

Education for Critique, Empowerment, and Liberation: Common Themes in Freire's and Foucault's Thoughts on Education

PHAVISMINDA Journal
Volume 9 (May 2010): 15-32.

Benedicto Po Tao
San Carlos Seminary College
Cebu City

Abstract

In this paper I will show that although Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault come from diverse social backgrounds, a survey of their works immediately reveals such common themes as education for the critique of structures of domination, education as the practice of freedom from oppression, and education as empowerment of the marginalized. In my conclusion, I will weave their complementary insights together to *suggest* (not pontificate dogmatically – or I will risk contradicting the thesis I'm defending here!) some general features that I think any libertarian (i.e., empowering) philosophy of education would do well to have.

Freire's and Foucault's General Critique of Oppressive Structures

Real-Life Struggles Alongside the Oppressed

While Foucault was the son of a surgeon and had a relatively well-off adolescence, Freire experienced poverty firsthand. As a child, Freire found himself feeling listless and lagging behind his classmates. And so, he vowed as early as the age of eleven to dedicate his life to the struggle against hunger and poverty, so that other children would not have to know the agony he was experiencing.

Freire soon realized the negative effects of the "culture of silence" whereby the oppressed masses were made to believe that their present situation was inevitable because of their inherent indifference, laziness, and ignorance. Determined to disprove this oppressive ideology, he went on to become an educator, developing a theory for the education of illiterates. The anti-establishment tone of his works, however, soon earned him an "invitation"

from the Brazilian government after the military coup of 1964 to leave his country. But he continued his struggles for the marginalized in Chile, writing and fighting at their side and refining his "pedagogy of the oppressed." He worked with UNESCO and the Chilean Institute for Agrarian Reform in programs of adult education. He also worked with various groups engaged in new educational experiments in rural and urban areas.

Foucault, for his part, became, by his own choice, an advocate for the rights of the marginalized. Though he missed the May 1968 student revolts in Paris, Foucault took part in Tunisia's own student protests rebelling against the repressive anti-Communist, pro-American government. Back in Paris in the 1970's, Foucault vowed to aid the marginalized in their struggles to give voice to their "subjugated knowledges" and discourses. He was alongside the prisoners during the series of prison riots in France. He helped them publish the details of the harsh conditions of their lives as prisoners. These experiences later inspired his famous researches on the birth of the prison in *Discipline and Punish* with its well-known themes of modernity's development of disciplinary technologies of power, techniques of surveillance, and practices of exclusion and normalization.

Foucault was also openly gay within his own circle and in some way was active in gay politics.¹

Freire's and Foucault's Critiques of Techniques of Domination in Modern Society

Freire sees that many of the structures and practices of modern society are oppressive. And what's worse is that the educational systems of modernity function as instruments for the perpetuation of the structures of oppression and the culture of silence among the oppressed. In his analysis of the social roots of the "banking" concept of education, Freire sees that it simply mirrors oppressive society as a whole. "Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression."²

Educators under the modernist framework would tend to talk about reality – whether the natural world or the world human beings have created for themselves (along with their social and political structures, cultural practices, etc.) – as if it were, for the most part, motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable.³ Their ideological emphasis, in other words, is the givenness and permanence of reality.

They would also, in effect, teach a dichotomy between the human being and the world. The human being is merely *in* the world, not *with* the world or with others. Freire says that for them, "man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world."⁴ Man is not a conscious being, but a possessor



of a consciousness. Thus, an uneducated mind (the person who has not had any formal schooling) is "an empty 'mind' passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside."⁵

If this is how modern society looks at the world and the (unschooling) human person, then it is easy to see why the methods of educating under the modernist framework have the following purposes: Education must be geared towards learning to "domesticate reality," i.e., to adapt to the world as it is (the status quo). Education must aim at making humans more docile, adaptable, and manageable beings.⁶

This educational ideology deceives the oppressed and the marginalized into thinking that it is either futile or unnecessary to change the world or societal structures. The distinction between what reality *is* and what it *should be* is effaced. Social practices and present (oppressive) political structures are what they naturally ought to be (although, of course, the oppressors take the greatest care to hide the arbitrariness of their universalizing narratives). Critical thinking is discouraged or subtly diffused. The more the people's fatalistic perception of their situation is reinforced the better for the establishment.

Foucault expresses a similar concern when he deplores that many of the marginalized have been made to accept as universal and self-evident truth some themes which have arbitrary historical constructions. People are made to forget that "they are much freer than they feel, that [they] accept as truth, as evidence, some themes which have been built up at a certain moment in history, and that this so-called evidence can be criticized and destroyed."⁷ Thus, as someone who works alongside the victims of oppressive ideologies, Foucault describes his role in the following terms:

It is one of my targets to show people that a lot of things that are a part of their landscape – that people think are universal – are the result of some very precise historical changes. All my analyses are against the idea of universal necessities in human existence. They show the arbitrariness of institutions and show which space of freedom we can still enjoy and how many changes can still be made.⁸

Thus, for both Freire and Foucault, modernist educational systems have failed – whether by careless neglect or by deliberate omission – to cultivate critical thinking among those they claim to educate. Instead, modernist institutions all connived to reinforce the ideology that the educated person is the docile and compliant *subject*, the well-adjusted individual who does not question the traditions of the establishment but adapts himself or herself

according to the established norms of what it means to be a "normal," decent and respectable student, employee, citizen, etc.

In the series of studies he conducted in the 1960's and 1970's, which Foucault calls "archaeologies" and "genealogies," he analyzes the processes of objectification which transforms human beings into *subjects*. He wants "to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects."⁹ His archaeological studies reveal the discourses (or systems of knowledge deemed "scientific") as well as the social practices by which certain individuals are constituted as "abnormal" (i.e., deviating from the norm and from "nature"), thereby making it appear imperative for them to be excluded from "normal" individuals in order to be treated and normalized once more.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault talks at length about the disciplinary power at work in many modernist institutions. Although in this book Foucault, for the most part, is analyzing penal institutions and their disciplinary techniques of making docile individuals – sometimes Foucault prefers using the terms "docile bodies" – he suggests that parallel procedures have become extremely widespread already in other modernist institutions – in schools, in industrial sites, in the army, and in just about any institution. As an art of the correct training of individuals, disciplinary power brings about the disciplining of individuals and of society by three instruments: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination.

The space and the architecture of the place where individuals are disciplined (schoolrooms, military camp, hospital, prison, factory, etc.) must be structured in a way that allows the constant surveillance of every individual by his supervisors. But this technique of hierarchical observation is multiple, automatic, anonymous, and functions as a network.

The disciplinary apparatuses exercise a constant normalizing judgment on their subjects. They employ a system of differentiation whereby the "good" and the "bad" subjects are hierarchized in relation to one another. Thus, there emerge several "dividing practices" and processes of categorization, control, and "normalization." The training of individuals tries to eliminate differences. Each subject must conform to the same model or standard norm. The "bad" (those who are judged to be falling short of the standard norm defined by the authorities of an institution) must disappear either by being excluded or by being normalized and becoming "good," just like all the rest.

Foucault then speaks of the examination as the main instrument used to periodically qualify, classify, and punish the erring individuals who are being trained. "The examination is at the centre of the procedures that constitute the individual as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge."¹⁰ It takes different forms in the schools, in the military camps, or even in the

hospital (by means of the doctor's ritual visitation of the sick). With the technique of the examination, a certain "power of writing" was being constituted as an essential part of the disciplinary mechanism.¹¹ Each individual's case (his characteristics, aptitude, level of abilities, the pace of his progress, etc.) was documented and filed. The examination thus constitutes the individual as a describable and analyzable object in relation to a permanent corpus of knowledge.¹²

Foucault uses Jeremy Bentham's figure of the *Panopticon* as the metaphor to describe the disciplinary mechanism developed since the seventeenth century. Literally meaning "all eyes," the Panopticon was the architectural figure devised by Bentham to enable a supervisor placed in a central tower to continually monitor each of those being supervised (a madman, a patient, a condemned criminal, a worker, or a schoolboy) as they are placed in separate cells. In Foucault's sense, the Panopticon is not just a dream building but

the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form.... It is polyvalent in its applications; it serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct schoolchildren, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work. It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical observation, of disposition of centres and channels of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons. Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behavior must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used.¹³

The Panopticon operates on the principle that power must be both visible and unverifiable. This means that under the panoptic schema, the prison inmate, or, by application, the student, or the factory worker, etc. always has before his eyes the central tower or any observation post from which he can always be spied upon. Although he doesn't know whether he is actually being watched at any given moment, he is aware that at any moment he is *possibly* being watched. Those who are supervised are, in effect, "totally seen, without ever seeing" the supervisor, while the supervising authorities "see ... everything without ever being seen" by the inmates, students, workers, etc. Consequently, the subjects of this all-seeing disciplinary mechanism behave accordingly. They assume responsibility for the constraints of power and become the principle of their own subjection.

The panoptic setup also serves as a laboratory in which to carry out experiments on people, to alter behavior, to train and correct individuals.¹⁴ The recorded observations are then accumulated in a series of reports and registers thereby constituting a complex documentary organization.¹⁵ Taken over by "specialized" institutions for their particular ends (schools, hospitals, state apparatuses, etc.), the panoptic disciplinary mechanism thus gives rise to the formation and accumulation of new forms or branches of knowledge (e.g., clinical medicine, psychiatry, child psychology, educational psychology, the rationalization of labor, etc.).¹⁶

All the above-mentioned disciplinary techniques at work in modernity, along with their attendant "dividing practices," are found very much at work in the organizational processes of education in modern-day society.

Stephen Ball mentions several examples of these "dividing practices" in education: the use of testing, examining, profiling, and streaming; the use of entry criteria for different types of schooling; and the formation of different types of intelligence, ability, and scholastic identity in the processes of schooling. "In these ways, using these techniques and forms of organization, and the creation of separate and different curricula, pedagogies, forms of teacher-student relationships, identities and subjectivities are formed, learned, and carried. Through the creation of remedial and advanced groups, and the separation of the educationally subnormal or those with special educational needs, abilities are stigmatized and normalized."¹⁷

Moreover, along with the processes of normalization and exclusion, various "truth games" about education are being played out with the construction of various "educational sciences" – educational psychology, pedagogics, the sociology of education, cognitive and developmental psychology, etc. Ball cites, for example, how the (supposedly) scientific "sociology of education" constructed a discourse/narrative on "the problem of working-class underachievement." Underachievement was traced back to the pathology of working-class families being inherently deficient and culturally deprived – in short, being "abnormal." Citing many studies by experts, Ball says:

The problem of underachievement was defined as beyond the control and capabilities of the teacher, and as culturally determined and inevitable. Teachers were provided with a rich, pseudo-scientific vocabulary of classifications and justifications for the inevitability of differences in intellectual performance between the social classes. Individuals drawn from the undifferentiated mass of school students could be objectified in terms of various fixed social class or other social indicators (Sharp and Green 1975) instituted in the school's

spatial, temporal, and social compartmentalizations. Knowledge and practices drawn from the educational sciences provided (in Foucault's terms) modes of classification, control, and containment, often paradoxically linked to humanitarian rhetoric of reform and progress: streaming, remedial classes, off-site units and sanctuaries, informal or invisible pedagogies (Bernstein 1975).¹⁸

Paolo Freire, as we shall see in more detail below, also rebels against this modernist ideology that the oppressed, especially the unschooled, working-class people, are pathologies of the healthy society of decent and respectable ladies and gentlemen. Freire also points out the hypocrisy in the humanitarian rhetoric of educational systems offering to "reintegrate" deviant working class people back to the "good society." Such systems merely make those they purport to educate compliant subjects, but not empowered to take action against the social structures that perpetually oppress them.

The Educational Methodology of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Freire's Critique of the "Banking" Concept or Narrative Method of Education

In Freire's view, the "banking" concept or narrative method of education so favored by the oppressive ruling elite because it furthers their interests is based on the following assumption: knowledge comes about when there is a transfer of information from someone who considers himself knowledgeable to someone whom he considers to know nothing. Those who consider themselves knowledgeable (the ruling elite, the oppressors, the teachers, etc.) make choices and enforce them; those whom they consider ignorant (the illiterate masses, the oppressed, the students, etc.) will simply have to comply.¹⁹ The marginalized are considered as incompetent and lazy folks that need to be "integrated" back to the healthy (good, organized, and just) society they have forsaken.²⁰ Moreover, they employ a paternalistic and humanitarian rhetoric when they treat the masses as "welfare recipients" but never bother to eliminate the social conditions that make them "welfare recipients" in the first place.

The fundamental character and educational strategy of the "banking" concept of education may be described as narrative, monologic, and deposit-making. Its philosophy is that education consists of a series of successful transfers of information by teachers "depositing" to the minds of students as to bank accounts. The teacher is the depositor while the students are the depositories.²¹ This practically means a mechanical memorization of a load of information, a concern for the mere "sonority of words" (e.g., "Four times four

is sixteen" or "The capital of the Philippines is Manila."). It is a "ready-to-wear" approach. The teacher, for example, gives verbalistic lessons and imposes non-negotiable required readings with specific page numbers.

The basic presupposition of the "banking" method is the polarization of the teacher-student relationship. The teacher knows everything, and so he teaches. The students know nothing, and so they should accept their ignorance and submit to be taught by the teacher. The teacher is the *subject*, i.e., the one who knows and acts. The teacher is the narrator and the one who disciplines. The students are the patient, listening *objects*, i.e., those who do not know but are known and acted upon.²² The banking method distrusts the students' creative power.

The role of the student is thus reduced to being mere receptacles or containers of the narrated content of education. Thus, the ideal student is the one who most meekly allows himself to be filled with the contents from the teacher. In Freire's words, the role of the student is simply that of "receiving, filing, and storing the deposits."²³

The role of the teacher in the "banking" concept is to *regulate* the way the world "enters into" the minds of the students.²⁴ The teacher takes up the role of filling the students, by means of narration, with the right "scientific" and "educational" contents. The ideal teacher is thus the one who can make the most deposits in the minds of the students; he or she is the one who can more completely fill the "containers." The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) simply have to adapt to it.²⁵

The "banking" method identifies two stages in the action of the educator. First, the educator cognizes a cognizable object while preparing the lessons in his or her study or laboratory. Second, the educator then goes to the classroom to transmit to the students by narration what has been previously cognized. In short, it is the teacher who does the critical thinking and the crucial experiments while the students simply have to take the teacher's word for any topic of discussion.

And of course, as expected, the "banking" method evaluates learning by examinations that measure how extensively and accurately students can repeat what the teacher has given them. The educated individual is the "normal" student, the one who passes these standards and norms of learning.

Freire's "Problem-Posing" Method of Education

The libertarian concept of education that Freire offers as the better alternative to narrative education employs the "problem-posing" method. While the "banking" method mirrors oppressive society as a whole, the "problem-posing" method arises from oppressed people's realization of their need for authentic liberation from dehumanizing social structures. Its

metaphysical outlook is that reality is not so fixed and permanent that changes for the better cannot be effected on it. Rather, "reality is really a *process*, undergoing constant transformation."²⁶ The world is unfinished. It can and should be constantly transformed for the better.

Freire's "problem-posing" method also looks at human persons as beings in the process of becoming. They are "unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality."²⁷ Human beings are free and creative. They understand the transformational character of reality. They know they have to work together as agents of the transformation of their world and their social structures. Human persons do not only come to possess a consciousness; they are by nature conscious beings. Moreover, appropriating Edmund Husserl's principle of intentionality (i.e., intentionality as the essence of consciousness), Freire says that each person is a "consciousness intent upon the world."

The human person, therefore, should not be set apart from the world or his/her specific historical context. Educating a person should not mean the mere instilling of some system of knowledge that's supposedly universal, eternal, unchangeable, true and valid at all times and in all contexts, and which the person can then use to adapt himself/herself to any given social structure. Rather, the whole purpose of education is the development of a critical consciousness among persons, empowering them to intervene in the world and become transformers of that world. Freire uses the term *conscientização* to refer to this project of "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."²⁸

The philosophy behind Freire's "problem-posing" method of education is that knowledge emerges through the continuing inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. The marginalized are reminded of their dignity as decent and respectable persons. They are not deviants living "outside" the healthy society, as their oppressor would have them believe ("you're good for nothing", "you're drunkards and idlers, and that's why you're poor and illiterate"); they've always been "inside" society — i.e., inside an oppressive structure that has made them "beings for others" (subservient to the ruling elite). The human person's ontological and historical vocation is to become more fully human. Freire describes this goal emphatically as mutual humanization because when the oppressed people are empowered and released from their dehumanizing conditions, their oppressors likewise regain the humanity they have lost when they began to oppress their fellow human beings.

The fundamental character of the "problem-posing" method is dialogue. The teacher takes account of the existential experience of the students. There is a dialogical discussion of the practical significance of the subject matter. For example, both teacher and students try to enrich each other's understanding of

what “capital” means to the people in a locality, e.g., “what Cebu City means to us Cebuanos” or “what Manila means to us Filipinos.” Teachers do not limit themselves to depositing in the minds of the students some material for memorization (e.g., “Kuala Lumpur is the capital of Malaysia”) which can then be “withdrawn” and given back to the teachers during the examinations. Rather, education is a joint venture enriching both teachers and students. As Freire puts it,

Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not in transferrals of information. It is a learning situation in which the cognizable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors – teacher on the one hand and students on the other.²⁹

Thus, the “problem-posing” method resolves the teacher-student contradiction presumed by the “banking” method. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself or herself taught in dialogue with the students. The students, in turn, while being taught, also teach.³⁰ Both are simultaneously teachers and students.

Freire’s Problem-Posing Teacher-Student and Foucault’s Specific Intellectual

Freire’s Critique of the Ideologue and Foucault’s Critique of the Universal Intellectual

Freire dismisses as ideological the one-sided approach of the teacher who merely argues from authority when teaching the students. Freire envisions a liberating education using the “problem-posing” method where “arguments based on ‘authority’ are no longer valid.”³¹ Especially when it comes to the humanities, teachers should no longer just dogmatically impose upon the students some particular ways of thinking that in turn support established social practices and political systems. (There is, of course, no indication in the works of Freire and Foucault that they have the same degree of objection to the passing on to students of certain *technical* knowledge in, e.g., mathematics, physics, engineering, aeronautics, chemistry, etc.)

Educators who have a mechanistic concept of consciousness do not trust in the students’ creative power. And sometimes, indeed, these educators employ the banking methods of domination (propaganda, slogans, arguments from authority, etc.) in the name of liberation. Adopting a very paternalistic and condescending tone, they purport to fill the empty minds of students with the right contents, promising to make them “well-adapted” individuals, better fit for the world. But then, Freire adds, this “world” is nothing but the world the

oppressors have created for themselves and which they indoctrinate the masses never to question.³²

Freire's critique of the bank-clerk educator who imposes his thoughts on the students parallels Foucault's critique of the "universal intellectual." In "Truth and Power," Foucault makes a distinction between two types of intellectuals: the *universal* and the *specific*. The universal intellectual is a person who is acknowledged as having

the right of speaking in the capacity of master of truth and justice. He [is] heard, or purport[s] to make himself heard, as the spokesman of the universal... the consciousness/conscience of us all.³³

The universal intellectual is considered as the bearer of universal values in his moral, theoretical, and political choices. "The intellectual spoke the truth to those who had yet to see it, in the name of those who were forbidden to speak the truth: he was conscience, consciousness, and eloquence."³⁴ The universal intellectual par excellence is embodied in the figure of the writer of genius who is regarded as a universal consciousness and a free spirit. Society invests him with the privilege and duty of revealing the truth to those yet unable to see it or unwilling to speak it. His discourse is totalizing. He is acknowledged as the upholder of reason, the crusader for universality, and the guardian of his society's faith and morals.

Foucault's diagnosis of this traditional role ascribed to universal totalizing intellectuals is that it is coming to an end, or at least that it is becoming more and more irrelevant even as new connections between theory and practice have been established in most societies in recent years. The universal intellectual, the detached "rhapsodist of the eternal," is being replaced by those who have a more immediate and concrete involvement in everyday political struggles.

Moreover, Foucault is extremely critical of the traditional pretensions of the universal intellectual who claims that he/she alone can represent the universal. Foucault detects in the intellectual's assertion of universality an undesirable instance of domination. Armed with the lance of reason and the sword of the written word, the universal intellectual usurps the power that enables him, and him alone, to win the battle of progress.³⁵

Foucault raises two objections against the representationality of the universal intellectual. In the first place, there is no epistemological justification for the representationality of the intellectual. Politically at least, it would not be expedient to get back to the retrograde notion that "there is one truth and that it is controlled by those who best manipulate logic and language,"³⁶ for this

would entail a suppression of dissenting (but legitimate) opinions and would jeopardize the exercise of such rights as freedom of expression and freedom of religion, to name a few.

Foucault's second objection against the arrangement that exalts an intellectual's position as "truly" representing the masses is that one never knows if the pronouncements of the intellectual are indeed correct or not since the populace rarely gets, if at all, the opportunity to speak. The masses are made to believe in and rely on the statements of an external voice that can very easily misrepresent them. Moreover, the voices of the masses are stifled in this arrangement. They do not develop the habit of speaking for themselves and formulating discourses properly relating to their situation. Under this arrangement there is thus a wide separation of politics and practice.

The "Problem-Posing" Teacher-Student in Freire and the Specific Intellectual in Foucault

After dismissing the personage of the "bank-clerk" educator, Freire offers the "teacher-student" as alternative. Foucault, for his part, identifies the "specific intellectual" as the one replacing the universal intellectual.

In Freire, the teacher ought to have profound trust in the students and in their creative power. The teacher becomes a "teacher-student," while the students become "students-teachers" and "they become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow."³⁷ The teacher-student treats the students as critical co-investigators in dialogue with him/her. The teacher-student's role is to encourage and to lead students to think critically for themselves. He/she works alongside students in the mutual quest for authentic liberation. For indeed, in Freire's words,

The teacher-student and the students-teachers reflect simultaneously on themselves and the world without dichotomizing this reflection from action, and thus establish an authentic form of thought and action.³⁸

In Foucault's genealogical analyses, the revolts of May 1968³⁹ were a sign that the masses no longer need universal intellectuals to knowledge or representation since they (the masses) know better than the intellectuals in regard to their plight, and they certainly are capable of expressing themselves. The intellectuals must therefore assume a new role.

I'm not convinced that intellectuals – starting from their bookish, academic, and erudite investigations – can point to



the essential problems of the society in which they live. On the contrary, one of the main opportunities for collaboration with 'non-intellectuals' is in listening to their problems, and in working with them to formulate these problems.⁴⁰

The new type of politically relevant intellectual work that Foucault envisions is no longer some abstract totalizing theorizing from a safe distance, but one that is practical, local, and regional. It must be "a struggle against power, a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious.... [I]t is an activity conducted alongside those who struggle for power and not their illumination from a safe distance."⁴¹

Foucault thinks that this type of intellectual work can only be performed by an emergent figure that he calls the "specific intellectual." Specific intellectuals are those who are "working, not in the modality of the 'universal,' the 'exemplary,' the 'just-and-true-for-all,' but in specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university, family and sexual relations)."⁴²

Specific intellectuals are more directly and concretely aware of everyday political struggles. They no longer stand above or outside their society but are immersed within it. When it comes to strategies of action, they prefer to listen to the oppressed rather than act as standard-bearer for their liberation.

They cite, analyze, engage in struggles not in the name of those who are oppressed, but alongside them, in solidarity with them, in part because others' oppression is often inseparable from their own.... They carry with them an experience of the kind that belongs to the oppressed themselves.⁴³

Conclusion: Education for the Critique of Social Institutions

After our exposition on the common themes of Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed and Foucault's thought on the education of intellectuals for the purpose of liberation from oppressive domination, we now conclude by outlining the general features of a philosophy of education behind a libertarian (i.e., "empowering") concept of education.

Education must aim at making individuals develop a profound sense of freedom. Education must develop critical thinking. Education must empower individuals and make them capable of liberating themselves and their fellow human beings from structures of domination in their societies.

An educated person is one who has been empowered to make a permanent critique of the present. The student must learn to inquire about the status of the present as well as about its history. He must investigate why certain particular rationalities in a society are made to count as "reason" in general in that society, and why in the name of "reason" the power of certain individuals and institutions is established over others.⁴⁴ In other words, both students and teachers must engage in a meticulous inquiry into the history and present functioning of a society. They must make a critical investigation of the kind of permanent oppression in daily life being put into effect whether by the state, by other institutions and oppressive groups, in short, by all those "who organize our lives by means of rules, by way of direct or indirect influences, as for instance the mass media."⁴⁵

All of us, teachers-students and students-teachers must commit ourselves to "a historical investigation of the events that have led us to constitute ourselves as objects of what we are doing, thinking, saying."⁴⁶

In short, an indispensable part of education is learning how to challenge the way people think and act. Education must help people find a way out of the status of "immaturity" that for Immanuel Kant, according to Foucault in "What Is Enlightenment?", characterizes most people. By "immaturity" Kant meant a certain state of one's mind that makes one accept someone else's authority to lead him in areas where the use of reason is called for. Such immaturity takes place when for example a person allows a book to take the place of his understanding, or when a spiritual director takes the place of his conscience,⁴⁷ in the sense that the person no longer thinks critically for himself. Such immaturity, in short, consists in an uncritical acceptance of all received practices.

Learning how to question and suggest better alternatives is an instrument for those who fight, resist, and refuse what is.⁴⁸ "What is to be done' ought not to be determined from above by reformers, be they prophetic or legislative, but by a long work of comings and goings, of exchanges, reflections, trials, different analyses."⁴⁹

A libertarian education thus, for both Freire and Foucault, envisions a society peopled by enlightened individuals in constant dialogue with one another. There would still be social structures and political structures. But the voices and questions raised by those who are below are not buried under the weight of prescriptive, prophetic discourse coming from those who are located at the top of a hierarchy of power. If reforms are to take place, then it should not be because reformers have finally realized their ideas exactly as they envisioned them but because different critiques from different people shall have been played out already in the open, shall have come into collision with

each other, and shall have already gone through problems, conflicts, and confrontations which are then reflected upon in a spirit of dialogue.

Bibliography

Ball, Stephen J., ed. *Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge*. London and New York, 1990.

_____. "Introducing Monsieur Foucault." In *Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge*. Ed. Stephen J. Ball. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.

Foucault, Michel. "Afterword: The Subject and Power." In *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. Brighton: Harvester Press Limited, 1982.

_____. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Random House, 1977.

_____. "Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze." In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. New York: Cornell University Press, 1977.

_____. *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori*. Trans. R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito. New York: Semiotext(e), 1991.

_____. "Truth and Power." In *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

_____. "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault [by Rux Martin]: October 25, 1982." In *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Ed. Luther H. Martin et al. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

_____. "What Is Enlightenment?" In *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Seabury Press, 1970.

Freire, Paulo, and Antonio Faundez. *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation*. Trans. Tony Coates. Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1989.

May, Todd. *Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics, and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.

Poster, Mark. "Sartre's Concept of the Intellectual." In *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: In Search of a Context*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Shaull, Richard. Foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by Paulo Freire. Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Seabury Press, 1970.

Endnotes

¹ See Lydia Alix Fillingham, *Foucault for Beginners* (New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, 1993). No doubt, Foucault's personal sexuality influenced his interests, as he himself suggests in an interview. "Each of my works is a part of my own biography. For one or another reason I had the occasion to feel and live those things. To take a simple example, I used to work in a psychiatric hospital in the 1950s. After having studied philosophy, I wanted to see what madness was: I had been mad enough to study reason; I was reasonable enough to study madness.... At first I accepted things as necessary, but then after three months (I am slow-minded!), I asked, 'What is the necessity of these things?' " Michel Foucault, "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault [by Rux Martin]: October 25, 1982," in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin et al. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 11.

² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, tans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Seabury Press, 1970), 65.

³ Ibid., 57.

⁴ Ibid., 69.

⁵ Ibid., 62.

⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁷ Michel Foucault, "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault [by Rux Martin]: October 25, 1982," 10.

⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁹ Michel Foucault, "Afterword: The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), 208.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1977), 192.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹² *Ibid.*, 190.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 205.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁷ Stephen J. Ball, "Introducing Monsieur Foucault," in *Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge*, ed. Stephen J. Ball (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 59.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

²² Myra Bergman Ramos, "Translator's Note," in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by Paulo Freire (New York: Seabury Press, 1970), 20, note 2.

²³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 58.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 62. This statement of Freire is akin to Foucault's critique of modernist institutions as employing a kind of "total education" for the purpose of regulation. There are sets of regulations that control the formation of individuals in prisons, in schools, in industrial sites, etc. In Foucault, these various "educational sites" take possession of the human person as a whole such that there is a "recoding" of the person's existence. See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 236-237.

²⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 59.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 61. See also 71.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁸ Bergman, Translator's Note to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 19, note 1.

²⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 67.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 63.

³³ Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 70.

³⁴ Michel Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*:

Selected Essays and Interviews, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 207.

³⁵ Mark Poster, "Sartre's Concept of the Intellectual," in *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: In Search of a Context* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 35.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 47. Poster quotes from David Carroll, "The Subject of Archaeology or the Sovereignty of the Episteme," *Modern Language Notes* 93 (1978): 695 and 722.

³⁷ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 67.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

³⁹ May 1968 in Paris, France was characterized by a violent revolution where students took over buildings and were attacked by the police. Leaders of the radical left proclaimed themselves Maoists and demanded an end to all institutions and all hierarchy. Though Foucault may have missed the May student revolts in Paris, as he was in Tunisia at that time, he did take part in Tunisia's own student protests rebelling against the repressive anti-Communist, pro-American government. See Lydia Alix Fillingham, *Foucault for Beginners*.

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori*, trans. R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 151.

⁴¹ Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power," 207-208.

⁴² Foucault, "Truth and Power," 68.

⁴³ Todd May, *Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics, and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 6-7.

⁴⁴ Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, 152. See also Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez, *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation*, trans. Tony Coates (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1989).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 46.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, "Questions of Method," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 84.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*