of impure reason” that affirms *both the transcendence and situatedness of reason*” (emphasis added).²⁶ Such an account, writes Peters,

gives up on the God’s-eye point of view to defend a methodological and social pluralism, where we seek to critique and reflect upon a range of different standpoints, each reasonable in their own way. We might call this a critical perspectivism or pluralism, which is characteristic of modern complex societies where there are competing political and ethical claims. Given that “no one perspective or theory may lay claim to epistemic, moral or rational superiority in advance” the reconciliation or mediation of these claims, as Bohman argues,²⁷ thus becomes the central issue for Critical Theory.

26 Thomas McCarthy, “Critical Theory today: an interview with Thomas McCarthy”, by S. O’Neill and N. Smith, in: *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn — The Transformation of Critical Theory (Essay in Honor of Thomas McCarthy)*, eds. W. Rehg and J. Bohman, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2001, p. 87.

27 J. Bohman, “Participants, observers, and critics: practical knowledge, social perspectives, and critical pluralism”, in: *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn - The Transformation of Critical Theory (Essay in Honor of Thomas McCarthy)*, eds. W. Rehg and J. Bohman, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2001, p. 89.

But this “critical perspectivism or pluralism” cannot be without a commitment to reason or rationality and an acknowledgement of the worth of the transcendental aspects of reason. (And nor, if the question is asked in the moral domain, can it be without a commitment to the *ethics of integrity*, but my concern in this paper is more with the epistemological issues.) How else might we even begin to reconcile or mediate between competing claims? Without recourse to reason, power and politics will provide the means of adjudication. It may be the case that when we are dealing with any competing political and ethical claims that are at all susceptible to reason, “no one perspective or theory”, as Bohman suggests, “may lay claim to epistemic ... or rational superiority in advance”. But if that perspective or theory has abandoned reason, it may, as I will show, be described in advance as epistemically and rationally inferior. Peters associates his “critical perspectivism or pluralism” with the competing political and ethical claims of modern complex societies, but not with any competing rational claims. That which is susceptible to reason can be defended and disputed by a plurality of different reasons pertinent to the situation, but the process of reasoning itself is not open to any such “perspectivism or pluralism”. Reason and reasoning are not culture-bound, or limited by context. Particular reasons offered in a particular situation may be.

Perhaps we need to talk about the limits of reason, rather than its limitations. *Sophie's choice*, in the novel by that name, about which of her children to give up to death at the hands of the Nazis, is not susceptible to a rational process of decision-making. But that says less about the limitations of reason and more about its limits, the extent of the domain in which it is applicable. Peters's conclusion is that Critical Theory needs reason, but also needs its critique. Critique, I would ask, in the name of what? If it's a critique in the name of ethics, to provide, as Peters suggests in his conclusion, “the analytical tools that serve to emphasize the way ... people are controlled and manipulated”, then this is not a critique about the limits of reason, but about its limitations, about domains beyond the scope of reason where problems are tractable only and ultimately by moral choices — and then only at bottom, when we have, if we want to stay clear of Hume's is/ought dichotomy and the naturalistic fallacy, recourse only to Humean sentiment or G.E. Moore's intuitionism.

In his article, *Gimme that Old-time Enlightenment Metanarrative*, Siegel argues, as suggested in the article's subtitle, that “radical pedagogies (and politics) require traditional epistemology (and moral theory)”.²⁸ He reminds us that “there is no single frame [of discourse] which is the Modernist, Enlightenment frame. The only candidate for such a frame ... is a single metaprinciple: for beliefs, claims, and other outcomes of dialogue to enjoy justificatory status, that status must depend upon, and be determined in accordance with, (fallible) criteria or standards of justification”.²⁹ And while much criticism has been

28 Harvey Siegel, “Gimme that old-time enlightenment metanarrative”.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

justifiably levelled at Enlightenment thinkers whose practice often excluded, for example, women, Siegel reminds us that it is more a case of deficient practice than deficient principle:

The errors of Patriarchal, classist, racist, heterosexist, and other inadequate [discourse] frames are errors that Modernism acknowledges, in theory if not always in practice. ... But [these failures] cannot condemn Modernism *per se*, since Modernism acknowledges the failure, at least in principle.

In fact, ... the criticisms levelled against Modernist frames are themselves underwritten by Modernist principles. In this respect, Postmodernism is itself best understood as informed by, and committed to, some of the metanarratives of Modernism. Its commitments to emancipatory social and educational change are underwritten both by Modernist moral principles concerning justice, equality, and respect, and by Modernist epistemological principles concerning evidence, reasons, justification, and truth.³⁰

We should, in other words, embrace postmodernist criticisms of the failings of modernity as criticisms of *practice* rather than of the *principles* of modernism, criticisms that indeed serve to advance the modernist project, if we may speak of one.

The most sceptical critics of a Critical Pedagogy and a Critical Theory still committed to an epistemology grounded in the universality of reason might yet ask the question why we should be committed to rationality. A defence of a commitment to rationality, such a critic might claim, must inevitably be circular, and viciously so, in its appeal to reasons, and thus beg the question further. Even Popper argued that in the end we have to settle for an irrational commitment to rationality, one grounded in “an irrational faith in reason”. Even his critical rationalism must, according to him, “admit its origin in an irrational decision (and which, to that extent, admits a certain priority of irrationalism)”.³¹

Nicholas Rescher’s response to this apparent circularity cuts to the quick: “If we bother to want an answer to the question ‘Why be rational?’ at all, it is clearly a *rational* answer that we require”.³² Siegel clarifies the justification:

Asking for a justification of rationality is asking for a *rational* justification of it; the very asking of the question commits the questioner to the presumption of the potential probative force of reasons, for in asking the question she is asking whether there are

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 136-38.

31 Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies 2*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962, p. 231.

32 N. Rescher, *Rationality: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Nature and the Rationale of Reason*, Oxford: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 43.

reasons which justify rationality, and in asking it seriously she is committing herself to judging the matter in accordance with the strength of reasons which can be brought in favor of or against being rational. Thus anyone who seriously asks the question “Why be rational?” has, in committing herself to judge the matter in accordance with reasons, already committed herself to the (only *seemingly* problematic or question begging) presumption of the potential epistemic force of reasons. ... [A] rational defense of rationality ... merely acknowledges, as any serious questioner must, that seriously asking “Why be rational?” presupposes a commitment to rationality.³³

Siegel’s conclusion underscores my position that Critical Pedagogy and Critical Theory should remain committed to principles of rationality and reason:

Postmodernism is best seen, then, not as a rejection of Modernism, but as an advanced movement within it: one which accepts basic Modernist, Enlightenment principles and intuitions concerning truth, justification, fallibilism, justice, and respect, and seeks politically and epistemologically more sophisticated understandings of those principles and more realistic explanations for failures to live up to them. Seen otherwise, it is incapable of carrying out and justifying its progressive, emancipatory project. In the end, then, there is rather less to the Postmodern criticism of the Enlightenment than meets the eye.³⁴

Critical Pedagogy should therefore remain committed to a Critical Theory whose epistemology is grounded in reason, and to the emancipatory potential of education. A Critical Pedagogy is as important as ever in South African education and beyond. What form might it take in the conditions of a post-Apartheid South Africa and after the postmodern turn? This new critical language in education is one that should be informed by the insights of postmodernism, and yet committed to rationality. Having offered a short defence of an epistemology grounded in reason and rationality, the ethics of a post-Apartheid Critical Pedagogy beyond the postmodern turn remain a question to which I have devoted little attention in this paper. I have, as I mentioned above, defended elsewhere the *ethics of integrity* as central to educational practice in multicultural educational environments. The potential for epistemological and moral relativism inherent in the postmodern perspective can lend itself to cruelty justified in the name of local cultural tradition. The *ethics of integrity*, derived from and beyond Bauman’s “postmodern ethics”, defend the principles of respect for

33 Harvey Siegel, “Why be rational? justifying the commitment to rationality”, in: *Rationality Redeemed? Further Dialogues on and Educational Ideal*, New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 85.

34 Harvey Siegel, “Gimme that old-time enlightenment metanarrative”, p. 137.

the dignity of our and each other's being and responsibility for the consequences of our actions. My position is that these principles should underlie not only a post-Apartheid Critical Pedagogy for a so-called postmodern era, but all teaching and learning. But these moral issues, only touched on here, are the subject of another paper.

Learning as Freedom: *The Letting Be of Learning Together*

Eduardo M. Duarte

The saying of the First Question with the said, “Nothing”, releases us to the freedom of discovery. Learning is discovery that comes with the adventure of inquiry, the seeking that is propelled by steadfast openness. This steadfast openness, expressed through the tacit acknowledgment of the relationship with the Nothing, which has *claimed* us, is called *Hsu* in the Taoist tradition. Translated at times as “vacuous” it denotes not an emptiness but a releasement from obstructions, thus an *emptying* of distractions. As a comportment, or way of being, Hsu describes “absolute peacefulness...and freedom from worry and selfish desires”.¹ We stress here that *hsu* denotes *vacuity*, an emptiness, unfilled, a void. The *tacit-turning* brought about by the saying of the said ‘Nothing’ is akin to the emptiness of *hsu*. Evocative speech is a calling (*vocare*) which enjoins us emptiness, the condition of learning where we are addressed in our steadfast openness. In heeding the saying of ‘Nothing’ we are made vacant (*vacare*). The call (*vocare*) of the First Question enjoins us in *hsu* (*vacare*). It claims us in our relationship with the “Nothing”.

We find our juridical voice silenced by the news of the relationship with Being, a relationship which opens us to Learning, understood as the possibility or freedom of discovery. The mood of silence is a “positive” or constructive response to this releasement from the overbearing perspective of the willing subject who seeks to dominate, control, and render all beings instruments of his endeavors. All beings, including, if not particularly, his fellow travelers or shipmates are subjected to his subjectivity. From this perspective, the overbearing subject stands apart, alone and isolated from all beings who are rendered “objects” up and against his “subjectivity”. From this perspective the subject has forgotten the relational ground of his own being. Instead of *bearing up* with the wind, he fights the Wind, which he “understands” as conspiring with the Tide to capture and control him. This solo pilot is overbearing or *uberwinden* in seeking to dominate the *Wind*, which means breeze, but also emptiness, so importantly related back to the Nothing, *Hsu*. But this response is not surprising, for the vacuity of *hsu* can be related to the emptiness of *k’ung*, or to what

1 Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 788.

the Zen master Hui-neng² called *wu-i-wu* (nothingness), which Suzuki warns “may push one down into a bottomless abyss, which will no doubt create a feeling of utter forlornness”.³ When Hui-neng related the tidings and declared, “From the first not a thing is”, the keynote of his Zen thought was stuck... This keynote was never so clearly struck before”.⁴ Hui-neng’s saying of *wu-i-wu* struck a keynote and thereby defined the basic relation between Being and beings. As a keynote *wu-i-wu* is like that fundamental note or tone that relates all others and is the principal element of the musical mode, expressing the basic tone or spirit of the piece to be performed. The saying of *wu-i-wu* is akin to the question “How is it with the Nothing?”, where both have the result of tuning the “hearers” bearing, releasing them to the letting-be, to the flow and movement of the Tide and Wind. But the subject hears a “threat” to his subjectivity in this saying, hears the sinking of his vessel to the bottomless abyss. Against this threat the overbearing subject, this isolated “man of choice”, struggles to overcome the Tide and runs *against* the Wind, the Nothing, possibility. The news conveyed by the saying of the Tide, and said in the Wind is denied, ignored, rejected by the subject, who alone, desperately attempts to control these Elements⁵. This subject, isolated and against all, seeks to *bear down* upon the Tide and the Wind, as in “overwhelm”, or “crush” or “subdue”. To bear down is to sail in the direction of the Wind and Tide, to sail *against* them. To *bear up* is to “endure cheerfully” the way, flow, movements of Tide and Wind.

The message brought to us by the evocative speech of the First Questions draws us into the location of discovery and thereby positions us. We have been turned, tuned, and in becoming teachable we are attuned to Being’s excess, which we take up as the matter at hand and in doing so have embarked on a seeking that is essentially interpretive. This is another way of saying that we have been enjoined in the hermeneutical relationship that reveals the possibility of all that appears in the horizon of beings. We see one another as this possibility, and thus the relationship of learning is undertaken in the give and take of poetic dialogue. Without this dialogue we are incapable of speaking with the mythopoetic voice. This voice is a response to our hearing of the message. There is no question that the “hearing” that we attempting to describe is more than a response to sound waves, although the sound waves generated by musical instruments, bells, drums, etc., can certainly be called “evocative” in the way we are using this term. So too can singing and chanting be understood as examples of evocative speech. After all, when we describe Learning as a dialogic event, we are calling

2 Hui-neng (638-713). See Chan, *Sourcebook*, p. 426.

3 Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind*, p. 24.

4 Suzuki, *ibid.*

5 With this name “Elements” I am seeking to recall what Heidegger called the first inceptions or *Anfang*, which denotes the initial revelation of Being. Specifically I am attempting to link the linguistic attitude of the preSocratic philosophers who sought to identify primary elements as the primary matter of Being. For example, for Heraclitus “fire” was the essential element.

attention to a particular kind of communicative action where people are engaged in what we might call, following Arendt, the art of freedom, where the *dramatic* performance of speaking and listening creates a condition of plurality where all can see and be seen, hear and be heard. This kind of performance is the essence of action as freedom. *Drama*, action, describes an event which is vivid and emotional, stirring, moving. When we stress the “physicality” of evocative speech and poetic dialogue we recover the earliest denotation of the term (*physis*) as the horizon of appearance, that through which Being emerges or shines forth. With this emphasis, then, we are suggesting that the tidings of Being are delivered through the dramatic performance of evocative speech, which can be identified within the wide range of communicative action. In other words, we should not reduce the discursive event of Learning to something like “deliberation” or even “dialectic”, if by these terms we mean a rule governed interaction that is formalized in a set of procedures that, in effect, limit the range of possibility and, thereby, undercut the entire thrust of Learning as a inquiry, seeking, search. In saying this, however, we are reminded that our exemplar, Socrates, himself appears to have often proceeded “dialectically”, by short question and answer, so that we can see precisely on what assumptions and inferential steps a given conclusion rests, instead of “being carried away by the magic of a speech”.⁶ There is no denying the existence of this “Socrates” who appeared to be impatient with the “unthoughtful” performance of poets like Ion, and downright hostile to the oration of sophists like Protagoras. But what does it mean to contrast rule governed discourse with “magical” speech? For Plato, and the tradition of philosophy that evolved in his powerful wake, the contrast does not serve to simply make a distinction and thereby fix the parameters of what will be deemed “legitimate” and “illegitimate” forms of philosophical practice, and it certainly does this. It further serves to privilege a kind of communication that is “rule bound” or archaic, i.e., principal speech. Plato’s hostility and impatience with the poets [which I will take up in more detail!] is in fact the basis of the blueprint he offers for formal education, specifically the early childhood schooling. For Plato, poets and sophists are said to be “reckless” and “denigrating” of the “great things” (the gods, the divine ideas) and have “taught” people to know not the truth of these things. What is necessary is then a “dialectical poetry” that provides an antidote to the spreading virus of opinion (*doxa*). Because “opinio” is merely an expression of the way things “appear”, as opposed to how they actually “are”, Plato believed it was necessary to develop and formalize a manner of discursive engagement that enabled us to feel certain that we were on the right path to truth. Because, as discussed above, Plato believed that we, as humans, were incapable of adequately expressing the truth of the great things, his main concern was to insure that develop to the fullest extent this faculty, reasoning, that appeared

6 Michael Frede, “Introduction to Plato’s *Protagoras*”, p. xv.

most capable of discerning the difference between organized and structured assertions, the kind, like a well built temple, that could withstand and endure the tests wrought by the storms of time, and passionate speech, the kind, like Ion's rhapsodies, that were moving, stirring, but appeared as if transmitted from an unknowable "beyond". Ironically, the frustration with "magical speech" or the "magic" of speech seems born from the same frustration with the limits of humanity. If only Ion could "know" why it is that he does what he does, i.e., perform the most stirring rhapsodies, then he would show his art of poetry to be worthy of the title "art", because then it would be something he could "instruct" others in. Alas, he is but an interpreter of interpretation, a conduit of the message from the gods. But was not Socrates too a messenger of the gods, and could it be that Plato's depiction of him, especially in his middle and later dialogues, is simply a distortion of Socrates stirring performances, when he drew his interlocutors, like Menon, and those who heard him into a state of perplexity where he himself claimed to dwell? When he doubted the message from the gods, the tidings that "You are wisest Socrates", was not the effect of his response a delivering of the message that wisdom is the very recognition of our limits, our limits as humans?⁷ Perhaps it is then the Platonic privileging of "dialectics", or rule bound "deliberation" that must be questioned insofar as it seeks to limit our limitations, rather than celebrate them as the opening of possibility, the freedom of play and discovery, which he correctly identifies as being at the core of education [citation]. The Platonic path to judgment appears then as a kind of "highway of despair" that unlike Hegel's, which is a despair brought about by the apparent existence of an invisible hand of Reason (Absolute Spirit) move *behind the backs* of humans to achieve its own end, Plato's despair is born from a recognition and rejection of the primordial relation with Being. It is a despair with hearing of *wu-i-wu*, perhaps uttered in the words of Heraclitus, which opened up for him not as a horizon of possibility, but as a chaotic abyss which seems to follow from open-ended, aporetic and seemingly an-archic communicative action. When human communication is moved by ongoing reinterpretation, then it suggests the temples of certainty that we have erected are indeed deconstructable, and not fixed and eternal, as we supposed the realm of the gods to be.

The drama of evocative speech evinces Learning as the appearance of the "not yet". It shows clearly why the condition of Learning enables the overcoming, or the turning around of one's place in relation to *what has been*, i.e., tradition. Learning is the possibility of "leaping beyond" tradition, beyond the fixity of the social script's narration that assigns us

7 Responding to the call of Being: The Vocations of Socrates and Ion: Socrates and the Poets (revisit "True, False, no of the Above" and the readings therein) The distinction between Socrates and Ion needs to be explored. Socrates and Ion, on hearing and cheerful enjoiment... What kind of "compartment" is Learning and why is properly understood as 'inquiry'? But if we hold our Socrates as the model of our teacher because he placed himself on the ground of uncertainty and drew others into that location through his peculiar kind of speaking, why is it that we describe this as an 'evocative poetic speaking'? "Mythopoetic speaker"?

“roles”. The drama of evocative speech opens up the play of possibility. Learning is the drawing out or emergence of our inclination to create, to seek, to inquire, to “go beyond”. We are inclined or disposed toward the performance of free play, to the play of freedom. This free play appears when we are enjoined by evocative speech. With our judgment held in abeyance, we are released to the condition of discovery. In the hearing of evocative speech we are drawn into the “magic” of dramatic performance. Dramatic in the sense of being vivid, stirring, and thereby catching and throwing us beyond ourselves. The “magic” of evocative speech is identified in what occurs after the moment of provocation has given way to wonder. To be struck with wonder is to be enchanted. Evocative speech is an *enchantment*. It is thus a kind of celebratory song, a singing or intoning. The *saying* of evocative speech *in-tones*, strikes the keynote with the *said* (“Nothing”, *wu-i-wu*, “from the first not a thing is”), the words that transport us beyond what “is” to that which “is not/not yet”. Herein is the hermeneutic horizon of possibility, the condition of Learning, the location where “not a thing is”, *hsu*, emptiness, possibility. The free play of Learning into which we are released by evocative speech is opened up for us by an enchanting in-tonement that is an expression of conjuring art. Evocative speech in-tones through invocation. But *invoke* is a particular kind of calling (*vocare*). To invoke is both to “call out” as in make supplication, to “call on”, but it also means to declare something, a relation, to be binding or in effect. Further, invoke is to appeal for a confirmation. In every sense, *invoke* designates the relation we maintain with Being, but this range of meaning indicates the range of our responses to this relation, specifically the uncertainty that comes forth from the mystery which prevails throughout this relationship. It is a game of hide and seek that can overwhelm. We appeal for a confirmation, but we can only wait, repose ourselves in the releasement of our will and judgment. When we repose find ourselves at rest, composed, with a “dignified calmness”. But to repose is also to place confidence or trust in something, a person or thing, a phenomenon. The releasement of the will, the silencing of the juridical voice is the Leap of trust we make into the mystery of our relation with Being. Learning unfolds in this Leap. The Leap is our response to the tidings we receive from the First Questions. In Learning we embrace the mystery of the emptiness, and watch with dignified calm as our temples of certainty are deconstructed. “Hermeneutics is Destruction!”⁸

The turning around, the adjustment (tuning) toward attunement, toward the condition of Learning constitutes a relocation, or repositioning. Our repose is the result of our being reposed. In this sense *we* are re-posed by the tidings of our relation with Being. But to be “re-

8 Heidegger, *Ontology — The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, p. 81. cf. Inwood’s entry for ‘hermeneutics and circularity’, pp. 87-90, *Heidegger Dictionary*. Heidegger’s reworking of hermeneutics takes us from the *hermeneuein* of the poets, those ‘interpreters’ (*hermenes*) of the gods to interpretation as “dismantling [*Abbau*] of tradition”.

posed” is to be “posed again”. And here we encounter again how the news of this relationship turns us and, in re-locating our *interest* and attention, re-forms us. The First Questions have the effect of re-posing us, as in making us *questions*. To be re-posed, then, is to be “posed again”, to questioned, or examined. Our posture, or pose, our comportment or attitude in Learning is one of being “under examination”. *We* become the question in Learning, and we place our confidence in the relationship in which we are questioned. This is the why the comportment of Learning as *gelassenheit* is described as the “willing of non-willing”. In the way that we “pose” for a photograph and are placed in the “right” position to be “captured”, Learning is the “letting-be of unconcealment”. Being “shines” through the First Questions which capture us in the way the photograph captures us in the “right” posture. Later when the image has been “developed” we examine the photo-graph. What does this image say? How do we “appear”? What shines forth with this photo? (“Photo” borrowed from the Greek “light”.) The First Questions capture us and throw us back on ourselves, but not in the manner of introspection. In throwing us back on ourselves we are turned toward our being-in-the-world, our fundamental relational existence, as beings existing in relations with others. The will-not-to-will is repose of being in relation with other beings.

In being captured by the Tide we are caught within the inflow and outflow of Being’s processural unfolding in appearing/withholding, presencing/absencing, unconcealment/concealment. The absence, concealment, is *heard* in the tidings. But how do we “hear” that which is absent or concealed? Exploring this question returns us again to the saying of “Nothing”, *wu-i-wu*, and our encounter with no-thing, emptiness, *hsu*. We have said that Learning is a Leap into that mystery of *hsu*, a cheerful enduring of this re-posing where we are moved, tossed about, and abide within an unstable location. We repose in the releasement of judgment and will and, like Socrates, place ourselves in the draft, the current. But now we want to explore further why the appearance of the mystery in the *said* “Nothing”, *wu-i-wu* is heard as “possibility”. If we return to Heidegger’s essay, “What is Metaphysics?” we take notice when he writes: “Dasein means: being held out into the nothing. Holding itself out into the nothing, Dasein is in each case already beyond beings as a whole. This being beyond beings we call ‘transcendence’. If in the ground of its essence Dasein were not transcending, which now means, if it were not in advance holding itself out into the nothing, then it could never be related to beings nor even to itself. Without the original revelation of the nothing, no selfhood and no freedom”.⁹

We have said that in becoming teachable we are attuned to Being’s excess, and the matter at hand of Learning is thus an interpretive seeking within the horizon of beings. Being’s excess spills over and thereby makes it possible for this horizon to *be* more than it *is* or

9 Heidegger, “What is metaphysics?”, p. 103.

appears to be. And as members of this horizon, this existential situation, we too find ourselves to be more than we appear. We have also said that when we have entered the situation of Learning we appear to one another as this possibility, and now we have recognized that the appearance of this possibility emerges with the manifestation of alterity, of the *autre*. The situation of Learning, then, is an event that begins with and is sustained by *evocative speech*, the saying that dismantles edifice upon and within which we stand outside and against the horizon of beings. When we are no longer capable of *withdrawing* into and away from the world, we find ourselves *among* the world and nature, the congregation of beings and the shining forth of Being. The event of Learning unfolds in bright light of publicity where all can be seen and see, heard and hear. Learning is the circulation of Being's excess, carried out in the ebb and flood of the Tide and the drafting of the Wind. Teachability is the attunement to this circulation, and to the congregation upon and within which it unfolds.

The texts of Taoism, specifically *The Tao Te Ching of Lao-Tzu*, are instructive here on the event of Learning as occurring in the Leap into the mystery of Being, which appears to us as the openness of an abyss, a primeval chaos. Becoming teachable, we have said, is to be re-posed in the repose, the dignified calm of letting-be. With Learning we Leap into the emptiness, and we become open to the circulation of Being. In *The Tao* we encounter the following: "The (state of) vacancy should be brought to the utmost degree, and that of stillness guarded with unwearying vigor. All things alike go through their processes of activity, and (then) we see them return (to their original state). When things (in the vegetable world) have displayed their luxuriant growth, we see each of them return to its root. This returning to their root is what we call the state of stillness; and that stillness may be called a reporting that they have fulfilled their appointed end". Jaspers reads this passage as an indication of how the individual, formally named the "subject", is "contained" within the "cosmic process" that reveals the Tao. Such "containment" is akin to what we have identified as the capture of the (human) being within the circulation of Being, the Tide and Wind. For Jaspers this circulation is revealed in "a futile coming and going from nothingness to nothingness or a return home to the source".¹⁰ For Jaspers, the return home is the fulfillment of the appointed end, a returning which "means tranquility" and "destiny". "To return to its destiny is called the eternal (Tao)".¹¹ We say that the Leap into the mystery of our relationship with Being is destiny. Our destination in our seeking is the im-possibility of Learning, of finding oneself in this the midst of the circulation of Being, caught and thrown by the excess, awed by the possibility, thrown by the irruption of uncertainty that arrives with the tidings brought by the First Question, specifically the saying of the said, Nothing. Our destiny is questioning, to be re-posed.

10 Jaspers, *The Great Philosophers, volume II*, p. 93.

11 *The Texts of Taoism*. Translated by James Legge. Dover: 1962 (1891), p.59.

Is our offering then a “lending”? We said above that in giving we have made an offer without concession. We said: “To ‘give’ is to present without expecting anything in return. This is the essence of *Gelassenheit* as the ‘willing of non-willing’. The gift gives without desiring compensation, without desiring to be ‘sated’. To ‘sate’ is to satisfy, but denotes an over-stuffing, an attempt to be filled beyond capacity, as in ‘glut’. In giving we bestow, we offer, we relinquish. Our attention and interest is fully engaged with the other, *autre*. In the giving we have emptied our-self. Thus giving is the ful-fillment of the dismantled ego, the *destruktion* of the willing-judging subject, the ‘one/‘I’ who stands against the other, which is seen as an object to be taken up. If the giving of the gift is accomplished, the reception produces ‘non-willing’. The reception is complete in itself’.

In giving the gift of teachability, our listening is an act of freedom, where we have made an offer without seeking reward, or to be returned in kind. To be free is to be released from the desire to be compensated, from the need to be acknowledged as “valuable” through a formula that measures and weighs our worth, the worth of our gift. We seek not rewards with the offering, the gift. Our wandering as a seeking is not a quest for a holy grail, or lost treasure at the end of the rainbow. Our wandering *is* the “lost treasure” we plunder each moment we find ourselves attuned to Being. Thus, when we say that we “lend” an ear (or two), we mean both that we are offering our capacity to listen to the other for the moment, and thereby grant “the use of something with the understanding that its equivalent will be returned”, and in the sense that we contribute obligingly or helpfully. This is the crucially important *dialogic* character of this give and take. Teaching/Learning, as a mutual exchange is dialogic, the giving and receiving of evocative speech. We “lend” our self to the other in lending an ear. And in this sense we are “adapting” ourself to the other. In being reposed we are lending ourselves to listening. Learning is thus a lending, which is possible because we *are in excess*, wandering in the horizon of Being, attuned to presenting, we are “full of” — *lent*. To listen is to be full of wonder. In Learning we are said to be “wonder-lent”, full of wonder. This is the outcome of the ful-fillment of the emptying subject. In lending ourselves we are flowing over into the other, we are giving ourselves to the other, our intense attentive listening is the sign of our wonder-lent, our being “full of” wonder. The give and take of Teaching/Learning is akin to the overflowing of the Grail, which is passed along and shared, and in this passing on forms a community or congregation of friends. Teaching/Learning is the process by which community emerges, the community of friends, the community amongst all living beings in the horizon. The excess of Being’s presence is the overflowing of this cup. Teaching/Learning is the passing on, the exchange of this cup

We have said that Socrates was put underway by the message he received from the oracle. The saying of the god’s message, “Socrates you are wisest”, held him out for questioning, and drew him into questionability. He received the gift of teachability and thereby became teachable. And in being teachable he was capable of learning. He passed on the gift he received in drawing others into the draft of inquiry that had caught him. He was less sure of

his ground as he endured, remained steadfast in, the wonder that was evoked the tidings. Socrates *pathos*, his passion for questioning, was his response to these tidings. His *pathos* also attracted others to him, especially young people who were energized by his openness and authentic engagement with others. Drawing others into the location of questioning, he compelled others to think along *with* him. In the dialogues he set thinking in motion, and turned others toward an attunement of Being's processural unfolding. The dialogues expressed this process, this motion, and hence reflected the *peripatetic* quality of Learning. In dialogue we wander, our talking is a walking, a movement, a seeking together. Friendship and community emerge from this thinking that is a wandering together. And this is why we say our relationship with Being is Learning, for Learning is another way of describing our attunement or awareness of our being-*with*-Being, of being reposed in Being's processural unfolding. Learning is the wandering thinking evoked by wonder (*thaumadzein*), the dialogue where silence and attentive intense listening predominate. Evocative speech, the saying of First Questions, or what Arendt, drawing on Kant, calls "ultimate questions", those questions ("of God, freedom, and immortality") which remain unanswerable, yet urgent and necessary. These questions emerge out of a passion and need that are inspired by "the quest for meaning".¹² In receiving the tidings our juridical voice is silenced, as we endure the wonder of possibility that appears before us as we are held out to the nothing, the profundity of possibility, of the "not yet". This wonder is the beginning of thinking, "it begins with *thaumadzein* and ends with speechlessness", the dismantling of the self-certain subject, which crumbles when compelled to endure the shaking ground of questioning. Unsettled by the seismic motion of Being, the intellect, along with its cognitive quest for "reliable" and "verifiable" "truth", are submerged by the flood of possibility that emerges when the shaking ground evokes a tidal wave of meaning which exceeds the capacity of "certainty" and "evidence". The silencing of the juridical voice is filled with the song of poetic thinking. These unanswerable and ultimate questions (re)establish us as teachers and learners, as question-asking beings. For Arendt, this poetic thinking, which she calls "philosophy", is the ground or the condition for the possibility for science and cognition. Poetic thinking is a remembering of the question-asking being. In this re-remembering we are re-minded of our *pathos* to know. Without this *pathos*, knowledge, science, are meaningless, and no better (or worse) than the artificial "intelligence" of machines, which are still, ultimately, the products of human hands. "In asking the ultimate, unanswerable questions, man establishes himself as a question-asking being. This is the reason that science, which asks answerable questions, owes its origins to philosophy, an origin that remains its ever-present source throughout the generations. Were man ever to lose his faculty of asking ultimate questions, he would by the

12 Arendt, "thinking", p.14-15.

same token lose his faculty of asking answerable questions. He would cease to be a question-asking being, which would be the end, not only of philosophy, but of science as well".¹³ So long as we have gift givers, those who are capable of hearing the saying of the other as *autre*, we are not in the grave danger Arendt alerts us to as the always already/not dismantling of the question asking being that occurs when the human condition of plurality, spontaneity, natality, freedom, and action are threatened by faceless, nameless institutional machinations. Faced with the spectre of "thoughtlessness", we seek teachers, those who are capable of nothing else than this: letting learning happen. Such teachers are gift givers, those whose offering of "teachability" cultivates friendship. This cultivation unfolds in a purposeful wandering together.

Where do we wander in Learning together? We might approach this question in a twofold manner. First, we might explore the location, the where (*topos*) of our wandering. Second, we might explore the manner or way of our being-together as we wander. The two moments overlap. The Sage's wandering cultivates a philosophy of the people. Through evocative speaking, the posing of ultimate First Questions, the Sage draws apprentices out of the habitual habitation of juridicality, of self-certain knowing. Learning is the quest and creation of meaning through the mutual exploration of unanswerable but urgent questions. The Sage brings the tidings of this meaning making journey by offering the gift of teachability. Heidegger calls this gift what is "most thought-provoking". He writes, "We must learn thinking, because our being able to think, and even gifted for it, is still no guarantee that we are capable of thinking. To be capable we must before all else incline toward what addresses itself to thought — and that is what of itself gives food for thought. What gives us this gift, the gift of what must properly be thought about, is what we call most thought-provoking".¹⁴ The gift of teachability arrives to the apprentice in the form of evocative speech, where he is held out before the nothing/possibility. The original message received by the apprentice, the initial provocation which turns him around, is called the "original revelation". This original revelation signifies the re-posing of the apprentices, the letting be of learning. "Only on the ground of the original revelation of the nothing can human existence approach and penetrate beings...Without the original revelation of the nothing, no selfhold and no freedom".¹⁵ The original revelation, which initiates Learning, identifies the location of philosophical wandering. This ground, which we break and upon which we make paths, is the abyss into which we make our Leap when we get underway with Learning. When we Leap onto this ground we have been released from the static domesticity of our solitary egoistic habitat. To wander is to be "held out into the nothing", identified as "possibility" in the most radical

13 Arendt, "Philosophy and politics", p. 99.

14 Heidegger, "What calls for thinking?", *Basic Writings*, p.381.

15 Heidegger, "What is metaphysics?", *Basic Writings*, p.103.

sense we can imagine. To be released is to be freed from repetition, routine, recurrence. In this releasement we are held out before possibility or the condition for our being spontaneous, improvisational, novel. We are called back to our original modality of making, of initiating, of creating when we are held out for questioning. To be held out for questioning is to have our sayings received poetically, and to be questioned by the ultimate First Questions. The Sage poses these questions, and in doing so offers the gift of teachability and lets learning happen. The ultimate and evocative First Questions are what are most thought provoking, because they reflect the twofold play of Being's processural unfolding. The questions are unanswerable (concealing, hiding, withdrawing) but our exploration of them is meaningful. The meaning we make of our lives is produced in our responses to these questions. *Who* we are, as opposed to what we are, appears or discloses itself in our response to these questions.

In posing evocative questions and offering the gift of teachability, the Sage re-calls the apprentice to the location where Learning unfolds. This location designates a modality or a way of being. This modality, which emerges from being re-posed and released, is called "freedom". Freedom signifies the second manner of wandering, the Way Learning unfolds. To be free in Learning is, first and foremost, to be turned away from the enclosedness of the self-certain subject. To be drawn out from this "self-certainty" is to be turned away from the domestic habitat and drawn onto the unstable and unpredictable ground of the nothing. This ground signifies possibility, and possibility is the essence of freedom. But to be released from the routine repetition of domesticity means to be turned toward the alterity of the other, to being estranged from the certainty of subjectivity. This estrangement, provoked by the evocative saying of the Sage, *releases* insofar as it *opens*. To be opened to the *autre* is to be released from the confines of the self. To be released from the self it to be turned towards and attuned to the horizon of beings and Being. This attunement is freedom as the "engagement in the disclosure of beings as such. Disclosedness itself is conserved in ek-sistent engagement, through which the openness of the open region, i.e., the 'there' ["*Da*"], is what it is".¹⁶ Heidegger's name for what we are calling "learner" is "*Dasein*". *Da-sein captures the twofold modality of wandering as both a ground upon which we are grounded or rooted and upon which we proceed, move. Da-sein, as the condition of Learning, is both the Way and Where. "In Da-sein the essential ground, long ungrounded, on the basis of which man is able to ek-sist, is preserved for him. Here 'existence' does not mean existentia in the sense of occurring or being at hand. Nor on the other hand does it mean, in an 'existentiell' fashion, man's moral endeavor on behalf of his 'self,' based on his psychophysical constitution. Ek-sistence, rooted in truth as freedom, is exposure to the disclosedness of beings as such. Still*

16 Heidegger, "On the essence of truth", *Basic Writings*, p. 126.

uncomprehended, indeed, not even in need of an essential grounding, the ek-sistence of historical man begins at that moment when the first thinker takes a questioning stand with regard to the unconcealment of being by asking: what are beings? In this question unconcealment is experienced for the first time”.¹⁷ We call the first thinker the Sage, the teacher who re-poses the learner and draws her on to the path of philosophical wandering when he offers the gift of teachability in the form of the question, Who are you? In posing this question, the Sage draws the apprentice into the open region of questioning where Ek-sistent reposing occurs. If Ek-sistence is “rooted in truth as freedom”, then freedom designates the truth which is disclosed in and through philosophical wandering. The essence of Learning is Freedom.

17 Heidegger, *ibid.*

Power Relations and Liberation

Critical Pedagogy Beyond Freire and Giroux

Anat Rimón-Or

Poststructuralist ideas are both implemented in the field of education, as well as rejected from it. In both cases there is an inclination to ignore the fact that a major part of poststructuralist writing postulates and reacts to the phenomenon of power relations.¹ And although poststructuralist thought rejects the premise of a transcendent truth or ultimate criterion for judgment, it is saturated with the moral obligation to express erased traces of claims which have been doomed to silence. Claims are silenced in every discursive interaction because we cannot eliminate the effects of the power relations that construct our discourses.

Hence, poststructuralist thought is not committed to transitivity or to change for its own sake. If one takes seriously Jacques Derrida, or J.F. Lyotard, or even Homi Bhabha, she/he might feel an obligation to express loss and suffering which might have been avoided under different rules of signification. At this point poststructuralist attitudes conjoin Marxist approaches in education.

In education, the passage from social critique to social transformation is mediated, even according to Marxist approaches, by speech acts. I am referring here to speech acts that strive, in any field of inquiry, to express loss and suffering that are caused by the social order itself. Our critical perspective exposes what seems to be the unavoidable destruction of human lives and natural resources as unnecessary effects of a historical economic order. Nevertheless, speech acts have their own rules. They constitute compulsions, as well as opportunities for liberation, that are not economic but linguistic.

My paper deals with the act of critique, and I want to show how Nietzschean and poststructuralist ideas can contribute to Critical Pedagogy based on a Marxist approach.

1 I refer here to the so called "French Philosophy" and postcolonial writing.

Plato's Wisdom and Human Desire

The questions I'd like to pose are: "What is the act of criticizing?" and "Why is the ability to criticize essential to human beings?" In other words: Why is it rational to be a criticizing creature, and what are the conditions which enable one to criticize the way one operates?

The question is not so different from Glaucon's question in the second book of Plato's *Republic*: "Why is it good to be just?" In the dialogue Glaucon refuses to accept Socrates' first answer, which is given in the first exchange between Socrates and Thrasymachus. The reason Glaucon gives for his refusal is based on the two meanings of the term good: good in terms of profit calculation, and good as good for itself. While Glaucon rejects Socrates' first answer, he declares that Socrates has won his argument with Thrasymachus by justifying justice in terms of consequences and rewards, which means that Socrates has proved that justice is profitable. Glaucon seems to be right in his judgment, since justice was found in the previous dialogue to be an attribute that protects society and man from the process of destruction. Glaucon pursues a decisive argument for the supremacy of justice over injustice, which is not based upon consequences.

Following a long detour that includes the pursuit of the Good as the open horizon of philosophical inquiry,² we find, at the end of the dialogue, the same instrumental reasoning for justice. The just man, or the just state, is declared to be good, since it gives each part of society, or of the soul, a chance to fulfill itself in harmony with all the other parts of the organism. The meaning of this last idea is that justice enables the development of the organism without self-destruction and with almost no damage to individual qualities or to men.

My argument is that placing the open horizon of the search for the Good in the center of the discussion about justice is meaningful. The arguments on behalf of justice against injustice fail to transcend the realm of discussion concerning damage and deterioration, which, according to the debaters, is every organism's destiny. This is valid even in regard to the discussion about the just state at the end of the book. If we examine the processes, which are supposed to bring about the decline of the utopian state, we will find that they are inherent in the decline of the guardian's ability to discern practices dangerous to the harmony of the utopian government.

All through the discussion, injustice is perceived as the result of an eagerness to satisfy desires in a non-critical way, i.e., by destroying and inflicting suffering upon the individual (or the state). The problem with this form of satisfaction is that it may give rise, in some

2 See: Adi Ophir, "Plato's *Republic* — philosophy as a serious game", *Iyyun* 35/1 (1999).

cases, to a sense of pleasure, even though it inflicts damage. It inflicts damage by oppressing other faculties or men in the desire for gratification or in the need to maintain gratification.

Now, not every repression of needs is injurious. Injury occurs when the faculties or claims that are repressed are the faculties, or claims, which can stop the process of decline and turn its course, as happens in cases of injustice, but not only in such cases.³ This is the conjunction of justice and wisdom. It is wise to be just, according to this logic.

In the second round between justice and injustice,⁴ it becomes clearer that the power of wisdom is the power to judge among desires. Moreover, it is the power to discern injuries, which cannot be perceived by the senses, in the harmonious coexistence of faculties or of men. According to this argument, wisdom performs as a critic of shortage itself: it functions as a judge among cases of broken harmony, determining which shortage or lack the organism is in need of compensation for and which should be dismissed. Wisdom takes form as part of the mental apparatus, which determines what should be desired in accordance with seeking self-preservation and self-prosperity. But we should note that, in this context, self-preservation and well-being means, above all, keeping the various qualities of the organism free to signal their needs for compensation or further development. Vices are determined by the enslavement of abilities of various kinds to limited varieties of desires. Wisdom operates in the field of needs. Its task is to keep it as rich as possible.

Briefly, justice wins out over injustice by becoming an attribute of wisdom. Wisdom emerges as an activity aimed at discerning processes of rupture in the harmonious existence of the organism, in itself as well as with its surroundings, and as an activity of judgment between desires. We should keep in mind that the Good is compared to light in Plato's dialogues: it enables the trained man — the philosopher — to see things in themselves. But we should also keep in mind that the field which embraces the entire discourse about wisdom is the field of desires.

In this dialogue desires are measured against a scale. Despite Nietzsche's rigorous criticism, the scale is Nietzschean in form. Desires are denounced, or ranked low, when they limit the ability to criticize the decline they bring about in man or society, or when the form of satisfaction limits the horizon of desire's possibilities (which is to say the same thing in different words). Now, one may wonder whether the spirit's "climb" out of the cave is not, at least in some respects, a voyage deep inside the soul to the origins of desires, in order to

3 In cases of injustice, one has to invest efforts to keep the silence of the victim or to hide the sources of his or her achievements. If one succeeds he, or she, will be rewarded with a sense of pleasure. One cannot stop this perpetual endeavor. Although the endeavor is enforced (by previous unjust achievements) when one succeeds, one feels pleasure. The same can happen in cases which are not termed "injustice", as we have learnt from the Frankfurt School's critique.

4 *Republic*, §590-592.

judge among them and in order to meet a new order of them. I will say a few words about this possibility immediately. For now, I will say that this voyage is not the voyage of wisdom: it is the voyage of critique, to see what desires really are and whether the needs they signify have become harmful to the faculty of judgment. And if we turn back to the reason Plato gives for justice, this voyage becomes the order of wisdom, since every organism is doomed to destruction as it fulfills its needs — as it satisfies desires.

Even disregarding the question of dualism, it is clear that, according to Plato, the soul is in principle detached from the truth, from the thing in itself, as long as it dwells in the body.⁵ The goal of the philosopher is to overcome the body's compulsions in order to approach truth as far as possible. It follows that seeking after truth, after knowledge, is at least a two-pronged movement: one is the critique of desires in order to discern and suspend them, and the other is toward the truth, never fully revealed and so forever beyond reach. Is the motion of seeking for truth really directed to a higher place, towards the realm of wisdom as opposed to the realm of the bodily or the material, which also means toward the objective and the transcendental, as Plato thought, or is it directed deeper, toward more authentic desires? In any case, it begins with the critique of needs and depends on the ability to hold them in abeyance.

The act of criticizing enables change in the course of desires. The change occurs in the field of reason, not in the fields of the material praxis. The meaning of our activity in fields of material praxis is determined for consciousness by reason, no matter the level of the phase that reason — or what later came to be “objective reason”, or “consciousness” for itself — has achieved.

Platonic Figure, Marxist Dress

This Socratic notion has shaped our conception of reason for good and for bad. According to this notion, critical thinking begins when the praxis of needs satisfaction is brought to a halt. The latent implication of this notion of reason is that critical thinking, in its turn, cannot replace the judgment it performs between competing needs with judgment between true and false. Whenever reason peruses truth in Plato, it finds itself seeking harmony. Nevertheless, although reason seeks harmony in mundane life, we cannot disregard the antagonistic aspect that exists between material practices and critical thinking, which is prior to the capitalist era.

⁵ This idea is developed in *Phaedo*.

In this book we can see this determined notion expressed clearly in McLaren's essay,⁶ where he deduces the role of the Marxist educator from his Marxist analysis of society. See, for example, the following quotation:

Critique cannot be derived from the standpoint of labor (i.e., whether such derivation is ontological, normative, metaphysical or romantic). This is because the oppressed under capitalism are always circumscribed by a determined totality; they are always already implicated in capitalist social relations as the necessary ground of capitalist exploitation such that they-as workers-exist primarily and permanently as commodified labor. Thus, they have no point of reference with which to articulate a counter-praxis to capital, or a counter-principle to capitalist society. Labor is the source of its own domination...⁷

I agree. But I would add that this is the very reason why liberating consciousness cannot be acquired in an educational interaction in which the oppositions that structure the class struggle are preserved.

The critical educator compels a transformation of attitude in his students while he/she refers to them as participants in critical discourse (even when the critical educator constrains his/her student to the position of addressees, in other words: even when there is no real dialogue). This transformation of attitude is induced by the educator's critical reference to the relations of production⁸ and by his speech act, which positions the former proletariat as instances of addressees of critical phrases. This very act enables the students to liberate themselves from perspectives that have been imposed by capitalist power relations. Hence, the educator releases the student from a compulsive praxis that characterizes the proletariat, as it is defined by McLaren in the citation above. The act that constitutes the conditions for the liberation of consciousness is a *speech act* (the reference to the loss and suffering of capitalist relations of production and the positioning of the proletariat as addressees). And in this speech act the educator cannot address his interlocutors as "proletarians," but only as future philosophers.

I said above that Western thought has been constructed on the intuition that the change of consciousness occurs in the field of reason, as opposed to the fields of material praxis. This is valid for Marx's thinking as well. We should remember that, in Marx, material conditions shape consciousness as long as consciousness is not critical towards itself. McLaren describes, in the citation above, the situation of the proletariats, in which they cannot develop

6 Peter McLaren, "Critical Pedagogy in the age of terror", in Ilan Gur-Ze'ev (ed.), *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today — Toward a New Critical Language in Education*, pp. 70-94.

7 McLaren, *Ibid.*, p. 91

8 Which means, pointing towards a better order of desires.

critical thinking. They can suspend neither the practices in which they are involved nor their needs. Thus, and McLaren is right about this, critical thinking cannot be developed in them. Hence, material conditions determine consciousness.

As in Plato, critical thinking in Marx strives to discover and to denote destructive ways of fulfilling needs. Subjects who cannot suspend or criticize their needs (either because their basic needs are not fulfilled, or due to other reasons which cause them to develop a passion for more of the same) cannot participate in critical discourse. Material conditions have to change for these subjects before they will be able to think critically.

Nevertheless, when Marx demands that German philosophers think critically, he doesn't claim that the relation of production has to change first. Marx claims that if the German philosophers want to liberate their consciousness, all they have to do is think critically.⁹ He doesn't seem to perceive them as being restricted to the proletariat's material conditions nor to any other material conditions. Philosophy was devised by Plato as a discursive activity in which needs are already postponed and criticized. And when the Marxist educator addresses his students, the relations of production are already deferred. The students of a critical educator, contrary to those of "normalizing education", are not proletarians.

Two points, then, can be made before returning to Plato: 1) Marxist perception of reality cannot lead a Marxist educator to focus on Marxist revolution. Each social involvement contains its own restrictions, and interpretations of social events cannot be implemented directly in education. Essential needs (social or individual) cannot directly determine educational needs. 2) Marxist perception of the dismantlement of the individual in capitalism might guide the critical educator in his/her decisions regarding which of his students' faculties should be nurtured at different ages. This educational act is revolutionary in itself; although it doesn't cultivate revolutionists in the Marxist sense, but vice versa: it betrays the antagonistic relations between critical thinking and essential social needs. Critical education stems from critical thinking; hence, it must postpone social needs, including those of the revolution.

The intuition described above — that the change of consciousness occurs when needs and regulations are postponed — is one of the foundations of Dewey's philosophy. It is important for me to mention Dewey here because, although Dewey took it in an entirely different direction, he emphasized a component of this structure, which was not given the prominence it should have been given in the notions of his followers as well as his critics. Dewey stresses

9 See, for example, Marx's statement in *A Contribution to Hegel's Philosophy of Rights*: "It is therefore the *task of history*, once the *other-world of truth* [religion] has vanished, to establish the *truth of this world*. It is the immediate *task of philosophy*, which is in the service of history, to unmask self-estrangement in its *unholy forms* once the *holy form* of human self-estrangement has been unmasked". Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, London: Penguin, 1992, p. 244. Philosophers can acquire a "correct world perception" before the revolution. Their task is to uncover self-estrangement. Marx here implies that the course of philosophical inquiry is parallel to that of social revolution. They do not converge and the gap between them cannot be reconciled by means of philosophical inquiry.

that the act of thinking occurs only when things are not going well, when action has led to the wrong results, when disturbances take place instead of regulated harmony.

In fairness to the traditions mentioned above, we can say that, according to all of them, there is one positive thing to be said about the engagement of critical thinking. This is that critical thinking engages with processes of destruction, which are injurious either to harmony or to the fulfillment of oneself or Others. Critical thinking throws light on these cases, since repressed faculties or men cannot signify their own losses while they are enslaved to the needs of others, or of their own. And this is a truth that is not limited only to capitalist society (although I agree with McLaren that the critical educator must focus on capitalist relations of production while assuming an attitude towards *society*¹⁰).

As Plato shows, the repression of faculties and men imparts a sense of satisfaction to the authorized voices, and the authorities recognize in the enslaving goal the ultimate, or the optimal, way of life. By focusing attention on the possibility that processes of destruction are occurring although they are not sensed, and by signifying them as inherent to the enslaving goal, wisdom becomes the guardian of life and the guarantor of prosperity. But because wisdom, both literally and essentially,¹¹ can never transcend the field of desires, the arguments for justice and a critical attitude can never transcend their instrumental form. Critical thinking reveals what seems to be a harmonious existence as an existence in danger, or as a dangerous existence. If I may make a suggestion, following Adi Ophir, I would say that the task of critical thinking is to signify senseless murmurs and bumbles as signs of losses.¹² In doing that, critical thinking creates a need, the need for a new order of needs and for new forms of satisfaction.

Two Conclusions about Critical Education

Bearing in mind that the critique of needs depend on the ability to suspend them in order to pay attention to losses inflicted by pursuing their fulfillment, I would like to point to two divergent directions in which the above may be taken.

1) The first is concerned directly with education. Formal education happens to be a praxis of suspension. We suspend all other activities the child could be occupied with, in order to

10 As has already been implied, not towards her/his student.

11 Literally, as the discussion about wisdom cannot transcend the discussion about needs. Essentially, as it has been declared in *Phaedo*.

12 See: Adi Ophir, "Damage, suffering, and differend: toward a postmodern ethic", *Iyyun* 45 (April 1996).

stimulate him and expose him to norms, “truths”, and so on. This process creates particular needs, as we all know, but normalizing education also destroys the ability to criticize them. To say that normalizing education obliterates the ability to recognize the Other’s suffering, or the Other’s suffering in oneself, is the same thing. The task of counter-education is to suspend these very needs in order to criticize them and enable a human being to change the course of his or her life, to give him or her the option to choose.

Should counter-education aim at creating particular needs of its own? If we remember the open horizon of wisdom, and if we accept my argument that this open horizon is not detached from the endless depth of needs, aiming toward the postulation of good needs, or “human needs”, will not accord with wisdom’s order. Anyway, my argument is not that needs and desires are not an essential or worthy part of human life, but that in themselves they are out of the hands of reason, as Nietzsche was determined to reveal. Reason has been defined, in Plato’s texts, as being conducted in the realm appropriated from desires. The dispute between Plato and Nietzsche doesn’t concern this dichotomy but the hierarchy that Socrates establishes between them. The substance that critical thinking deals with is the process of decline, oppressed and silenced voices, or losses that no sign in the world includes as its signified, but not particular needs. The only positive need that we can recognize in this context is the perpetual desire to maintain the ability to criticize, which now is located in the realm of morality. It is the ability to pay attention to suffering. Here Nietzsche and Plato are conjoined to Marx in many aspects of critical education.

The above quotation from McLaren is followed by his conclusion:

Any Critical Pedagogy that wants to move beyond reformism must recognize that in order to achieve emancipation for the oppressed the social relations out of which labor’s antagonistic relation to capital emerge... must be smashed outwards or imploded inwards (or both).¹³

If we abandon the demand placed on students to participate in social revolution, we will be left with the proposition: “Any critical pedagogue who wants to move beyond reformism must recognize that her/his act of education is an act that radically opposes the social relations out of which labor’s antagonistic relation to capital emerges”. The beginning of critical education is the end of the proletariat in both meanings: 1. It can change proletarian consciousness; 2. There are no proletarians in the critical discourse implemented in education. But we must recognize that this is the only part of the student’s course towards liberation over which the educator possesses any control. We cannot, and should not, predict what our students will do with the abilities that we develop in them. There is no Marxist

13 McLaren, *ibid* XXX.

education, only Marxist educators. The social implications of this transformation are out of the reach of reason too. This last sentence, though with a different emphasis, is also valid in the case of Nietzschean educators.

Thus, even when the critical educator's attitude towards society is determined by a Marxist point of view, her/his attitude towards his/her student cannot be shaped in terms of a class struggle. What Eduardo Duarte describes as the estrangement effect (in its different dimensions), or the "self creation... [which] issues forth from a consciousness/awareness of being a subject in process",¹⁴ is achieved through the educational praxis of referring to the pain and suffering caused by the (capitalist) social order. Otherwise it has no educational meaning.

2) The second direction in which I want to take my conclusion in the opening part of this paper emphasizes the central role of the suspension of needs in the operation of wisdom. We have seen that the act of critique depends on the ability to suspend desires. This condition tells us that the position of the critic is a privileged one. It is not a position into which shortage is built, at least not in a tangible manner. It is an obvious truth that, as long as the discourse which pretends to be conducted by the rules of wisdom (and, as was just said, it must be moral in order to obey the rules of wisdom) is maintained, it creates its own mechanism of self-destruction. But what this last fact means is only that the discourse that purports to be conducted by wisdom's rules must perpetually refer to itself too. What I mean by the term "privileged position" is that this position cannot be the one that is posed as the inferior by the sustaining power relations.

If we follow Plato's argument, we see that the oppressed authority, the one whose needs are enslaved to the other's satisfactions, is deprived of the ability to see the damage inflicted upon itself. It can feel pain and suffering, but it cannot recognize their sources. Being enslaved means being enslaved to needs that reconstitute shortage without any ability to stop the process. It is not the situation of bondage in Hegelian dialectic. It is more like the false consciousness of the Marxist notion that McLaren describes in his essay: no dialectic development stems from it as the result of reasoning action. If I may suggest my own interpretation of Marcuse's explanation of the destiny of revolutions,¹⁵ I would say, also basing myself on Freud's theory of needs, that revolutions cannot end in liberation because if they are motivated by unsatisfied essential needs, they can never stop the process of repression. The sphere in which liberating transformation occurs is the sphere of critique, not of revolution. But the sphere of critique is constituted by the power to keep out other claims

14 Eduardo Duarte, "Learning as Freedom: The Letting Be of Learning Together", in Ilan Gur-Ze'ev (ed.), *Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy Today — Toward a New Critical language in Education*, pp. XXXXXX

15 Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, Beacon Paperback, 1974.

and disturbances, as we can see in the case of Thrasymachus breaking into the discussion. This is another point of view that demonstrates why the position of the “proletarian” cannot be imported into the social domain in which Critical Pedagogy is carried out.

I do not suggest that a philosopher cannot philosophize while he or she is hungry, or that philosophy cannot join forces with struggles for liberty. What I am suggesting is that, according to what was mentioned above, the availability of this very attitude, which is the conjunction of the reasonable and the moral, is a function of the ability to resist compulsions. And the ability to resist compulsions is also affected by power relations. It can be taken from someone and leave no trace of its absence, because when it is taken it does not yet exist as an option, as we all see in the case of normalizing education. In the case of the Lyotardian victim, this attitude is denied a priori to the victim.

Power relations that deprive the inferior of her or his ability to resist compulsions also deprive her or him of the ability to combine the reasonable with the moral. In this case, it is unwise to be aware of the suffering of the oppressor and even of other victims. The only way out for the oppressed in these circumstances is to destroy power relations as such. This recourse, however, is motivated by essential needs, not by wisdom. My point is that wisdom is the privilege of the oppressor only, and that the oppressor alone holds the key to the liberating acts and solutions.

By fostering this kind of awareness teachers can practice a liberating attitude in the classrooms. It is not the real dialogue between authority and subalterns which is needed for liberating education; it is an awareness of the inherent limitations of dialogue between the privileged and the unprivileged, which includes the potential for liberation. Not a real dialogue, perhaps, but a real attempt, by the privileged (teachers), to be aware of possible distress at the margins, which are created by the rules that delineate for us the borders between what is “legitimate” and what is “illegitimate”.

By the same token, the question is not whether the terrorist attacks of September 11 were truly “acts against humanity”.¹⁵ The important question is what they were trying to express, and what has been erased by the exclusion of the “terrorist” from the “human” domain. Or in other words, what has been erased by the rules that define for us the significant difference between the massive destruction caused by capitalism and the massive destruction caused by its (Arab) victims. It is this readiness — to give up the privilege to define the legitimate and the unjustified in order to let other voices be expressed—that makes the critical educator. Transitivity too should be understood in this context. And I agree with McLaren that it is the rules of capitalism that should be renounced.

16 McLaren, *ibid*, p. 70.

Upheavals or social revolutions are not, and can never be, liberating in that sense. They are aimed at fulfilling essential needs or toward the annihilation of power relations as such. The signification of a social event can never be provided by its participants. It is provided only by those who occupy privileged hierarchical positions. This hierarchy is determined by people's access to bodies of knowledge and their ability to utter sanctioned ideas, apart from the subjects' position within the contending forces. These are also the circumstances of the Marxist critics in their handling of the proletariat's affairs, as well as in the case of any critics of power relations. They are detached from the reality of their subjects' revolutionary inclinations.

My suggestion is that, if we want to posit the act of education as a junction of morality and reason, it must consist of summoning one to the voyage of critique. But the one who issues the summons must assume that the one being summoned already occupies an advantageous, never a disadvantaged, position. The voyage of critique is a voyage to the missing participant. So if we perceive someone to be disadvantaged (and here the proletarian is just one case), our voyage is not, and can never be, with him, but only with the authorities that have the power to open the way for him. The disadvantaged cannot participate in this voyage by obeying the rules of reason. This is the conjunction of disadvantage and (moral) disabilities. Marxist interpretation of the events of September 11 should start with this understanding. And this understanding has its implications in classrooms: determining moral standards do not make an educator critical, only a readiness to realize that any judgment is formed by power relations does. Thus, as in the old Socratic wisdom, what makes a postmodern educator a critical one is her/his readiness to lend a voice to suffering and erased claims.

Conclusion

It is easier for me to talk about moral disability in Lyotardian terms, and I hope that this discontinuity won't come out as an omission or serious flaw in my argument. It is easier because Lyotard's terms enable us to discern two asymmetrical attitudes that comprise what we might call "self-consciousness". It seems to me that when we use this term in the field of Critical Pedagogy we don't pay enough attention to their discreteness.

When I say that the moral attitude does not indwell in the disadvantaged position, my contention rests on two levels: first, the moral act, as I use the term, is a kind of ability to give up something. Following Lyotard, I would say that it is an ability to give up some prevalent assumed attitudes, which normalize the speaker position in the dominant discourse. It is the ability to hear in senseless murmurs and bumbles, or in senseless destructive voices or acts, signifiers of the arbitrariness of the dominant discourse; it consists of the readiness to link to it a phrase enabling the new work of excavation to proceed in new or other idioms.

Now, as one is expelled from speaker positions, as one is not summoned as an addressee, as one is deprived of the ability to suspend expected linkages, when the appeal to one is the appeal of the oppressor to obey the oppressing rules, when one is a victim, when one is not acknowledged in the rules and terms of discourse of some relevant tribunal, the two attitudes that I mentioned before — of the addressee and the following addressor — are not available. One cannot give away what one does not have while one does not yet exist in a discourse.

In the case of victimization, both sides — the victim (in the Lyotardian sense) and the one who has new idioms to express the differend — might be justifiably (in the Platonic sense) committed to subverting the dominant discourse. But they cannot do so in the same way. For the one who holds a relevant speaker position or has the ability to deliver the sense of differend (in arts or in philosophy, in the press, in the juridical field, and so on) can link phrases in the relevant discourse. But for one who is deprived of idioms that might enable him or her to express the wrong, the only way to testify to wrong is through vengeance. Both are motivated by the same sense of wrong and by the same sense that the subversion of the dominant discourse is an urgent matter. The difference lies in their access to knowledge and to influential speaker positions.

Thus, if we want to exclude some cases of violence from the moral discourse, we must assume that some positions are deprived of a moral attitude. As I've said, knowledge, the ability to hold speaker positions, and a readiness to derive from them subversive attitudes toward the dominant discourse — these are the tools of moral action, or, in the broader sense, of critique.

The attribute of “self-consciousness”, or “consciousness for itself”, can be ascribed to the situation of the disadvantaged described above. I suggest that this self-consciousness is not a potential trigger for liberation, although it can function as a trigger for change and may better the situation. It is caught in the course of urgent needs, since its starting point is an act of destruction and the cause of pain and suffering. It has no other way, since it knows the oppressor and is committed to justice.

When Critical Pedagogy assumes that its students are disadvantaged, it may be inclined to push them to this starting point. It is only in the case of the advantaged that self-consciousness or consciousness for itself is the awareness of the Other's suffering, and so may end the predetermined course.

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Subjects Index

- Absolute, 18, 24, 25, 29, 46, 79, 117, 190, 219, 220, 232, 234, 235, 263, 279, 288, 308, 317, 320
 Deabsolutized, 42
 and Postmodernism, See: Postmodernism—Absolute
Aesthetic, 7, 19, 33, 45, 51, 125, 140, 141, 164, 175, 191, 209, 278, 281, 283, 307
Affirmation, 283
Affirmative Action, 198
 Non-affirmative, 209
Afrocentrism, 118
Agency, 58, 86, 87, 92, 114, 115, 117, 120, 121, 134, 144, 152, 160, 165, 168, 170, 184, 205
Aim (and Goals), 9, 24, 93, 115, 117, 121, 136, 139, 147, 152, 155, 163, 170, 174, 181, 211, 262, 263, 264
 of Activist Communication, 196
 Aimlessness, 25, 162, 166
 of Becoming, 182
 of Civilization, 266, 288
 Construction of, 134
 of Counter-education, 24, 30, 166, 191, 192
 of Critical Pedagogy, See: Critical Pedagogy — Aim
 of Critical Theory — See: Critical Theory
— Aim of
 of Critical Thinking, 8, 335
 of Critics of Critical Pedagogy, 195
 of Dialogue, 201, 203
 of Didactics, 250
 of Education, 150, 166, 168, 177, 187, 238, 239, 243, 261, 263, 267, 270, 273, 274, 288, 302, 327, 328
 of Enlightenment, 15, 265, 295
 of Entertainment Industry, 287
 of our Era, 17
 of Feminism, 171, 178
 of Foucault, 291
 of Habermas, 295
 of Human Existence, 144, 181, 191, 217, 229, 265, 266, 267, 270, 327, 328
 of Life, 17, 170, 192, 263, 288, 330, 335
 of Mass Culture, 272
 of Mass Society, 272
 of Multicultural Education, 300
 of People's Education, 304, 305
 of Political Solidarity, 203
 of Philosophy, 45, 227, 268, 332
 of Postmodernism, See: Postmodernism
— Aims
 of Postmodern Feminist Critical Pedagogy, See: Critical Pedagogy — Aims
 Pre-determined, 233, 235
 of Revolutions, 339
 Self-constitution of, 140
 Self-realization Without Any Aim or Telos, 210
 of Totally Administered Society, 262, 286, 287
 of Wisdom, 331
Alienation, 7, 23, 25, 45, 81, 98, 219, 223, 227, 229, 231, 265
Alterity, 219, 323, 327
Appolo/nian, 168, 279, 280, 281
 Moment, 280
Archetype, 125
Art, 9, 11, 24, 25, 45, 147, 179, 278, 279, 282, 283, 320, 321, 340
 Adorno on, 241, 282, 286
 Apollo, 280
 Commercialization of, 281, 283
 Contemporary, 282, 283
 Degeneration of Current, 283
 Dionysian, 279
 and Elevation, 280
 of Freedom, 319
 Horkheimer on, 272, 275, 282
 Life as a form of, 25, 31
 Nietzsche on, 280
 Plastic, 279
 Purifying essence of, 282, 283

- Reification of, 25
 - as a Savior, 282
 - Tragic, 278, 281
 - Women's, 179
 - Reification of, 25
 - True, 281
- Aufhebung, 65, 66
- Auschwitz, 121, 143, 241, 243, 263
- Authentic, 15, 17, 28, 31, 32, 93, 117, 140, 160, 184, 239, 325
 - Authentic I as the voice of Violence, 160
 - Desires, 332
 - Values, 165
- Autonomy/Autonomous, 20, 30, 37, 51, 62, 74, 82, 87, 92, 97, 118, 133, 137, 138, 141, 143, 144, 146, 151, 152, 162, 171, 173, 174, 180, 181, 182, 212, 221, 243, 246, 261, 263, 271, 274, 297, 322, 327, 328, 334, 335
 - Critique and the Possibilities of Human Abstract, 209, 230, 234, 235
 - Destruction of the Individual's, 272
 - Education for, 244, 304, 305
 - Rational, 144
 - of the Student, 151, 239
 - of the Subject, See: Subject — Autonomy
- Authority/Authoritarian, 95, 97, 99, 100, 106, 109, 119, 120, 124, 128, 130, 141, 193, 250, 261, 262, 264, 267, 271, 272, 286, 288, 335
 - Anti-, 193, 200
 - Anonymous, 268
 - Children and, 266, 268
 - Non-authoritarian Pedagogical Method, 207
 - of Critical Pedagogy, 152, 169, 176, 177, 205
 - of Critical Theory, 119, 141
 - of the Family, 268
 - of the Feminist Intellectual/Educator, 176, 177, 178
 - Horkheimer on, 266, 267, 271
 - Rational, 266, 274
 - of Student, 256
 - of Teacher, 131, 132, 193, 200, 203, 240, 268, 277
- Barbarism, 14, 245, 262, 272, 280
 - De-barbarization of Mankind, 241, 243, 288
- Beauty, 14, 17, 162, 175, 192, 269, 279, 281, 307
- Becoming, 9, 17, 24, 31, 32, 181, 190
 - All-becoming, 182
 - for Another, 137
 - Becoming a human being, 55, 163
 - as Anti-memory, 182
 - Becoming-toward-the-world, 15, 22, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33
 - Becoming-in-the-world, 22, 160
 - Critical, 123
 - Different, 124
 - Love enables, 163
 - Myself, 137
 - Religious, 190
 - Swallowed by the home-returning call, 16, 18, 27, 28, 32, 160, 174, 181
 - Teachable, 318, 322, 323
 - Truth of, See: Truth of Becoming
 - Woman, 181, 182, 192
- Being, 7, 11, 12, 17, 19, 21, 22, 25, 33, 79, 137, 310, 317, 318, 319, 321, 323, 327
 - and beings, 19, 23, 317, 318, 322, 327
 - Being-thrown-into-the-world, 8, 9
 - Being-in-the-world, 11, 29, 160, 322
 - Being-together as Diasporic Learners, 16, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 30, 79, 182, 208, 212, 220, 224, 225, 324, 325, 326
 - Being-toward-life, 14, 24, 30, 326, 327
 - Being-toward-the-Godless-world, 18
 - Being-with-Being, 325
 - Beyond beings, 322
 - Call of, 18, 26, 27, 171, 320, 326, 340
 - Coming-into-being, 174
 - Diasporic Human and, 25
 - Diasporic Stance of, 191
 - Distorted, 7, 12
 - Freedom of, 11
 - Nearness of, 12, 190, 317, 325
 - and otherness, 33,
 - Primordial Relation With, 320
 - Revelation of, 318, 322, 326
 - Shining of Being Trough Questions, 322
 - Together-with-some thing or some one, 208, 212, 220, 224, 225, 325, 326
 - Totality of, 174
 - Truth of, 10, 11, 21, 190
 - Unfolding in Appearing/Withholding,

- 322, 323, 325, 328
 Veil of, 163, 165, 174, 320, 322
 Way of, 317
- Bildung, 143, 208, 210, 216, 218, 274, 275
 and Critique, 210, 219
 Critique of, 211
 and Emancipation, 210, 220
 and Enlightenment, 212
 and Power, 212, 215
 Practice of, 208
 Social, 215
- Body, 7, 15, 25, 33, 40, 53, 57, 136, 162, 215, 271, 278, 311, 312, 332,
 Disciplinary Technologies and the, 214,
 Embodiment, 125, 136, 272,
 Embodied Other, 197,
 Mind and, 180,
 Nomadic, 182,
 Socialized, 117,
 Postmodern, 120,
 Soul and, 332,
 Without Organs, 182,
- Bourgeoisie, 52, 55, 58, 73, 74, 80, 88, 135, 169, 210, 212, 216, 227, 229, 230, 231, 233, 261, 276
 Pre-, 231
- Capital/ist, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 116, 132, 161, 177, 191, 205, 268, 302, 332, 333, 336
 Apartheid-capitalist Norms, 303
 Control, 74, 76, 82
 Cultural, See: Culture - Capital
 Educational, See: Education - Capital
 Human, 84, 90
 Intellectual, 74
 Mode of Production, 93, 177, 297
 Rule of, 77, 85, 86, 90, 91, 127, 130, 333, 335
 Society, See: Society — Capitalist
 State, 77, 89
 Teachers Resisting, 229
 Transnational, 76
- Capitalism, 8, 52, 55, 58, 61, 70, 72, 73, 77, 84, 86, 88, 90, 107, 116, 124, 156, 175, 333, 338
 Advanced, 7, 9, 17, 82
 Call of, 10
 Compassionate, 88
 Crisis of, 80
 Dismantlement of the Individual in, 334
 Fast, 76
 Global, See: Global Capitalism
 Late, 184
 Logic of, 74, 76, 79, 83, 85, 177
 New, 74, 76, 88
 Spirit of, 8
- Canon, 25
- Catharsis, 278, 280, 281, 283, 285
 Laughter as, 285
 Adaptation to the System and Pseudo, 287
 in the Reverse, 283
- Chaos, 9, 72, 267, 320, 323
 Destruction of, 16
- Christian/ity, 7, 8, 97, 107, 216, 250
- Class, 7, 12, 28, 41, 50, 57, 58, 67, 68, 72, 77, 80, 81, 88, 89, 90, 94, 99, 102, 105, 109, 116, 118, 132, 133, 145, 169, 171, 172, 184, 201, 302
 Bourgeois, 52, 55, 58, 73, 74, 80, 88, 135, 169, 210, 212, 216
 Middle, 95, 101, 132
 Polarization, 77, 84
 Ruling, 55, 56, 73, 201
 Struggle, 12, 76, 81, 84, 85, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 118, 337
 Underclass, 56
 Working, 55, 57, 73, 81, 88, 93, 94, 101, 106, 131, 132, 135, 201
- Collective/collectivism, 8, 10, 16, 17, 19, 24, 30, 32, 33, 68, 71, 92, 96, 105, 106, 112, 113, 136, 138, 142, 148, 163, 164, 175, 185, 189, 191, 214, 220, 303, 306
 Anti-, 32, 33, 175, 191, 192
 Identity, See: Identity — Collective and Individual, 93, 162, 224, 268
 Construction of, 165
 Silenced, 198, 199
 Unconscious, 125
- Colonialism, 7, 24, 44, 56, 111, 119
 Anti-, 176
 Decolonization, 56, 84, 102
 Neo-
 Post-, see: Postcolonialism

- Violence, See: Violence — Colonialist
Western, 161, 176, 179
- Commodity, 43, 45, 84, 85, 87, 89, 90, 91, 113, 187, 269
- Commodified Labor, 333
 - De-commodification, 91
 - Education as a, 78, 87, 90, 91, 99, 100, 108
 - Fetishism, 227, 228
- Communication, 9, 11, 12, 26, 44, 45, 52, 62, 63, 64, 66, 69, 101, 119, 137, 146, 179, 194, 195, 202, 215, 221, 222, 242, 320
- Activist, 196
 - Computer-mediated, 180
 - Deliberative, 196
 - Electronic, 297
 - Inclusive Mode of, 195
 - Pedagogical, 193, 194
 - Privileged, 319
 - Without any Consensus, 222
- Communicative, 60, 84, 194, 198, 276
- Action (Reason as), 295, 296, 319, 320
 - Interaction, 201, 202
 - Norms, 202
 - Praxis, 223
 - Reason, 42
 - Relations, 202
- Communist/Communism, 55, 88, 206, 230, 263
- Community, 33, 54, 62, 66, 67, 100, 104, 112, 114, 121, 129, 132, 134, 138, 140, 142, 173, 177, 215, 221, 224, 259, 274, 275, 303, 304, 307, 324, 325
- of Learning, 64, 81
 - Religious, 106, 107
 - Speech, 174
- Conceptual, 9, 12, 15, 22, 23, 25, 36, 43, 45, 46, 47, 50, 52, 53, 56, 57, 64, 69, 84, 88, 91, 97, 99, 113, 114, 115, 117, 122, 123, 128, 133, 147, 150, 154, 161, 168, 170, 172, 187, 249, 262, 263
- Agency of, 165, 168
 - Apparatus in the Service of Normalization, 165, 174
 - of Authority, 266, 267
 - of Bildung, 208, 209, 210, 211, 216, 218, 220, 274, 275
 - of Catharsis, 278
 - Creation of, 165
 - of Critical Pedagogy, 167, 226, 229
 - of Critical Theory, 7
 - of Critique, 209, 221
 - of Culture, 226, 227
 - of Democracy, 274
 - of Dialogue, 172, 201
 - of Diaspora, 22
 - of Difference, 201, 202
 - of Education, 170, 227, 230, 246, 274
 - of Enlightenment, 265
 - of Freedom, 213
 - of Human, 16, 17, 52, 53, 54, 55, 87, 92, 114, 119, 123, 133, 134, 150, 160, 161, 165, 168, 218, 262, 295
 - of Irony, 237
 - of Life, 222
 - of Mimesis, 267, 269, 270
 - Modern, 210, 263
 - Modern Concept of the Individual, 222
 - and Object, 122
 - of the Oppressed, 205
 - of Order, 292
 - of Philosophy, 45, 161
 - Possibilities, 153
 - and Reality, 247
 - of Reason, 185, 308, 310, 332
 - and Self-Narrative, 133
 - and Transcendence, See: Transcendence
- Concepts Allowing Transcendence
- of Truth, 162, 311, 332
 - Universal, 123
- Conceptualization, 40, 58, 311
- Consciousness, 27, 113, 122, 124, 133, 136, 165, 171, 219, 220, 228, 232, 235, 238, 255, 264, 268, 271, 332, 337, 339
- Abstract, 231, 239
 - and Alienation, 231
 - Bourgeois, 233
 - Change of, 333, 334
 - Commercial, 128
 - Critical, 122, 128, 136, 173, 228, 302
 - False, 95, 189, 201, 203, 205, 232, 234, 240, 337
 - Formation of, 145
 - Individual, 270
 - of Non-identity Thinking, 122
 - Liberation of, 333

- Proletarian, 336
- Re-humanized, 240
- of Repressive Productivity, 288
- Self-critical, 333, 339, 340
- Shaped by Material Conditions, 333
- Revolutionary, 239
- Conservative, 95, 96, 97, 98, 101, 103, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 146
 - Neo-, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 104, 112, 113
- Consumption, 22, 23, 52, 77, 85, 90, 124, 126, 127, 130, 132, 283
 - of the Logic of the Hegemonic Order, 166
 - of Postmodern Philosophy by Post-feminist Thinkers, 181
 - of Postmodern Feminist Critical Pedagogy, 190
- Context, 57, 120, 124, 125, 128, 130, 137, 138, 144, 161, 184, 186, 187, 203, 206, 216, 251, 254, 266, 276, 307, 336
 - Cultural, 174, 185, 191, 282
 - Determination of "Natural Beginnings", 30, 164, 182, 183, 234, 235, 239, 263, 265, 320, 322, 323, 329
 - Dynamic, 139, 141
 - of the Emergence of Critical Pedagogy, 7, 143, 146, 172, 193, 210, 227, 240, 246, 304
 - of the Emergence of Critical Theory, 281
 - Historical, 154, 163, 191
 - Human as an Echo of "Her", 18, 30, 161, 162, 163, 164, 166, 170, 171, 173, 174, 181, 182, 183, 229, 239, 263, 267, 268, 269, 272, 282, 283, 286, 287, 320, 321, 322, 329
 - Material, 163
 - Pedagogical, 196
 - Philosophical, 168
 - Postmodern, 139, 161
 - as Power/Knowledge, 154, 162
 - Racial, 174
 - Reason and, 313
 - Social, 143, 185, 191
 - Solid, 139
 - Political, 151, 191
 - Production of the, 161, 162, 163, 164, 170, 181, 182, 214, 215, 218, 221, 222, 265, 329
 - Transcendence from the, 11, 12, 28, 29, 30, 148, 153, 154, 160, 161, 171, 174, 175, 178, 181, 183, 184, 187, 189, 205, 209, 211, 212, 213, 214, 217, 219, 222, 224, 229, 231, 234, 235, 239, 260, 261, 263, 265, 266, 267, 272, 274, 275, 276, 281, 288, 320, 321, 322, 323, 327, 328, 332, 337
- Contingency, 11, 14, 29, 30, 146, 154, 162, 163, 164, 172, 180, 183, 209, 220, 227, 229, 230, 234, 235, 239
 - Offering the Students Mere Contingency, 238
 - Truth of, 234
- Continuum, 16, 20, 22, 32, 163, 164, 199, 327
 - the Subject as Part of the, 166
- Control, 11, 15, 22, 24, 32, 62, 74, 76, 77, 105, 110, 115, 117, 133, 134, 135, 137, 152, 158, 166, 170, 174, 185, 189, 215, 261, 263, 265, 267, 274, 287, 313, 317, 318, 336
 - Free, 279
 - Internalized, 263, 274
 - Rational, 270
- Cosmos, 7, 11, 21, 22, 23
 - Conquest of, 23
 - Relation to the, 7, 15, 18, 19, 22, 25, 33 and Subject, 22-26, 62, 279, 321
- Cosmic
 - Exile, 23
 - Affluence, 23
 - Music, 28, 32
- Counter-education, 12, 15, 17, 20, 21, 23, 25, 28, 30, 32, 33, 54, 79, 162, 171, 186, 169, 188, 191
 - Aim of, 24, 30, 31, 166, 169, 191, 192, 335, 336
 - Challenging De-humanization, 166, 336 and Creativity, 24, 167
 - and Critical Pedagogy, 20, 25, 169
 - and Diasporic philosophy, 13, 15, 17, 21, 23, 25, 160, 190, 192
 - Emancipation, 168
 - as a manifestation of Love, 24, 31, 191 and Nature, 23
 - Realization of, 31, 79, 166, 191 and responsibility, 30, 31, 32
 - Truth of, 31
- Creativity, 9, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 32, 49, 62, 64, 93, 97, 105, 136, 168, 172
 - Anti-, 19

- Authentic, 14, 19, 24, 26, 93
 Diasporic, 24, 25, 26, 31, 167
 and Love, 24, 25
 Poetic, 22, 79
- Critical Pedagogy, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 25, 30, 34, 36, 50, 51, 56, 64, 66, 70, 75, 78, 80, 81, 83, 91, 93, 94, 96, 114, 115, 117, 118, 120, 121, 123, 124, 126, 127, 128, 131, 132, 140, 141, 151, 153, 155, 156, 160, 164, 166, 167, 168, 172, 174, 175, 186, 193, 200, 211, 220, 226, 233, 238, 239, 240, 241, 276, 277, 289, 298, 300, 305, 308, 329, 338, 339, 340
- Aim of, 7, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 24, 47, 56, 66, 67, 68, 78, 80, 84, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 115, 120, 121, 123, 124, 125, 128, 138, 139, 141, 142, 143, 146, 147, 152, 160, 167, 171, 183, 184, 192, 193, 201, 205, 227, 228, 230, 232, 233, 239, 244, 247, 273, 276, 304, 336
- Aim of Postmodern Feminist CP, 170, 171, 185
- Alternative, 50, 64, 78, 79, 80, 82, 84, 87, 89, 93, 114, 121, 122, 129, 141, 142, 153, 155, 156, 158, 159, 169, 184
- and Art Education, 24, 69
- Authority of, 152, 169, 176, 177, 186, 205, 333, 339, 340
- and Bildung, 209, 210
- Challenges faced by, 10, 12, 13, 18, 22, 23, 34, 35, 50, 78, 80, 89, 90, 93, 129, 130, 139, 149, 172, 203, 204, 226, 306
- Concept of Education, 147, 205, 230, 236, 237, 239
- Context of the Emergence of CP, See: Context — Critical Pedagogy
- Context — Critical Pedagogy
- as Counter-practice, 155
- and Critical Theory, 7, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 32, 35, 47, 81, 82, 114, 115, 122, 153, 185, 187, 208, 226, 227, 229, 241, 242, 243, 244, 289, 291, 300, 301, 311, 314
- and Critique of Critique, 236, 237, 239
- and Critical Thinking, 289, 290
- and Critique as Culture, 228
- as a Culture, 226, 230, 232, 240
- and Cultural Studies, 36, 226, 230
- as counter-education, 19, 20, 160
- Deconstructive, 141, 142
- Demystification, 145, 146, 153, 171, 240
- Demystification as the Working of Power, 153
- Dialogue, 193, 194, 195, 203, 204, 205, 207, 333
- Dionysian Sources of, 280
- and Diasporic Philosophy, 17, 21, 25, 164
- and Difference, 201
- Disoriented, 7, 10, 22, 78, 79, 166, 208, 209, 226, 230
- Domesticated, 7, 16, 78, 79, 84, 226
- and Ecological Ethics, 23, 62
- Educating the Educator, 150
- and Emancipation, 145, 146, 152, 155, 156, 167, 169, 184, 185, 204, 205, 239, 300, 301, 308, 336
- and Enlightenment, 153
- as Ethnocentrism, See: Ethnocentrism - Critical pedagogy
- Eutopic, 114, 141, 142
- Failures of, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 78, 79, 80, 83, 84, 96, 114, 129, 139, 142, 155, 156, 158, 164, 169, 173, 184, 207, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 236, 237, 239, 240, 245, 299, 301
- Feminist, 128, 145, 160, 161, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 176, 177, 178, 179
- Feminist Compared With Critical Pedagogy, 171, 172, 176
- Feminist Critique of, 167, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 204
- Feminist Defense of, 169, 170
- Foundationalism of, 146, 167
- Freirean, 167, 172, 176, 202, 302, 329
- Future of, 47, 48, 143, 155, 159, 184, 301, 309
- and Justice, See: Justice — Critical Pedagogy
- and Love, 17, 19, 25, 226
- "Making" the Students Critical, 239
- Marxist, 64, 84, 153, 226, 228, 230, 231, 329
- and Modern Education, 146, 184
- and Multicultural Education, 78, 80, 81, 226, 300
- Nietzschean, 329, 337
- as Normalizing Education, 19, 20, 152,

- 160, 164, 202, 230, 340
 and Objectivity, 231
 Pedagogy of, 232
 Phallogentrism of, 178
 Phenomenological, 228, 240
 Philosophical foundations of, 19, 23, 171, 184, 226-232, 234, 237, 240, 309
 Postcritical, 184, 185
 and Postmodernism, 13, 65, 76, 79, 81, 82, 143, 145, 146, 147, 149, 150, 153, 154, 156, 158, 164, 175, 176, 226, 228, 230, 231, 291, 300, 301, 306, 307, 314, 315
 Postmodern Feminist, 160, 161, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 174, 176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 185, 187, 189, 190, 191
 Postmodern Feminist CP as Normalizing Education, 160, 164
 and Postcolonialism, 13, 145, 167, 176, 204
 and Poststructuralism, 204, 329
 Postutopian, 121
 Praxis of, 19, 193, 205, 207
 and Race, 145
 and Radical Democracy, 36, 78, 90, 93
 and Rationality, 314, 315
 and reality, 10, 16, 19, 22, 66, 78, 84, 90, 185, 204
 as a religion, 19
 Reception of, 10, 13, 16, 95, 195, 204
 Repressive, 10, 19, 20, 24, 172, 173, 185, 195, 196, 203, 204, 230, 231, 232, 237, 239, 333, 340
 Revolutionary, 83, 84, 85, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 127, 129, 141, 204
 Self-critical, 152, 176, 231, 236, 237, 239
 and Social Change, See: Social Change and the Socratic Ideal, 207
 South African, 302, 305, 306, 309, 315, 316
 Subject as Free in Critical Pedagogy, 233, 239, 306, 334
 Teachers, 10, 80, 89, 90, 121, 130, 138, 139, 141, 231, 232, 239, 240, 255, 333, 336
 Teaching, 232, 239
 Thinkers, 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, 19, 69, 80, 96, 111, 117, 120, 131, 140, 152, 184, 204, 230, 314
 as Totalising, 156, 175, 176, 195, 196, 204, 239, 308
 Traditional, 144
 Training teachers, 10
 as Transcendence, 155, 156, 205, 239
 as Holding the Truth, 152, 234, 237, 308
 Utopian, 121, 141, 155, 230
 Critical Theory, 7, 13, 15, 18, 22, 30, 36, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 50, 51, 57, 58, 59, 66, 81, 82, 114, 115, 119, 123, 140, 142, 162, 170, 172, 176, 184, 185, 186, 194, 226, 227, 228, 229, 245, 260, 288, 289, 294, 296, 297, 300, 304, 305, 306, 312, 315
 Absence of Critical Theory in Feminist Discourse, 168, 185
 Aim of, 13, 30, 41, 47, 51, 52, 58, 59, 64, 67, 68, 243, 295, 302, 305
 and Contextualized Reason, 313
 and Critical Pedagogy, 11, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 34, 35, 36, 38, 47, 81, 82, 114, 115, 122, 171, 185, 208, 226, 229, 245, 260, 300, 301, 314, 315
 and Critique as Culture, 228
 Critique of, 171, 172, 190, 245, 313
 Deleuze and renewal of, 45, 48
 and Diasporic Philosophy, 9, 18, 20, 21, 22
 of Didactics, 252
 and Education, 20, 48, 49, 50, 52, 54, 57, 58, 59, 64, 66, 115, 140, 184, 194, 240, 241, 242, 243, 245, 246, 247
 and Electronic Communication, 297
 and Emancipation, 295, 305
 Feminist, 119, 169, 170, 176
 Feminist Critique of, 171, 185
 and Foucault, 298
 Future of, 35, 311
 Mature, 14, 19, 187
 Old, 174
 Optimism, 245
 Pessimism, 245
 and Pluralism, 41, 312, 313
 Poststructuralist, 119
 and Pragmatism, 39, 42, 48, 81
 Mature, 9, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 30, 186, 187
 and Nature, 22
 New, 57, 59

- Nietzschean, 45, 281
 and Rationality, 314, 315
 Tinkers, 8, 10, 16, 30, 32, 41, 57, 120, 135, 172, 176, 232, 314
 and Truth, 295
 and Utopia, 41, 119, 206
 Universalistic, 206, 314
- Critical Language, 11, 12, 33, 34, 78, 84, 226, 301, 315
 Critical Thinking, 8, 38, 43, 47, 229, 269, 289, 290, 303, 332, 334, 335, 336
 Determined by Change in Material Conditions, 334
 Determind by Injurious Destruction, 335
 Limitations of the Proletariat's, 333, 334
 as a Version of Informal Logic, 289, 290
 Marxian, 334
 and Not Social Needs as a Gate for Revolution, 334
 Critique, 10, 12, 14, 19, 20, 25, 26, 29, 30, 32, 35, 36, 38, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 63, 65, 67, 69, 72, 78, 80, 83, 84, 89, 90, 91, 115, 117, 119, 120, 121, 124, 125, 130, 131, 142, 143, 145, 146, 148, 154, 166, 168, 172, 176, 184, 187, 190, 207, 208, 210, 211, 221, 222, 227, 230, 231, 232, 233, 237, 238, 239, 245, 276, 298, 312, 329, 330, 333, 340
 and the Ability to Suspend Desires, 329-340
 as an alternative to Will to Power, 236
 and Bildung, 210, 221
 Conservative, 266
 Constructive, 253
 and Contextualized Reason, 313
 Critical Notion of, 209, 235, 236, 238, 239
 Criteria of, 221
 as Culture, 227, 228
 of Desires, 331, 332, 334, 335
 Diffusion of the Notion of, 209
 and the Dionysian Experience, 280
 of Domination, 233
 Education as, 227
 Ethics and, 313
 Foundations for, 271, 309
 Impossibility of Criticizing Normalizing Education, 335, 336
 Macro, 122, 139
 Must be Moral in order to Obey the Rules of Wisdom, 337
 as Part and Parcel of the Order it is Supposed to Challenge, 166, 208, 209
 as a Perpetual Desire to Maintain Critique, 336
 of Phallocentrism, 179
 as Political Education, 228
 Post-Critique, 168
 as Praxis of De-subjection, 224
 Practical, 154, 156
 as Purely Functional Instrument, 209
 Rational, 295, 304
 as a Rational Negation, 209
 Rearticulated, 221
 of Society, 244, 329, 333
 Tragic, 237, 238
 Trivializing, 209
 as Will to Power, 236
 With no Transcendence, 155, 336, 337, 340
 Utopianism as, 141
 as Transcendence, 171
 Voyage of, 331, 339
 Wisdom as, 331
- Culture/Cultural, 8, 11, 12, 14, 21, 27, 30, 31, 33, 39, 40, 43, 57, 60, 63, 64, 65, 69, 83, 95, 97, 99, 107, 109, 110, 112, 115, 119, 125, 132, 133, 134, 136, 141, 174, 176, 187, 230, 240, 272, 275, 279, 281, 289, 299, 302, 307, 309, 310, 311, 312
 Borders, 26, 148, 177
 Capital, 12, 61, 66, 67, 97, 99
 Critical Pedagogy as a, See: Critical Pedagogy — Culture
 Critical Potential of, 281
 Critique as, see: Critique — Culture
 Cyber-, 60, 64, 68
 Degradation, 39
 Difference, See: Difference — Cultural
 of Domination, 35, 118, 310
 Dominant, 116, 186, 197
 Democratic, 35, 65
 Digitalized, 59, 66
 and Education, 143, 240, 300
 Equal Value of Each, 233
 Environment, 126, 174

- Essentialism, 141
- Hegemony, 116, 118, 310
- High, 283
- High-tech, 64, 67
- Identity, See: Identity - Cultural
- Ideologies, 140
- Industry, See: Culture industry
- Intellectual, 281
- Life, See: Life — Cultural
- Marginalized, See: Marginalized - Cultures
- Mass, 272, 282, 286
- Media, 126
- Multimedia, 65
- National, 141
- and Nature, 125
 - Politics, 120
- Popular, 65, 123, 128, 130
- Reproduction, 25, 116, 117, 173
- Restructuring, 66, 129
- School, 81, 138
- Struggle, 96, 97, 226
- Subjectivity as, 227
- Transcultural Ideals, 300, 301
- Transformation, 113
- Turn, 36
- Universal, 53
- War, 175
- Western, 179
- Women and Jews along History of, 192
- Work, 232
- Culture Industry, 9, 25, 79, 187, 250, 281, 282, 283, 284, 286
- Curriculum, 117, 118, 121, 130, 290
- and Cultural Reproduction, 115, 116, 117
 - “Feel Good”, 240
 - Hidden, 117
- Cyberfeminism, 168, 179, 180, 190
 - as Affirmation of Thanatus, 181
 - and Clitoris Symbolizing overcoming
- Phallogocentric Quest for Truth and Power, 179
- Cyberoptimism/Cyberoptimists, 182
- Cyberspace, 25, 33, 179
- Cyborg, 180, 181
- Damage, 330, 331
 - The Oppressed are Unable to recognize their, 337
- Dance, 11, 18, 28, 79, 267
- Danse Macabre, 172
- Dasein
 - Beyond Beings as a Whole, 322
 - Essence of, 322
- Death, 8, 11, 179, 287
- Decadence, 172
- Deconstruction/Deconstructive, 41, 76, 114, 123, 131, 137, 141, 168, 172, 178, 183, 216, 239, 240, 307
 - Goal of, 137, 307
 - and Neoliberalism, 76
 - and Modernism, 147
 - and Reconstruction, 41, 312
 - of the Subject, 181, 222
 - of the Temples of Certainty, 321
 - of Universals, 177
- Democracy/Democratic, 35, 39, 42, 45, 48, 50, 56, 57, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70, 73, 89, 99, 105, 113, 128, 145, 146, 151, 169, 175, 260, 272, 273, 301, 302, 303, 309
 - anti-, 50, 53, 109, 115
 - Culture, 53, 281
 - and Education, 50, 55, 57, 58, 60, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 74, 78, 82, 100, 104, 112, 193, 273, 274, 303, 304
 - Liberal, 51, 66
 - Mass-, 274
 - Non-racial, 305
 - Public Sphere, 194
 - Radical, 35, 36, 50, 58, 78, 113, 118, 119, 220
 - Radical Pluralist, 118
 - Society, see: Society — Democratic
 - Strong, 55
 - Teledemocracy, 74
 - and Transnational Elite, 76
 - as Way of Life, 93
 - Wester, 56
- Demystification, 149, 154, 171, 175
 - Impossibility of, 153, 154, 155, 156, 158, 159
 - Counter-education and, 153
 - as the Working of Power, 153
 - and Enlightenment, 153, 154, 265, 266
- Desires, 168, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 336
 - Change in the Course of, 332
 - Destructive Ways of Fulfilling, 334

- Suspending and Criticizing, 334, 337
- Destiny, 164, 166, 170, 172, 192, 216, 323, 330
 - Human's Return to its, 323
 - Questioning as, 323
 - of Revolutions, 337
- Determinism, 11, 22, 32, 92
- Dialectic/al, 14, 15, 16, 17, 23, 24, 29, 31, 45, 51, 55, 56, 58, 63, 65, 67, 84, 89, 93, 94, 120, 187, 191, 228, 229, 234, 236, 238, 240, 244, 246, 262, 267, 272, 319, 320
 - Non-totalizing, 230
 - Negative, 122
 - Resolution, 137
- Dialogue/Dialogical, 8, 11, 13, 52, 56, 68, 69, 80, 119, 136, 162, 166, 168, 173, 175, 183, 189, 194, 195, 196, 202, 240, 266, 299, 313, 318, 324, 325, 330
 - Aim of, See: Aim — Dialogue
 - Anti-authoritarian, 200
 - Between Teacher and Student, 131
 - Burbules on, 203
 - as a Way to Control the Other, 197
 - Creative, 174
 - Critical, 104, 172, 173, 196, 205
 - Critics of, 203, 205, 207
 - and Critical Pedagogy, See: Critical Pedagogy — Dialogue
 - Critique of the Various kinds of Dialogue, 198, 199, 200
 - Desire for, 196, 338
 - Domesticating Difference, 201
 - Education, 194, 276, 325
 - Emancipatory, 204
 - Erotic, 19, 175
 - Existence, 142
 - Freirean, 194
 - Limitations of, 338
 - Open, 198, 200
 - Platonic, 320
 - Poetic, 318, 319
 - Subject, 180
 - Within/Across Cultural Differences, 177, 200, 202
- Diaspora/Diasporic, 7, 9, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 187, 191
 - anti-Diasporic, 23
 - as a gate to alternative thinking, 79, 326
- Coming-into-being, 174
- Counter-education, 15, 17, 21, 30, 31, 190, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328
 - Creativity, 24, 25, 327
 - Destiny, 166, 323, 327, 328
 - Eternal, 29
 - Existence, 8-34, 160, 164, 174, 175, 183, 187, 190, 191, 192, 326
 - Humans, 15, 24, 25, 28, 164, 170
 - Learning, 190, 324, 325, 326, 327
 - Life, 8, 9, 24, 28, 31, 32, 33, 79
 - Ontological, 191
 - Philosophy, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 79, 160, 167, 170, 183, 185, 188, 190, 191, 192, 326
 - and Redemption, 22
 - Response-ability/Responsibility, 28, 29, 30
 - Thinkers, 16, 21
 - Transcendence, 160
 - of the Truth and the Body, 332
 - as a Wander Held Out into the Nothing, 326, 327
- Didactics, 248, 249, 250, 253, 254, 265
 - as Attributing Learning to Teaching, 252
 - Modern, 250
 - as Technology, 250
- Difference/es, 7, 22, 24, 26, 29, 35, 57, 66, 67, 80, 81, 82, 88, 93, 96, 108, 109, 110, 118, 124, 128, 138, 145, 151, 164, 170, 171, 177, 183, 185, 189, 197, 201, 205, 206, 209, 217, 219, 221, 235, 240, 243, 320, 338, 340
 - Bridging, 201, 207
 - Cultural, 133, 177, 194, 197, 300
 - Dialogue Across Differences, 200, 202
 - Conception of, 201, 202
 - Which Makes a Difference, 162, 163
 - as Diversity, 201
 - Feminism and, 128, 169
 - Individual, 300
 - Play of, 181
 - Politics of, 118
 - Radical, 202,
 - as a Resource, 201
 - Unbridgeable, 202, 219, 220
 - Unqualified Celebration of, 156
- Dionysian, 168, 172, 279
 - and Apollo, 280

- Orgies, 280
- Roots of Critical Pedagogy, 280
- Wisdom, 280
- Disclosure, 151, 152, 156, 159, 320, 321
 - Good vs. Bad, 156
- Domination, 35, 52, 54, 58, 62, 74, 83, 85, 89, 90, 91, 92, 96, 97, 99, 101, 104, 109, 116, 118, 119, 125, 169, 171, 197, 205, 213, 214, 216, 230, 231, 232, 233, 265, 267, 274, 283, 288, 295, 296, 317, 339, 340
 - of Capital, 127
 - of Discourse, 132, 171
 - Corporate, 77
 - Economic, 296
 - of Irrational Impulses, 283
 - Labor as, 86, 90
 - of Power, 155
 - Technologies of, 135
 - Through Knowledge, 295
 - Total, 296
- Dualism, 17
- Ecology, 23, 62, 68, 78
 - Ecological Ethics, 22, 23
- Economy/Economic, 8, 25, 28, 39, 43, 60, 61, 64, 65, 76, 82, 83, 95, 96, 105, 109, 115, 118, 186, 250, 272, 281, 293, 294, 302, 305
 - Domination, 296
 - Equality, 207
 - Global, 59, 60, 61, 64, 66, 78, 97, 111, 118, 119, 124, 130, 138
 - God's, 107
 - Market, 260
 - Order, 329
 - Political, 39, 52, 73
 - Rationalization, 116
 - Restructuring, 66
 - Sphere, 125
- Ecstatic, 9, 24, 190, 279, 283
- Education, 7, 8, 9, 13, 16, 18, 25, 31, 34, 35, 36, 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 64, 67, 68, 89, 90, 96, 98, 99, 111, 117, 123, 124, 132, 143, 150, 152, 170, 217, 230, 237, 238, 240, 241, 246, 261, 264, 272, 274, 294, 301, 319, 329, 339
 - as Adaptation to the Social Order, 144, 268, 276
 - Adorno's Influence on, 243
 - Adult, 81, 90, 152
 - After Auschwitz, 243
 - Aim of, 150, 166, 168, 177, 208, 238, 243, 261, 263, 267, 270, 273, 274, 303, 339
 - Alternative, 14, 50, 52, 67, 102, 169, 189, 303
 - Art, 24, 25, 281
 - Authority of Feminist, 176
 - Banking, 56, 193, 207
 - Bourgeois, 55
 - Capitalist, 91, 107, 116
 - Civic, 244, 247, 254, 257
 - Classical, 52, 53, 54, 56
 - as/for Coldness, 19, 242, 246, 247, 254, 257, 258, 260, 271, 272, 273
 - Commercialization of, 74, 75, 77, 99, 102, 107, 108, 109, 146, 247, 252, 281
 - Commodification, 84, 127
 - as Commodity, 78, 84, 85, 87, 90, 91, 99, 100, 102
 - Concept of, 227
 - Conservative, 95, 97, 98, 100, 101, 103, 105, 106, 146, 310
 - Constructive, 141, 218, 246
 - Counter-education, See: Counter-education
 - Counter-practice, 155
 - Critical, 7, 12, 22, 58, 64, 70, 78, 80, 82, 83, 88, 93, 100, 102, 103, 111, 112, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 120, 121, 125, 136, 140, 141, 143, 145, 149, 161, 168, 169, 208, 210, 212, 218, 227, 232, 238, 239, 245, 247, 277, 302, 303, 333, 334, 335, 338, 339
 - and culture, 143
 - and Culture Industry, 250
 - as Cultivation, 242
 - Cyberspace, 25
 - Democratic/democratizing, 50, 52, 53, 55, 58, 60, 61, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 74, 82, 90, 93, 104, 111, 274, 303, 304
 - Deconstructive, 141, 222
 - as De-humanization, 166
 - Dialogue/Dialogical, See: Dialogue —
- Education
 - Diasporic, 16, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 30, 79, 167, 182, 324, 325, 326
 - Discovery and Play as the Core of, 320
 - Educating the Educator, 55, 150, 243, 277

- Emancipatory, 8, 15, 51, 56, 80, 94, 168, 189, 205, 300, 301, 303, 307, 308, 309, 310, 315, 335, 338
 - Environmental, 18, 22, 25
 - Ethical, 141
 - Exploratory, 141
 - Eutopic, 141
 - Failure of, 143
 - Feminist, 57, 128, 160-169, 170, 172, 175, 176, 177, 178, 182, 183, 184, 189, 190
 - Foucault and, 298
 - General Formation, 252
 - and Globalizing Capitalism, 67, 73, 74, 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 94, 247, 252
 - Higher, 74, 136, 252, 301, 305
 - Home and, 269
 - Hope and, 241, 276
 - Horkheimer on, 270, 277
 - Idealist, 55
 - Idiosyncratic, 140, 141
 - Impossibility of, 150, 151, 152, 156, 158, 159
 - Inclusive, 196
 - Instrumentalization of, 143, 264
 - Internet-based, 68
 - Liberal/Neoliberal, 67, 74, 75, 76, 78, 81, 82, 111, 112, 146, 208, 216, 220, 247, 296
 - Marxist, 55, 80, 81, 82, 86, 87, 228, 329, 333, 334, 337
 - Mimesis, 261, 266, 267, 270, 273, 274, 276
 - Modern, 60, 66, 69, 143, 144, 146, 168, 274
 - Moralizing, 243
 - Multicultural, 78, 80, 81, 105, 118, 197, 300, 301, 310, 315
 - Nazi, 143
 - New, 144
 - New Sociology of, 145
 - Nietzschean, 337
 - Normalizing, 12, 18, 19, 20, 22, 28, 29, 31, 33, 134, 160, 161, 162, 164, 165, 166, 169, 171, 177, 179, 184, 188, 191, 192, 214, 230, 243, 334, 335, 336, 338, 339
 - as Overcoming, 161, 229, 230, 237
 - Peace, 30, 66, 302
 - People's, 302, 303, 304
 - Philosophy of, See: Philosophy of
 - Physical, 25, 63
 - Political, 228, 229, 276
 - Postindustrial, 61
 - Postmodernism and, 143, 146, 147, 162, 168, 176, 178, 183, 184, 190, 220, 240, 306, 339
 - Postmodernism and Neoliberal politics, 76, 78, 81, 82
 - Postmodern Feminist Critical Pedagogy, 160, 161, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 172, 174, 175, 178, 184, 192
 - Poststructural, 119, 141
 - and Power, 251
 - Practice, See: Practice — Educational as Praxis of Suspension, 335
 - Privatization, 75
 - Progressive, 55, 66, 72, 81, 82, 83, 99, 100, 101, 103, 109, 144, 194, 247, 310
 - Public, 55, 241, 256
 - Radical, 15, 59, 60, 63, 67, 72, 76, 80, 83, 84, 89, 94, 164, 179, 229
 - Re-, 277
 - Reconstruct/ed, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 69
 - Reproduction, 116, 117, 134, 146
 - Restructuring, 65, 67, 68, 75, 76, 104
 - Revolutionizing, 62, 80
 - Revolutionary, 83, 87, 88, 90, 93, 94, 118, 135, 334
 - Scientification of the Educational Situation, 270
 - Self-education, 32, 56, 117, 135, 211
 - Social Context of, 143, 277
 - and Student, See: Pupil/Student
 - Technology, See: Technology — Educational as a Tool of Oppression, 303
 - Totalitarianism of, 152, 240
 - Transformation, 151
 - Unpredictability, See: Unpredictability
 - Utopian, 168, 277
 - as Violence, See: Violence — Education
 - Western, 52, 53, 168, 179
 - Worker, 304
 - Emancipation/Emancipatory, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 24, 29, 38, 40, 62, 91, 92, 114, 115, 117, 124, 125, 144, 145, 146, 149, 152, 155, 168, 171, 172, 175, 177, 178, 181,

- 184, 185, 195, 203, 206, 255, 264, 282, 288, 304, 315
- Counter-education and, See: Counter-education — Emancipation
 - in Critical Pedagogy, See: Critical Pedagogy — Emancipation
 - in Critical Theory, See: Critical Theory — Emancipation
 - and Critique, 210, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230
 - as Demystification, 153, 265, 305
 - Emancipatory Cognitive Interests, 304
 - Emancipatory Resistance, 304
 - Feminism and, See: Feminism - Emancipation
 - Knowledge as the Working of Power, 153
 - in Modernity, 170, 189, 229, 230
 - in Modern to Postmodern Feminists, 168, 176, 189
 - from Phallogocentric Knowledge, 170, 177
 - Trough Knowledge, 308
 - Empire, 46, 47, 48, 53, 54, 88, 119
 - Empowerment, 9, 56, 64, 118, 138, 139, 169, 171, 176, 194
 - Enlightenment, 8, 9, 15, 23, 40, 41, 47, 51, 54, 57, 66, 143, 144, 146, 153, 167, 183, 212, 240, 241, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 250, 262, 264, 265, 266, 267, 272, 300, 301, 306, 307, 308, 309
 - Aim of, 265, 266
 - Aims of Education, 143, 172, 183, 187
 - Concept of, 265
 - Concept of Autonomy, 173, 180, 212
 - Concept of Critique, 209, 227, 228, 306, 313, 315
 - Concept of Progress, 184, 265, 266
 - Concept of Rationality, 308
 - and Demystification, See: Demystification — Enlightenment
 - Instrumental, 270
 - Manichean Foundations of, 154
 - as Myth, 240, 265
 - and Postmodernism, See: Postmodernism — Enlightenment
 - and Postmodern Feminist Critical Pedagogy, 167, 169, 170, 189
 - Practical, 241
 - Self-destruction of, 266
 - and Transcendence, 189
 - Environment/al, 18, 22, 23, 25, 57, 62, 68, 77, 109, 126, 135, 301, 315
 - Discursive, 133
 - Equality, 10, 56, 57, 58, 78, 110, 124, 145, 165, 175, 207, 221, 258, 263, 314
 - of All Cultures, 233
 - Vs. Freedom, 14, 221
 - Inequality of the Finite and Infinite, 240
 - Inequality of Class or Sex, 303
 - Unbridgable Inequality between Partners of Critical Dialogue, 339, 340
 - Episteme, 292
 - Epistemology, 18, 22, 178, 202, 209, 218, 300, 301, 307, 309, 310, 311, 313, 315
 - Epistemic Superiority, 41, 312
 - Epistemic Violence, See: Violence — Epistemic
 - Radical Pedagogy requires Traditional, 313
 - Relativism, 315
 - Eros, 8, 10, 13, 19, 25, 32, 124, 125, 171, 172, 190
 - Instrumentalization of
 - Surrendering, 174
 - Essence/Essentialism, 118, 141, 146, 160, 161, 167, 170, 172, 178, 179, 181, 184, 185, 186, 187, 190, 191, 192, 220, 233, 319, 322, 323
 - Estrangement, 16, 165, 166, 223, 228, 229, 327
 - Eternal Return, 236
 - Eternal Improviser, 24
 - Eternal Resolution, 239
 - Eternity, 7, 17, 22, 25, 32, 33, 47, 165, 180, 240, 320, 323
 - Ethnicity, 49, 58, 76, 80, 81, 131
 - Ethnocentrism, 10, 18, 28, 160, 163, 191
 - of Critical Pedagogy, 10, 20, 167
 - of Enlightenment Thinkers, 167, 189
 - Non-ethnocentric-solidarity, 175, 226
 - of Postmodern Feminist Pedagogy, 172, 176
 - of the marginalized, 20, 177, 184
 - Ethics, 19, 22, 23, 28, 30, 31, 40, 42, 45, 54, 79, 93, 120, 122, 124, 141, 156, 157, 161, 175, 194, 202, 231, 297, 301, 307, 310, 312, 313

- Abyss between the Political and the, 26
 Bridge between the Political and the, 27, 31
 and Critique, 313
 Foucault on, 298
 of Postmodernism, See: Postmodernism
 — Ethics
 Ethical “I”, 18, 26, 27, 33, 164, 170, 192
 Eurocentrism, 167
 Evil, 9, 15, 70, 163, 182, 192, 198, 235, 236, 245, 278, 303, 305
 Mimesis as the Source of, 267
 Exclusion, 133, 136, 149, 169, 219, 310, 314, 340
 by Critical Pedagogy, 139
 Exile, 9, 16, 51, 56, 161, 168, 191
 Cosmic, 23
 the Other, 165
 of Spirit, 179, 230
 Existence, 7, 9, 12, 22, 23, 25, 26, 31, 32, 33, 49, 73, 79, 85, 86, 87, 105, 118, 133, 161, 163, 170, 171, 181, 186, 187, 220, 224, 282, 319, 322, 326
 Aim of Human, 144, 170, 275
 as Being-together-with, 208
 Coexistence, 331
 Dangerous, 335
 Dialogical, 142, 180
 Diasporic, See: Diasporic — Existence
 Ecstatic, 9, 24, 190, 191, 279, 283
 Harmonious, 335
 Mere, 275
 Messianic, 191
 Nomadic, See: Nomadism
 Patriarchal-oriented, 180
 Rhizomatic, 182
 and Reason, 123
 Standardized, 283
 True, 227
 Existential/ism, 8, 9, 12, 16, 18, 19, 22, 30, 35, 168, 170, 174, 191, 241, 302, 307, 322
 Homelessness, 164
 Possibilities, 177, 323
 Fascism, 52, 70, 71, 186, 206, 272, 273, 286
 Feminism/Feminist, 7, 12, 13, 35, 38, 41, 43, 57, 58, 115, 120, 137, 166, 168, 169, 171, 174, 178, 183, 187, 189, 191, 192, 206
 Aim of, 178
 Authority, 176, 177, 178
 Absence of a Comprehensive Critical Theory, 168
 Anti-intellectual, 168
 Crisis of, 166, 167
 and Cyberfeminism, 179
 and Critical Pedagogy, 78, 128, 145, 166, 170, 171, 172, 174, 176, 190
 and Critical Theory, 119, 176, 185
 Cultural, 178
 and De-politization, 168
 Education, See: Education — Feminist
 Elitism, 177
 and Emancipation, 179, 181, 185
 Essence of, 160, 168, 174, 191, 192
 Instrumentalism of, 168
 Justice, 171, 174
 and Life, See: Life — Feminism
 Pedagogy, See: Pedagogy — Feminist
 Philosophy, 168, 182, 190
 Political Intentions, 169, 170
 Post-feminism, 168, 170, 179, 180, 181, 182
 and Postmodernism, 169, 170, 173, 176, 178, 179, 181, 182, 187
 Postmodern Critical Pedagogy, 160, 166, 172, 174, 175, 179, 187
 Poststructuralism, See: Poststructuralism — Feminist
 Teaching, See: Teaching — Feminist
 Fin de Siecle, 184
 Forgetfulness, 17, 28
 of Forgetfulness, 17, 161
 Self-forgetfulness, 17, 33, 161, 166
 Total, 279
 Fortuna, 163
 Foundation/alism, 129, 146, 148, 149, 170, 172, 209, 218, 270, 271, 273, 308
 Anti-, 146, 149, 158, 307, 309
 and Critical Pedagogy, 160, 161, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 189
 of Critical Pedagogy, 146, 160, 161, 166, 167, 172, 187
 Philosophical, 161, 171, 308
 of Rationality, 314
 Sociality Without, 219
 Frankfurt School, 8, 13, 16, 20, 32, 41, 44,

- 51, 58, 81, 114, 115, 123, 133, 167, 170, 172, 185, 261, 288, 296, 305, 312, 331
- Freedom, 10, 11, 15, 22, 31, 42, 43, 52, 57, 76, 82, 100, 105, 132, 139, 141, 145, 155, 165, 175, 204, 205, 207, 218, 221, 228, 232, 263, 265, 269, 271, 273, 278, 279, 288, 292, 293, 295, 298, 301, 302, 307, 317, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328
- Action as, 319
 - Art of (Arendt on), 319
 - as the Opposite of Power, 213
 - vs. Equality, 14, 221
 - Homelessness as the essence of, 327
 - Kantian, 213
 - Marxist, 296, 297
 - of Play and Discovery, 320, 321
 - as Revelation of Nothingness, 322
- Friendship, 28, 271, 324, 325, 326
- Functionalism, 184
- Structural, 116
- Garden of Eden, 8, 17, 180, 190
- Gender, 9, 26, 35, 50, 51, 57, 58, 76, 99, 109, 118, 133, 136, 145, 167, 168, 171, 174, 201, 302
- Global/ization, 39, 46, 50, 59, 60, 61, 65, 66, 67, 78, 104, 109, 130, 215
- Capitalism, 10, 12, 21, 25, 47, 66, 72, 73, 79, 80, 82, 87, 88, 146
 - Economy, 60
 - and Education, See: Education — Globalization
 - Era of, 64, 75
 - Human Beings, 141
 - Responsibility, 22
 - Restructuring, 66, 67, 74, 75
 - Rule, 46, 73
 - and Standardized tests, 64, 75, 77, 98, 101, 102, 109
 - War, 71
- Gnosis/Gnostic, 7, 9, 15, 20
- God, 14, 16, 71, 97, 99, 107, 162, 179, 180, 190, 191, 239, 253, 279, 286, 319, 320, 325
- Absence of, 14, 18, 29, 190
 - Death of, 307
 - Eye, 42, 312
 - Evil, 9, 20, 191
 - Exiled, 9, 191
 - Hidden, 9
 - Godless World, 9, 16, 17, 18, 31
 - Message from, 320
 - vs. Providence, 191
 - Suffering, 191
- Good, 27, 30, 32, 162, 164, 177, 188, 330
- and Justice, 330
 - as Light, 331
 - and Meaning, 330
- Happiness, 9, 20, 25, 28, 142, 174, 175, 263, 269, 271, 280, 281, 282, 283, 285, 286
- Amid Suffering, 26, 190, 192
 - Horkheimer on, 263, 267
- Harmony, 7, 8, 14, 17, 22, 68, 186, 286, 330, 331, 332, 335
- Counter-, 52
- Hegemony, 8, 16, 25, 26, 28, 30, 52, 75, 80, 95, 99, 107, 116, 136, 138, 140, 166, 168, 175, 201
- Bourgeoisie, 169
 - Counter-, 78, 106, 118, 119
 - Reproduction of, 162, 165, 166
- Hermeneutical, 32, 175, 318, 321
- Heroism, 127, 129, 131, 132
- Critical, 138, 139
 - Ordinary, 133
 - Tragic, 16, 184
 - Unheroic Work for Social Justice, 130, 141
- Hierarchy, 7, 32, 61, 118, 124, 128, 174, 180, 191, 217, 230, 336, 339
- Higher Education,
- Commercialization of, 74
- History/Historical, 11, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 40, 43, 44, 47, 50, 49, 55, 56, 58, 65, 76, 78, 79, 83, 84, 88, 89, 99, 100, 109, 112, 114, 118, 119, 133, 134, 144, 161, 164, 171, 173, 185, 186, 187, 210, 261, 288, 291, 294, 308, 311, 312, 329
- Consciousness, See: Consciousness — Historical
 - Change, 171
 - Crisis, 80
 - End of, 80
 - Intellectual, 115
 - Limits, 154

- Moment, 11, 30, 31, 161, 163, 165, 166, 167, 190, 191, 212, 265, 291
 of Pedagogical Enlightenment, 245
 of Problematics, 291
 Position, 148
 Realization of the Inner Logic of Civilization, 266
 Social, 216
 of Thought, 291, 292, 298
 Home, 8, 17, 22, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 43, 94, 160, 164, 175, 181, 186, 191, 192, 269, 272, 276, 294, 306, 321, 323, 326, 327
 Realm of Wisdom as, 332
 the Totality of the Moment as, 192
 Homelessness, 16, 17, 23, 25, 29, 32, 160, 164, 191, 326, 327
 as the Essence of Diasporic Freedom, 327
 Existential, 164
 Philosophical, 164
 Ontological, 175
 Political, 164
 as opposed to Self-forgetfulness, 24
 as Home, 24, 189
 Home-returning, 7, 8, 15, 16, 17, 18, 24, 29, 32, 79, 164, 168, 191, 280
 Conquest of the Cosmos as, 17, 23
 as a Futile Coming and Going from Nothingness to Nothingness, 323
 Jaspers on, 323
 Marxian, 230
 to the Totality of Being by Reified Art, 283
 to the Totality of Being by Knowledge, 280
 Taoism on Learning and, 323
 to Truth Overcoming Body and Desires, 332
 Hope, 8, 15, 18, 23, 24, 25, 32, 54, 64, 70, 72, 78, 93, 95, 96, 97, 103, 113, 154, 164, 178, 182, 188, 190, 191, 192, 198, 241, 243, 246, 267, 270, 276, 277, 301, 306
 Hsu, 322
 as Absolute Peacefulness, 317
 Human/s, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 31, 32, 37, 38, 43, 52, 54, 57, 78, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 117, 136, 137, 145, 149, 153, 163, 165, 168, 172, 174, 178, 180, 184, 190, 191, 193, 195, 204, 253, 269, 275, 276, 278, 278, 283, 288, 290, 338
 as Absolute Value, 263, 270
 Anti-, 70, 82, 88, 118, 166, 168, 171, 174, 284, 286, 295
 Awakening, 20, 166, 267, 281, 288
 Being Beyond Beings, 322, 323
 Brotherhood, 302
 Called Upon, 18, 20, 26, 27, 160, 166, 171, 183, 317, 320, 321, 323, 326, 339, 340
 Capital, See: Capital - Human
 in Christianity, 216
 Cold, 271
 Concept of the, 52, 53, 54, 55, 87, 92, 114, 119, 123, 133, 134, 150, 160, 161, 162, 165, 218, 262
 Condition, 150, 191, 326
 Construction/Formation of the, 30, 47, 53, 55, 59, 60, 68, 69, 85, 92, 117, 123, 124, 125, 127, 133, 134, 134, 135, 138, 139, 140, 151, 153, 160, 161, 162, 163, 165, 173, 183, 184, 211, 250, 263, 267, 268, 286, 287, 320
 Desire, 330
 Destiny, 22, 24, 164, 165, 166, 174, 183, 184, 217, 265, 216, 323, 326
 De-humanization as an Iron Cage (Weber on), 295
 De-humanization by Normalizing Education, 21, 166, 267, 286, 287
 Diasporic, See: Individual - Diasporic
 Dwelling in Meaninglessness, 161, 175, 286, 287
 Edification, 31, 166, 174, 188, 211, 218, 261, 270
 Essence of the, 161, 180, 190, 191, 216, 229, 330
 Flexible, 64
 Free, 233
 Fully-developed, 56
 de-humanizing, 12, 23, 28, 163, 267, 286
 Inhuman, 242, 286
 Interaction, 150, 151
 Isolation, See: Subject - Isolation
 Limits as, 320
 Mass, 272
 and nature, 19, 23, 25, 124, 125, 165, 186, 262, 264, 269, 272, 275, 286
 Nature of, 22, 37, 47, 93, 144, 150, 153,

- 161, 162, 180, 184, 215
 Needs, 336
 Nomadic, 31, 33, 79, 324, 325, 326
 as a Question-asking being, 325, 326
 Post-, 179
 Rational, 28, 40
 Returning to Herself/Himself, 230, 280,
 281, 288
 Rights, 66, 70, 72, 207, 293
 Solidarity, 183
 Supra-human, 7
 Unavoidable Destruction of, 329
 and World, 12, 17, 22, 23, 25, 62, 151,
 211, 279, 280, 317, 320, 327
 as a Work of Art, 275
 as the Work of the Invisible Hand of
 Reason, 320
 Humanism, 8, 9, 35, 149, 302
 anti-, 36, 168
 Critique of, 36, 80, 178
 Neo-, 216
 Tradition, 175, 184
 Hybrid/ity, 139, 140, 141, 170
- Ideal/ist, 9, 13, 18, 25, 41, 52, 53, 54, 55, 97,
 146, 157, 172, 180, 181, 198, 206, 295, 300
 Regulative, 157
- Identity, 7, 10, 22, 57, 96, 97, 98, 114, 115,
 117, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 126, 129, 132,
 177, 134, 136, 138, 139, 142, 184, 187, 202,
 219, 221, 224
 Alternative, 118
 Border-crossing, 178
 Civic, 129, 130
 Collaborative, 128
 Collective, 106, 126
 Complex, 138, 139
 Conflicting, 132
 Critical, 121, 122, 126, 127, 129, 131,
 132, 133, 138, 140
 Cultural, 134, 176
 Deconstructive/Deconstructed, 114, 177,
 178, 222
 Dystopic, 129, 130
 Emancipated, 124
 Empowered, 138
 Essential, 133
 False, 285
 Feminine, 132, 178, 187
 Fluid, 139, 176
 Heroic, 127, 128, 129, 130, 132, 139
 as Homogenous Totality, 223
 Hybrid, 139
 and Meaning-making, 137
 Modern, 134
 Multiple, 139, 178, 297
 Narrative, 137
 Non-, 122
 Normalized, 124
 Persistent, 297
 Political, 129
 Politics, 224
 Politics of, 35, 82
 Position, 127, 130
 Production of, 124, 133, 134, 135, 136,
 138, 139, 145, 164, 172, 221, 221, 222
 Rational, 138
 Re-articulation of, 136, 137, 139
 Repressed, 124
 Revolutionary, 129
 Self-, 164
 Solid, 60, 123, 206, 297
 Struggle Over, 96
 Unique, 151
 Teacher, 129, 131, 135, 140
 Thinking, 122, 133, 229, 230
 and Totality, 223
 Utopic, 129
 of Youth, 60
- Ideology, 19, 24, 25, 44, 52, 59, 73, 76, 81,
 82, 91, 96, 97, 102, 105, 108, 109, 110, 116,
 143, 165, 177, 180, 192, 230, 274, 282, 288
 Critical Perspectives on, 133, 221, 239
 Cultural, 140
 Post-colonialist, 167, 177
 Reproduction of, 52, 116
- Ideology Critique, 14, 16, 25, 52, 58, 146,
 153, 181, 189, 221, 239
 as an Ideological Construction, 221
- Ignorance, 153
 Emancipatory, 152
 Fundamental, 152
- Illusion, 188
- Imagination, 18, 23, 24, 25, 49, 93, 97, 136,
 140, 271
 Current Destruction of, 272

- Dialectical, 268
- Negative, 175
- Popular, 130
- Immanence, 8, 16, 17, 28, 32, 183, 190, 191
 - Continuum of the, 16, 20
 - Plane of, 46
 - and Transcendence, 28, 29, 160, 171, 175, 180, 190
- Imperialism, 46, 73, 78, 82, 83
- Impossibility, 143-159
 - the Experience of the, 157
- Improvisation, 22, 79, 139, 191, 327
 - Creative, 9, 18, 24, 33, 175
 - Teacher's, 139
- Improviser
 - Eternal-, 20, 24, 24, 25, 26, 30, 31, 32
- Incommensurability, 177, 180, 307
- Individual/ity, 7, 8, 9, 17, 23, 28, 30, 32, 33, 40, 52, 53, 57, 58, 62, 66, 67, 85, 86, 93, 97, 108, 115, 116, 124, 142, 144, 156, 174, 175, 187, 199, 201, 210, 213, 216, 219, 237, 257, 259, 261, 268, 272, 273, 279, 280, 284, 285, 299, 303, 305, 323, 330
 - Care for Oneself, 298
 - and Collective, 93, 133, 143, 224, 272, 285
 - and Context, 11, 12, 28, 29, 30, 54, 137, 148, 153, 154, 160, 161, 162, 171, 175, 178, 181, 183, 184, 187, 189, 205, 209, 211, 212, 213, 214, 217, 219, 222, 224, 229, 231, 234, 235, 239, 260, 261, 263, 265, 266, 267, 272, 274, 275, 276, 281, 288, 320, 321, 322, 323, 327, 328, 332, 337
 - Destruction of the, 272, 284, 334
 - Diasporic, 15, 163, 188
 - Differences, 300
 - Edification of the, 217, 222, 250, 255, 265, 266, 267, 271, 274, 275, 276, 288
 - Existence, 15
 - Freedom, 57, 288
 - as Interpreter of (imposed) Interpretation, 320
 - Life, 224, 263
 - Modern Concept of the, 222
 - Monadic, 272
 - Notion of, 133, 136, 137, 138, 188, 212, 213, 214, 215, 231, 272
 - Oppressed, 56, 220
 - vs. Society, 284
 - Spiritual, 30
 - Solidarian, 188, 273
 - Vs. Socialization in Education, 276
- Individuation
 - Principle of, 21, 280
- Individualization
 - Government of Individualization as form of Power, 212, 214, 215, 219, 224
 - and Totalisation, 212, 215, 218
- Inequality, 8, 66, 67, 90, 98, 99, 303
 - in Dialogue, 203, 339, 340
 - Reproduction of, 115, 116, 128, 145
- Injustice, 12, 13, 26, 30, 31, 89, 160, 164, 173, 188, 189, 310, 311, 330, 331
 - Reproduction of, 145
 - Truth as Resistance to, 192
- Infinite/Infinity, 7, 11, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 28, 32, 33, 163, 240
- Injury, 331
- Instrumentalization, 147, 211, 262
 - of Education, See: Education — Instrumentalization
 - of Reason, 133, 185, 263, 264, 267
 - of Social Life, 263, 264
 - of Schooling, See: Schooling — Instrumentalization
- Instrumental Rationality, 9, 16, 17, 21, 23, 61, 117, 123, 133, 166, 187, 262, 263, 265, 272, 286, 296
- Intellect, 7, 18
- Intellectual, 16, 18, 19, 31, 37, 43, 51, 80, 99, 120, 123, 124, 125, 141, 172, 176, 184, 190, 191, 200, 210, 211, 242, 263, 281, 283
 - Anti-intellectual, 10, 168, 172, 175, 281
 - Black, 135, 303
 - Critical, 184, 204, 205
 - Feminist, 176, 177
 - History, See: History — Intellectual
- Internet, 62, 63, 68
- Intimacy, 12, 16, 22, 23, 272, 283
 - Dialectical, 15
 - Diasporic, 18, 24, 26
 - Negative, 15, 23, 24
 - Nomadic, 25
 - with the Self-evidence, 16
 - Teacher-Student, 274
 - With Place, 136

- with eternity, 22
- with the cosmos, 7, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 279, 321
- with Violence, See: Violence — Intimacy
- Jewish, 7, 187, 188, 190, 191, 263, 274, 277
- Jews, 8, 191
 - and Women along History, 192
- Judaism, 8, 19, 161, 163, 190, 192, 276
 - Essence of, 160, 190, 191, 192
 - as Negative Utopia, 190
 - as Hope for Justice, 190
 - Rejection of Violence, 192
- Justice, 26, 62, 66, 68, 74, 115, 118, 119, 131, 142, 145, 146, 150, 156, 162, 190, 192, 220, 257, 263, 307, 330, 331, 335, 340
 - Critical Pedagogy and, 158, 171, 306, 307, 311
 - Distributive, 258
 - as the Experience of the Impossibility, 157
 - in Feminist Thought, 171, 174, 175
 - Impossibility of, 156, 157, 158, 159, 335
 - In Marxist Thought, 171
 - Modern Concept of, 170, 315
 - Plato on, 330
 - Postmodern Positive Concept of, 150, 314, 315
 - Unjust, 120, 311
 - and Wisdom, 331
- Knowledge, 31, 36, 37, 38, 42, 46, 54, 59, 68, 95, 97, 99, 109, 114, 115, 121, 135, 136, 148, 149, 157, 158, 163, 165, 176, 193, 194, 200, 202, 203, 210, 214, 216, 218, 239, 252, 275, 279, 280, 282, 291, 304, 308, 325, 332
 - as the Ability to Hold Speaker Positions, 340
 - Access to, 339, 340
 - Alternative, 166, 189, 275, 280, 304
 - about knowledge, 7, 36, 37, 38, 42, 234, 235, 238, 239
 - about Power/Knowledge working, 153
 - Canonical, 171, 210
 - Change in the stance of, 10, 12, 100
 - Constructivist View of, 194
 - Contingency of, 235
 - Cooperative, 101
 - Dangerous, 230
 - Depth, 291, 292
 - Didactic, 250, 243
 - Dogmatic, 227
 - Domination Trough, 295
 - Economically Useless, 99
 - and Economic Structures, 116
 - and Dominant Culture, 116
 - through Experience, 37, 193
 - Educational, 150
 - Feminine, 187, 189
 - General, 210
 - Genuine, 38
 - Humanistic-oriented, 10
 - and Human Interests, 290
 - as a Form of Capitalist Production, 75
 - about Justice, 157, 311
 - of the Marginalized and Oppressed, 176, 184, 189
 - Objective, 227, 230, 239, 307, 309
 - Official, 99, 109, 118, 169, 319
 - of the Oppressed, See: Oppression —
 - Source of Supreme knowledge
 - Personal Experience as foundation of, 185
 - Phalocentric, 170, 180
 - Phenomenal, 228, 23
 - and Power, 118, 153, 165
 - Power/Knowledge, See: Power/Knowledge
 - Pure, 154, 235
 - Reified, 89, 100, 102, 107, 207
 - Relative, 307
 - and Return to Totality, 16, 280
 - Situated, 57
 - Society, 211
 - Superior, 152, 189
 - Technological, See: Technology —
- Knowledge
 - Transcendental, 320
 - Victory Over Power, 154, 327, 328
 - Western, 172, 329, 330
- Laughter, 285, 286, 287
 - Anti-Semitic, 286
 - as Catharsis, 285
 - as Resistance, 286
- Law, 9, 11, 15, 71, 135, 177, 213, 214, 229,

- 243, 255, 285
 Abstract, 231
 International, 293
 of the Market, 281
 Natural, 227, 232, 233
 Property, 229
- Learning, 27, 31, 33, 40, 56, 61, 62, 66, 67, 69, 81, 93, 101, 116, 117, 163, 169, 194, 200, 203, 205, 240, 252, 270, 290, 292, 316, 319, 321, 322, 326
 and Alterity, 323
 and the Appearance of the Other, 323
 as the Appearance of the "Not Yet", 24, 320, 321, 323, 325
 to Care, 298
 Collective, 306
 Communities of, See: Communities — of
- Learning
 Co-operative, 76
 as a Dialogic Event, 318
 Diasporic, 15, 17, 21, 164, 174, 175, 187, 190, 324, 325, 326, 327
 as Discovery, 317
 Dislearning, 163
 as Emergence of our Inclination to Create, 321
 Enhancement of, 62, 68
 and Evocative Speech, 321, 323, 325, 326, 327
 Eurocentric, 81
 in Face of Doubt and Struggle, 238
 Feminist, 169
 Free Play of, 321
 as Freedom, 317, 328
 as Gelassenheit, 322
 Genuine, 64, 237, 238
 Im-possibility of, 323
 in and For Itself, 238
 as Imitation, 267
 as Inquiry, 318, 319, 321, 324
 as a Leap into Mystery, 321, 321, 322, 323, 326
 as Letting-be, See: Letting-be
 Lifelong, 88
 To Listen, 163
 Love of the Otherness as a Gate for, 163
 Postmodern, 220
 as Relationship with Being, 325
- Society, See: Society — Learning
 Taoism and, 323
 Teaching/Learning as a Mutual Exchange, 324, 325, 326, 327
 Webs, 62, 63
- Left, 35, 44, 72, 78, 97, 107, 110, 111, 194
 Academic, 80
 Bourgeois, 88
 Educational, 72, 74, 76, 83, 84, 88
 Liberal, 87, 88
 Populist, 109
 New, 35
 Right Coalition, 107, 108, 109, 110
- Letting Be, 317, 318, 322, 323, 326, 327
- Liberal/ism/Neoliberalism, 7, 40, 42, 43, 47, 51, 61, 63, 66, 67, 71, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 82, 83, 88, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 104, 105, 106, 107, 109, 111, 112, 113, 117, 130, 146, 197, 296
- Liberation, 35, 55, 83, 84, 88, 90, 91, 123, 142, 145, 156, 161, 168, 172, 185, 187, 194, 203, 204, 205, 245, 265, 269, 279, 280, 298, 304, 329, 336, 339
 Catholic Liberation Theology, 302
 of Consciousness, 333
 Freedom as a priory of, 288
 Genuine, 337
 Laughter as, 285, 286
 Produced by the Rules and Limits of Speech Acts, 329
 Revolutions Cannot Bring, 337
 Self-consciousness as a Trigger for, 340
- Liberty, 278, 284, 296, 302, 338
- Life, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 40, 49, 51, 52, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59, 65, 66, 69, 80, 82, 87, 95, 97, 120, 128, 135, 138, 140, 160, 172, 174, 176, 180, 191, 192, 216, 219, 222, 224, 227, 238, 251, 263, 266, 269, 279, 283, 306, 336
 Autonomous, 271, 272
 as a Call, 18, 26, 27, 28, 160, 171, 183, 326
 Cultural, 95, 298
 Ethical, 231
 Feminine as Giving Life, 191
 as a Form of Art, 25, 31
 Fragmentation of, 41
 Living-toward-the-not-yet, 9, 32, 320,

- 321, 323, 325
 Commodification of, 82, 269
 Conditions, 23, 60, 61, 153
 Critical, 126
 Cultural, 57, 298
 Democratic, 56, 69
 Disappearance of Innerlife, 272
 Dominant form of, 220
 Estranged, 228
 Experience, 61
 Feminism and, 168
 Free from Domination, 295
 Goal of, 17, 192
 Good, 29, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 64, 163, 164
 Individual, 224, 263
 Lifeworld, 143
 vs. Logic and Texts, 140
 Love of, See: Love — Life
 Meaning of, 262
 Modern, 149
 Mental, 133
 Mundane, 332
 Narrative, 126, 131
 Nature and Sustaining, 267
 Negativity as form of, 22
 Nomadic, 18, 22, 23, 25, 28, 29, 32, 183
 Non-capitalist, 92
 Ordinary, 129
 Political, 55, 56, 141, 170
 Postmodern, 65, 69, 76, 180
 as a Serious Play, 31
 Social, 47, 49, 51, 55, 56, 58, 61, 62, 75,
 77, 82, 84, 92, 263, 265, 297, 298, 305
 Story, 126
 Totality of, 269
 Worthy, 10, 16, 27, 228, 335
- Literacy, 25, 36, 50, 59, 60, 63, 64, 65, 66,
 67, 68, 290
 Computer, 64, 66
 and Global Economy, 76
 Critical, 128, 194
 Illiteracy, 290
 Information, 64
 Media, 64
 Multiple, 65, 66, 67, 68
- Literature, 278
 Loss, 329, 333, 335, 336
 Repressed Faculties and Humans Cannot
 Signify their, 335
- Love, 10, 11, 14, 17, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 132,
 161, 162, 163, 166, 175, 177, 182, 190, 191,
 226, 270, 273, 302
 Destruction of Instinctual, 270
 as the Opposite of Violence, 11, 24
 of God, 24, 162
 of Life, 14, 15, 17, 19, 24, 25, 27, 31, 33,
 160, 191
 Maternal, 271, 273
 Marx on, 19
 of Motherland, 162
 non-sentimental, 17
 of Otherness, 163, 191
 of Truth, 163
 Truth as, 13, 161
- MacWorld, 12, 21
 Magic of the Speech, 319, 320, 321
 Marginalized/Marginalization, 10, 12, 16, 58,
 66, 132, 135, 161, 169, 189, 197 273, 286,
 300, 310, 338
 Ethnocentrism of the, 177
 Self-evidence of the, 16, 174, 176, 184,
 189
- Marginality, 57
 Marxism, 15, 35, 39, 40, 41, 52, 58, 59, 72,
 80, 81, 84, 118, 119, 153, 204, 229, 230, 296,
 302, 329, 332, 336, 337, 339
 Anti-, 44, 83
 Critique of, 296, 297
 Deleuzian, 48
 and Education, See: Education — Marx-
 ist
 Foucault and, 188, 296
 Neo-, 44, 114, 115, 146, 302
 Post-, 83, 176
 Revolutionary, 76, 88
- Material/ism, 30, 32, 46, 48, 59, 60, 66, 79,
 95, 103, 118, 135, 136, 161, 172, 192, 235,
 263, 266, 278, 288, 332, 333
 Conditions, 123, 145, 165, 171, 177, 190,
 333, 334
 Historical, 78, 84
 and Idealism, 227
 and Moral, 270
- Matrix, 134, 135, 161, 172, 179, 217
 Omnipotence of the, 174

- and Phallogocentrism, 180
- Meaning, 8, 9, 12, 17, 18, 24, 29, 32, 56, 76, 89, 96, 97, 106, 122, 134, 135, 136, 138, 140, 141, 148, 160, 162, 170, 177, 180, 181, 184, 187, 229, 262, 269, 281, 292, 293, 294, 297, 298, 307, 321, 325, 326, 327
 - Aesthetic, 278
 - Beyond Language, 160, 163, 271, 307, 318, 320, 321, 322, 323, 325
 - Critical Concept of, 168, 193
 - in Diasporic Philosophy, 175
 - and Damage, 330
 - Deleuze on, 181
 - Exiled, 190
 - of “Good” and “Evil”, 289
 - and the Good, 330
 - of Purification, 278
 - Repositioning, 141
 - Shifting, 169
 - Superior, 280
- Meaninglessness, 8, 9, 10, 14, 17, 18, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 79, 160, 162, 164, 177, 181, 183, 190
 - Affluence of, 16, 29
 - Dwelling in, 161, 175
- Messianic/Messianism, 70, 128, 168, 180, 191
 - Absence of, 192
 - Deleuzian, 181
 - without a Messiah, 164
 - Impulse, 14, 170
 - Postmodern, 180
 - Time, 11, 163
- Metaphysic, 8, 32, 70, 89, 91, 149, 172, 175, 189, 216, 235, 240, 322, 333,
 - Metaphysical violence, 11, 18, 25, 161, 165, 179
- Mimesis/Mimetic, 261, 267, 268, 270, 273
 - Breaking the Borders of the Subject, 269
 - Transformation of, 268
 - and Undifferentiated Relation to Nature, 269
- Mind, 15, 45, 47, 53, 238, 264, 274
 - Critical, 304
- Minorities, 12, 72, 81, 132
- Modern/ity, 8, 9, 47, 100, 266
- Modern/ism, 9, 29, 44, 46, 57, 60, 62, 63, 67, 79, 123, 149, 149, 169, 172, 185, 211, 216, 218, 222, 262, 274, 275, 279, 314, 315
 - Crisis of, 7, 9
 - of Critical Pedagogy, 140
 - Destiny, 170
 - Didactics, 250
 - Emancipation, 9, 15
 - Hierarchies, 230
 - Identity, See: Identity — Modern
 - Philosophy, See: Philosophy — Modern and Postmodernism, 147, 148, Pre-, 33, 148
 - Private Property, 233
 - Reality, 33, 42, 61, 149, 209, 226, 314
 - Schooling, 298
 - Society, 212, 215, 227, 230, 268, 312, 313
 - Science, 149, 266
 - Subject, 60, 125, 144, 187, 210, 212, 215, 221
 - Technology, See: Technology — Modern
 - Thought, 7, 57, 230, 315
 - World, 238
- Modernization, 95, 96, 98, 101, 106, 107, 109, 110, 262, 263, 264, 265
 - Conservative, 95, 96, 98, 101, 106, 107, 109, 110, 111, 113
- Moment, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 47, 59, 69, 119, 161, 163, 165, 187, 190, 191, 192, 212, 216, 218, 285, 324
 - Apollonian, 280
 - Capitalist, 174
 - of Education, 239
 - Ethical, 28
 - Historical, See: Historical — Moment as Home, 192
 - Infinity of, 32
 - and Materialism, 270
 - Negative, 285
 - of Provocation, 321
 - of Reconciliation, 240
 - as the Veil of Being, 165, 322
 - Totality of the, 9, 19, 22, 25, 26, 322
- Moral, 7, 28, 42, 51, 65, 70, 71, 108, 113, 124, 135, 186, 188, 191, 241, 243, 244, 254, 256, 257, 259, 263, 264, 270, 298, 307, 310, 312, 313, 314, 316, 329, 336, 339, 340
 - Coexistence, 165

- Diasporic, 24, 26
 Disability, 339
 Feeling, 270
 Hegemonic, 26
 "I", 170, 192
 Immoral, 26, 283
 Judgment, 164, 311
 Morality of Morality, 236
 Relativism, 315
 Struggle, 164
 Subject, 182, 271
 Superiority, 42, 312
 Unification of Reason and, 337, 338
 Multicultural/ism, 7, 9, 12, 21, 49, 50, 57, 58, 59, 66, 68, 80, 81, 105, 118, 145, 156, 178, 197, 201, 226, 233, 234, 300, 310
 Multimedia, 65, 66, 68
 Music, 32, 60, 136, 172, 278, 283, 318
 Cosmic, 28, 32
 of Tanathus, 172
 Mystery, 23, 213, 321, 322, 323
 Myth, 23, 71, 125, 128, 131, 132, 133, 175, 186, 189, 195, 240
 Art as Resistance to the Mythical Threat, 282
 Enlightenment and, 265
 as Enlightenment, 240, 265
 Tragic, 280
 Mytopoetic
 Voice, 318
 Narrative/s, 9, 81, 82, 125, 126, 130, 131, 132, 140, 185
 Competing, 137, 138
 Constructing the Self, 137
 Construction, 132
 Counternarrative, 48
 Dangerous, 230
 Grand, 308
 Identity, 137
 Master, 125, 300
 Meta-, 44, 81, 84, 118, 129, 170, 172, 307, 308, 310
 Partial, 174
 and Place, 136
 Reformulation of, 133
 of Utopia, 206
 Nation/al, 8, 26, 46, 68, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76, 84, 87, 97, 104, 105, 110, 141, 148, 172, 219, 261, 267, 301, 302
 Curricula, 99
 Tests and Standards, 64, 75, 77, 98, 99, 102, 109
 Nature/Natural, 9, 17, 22, 23, 124, 125, 165, 186, 262, 264
 Art Invading Nature, 280
 Beginnings (Illusion of), 234
 Diasporic Philosophy and, 15, 17
 Enslaving, 22, 23, 233, 265, 266, 288, 317
 Enslaved by, 265, 317
 Estrangement from, 165, 233
 Harmonious, 17
 and human/inty, 16, 19, 22, 23
 of Human, See: Human — Nature of
 Law, See: Law — Natural
 and Mimesis, 269
 Naturalistic Fallacy, 313
 Natural Resources, 329
 Reconciliation between Culture and, 125, Relation, 233
 Repression of Inner, 269
 and Science, 141, 266
 Science, 233
 Socially Mediated, 275
 Sustaining Life and Imitation of, 267
 as standing reserve, 17, 22, 23
 of Things, 119
 Nazism, 143, 187, 313
 Negation, 238
 Negative Dialectics, See: Dialectics — Negative
 Negative Theology, 14, 190
 Negative Schizophrenia, 44
 Net, 179
 and Connectionism, 180
 Nihilism, 8, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 25, 26, 28, 146, 174, 184, 268
 Nirvana, 16, 22, 24
 Nomadic/Nomadism, 16, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 30, 32, 79, 182, 324, 325, 326
 Existence, 27, 28, 31, 32, 174, 183
 Postmodern, 170
 Normalizing Education, 12, 18, 19, 20, 22, 28, 29, 31, 33, 134, 160, 161, 164, 165
 as Challenged by Postmodern Feminist

- Critical Pedagogy, 166
 Critical Pedagogy as, See: Critical Pedagogy — Normalizing Education
 as De-humanization, 166
 Overcoming, 160
 as Violence, 160, 161, 171
- Nothing/ness, 9, 16, 17, 18, 22, 141, 182, 317, 318, 321, 322, 323, 326, 327
 Being held Out into, 322
 and Being, 21, 321, 322
 Exile of, 191
 Human's Futile Coming and Going from
- Nothingness to Nothingness, 323
 Revelation of the, 322, 326
 Wu-i-wu, 318, 320, 321, 322
- Object/ive/Objectivity, 17, 26, 47, 92, 93, 94, 122, 214, 227, 228, 229, 232, 234, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 242, 250, 254, 271, 291, 307, 332
 Critical Pedagogy and, 231, 232, 233, 234
 of Contingency, 229
 of Desire, 284
 in Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche, 236, 237
 Knowledge, See: Knowledge — Objective
- Phallogocentric quest for, 180
 the Other as an, 324
 Reason, See: Reason — Objective
 Social Relations re-forming the Object, 227
 the Subject as an Object of Manipulations, 166, 211, 212, 213, 214
 the Self as an, 123, 162
 as Subjectivity's Subjectivity, 237, 317
 as a Mere Thing in critical Pedagogy, 233, 237
 of Thought, 290, 291, 292, 293, 298
 Tragic, 238
 Truth, 122, 234, 309, 332
 Unity of Word and, 268
 World, 309
- Objectification, 275
 Objectivism, 148, 227
 and Postmodernism, See: Postmodernism — Objectivism
- Omnipotence, 9, 12, 29, 172, 174, 188
 of Facts, 191
- Ontology/Ontological, 8, 18, 22, 28, 79, 89, 91, 141, 153, 161, 162, 174, 175, 186, 190, 321, 333
- Openness, 11, 17, 22, 27, 32, 92, 93, 161, 180, 197, 200, 202, 230, 317, 321, 325, 327
- Oppression, 9, 10, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20, 24, 35, 38, 41, 52, 56, 58, 63, 65, 77, 79, 82, 91, 92, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 129, 130, 131, 139, 164, 168, 171, 173, 174, 180, 181, 184, 193, 194, 200, 201, 205, 214, 237, 240, 275, 281, 285, 301, 303, 304, 310, 323, 331, 333, 335, 336
 as Being Enslaved to Reconstitute Disability to recognize Damage 337
 Conquest of Nature and Oppression of Humans, 288, 317
 Critique of Freire's Concept of, 239
 Modern vs. Postmodern Critique of, 209
 as Reflecting the Longings of the Oppressed and the Plight of Nature, 268
 as a Source of Supreme Knowledge, 176, 189, 205
- Optimism, 14, 25, 48, 65, 78, 129, 140, 184, 187, 188, 241, 245, 296
- Other, 7, 8, 12, 16, 17, 23, 24, 26, 29, 33, 45, 57, 66, 68, 107, 110, 131, 138, 157, 159, 162, 163, 164, 180, 181, 187, 191, 198, 201, 202, 213, 219, 270, 271, 324, 335, 336, 340
 Absence of the, 339
 Alterity of the, 323, 327
 as a Fellow-human, 25, 27, 191, 270, 316
 One/I Against the, 324
 as an Object, 324
 Redeeming/Educating/Exiling/Destroying/Re-educating the, 165, 339, 340
 Values of the, 166
- Otherness, 7, 17, 26, 29, 33, 57, 157, 163, 180, 181, 187, 191, 202, 219, 222, 270,
 Absolute, 219
 Destruction of the, 165
 of the "I", 33, 165
 Infinite, 163
 Love of, 163
 of the Subject stolen by Normalizing Education, 166
 of Women and Jews along History of Culture, 192

- Overcoming, 22, 28, 170, 173, 181, 229, 230, 237, 239, 267, 296, 320
 the Body, 332
 of the Chaotic Element in Humans, 271
 Desires and Needs as Pre-condition for Human Liberation, 335
 Dichotomy between Reconstruction and Deconstruction, 41
 Dichotomy between Transcendence and Immanence, 187
 the is/ought Dichotomy, 296
 the Logic of Politics, 30
 the Truth of Not-overcoming, 237
 in the Zen Tradition, 318
- Patriarchal/Patriarchalism, 179, 180, 191
 Non-western, 179
 Western, 179
- Patriotism, 89
- Peace, 14, 47, 131, 161, 162, 278, 302
 Pacification of the Other, 288
 Peaceful/ness, 149, 177, 261, 271, 317
 and Truth, 161
- Pedagogy, 10, 25, 35, 36, 48, 51, 52, 53, 56, 57, 60, 63, 65, 68, 69, 72, 83, 90, 115, 122, 123, 145, 152, 183, 195, 208, 233, 241, 243, 244, 258, 260, 289
 Adorno on, 241, 260
 Affirmative Action, 198
 Alternative, 50, 52, 58, 69, 90
 Anti-western-colonialist, 176, 179
 Civic, 254
 Constructivist, 246
 Context, 196
 Critical, See: Critical Pedagogy
 Critic of, 243
 Dialogical, 56, 196, 203
 Emancipatory, 12, 56, 64, 193
 Existentialist, 241
 Feminist, 167, 168, 169, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 185
 Feminist and Critical Pedagogy, 171, 176, 177, 178, 185, 193
 Freirean, 200
 Geisteswissenschaftliche Paedagogik, 143, 144
 and Globalization, See: Education — Globalization
- Humanist, 35
 Libertarian, 18, 35, 90, 184, 193
 Marxist, 232
 Merging to the Capitalist Productive Process, 74, 77, 78
 Multiple, 65
 Negative Theory of, 245, 246, 247, 260
 of the Oppressed, 35, 52, 55, 56, 176, 205, 302
 Positive (Critical) Pedagogy, 245
 as Praxis, 232
 Post-critical, 167, 169, 170, 175, 177, 178, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185
 Post-critical Feminist, 183, 184
 Post-feminist, 169, 181
 Postmodern, 147, 181, 183, 240, 298
 Postmodern Feminist, 172, 174, 175, 178, 184, 190, 192
 of Postulates, 244
 Practical, 241, 246, 299
 Radical, 61, 62, 66, 67, 68, 81, 83, 84, 89, 90, 185, 313
 Self-enlightenment of, 243
 Socratic, 193, 200, 204, 207
 Untruth of, 242
- Phallogentrism, 170, 178, 179, 180
 Post-phallic, 179
- Phenomenology, 122, 123, 226, 227, 228, 236, 240
- Philosophy/Philosophical, 8, 11, 13, 18, 27, 29, 45, 46, 52, 58, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 135, 146, 147, 168, 171, 187, 194, 218, 229, 231, 232, 234, 262, 278, 308, 325, 338, 340
 Aim of, 227, 268, 332
 as the Art of Forming Concepts, 45, 46
 as Art of life, 27
 Ancient, 283
 Classical, 50, 52, 53, 56
 Concept of, 46, 161
 Context, See: Context — Philosophical
 as the Creation of Concepts, 46
 Critical, 9, 20, 36, 37, 38, 43, 45, 115, 184, 236, 238
 Critique of Critique, 236
 of Critical Pedagogy, See: Critical Pedagogy - Philosophy
 and Suspension of Desires, 334
 Diasporic, See: Diasporic Philosophy

- Educational, 9, 20, 29, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 64, 88, 136, 167, 180, 181, 182, 183, 190, 196, 232, 239, 299,
 - Feminist, 168, 182, 190
 - and Feminist Educational Discourse, 168, 172, 183
 - French, 329
 - Foundationalist, 308
 - History of, 50
 - Homelessness, 164
 - Illegitimate, 319
 - Legitimate, 319
 - Life Philosophy, 16
 - Modern, 149
 - Platonic, 334
 - as Poetic Thinking, 325
 - as a Project of Destroying Generality and Particularity, 181
 - Political, 54
 - Postmodern, 167, 178
 - PreSocratic, 318
 - Marxist, 55, 227
 - Moral, 307
 - of Religion, 227
 - of the Subject, 36, 44
 - Tradition, 319
 - as Transcendence, 181
 - Western, 161, 165, 333
- Philosophical Pessimism, 14, 183, 187
- Place, 135, 136, 138, 140, 141, 151, 155, 160, 194, 243, 286, 320, 321, 322, 327
 - as a Construct, 136
 - Critique of, 141
 - Higher, 332
 - and Identity, 136
 - No-, 141
 - Outside the System, 154, 169
 - the Topos of our Wandering as Learners, 326
- Platonic/Platonism, 161, 162, 330, 331, 332, 334, 336, 340
- Play, 18, 25, 29, 31, 119, 172, 259, 306
 - of Differences, 181
 - Freedom of Play and Discovery, 317, 320, 321
 - of Possibility, 321,
- Pleasure, 17, 97, 131, 132, 138, 140, 165, 174, 181, 183, 189, 229, 278, 279, 280, 283, 285, 286, 331
- Pluralism, 24, 41, 42, 230, 312, 313, 319, 326
 - Critical, 313
- Poetic/al, 10, 24, 30
- Poet/ic, 45, 318, 319
 - Plato on, 319
 - Thinking, 325
- Poetry, 11, 18, 25, 28, 79, 278, 279, 320
 - Dialectical, 319
- Poiesis, 24, 25, 168
- Politic/al, 8, 12, 13, 18, 19, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 39, 40, 41, 42, 51, 54, 55, 57, 68, 59, 61, 62, 70, 72, 76, 78, 79, 82, 83, 88, 96, 97, 104, 106, 107, 110, 113, 114, 115, 117, 119, 120, 121, 128, 129, 130, 144, 149, 152, 168, 171, 177, 184, 201, 205, 226, 232, 243, 264, 289, 290, 293, 294, 299, 313, 315
 - Action, 131, 138
 - Agenda of the Teacher, 200
 - Apolitical, 30, 31, 81
 - Abyss between the Ethical and the, 26, 27, 30, 31
 - Bridge between the Ethical and the, 27, 31
 - Context, 151
 - De-politization of Education by Feminists, 168, 183
 - De-politization of Bureaucratic Rationality, 296
 - Determination of Natural Beginning, 234
 - Economy, 52
 - Education, See: Education - Political
 - Feminist, See: Feminism - Politics
 - Homelessness, 164
 - of Identity, See: Identity — Politics of
 - Involvement, 30, 79, 156
 - Logic of the, 30
 - Order, 209, 302
 - Post-, 114
 - of Postmodernism, See: Postmodernism
 - Politics,
 - Praxis, See: Praxis — Political
 - Self-Consciousness, 228
 - Solidarity, See: Solidarity — Political
 - Violence, See: Violence — Political
- Pornography, 284
- Postcolonial/ism, 9, 12, 13, 37, 38, 41, 115, 161, 167, 177, 206, 329

- and Critical Pedagogy, 145
- Feminist, 168, 177
- Freire's Work as a Postcolonial Text, 167, and Postmodern Feminist Critical Pedagogy, 167, 168,
 - Radical, 167
- Postindustrial, 61, 62, 63
- Postmodern/ism, 7, 9, 13, 25, 28, 29, 33, 35, 42, 43, 46, 48, 59, 61, 65, 76, 78, 79, 81, 121, 130, 137, 139, 141, 143, 145, 146, 156, 168, 179, 181, 183, 187, 189, 209, 221, 231, 239, 300, 301, 306, 307, 308, 316
 - and Absolute, 148
 - Aims of, 148, 149, 308, 309
 - Concept of Bildung, 210
 - Concept of Reason, 310, 315
 - Context, 139, 179, 230
 - and Contingency of Values, 146, 307, 308
 - and Critical Pedagogy, See: Critical Pedagogy — Postmodernism
 - Critics of, 149
 - and Education, See: Education — Postmodern
 - Dystopics, 129
 - Elitism of, 167
 - and Enlightenment, 148, 306, 308, 313, 314, 315
 - Ethics of, 147, 148, 149, 150, 157, 158, 307, 310
 - Feminism and, See: Feminism — Postmodernism
 - Feminist Critical Pedagogy, See: Critical Pedagogy — Postmodern Feminist CP
 - Feminist Critical Pedagogy as Normalizing Education, 160, 161, 164
 - "Hard", 168, 169, 175, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183
 - "I", 172
 - as a Junk Theory, 147
 - and Knowledge, 148, 315
 - and Master Narratives, 300
 - Messianism, 180
 - and Modernism, 147, 314, 315
 - and Moral, 147
 - and Nihilism, 146, 147, 148
 - Nomadism, See: Nomadism — Postmodern
 - Pedagogy, See: Pedagogy — Postmodern Perspectives, 137
 - Politics of, 147, 148, 149, 158
 - Pessimism, 182
 - and Postcolonialism, 167
 - and Objectivism, 148, 309, 310
 - Radical, 59
 - and Relativism, 146, 147, 148, 149, 180, 307, 308, 310,
 - "Soft", 167, 169, 179, 181, 183,
 - Support of Neoliberal Politics, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 156
 - and Truth, 148, 172, 307, 308, 319, 310, 314, 315
 - and Universalism, 148, 172, 307, 308, 309, 310
 - Poststructuralism (French Theory), 13, 35, 36, 38, 44, 45, 46, 47, 50, 51, 57, 58, 76, 114, 119, 122, 138, 141, 147, 205, 206, 311, 329
 - Critical, 57, 115, 119
 - Feminist, 138, 139
 - Support of Neoliberal Politics, 76, 77, 81
 - Theory of the Self, 133, 291
 - Power, 8, 12, 14, 17, 25, 46, 54, 70, 81, 82, 94, 96, 99, 104, 105, 114, 115, 119, 121, 122, 128, 129, 131, 135, 150, 155, 156, 160, 170, 183, 186, 193, 201, 202, 213, 216, 237, 251, 265, 269, 274, 282, 285, 286, 308, 313, 333
 - Apparatus, 212, 218
 - Asymmetrical, 199, 203
 - and Bildung, 212, 215
 - Bio-power, 214, 215
 - Control, 215
 - Creative, 172
 - Cultural, 99, 115, 116, 138
 - Discipline, 215
 - Economic, 77, 97, 99, 116, 138
 - Emancipatory, 301, 309
 - Elite, 205
 - Everywhere, 154
 - Exposure of, 306
 - as a Function Top Down, 116
 - Game, 161, 173, 187, 192
 - Give Away, 139
 - Government of Individualization as a form of, 212
 - Investigating, 128, 155
 - and Knowledge, 118, 134, 140, 153, 162

- Power/Knowledge, 154, 155, 162, 216
- Labor, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 229
 - as the Opposite of Freedom, 213
 - Operates, 140, 153-155
 - Pastoral, 214, 215, 216, 217
 - Patriarchal, 177, 179
 - People's, 303, 304
 - Political, 77, 97, 116, 214, 312
 - Powerlessness, 243, 256, 257, 280, 287, 288
 - as Productive Technique and Mechanism, 213
 - Relations, 15, 20, 30, 32, 99, 112, 119, 124, 134, 136, 138, 145, 154, 162, 163, 173, 175, 185, 191, 201, 205, 213, 214, 216, 329, 338, 339
 - as Relations, 213, 214, 295
 - as Repressive force (Critique of), 213
 - Social, 90
 - Spiritual, 174
 - Structures, 133, 184
 - and Subject, 212, 229, 246, 267
 - of the Subject as an Agent, 117, 153
 - Structures of, 201, 202
 - of the Teacher, 119, 138
 - Thanatus as a Quest for, See: Thanatus —
- Quest for Power
 - And Truth, 162
 - Vital, 92, 93
 - Will to, 172, 190, 236
 - Wisdom, 331
 - Worker's, 303
- Practice, 52, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 63, 65, 74, 75, 77, 80, 83, 84, 93, 97, 99, 104, 111, 114, 115, 117, 121, 122, 123, 133, 139, 161, 170, 207, 216, 241, 242, 243, 245, 246, 248, 257, 290, 296, 304, 311, 312
 - Capitalist, 161
 - Counter-, 155
 - Educational, 145, 150, 156, 169, 183, 194, 208, 218, 228, 239, 242, 260, 263, 264, 270, 276, 277
 - Ethical, 141, 144
 - Micro, 122
 - New Critical, 155, 246
 - Occasional, 133
 - School, 142
 - and Theory, 296, 314
 - of Transgression, 159
- Pragmatism, 22, 36, 41, 42, 44, 47, 50, 51, 56, 58, 175, 204, 311, 312
 - Neo-, 147
- Praxis, 8, 15, 20, 35, 136, 188, 205, 207, 222, 332, 333
 - Bureaucratic Rationality as an Alternative to, 296
 - Counter-praxis to Capital, 333
 - and De-subjectivation, 224
 - Educational, 168, 335, 337
 - Pedagogy of Critical Pedagogy as, 232
 - Political, 228
 - Revolutionary, 78, 83, 84, 89, 93
 - Socially Transformative, 194
 - and Theory, 227
 - Transformative, 92
- Private Property, 232, 233
- Problematisation, 291, 292, 293, 294, 298
- Production, 29, 52, 63, 72, 73, 117, 118, 226, 227, 304, 333
 - Capitalist, 93, 130, 177
 - of the Human, 30, 33, 55, 60, 68, 69, 77, 92, 116, 117, 123, 124, 125, 126, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 144, 151, 153, 160, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 171, 173, 174, 183, 187, 188, 189, 209, 211, 212, 214, 219, 224, 250, 263, 265, 267, 268, 283, 297, 320
 - of the Critical Thinker, 124, 263
 - of Identity, 124, 125, 126, 127, 133, 134, 138, 164, 224
 - Knowledge, See: Knowledge — Production of
 - of Labor Power, 89, 90, 91
 - Material, 55
 - Means of, 77
 - of a Rational Individual, 144
 - Relations of, 334, 335
 - of Self Which is not Sustained by Power Apparatus, 224
 - of Subjectivity, 166, 265
 - of Totality, 170
 - of Truths, 29, 189
 - of the Form of Universality, 226
 - of Values, 29, 69, 84, 162, 189
 - Productivity/Productivization, 11, 20, 22, 27, 67, 68, 136, 160, 187, 283

- of Conflict, 288
 - of the Invisible Hand of Reason, 320
 - of Power, 214
 - Repressive, 288
 - Societal, 260
 - of Violence, 160, 192
- Progress/Progressive, 8, 9, 16, 31, 33, 56, 58, 60, 61, 62, 65, 67, 74, 78, 80, 81, 91, 99, 100, 101, 105, 107, 108, 109, 111, 112, 115, 135, 161, 163, 164, 184, 186, 194, 195, 206, 209, 217, 264, 265, 266, 274, 282, 289, 309, 310, 315
- Providence, 191
- Pupil/Student, 16, 100, 101, 102, 111, 112, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 123, 124, 125, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 134, 138, 140, 151, 152, 169, 171, 174, 175, 194, 196, 200, 228, 229, 231, 232, 233, 238, 239, 240, 242, 243, 246, 247, 248, 249, 252, 253, 255, 259, 274, 276, 277, 301, 301, 303, 306, 327, 328, 335, 336, 337
 - Autonomy of the, 256, 257, 259, 276, 333, 336
 - Black, 305
 - Coldness, 257
 - Emancipation of, 246, 335
 - as Inwardness of Truth, 238
 - as an Occasion for the Teacher to Understand Himself, 239
 - as Objects of Education, 242
 - as Untruth of Overcoming, 239
 - as Eternally Not Known to the Teacher, 240, 336
 - Struggle, 300, 301, 302, 303, 305, 306, 336
- Purgation, 280, 282, 283
- Purification, 278, 283

- Queer Theories, 9, 12, 13
- Quality Control of Teaching, 64, 75, 77

- Race/Racist, 12, 26, 28, 35, 41, 49, 50, 51, 57, 58, 67, 78, 95, 99, 105, 109, 118, 139, 174, 176, 201, 303, 305, 314
 - and Critical Pedagogy, 78, 81, 87, 118, 145, 167, 169, 171, 302
- Radical, 12, 13, 14, 15, 36, 40, 50, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 66, 67, 72, 78, 83, 89, 91, 94, 115, 121, 139, 174, 185, 193, 216, 228, 243, 262, 288, 326
 - Alienation, 223
 - Change, 135, 336
 - Constructivism, 218
 - Critique, 61, 146
 - Democracy, See: Radical Democracy
 - Differences, see: Difference — Radical
 - Education, See: Education — Radical
 - Empiricism, 181
 - Equality, 110
 - Pedagogy, See: Pedagogy — Radical
 - Political Trajectories, 80, 117
 - Self-critique, 152
 - Skepticism, 141
 - Teacher, See: Teacher — Radical
 - Undecidability, 158
- Rational/ity, 8, 17, 26, 28, 36, 42, 60, 117, 123, 124, 130, 138, 140, 164, 172, 174, 183, 186, 187, 209, 213, 221, 261, 262, 270, 285, 295, 300, 308, 309, 310, 311, 330
 - Action, 267, 270, 330
 - Autonomy and, 144, 266, 274
 - and Bureaucracy, 295, 296
 - Control, 270
 - Critical, 309
 - Defending, 301, 313
 - Genuine, 262
 - Individual, 144
 - Impossibility of Rational Critique, 295
 - Instrumental, See: Instrumental Rationality
 - Irrational, 18, 148, 166, 186, 262, 264, 265, 283, 285
 - Irrational Commitment to, 314, 315
 - Objectivist, 296
 - Pre-, 170, 192
 - Self, See: Self — Rational
 - Libidinal, 125
 - as Relative to Time and Space, 308
 - Subjectivity, 221, 312, 313
 - Technological, See: Technological Rationality
 - Universal, 306
- Rationalization, 40, 116, 250,
 - Market-oriented Rationalization of Education, 75
- Reality/Realities, 8, 9, 10, 20, 28, 32, 33, 41,

- 57, 95, 96, 105, 110, 113, 117, 121, 137, 146, 167, 170, 183, 186, 190, 192, 207, 231, 243, 246, 248, 274, 275, 279, 282, 288
- Antagonistic, 283
 - and Appearance, 141, 165, 274, 280, 319, 322, 323
 - as Concealment, 161
 - Dwelling-in-Reality, 161, 283
 - Fixed, 141
 - Marxist Perception of, 334
 - Multiple, 138, 307
 - and Pre-determination of Emancipation, 230, 234, 235
 - Present, 141
 - Thinking as, 227
 - True, 280
 - TV, 286
- Reason, 37, 40, 41, 47, 48, 51, 52, 57, 95, 96, 120, 123, 175, 185, 209, 213, 221, 275, 278, 285, 300, 301, 308, 309, 311, 312, 332, 333, 337, 338
- Abstract, 235
 - Abyss Between Desires and, 336
 - Appropriated from Desires, 336
 - Communicative, 42, 295
 - Critical, 37, 124, 165, 263
 - Critique of impure, 41, 312
 - Culture-bound, 313
 - Defending, 301, 312, 313
 - Detranscendentalizing, 40, 311
 - Eclipse of, 267, 309
 - Education as a Junction Between Moral and, 339
 - Emancipatory, 309
 - Enabling Transcendence, 162, 338
 - End of, 262, 301, 313
 - and Existence, 123, 320
 - Instrumental, See: Instrumental Reason
 - Invisible Hand of, 320
 - Irrational Faith in, 314, 315
 - Limits of, 311, 312, 313
 - Objective, 166, 168, 186, 262, 332
 - the Other Side of, 40, 47, 48
 - Postmodern Skepticisms of, 301
 - Pure, 38
 - Practical, 270
 - Realization of, 40
 - and the Reflective Subject, 123, 269
 - Situated, 57, 312, 313
 - Subjective, 262, 263, 295
 - Transcendental aspects of, 313
- Reasoning, 289, 313, 330, 337
- Reasonable, 312
- Disagreements, 311, 312
 - Force, 293, 294
- Recognition, 138
- as a Struggle, 223
- Redemption, 9, 11, 14, 16, 21, 22, 54, 163, 165, 180, 186, 187, 188, 197, 280
- Reflection, 10, 20, 22, 27, 29, 30, 37, 39, 42, 45, 51, 52, 55, 57, 61, 83, 93, 119, 131, 136, 143, 145, 164, 173, 176, 181, 208, 210, 225, 234, 236, 238, 241, 243, 263, 269, 312
- Critical, 146, 149, 153, 187, 205, 210, 235, 237
 - Diasporic, 175
 - Self-reflection, 30, 33, 38, 89, 92
 - on Society, 128, 187
 - upon our Limits, 154
 - and Transcendence, 162, 269, 288
- Reflexive Turn, 36, 37, 38, 57
- Refusal, 10, 15, 17, 20, 171
- Reification, 12, 25, 82, 89, 90, 91, 134, 179, 263, 264, 269
- of Culture, 281
 - of Cultural Critique, 14, 43
 - of Knowledge, 89, 207, 257
- Relativism, 17, 22, 25, 79, 148, 154, 158, 180, 185, 226, 251, 307, 308, 310, 315
- and Postmodernism, See: Postmodernism
 - Relativism
- Religious/Religiosity, 10, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 51, 79, 95, 99, 100, 106, 107, 118, 134, 190, 191, 232
- anti-, 106
- Represent/ation, 11, 23, 25, 32, 44, 74, 80, 119, 133, 164, 165, 193, 228, 292, 297,
- Misrepresentation, 184, 227
- Repression, 124, 129, 171, 213, 214, 217
- Reproduction, 9, 25, 54, 56, 63, 115, 116, 117, 209, 241
- Critique of Theories of, 145
 - of the Culture Industry, 281, 282
 - of the Hegemonic Order, See: Hegemony
 - Reproduction
 - of Suffering, 173

- Social, See: Social — Reproduction
 Symbolic, See: Symbolic — Reproduction
- Resistance, 10, 16, 22, 27, 47, 78, 87, 88, 90, 93, 115, 117, 118, 136, 138, 139, 142, 151, 163, 171, 174, 176, 181, 182, 183, 203, 204, 205, 212, 250, 256, 264, 283, 286, 288, 301, 305, 338
 Laughter as, 286
 as a Manifestation of Truth, 189
 of the Students with Coldness Against Coldness, 257
 True Art as, 282
- Responsibility, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 158, 164, 168, 170, 174, 181, 182, 191, 226, 293, 310
 Diasporic, 22, 26, 29, 30, 32, 33, 160, 192
 Global, 22
 Irresponsibility, 26
- Respond-ability, 27, 30, 31, 32, 339, 340
- Response, 18, 21, 26, 27, 30, 31, 34, 183, 187, 318, 320, 321, 327
 Responding the Call of Being, 18, 26, 27, 28, 31, 160, 171, 182, 183, 320, 326, 327, 339
- Response-ability, 16, 17, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 339, 340
- Revolution/ary, 8, 14, 20, 30, 49, 61, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 83, 84, 88, 89, 92, 93, 114, 117, 120, 122, 124, 127, 143, 205, 231, 284, 334, 336, 337, 339
 Consciousness, 239
 Critical, 126, 132
 Education in a non-Marxist sense, 334
 Free Market Revolution, 73
 Identity, See: Identity — Revolutionary Marxist, 334
 Praxis More Important than Understanding, 229
- Rhizome/Rhizomatic, 182, 183
 Creation, 182
 Existence, 182
- Salvation, 14, 15, 18, 22, 32, 215, 276
- Same, 166, 267, 269, 334
- Scepticism, 152, 306, 307, 308, 309, 314
- School, 52, 60, 62, 67, 72, 80, 84, 94, 98, 99, 100, 101, 104, 106, 108, 110, 115, 116, 128, 133, 136, 138, 142, 241, 244, 245, 246, 251, 254, 255, 259, 268, 269, 274, 293, 302, 306, 308
 Since 17th Century, 250
 Afrocentric, 118
 Aims of, 77, 96, 118
 Charter, 110
 Citizen, 105
 Coldness of, 257
 Commercialization of, 281
 Culture, 81, 138
 and Big Corporations, 74, 75, 77, 78, 108, 109, 246, 247
 Democratic, 111
 Educational Potential, 257
 and the Ideal of Emancipation Today, 246
 of Marginalized groups, 118
 Negative Pedagogy and, 247
 Power/Knowledge at, 140
 Progressive, 101
 Public, 107, 108, 112, 117, 293
 Religious, 106, 107
 Resistance, 301, 302, 305
 and Society, 288
 and Social/Cultural Reproduction, 116, 134, 302
 State, 293, 294
 and Reproduction of Inequality, 116
 and Self-formation, 139
- Schooling, 56, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 69, 87, 100, 102, 110, 114, 251, 252, 254, 274, 319
 Critical Educators and, 114, 120, 243, 244, 245, 246
 Mass, 298
 Modern, 298
 Public, 250
 Instrumentalization of, 143
 Restructured by Business, 75, 76, 77, 84
 Reproductive, 117
 as a Revolutionary Alternative, 78, 84
 Social Functions of, 256
 Transformation of, 65, 67
- Science/Scientific, 8, 47, 48, 62, 63, 81, 119, 135, 172, 234, 252, 266, 295, 308, 325
 Critique of, 246, 295, 296
 and Global Economy, 76
 Human, 308

- Modern, See: Modern — Science
 Natural, 233, 304
 and Nature, 141
- Scientification of Education and the Destruction of Love, 270
- Self, 23, 26, 29, 33, 45, 121, 122, 123, 125, 151, 162, 178, 183, 216, 223, 270, 271, 291, 322, 324
 Abandonment, 33, 321, 322
 Affirmation, 217
 Alienation, 219, 220, 223, 227, 334
 Conception, 137, 297
 Constitution, 9, 18, 22, 24, 27, 30, 33, 40, 54, 92, 93, 124, 136, 137, 139, 140, 172, 173, 180, 191, 204, 210, 211, 216, 217, 220, 222, 224, 231, 234, 235, 281, 291, 305, 322, 327, 337
 Constructed Social Order, 209
 Content, 22, 33, 80, 188
 Contentment of Nature, 14
 Consciousness, 44, 129, 184, 227, 228, 339, 340
 Correcting, 195
 Criticism, 57, 89, 176, 195, 226, 232, 239
 Decentered, 297
 Deception, 246, 248
 Deconstruction, 222, 337
 Destruction, 17, 330, 340
 Determination, 209, 210, 217, 221, 288
 Education, See: Education - Self
 Embodied, 122, 125, 136
 Enlightenment, 241, 243, 246
 Evidence, 7, 8, 11, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 29, 32, 136, 153, 162, 164, 165, 166, 174, 175, 176, 180, 184, 189, 207, 253, 293, 305, 320, 326
 Evidence of the Apparatuses Evaluating others' Values, 166, 189
 Forgetfulness, 10, 14, 18, 24, 28, 160, 161, 166
 Identity, See: Identity — Self
 Imposed, 199, 321
 Inscribed, 122, 133
 Intellectual, 124
 Irony, 20
 Love, 163
 Liberation, 117, 281, 333
 Narrative of, 125, 133
 Negation, 27, 217
 Performed, 137
 Positioning, 33, 79, 321, 324
 as a Process, 137
 Placed, 135, 322, 323, 324
 Postmodern, 172
 Preservation, 9, 263, 269, 331
 Prosperity, 331
 Protection, 9, 17
 Rational, 122, 123, 124, 137
 Reflective, 11, 38, 57, 89, 92, 123, 152, 281
 Released from the, 327
 Revaluation, 236
 as a (Constant) Transformation, 137
 Technologies of the, 134
 Transgression, 217
 Understanding, 38, 63
- Sexuality, 35, 51, 57, 58, 109, 131, 134, 169, 176
- Signifier, 9, 339
 Master signifiers, 11, 29
 and signified, 17, 19
 Transcendental, 119
- Signification, 44, 58, 134, 154, 335, 336, 339
 of Loss Impossible for Repressed Faculties and Human, 335
 Suffering under Different Rules of, 329
- Silence/d, 9, 22, 27, 29, 34, 176, 184, 197, 198, 199, 317, 325, 329
 Privilege, 199
 Losses, 336
 Voices, 336
- Silencing, 8, 29, 99, 165, 169, 174, 197, 310, 321, 325, 331
- Simulacra, 297
- Singing, 11, 18, 172, 318, 321
- Society, 7, 12, 30, 44, 50, 52, 53, 56, 58, 59, 63, 81, 84, 86, 95, 96, 97, 99, 104, 109, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 120, 122, 124, 128, 133, 193, 220, 231, 246, 256, 262, 268, 274, 284, 288, 293, 305, 306, 330, 331, 335
 Administered, 286, 288
 Advanced Industrial, 35
 Bourgeois, See: Class — Bourgeois
 Capitalist, 55, 58, 78, 84, 89, 90, 96, 174, 268, 303, 333, 335
 Civil, 96, 144, 210, 217

- Contemporary, 282
- Corporate domination of, 77
- Control, 215
- Critical, 271
- Critique of, See: Critique — of Society of Culture Industry, 281
- Democratic/Democratizing, 47, 52, 55, 56, 61, 62, 64, 304, 305
- Derrida on, 307
- of Despair, 284
- and Geist, 65
- Global, 50, 59
- Good, 52, 53, 55, 56, 64, 73, 74
- Industrial, 62, 63
- Instrumentalization of, 264
- Just, 53, 54, 115, 117, 306, 331
- Knowledge, 211
- Late-modern, 209
- Learning, 211, 215
- Marxist Analysis of, 333
- Mass, 268, 272, 276
- Modern, See: Modern/ism — Society
- Network/ed, 64, 65
- New, 91, 210
- of Normalization, 214
- Restructuring, 57, 69
- Postindustrial, 63
- Power/Knowledge at, 140
- Risk, 23, 79
- and School, 288
- Socialist, 52, 90, 91
- Unequal, 145
- Western, 128, 208, 210
- Technological, 50
- Totally Administered, 262
- Transformation, 52, 56, 91, 93, 124, 128, 145
- Social
 - Action, 141
 - Aid, 281
 - Capital, 66, 99
 - Change, 8, 12, 41, 49, 58, 59, 61, 78, 91, 129, 150, 169, 171, 173, 205, 210, 216, 267, 293, 300, 310, 314
 - Conditions, 8, 9, 31, 38, 45, 58, 59, 129, 137, 173, 262, 264, 271, 294, 299, 312,
 - Context, 124, 133, 143, 185, 191, 276, 289
 - Crisis, 262, 312
 - Critique, 56, 91, 329
 - Deconstruction, 14
 - Determination of Natural Beginning, 234, 235
 - Dislocation, 39
 - Equality, 207
 - Experience, 117
 - History, 216
 - Instrumentalization, 211
 - Justice, 51, 58, 62, 64, 66, 69, 81, 90, 91, 93, 130, 136, 310
 - Life, See: Life — Social
 - Movements, 59
 - Needs vs. Critical Thinking, 334
 - and Negative Schizophrenia, 44
 - Order, 8, 31, 32, 40, 47, 63, 78, 133, 144, 187, 209, 329, 337
 - Pluralism, 312
 - Power, 90
 - Reconciliation, 44
 - Rationalization, 116
 - Reform, 217
 - Relations, 52, 58, 59, 68, 74, 77, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 89, 90, 92, 93, 118, 141, 226, 227, 230, 231, 233, 333, 336
 - Reproduction, 54, 56, 63, 162, 209, 241, 269, 285
 - Revolutionary Movements, 78, 339
 - Science, 36, 42, 43, 63, 81, 308
 - Struggle, 59, 85, 91
 - of the Subject to construct herself, 117
 - Theory, 147, 149, 194
 - Totality, 285
 - Transformation, See: Transformation — Social
 - Worlds, See: World - Social
- Socialism, 55, 77, 84, 88, 91
- Solidarity, 8, 20, 34, 62, 91, 93, 99, 160, 168, 170, 175, 183, 187, 188, 201, 203, 226, 255, 256, 259, 273, 288
- Non-ethnocentric, See: Ethnocentrism - Non-ethnocentric Solidarity
- Solipsism, 25, 172
- Spirit, 7, 15, 16, 28, 30, 49, 52, 55, 71, 73, 174, 175, 231, 250, 331
- Absolute, 320
- Apollonian, 280

- Critical, 8, 14, 69, 169,
- Dionysian, 280
- as Educator, 49, 55
- Exile of, 179, 230
- Free, 8, 12
- Geist, 65
- Oppositional, 135
- Optimistic, 140
- of Power, 281
- Specialists Without Spirit, 295
- Spiritual, 124, 228, 232, 237, 238, 272
 - Impulses, 271
 - Purgation, 283
 - Well-being, 278
- Stoa, 7
- Strive, 9, 11, 18
- Structuralism, 133
- Subject/s, 51, 56, 59, 60, 69, 92, 119, 121, 125, 146, 151, 162, 173, 175, 178, 195, 248, 250, 269, 318, 323
 - Autonomy vs. Reality, 11, 12, 16, 20, 22, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 92, 117, 120, 124, 133, 134, 151, 152, 154, 160, 163, 166, 171, 173, 174, 180, 181, 187, 204, 212, 213, 223, 231, 232, 263, 269, 270, 274, 281, 283, 285, 288, 297, 306, 313, 320, 322, 334
 - and Cosmos, 10, 16, 17, 22, 24, 29, 62, 68, 123, 211, 279, 211, 317, 321, 323
 - Critical Concept of, 168, 173, 233, 330
 - Critical, 114, 130, 132, 168, 186, 330
 - Critique in the Service of Establishing a New order of the Subject, 209, 330
 - Death of the, 178, , 181, 182, 272
 - Deconstructed, 181
 - Destruction of the Human as unavoidable, 329, 340
 - Destruction of the Willing-judging-subject, 324, 325
 - Dialogical, See: Dialogue — Subject
 - Dismantling of the Self-certain Subject, 181, 325, 327
 - Flexible, 64
 - as Free in Critical Pedagogy, 233
 - Isolated, 22, 164, 317, 318, 324
 - Knowing, 309, 310
 - Loss of the, 121, 181, 182, 285
 - Modern, 210, 212
 - Moral, 182
 - Multiple, 138
 - Never Totally Controlled, 166, 288, 321, 322, 323
 - Notion of the, 44, 120, 123, 133, 138, 160, 162, 166, 171, 183
 - as an Object, 160, 162, 163, 164, 166, 181, 182, 229, 236, 269, 270, 283, 285, 323
 - Philosophy of the, 36
 - Production/Formation of, See: Production — Subject
 - Position, 57, 138, 296, 327, 339
 - Postmodern, 172, 29
 - and Power, See: Power — Subject
 - Rational, 8, 17, 28, 144, 187, 210, 221, 308,
 - Transcendence, See: Context — Transcendence, and See: Production — Human
 - Transcendental, 117
 - True, 117
 - Willing, 317
 - Subject-object, 16, 23, 56, 92, 117, 149, 182, 232, 233, 236, 239, 250, 270
 - Subjective, 148, 149, 236, 255, 263
 - De-subjectivation, 222, 224
 - Relation of the Teacher to the Student, 242
 - Reason, See: Reason - Subjective
 - Subjectification, 31, 122, 139, 140, 164, 166, 172, 173
 - Subjectivity, 44, 45, 51, 57, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 67, 68, 85, 88, 92, 114, 115, 121, 122, 138, 144, 166, 174, 178, 210, 219, 224, 225, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 237, 254, 317, 318, 327
 - in the Bildung Tradition, 216, 219, 220
 - Civic, 257
 - Conflicting Forms of, 138
 - Creation of, 138, 219
 - Critical, 92
 - as Culture, 227
 - Deconstructed, 177, 178
 - as a Development of Individual Consciousness, 270
 - Genuine, 228
 - as Internalization of Control, 263
 - Intersubjectivity, 92, 136, 170, 173, 174, 175, 212, 219, 222, 271
 - Negative, 237

- as an Object for Critical Reflection, 237
 - Rational, 221
- Suffering, 8, 10, 12, 14, 17, 23, 24, 26, 31, 39, 90, 119, 128, 177, 187, 190, 192, 228, 229, 231, 263, 279, 280, 281, 284, 329, 333, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340
 - and Creativity, 25, 279
 - Democratization of, 73
 - End of, 14, 21
 - Existential, 279
 - God, 191
 - Impossibility of Acknowledging the Other's, 336
 - Meaningful, 182, 311
 - Meaningless, 17
 - of the Oppressor, 338
 - Sublimated, 283
 - and the Wisdom of Life, 282
 - in the World, 279
 - World of, 281
 - Worthy, 16, 18, 160, 166, 174, 188, 190, 284
- Superstructure, 171
- Symbol/ic, 9, 10, 12, 25, 32, 33, 116, 125, 179
 - Creation of Concepts, 165, 172
 - Reproduction, 162
 - Representation of the Dionysian Wisdom, 280
 - Setting, 165
 - Violence, See: Violence — Symbolic
- Taoism, 323
- Taboo, 241, 246
- Rao/ist, 317
- Teachable, 231
- Teacher/s, 53, 56, 67, 68, 72, 83, 90, 91, 101, 107, 110, 112, 113, 117, 119, 125, 129, 130, 137, 138, 199, 200, 205, 233, 237, 238, 240, 242, 243, 245, 247, 248, 249, 256, 277, 281, 298, 306
 - Aim of, 326
 - Autonomy, 74, 90, 131, 138, 176, 177, 205, 240, 245, 268, 274, 328, 338
 - Authority, 200, 277, 293, 306,
 - as a Construct, 116, 135,
 - Critical, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 126, 130, 131, 132, 133, 136, 138, 140, 238, 239, 244, 245, 246, 338
 - Diasporic, 327
 - Dis-spirited, 306
 - Feminine, 132
 - Foucault as a, 298
 - Good, 131, 132, 276
 - as Hero, 130, 131
 - and HIV, 306
 - Identity, See: Identity - Teacher
 - Ironic, 237
 - Letting Learning Happen, 326
 - Marxist, 334
 - Negative, 237, 238
 - New Purposes for, 140
 - as an Occasion for the Student to Understand Himself, 239
 - Philosophical, 238, 239
 - Philosophical vs. Critical, 239
 - Power, 119, 176, 274, 293
 - Professional, 132, 138
 - Progressive, 81
 - Radical, 232
 - Re-proletarianized, 74
 - Revolutionary, 229
 - as a Sage who Re-calls the Apprentice to where Learning Unfolds, 327, 328, 339, 340
 - Socratic, 238, 240, 320, 325, 327
 - Spiritual, 238
 - and Student, 151, 176, 194, 200, 228, 229, 232, 233, 238, 240, 242, 243, 252, 274, 276, 277, 325, 334
 - as a Transmitter, 118
 - White, 81
 - Zarathustra, 236
- Teaching, 64, 68, 72, 81, 93, 98, 100, 104, 110, 111, 117, 120, 123, 131, 141, 169, 194, 195, 204, 242, 245, 246, 250, 290, 306, 316
 - Adorno on, 287
 - Banking conception of, 207
 - Becoming Teachable, See: Becoming Teachable
 - Conformist, 134
 - Critical, 128, 129, 130, 169, 232
 - Cross-cultural, 81, 198
 - Defensive, 134
 - Diasporic, 15, 17, 21, 190, 324, 325, 326, 327
 - Feminist, 167

- as Improvisation, 139
 - Non-Authoritarian, 193, 325
 - of Oppositional Thoughts, 77, 229
 - Teaching/Learning as a Mutual Exchange, 324
 - for Self-Transformation, 93
 - of Traditional Values, 100
- Teachability
 - as a Gift, 324, 326
- Techné, 179
 - Replacing Praxis, 296
- Technology/Technological, 8, 10, 12, 48, 49, 50, 60, 62, 63, 65, 67, 74, 108, 172, 185, 18, 224, 263, 272, 274, 275
 - Conquest of Nature, 288
 - Controlled by, 62
 - and Democratization of Education, 61, 63
 - Didactics as, 250
 - Disciplinary Technologies, 214
 - of Domination, See: Domination —
- Technologies of
 - Educational, 64, 150, 156, 246, 270
 - High-tech, 179
 - Information, 63, 64, 66
 - Knowledge, 274
 - Modern, 161, 179, 266
 - Multimedia, 65
 - Paradise, 264
 - Power, 213, 218
 - Rationality, 35, 274
 - Revolution, 61, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68
 - of the Self, 134
 - Technophobia, 51
 - Technophilia, 51
- Telos, 10, 13, 15, 18, 32, 169, 173, 182, 204, 210, 216, 217, 323
- Terror, 14, 60, 66, 70, 74, 78, 89, 119, 226, 231, 278, 280, 286, 338, 339
- Tests, 64, 75, 77, 98, 101, 102, 109
- The Totally Other, 11, 20, 22, 31, 32, 163, 180, 183, 191
- The Totally Administered Society, 262
- Thanatus, 13, 16, 22, 160, 190
 - Enslavement to, 24
 - and Knowledge, 179
 - Music of, 172
 - as a Quest for Power, 160, 179
 - as a Symbol for the Quest for Truth, 179
- Theology, 9, 14, 18, 35, 188, 191, 206
 - Catholic Liberation, 302
 - Liberation, 83
 - Political, 18
- Thingness, 15, 28, 79, 283, 320, 321, 322
 - Harmony of the, 17
 - Return (in)to, 16, 17, 20, 265, 266, 283
- Thinking, 8, 12, 21, 22, 31, 64, 93, 106, 131, 144, 163, 245, 272, 273, 276, 288, 291, 325, 326, 335
 - Beyond Appearance, 163, 281, 321
 - Critical, 8, 229, 230, 269, 289
 - and Diaspora, 15
 - and Discipline Power, 215
 - Enlightenment, 265
 - Formation of, 268
 - Free, 144
 - Heidegger on, 326
 - Hierarchical, 180
 - Identity, 22, 122, 229, 230
 - Non-identity, 122
 - Phallic, 180
 - Rational, 265
 - as Reality, 227
 - as Relation of Drives to Each Other, 235
 - as Relation of Drives to Each Other, 235
 - Tragic, 237
- Togetherness, 7, 9, 24, 25, 26, 31, 32, 33, 191
- Tests
 - National, 64, 75, 77, 99, 101
 - Standardized, 64, 75, 77, 99
- Totalisation
 - and Individualisation, 212
- Totality, 17, 19, 47, 52, 70, 149, 170, 175, 180, 218, 219, 223, 251, 333
 - of Being, 174
 - of Bureaucratic Rationality, 296
 - Capitalist, 81, 82, 89, 91, 93
 - of Human Relations, 123
 - of the moment, 9, 19, 22, 25, 26, 322
 - Non-, 230
 - Social, 80, 85, 92
 - of the Subject, 223
- Totalitarian Authority, 206
- Tradition/al, 7, 9, 12, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 38, 39, 40, 43, 50, 52, 54, 55, 57, 64, 67, 81, 83, 84, 95, 99, 100, 101, 102, 114, 116, 126, 130, 143, 145, 146, 153, 154, 162, 163, 166, 168,

- 175, 179, 189, 193, 243, 262, 274, 290, 309, 310, 311, 312, 317, 319, 320, 321
 anti-traditionalist, 17, 19
 De-traditionalization, 209
 Learning as Leaping Beyond, 163, 320
 Transgression, 155, 156, 159, 217
 Transcendence, 8, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 41, 54, 65, 88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 117, 119, 134, 146, 148, 153, 154, 155, 156, 162, 163, 164, 168, 173, 174, 175, 177, 180, 183, 187, 189, 205, 205, 209, 211, 212, 213, 214, 217, 230, 267, 270, 307, 309, 321, 322, 323, 328, 332, 337
 as Dasein's Being Beyond Beings, 163, 322
 Concepts Allowing, 162
 Critique as, See: Critique as Transcendence
 Detranscendentalization, 40, 42, 311
 Diasporic, 160, 191
 and Immanence, 28, 29, 160, 171, 175, 180, 187, 190, 322
 as Limiting our Limitations, 320, 321
 Normalizing Education and, 160, 177
 Non-violent, 182, 191
 Philosophy as, See: Philosophy — Transcendence
 Phallogocentric Quest for, 180
 of Reason, 312
 of the Subject, See: Subject — Transcendence
 Transformation, 150, 169, 171, 173, 205, 206, 210, 216, 217, 329, 333, 337
 Transcendental Empiricism, 181
 Trust, 93
 Truth, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 22, 24, 25, 27, 29, 31, 42, 99, 146, 153, 154, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 168, 173, 178, 189, 190, 193, 207, 209, 221, 232, 235, 237, 279, 295, 306, 307, 310, 311, 315, 319, 320, 325, 328, 335, 336, 337
 Absence of, 14, 160
 of Abstract Consciousness, 231
 of Being, 10, 11, 190,
 of Becoming, 161
 Beyond Reach, 160, 332
 Contingency of, 146, 189, 235, 307, 308
 Critical Pedagogy as Holding the, See: Critical Pedagogy — Truth
 Critical Theory and, 295
 as Death, 179
 Doubt as, 240
 or False at a Particular Historical Moment, 291
 Fear of, 235
 of Femininity, 179
 Feminism and Universal, 128, 174, 178
 as a Gate for Emancipation, 308
 Impotence of the Marginalized as a Foundation of, 189
 Incommensurability of Truth Claims, 307
 Learner as Inwardness of, 238
 as Light, 179, 180
 Love of, 161, 163
 Normative Validity Claims of Truth, 194
 as an Object, 234
 Overcoming True-False Dichotomy, 182, 234, 235, 239
 and Passivity, 280
 and Peace, 161
 Phallogocentric Quest for, 179, 180
 Plato on, 332
 Pleasure-, 17
 Postmodernism and, See: Postmodernism — Truth
 and Power, See: Power — Truth
 Production of, 14, 148, 188, 189
 Regimes of, 134, 162
 as Resistance, 189, 192
 the Soul Detached from the, 332
 as the Solidification of Old Metaphors, 307
 Transcendent, 329
 True and False vs. Competing Needs, 332
 Truthfulness, 238
 Untruth, 164, 227, 228, 234, 239, 242
 and Violence, 161, 162
 from the Bottom of the, 280
 Unconscious, 125
 Undecidability, 158
 Universal/ism, 8, 47, 53, 70, 118, 119, 122, 123, 124, 137, 146, 155, 169, 175, 184, 187, 191, 218, 226, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 268, 275, 286, 296, 307
 A Priori, 308

- Contingency, 234
- Control of Commodities Over Life, 269
- Construction of, 139
- of Counter-education, 192
- Feminism and, 128, 169, 174, 176, 178, 184
- as Hegemony, 138
- Identity, 133
- and the Particular, 139
- Particularization of the, 139
- Phalocentric Quest for, 180
- and Postmodernism, 148, 149, 167, 174, 307
- Rationality, 306, 309
- Universality of the Illusion vs. True Knowledge and Emancipation, 239
- Validity of Truth Claims, 146, 169, 308
- Values, See: Values — Universal
- Unpredictability, 150, 151
- Utopia/n, 7, 8, 13, 14, 26, 30, 41, 48, 52, 54, 72, 93, 97, 111, 114, 119, 120, 121, 127, 129, 130, 141, 142, 178, 183, 184, 190, 191, 205, 209, 216, 220, 271, 274
 - Anti-, 20
 - Concrete, 30, 179, 190, 192
 - Critical Pedagogy as, 155, 156
 - of the Dionysian, 281
 - Dystopia, 114, 119, 120, 130, 180
 - Marxian, 15
 - Negative, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 28, 79, 142, 170, 175, 188, 188, 190, 191, 192
 - No-place, 141
 - Positive, 12, 13, 15, 17, 22, 26, 79, 168, 170, 174, 177, 180, 186, 187, 190
 - Postmodern, 180, 182
 - Provisional, 156
- Youth, 61, 65, 105, 285, 298, 302, 325
 - Rebellion and Lack of Rational Authority, 267
 - Reaction to School's Contradictions, 257
- Value/s, 13, 14, 18, 24, 51, 54, 56, 62, 66, 69, 84, 85, 89, 90, 97, 106, 108, 117, 127, 131, 141, 164, 165, 171, 209, 224, 236, 256, 289, 290, 307, 312
 - and Conceptual Apparatus, 165
 - Conservative, 108, 224
 - Contingency of, 146, 148
 - Critique of, 263
 - Educational, 196
 - Equal Value of Each Culture, 233
 - Evaluation of, 14, 96, 164, 165, 166, 171, 177, 189, 209, 234
 - Exchange, 85, 229
 - Judgments, 146
 - of the Other, 166
 - Production of, See: Production of Progressive, 109
 - Reason and, 262, 312
 - Surplus, 72, 73, 86
 - Traditional, 100, 224
 - Use, 85, 86, 87, 93
 - Universal, 70, 142, 170, 230
 - Value, 263
- Vices, 331
- Victim, 10, 13, 14, 19, 31, 89, 121, 138, 160, 184, 188, 201, 205, 243, 310, 331, 338, 340
 - as an Enthusiastic Agent of her Victimization, 166, 183
 - as a Manifestation on Contingent Power Relations, 162, 163, 186, 187
- Victimization, 123, 156, 311, 340
- Victimizer/Perpetrator, 19, 31, 184, 243
 - as a Manifestation on Contingent Power Relations, 162
- Violence, 15, 23, 25, 89, 156, 160, 162, 165, 169, 170, 174, 175, 183, 189, 192, 222, 265, 279, 281, 284, 340
 - Absence of, 213
 - as affluence, 16
 - as the form of truth, 13
 - Cannibalistic, 8
 - Colonialist, 179
 - Counter-, 17, 161, 175, 183, 191
 - Critical Concept of, 168, 170, 222, 265
 - Critical Pedagogy as, 19, 164
 - Direct, 162, 165
 - Educational, 19, 29, 30, 160, 161, 171, 177, 179, 303
 - Epistemic, 162, 165
 - Indirect, 12
 - Intimacy with, 22
 - Immanent, 8
 - Hidden, 11, 165, 168, 174
 - Jewish Rejection of, 192
 - Metaphysical, See: Metaphysical

- Normalizing Education as, 19, 160, 161
 Ontological, 162
 Patriarchalism as a Manifestation of, 191
 Political, 186
 Productivity of, 160, 192
 as a Realization of the Mimetic Impulse
 in Face of Oppression, 267, 275
 Structural, 162
 Symbolic, 32, 160, 161, 162, 177, 187
 and Western concept of Truth, 161, 172, 179
 Virtue, 54, 201
 Voice, 28, 57, 58, 99, 118, 119, 136, 138, 160, 169, 174, 176, 197, 278, 317, 318, 321, 325, 335, 336, 338, 339
 Voiceless, 129
- West/ern, 7, 8, 16, 21, 45, 53, 80, 83, 127, 133, 161, 186, 208, 222
 Anti-, 176, 179
 Colonialism, 161, 176, 179
 Countries, 294
 Culture, 179, 210, 219, 262, 264, 265, 267
 Decline of the, 266
 Democracies, 56
 Education, 52, 53, 168
 Essence of, 179
 Knowledge, See: Knowledge — Western Non-, 179
 Philosophy, See: Philosophy — Western and Third World, 73
 Tradition, 153, 200, 333
 Violence, 179
 World, See: World — Western
- Whiteness, 167
- Whole/ness, 7, 9, 15, 16, 28, 51, 52, 115, 118, 125, 137, 218, 219, 237, 255, 274, 322
 Absent, 15, 322
 of life, 8, 10, 16, 22
 Irrational, 264
 Nature, 279
 Alternative Knowledge and the Return to the Lost, 16, 280
 Social Process and Education for Individuality, 276
- Will, 87, 128, 140, 172, 213, 233, 235, 256, 279, 321
 to Power, 172, 190, 235, 236
 Willing Subject, 317
 Willing of non-willing, 322, 323
- Wisdom, 52, 278, 279, 280, 320, 324, 330, 331, 337
 as Critique, 331
 and the Impossibility of Transcending Desires, 335
 as Guardian of Life, 335
 and Justice, 331
 Open Horizon of, 336
 as the Power to Judge Among Desires, 331
 as the Privilege of the Oppressor, 338
 as Recognition of our Limits, 320
 Suspension of Needs in the Operation of, 337
 Voyage of, 332
- Woman/Women, 8, 30, 57, 81, 97, 102, 121, 131, 132, 173, 177, 178, 179, 181, 271, 314
 Concept of, 177, 178, 179, 180, 216
- World, 9, 15, 16, 24, 25, 30, 33, 42, 47, 49, 50, 60, 63, 64, 66, 70, 71, 80, 93, 94, 101, 110, 113, 120, 121, 123, 138, 150, 155, 169, 171, 173, 182, 190, 192, 215, 221, 227, 229, 231, 235, 270, 271, 279, 280, 282, 283, 296, 304, 323
 Among the, 323
 Art and the other, 272, 280
 Bettering the, 171, 181, 245, 248
 and the Human, 10, 17, 24, 29, 68, 123, 211, 279
 Dialogue with the, 11
 Deciphered, 165, 251, 266
 Fully Administered-, 9
 Globalized, 21, 30, 47, 49, 50, 59, 66, 79, 82, 94
 Godless, See: Godless World
 History, 266
 Inner, 30
 Intimacy with the, 24, 25, 26, 33, 68
 Known, 127
 Learning Critically the, 93, 234, 235
 of Mind, 238
 Modern, See: Modern — World
 Mourning of the, 238
 New World Order, 71, 72
 Objective, 309

- Patriarchal, 179
- Represent the, 133
- Social, 142
- of Suffering, 281
- Third World, 73, 161
- Viewed from the Inside, 236
- Western, 265, 286, 293, 307
- Withdrawing into and from the, 323
- Worldviews, 148, 211, 307
- Zen, 318

Names Index

- Adorno, Theodor, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 30, 31, 79, 122, 133, 175, 183, 185, 187, 188, 190, 221, 226, 230, 231, 235, 241, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 249, 257, 260, 261, 262, 264, 265, 266, 272, 273, 275, 281, 282, 283, 284, 286, 287, 288
- Alcoff, Lynda, 178
- Allman, Paula, 84, 90, 93
- Althusser, Louis, 35, 36, 118
- Apollo, 279, 280, 281
- Apple, Michael, 11, 13, 18, 95, 98, 100, 107, 111, 112, 116, 145
- Anaximander, 21
- Arendt, Hannah, 150, 151, 319, 325, 326
- Aronowitz, Stanley, 35, 145, 174
- Aristotle, 46, 217, 249, 278
- Arnold, Matthew, 53
- Augustine, St., 7, 187
- Austin, John, 296
- Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailowich, 137
- Baudrillard, Jean, 59
- Bauman, Zigmunt, 315
- Beck, Ulrich, 23
- Benhabib, Seyla, 178
- Benjamin, Walter, 10, 11, 14, 20, 27, 54, 141, 163, 186, 187, 188, 277
- Bergson, Henri, 46
- Bernstein, Richard, 148
- Bhabha, homi, 201, 329
- Biesta, Gert, 9, 10, 79, 143, 148, 151, 153, 156, 205
- Bloch, Ernst, 54
- Bloom, Harold, 124
- Boeme, Jacob, 191
- Bohman, James, 41, 42
- Bourdieu, Pierre, 117
- Bowels, Samuel, 116
- Brecht, Bertold, 231, 285,
- Bronfenbrenner, Urie, 124
- Burbules, Nicholas, 9, 10, 11, 177, 193, 198, 201, 202, 203, 206
- Bush, Georg, 70, 71, 72, 89, 94
- Butler, Judith, 173, 214, 224
- Camus, Albert, 21
- De Castell, Suzanne, 198
- Carr, Wilfred, 308, 309
- Castro, Fidel, 35
- Cicero Marcus-Tullius, 54
- Cohen, Herman, 8,
- Comenius, Amos, 249
- Descartes, Rene, 46,
- Deleuze, Gilles, 21, 45, 46, 48, 161, 168, 175, 181, 182, 183, 185, 190, 215, 234
- Derrida, Jacques, 18, 21, 43, 44, 81, 119, 156, 157, 158, 161, 176, 202, 221, 222, 307, 308, 329
- Descartes, Rene, 123
- Dewey, John, 47, 50, 51, 52, 55, 56, 58, 64, 66, 69, 81, 100, 115, 145, 182, 204, 334
- Dionysus, 279, 280, 281
- Durkheim, Emile, 116
- Duarte, Eduardo, 9, 11, 205, 317, 337
- Ellsworth, Elizabeth, 119, 167, 168, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 180, 182, 185, 195, 196
- Engels, Friedrich, 55
- Erikson, Erik, 124
- Fendler, Lynne, 120
- Feuerbach, Ludwig, 55, 191, 227, 228, 229
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, 237
- Foster, John, 104
- Foucault, Michel, 40, 43, 45, 81, 115, 120, 134, 135, 149, 153, 154, 161, 162, 164, 174, 175, 178, 181, 185, 200, 201, 212, 213, 214, 215, 220, 222, 223, 224, 289, 290, 291, 292, 294, 296, 298, 307, 308
- Freire, Paulo, 13, 35, 36, 50, 52, 56, 58, 64, 66, 69, 80, 81, 82, 83, 104, 115, 119, 131, 164, 167, 168, 171, 172, 176, 184, 189, 193,

- 200, 206, 207, 239, 302, 329
 Freud, Sigmund, 44, 58, 124, 150, 275, 276, 285, 337
 Fromm, Erich, 35, 266
- Gilligan, Carol, 124
 Gintis, Herbert, 116
 Giroux, Henry, 9, 13, 23, 35, 36, 82, 117, 120, 145, 164, 167, 172, 173, 184, 229, 290, 304, 329
 Glaucon, 330
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 252, 278
 Gore, Jennifer, 167, 170, 171, 177, 184, 185
 Gruschka, Andreas, 9, 10, 11, 241, 251
 Gramsci, Antonio, 52, 83, 96, 116, 194
 Guattari, Felix, 45, 46, 175, 181
 Guevara, Che, 35, 82, 120, 121, 127
 Gur-Ze'ev, Ilan, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 18, 20, 21, 33, 49, 79, 119, 136, 137, 141, 146, 153, 160, 161, 164, 166, 168, 179, 182, 184, 189, 204, 205, 207, 226, 230, 300
- Habermas, Juergen, 39, 40, 42, 122, 125, 130, 174, 185, 194, 198, 221, 245, 295, 298, 304
 Hall, Stuart, 137
 Haraway, Dona, 168, 180, 182
 Hardt, Michael, 46, 48,
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 35, 45, 49, 52, 55, 56, 59, 65, 227, 228, 229, 231, 234, 235, 236, 238, 320, 334, 337
 Heidegger, Martin, 8, 11, 15, 21, 23, 31, 36, 163, 179, 185, 290, 318, 321, 322, 326, 327, 328
 Heilman, Elizabeth, 9, 114
 Held, David, 122, 137
 Heraclites, 20, 21, 318, 320
 Hirsch, Donald, 53, 100, 112
 Hooks, Bell, 58, 164, 167, 168, 169
 Horkheimer, Max, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 27, 30, 38, 79, 122, 136, 141, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 192, 221, 231, 235, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 281, 282, 283, 284
 Von Humboldt, Wilhelm, 210, 217, 218, 250
 Hume, David, 313
 Hyppolite, Jean, 45
- Illich, Ivan, 52, 53, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 68, 69
 Ion, 319, 320
- Jackson, Philip, 116
 Jaspers, Karl, 323
 Jay, Martin, 268
 Jonas, Hans, 15
 Jung, Carl, 125, 127
- Kafka, Franz, 21
 Kahn, Richard, 49, 68
 Kant, Immanuel, 37, 38, 46, 51, 144, 154, 213, 234, 237, 270, 298, 308, 325
 Kellner, Douglas, 11, 36, 49, 51, 64, 68, 104, 164
 Kincheloe, Joe, 114, 115
 Kierkegaard, Soren, 21, 237, 238, 239, 240
 King Arthur, 128
 Klafki, Wolfgang, 174
 Kohlberg, Lawrence, 124
 Kohly, Wendy, 9, 177, 205
 Kojeve, Alexandre, 45
 Kristeva, Julia, 43, 44
- Lacan, Jacques, 81, 168
 Laclau, Ernesto, 118
 Lankshear, Colin, 9, 15
 Lather, Patti, 9, 83, 119, 137, 167, 168, 170, 175, 176, 180, 182, 184, 185, 195, 205
 Leach, Mary, 19
 Lenin, Vladimir, 73
 Levi-Strauss, Claude, 115
 Levinas, Immanuel, 15, 21, 26, 29, 161, 164, 202, 230
 Liston, Daniel, 10
 Lock, John, 37, 271
 Loewenthal, Leo, 277
 Lukacs, Gyorgy, 35, 116, 263
 Luke, Allan, 60, 63
 Luke, Carmen, 60, 63, 167, 170, 171, 177, 178, 184, 185
 Luxemburg, Rosa, 35, 120, 121, 127
 Lyotard, Jean Francois, 59, 161, 175, 185, 202, 209, 219, 220, 222, 307, 308, 329, 338, 339, 340
- Mainlander, Philipp, 22, 182
 Malcolm X, 120, 121, 127
 Marcuse, Herbert, 31, 35, 52, 117, 123, 124,

- 125, 174, 185, 288, 337
Markion, 21
Marshal, James, 11, 289, 293
Marting Luther King, 128
Marx, Karl, 8, 15, 19, 35, 38, 40, 44, 46, 52, 55, 59, 64, 78, 80, 83, 86, 92, 93, 133, 171, 205, 223, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 236, 238, 298, 304, 329, 333, 334, 336
Mason, Mark, 79, 310
McCarthy, Cameron, 96
McCarthy, Thomas, 39, 40, 41, 295, 311, 312
McLaren, Peter, 9, 11, 13, 18, 35, 70, 82, 83, 84, 114, 115, 117, 118, 120, 121, 127, 128, 139, 145, 147, 153, 156, 164, 172, 184, 205, 226, 228, 229, 240, 333, 334, 336, 337
McLuhan, Marshal, 65, 66
Maslow, Abraham, 124
Mason, Marc, 9, 11
Masschelein, Jan, 9, 11, 152, 205, 208, 209, 218
Memmi, Alber, 35
Menon, 320
Milton, John, 289
Mollenhauer, Klaus, 145
Montagne, de, 21
Moraes, Raquel, 9
Muffe, Chantal, 118

Negri, Antonio, 46, 48
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 17, 21, 45, 46, 48, 58, 133, 172, 229, 234, 235, 236, 238, 278, 279, 280, 281, 307, 308, 329, 331, 336, 337
Noddings, Nel, 299

Odysseus, 17, 23, 269
Ophir, Adi, 330, 335
Orpheus, 278
De-Olivera, Newton, 9, 278

Pascal, Blaise, 16, 21
Peters, Michael, 9, 11, 35, 45, 230, 311, 312, 313
Piaget, Jean, 124
Picasso, Pablo, 272
Plant, Sadie, 168, 179, 180
Plato, 30, 53, 54, 161, 175, 249, 278, 319, 320, 329, 331, 332, 334, 336, 340
Popper, Carl, 221, 314
Popkewitz, Thomas, 119

Poster, Mark, 35, 297
Protagoras, 319
Pucci, Bruno, 278
Pyrrho the skeptic, 22

Rawls, John, 42
Reagan, Roland, 70, 71, 75
Rheingold, Howard, 130
Rice, Susanne, 177, 196
Ricken, Norbert, 208, 217, 219, 220, 223
Rikowski, Glen, 84, 85, 86, 87, 91, 92, 146, 147
Rimon-Or, Anat, 11, 329
Rorty, Richard, 42, 47, 81, 221
Rushdie, Salman, 21
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 56, 100, 144, 223, 271

Sachs, Oliver, 136
Sartre, Jean Paul, 35
Scheller, Max, 242
Schelling, Friedrich Joseph, 46
Schiller, Friedrich, 55
Schopenhauer, Arthur, 15, 21
Searle, John, 296
Semtesky, Inna, 182
Shor, Ira, 13, 128, 164, 172, 184, 204
Siegel, Harvey, 300, 309, 310, 311, 313, 314, 315
Socrates, 51, 68, 193, 200, 204, 207, 237, 239, 249, 319, 320, 322, 324, 330, 332, 339
Spivak, Gayatri, 119
Sofoulis, Zoe, 168, 179
Spengler, Oswald, 184, 266

Steiner, Rudolf, 124
Tiedemann, Rolf, 242
Tolstoy, Leo, 139
Trasymachus, 330, 338
Tubbs, Nigel, 9, 11, 226, 231

Young, Iris, 196, 201
Weber, Max, 58, 116, 295
Weiler, Kathleen, 9, 128, 164, 169, 171, 173, 177, 184, 185
West, Cornel, 15

Zarathustra, 236
Zeichner, Kenneth, 9, 10
Zizek, Slavoj, 28

