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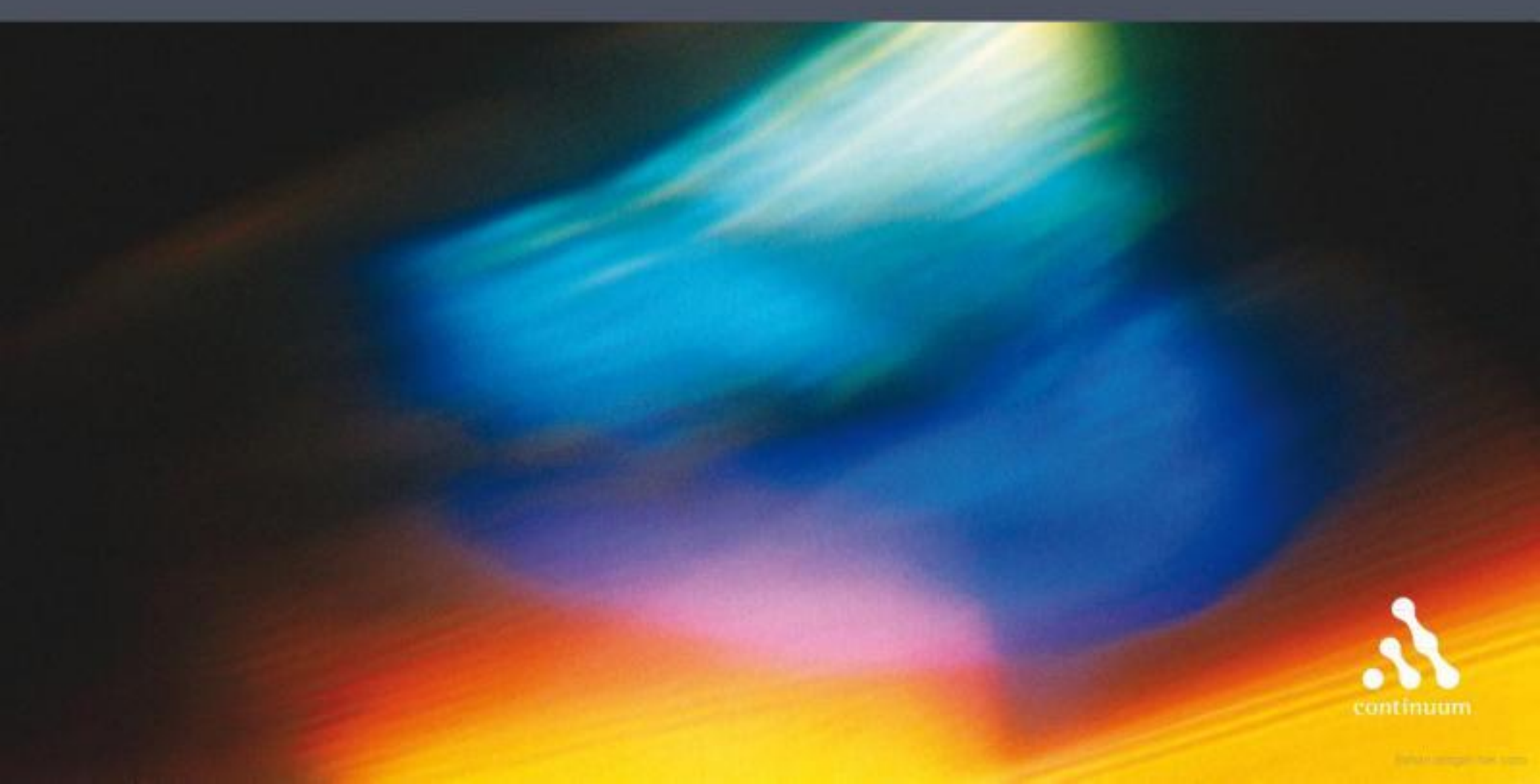
Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Education

Origins, Developments, Impacts and Legacies

Jones Irwin



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I would like to dedicate this book to my parents, Leslie and Úna Irwin, who have, from day one, encouraged and balanced me in my sometimes obsessive pursuit of philosophy. I owe them more than words can ever say.

Jones Irwin, Dublin, August 2011

INTRODUCTION

From life to philosophy: exploring Freire's biography

The intimate connections between life and philosophy are nowhere more apparent than through an exploration of Paulo Freire's work. Throughout this text, in seeking to explicate Paulo Freire's philosophy of education, I will return to examples drawn from the detail of Freire's 'life'. This recourse to insights from Freire's existence, so as to help in an understanding of his thinking, is hardly an imposed method foreign to the tendencies of his work. On the contrary, this symbiosis between life and philosophy is everywhere manifest in Freire's texts, early to late. It involves less a kind of edifying approach which would supplement his theories with more down-to-earth experience, and more an integral commitment of his overall philosophical vision. From the very beginning, Freire's texts develop organically from existential and political situations, often of acute terror and vulnerability, such as that of the military coup in Brazil in 1964. Freire's philosophy is thus fundamentally a philosophy of life and politics, in a way that often more supposedly practical philosophies could never be. His writing evolves from a sometimes fraught but oftentimes celebratory understanding of the possibilities of living, both the immense dangers but also the intense joys of human relationship and community. As Nietzsche declared, 'I love only what a person has written with his blood' (quoted in Derrida, 1978, p. 328) and Freire is, in this sense, very much a writer in the Nietzschean tenor.

'A land of contrasts and a pedagogy of contradiction'

As one of Freire's greatest commentators, Carlos Alberto Torres, has noted, in 'A Land of Contrasts and a Pedagogy of Contradiction', much of the verve and tension of Freire's thinking derives from the specifics of his Brazilian upbringing and socio-cultural context (Torres, 1994): 'Brazil is a land of contrasts. Land of wonderful Rio de Janeiro, with the beautiful sights of the Corcovado mountain and its splendid world-class beaches, but also land of the Amazonian Indians, harassed, haunted, and murdered in their own dominion by gold prospectors and entrepreneurs of many

sorts' (Torres, 1994, p. ix). Freire's early texts, for example, resound with the echoes and moods of the political and educational conflicts of the early 1960s in Brazil, conflicts which will lead to Freire's enforced exile. While his most famous text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1996a) tends to opt for a more universalist-humanist perspective, it is clear, as we will see from a reading of *Education as The Practice of Freedom* (Freire, 2005a), that Freire developed these ideas and concepts very much out of the crucible of a Brazilian society struggling with the damaging legacy of Portuguese colonialism, and with its own complex internal politics.

Freire's own upbringing in Recife and Jaboatão in Northeastern Brazil (he was born in 1921) had already exposed him to the reality of poverty and oppression, as this was one of the poorest regions of the world. Freire's own relatively affluent family were thrown into disarray by the premature death of his father when Freire was just 13, and he only entered the *ginásio* (or high school) when he was 16, while his classmates were aged 11 or 12 (Gadotti, 1994, p. 3). This no doubt contributed to his 'great difficulty in assimilating any kind of formal education' (Gadotti, 1994, p. 3), a factor perhaps contributing to his uncommon sensitivity to the weaknesses of traditional education. His mother's strong religious faith was also central to Freire's formation, and he always remained a Catholic philosopher, although hardly orthodox. He consistently challenged and criticized what he saw as the oppression perpetrated by the traditionalist church, advocating instead what he termed the 'prophetic church' (Gadotti, 1994, p. 4), in a manner which drew him close to the Liberation Theology movements of Latin America (Gutierrez, 2001; Torres, 1993). His first wife Elza was also a constant source of inspiration to Freire, who acknowledges her 'solidarity' (Gadotti, 1994, p. 5) throughout the difficult years of imprisonment and exile, right up until her death in 1986. His second wife, Ana Maria Araújo Freire, also features as a key interlocutor and reader of his later work (Freire, 2004) and we can thus foreground the significance of inter-personal relationships in the intellectual formation of Freire. We shall see how this inter-personal dimension also influences how Freire writes and indeed the very form of his texts as his work develops, with increasing recourse to the dialogue form and the epistolary text.

Freire's critique of traditional Christianity, and traditionalist education, draws its sustenance from an extraordinary array of philosophical sources, what Elias refers to as a theoretical 'eclecticism' (Elias, 1994). But Marx's thinking, and especially the early Marx, is a constant recourse throughout Freire's texts, and we shall see how the former's 'Theses On Feuerbach' (Marx, 1992a) may be seen as paradigmatic in the development of Freire's criticisms of traditionalist or essentialist philosophy. Not the least of the enigmas surrounding Freire's thinking is, therefore, how he succeeds in being both a Christian and a Marxist at the same time.

Perhaps the key philosophical and political moment in Freire's early life is his development of a new method of adult literacy education, which

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work of such philosophers as Jacques Derrida (Derrida, 1978) and Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1998) for schooling and the relationship between education and culture has at long last become apparent. In the UK, this evolution of the discipline is being led by thinkers such as Paul Standish and Nigel Blake, who apply the insights of the theoretical work to the particular (changing) context of British education. The previously dominant analyticity and neo-Kantianism no longer seems so relevant in the context of an increasingly powerful politicization of education.

This insight, under the guise of the 'Critical Pedagogy' movement, is also being taken up in the USA. This movement, led by figures such as Peter McLaren, bell hooks and Henry Giroux, seeks to answer the needs of the increasing complexification of youth and urban culture, as they impact on education. *The key influence and acknowledged original source for this strand of pedagogical thinking is the work of Paulo Freire.* Under the tutelage of Freire, these philosophers recognize the need to pay homage to a romantic tradition of creativity and imagination in education, while reformulating some of the implicit utopianism of this romantic tradition through the addition of a healthy dose of urban and inter-cultural pedagogical experience. However, I want to claim that an analysis of Freire's work may also be seen as immensely significant not simply in the American context of education but also more globally. With regard to what Freire refers to as the 'Third World' (itself a constantly shifting concept in terms of its identification), we shall see how Freire's work is very explicit in its influence. But, as Freire's work constantly demonstrates and reiterates, the so-called First and Third worlds are in constant mutual interaction and reaction, and we shall also see how Freire's philosophy of education may be seen as increasingly relevant with regard to changes in the education systems of the UK and Ireland, among other countries. Within the UK, for example, alongside the practical connections, we can also see Freire's philosophy as connected to the evolution of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (hereafter CCCS), in its initial forays into adult education and then with regard to the study of youth subculture. This nexus of influence and evolution, which has looked back to Marx (Marx, 1992a), Nietzsche (Nietzsche, 1998) and Gramsci (Gramsci, 1988) among others, may be seen as developing, with significant degrees of tension, through the 1980s and 1990s work in the philosophy of education, both in the USA and the UK. These respective developments of Freire's work share significant affinities but also manifest tensions with regard to their interpretations of Freire.

I will explore how the British example of the CCCS may be viewed as pushing beyond the limits of Freire's work while maintaining important connections to the latter; such extension should not of course be seen as simply negative. In recent critical anthologies devoted to his work, Freire has acknowledged the need for such challenging of his own approach. However, criticism of both Freire and the developments of his work have come from other sources. One accusation posits that critical pedagogy has

taken an unnecessarily 'moralistic' stance on popular culture and contemporary subcultures, especially those associated with youth. This would seem to be at odds with the spirit of Freire's own work, which eschews formulaic or moralistic responses, in its emphasis on historicity. Some commentators have argued that such 'moralism' or rigid essentialism is already present in Freire's original work and is merely being mirrored in the critical pedagogy approaches. Another key aspect of such challenges to Freire and Freirean approaches concerns *the relation between modernity and postmodernity*. Freire's work has conventionally been seen as a kind of modernist 'emancipatory' approach. However, with regard to the interpretations of both critical pedagogy and the CCCS, and especially the latter and the development of a recent British continentalist philosophy of education, Freire's work has arguably been pushed in a direction which is too accepting of the dictates of postmodernism. As we will see below, in his later work, Freire argues for what he terms a 'progressive postmodernity' (Freire, 1992). However, the more or less whole-hearted embracing of Foucauldian and Lyotardian (Lyotard, 1986) discourse and politics by thinkers such as Standish (Dhillon and Standish, 2000) and Hall (Hall, 1996a) might be seen as betraying the more balanced perspective of Freire, who has always sought a *rapprochement* between the demands of an emancipatory modernism and a more ironical or deconstructive postmodernism.

Freire and Dewey

While Freire is often cited as a paradigmatic figure in the development of twentieth-century educational thought, his importance is often underestimated in favour of a foregrounding of the work of John Dewey (Dewey, 1973). Progressive educationalists have tended to look back to John Dewey as the great critic of traditionalism in schooling and the great visionary of a child-centred and active learning curriculum and school system. Moreover, Dewey and the wider movement of American pragmatism, including Charles Pierce and particularly William James, may also be seen as formative for the Vygotskian development of 'constructivist' learning theory in educational psychology (which has been such an unquestioned influence in recent Irish and global education). All of these thinkers share a modernist (and romantic) faith in individual human reason and democratic community. However, as Giroux and Stanley Aronowitz have pointed out in their text *Postmodern Education* (Giroux and Aronowitz, 1992), much of what passes for enlightened education and democracy in these times under the names of Dewey and Vygotsky seems hardly worthy of the title. This pragmatist and constructivist legacy has (arguably) failed to deal with the subtleties of contemporary culture and education. For Giroux and Aronowitz, these philosophies, whether through distortion or through contradictions internal to their own rationale, have become congealed into pedagogic instrumentalisms.

This issue of instrumentalism in education will be a recurring theme of this book. Oftentimes, this new epoch of technicism and instrumentalism is associated with the development of the 'postmodern' era in society and culture (for example, Jean-François Lyotard's text *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* becomes exemplary). Thus, such a pedagogical ethos (mostly associated with 'managerialism' and with 'rigorous assessment') seems to have taken on a kind of paradigmatic significance for those who wish to mark a clear demarcation between high modernity and the supposedly new epoch of postmodernity. Moreover, this rupture in epistemological reference is also seen as having revolutionary ethical and political implications for the way in which we understand knowledge and its connection to people's lives. Here, education is one of the crucial processes at stake. It is easy to jump (or it seems easy to jump) from Lyotardian performativity to the more recent paradigm shift in educational thinking and management, towards a new technicism and hegemony of positivistic assessment. There are undoubted connections in this context. For example, as we know, 'performativity' is one of the key terms, one of the key values, of the new management in education, what Fiachra Long has referred to in a recent essay (although not specifically in relation to Lyotard) as the 'rubricist' paradigm (Long, 2008). This ideological approach has also been aligned with a kind of New Right technocratic thinking as in Daniel Bell's *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society* (Bell, 1973), and comes to stand for a postmodern exemplary hybrid of technicism, individualism and amoralism. However, for Giroux and Aronowitz, it is more appropriate to lay the blame for this reductionistic approach to pedagogy at the feet of modernism than postmodernism. In addition, their understanding of the latter involves a *redirection* of the former's potential, away from what they see as this more instrumentalist legacy.

Taking Dewey as an exemplary modernist, they state: 'postmodernism cannot be a simple rejection of modernity; rather, it involves a different modulation of its themes and categories' (Giroux and Aronowitz, 1992, p. 59). This different modulation is itself a response to the new vista which faces educationalists today. Taking the Irish educational context as an example, we may say that while the 1999 Primary School Curriculum (NCCA, 1999) instituted Deweyean principles of democratic education in Irish schools, much remains to be done at the level of the proper implementation of this curriculum in practice. While the talk may be Deweyean, the constraints on practice due to increased content and the multiplied roles of the individual teacher may often revert back to a more traditionalist ideology (Burke, 2007). We may also say, however, that even the proper implementation of Deweyean principles in practice may not be enough. Perhaps more fundamentally, we need to recognize the dawning of a 'different modulation'.

It is just such a 'different modulation' which this book seeks to foreground and explore through a detailed and rigorous analysis of the work of Paulo

Freire. I will argue that it is Freire's vision of education, perhaps more than that of Dewey, that has become increasingly relevant in a pedagogical context of increased diversity and tension, and a global political context of increasing stress on 'social movements', especially within the context of the Third World. Always alert to the specific contexts of the Third World, what makes Freire astute is his ability to see such contexts not in isolation but as significantly connected to the political and pedagogical sites of the First World. More and more, this seems to be an increasingly prescient insight. For example, in the more practical contexts of education and schooling, the contemporary (Irish) realities of disenfranchised youth, multicultural classrooms, linguistic diversity and conflicting ethoi, it appears that Dewey's own romantic vision of education may need to be re-evaluated. Garrison and Neiman refer to the 'poetic' pedagogy of Dewey and William James (Garrison and Nieman, 2003). It is no doubt time to look to how a rather different pedagogical poetics (for example, that of Freire) might inspire our conception of education.

Freire's own evolution and auto-critique

In this book, I want to look at the nature of Freire's highly significant influence and at Freire's relevance to the contemporary analysis of education and culture, most especially as these relate to the politicization of education and culture. I will argue that Freire's own intellectual development demonstrates significant self-critique, early to late, but that there still remain tensions in his work which are unresolved. As Freire notes, 'If you were to ask me, "are you attempting to put into practice the concepts you described in your book [*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*]?", of course I am, but in a manner in keeping with the times' (Freire and Torres, 1994, p. 106). Freire has thus always sought to evolve his own work and challenge his own presuppositions in the name of a radically historicized understanding of the nature of philosophical dialogue and dialectic (close, as we shall see, to the Platonic wellsprings of *elenchus* or 'refutation', constantly putting one's own position under interrogation). I will look at the origins and development of Freire's extraordinarily influential and profound philosophy of education, which sought to do justice to traditional ethical and spiritual concerns while also coming to terms with the most radical and revolutionary of contemporary events and ideas. Developing out of a complicated symbiosis between Christian and Marxist thought, Freire also sought to take on board the insights of existentialism and psychoanalysis. Freire's work is also notable for its constant emphasis on the need for *praxis*, for a practical exploration of the relation between philosophy and the world, so as to bring about real and progressive change in people's lives. In this measure, his influence has extended well beyond the academy, and has been the inspiration for significant political and revolutionary movements throughout the world.

Development of sections and chapters

Part One of the book – entitled 'Paulo Freire: origins and development' – will consist of four chapters which look at the genealogy of Freire's thinking, early to late. In Chapter 1, entitled 'From sectarianism to radicalization and *conscientização*: the politics of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*', I look in detail at Freire's most famous and influential text. In this chapter, I focus on the political dimension to this work. For Freire, education and politics are always inextricably connected; education is always a political process through and through. Here, I look at what sense we can make of the political background to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, with Chapter 1 of that text being perhaps Freire's most explicitly political writing of this period. Employing the themes of 'sectarianism and radicalization' and *conscientização* (conscientization), I will explore how these concepts originate in his work, how they develop from an eclectic series of influences, but also how Freire operationalizes them in his own specifically powerful way. Moreover, these are concepts and themes which recur throughout Freire's work (as we shall see), often with slightly different inflections and 'modulations', depending on the context of the work, but always in some way returning to the original discussion in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In Chapter 2, entitled 'From banking education to problem-posing education in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*', I explore how Freire begins to make the links between education and politics. This is a book which is primarily focused on Freire's educational vision and, while in Chapter 1 we saw how, for Freire, education and politics are ultimately inextricable, we can also delineate the contours of Freire's own view of the specific challenges and dimensions of pedagogy. In this chapter, I explore this issue through Freire's famous and hugely influential distinction between what he calls 'banking' and 'problem-posing' education. In looking at banking education, I pay particular attention to what Freire calls the 'Teacher–Student contradiction' and the 'A–J of Banking Education', while with regard to his problem-posing alternative, I explore the nature of *freedom* in education for Freire, both for teacher and student. As we will see, this is never understood as a freedom in isolation, but rather as a valuation of freedom which takes account of the dialectical relationship between freedom and authority.

One of the problems in the secondary literature on Freire is that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* gets such an extraordinary deal of attention while Freire's many other texts may often seem neglected. This is often based on the perception that Freire's work is consistent in its philosophical principles and ideas. While there is truth to the latter view, and while *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is indeed an extraordinary text, too much attention to it and too little attention to Freire's other (highly voluminous) work can underestimate the degree of differentiation to be found within Freire's *oeuvre*. This refers not simply to Freire's texts written after *Pedagogy of*

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Chapter 6 explores a significant episode in the development and history of Freire's work, namely his return to Brazil in the 1990s as Secretary for Education in *São Paulo*. One dimension to this story is the personal aspect, the sense of a man who had worked so hard to make his country a better and more equal place to live, exiled and brutalized by a regime which had interest only in its own power. However, Freire's return signals a revolutionary change in Brazil, accompanied by the increasingly significant role which the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores)* has in Brazilian politics (a party which Freire was involved in co-forming). My focus in this chapter will be on Freire's work in the educational sector in São Paulo, which as always with Freire, cannot be separated out from his political understanding and philosophy. What is most striking about Freire's work in São Paulo is its extraordinary fidelity to the Freirean principle of *praxis* – practice and theory working in symbiosis and reciprocal challenge. We are also lucky to have a very experientially and philosophically rich analysis of Freire's work in Brazil available to us in the shape of the work which Carlos Torres and others put together on this period (O'Cadiz *et al.*, 1998). I will have significant recourse to O'Cadiz *et al.* in this chapter, but I will also contextualize the São Paulo period in relation to Freire's work as a whole. Throughout Freire's life, whether in Brazil and Chile initially, or later in Tanzania and Guinea-Bissau, among other countries, Freire has practised what he preached, has walked the talk, but in São Paulo we have perhaps the most extraordinary and evocative of these examples.

Freire's influence on both theory and practice in education has been monumental and, alongside John Dewey, he is perhaps the most significant educational thinker and practitioner of the twentieth century. A sustained analysis of this influence would require many volumes but, in Chapter 7, I conclude the book with an exploration of two particularly significant strands of this influence, in the work of critical pedagogy and the Birmingham CCCS. Chapter 7 is entitled 'Postmodernist tension and creativity in Paulo Freire's educational legacy: from critical pedagogy to the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies'. Here, I look first at how Freire's legacy has been developed in the USA, through the work of Peter McLaren (McLaren, 1994), Henry Giroux (Giroux, 2000) and bell hooks (hooks, 1994) among others. As with all of Freire's work, this influence is not without contestation or differentiation, but ultimately I argue for the vibrancy of this strand of thought. Second, I explore a more neglected connection to Freire's work (also influential on critical pedagogy itself) – the work of the Birmingham CCCS. Here, I pay particular attention to the work of Stuart Hall (one of the original founders of the CCCS) and that of Paul Willis, famous for his *Learning to Labour* (Willis, 1981) text. In both cases, there are affinities and disaffinities with the work of Freire, but again the work of the CCCS exemplifies the relevance of Freire's philosophy of education not simply for current debates in the USA but also in the UK and indeed more globally, cutting across as I have argued (and

Freire constantly argued) divisions between Third and First worlds. As the 'revolutions of democracy' continue to spread across the Arab world, from Tunisia to Egypt and to Libya, and as Western societies continue to struggle with issues of accountability and justice, Freire's insight and wisdom seem stronger and more of a needed resource for us than ever.

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PART ONE

Paulo Freire – origins and development

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CHAPTER ONE

From sectarianism to radicalization and *conscientização*

The politics of Pedagogy of the Oppressed

The influence of Marx on Freire

This first chapter focuses on Freire's most famous text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1996a), originally published in the seminal year of 1968, which is also one of his earliest books. This text has received the most attention and discussion among scholars and also has arguably been the text which has influenced the most practical application of Freire's work, whether in terms of his own work, in places such as Guinea-Bissau (Freire, 1978) or as Secretary of Education in São Paulo (O'Cadiz *et al.*, 1998), but also in terms of the take-up of his work by political and educational groups, especially in Latin America. As we will see, this hermeneutic foregrounding of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is mostly justified, as it is a text of extraordinary philosophical richness and is especially effective in combining a philosophical and pedagogical emphasis. Moreover, it places education firmly within the ambit of politics and a revolutionary politics which seeks to redirect the vision of the West *vis-à-vis* the Third World. In this, it has strong similarities, for example, to Frantz Fanon's iconoclastic *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, 1986b) and we will look at these similarities in more detail below. However, it may be argued that Freire's text has been the more influential insofar as it speaks not simply to a political or

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there is for change under the existing structures (of oppression). If ideology is all-encompassing, then there can be no possibility of authentic resistance and several Marxists seem to move towards this rather pessimistic conclusion. Pierre Bourdieu, for example, argues that 'the capacity for resistance, as a capacity of consciousness, was overestimated. It is clear that people are prepared to accept much more than we would have believed' (Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1994, p. 268). Althusser, through a different approach, seems to come to similar conclusions (Althusser, 1994), while simultaneously invoking a distinction between 'ideology' and 'science', which seems to reinforce the chasm between the 'masses' and the 'intellectuals'. For Althusser, the philosopher has access to a non-ideological knowledge which is not accessible to the common people. Again, Freire's work may be seen as strongly opposed to the latter claims, in all Freire's emphasis on, and affirmation of, 'popular' or ordinary consciousness, while still not accepting the exact terms of reference of the popular understanding. We can see this as strongly influenced by Gramsci's more positive understanding (Gramsci, 1988) of popular ideology:

> Popular consciousness is not to be dismissed as purely negative but its more progressive and more reactionary features must instead be carefully distinguished. The function of the organic intellectuals is to forge the links between theory and ideology, creating a two-way passage between political analysis and popular experience.
>
> (Eagleton, 1994, p. 198)

Third, and finally for our purposes in this context, we can foreground the Marxist understanding of the *concept of the subject*. As Balibar makes clear (Balibar, 2007, p. 29ff.), the question 'What is man?' may be seen as a relatively recent philosophical development, associated with the 'theoretical humanism' of the late eighteenth century. Balibar sees Kant, von Humboldt and Feuerbach as especially paradigmatic in this context, and also sees Marx as instituting a break with this humanist tradition (Balibar, 2007, p. 29) in his 'Theses on Feuerbach' (Marx, 1992a): 'But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each individual. In its reality, it is the ensemble of social relations' (Marx, 1992a, p. 423). This text has often been seen as an example of the anti-subjective thrust of Marxism, such that Marx would have sought to, in effect, annihilate the individual or subjectivity. However, Balibar reads this text differently and it is this reading which we need to keep in mind when we come to explore Freire's understanding of subjectivity below. Whereas Althusser sees this as an example of Marx's privileging of the 'totality of the system over the individual historical subjects' (Kearney, 1986, p. 302), for Balibar it rather shows that Marx, while accepting the reality of subjectivity, none the less sees such subjectivity as ultimately constituted in the 'multiple and active *relations* which individuals establish with each other (whether of language, labour, love,

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all authentic communication. This was a paradigmatic theme of Freire's work even before *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In his early text *Extension or Communication* (Freire, 2005b), he demystifies all aid or helping relationships. He sees an implicit ideology of paternalism, social control and nonreciprocity between experts and 'helpees', and refers to the oppressive character of all nonreciprocal relationships (Freire, 2005b). We will look in detail at this earlier context of Freire's thinking in chapter 3. Here, I want to look at *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* specifically. In the following section, I will explore Freire's seminal 'Preface' in more detail, as well as his crucial conceptions of 'conscientization' and 'banking'.

Conscientização (conscientization) and Freire's progressivism

Already in the Preface to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire has introduced some of the key foundational concepts which provide a backdrop to his famous distinction between 'banking' and 'problem-posing' education. With regard to the distinction between 'sectarian' and 'radical' that I have just discussed, Freire makes clear that his text is addressed to one of these groups only: 'the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the introductory outlines of which are presented in the following pages, is a task for radicals; it cannot be carried out by sectarians' (Freire, 1996a, p. 19). But what Freire is advocating here is not some kind of dogmatism of its own. The open-ended aspect of his work, which we will be seeing developed in more detail in later chapters, as well as the evolution of a loyal but none the less critical tradition of neo-Freireanism, is exemplified already here in the opening Preface: 'I will be satisfied if among the readers of this work, there are those sufficiently critical to correct mistakes and misunderstandings, to deepen affirmations and to point out aspects I have not perceived' (Freire, 1996a, p. 21). This aspect looks forward to the work of Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux and bell hooks, amongst others (McLaren and Leonard, 1993a; hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2000). In addition, despite all the analysis of concrete situations and contexts, a tendency which, if anything, is exacerbated in Freire's later work (for example, the tendency towards personal testimony in *Letters to Cristina: Reflections on My Life and Work* (Freire, 1996b) or in *Pedagogy of Hope: Revisiting Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1992)), there is also a kind of romanticism or utopianism which remains. As Freire observes: 'from these pages, I hope at least the following will endure; my trust in the people and my faith in men and in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love' (Freire, 1996a, p. 19).

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they may disagree with me in part or whole.' Freire seems to be designating here a fundamentally progressive or 'progressivist' element of his thinking. As some commentators have argued, progressivism is never an absolutist or fixed philosophical position but is best understood in the sense of a specific reaction to the crisis of the times (Darling and Nordenbo, 2003), and Freire's work can helpfully be seen in this light. It can only be properly understood, on this reading, through taking account of its time, place and contextual positioning, although that is far from saying that it is simply reducible to those coordinates. In the following section I want to look at how Freire develops this progressivist mode of thinking in a vehement critique in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* of what he terms 'banking education' and a militant espousal of what he terms 'problem-posing education'.

Freire and 1968

Freire's prose has a way of alternately confronting problems directly and elliptically. Each sentence carries a heavy weight. Freire often comments on his love of language and his concern with the 'form' of his texts, and with the process of writing itself. In this, we see a Freirean connection to the work of postmodernist philosophy, most especially with the work of Jacques Derrida (Derrida, 1982). We have looked at how the Preface to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is important in a number of respects, but especially insofar as it delineates a key distinction between the concepts of 'sectarianism' and 'radicalization'. As his thinking develops in Chapter 1, we see Freire dealing with issues at both a macro- and micro-level. He begins by foregrounding the problematic of 'humanization' which will be so central to the book as a whole. He states the following: 'while the problem of humanization has always been, from an axiological point of view, man's central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern' (Freire, 1996a, p. 25). The translator's note is again helpful in clarifying the meaning of Freire's notion of 'axiological': 'An axiological viewpoint is one which involves the ethical, the aesthetic and the religious' (translator's note; Freire, 1996a, p. 25). This notion of the 'axiological' is significant in Freire's work and we will return to it at several points. This seems important in at least two respects. In the first case, Freire is foregrounding the interconnections between the 'ethical, aesthetic and the religious'. Although not cited here, it would seem that he is looking back at Kierkegaard's schema of existential life, or life's three stages of the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious (Kierkegaard, 1992; Gardiner, 2002). However, unlike in Kierkegaard, where we get a sense of hierarchy between these three levels, here we just get a sense that each phase or stage is indispensable to the whole. This makes sense of Freire's continual return to the aesthetic and to art as key components of his thinking, and also the foregrounding of the religious looks to his involvement and affinity

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aspects of Freire's work is the way in which he sees this as being a dialectical relationship. This dialectic works both ways, making the oppressor and oppressed co-dependents rather than opposed. On the one side, the process is not simply positive for the oppressor. Rather, there is an ultimately negative aspect for those doing the oppressing, a dependency which gives the lie to the supposed autonomous power which oppressing is meant to give them. On the other side, the oppressed are not simply innocent victims, but are also complicit with the oppressor in the oppression. Thus the process of oppression, the *pedagogy of the oppressed* per se, is not a one-way process. Rather, it is enigmatic and, in some key respects, mutual. While Freire brings an original analysis to bear on this issue, none the less this dialectic of oppressor–oppressed does look back to Hegel's master–slave dialectic (Hegel, 1979). 'Dehumanization. Which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also [though in a different way] those who have stolen it' (Freire, 1996a, p. 20). This leaves us with some interesting questions regarding the motivation of the oppressors, but it will also connect with Freire's discussion later in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* of the concepts and processes of 'sadism' and 'masochism'. Freire develops this problematic with an appeal to the concept of 'distortion' and the sense of a distortion of something that is a 'vocation'. Freire is also adamant that this is not just a question of which perspective you take, as in some form of historical and interpretative relativism. Although 'dehumanization' occurs in history, it cannot be the historical vocation of humanity: 'but it is not an historical vocation. Indeed, to accept dehumanization as a historical vocation would lead to either cynicism or total despair' (Freire, 1996a, p. 26). The second point is also significant. Not only is it not a historical vocation but to accept this would lead to 'either cynicism or despair'. Freire's work is thus set up very clearly against both cynicism and despair.

Freire gives us again a sense of what his key struggles are in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: 'The struggle for humanization, for the emancipation of labour, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of human beings as persons' (Freire, 1996a, p. 26). Thus we have here a four-pronged assault to create a more positive ambition for humanity: humanization (which we have already spoken about), emancipation of labour (which refers to Marx's theory of labour value (Marx, 1992b)), the overcoming of alienation (a key concept which owes something to Marx and Hegel, and indeed to Plato and the Allegory of the Cave (Plato, 1961)) and the 'affirmation of human beings as persons'. For Freire, this is all the result of an 'unjust order' (Freire, 1996a, p. 26) which 'engenders violence in the oppressors' (Freire, 1996a, p. 26). The *violence of the oppressors* is also foregrounded as another key concept for Freire.

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a question of reform vs. revolution, where reform would come off badly by always containing a residue of the old oppressiveness. For Freire, even revolution itself runs this risk, in theory and in practice. Freire refers to revolution as being about a 'process of liberation'. Perhaps this is the key – what we have here is a *process* rather than a destination.

The fear of freedom

But what is standing in the way to some kind of proper or authentic humanization, if even revolution has taken place? Freire introduces a concept which seems to derive from a fellow thinker, Erich Fromm, what he terms the 'fear of freedom' (it is here introduced in quotation marks, indicating the citation of Fromm) (Fromm, 2001). This notion of a 'fear of freedom' (Freire, 1996a, p. 28) is developed by Freire specifically in relation to the oppressed and their fear of overcoming the position of being oppressed. Thus, in the first instance, this fear constitutes a reason or a motivation to stay oppressed, to maintain the status quo and to be complicit in this maintenance. However, it may also relate to a tendency to 'desire the role of the oppressor' (Freire, 1996a, p. 28). What Freire seems to be suggesting, then, is that the oppressed have only negative reasons for wishing to become the oppressors. There is nothing affirmative or positive in this desire. Freire relates this to a psychological internalization of the oppressors' ideology. 'The oppressed, having internalised the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom' (Freire, 1996a, p. 29). While the analysis points towards the value of freedom for the oppressed, we should remember that while regarded as a positive notion, freedom remains a contested ideal. Freire tries to explicate what exactly he means by freedom when he says, 'freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility. Freedom is acquired by conquest and not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly' (Freire, 1996a, p. 29). But he is again unequivocal in his dual tendency to see freedom as linked to human essence and also to seeing the possibility of freedom as indispensable to human flourishing, as the very condition to make human flourishing a reality: 'freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion' (Freire, 1996a, p. 29).

The notion of a pedagogy of the oppressed

It is at this point that, for the first time, Freire introduces the specific concept of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a notion that will have such significance in his own name. At the root of this pedagogy must be an acknowledgement

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symptoms of a postmodern turn in his work. But whereas there are definite changes of emphasis and context in Freire's work, early to middle to late, none the less perhaps what is most striking is the continuity in terms of purpose and conceptuality. We have already seen Freire distinguish his thought very clearly from both materialism and idealism, or at least seek to position his thought in a more complicated relationship to both. Here, now, he also wishes to evolve his discussion of subjectivity, and its role in the political and pedagogical struggle. Certainly, Freire is clear that we need to avoid individualism or simply individualistic gestures, whether charitable or otherwise, but here he is also concerned that we do not derive from this some kind of complete disavowal of subjectivity. Freire is keen to stress the irreducibility of a certain kind of subjectivity here:

> to present this radical demand for the objective transformation of reality is not to dismiss the role of subjectivity in the struggle to change structures ... Neither objectivism nor subjectivism nor yet psychologism is propounded here, but rather subjectivity and objectivity in constant dialectical relationship.
>
> (Freire, 1996a, p. 32)

Marx and subjectivity

What is also significant about this section of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is that Freire is not simply intent on distinguishing his own work here as relying on a notion of subjectivity but also with offering revisionist accounts of Marx's own thought, with which he obviously feels most affinity at this point, connecting explicitly with our earlier analysis of this relation. 'Marx does not espouse such a dichotomy, nor does any other critical, realistic thinker' (Freire, 1996a, p. 33). What Marx criticized and scientifically destroyed was not subjectivity but subjectivism and psychologism. Without subjectivity, it seems that there is no real chance of transformation, political-educational or otherwise. But this is not subjectivity in some kind of vacuum or tending towards the dangers of narcissism. What is at stake in this context is oppression, and the possibility of a liberation from this oppression, which can only come about through critical awareness of such oppression. This, it would seem, requires subjectivity and subjects, because, without subjects, who exactly is going to be able to have awareness of oppression and critical insight? Central to this and indeed to Freire's wider project is the operationalization of this subjective critical insight in action, and this action must take place between subjects, who exist in solidarity, a notion we can connect with Marx's conception of the subject as constituted by its 'relations', which he elaborates in 'The Theses on Feuerbach' (Marx, 1992a). Such relationality between subjects becomes fully evident only in action, in practice, which again develops Marx's key claim from 'The Theses

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seduced and/or dominated. Freire invokes Erich Fromm's (Fromm, 2001) analysis in some detail in terms of his key distinction between 'being and having' and the concomitant understanding of a sadistic consciousness which seeks to possess everything and which is thus necrophiliac. In a short space, Freire has thus invoked three key concepts of his analysis: *sadism*, *masochism* and *necrophilia*. Freire also links this (in almost Heideggerian mode) to the advent or at least the intensification of science and technology. He also cites in the footnotes Herbert Marcuse's key work on 'dominant forms of social control', relating to Marcuse's text *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse, 2002) (Freire, 1996a, p. 42). Once more, there is a sense that these manipulative societal controls won't be easy to overcome with a re-emphasis on the duality of oppressed consciousness and the admiration of the colonized for the colonizer (Freire often speaks of this as the way in which the oppressed 'introject' the oppressor consciousness). Here, Freire additionally cites Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth* and Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Freire, 1996a, pp. 44–45).

The subjectivity of the oppressed

So is this oppression insurmountable? Should we see the manifestation of the violence of the oppressed as somehow a last cry in the wilderness, a useless and pointless exercise in nihilism? No, Freire emphatically answers, and the ultimate response and answer seems to lie in *dialogue*. There can be no question of vanguard leaderships or rule by an intellectual or political elite. 'The conviction of the oppressed that they must fight for their liberation is not a gift bestowed by their revolutionary leadership; but the result of their own *conscientização* (conscientization): the oppressed must reach this conviction as Subjects and not as objects' (Freire, 1996a, p. 49). This consciousness-raising will hope to take people out of their situation as objects among objects, as things. This of course is a thematic of objectification or reification which extends right through the neo-Marxist heritage, but it also raises a potential problem for Freire here. That is, Freire needs to be careful of this ambivalance or ambiguity between two ways of interpreting the political and educational situation which runs through his work: (1) That all people are reduced to things in some blanket kind of objectification and that alienation is full and complete; and (2) that this domination is only partial. It would seem that Freire needs to avoid the talk of total domination, but he is also right to point to the revolutionary method as itself problematic in this respect. If Freire is orthodox in the ambiguity regarding the dominant/non-dominating tendencies, he is less orthodox and more progressive in recognizing that the revolutionary pedagogy itself is often complicit with reactionary forces and simply serves to consolidate class and oppressive interest. As he says in a phrase which will become very influential for bell hooks, for example: 'they cannot enter the struggle

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on a revolutionary pedagogy owes a great deal to Freire's experience of political alienation and exile from Brazil. Freire says exactly this in his later retrospective analysis of this situation in *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1992). In the very revolutionary flavour of the pedagogical process as described, however, we should not lose sight of Freire's recognition that education is a process which must be understood in its own right, as well as in its connections to politics.

As the Introduction explored, Freire is a key figure in the transformation of philosophy of education (as a discipline) from being neo-Kantian and rationalist (as well as individualist) to being grounded in a more socio-political understanding of pedagogy (Blake *et al.*, 2003b, p. 5). One way to understand this move is to speak of a transition from an *analytic* to a more *continentalist* philosophical framework, while another (more politicized reading) is to view it as a transition from a more liberal to a more social-democratic understanding of education, or a move from a modernist to a postmodernist view. Freire aligns his own work in Brazil with the Workers' Party, which describes its ideology as 'democratic socialist'. Another important issue in this context concerns what Blake *et al.* refer to as 'the ambiguity of liberalism between political and economic forms' (Blake *et al.*, 2003b, p. 5) in the measure to which economic liberalism tended to be grounded in a 'social and educational authoritarianism' (Blake *et al.*, 2003b, p. 5). This latter becomes synonymous with what Freire will describe as the machinations of 'banking education'.

Blake and colleagues (Blake *et al.*, 2003b, p. 14) point to three key elements which might inform any renewed understanding of the discipline. First, a concern for language and for conceptual clarity, with more connections made to postmodern developments in theory. Second, an interdisciplinary dialogue between the disciplines of education (philosophy, psychology, sociology, history) where the philosophy of education can play a dialogical and distinctive role, but where it can no longer be regarded as the master discipline as it has been in the past. Third and more ambitiously, philosophy of education can engage in 'the exploration of what education might be or might become, a task which grows more compelling as the politics of the obvious becomes more oppressive' (Blake *et al.*, 2003b, p. 14). As we will see, in each of these three ways, but especially in the last case, Freire's work will take up this challenge, both originally and creatively.

With regard to their renewed vision for the philosophy of education as a discipline, Blake and colleagues have referred rather negatively to what they see as a failure to interrogate the very concept of educational practice itself in more recent American critical pedagogy approaches, which claim to take their cue from Freire's work (Blake *et al.*, 2003b, p. 50). They describe the critical pedagogy approaches as simultaneously 'utopian' and 'instrumental', insofar as they seem to eschew philosophical interrogation and self-critique in favour of the positing of a more ideological, politicized project. We will examine in Chapter 7 whether this interpretation of

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banking education maintains and even stimulates the contradiction through the following attitudes and practices, which mirror oppressive society as a whole' (Freire, 1996a, p. 54). We will see below how important this is in terms of delineating very clearly that any attempt to liberate human beings from the banking system or society must divorce itself completely from any banking ideology or psychology. The threat is twofold; the first, and a threat which has plagued Marxism in its most politically institutional form, is that, in the idea of a certain transitional period, similar structures of power can be maintained in the revolutionary period from what went before (although obviously with a change in who holds power). The emphasis here is on a transitional phase. The problem historically, if not also in principle, has related to the transitional phase becoming a more permanent state of affairs. This has been the main basis of the historical and ideological feud between Marxism and anarchism, for example, that between Marx himself and Mikhail Bakunin (Irwin, 2010c). At the root of this issue is the question of authority and its connection to government and power. Even if only defended temporarily, the transitional 'dictatorship' highlights a residual elitism in Marxism (or at least this was Bakunin's claim).

The second issue relates to a more invidious residue of the 'oppressor mentality' even after such a transitional phase. Again, we are back to Hegel and the relationship of dependency which exists between master and oppressed. Freire is not just talking in the abstract but also in terms of several examples of revolutions which have already taken place or are in the process of erupting. In each case (and he cites in this context Fanon (Fanon, 1986b) and Memmi (Memmi, 1975) most especially), there is the acknowledgement that the oppressed maintain an ambivalent relationship to the power of the oppressor, which they resist but also admire and, paradoxically (in some cases at least), seek to emulate. Thus, for an authentic revolution to take place, what is required is a genuine move beyond the oppressor consciousness as mimicked by the oppressed in any attempt to revolutionize a society.

Freire's primary concern in Chapter 2 is none the less education rather than politics (although they are, on his terms, ultimately indissociable). Freire refers to the *mirroring* of the educational problems in the society as a whole (Freire, 1996a, p. 54). This concept of 'mirroring' is often used by Freire but it may, and has been, criticized, for an excessive literalism or simplification in the understanding of the relation between education and society/politics (McLaren, 1994). We should also note that some commentators at least regard Freire's positions on this relation between education and society as changing from his early to his late work (for example, Paddy Quinn's analysis of Freire's supposed turn to a later non-revolutionary 'reformism' (Quinn, 2010)). It should also be added that this relation bears somewhat on an even more significant relation between (economic) base and (socio-cultural) superstructure, where Freire inherits a complex Marxist heritage (Althusser, 1994). At this point in the text, Freire delineates the key

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would seem to be somewhat simplistic. It is also a theme he complexifies in his later work, especially in his confrontation with postmodernism, through the work of Peter McLaren among others (Freire, 1993; McLaren and Lankshear, 1994b).

Freire invokes in this context the existentialist distinction between 'beings for others' and 'beings for themselves' which he relates to 'student *conscientização*' or conscientization. 'The oppressed have been made "beings for others" ... the solution is not to "integrate" them into the structure of oppression but to transform that structure so that they can become "beings for themselves"' (Freire, 1996a, p. 55). He also makes the distinction between his thinking and a specific form of 'humanism' (Freire, 1996a, p. 54) of the banking approach; the latter masks the effort to turn women and men into automatons. This constitutes the very negation of their ontological vocation to be more fully human.

But how can such a liberation or a searching for emancipation begin or be generated in the first instance, especially if the process by which people are maintained in oppression is so powerful (those processes such as 'objectification', for example)? The key concept, for Freire, seems to be (as it was for Marx) 'contradiction': 'if men and women are searchers, and their ontological vocation is humanization, sooner or later they may perceive the contradiction in which banking education seeks to maintain them, and then engage themselves in the struggle for their liberation' (Freire, 1996a, p. 55). In the banking concept of education, there is a whole philosophy of *man and world* or *person and world* which is inherently contradictory. In this context, we might refer, as an example, to the complicated debate about Freire's use of language and the re-translation of *Pedagogy* to make it more feminist in its employment of language and predication (hooks, 1994).

The travesty of education under the banking system is that it *miseducates*. Instead of educating us into self-realization, it reinforces the problem of what Freire calls 'adaptation' and 'domination': 'education should make them more passive still, and adapt them to the world; the educated person is the adapted person, because he or she is a better "fit" for the world ... how little they question it' (Freire, 1996a, p. 55). There is a reference to Sartre's existentialism in a footnote. This reference invokes what Sartre calls the 'digestive' or 'nutritive' concept of education, in which knowledge is fed by the teacher to the students to fill them out (Freire, 1996a, p. 57). However, for Freire, this system seems to be in some inevitable process of breakdown or crisis.

Solidarity

In a language which in effect anticipates much of the more recent development of leftist and Marxist theory through figures especially associated with May 1968 (Rancière, Badiou, Balibar, etc.), Freire speaks of a

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and practice take the peoples' historicity as their starting point' (Freire, 1996a, p. 64). Again, we can see that the phenomenological and existential strands of thought have had an influence on Freire's thinking which he assimilates in his usual eclectic way, with the latter eclecticism having its advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are clear: a sense of contemporaneity and an absorption of some of the most important philosophical ideas of the time. This very eclecticism also reflects positively on Freire's own genuine affirmation of and fidelity to some kind of 'historicity'. Freire's own openness to different strands of 'new thought' is genuine and causes some difficulties for his own thinking insofar as it challenges the basis of the latter. It also shows Freire's willingness to evolve his own thought in terms of what he calls in *Pedagogy of Hope: Revisiting Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1992) 'new thought's new ways of thinking'. However, there is also a more potentially negative side to this eclecticism. In taking and borrowing many different theories from many different thinkers and reabsorbing them back into the very specific history of his own thought, Freire runs the risk of distorting the true meaning of these ideas and simply using them for his own purposes (Elias, 1994). There is a danger of reductionism here as well as a superficial appearance of openness, which masks a greater grand mastery (it is reminiscent of Thomas Aquinas' claim to have developed a *perennial philosophy* which can assimilate all that went before).

Moving back to Freire's conception of problem-posing education, we may say that there is also a crucial conception in this context of 'human being' as unfinished:

> problem- posing affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming; as unfinished, uncompleted beings in an unfinished reality. In this incompletion and this awareness lie the very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation, the unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity.
>
> (Freire, 1996a, p. 64)

Again, the resonances to Sartre and Husserl are powerful, and what does this tell us about the process of education itself? 'Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis; in order to be, it must become' (Freire, 1996a, p. 65).

Freire clarifies that underlying this notion of problem-posing and connected to his previous emphasis on historicity and consciousness, this must not be understood as in any way an idealism of consciousness. Rather, in an existentialist vein, we can never see people in this kind of abstraction: 'since people do not exist apart from the world, apart from reality, the movement must begin with the human–world relationship. Accordingly, the point of departure must always be with men and women in the here

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in earlier chapters – sadism and masochism, concepts also linked to Sartre and Fromm. It is love which brings us beyond fear, beyond the fear of freedom, as an act of courage. The emphasis on pathology indicates the psychoanalytic dimension of Freire's analysis, which owes a lot to Fromm (there are also Hegelian resonances in this discussion). As Freire notes, 'domination reveals the pathology of love; sadism in the dominator and masochism in the dominated. Because love is an act of courage not of fear, love is commitment to others' (Freire, 1996a, p. 70). We can clearly contrast Freire's reading of love and his analysis of relationality with, for example, that of Sartre's in *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre, 2003), the latter interpretation being far more negative and objectifying. For Sartre, in complete contrast, love is pathological.

Freire makes clear that this emphasis on love is not to be misunderstood as a naïve sentimentalism or romanticism (certainly, however, there are undoubtedly romantic elements to it). Rather, this thematic of love is connected to the theme of liberation and of dialogue. 'As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental. As an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation; it must generate other acts of freedom; otherwise, it is not love' (Freire, 1996a, p. 71). We see the connection between love and freedom, and whereas love might be accused of romanticism, the emphasis on freedom once again returns us to the problematic of liberalism (as discussed, for example, by Moseley, 2008). But for Freire, love is not possible in the current situation of oppression. In the context of dehumanization there is *a distinct lack of love*, an incapacity to love, which also connects with Freire's themes of sadism and masochism and brings us back to Fromm. 'Only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made impossible. If I do not love the world, if I do not love life, if I do not love people, I cannot enter into dialogue' (Freire, 1996a, p. 71). For Freire, this authentic dialogue which he is searching for will bring about what he terms the condition for 'encounter' (Freire, 1996a, p. 71): 'someone who cannot acknowledge himself to be as mortal as everyone else still has a long way to go before he can reach the point of encounter' (Freire, 1996a, p. 71). This is, for Freire, primarily a matter of 'naïve thinking' versus 'critical thinking' (Freire, 1996a, p. 71). On the side of naïve thinking, there is an attempted 'normalization', whereas what Freire terms critical thinking seeks rather the 'transformation of reality' (Freire, 1996a, p. 73). Freire quotes here from the philosophy of time: 'the goal will no longer be to eliminate the risk of temporality by clutching to guaranteed space but rather to temporalise space; a domain which takes shape as I act upon it' (Freire, 1996a, p. 73). This notion of the 'risk of temporality' is especially evocative and connects Freire to existentialism.

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Conclusion: is there a change of emphasis, a Freirean turn?

Paddy Quinn states in his essay 'Paulo Freire's Theory of Education as Political Transformation' (Quinn, 2010) that a change of emphasis takes place in Freire's later work. Quinn associates Freire's later philosophy with the next statement made at the discussion concerning university education in Mexico in 1984: 'Paulo Freire, one of the most important 20th century philosophers of education, at a conference on higher education in Mexico city in autumn 1984, insisted that he was never inclined to believe that education could be the lever for political revolution' (quoted Quinn, 2010, p. 83). Quinn goes on to elaborate why he considers this view to represent a paradigmatic change from Freire's earlier work:

> For those, who like myself have read his earlier works on education, especially *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Cultural Action for Freedom*, both published in the early 1970s, this claim seems at odds with his earlier view where the impression is given that a liberating education constitutes the central lever for revolutionary, political transformation.
> (Quinn, 2010, p. 83)

We have already discussed Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1996a) in great detail in the last two chapters. Often Freire's early work (if not indeed his corpus as a whole) is seen as defined by *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, as a text.

However, Freire has significant pre-*Pedagogy* work, and his work written immediately after *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, such as *Cultural Action for Freedom* (Freire, 1977), is also very significant in understanding some of the implicit assumptions of the educational and political philosophy contained in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Freire's subsequent intellectual and political development. As we will see, it is an oversimplification to regard Freire's work as, first, defined by *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and, second, as continuous in theme and perspective. While there are certainly consistencies in Freire's work, early to late, it is also the case that significant shifts of emphasis take place. Quinn's argument about just such a conflict in Freire's development is thus a useful way into the discussion of Freire's early work, other than *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and most especially his conception there of the relation between education and politics. It provides us with a useful hermeneutic framework to analyse Freire's early work and to contrast it with the evolution of his later work, which we will discuss in subsequent chapters. There, we will return to the claims of Quinn and other commentators concerning the supposed stark chasm between Freire's early and later work.

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'American readers of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* will find in *Education as The Practice of Freedom* the basic components of Freire's literacy method' (Goulet, 2005, p. viii). However, we must immediately make some qualifications. There is no Freirean method as such (in terms of a literacy method or any other method), as Freire tells us again and again. We might say that Freire's method is to disavow any kind of formulaic methodology. We will see this expressed in a most extraordinary way (exactly faithful to Freires' consistent philosophy) in his practical work at the Education Secretariat in Brazil in the 1990s (O'Cadiz *et al.*, 1998). Thus, when we look at his approach to literacy education, we are immediately struck by the multi-layered and explicitly interdisciplinary approach he takes to literacy education. Another key component is Freire's stress on the need for what he terms 'generative themes', and indeed a generative methodology, which must continuously be reinterrogated as we develop our understanding (and which constitutes a kind of *anti-methodology*). In addition, key to his approach is a *cooperative relationship* between teacher and student, where there is certainly a distinction between these roles, but here the teacher's role is more to problematize than to in any way provide an answer. It is arguable that, in such a practical–educational context, we can see the very same structure which Freire will later theorize more systematically in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and in his later texts. Elias, for example, sees the latter text as constituting an exploration of the 'post-literacy' phase of Freire's work, whereas *Education as the Practice of Freedom* is focused more specifically on the 'literacy' phase (Elias, 1994, p. 19).

Culture circle

Thus, as Elias (Elias, 1994, p.18) has shown, in Freire's early work we already see his radical pedagogical practice. We can cite the replacement of the concept of school or class with the notion of *culture circle* or the subversion of the teacher's role with the concept of a coordinator. We can cite this coordinator as becoming an 'educatee' and a concept of critical understanding which eschews abstraction and becomes embedded in real contexts of action. This is what Freire means by freedom, and this approach also stresses his conception of a *fundamental equality* between teacher and student. 'Education in the Freire model is the practice of liberty because it frees the educator no less than the educatees from the twin thrall-dom of silence and monologue' (Goulet, 2005, p. viii). We know that Freire's approach to literacy education was highly successful in Brazil in the early 1960s (this indeed was the main reason why Freire was exiled). This success was not, however, based on some kind of literalist education (Araújo Freire and Macedo, 1998, p. 19). Rather, literacy education for Freire is always intrinsically socio-political in orientation and it emphasizes the necessity of self-transformation. In addition, Freire's method is always linked to

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starts by observing, 'to be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world. It is to experience that world as an objective reality, independent of oneself, capable of being known' (Freire, 2005a, p. 3). Freire contrasts the human situation with that of the animal: 'animals submerged within reality, cannot relate to it. They are creatures of mere contacts, but the human being's separateness from and openness to the world distinguishes him or her as a being of relationships' (Freire, 2005a, p. 3). This is an interesting way to look at the human and it coheres with much of the emphasis, for example, in a key existentialist text such as Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism* (Sartre, 2007). The human is individual before anything else: our *existence* (or ex-*is*tence) is precisely, etymologically and semantically, an ability to stand outside ourselves and our world, which animals are fundamentally incapable of, at least on this interpretation. For Freire, 'human beings, unlike animals, are not only in the world but *with* the world' (Freire, 2005a, p. 3; italics in original). Not the least of the problematic aspects in this context, for Freire, might be the tension which exists between his sense of the human as subject and his sense of the human as a 'being-in-the-world' or with the world, which is also *with others*. For Freire, these seem not to be mutually exclusive but complementary: we are subjects *and* fundamentally inter-subjective. One of our key questions to return to will be to what extent, if any, there is indeed a tension here or not.

Second, this also relates to the whole issue of 'critical consciousness' or conscientization as Freire calls it elsewhere: 'human beings relate to their world in a critical way; they apprehend the objective data of their reality (as well as the ties that link one datum to another)' (Freire, 2005a, p. 3). For Freire, this is not simply critical consciousness, *it is also, precisely, literacy*: political, social and philosophical literacy which allows people to both read the word and 'read the world'. This capacity is not something that always exists for human beings in whichever culture. Rather, it depends upon the literacy of the culture which allows critical consciousness to thrive. This then is 'humanization', a possibility that, it seems, is denied to non-human societies. However, it is also a possibility of literacy that is denied to humans if the culture has a tendency towards education as domination (Freire, 2005a, p. 3). In 'illiterate cultures, the "weight" of such illiteracy hinders people from having such a critical consciousness' (Freire, 2005a, p. 3). Crucial here is an understanding of time or temporality: 'the dimensionality of time is one of the fundamental discoveries in the history of human culture. In illiterate cultures, the weight of apparently limitless time hindered people from reaching that consciousness of temporality and thereby achieving a sense of their historical nature' (Freire, 2005a, p. 3). Temporality and a consciousness of temporality is thus something unique to the human being's sense of reality and this connects with Freire's ongoing thematic of 'historicity', which he inherits from phenomenology and existential phenomenology (Sartre, 2003). This possibility is absent in animals: 'a cat has no historicity; his inability to emerge from time submerges him in a

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'These myths turn against him or her' – this is undoubtedly true.

But Freire is also insightful in terms of how individuals panic in these situations in an effort to survive this challenging context: 'On the other hand, fearing solitude, they gather in groups lacking in any critical and loving ties which might transform them into a cooperating unit, into a true community' (Freire, 2005a, p. 5). So there are many communities which appear as if they might be true or authentic and based on solidarity, but which fall victim to the same forces of destruction and complicity with adaptation. Freire's sensitivity to the psychological pitfalls of group psychology and indeed politics is interesting and shows a sensitivity to subjectivity and subjective authenticity. The important distinction which Freire makes here is between 'solidarity' and 'gregariousness'. '"Gregariousness is always the refuge of mediocrities, said ... Dr Zhivago". It is also an imprisoning armour which prevents human beings from loving' (Freire, 2005a, p. 5).

Freire describes this as 'tragedy of modern humanity', that of our 'domination', a thematic which links Freire to specific thematics on the Left, such as Althusser's conception of ideology (Althusser, 1994) and Marcuse's understanding of domination in *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse, 2002). It also potentially puts him at odds with an alternative strand of Leftist thinking associated with, for example, Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 2002) or Slavoj Žižek (Žižek, 1994a), who would see capitalist 'consumption' as a more positive possibility, and would view the notion of domination or 'false consciousness' (Žižek, 1994a) as too reductionistic. We have traced the status of this question of ideology in Chapter 1, in relation to the later text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. But here, at an earlier juncture, Freire seems to invoke a concept of 'false consciousness': 'by the force of these myths and their manipulation by organized advertising, ideological or otherwise, gradually, without even realizing the loss, the human being relinquishes their capacity for choice; they are expelled from the orbit of decisions; ordinary people do not perceive the tasks of the time' (Freire, 2005a, p. 5). This is in line with leftist thinking but runs the risk of setting up the very opposition between ordinary and extraordinary thought that Freire seems to want to undermine. However, Freire is not so much suggesting that ordinary people cannot perceive the tasks of the time as that they are not allowed to: 'the latter [tasks of the time] are interpreted by an "elite" and presented in the form of recipes or prescriptions; and when human beings try to save themselves by following the prescriptions, they drown in levelling anonymity, without hope and without faith; "domesticated and adjusted"' (Freire, 2005a, p. 5).

Freire quotes and cites Erich Fromm (Fromm, 2001) here, a constant companion in these endeavours. He is keen to stress Fromm's sense of the powerlessness of contemporary humanity:

> As Fromm said in *Escape From Freedom*, ... modern human beings are overcome by a profound feeling of powerlessness which makes

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Freire cannot be unaware of the polemical import of what he is saying in this situation. Political activism per se is to be rejected as unreflective and naïve. This naivete at best (or knowing dogmatism at worst) is complicit with the forces of adaptation and massification. It leaves the interlocutors of this kind of discourse locked into a pre-established knowledge: 'sectarians can never carry out a truly liberating revolution because they are themselves unfree' (Freire, 2005a, p. 9). This links with Freire's emphasis on freedom and the problematic aspect of this to the extent in which it partakes of some of the issues which I have already outlined with regard to liberalism and the contestation of freedom as value and concept (Moseley, 2008). Freire has already discussed the intensification of the emotional climate around these issues, and here he now mentions the term 'fanaticism' which, he says, flourishes in such a context. For Freire, the matter is unequivocal: 'Fanaticism flourished. This fanaticism, which separated and brutalized human beings, created hatred' (Freire, 2005a, p. 10). This hatred, rather than sustaining, can be seen to drain, for Freire at least, all the positive resources from radicalization and the possibility of real change in the society and the educational sector.

Seeing the alignments and disalignments across the political spectrum can be one of the most interesting challenges when reading Freire. Here, matters are especially complicated, as Freire himself notes. First of all, he tells us that 'in the Brazilian transition, it was the sectarians especially those of the right, who predominated rather than the radicals' (Freire, 2005a, p.10). But the footnote which develops from this point complexifies the situation still further, once more highlighting perennial themes in Freire of progressivism and the relation between progressivism and religion, especially Christianity and liberation theology movements. Freire is foregrounding here the issue of how different movements and ideologies can be split between progressive and reactionary elements, for example, both Christianity and leftism, as Freire understands them. Freire approvingly cites Emmanuel Mounier, the Christian personalist or existentialist thinker (Freire, 2005a, p. 17), and makes an important distinction between progressivist Christians and more reactionary or sectarian Christians, although neither the progressives nor the sectarians in Brazil were exclusively Christian. This is important for a sense of a rapport between Christian and non-Christian radicalism in Freire, which also distinguishes between reactionary forms of the same. The key, in this particular context, is the acceptance of the development of 'science and technique' as an aspect of human liberation, while still seeing the human being or 'man' as the author of his own liberation (rather than technology).

At the root of Freire's affirmations and denegations is once again the issue of power and especially reciprocity between teacher and student. What constitutes radicalism, Freire says, its identifying mark, is a rejection of the 'palliatives of "assistencialism"' (Freire, 2005a, p. 12). ('Assistencialism' is the term used in Latin America to describe policies of financial or social assistance which attack the symptoms, rather than the causes, of social ills.) This point of course has resonances with Freire's whole critique in *Pedagogy of*

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> consciousness; and transformed into a knowledge of democracy. On the contrary, the circumstances of our colonization and settlement created in us an extremely individualistic outlook; as Vieriea said so well, 'each family is a republic'.
>
> (Freire, 2005a, p. 23)

This issue of individualism once again brings us back to the binary or either/or opposition between materialism and idealism, and that between subjectivism and objectivism: in each case, Freire wishes to posit a *both/and possibility*. What is significant for Freire is that often, from a formal viewpoint, there can be an attempt to inaugurate democracy but this formalism fails to take account of the informal lack of experience which lies under the formal claims: 'it was upon this vast lack of democratic experience, characterised by a feudal mentality and sustained by a colonial economic and social structure, that we attempted to inaugurate a formal democracy' (Freire, 2005a, p. 24). Central to this feudal structure for Freire was a whole psychology of fear and failure: 'upon a feudal economic structure and a social structure within which men were defeated, crushed and silenced, we superimposed a social and political form which required dialogue, participation, political and social responsibility, as well as a degree of social and political solidarity which we had not yet attained' (Freire, 2005a, p. 24). We can see how this analysis connects very clearly to Freire's description in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* of what he calls the whole pathology of sadism and masochism, but what this analysis of the Brazilian situation allows us is an empirical grounding for the analysis of a theory which can seem very abstract. Whereas Sartre (Sartre, 2003), for example, sees such a pathology of sadism and masochism in the very structure of human relationships, Freire sees it rather as conditional upon the context in which one is working. Thus, what this latter approach of contextualism also allows is a sense that the situation can be transformed, and in some cases, radically transformed.

The contingency of oppression

In other words, what Freire seems to be allowing for here is the sense both that oppression and anti-democracy are contingent trends, and that as contingent they can be transformed and overcome. Within the context of Brazilian society specifically, Freire is looking to explain *the resistance to democracy* which seems to be such a feature of his society. Here, the discussion is not merely abstract but is based on the events leading up to 1964 and the military coup. As Freire says elsewhere, the very fact of a military coup is already a sign that the process of democratization was actually working. In other words, it was working too well and had to be stopped, cut at the joints. The elite in Brazil were scared and responded in

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of being "theoretical", mistakenly equating theory with verbalism' (Freire, 2005a, p. 33). This identification of verbosity with theory is radically mistaken for Freire.

> On the contrary, we lacked theory; a theory of intervention in reality; the analytical contact with existence which enables one to substantiate and to experience that existence fully and completely; in this sense, theorising is contemplation (although not in the erroneous connotation of abstraction or opposition to reality). Our education was never theoretical precisely because it lacked this bent towards substantiation.
>
> (Freire, 2005a, p. 33)

This is a subtle and provocative statement and one which is also tied in with Freire's critique of so-called activism as not properly involving itself in an authentic 'praxis', which we discussed above.

Verbalism and lack of dialogue

Freire goes on to develop this point and thematic in more detail. 'Our verbal culture corresponds to our inadequacy of dialogue, investigation and research; as a matter of fact, I am increasingly convinced that the roots of the Brazilian taste for speeches, for easy words, for the well turned phrase, lie in our lack of democratic experience' (Freire, 2005a, p. 33). Why?

> The fewer the democratic experiences which develop through concrete participation in reality to critical consciousness of it, the more a group tends to perceive and to confront that reality naively, to represent it verbosely; the less critical capacity a group possesses, the more ingenuously it treats problems and the more superficially it discusses subjects.
>
> (Freire, 2005a, p. 33)

This is a radical critique of the appearance of dialogue in the Brazilian tendency towards verbalization. It also gives the lie to those who would see Freire as too 'populist', one of the main criticisms made of him in Brazil, for example (Torres, 1993). Here, in his early work, we see his radically critical spirit, which he applies not simply to those who oppress, but to the entire resources of the ordinary culture of Brazil. Again, Freire finishes with a reference to the revolution's connection to a thematic of 'love', indeed education's integral connection to such a *love*: 'education is an act of love and thus an act of courage; it cannot fear the analysis of reality or under pain of revealing itself as farce, avoid creative discussion' (Freire, 2005a, p. 33).

So how was Brazil to get beyond this verbalism towards true dialogue? Despite Freire's radical criticisms of much of the existing education, he

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see the influence of neo-Thomism in this context on Freire, in the case of Jacques Maritain (Maritain, 1943). Freire notes:

> As Jacques Maritain has pointed out, if we remember that the animal is a specialist and a perfect one, all of its knowing power being fixed upon a single task to be done, we ought to conclude that an educational program which would only aim at forming specialists ever more perfect in ever more specialised fields, and unable to pass judgement on any matter that lies beyond their specialised competence, would lead indeed to a progressive animalisation of the human mind and life.
>
> (Freire, 2005a, p. 36)

This is taken from Maritain's influential book *Education at the Crossroads* (Maritain, 1943): the 'progressive animalisation of the human mind and life'. For Freire, humanization can only take place for humans, by definition. This is because of the chasm which separates the animal from the human, in Freire's eyes.

This question leads into Freire's final chapter in *Education as the Practice of Freedom,* 'Education and Conscientização'. Freire is here preoccupied with the specific aspects of the Brazilian context in the 1960s from which his work emerged:

> My concern for the democratisation of culture within the context of fundamental democratisation required special attention to the quantitative and qualitative deficits in our education. In 1964, approximately four million school age children lacked schools; there were sixteen million illiterates of fourteen years and older. These truly alarming deficits constituted obstacles to the development of the country and to the creation of a democratic mentality.
>
> (Freire, 2005a, p. 37)

These are indeed 'alarming deficits' in anyone's language and they also demonstrate how raising the theme of literacy couldn't but also connect with the wider socio-political reasons why so many people were illiterate. Thus, there was then a real need for what Freire calls 'conscientization' or 'conscientização'. Freire distinguishes in this context between an authentic 'critical consciousness' and two other forms of consciousness which can often prevent the achievement of critical consciousness (he has mentioned these before, but with a slightly different sense): 'Critical consciousness is integrated with reality; naive consciousness superimposes itself on reality, and fanatical consciousness whose pathological naivete leads to the irrational, adapts to reality' (Freire, 2005a, p. 39).

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CHAPTER FOUR

From *Extension or Communication* to *Cultural Action for Freedom*

Introduction – from Fanon to Freire

In this chapter, I will focus on two texts which succeed Freire's 'first text', *Education as the Practice of Freedom* (Freire, 2005a), and which respectively pre-date and succeed *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1996a). The first text we will look at here is *Extension or Communication* (Freire, 2005b) which was written almost simultaneously with *Pedagogy*. As with the latter text, this shorter work demonstrates a change which has taken place in Freire's work, specifically during his time in exile from Brazil, since 1964. Here, we see the move from reformism to revolution, and also a foregrounding of education as key to the process of political transformation. Later, Freire will deny this reading of his early work, but there is an undeniable forcefulness here, which is distinctly different and more moderated in the later texts.

The second text I will look at in this chapter is a book which reinforces this view of the early, post-exile Freire as a revolutionary thinker of education and politics. *Cultural Action for Freedom* (Freire, 1977), written after the worldwide acclaim which greeted *Pedagogy*, is a more minor text, but in its principled stances it mirrors and reinforces the earlier work. If anything, it may be seen to clarify and intensify some of the ambiguities which may have caused some confusion in *Pedagogy*. This reinforcement

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student, in this case the rural peasant, who is turned into a 'thing': 'Freire shows you how the concept of extension leads to actions which transform the peasant into a thing; an object of development projects which negate him as a being capable of transforming the world' (Chonchol, 2005, p. 82). This is thus no accident of the process. The very concept of extension itself leads inevitably to the reification or objectification of the peasant.

Freire's early work in Chile

For Chonchol, we must see Freire's early work on extension in Chile as part of a wider discourse which Freire is seeking to instigate and develop on the whole process of education per se. Already, in this early context, we see the embryo of the later concept of banking education. For Freire, says Chonchol, 'knowing is not the act by which a subject transformed into an object docilely and passively accepts the contents others give or impose on him or her' (Chonchol, 2005, p. 82). In other words, education is not banking education; this latter is not worthy of the name of education. And although Freire is focused on the concept of extension here and doesn't use the concept of banking, we can see how the former becomes an example of the latter, in the language of *Pedagogy*. In addition, what is paradigmatic in relation to *Extension or Communication*, from the point of view of education and politics, is the discussion of technology and its relation to the evolution of modern and postmodern society, a theme which Freire turns to again but which also connects him to the wider leftist discourse on technology, which goes from Marcuse's rather negative approach (Marcuse, 2002) to thinkers like Lefebvre's (Lefebvre, 2002) more ambiguous relation to it. As Chonchol observes, 'in addition, Freire emphasises that from a humanistic and scientific perspective, one cannot focus on technical capacitation except within the context of a total culture reality' (Chonchol, 2005, p. 82). Two aspects are worthy of note in this context: first, the emphasis on holism and the need to see technology not as a specialization but as something which must be connected to our whole vision of the world. Our relation to technology must be consistent with humanistic values. Second, however, there is the very acceptance of a tendency to 'technical capacitation'. Again, this marks a difference from other thinkers on the Left (and some on the Right), who see technology as an evil in itself.

For Chonchol, this represents a crucial aspect of *Extension or Communication*, which he concludes by saying has two main threads to follow. First, 'I would like to stress the importance of Freire's criticisms of the concept of "extension" as cultural invasion; as an attitude contrary to the dialogue which forms the basis of an authentic education' (Chonchol, 2005, p. 83). This is foundational for an understanding of Freire's Third Worldism, which he returns to, for example, in *Cultural Action for Freedom*, discussed below. Second, 'also fundamental to Freire's analysis

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A discussion of magic

Freire, of course, understands the predicament which education in contexts of deprivation faces. He makes this clear in his discussion of rural mores in Latin America, especially in a fascinating discussion of magic and religious beliefs concerning weather conditions and crops. These peasants remain 'dependent on prayers and priests rather than actions' and Freire asks 'what can be done from the point of view of education in a peasant community which is at such a level?' (Freire, 2005c, pp. 94–95). Again, showing the interesting interconnectedness of his early texts, Freire namechecks both *Education as the Practice of Freedom* and *Cultural Action for Freedom* in his discussion of an answer to this thorny problem (Freire, 2005b, p.101). Certainly, Freire does not want to have to affirm such beliefs and he acknowledges the negative impact which these beliefs about magic have on the peasant's life and community, insofar as they cause them to refuse to take 'action'. They induce a passivity and a belief that external forces will remedy the situation. However, although Freire acknowledges that the beliefs need to be 'replaced' (Freire, 2005b, p. 95), he disavows the attempt to get rid of them by the method of 'extension': 'the answer cannot lie with those extension agents who, in their relations with the peasants, mechanically transfer technical information' (Freire, 2005b, p. 95).

Freire now enters into an interesting discussion of the nature of the magical beliefs themselves which shows him to be already a subtle thinker concerning myth and its relation to *logos*: 'magic thought is neither illogical nor pre-logical; it possesses its own internal logical structure and opposes as much as possible any new forms mechanically superimposed' (Freire, 2005b, p. 95). In order to understand the nature of people's beliefs, then, we must first undertake what Freire will call a more 'generative' critique of their existing views, but second, this must be done in dialogue with the people. Any simple attempt using a transmission or an extension model to change people's beliefs runs the risk of a simple external compliance with no internalized change. As Freire makes clear elsewhere in the essay, what will happen most likely then is that the magic beliefs will remain and be used to reinterpret the content of the 'extension programme' in their own way. Thus, the efforts of the extension programme are bound to fail as the peasants will continue to return to their superstitious traditions and give only give superficial adherence to the new practices which are being inculcated. Thus, no real new knowledge or wisdom is acquired in such a situation; this is no re-education: 'knowledge is not extended from those who consider that they know to those who consider that they do not know; the effort required is not one of extension' (Freire, 2005b, p. 99).

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before Fanon died at the age of 36. This reading of Fanon continues to be an influence to the present day in the intercultural debate, most especially through trends in neo-Marxism.

In the 1980s however, an earlier text by Fanon, virtually ignored by the revolutionary interpretation, was taken up by post-colonial and postmodern discourse, his 1952 work *Black Skin, White Masks*. This new reading of Fanon tends to play down the revolutionary dimension of Fanon (and most especially his advocation of violence) by more or less ignoring *The Wretched of the Earth*. On this reading, Fanon's contribution to interculturalism has less to do with class politics and race or ethnic equality and more to do with issues of 'cultural identity', most especially the issues of racial and sexual identity. The question becomes one then of whether we can bring about some kind of dialogue between these two Fanons: to what extent is it possible to reconcile the divergent strands in Fanonist thought, in what measure can we make the two Fanons one? In addressing this question, I want to also suggest that the problems at the heart of the interpretation of Fanon represent a microcosm of macro-theoretical problems which continue to plague attempts at intercultural dialogue or resolution, and which we have seen present throughout our analysis of Freire's work.

Early Fanon – Black Skin, White Masks

Homi Bhabha has commented that Fanon reveals with 'greater profundity and poetry than any other writer ... the question of cultural identity' (Bhabha, 1986, p. xxxv), and it is in the extraordinarily lyrical and passionate *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon, 1986a) that this expression finds its most intense formulation. As well as being his most poetic work, this text is also Fanon's most explicitly philosophical, and it is not surprising that postmodernist thinkers have found it so seductive. Like the later *Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, 1986b), the backdrop to *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon, 1986a) is the psychopathology of colonialism, in this case specifically the experience of being black under French rule in Martinique.

Fanon's experience of Martinique is of a highly complex and layered system of racial hierarchy and 'race prejudice' (Fanon, 1986a, p. 9) where the three main categories of white, mixed race and black are organized in descending order of status and power. Fanon tells a related joke: three men arrive at the gates of heaven and are greeted by St Peter, a white man, a man of mixed race and a black man. What do you want most, St Peter asks? Money, says the white man. And you? Fame, says the man of mixed race. St Peter turns to the Negro, who says with a wide smile, 'I'm just carrying these gentlemen's bags' (Fanon, 1986a, p. 49). Although Fanon himself only realizes this system of stratification when he leaves Martinique for France (as growing up in Martinique this system operated as a kind of social unconscious), he retrospectively traces its influence on

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these metropolitan societies are very capable of 'absorbing dissent': 'it is true that in speaking of the process of social change within these societies, one has to take into account their greater capacity for absorbing dissent' (Freire, 1977, p.15). Freire makes a specific reference to Herbert Marcuse's (Marcuse, 2002) work here and states that it is the advanced technology of these societies that alters their capacity for dealing with dissent.

'Marcuse has repeatedly called attention to the fact that this technological power is able to transform many of these protest movements into mere manifestations of folklore' (Freire, 1977, p. 15). Again, this is significant for the foregrounding of the student movements but also the sense that these movements are incapable of real and revolutionary change. Freire, however, acknowledges here that this issue of protest and of the relation of the society to the protest is not his main subject, but a digression: 'This point however is not part of our subject, nor can it be adequately dealt with in a footnote' (Freire, 1977, p. 15). This discussion develops from what Freire has said about the specific context of colonization in, for example, *Education as The Practice of Freedom*, where he spoke about the lack of democratic experience from which Brazilian society has suffered in the effort to develop a new kind of progressivism. Again, here, Freire wants to delineate a colonial specificity, although his discussion is more generalized rather than specific to Brazil: 'in either case, there is a fundamental dimension to these societies resulting from their colonial phase; their culture was established and maintained as a "culture of silence"' (Freire, 1977, p. 16). Again and again we see this as Freire's target, the 'culture of silence' – how we can work politically and educationally to subvert this 'culture of silence'. Freire describes this here as a 'twofold pattern'.

The alienated society and the director society

As Freire notes (Freire, 1977, p. 16), 'externally, the alienated society as a whole as the mere object of the director society, is not heard by the latter. Meanwhile, within the alienated society itself, the masses are subjected to the same kind of silence by the power elites' (Freire, 1977, p. 16). This is *massification* and *objectification* as Freire understands it. As we have seen, however, this process is rarely complete. There will always be some pockets of resistance but when there is a resistance to this, when the resistance breaks out, there is a powerful reinstating of power from the oppressors: 'when the popular masses are able to break their submissive silence, the power elites violently attempt to arrest the process. The director society takes it upon itself to do so' (Freire, 1977, p. 16). Here, Freire seems concerned with the colonized society itself. When there is a resistance movement developed in this dependent society, often the power elites will call upon the 'director society' to kill off the resistance. Again, there are clear resonances between this discussion and the critical analysis which Fanon undertakes of these

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culture of silence took shape' (Freire, 1977, p. 61). So, for Freire, there is a direct correlation between colonization and the closure of a society. In this context, Freire is first concerned to delineate the specificity of the colonized experience. However, he also wants to claim that similar patterns are at work in metropolitan societies, which seem, on the one hand, to be not so closed. However, on the other hand, Freire makes clear that he thinks these metropolitan societies often have a greater capacity to 'subdue dissent' and thus 'absorb resistance'. They are also more than likely to have a greater capacity to hide the very nature of the oppression of their citizens, this oppression or massification being not as obvious as in dependent societies. This is because many of the societies operate under the auspices of a liberal democratic regime whereas many dependent societies are under the rubric (as was Brazil) of a military dictatorship. As Blake *et al.* (Blake *et al.*, 2003b) discuss, one of the difficulties here is the inherent ambiguity of liberalism and especially the problem that this liberal ambiguity is felt more forcefully (and with more tragic results) by dependent societies. This is because the appearance of liberalism does not have to be maintained by the director society in its colonies, to the same extent as in the home country.

One significant question which Freire addresses here is whether revolution is easier to achieve in a dependent society. Certainly, Freire does point to the complex processes of assimilation which have only been enhanced by the growth of contemporary technologies in the West most especially (here there is a great deal of connection with Marcuse's thematic). However, Freire's comments on Latin American societies (here written in 1973) suggest that Latin American societies have struggled considerably with the possibility of a democratic transition. We will return later to how these societies have changed in the intervening years and the implications thereof, especially in the Brazilian context when we look at Freire's own political and educational efforts following the return of democracy there (O'Cadiz *et al.*, 1998). However, Freire does acknowledge that there is one Latin American society already in 1973 which shows itself to have moved beyond 'closure': 'with the exception of post-revolutionary Cuba, these societies are still closed societies today' (Freire, 1977, p. 71).

The extraordinary level of cross-referencing continues with Freire referring back to the key distinction between sectarianism and radicalization which he initially referred to in his earlier texts but which receives its fullest elaboration in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in the Preface (Freire, 1977, p. 71). Similarly, there is a related reference back to Freire's conceptions of 'biophilia' and 'necrophilia' (Freire, 1977, p. 73), which is borrowed explicitly with regard to Erich Fromm. He follows with a critique of gregariousness (Freire, 1977, p. 74), which he previously looked at in his analysis of the specifics of Brazilian society in his 'Society in Transition' section of *Education as the Practice of Freedom*. There, he connected this pejorative sense of gregariousness with his critique of the structures of Brazilian society, and its manifestations of a deep cultural unconsciousness

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PART TWO

Impacts and legacies – from Freire's return to Brazil to critical pedagogy

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this is definitely not just restatement: 'I wrote *Pedagogy* in 1967/1968; now in 1992, I want to look at it again, rethink it, restate it; and to do some new saying as well; by speaking of hope' (Freire, 1992, p. 39). That is, this new book involves itself in a 'new saying' which should not be underestimated. In some ways, what Freire is doing is drawing out elements which were present in the earlier work but which have been reinterpreted somewhat or reemphasized. For example, Freire speaks of the 'meeting between Erich Fromm and Ivan Illich' where Fromm described the shared practice of their work thus: 'this kind of educational practice is a kind of historico-cultural, political psychoanalysis' (Freire, 1992, p. 44). Of course, psychoanalysis is important in the early work but here, writing in the 1990s, this dimension of the work has become increasingly significant. I am thinking, for example (although Freire does not mention him here) of the importance of Lacan (and neo-Lacanianism) in much of the contemporary political discourse which dovetails with that of Freire, for example, the political theory of Mouffe and Laclau (Mouffe, 2005) or of Žižek (Žižek, 1994).

But, as always with Freire, we return from the high towers of theory to the concrete existential reality of lived experience and especially the lived experience of the student or the peasant. Freire reinvokes his insight from many of his meetings with peasants in Chile following his exile from Brazil; fear of freedom had marked each meeting, flight from the real, 'an attempt to tame the real through concealment of the truth' (Freire, 1992, p. 45). By the same token, this critique must be balanced with respect for the insights which each individual already has, a warning against the kind of teacher condescension which ruins genuine rapport and relation: 'the educator must not be ignorant of, underestimate, or reject any of the knowledge of living experience with which educands come to school' (Freire, 1992, p. 47). In an excellent example, one of his most evocative, Freire quotes a letter: 'an excellent letter from a group of workers in São Paulo; '"Paul" they said, "keep writing – but next time lay it on a little thicker when you come to those scholarly types that come to visit as if they had revolutionary truth by the tail. You know, the ones that come looking for us to teach us that we're oppressed and exploited and to tell us what to do"' (Freire, 1992, p. 51). Once more, Freire returns to the question of what his meta-level hermeneutic sought to achieve; the need for memory is affirmed but not simply to reattest the past experience: 'stir my memory and challenge it; show you the actual process of my reflection, my pedagogical thought and its development; the consistency between word and deed; not paralysis but consistency which still allows me to change position' (Freire, 1992, p.53). At root, this is a perspective of radical philosophical interrogation: 'a permanent process of search which requires patience and humility; in our dealings with others; at times, we find ourselves lacking these virtues' (Freire, 1992, p. 53). It is a rethinking of the 'soul and body' of the previous text: 'in writing this *Pedagogy of Hope*, in which I rethink the soul and the body of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*' (Freire, 1992, p. 55).

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follow the journeys or pathways out of *Pedagogy* or on which *Pedagogy* took him as an author. Here he wants to 'relive' but also he says crucially '*rethink*' some aspects of this process:

> In the third and final step of the book, I shall speak at length of the threads and fabrics whose essence as it were was *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* itself; here I shall practically relive – and basically shall actually be reliving – and as I do so, rethink, certain special moments in my journeys through the four corners of the earth to which I was carried by *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
>
> (Freire, 1992, p. 5)

However, as is clear from the phrase 'rethink', this will not be some nostalgia trip for Freire, or some unequivocal affirmation of his approach. Rather, Freire wants to also spell out some of his reservations or questions concerning his own work, and this, of course, is completely in keeping with his problem-posing method. For Freire, philosophy is '*problematization*'; 'perhaps, however, I should make it clear to readers that in taking myself back to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and in speaking today of the tapestry of my experience in the 1970s, I do not intend to wallow in nostalgia' (Freire, 1992, p. 5). Rather, Freire says this will be a 'reencounter'; 'instead my reencounter with *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* will have the tone of one who speaks not of what has been but of what is' (Freire, 1992, p. 5). This also connects with his understanding of the history of philosophy as a discipline; *philosophical understanding is historical through and through*. We have not moved very far from the original discussion which is still ongoing today: 'the facts, the debates, the discussions, the projects, the experiments, the dialogues in which I shared in the 1970s all bearing on *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, seem to me to be as current as do others to which I shall refer; of the 1980s and today' (Freire, 1992, p. 5). This raises the interesting question of the relation between the earlier debates in the philosophy of education and the current debates. Indeed, the very nature of progressivism is also at stake in this context; that is, is the new managerialism really just another kind of traditionalism against which progressivism has always fought? Darling and Nordenbo (Darling and Nordenbo, 2003) put forward a view of progressivism which is context-specific, but as Freire notes, in education debates, some of the co-ordinates have remained significantly consistent from the 1960s and 1970s, through to the 1980s and 1990s. In many respects this is still the case in 2011. The debate around progressivism and traditionalism (dealt with so interestingly by Dewey in his *Experience and Education*) (Dewey, 1973), continues in different guises to the present day.

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Class knowledge and class analysis: an existential approach

We also know that Freire's analysis has been keenly felt in the whole dynamic of class analysis, as it has been understood in terms of education and politics. 'This is class knowledge I say now' (Freire, 1992, p. 18). We know that, in recent times, the emphasis on the concept of class analysis and the very concept of class per se has fallen away somewhat in the emphasis on gender and ethnicity, which has become more and more a part of education studies, and often under the influence of a supposed 'postmodernisation' of pedagogy. However, in the first instance this loses sight, for example, of a critique of the very concept of class (or the rigidity of such a notion) within the discourse of neo-Marxism itself, whether we look to the analysis of Mouffe (Mouffe, 2005), Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 2002), and the extended critique of class analysis (at least in its more orthodox form) in the work of the Birmingham CCCS, for example, through Hall and Willis (Hall, 1996a; Willis, 1981), discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

Here, we can say several things. First, that there has been a return to an emphasis on class in recent sociology of education, for example, in Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1994). But Freire's work is perhaps closer to that of the Birmingham CCCS in its mixture of a Gramscian emphasis on class, with a simultaneous emphasis on the multi-layered and interdisciplinary importance of the concept of culture (Hall, 1996a; Willis, 1981). In terms of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2000; McLaren, 1994), we can say that there is an analagous emphasis on class, which is also somewhat inflected with the 'postmodern turn'. But what is particularly striking about Freire's analysis here in *Pedagogy of Hope* is the way it works out from a series of stories from Freire's own life experience. His class analysis we might say is 'existentialist'.

As well as an existentialist emphasis, Freire also seeks to link this problematic to the whole theme of 'progressivism':

> it was the culmination of the learning process which I had undertaken long ago; that of the progressive educator, even when one must speak *to* the people, one must convert the 'to' to a 'with' the people. And this implies respect for the 'knowledge of living experience' of which I always speak, on the basis of which it is possible to go beyond it.
>
> (Freire, 1992, p. 19)

Freire also speaks here of an 'existential experience that had a noticeable influence on the development of my pedagogical thought and my educational practice' (Freire, 1992, p. 20). The key to the class analysis, in this context, is a radicalization of the teacher–student relation, not that the teacher authority is undone but that the teacher's authority takes its

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and new citizenship. Rather, it must also rely on a subjective creativity and invention, never working in subjective isolation (or 'narcissism') but rather in a truly *dialectical* relationship with the objective. This dialectic for Freire, inherited as we have seen to some extent from Hegel (Hegel, 1979) and Marx (Marx, 1992a) especially, provides the material basis for the dreams or utopianism of the people.

A finer, less ugly world

As Freire (1992, p. 3) notes,

> I still have in my memory today, as fresh as ever, snatches of the discussions by peasants and expressions of their legitimate desires for the betterment of their world; for a finer less ugly world, a world whose 'edges' would be less "rough", in which it would be possible to love. Guevera's dream, too, 'for a finer less ugly world; in which it would be possible to love'.

The dialectic here between utopianism and political materialism or even pragmatism is powerful. What it also points to is a real democracy at the heart of Freire's work, a notion of radical democracy or what he sometimes calls democratic socialism (for example, this is the political ideology underlying his work with the Brazilian Workers' Party) (O'Cadiz *et al.*, 1998)). This, in effect, is what *Pedagogy of Hope* means: a hope in the people's understanding and innate intelligence which refuses to be subdued or destroyed by the failures of government and authority; 'the peasants know more than we do' (Freire, 1992, p. 32). This 'reading' or 'writing' of the world is not simply a transcription of what is already there but also a *futural transformation*: 'the reading and writing of the word would always imply a more critical rereading of the world as a [prelude] ... to the rewriting – the transformation – of that world; hence the hope that necessarily steeps *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*' (Freire, 1992, p. 33). Significantly, Freire also links this issue and problematic here to the wider problematic of multiculturalism or interculturalism: 'respect for cultural differences; a criticism of "cultural invasion", of sectarianism, and a defence of radicalness, of which I speak in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, originated in Brazil and deepened in Chile' (Freire, 1992, p. 34).

Significantly, Freire makes a further connection to May 1968: 'in May 1968 came the student movements in the outside world; rebellious, libertarian; there was Marcuse, with his influence on youth' (Freire, 1992, p. 33). Freire uses this as a possibility of generalizing to a conclusion about his teaching methodology itself: 'respect for the student does not mean that the educator must accommodate to their level of the reading of the world ... the great political importance of the teaching act ... the students must take

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A postmodern progressivism/a postmodern Marxism

One of the more interesting aspects of *Pedagogy of Hope* (Freire, 1992), and something which does distinguish it quite forcefully from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is Freire's new emphasis on the importance of an understanding of the distinction between the moderns and the postmoderns, where one might have expected Freire to emphasize the modernist aspects in favour of the postmodernist. The opposite is the case in *Pedagogy of Hope*. Here, for example, he says: 'in a like perspective – indisputably progressive, much more postmodern, as I understand postmodernity, than modern, let alone "modernizing" – to teach is not the simple transmission of knowledge concerning the object or concerning content' (Freire, 1992, p. 67). Thus, Freire is seeking to indicate his favoured notion of pedagogy, which must never be neutral but rather always political, and thus politically progressive. For Freire, it seems that this progressivism can only be postmodern rather than modern. '*Much more post-modern than modern*' – his words are unequivocal in this context although he does leave the important proviso; 'as I understand postmodernity'.

He is once again critiquing the delivery model or banking model of education. Here, he is indicating clearly that for this model to be overcome, (that is, for banking education to be overcome) requires a progressive postmodernism in education. This connects with a renewed model of teaching which Freire wishes to emphasize: 'teaching – again, from the postmodern progressive viewpoint of which I speak here' (Freire, 1992, p. 67). This then is a postmodern and progressive model of teaching, which Freire wishes to oppose to banking education and which he referred to in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, as a problem-posing method of education. 'Teaching is a creative act, a critical act and not a mechanical one ... educands become the ever more critical subjects' (Freire, 1992, p. 68). Critical subjectivity is thus key to the very notion of education which must be a facilitation rather than an imposition. This is what constitutes the very sense of a progressive education and pedagogy.

One of the other powerful and recurrent elements of Freire's writings and educational practice is the interconnectedness within his work as a whole. Here, he now returns us to the specificity of another key text which we have discussed earlier, that is, *Education as the Practice of Freedom* (Freire, 2005a).

'My first book ... Education as the Practice of Freedom'

As Freire observes, 'but let us go back to my first book, *Education as The Practice of Freedom*, completed in 1965 and published in 1967' (Freire,

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