This Paper is adapted from my 1997 PhD Dissertation

The Social Construction of An Architectural Reality in Design Education.

©
2007
Tony Ward

No part of this document may be published or reproduced without the written permission of the author
The late Brazilian educator Paulo Freire was one of the central figures in the development of critical theories of education. His theories were the result of many years of work in literacy campaigns with the landless peasants of Latin America and Africa where the imprisonment and "disappearance" of intellectuals is an everyday occurrence. Freire himself was forced to flee his native Brazil after the military coup in 1964, and thereafter worked at Unesco and with the Allende regime in Chile, primarily in the area of adult education programmes until Salvador Allende's assassination. His constant references, which I will repeat throughout this section, to a "pedagogy of oppression" or "domination" and a "pedagogy of liberation" or "emancipation" bear witness to the social context of his endeavours - working often with hungry, beaten men and women, teaching them to read and write so that they may take greater control over their lives.

I would be the last person to suggest that the situation which Freire has continually confronted is identical to that of a professor trying to teach design to upper-middle class (mostly) white, (mostly) male students in a First World university setting. It seems facile, indeed, to use in this context, the same metaphors of domination and liberation which Freire uses, to describe the everyday reality of these very privileged participants. Unlike Freire's peasants, university students are being trained not for submissive roles in the sugar or coffee plantations, but to be part of the dominant culture itself of which they either presently or soon will be a part. They have usually already passed through many of the filters which are in place to "weed out" unsuitable candidates and have therefore come to some extent to accept the mores and values of the dominant class itself. For these students, the idea that they may be in the process of being trained for an oppressive role in society would seem ludicrous.

Dominant Culture Views of Education as Emancipation

In the first place, they would find it difficult to equate the teaching and practice of their discipline as an instrument of domination. Secondly, they would find it equally difficult to recognise in themselves and in their families and peers, any
identification with the members of the dominant cultural elite who are so much a part of the background of life in South America. These students aspire to positions of dominance, which they see not as a negativity, but as offering a potential for personal advancement and also, perhaps, as a way of bringing about social change in a slow and non-violent manner. They do not see themselves, in other words, as members of an oppressing class, because, for them, the effects of repression are remote and indistinct.

I believe that the concept of oppression is appropriate to the educational context of the University, because the oppression to which Freire refers is not a personal, but an institutionalised form of oppression which therefore, like institutionalised racism or sexism, remains relatively hidden within the accepted and normative institutionalised practices of society. This same feature, as well as others, is identical to elements in the experience of the members of the dominant cultures which Freire has encountered elsewhere. He speaks, for instance, of the fact that oppression damages the sensitivities of both the oppressed and the oppressors, and that in the latter, this lack of sensitivity to the reality of their own oppressiveness, their own role in the domination of the oppressed, makes it impossible for them to fully engage in a process of liberation. He also notes (and this is something which I will constantly repeat) that oppression is not only an overt act of violence, but is, rather, any action or inaction which renders another less human, less capable of shaping their own lives, less able to participate in the creation of a better world. In an education for liberation, he says:

"One has to respect the levels of understanding that those becoming educated have of their own reality. To impose on them one's own understanding in the name of their liberation is to accept authoritarian solutions as ways to freedom. But to assume the naiveté of those becoming educated demands from educators a most necessary humility to assume also their ability to criticise, thus overcoming our naiveté as well."

Freire demonstrates throughout his work, how normative mainstream systems of education, through what he calls the "banking system" exhibit pedagogies of domination which operate to precisely this effect. The banking system of education presumes that students come to the learning experience with "empty heads" into which the teacher must make deposits. These deposits then accumulate and acquire a certain degree of "interest" - that is, by virtue of the accumulated knowledge deposited, more knowledge is intrinsically gained. If the students come with any prior knowledge, it is necessary under the banking system to replace this, as one might replace false currency, so that legitimate knowledge can be deposited. As we shall see,

this is a very common practice in architectural education, where students are frequently expected to 'forget" everything they know at the start of and as a requirement of their design education.

**Becoming Human, Making the World**

As Paulo Freire has also noted, education which involves such an *imposition* of knowledge is an essentially *violent* activity, in the sense that:

"Every relationship of domination, of exploitation, of oppression is by definition violent, whether or not the violence is expressed by drastic means. In such a relationship, dominator and dominated alike are reduced to things - the former dehumanised by an excess of power, the latter by lack of it. And things cannot love. When the oppressed legitimately rise up against their oppressor, however, it is they who are usually labeled "violent," barbaric," "inhuman," and "cold". Among the innumerable rights claimed by the dominating consciousness is the right to define violence, and to locate it. Oppressors never see themselves as violent."²

What marks this form of education as violent is its denial of the basic rights of the person to name and frame their own reality, to create themselves by creating the world. Marx once remarked that that which distinguishes humans from other species, and places human uniqueness firmly in the orbit of work and production is the ability to creatively reflect upon one's production and therefore reflexively upon the self, the producer:

"The animal is immediately one with its vital activity. It is not distinct from it. They are identical. Man makes his vital activity itself into an object of his will and consciousness. He has a conscious vital activity. He is not immediately identical with any of his characterisations. conscious vital activity differentiates man immediately from animal vital activity. It is this and this alone that makes man a species-being. He is only a conscious being, that is, his own life is an object to him, precisely because he is a species-being... The

practical creation of an object world, the working-over of inorganic nature, is
the confirmation of man as a conscious species-being, that is, as a being that
relates to the species as to himself and to himself as to the species. It is true
that the animal, too, produces. It builds itself a nest, a dwelling, like the bee,
the beaver, the ant, etc. But it only produces what it needs immediately for
itself or its offspring; it produces one-sidedly, whereas man produces
universally; it produces only under the pressure of immediate physical need,
whereas man produces freely from physical need and only truly produces when
he is thus free; it produces only himself, whereas man reproduces the whole of
nature...This production is his active species-life. Through it, nature appears as
his work and as his reality. The object of work is therefore the objectification
of the species-life of man; for he duplicates himself not only intellectually, in
his mind, but also actively in reality, and thus can look at his image in a world
he has created.”

**Constructing the Self by Constructing the World**

Marx's view was undoubtedly shaped by contemporary notions of a "chain of
being" with humans standing at the apex of the pyramid of life, and lacked more
recent and extensive insights which might challenge a homocentric view of reality.
Nevertheless, this is an important statement, because it establishes three significant
ideas. The first, is that production is the primary activity of all human life (ie.
production over and above that required for necessities for survival). The second is
that humans produce from the material of the natural world not only to produce things,
but also to produce themselves through the production of things. Finally, and
following on from the other two, it asserts that the production of the self, through the
transformation of the natural world therefore constitutes the primary task of all living
human beings. This suggests that human beings are being most fully human when
they are engaged in the process of producing themselves through the transformation of
the world, through the creation of themselves through the creation of the world around
themselves. Extending this argument, we are able to agree, along with Paulo Freire,
that an act of violence, an act of domination, an act of dehumanisation is any action
which prevents or limits another from engaging in this activity of making the world
and therefore making themselves fully human.⁴

Of course, this does not refer to the kind of work which is mindless, which
reduces the person to the repetition of a simple automatic physical movement as an
element of industrial production. This kind of mindless work, according to the
definition suggested above, is a dehumanising activity simply because it steals from
the worker the opportunity to reflect upon and control the object of his or her
production and to produce something of value to him/herself. What is being referred

Oppression as the Circumscription of Self-Creativity

As an act of dehumanisation, the circumscription of the other's ability or opportunity to create him/herself is also an act of violence, of oppression, an imposition of one person's will upon another and a limiting of the worker's ability to fully realise him/herself as a creative fully-human being. In a sense, this definition comes close to J. S. Mill's Utilitarianism, of allowing the other the freedom to be him or herself to the extent that their being so does not conflict with one's own right to experience this same freedom. The difference here, is that Mill's acceptance of the normative hierarchies and forms of constitutional representation which were designed to maintain them and the existing social order, have been discarded and made instead the object of critical inquiry.

The reciprocal nature of Mill's and Bentham's model is underlined by a recognition that the act of limiting the other, as Freire also sagely notes, also dehumanises not only the oppressed, but also the oppressor, the perpetrator of the act:

"Dehumanisation... marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human."5

Critics might say that it is perhaps too extreme to suggest that education by imposition or indoctrination is an act of violence. In the sense of seeing the banking system of education as theft, I believe that it is entirely appropriate to make this connection. In the sense that objective conceptions of knowledge act for or on behalf of the ignorant rather than with them, in the sense that "teachers" presume to know on behalf of the ignorant what the reality of the ignorant themselves is "really" like, I believe this is the case. Acting in this patronising or paternalistic way, objectivated knowledge steals from the Subject his or her essential subjectivity, steals the opportunity to "read" a world creatively, and in the process it both marginalises and devalues the voice of the person-wishing-to-know. Furthermore, the process is self-reproducing since the "objectivity" of knowledge under the banking system is designed to provide the material evidence to substantiate and legitimate the status of the banker-teacher him/herself an ontology which creates in the recipient a sense of dependency rather than personal power.

---

5 ibid., p. 20.
Such processes of cultural superimposition in education cannot be separated from the class interests which operate in society as a whole. It is the knowledge of the dominant culture which is invariably imposed or deposited in the minds of the culture at large - particularly through the medium of compulsory education. And it is the ideas and forms of knowledge of the dominant culture which in this way tend to become normalised - to be accepted as the paramount reality of everyday life.

The Invasive Nature of Technical Rationality in Education

An important element in the process of the normalisation of cultural superimpositions is their representation not as cultural products but as facts. The banking system of education frames the deposits of knowledge as 'facts" - that is to say as objective views of reality unmediated by any individual subjectivity, and these facts are increasingly enmeshed in scientific and objectivist terminologies which includes the use of technical-positivist rationality to characterise the actors themselves, to define and categorise students hierarchically, serving to locate them, to determine their abilities to judge and challenge the factuality of the knowledge with which they have been inculcated.

Schools play an important role in perpetuating the present system of social inequality and exploitation, and in their capacity as agent of dominant cultural values they have increasingly turned to the tools of scientific rationalism and logical positivism. Referring to the process of education as cultural invasion, Paulo Freire says:

"In cultural invasion it is essential that those who are invaded come to see their reality with the outlook of the invaders rather than their own; for the more they mimic the invaders, the more stable the position of the latter becomes...To this end, the invaders are making increasing use of the social sciences and technology, and to some extent the physical sciences as well, to improve and refine their action. It is indispensable for the invaders to know the past and present of those invaded in order to observe the alternatives of the latter's future and thereby attempt to guide the evolution of that future along lines that will favour their own interests."^6

As we move into the Twenty-First Century, it is a sobering experience to look back over a century of compulsory schooling and note how it has developed and changed. One of the most significant changes which has taken place seems to have been that school has become more systematically "scientised". I. Q. Tests, Thematic Apperception Tests (TATs), Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SATs) and Graduate Record Examinations (GREs) - not to mention, High School Diplomas, University Entrance

---

^6 ibid., p. 122.
Exams and (in New Zealand) Bursary Examinations have all become the standard measures of individual student ability. So much so, that according to psychologist William Ryan, we have in fact been misled into believing that education is about the creation of an equality of opportunity in society, when in fact, it is really about the labelling and sorting of young people to fit them precisely for the available number of different jobs with different aptitude requirements in the society at large.\(^7\)

Not only has this "scientisation" of education been instrumental in shaping the way we measure child (and adult) performance, but also - and partly as a function of its apparent success in this capacity - it has also coloured educative notions about what constitutes truth and knowledge. In other words, the positivist analysis of schooling serves indirectly to legitimate positivism as a key ingredient in valid learning, and hence in the educational experience as a whole. Increasingly, over the last 100 years positivist forms of knowledge have displaced or penetrated other, less determined and deterministic forms. Within the curriculum, science and math increasingly predominate over art and social studies as legitimate educational pursuits. In this sense, we seem to have almost reached the stage where science and education have become synonymous. Knowledge itself, as Martin Carnoy has so eloquently put it, has been colonised.\(^8\) Speaking of the historical use of education in the European colonies to inculcate of a feeling of inferiority in the indigenous peoples - in other words as the laying on of a psychological condition, Carnoy notes that:

"Colonialism becomes a description of relationships between people rather than nations. We therefore use the term to describe the way one individual behaves toward another (one individual's subjugation of another). Since human relations usually occur within the context of institutions (created and managed by people), these relations are shaped and mediated by institutional structures. "Colonial" institutions have clearly defined hierarchies: the institution defines each person's role in an authoritarian structure and there is great disparity between the control that various individuals have over its structure and operation. Such institutions are the family, the factory, the school, the hospital etc. Colonial institutions can also be society-wide.\(^9\)

Clearly, education, seen in this light is hardly an egalitarian phenomenon, but is rather an operation which equates with subjugation and oppression - which is to say with cultural violence. And if this is the case, then its constituent parts - knowledge itself, together with the rationalism and scientific positivism which have become so

---

\(^7\) Ryan, W., *Equality*, Pantheon, New York, 1981. Not only that, but as Ryan points out, schools are actually structured to create the aptitudes in individual children which they otherwise read as inherent, and which they then proceed to measure with apparent detachment and objectivity. These points will be taken up in more detail later, as I review the work of American sociologists Samuel Bowles and Herb Gintis.

\(^8\) Carnoy, M., *op. cit.*, 1974, p. 3.

\(^9\) *ibid.*, pp. 3, 27 (fn.4).
much a legitimating part of knowledge, are implicated in this violence. Undoubtedly, this is a strong assertion and needs further explanation.

It is this juxtaposition between the effects of technical rationality, of objectivism, and the world of human experience and inter-subjectivity which stands at the centre of any critique of education. The normalisation of objectivated knowledge turns subjectivities into objects of indoctrination, and in this process the experience of being indoctrinated itself becomes normalised as "getting an education", with all of its dehumanising potential. This process of dehumanisation, of the transformation of Subjects into Objects takes on an added dimension when seen in the context of the State's need to maintain an integrated sense of "the nation" - a sense of patriotism through which it maintains the accepted social order.

**The Social Construction of The Expert**

A critical social perspective recognises that notions of normality are tied to power interests in society. As Marx expressed it long ago;

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch, the ruling ideas: ie. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it."\(^{10}\)

This perspective sheds light upon the role of education in the process of colonisation and cultural assimilation. I noted how early observers of the colonisation process witnessed the inculcation of social values which privileged extrinsic rather than intrinsic value - introduction of a regime of external judgment (with concomitant sub-regimes of reward and punishment) and I noted at that time how the inculcation of value-extrinsicity corresponded to the required patterns of social behaviour which flow from the capitalist means of production. We saw, in other words, how the destruction of intrinsic value systems is an important feature in catering for the needs of the State and the owners of the means of production - in other words, the Establishment. This linkage between accepted versions of normality, coupled with extrinsicity, power and economic interests was well expressed, if with somewhat overwhelming simplicity by Spiro Agnew, when he was Richard Nixon's Vice-President:

---

“You may give us your symptoms, we will make the diagnosis. And we, the establishment, for which I make no apologies for being a part of - we will implement the cure.”

He went on, with further breathtaking insight, to link all of these interests to the overarching canopy of legitimation embodied in American academia, “You don’t learn from people suffering from poverty but from experts who have studied the problem.” This statement reveals a divergence between the normative ideal and the actual practice of democracy in Western society, that it is a basic function of the education system to inculcate into its future citizens a notion of citizenship circumscribed by a passive acceptance of precisely those conceptions of democracy which further the ends of the powerful in society. Agnew's civic arrogance is deftly captured in Steadman's cartoon

Fig. 3. Cartoon by Ralph Steadman, New Society, 15th Feb. 1968.

12 Speech by Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, October 17th, 1968, ibid.
Put another way, we need to study in closer detail how various key social and cultural meanings are transmitted through the medium of education, how these meanings operate to reinforce each other, and how they both reflect and reproduce the values of the dominant culture as well as the conditions of their continued transmission.

**The Role of Education in Maintaining Social Order**

Critical education theorist Michael Young suggests that the perceived role of education in society has not been stable. At different times, its purpose has been viewed differently. He roughly divides its perceived social role into three phases:

1. From the early 1900s to 1945 - as a means of social pacification
2. From 1945 to 1974 as a means of national economic productivity
3. From 1974 to the present, as a national economic burden.  

Initially, public education was seen, as a means of social pacification. As early as the 1790’s in England, educators as well as politicians were well aware of the danger of having a literate poor in society. As Lankshear points out, the British educationalist Hannah More, who established a series of Sunday Schools in the Mendips at that time was careful to make sure that her students only read the Bible, and at no time where encouraged to learn to write. Replying to critics of her reading programme who believed that it would encourage sedition among the lower classes she said:

“I allow of no writing for the poor. My object is not to make them fanatics, but to train up the lower classes in habits of industry and piety.”

At different times since then, education for the poor has been viewed by the wealthy and powerful as a threat, by the poor themselves as a means of social emancipation, by the middle class as a means of social distinction and by the State as an investment. From the end of the Second World War until the mid-1970s, according to Young, education was seen, as a *contributor*, either potentially or actually, to the national economy in most States. This view accords closely with the theories put forward by Jerome Karabel and A. H. Halsey of education as a kind of investment in cultural or human capital. According to this theory, the educational investment

---

13 Young, M., “Education”, in: Worsley, P. (ed.), *The New Introducing Sociology*, Penguin Books, London, 1987, p. 167. A great deal of the research into the relationship between education, power, economics, culture and class has evolved from the British experience over the last thirty years. The theories arising from this experience have had a profound effect upon theorising in other Western States, particularly in the USA.


would return an economic profit to the individual over a lifetime of employment. By
the same token, the cumulative economic profit accorded to individuals would by
extension flow into the competitiveness of the national economy, increasing
investment and exports and leading to general prosperity. During this era, this
philosophy developed alongside, and to a large extent influenced, a general expansion
of the educational system and a massive investment in the educational budgets of most
Western States.

One of the structural characteristics of this system was that it tended to create
new pyramidal social structures which differed from the older traditional
(aristocratic) structures of privilege and power.

These newer structures - meritocracies, in Michael Young's fictional and
futuristic rendering, were based upon natural talent or intelligence.\(^\text{16}\) The idea that
everyone in society had a natural potential which was being stifled by the older
hierarchical social structures equated with the drive to liberate these potentialities by
developing a system based upon individual merit. It was in this sense that, after the
War, the theoretical development of I.Q testing was expanded and overlaid (originally
and primarily in Britain) on the existing public school system, to target precisely those

children from poor families who had this natural ability to take their place in the developing meritocracy. This was known as the 11-Plus exam, which was designed to “stream” children into different levels of education compatible with their “natural abilities”.

From the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, significant numbers of children from working class homes entered the University-directed stream, and as a consequence, the State was called upon to significantly expand its educational portfolio, particularly at the tertiary level, in order to absorb these increasing numbers of students with increased expectations.  

**Education as National Economic Burden (1970-)**

By the mid-1970s, though, the economic burden of these educational costs began to outweigh their perceived economic usefulness to the system. The tax burden which they imposed upon capital, with its consequent reduction in profits required that economies be made. Education (particularly university education) became seen as an economic burden rather than an economic investment. This was particularly the case since research had been able to point to no actual economic benefits at the national level, of the increased educational provision. Instead, increased levels of educational achievement had simply increased the qualification demands of prospective employers, creating what has been called "credential inflation".

By the mid-1960s, it was becoming clear, in Britain at least, that the proposed social stratification of children according to their "intelligence" measured by the 11-Plus was not working. Researchers discovered that working class students were still largely unrepresented at the university entrance level. Gradually, under the labour Governments of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan, the streaming exam was phased out and a system of comprehensive education was slowly and voluntarily established in its place, with the intention of addressing the social stratification operating within the larger British society, replacing the ethic of individualism and focusing instead on a policy of social co-operation and understanding.

---

21 Bullivant, B., *The Pluralist Dilemma in Education*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1981, pp. 23-5. But old Establishment habits die hard. At last analysis, few education authorities had taken the opportunity to adopt the Comprehensive model, and the older stratified system persists, not least in the "Public" Schools - Eton, Harrow, Winchester, etc, where the sons of the elite are prepared to take the place of their fathers at the head of the dominant culture.
Critical Pedagogy of Possibility and a Theory of Cultural Liberation

I earlier cited Paulo Freire's suggestion that the oppressed do not recognise their oppression because they are submerged within it. The consequence of this submersion was, as we saw, a regime of self-deprecation, believing that they "knew nothing" and that they produced nothing of value. Culture, for these people is something remote - a part of the system of oppression within which they are submerged and which they do not recognise as oppression, but as "reality", their reality. They do not think of themselves as producing culture. For them, culture is always produced by others who are more talented or more intelligent - the artists and scientists, the "professors" who possess knowledge. In this sense alone, culture, for these individuals is not part of everyday life, but exists apart from it - the province of others but never of the self.

They have become convinced of their own deficiency as a normal and therefore of the production of culture as an extraordinary process - an event separate from themselves and their capacities. It is precisely this belief which marks the periphery of their colonisation - a separation from their intimate, authentic selves, an inadequate belief in their own inadequacy, the psychic wheels spinning in the mud of a classed existence, with no substantial reality (the reality of the authentic child-self abandoned under the critical gaze of the (inherently) superior other) to gain a critical purchase.

From this twice damned situation (damned by the self for accepting the damnation of the other) how might one set a course for the light, for the solidity of a secure and substantial ontology? Where does one begin to (re)build an identity that is not simply the accepted construction of both significant and remote others, of both one's culture of origin and one's culture of destiny? How does the voiceless one begin to voice the reality and cause of her own voicelessness in a world where no one seems willing or interested in listening?

The Cultural Basis of Transformation

One begins with culture. One begins by recognising that culture is not something alien, strange, special, privileged. One begins by recognising that culture is something we all make all of the time. We not only live out the culture of our social landscape. We create the culture, the social landscape itself. The creation of culture is the act of every living being. This definition of culture is, then, very different from that which we normatively take to be the case. It is very different from the view that sees culture as the writing of symphonies or the painting of masterpiece works of art.
These may be culture also, but they are not exclusively so. And to elevate them to a status greater than the creation of a carved or crafted doll, the knitting of a baby-suit, the cooking of a meal, is a social and a psychological imposition, because it is to introduce into the act of creation a value external to itself which it does not properly merit.

Such a view of creation presumes a point of absolute and objective judgement separate from the realm of human experience. Such a judgement in any case endows the meaning of culture with a special significance for no other reason than to elevate the social standing of one particular act over another - to introduce hierarchy into a phenomenon which is itself based upon a process and a principle of openness, acceptance, curiosity and inclusivity.

The normative class(ed) definition of culture is co-existent and mutually implicated with a parallel class(ed) definition of creativity. 'High' culture is 'creative', 'common' culture (the name says it all) is uncreative, repetitive, non-innovative, not-unique etc. What we fail to recognise in these commonly accepted definitions/constructions is that the meanings and exclusivities are themselves socially constructed and are shaped by class interests. It serves the dominant culture for their definition of creativity to be(come) the norm, since the emblems which the process described produces are those which also describe and articulate the class and which act as a mark of their social superiority and by extension the creative sensibilities of its members.

It is therefore important to begin any critical proposal for an alternative hegemony than those which represent current dominant culture values with a rewriting not just of "culture", but also of "creativity" as one of the legitimating antecedents of normative values. This means that the way creativity is constituted - its social and cultural embeddedness - becomes a critical point of departure.

The Act of Creation as an Emblem of Popular Culture

It is one of the characteristics of our society that the creative person is frequently seen as a social freak, an outcast, an outsider. This is not always the case in other cultures, where the artist is seen as an integral and important member of the community. In these other communities (the Hopi, the Navajo, the Maori, etc) the forms of art which are produced by artists are correspondingly traditionally sensitive to social expectations and values - rooted in the traditions of the social collective. Hence, in the New Zealand context, for instance, the traditional Maori carver, the tohunga whakairo, is the person who carries and expresses the tribal history and whakapapa (genealogy) dating back hundreds of years.

His is the task of giving expression to the stories of the tribe, and of shaping the environment in which the ancestors who people these stories are an ever-present reality. In this sense, the tohunga operates from within the tribe, valued, understood and honoured. And while he (carving is traditionally though not exclusively a male task) may engage in a degree of license, following the dictates of an internal vision, the important aspect of the process is that the outcome is and must be useful in helping his people to make sense of their world. It is important, therefore, that the people not be excluded from the act of creation, but that they should share their stories for the common good. The creative act is very much, in this context, a co-operative act.

In our own Western world, on the contrary, the opposite can almost be said to be the case. The artist often exists as a kind of social pariah, working in isolation and engaging in an individual act of creativity, vying competitively for commissions which bear little resemblance to the lived reality of the ordinary man and woman. The result of this separation between art and everyday life in our society is that reciprocally speaking, while art has been designated as a specialised act, the process of creativity upon which it depends has grown less and less to be seen as the province of everyday living. The man and woman in the street tend to think of themselves as uncreative, uncultured. Paulo Freire describes the astonishment with which his peasant literacy students come to awareness of their own cultured being, when they recognise that culture is the act of creating a world for oneself:

"...by discovering that he, as well as the literate person, has a creative and re-creative impulse, he would discover that culture is just as much a clay doll made by artists who are his peers, as it is the work of a great sculptor, a great painter, a great mystic, or a great philosopher; that culture is the poetry of lettered poets and also the poetry of his own popular songs - that culture is all human creation."

Freire goes on to make the important point that creativity, as a process of thought, is always a social, and never an individual act. Even when it is done alone, the act of creation is an act in which the creator conducts a silent co-operative dialogue with invisible others. Kohn made the point that competing actually inhibits true creativity by focussing attention towards extrinsic factors. This is not to say that there are no conflicts connected to the creative act. The ethnographic and biographical evidence clearly points to a contrary conclusion. The gripping story of the work of Crick and Watson in the discovery of the DNA double-helix is but a case in point. Their intense sense of competition, their need to be the first to be recognised as its

---

24 ibid., pp. 136-7.
discoverers stands separately from the actual discovery itself - the focus not on the silent witnesses or to future imagined accolades, but to the present-time reality of an abstract geometry sensed as an almost physical, muscular experience, arising in their case from an act of partnership, rather than as an isolated, solitary act. Psychologist Rollo May describes the subjective experience of the creative breakthrough very well:

"What occurs in this breakthrough is not simply growth; it is much more dynamic. It is not a mere expansion of awareness; it is rather a kind of battle. A dynamic struggle goes on within a person between what he or she consciously thinks on the one hand, on the other some insight, some perspective, that is struggling to be born. The insight is then born with anxiety, guilt, and the joy and gratification that is inseparable from the actualising of a new idea or vision." 

In other words, the act of creation is an essentially internal experience which is both immeasurable and incomparable, as well as being disconnected, from any external social circumstances, although these may play an important role as a form of internalised dialogue with others. Yet this private act takes place unavoidably in a public context. The social collective is as essential to the private act of creation as the creative experience is to society. But there seems to be a fundamental split in our society (and in traditional societies) between those who dream and (en)vision and those who do not. In traditional precolonial societies like the Maori this division is lessened by virtue of the fact that the role of the artist and scope for the individual expression is constrained by shared understandings and experiences, and it is the role of the dreamer to dream for the collective, on behalf of the social group, giving expression to the shared rather than the private experience. In modern society this role has changed, so that the artist seeks a personal vision rather than a community vision. This structure accords with a commodified form of art embedded in an economy of

---

25 In similar vein, Albert Einstein recorded how the creation of his special theory of relativity was experienced as a play of muscular sensations: "The words or the language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The physical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images which can be voluntarily reproduced and combined... Taken from a psychological point of view, this combinatorial play seems to be the essential feature in productive thought - before there is any connection with logical in words or other kinds of signs which can be communicated to others. The above mentioned elements are, in any case, of visual and some muscular type. Conventional words or other signs have to be sought for laboriously only in a secondary stage, when the mentioned associative play is sufficiently established and can be reproduced at will. According to what has been said, the play with the mentioned elements is aimed to be analogous to certain logical connections one is searching for. In a stage when words intervene at all, they are, in my case, purely additive, but they interfere only in a secondary stage as already mentioned." Similar, if not almost identical experiences of the creative process have been variously recorded by the chemist Kekule, who discovered benzene, physicist Michael Faraday, mathematician Henri Poincaré, and psychologist Rollo May. See: Hadamard, J., *The Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field*, Princeton University Press, 1949, p. 94. See: (for Kekule) Koestler, A., *The Act of Creation*, MacMillan, New York, 1964, pp. 36-8; (for Faraday) Kandal, J., *Michael Faraday*, Faber, London, 1955; (for Poincaré) Ghiselin, B., *The Creative Process*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1952, pp. 36-4; and May, R., *The Courage to Create*, Bantam Books, New York, 1978, p. 60.

26 ibid., pp. 62-3.
production/consumption. In the shift to artistic autonomy, the modern artist must of necessity relinquish to a greater or lesser extent the opportunity for dialogue with his or her community, for common understanding. Paulo Freire speaks of this process of dialogue in the learning/creating experience when he says:

"In true... education there is no particular moment in which, all alone in the library or laboratory, the educator "knows," and another moment in which s/he simply narrates, discourses on, or explains the knowledge "received." At the moment in which educators carry out their research, when as knowledgeable Subjects they stand face to face with a knowable object, they are only apparently alone. Not only do they establish a mysterious, invisible dialogue with those who carried out the same act of knowing before them, but they engage in a dialogue with themselves too. Place(d) face to face before themselves they investigate and question themselves. The more they ask questions, the more they feel that their curiosity about the subject is not decreasing. It only diminishes if it is isolated from human beings and the world. This is why dialogue as a fundamental part of the structure of knowledge needs to be opened to other Subjects in the knowing process. Thus a class is not a class in the traditional sense, but a meeting place where knowledge is sought and not where it is transmitted."  

In addition, the notion that culture is something everyone produces seems to be at odds with the role of the isolated individual artist. Freire and others touch upon the rich potential of a new and exciting conception of art when they speak of a shared creativity, a process by which each member of society is helped and encouraged to extend their cultural production and to develop a creative engagement with others for their mutual empowerment and self realisation.

What seems to be important in the creative experience, is the intrinsic reward of creation itself which, as we saw earlier, is antithetical to competition, and which, according to Rollo May and others both expresses and brings about a synthetic integration of separate and often conflicting parts of the self. In other words, and to restate the case more simply, the suggestion that the creative act (the act of creating culture) is a special act separate from life and confined to a few blessed (or cursed) individuals, rather than a fundamental part of every person's daily experience, is a suggestion based upon a misguided notion of the actual creative process and arising

---

from a classed, gendered and racist world. More particularly, the establishment of a hierarchy of cultural production which subordinates one form of creativity to another evolves directly from the circumstances of competition between different cultural commodities within the framework of the capitalist economy of consumption. What this means is that the need to value one cultural product above another is importantly consistent with the demands placed upon cultural production in general by the forces of the marketplace.

Even beyond this, however, we must look not just to the marketplace as a generalised arena of economic activity. The marketplace is not itself separate from the existing structures of economic and social power operating in the everyday world. It is, on the contrary, a manifestation of these powers. There is little in the ebb and flow of market prices and the controlled consumption of the marketplace that is separate from these power interests, and this is why they (the power interests) seek continuously to extend their sphere of influence into every corner of everyday life, including academia, research, curriculum content and so on. So the social and cultural structuring of cultural production is an essential element of this process of domination and subordination. The act of privileging one form of creative act over another is an act of domination carried out to establish and reproduce a regime of cultural distinction which serves the interests of the dominant class. In any attempt to decolonise education, to liberate knowledge from the bounds of a classed normativity or to develop a transformative model of education with a liberatory pedagogy, the exclusive (culturally determined) view of culture itself stands as the first area of cultural criticism which is required to be decolonised.

Just as the notion of culture has been colonised, intellectual activity is similarly compromised. As Freire notes, the intellectual activity of the powerless is always characterised as non-intellectual, and this leads invariably to a situation in which the supposed universality of education (together with its capacity for personal improvement and emancipation functions), leads in the face of individual failure, to the cause of failure being laid upon the students themselves - what Ryan has called "Blaming the victim". Since the time of the Enlightenment culture and nature have been viewed as separate and mutually exclusive categories. Marx distinguished culture from nature, commenting how the architect differed from the spider in his or her capacity to imagine a finished design. It is the reflective capacity of humans, according to Marx, which makes our productions qualitatively different from those of

31 We may, perhaps, forgive Marx the arrogance of presuming that spiders are not reflective.
other species, that makes us specifically human. Freire takes this one step further adopting an anthropological definition of culture. Culture, for Freire, is that which mankind produces out of nature. Culture is the bow and arrow as it is the bronze sculpture. It is that by which human beings create themselves through the transformation of nature. It is, as I have constantly emphasised, the product of our everyday lives.

**Naming the Word, Naming the World: Making Culture**

Certain educational principles result from this model of culture. The first, well articulated by Freire, is that an education for freedom (as opposed to an education for domination) must begin by recognising that any process which prevents or inhibits the individual from participating in the production or creation of culture is repressive, since it places limits upon the emerging humanity of the individual. Among the operational structures which embody this repressive educational process is what he calls the *prescriptive* attitude of educators.\^32 A prescriptive education is one in which one person's choices are prescribed by another, where knowledge itself is prescribed *for* the other rather than *with* the other.

The exclusion of the subjectivity of the learner from the process of deciding what is appropriate to be learned constitutes, ipso facto, an act of domination and thereby a limitation of his or her humanness:

"Knowing, whatever its level, 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. Knowledge, on the contrary, necessitates the curious presence of Subjects confronted with the world. It requires their transforming action on reality. It demands a constant searching. It implies invention and re-invention. It claims from each person a critical reflection on the very act of knowing. It must be a reflection which recognises the knowing process, and in this recognition becomes aware of the *raison d'être* behind the knowing and the conditioning to which that process is subject. Knowing is the task of Subjects not objects. It is as a Subject, and only as such, that a man or woman can really know. In the learning process, the only person who really *learns* is s/he who appropriates what is learned, who apprehends and thereby re-invents that learning; s/he who is able to apply the appropriated learning to concrete existential situations."\^33

Hence to be fully human is to engage in the process of creating the world, of creating culture, and this happens through the subjective apprehension of the world and through the reflective action upon the world, based on the understanding thus acquired. To *instruct* or *prescribe* or *profess* is therefore a counter-productive process.

---

\^32 Freire, P., *op. cit.*, 1972, p. 25.
insofar as the goal of education is taken to be the emancipation of the individual or the maximisation of his or her humanity. Freire refers to the act of creating culture as "naming the world", which always precedes (in literacy terms) "naming the word", or to be more precise, that becoming literate requires a rewriting of the world - the coming to consciousness of one's concrete situation in the world and renaming its previously colonised meanings.\textsuperscript{34} In other words, the teaching/learning process involves of necessity a decoding of the meanings which have previously formed the horizon of our lived experience, and a reframing of these meanings consistent with the new awareness of ourselves as colonised beings.

According to Berger and Luckmann, the given conceptual categories through which we come to characterise and understand the world determine, to a large extent, the understanding that we have of it. Institutions exist through and by the naming of the world, through particular conceptual categorisations, delineations and demarcations, through the classification into particular forms of cognitive structures.

We are now in a position to relate this model to that proposed by Freire, in which he notes, the \textit{naming of the world} constitutes the fundamental process of our understanding of everyday reality, and that the naming of the world is the prime cultural event in our lives.\textsuperscript{35} In contradistinction to this, we will see that the naming of the world for another is and must always be a dehumanising act of violence, which, taken to its logical extreme erases the culture of the other and culminates therefore in an act of genocide.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{cartoon.png}
\caption{Cartoon illustrating a dehumanising act of violence.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{34} Freire, P., \textit{op. cit.}, 1972, p. 61; Freire, P. and Macedo, D., \textit{op. cit.}, 1987, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{ibid.}, pp. 47-9.
From this, we can see that an education for freedom will reject the naming of the world for another and will encourage each individual to come to the naming of the world for him/herself. In other words, any educational process which operates upon the basis of prescription can be seen to steal from its recipients the freedom and the ability to come to their own understanding of reality, and in the process deny to them their right to shape the world, to make history and thereby to make themselves. Put more directly, we can say, along with Freire, and remembering Berger and Luckmann that:

"If this historical-cultural world were a created, finished world, it would no longer be susceptible to transformation. The human being exists as such, and the world is a historical-cultural one, because the two come together as unfinished products in a permanent relationship, in which human beings transform the world and undergo the effects of their transformation. In this dynamic historical-cultural process, one generation encounters the objective reality marked out by another generation and receives through it the imprints of reality. Any attempt to manipulate people to adapt them to this reality... means taking from them their opportunity and their right to transform the world. Education cannot take this road. To be authentic it must be liberating."36

Nor, according to Freire, is it only the oppressed alone who stand in need of liberation. Oppression touches both the oppressed and the oppressors, dehumanising both and engendering a whole way of life for those caught up in it.37 Yet the oppressors themselves are incapable of liberating themselves and those they oppress from their oppression. This is because the dehumanisation of the oppressor desensitizes the latter's awareness to the fact of his or her violence, which is seen not as violence, but as either the natural order of things or as tolerance. For the oppressor, the circumstances of those whom they oppress stands as a natural phenomenon, and their own status as an elite appears as an inalienable right. The oppressed are, in these terms, "lazy", "dole bludgers", "incompetent" or simply "ungrateful" (remembering here both the historical facts of colonisation as well as the current definition of "oppression", as the limitation of another's freedom through the withholding of either material, cultural or intellectual capital).38

**Cultural Deprivation Theory**

In this sense, any move away from the circumstances of oppression - as for instance in the democratisation of education, or the abolition of authoritarian teaching methods is seen as madness, a flight from rationality and a diminution of educational

37 Freire, P., *op. cit.*, 1972, p. 34.
38 ibid., p. 35.
standards. Any suggestion that Eurocentric curricula should be replaced by culturally sensitive material and that the learners should have some part in its choice is seen as a retrograde step. A typical example of the tension around such issues is the question of whether "Black English" should form a legitimate part of the curriculum of schools where it is the language of everyday life for the majority of the population, or whether, instead, the system should insist upon an adherence to standard "Queen's" English in the classroom. 39

Irish-Canadian theorist Jim Cummins has shown that within the normative educational domain, the converse belief reigns supreme - that the illiterate and innumerate are seen to suffer from a deficiency of knowledge, and that what they really need is more and more of the same standard or dominant cultural products. 40 In the latter example, for instance, it would be suggested that the advancement of black students requires that they speak "properly" in the world, and move beyond the colloquialisms of their everyday lives, and that the best way to accomplish this is to insist that they relinquish their dialects in favour of a "universal" standard. Henry Giroux, commenting on this "deficit" model of education ie. that poor and marginalised students suffer a deficiency which needs to be "treated" through the laying-on and absorption of increased amounts of dominant culture, makes the important point that:

"...the notion of cultural deprivation serves to designate in the negative sense forms of cultural currency that appear disturbingly unfamiliar and threatening when measured against the dominant culture's ideological standard regarding what is to be valorised as history, linguistic proficiency, lived experience and standards of community life. The importance of developing a politics of difference in this view is seldom a positive virtue and attribute of public life; in fact difference is often constituted as deficiency and is part of the same logic that defines the other within the discourse of cultural deprivation." 41

39 This is a pertinent example which Freire himself discusses. I cite it here because it is both topical and charged with emotion. A more historical, and therefore less challenging example (although still, pertinent) is the suppression of indigenous languages within the educational systems of colonised countries such as the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. All of the research evidence indicates that learning happens most easily when it takes place in the heritage language of the learner, and that the promotion of a first (minority) language within the educational system actually favours its native speakers and does not, as popular mythology maintains, inhibit their development in the dominant culture language or in other subjects. See Freire, P. and Macedo, D. op. cit., 1987, pp. 127-9. For a comprehensive analysis of the use of language in the education of minority students see: Cummins, J., Empowering Minority Students, California Assn. for Bilingual Education, Monterey, 1989

40 ibid., pp. 20-2. This deficit model of education has recently been most fully and mistakenly articulated by E. D. Hirsch Jr., who suggests that minority and working class students fail in school not because they have not mastered the inherited stock of knowledge which forms the basis of normative tradition. See: Hirsch, E. D., Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1987. For a fuller critique of Hirsch see: Giroux, H. A., op. cit., 1988, pp. 117-8.

This deficit model actually serves to reinforce a racist and classed system of education which is itself patently failing, as Paul Willis' and other numerous examples testify. It reinforces the role of the teacher *qua* teacher as the knowledgeable person confronted by the ignorant student, yet, as Freire again reminds us, there are at the point of encounter neither utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know.\textsuperscript{42}

**The Banking Principle of Education.**

The deficit model of education prevails throughout the world as the universal norm, as the standard and accepted basis for the creation and "transfer" of knowledge from one generation to the next. Yet there is a curious paradox at work within the model. If we take education to be about the emancipation of future generations, if we expect them, through education, to "do better than we did," or to free themselves from social and economic servitude, we also ensure, by the very model of education to which we subject them, that they will be compelled to adapt to our model of education, and to the set of social relationships which shaped us and which it represents, and against which we otherwise seem to be at odds.

\textsuperscript{42} Freire, P., *op. cit.*, 1972, p. 63.
The normative system of education, in other words, works counter to its own espoused aims of emancipation and democracy. Freire calls this system of education the “Banking System of Education” in which the “teacher” makes “deposits” into the supposedly “empty” heads of the “learners”, or replaces “knowledge with a poor “currency value” with “higher value” knowledge.

Speaking of this "banking" system of education, Freire notes:

"It is not surprising that the banking concept of education regards men as adaptable, measurable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them."

Yet this contradiction between the espoused aim and the practice of education is never itself made a critically reflective object of the education process. Instead, while we impress upon our students the need to transform the world, we simultaneously deny to them the opportunity to transform the world of education in which our exhortations are framed. In this sense, the banking system of education forms the totalising and synthetic framework within which all other elements of the hidden curriculum find their logic. An emancipatory education which relies upon the passive reception by an objectified learner of a knowledgeable narration from a knowing Subject is therefore a contradiction in terms. Students in this situation are not encouraged to become free-thinking participants in the creation of knowledge, but are instead turned into "containers" to be filled up by the teacher, in a process in which the students become depositories and the teachers depositors.

Knowledge in this context is seen as a gift from the knowledgeable to the ignorant. Worse still, such a procedure conveys the inevitable meaning that knowledge is a commodity, which can not only be bought and sold in the marketplace, but which is also a value-neutral phenomenon separate from the realm of human suffering or power. Yet the power associated with this conception of knowledge is paradoxically hidden within its own representation. Students in this context never come to realise that they already know something, nor even that in the learning situation they invariably teach the teacher anything. Quite the contrary is the case. The teacher projects a state of absolute ignorance upon the student and in the process justifies his or her own existence, reinforcing the imposition of a system of power.

---

43 ibid., p. 47.
44 ibid., p. 45.
embodied in the educational situation while at the same time denying it. Education in this form functions primarily to mystify, rather than to clarify, and is not only non-emancipatory, but on the contrary, is based upon the practice of domination, reflecting the structure of an oppressive society as a whole (which the student is being fraudulently encouraged to transform). Freire lists ten characteristics of this banking system of education:

1. The teacher teaches and the students are taught
2. The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing
3. The teacher thinks and the students are thought about
4. The teacher talks and the students listen (meekly)
5. The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined
6. The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply
7. The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher
8. The teacher chooses the programme content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it
9. The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students
10. The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects

Such, according to Freire, is the character of an education of domination, which steals from students their ability to transform the world, to be fully human. Against this, we can see that a liberatory model of education would be built around a very different conception of knowledge. In this alternative, knowledge is not a lifeless commodity, but the expression of an ongoing process of discovery. Knowledge is not extended from those who know to those who are ignorant, but is socially constructed, is creatively built up between human beings in a relationship of equality.

Nor is knowledge itself blind to these relationships, but both problematises and integrates them into its formation and development. What this means is that the social context within which learning takes place is integral to that which is learned. To preach freedom from a position of authority is nonsense. The false conception of education based upon the deposition or banking model of learning in those being educated is a fundamental obstacle to both personal and social transformation. Education for the practice of freedom can only occur when there is a true dialogue between equals, where each is willing to acknowledge, with humility, that there is much to be learned. Or again, to quote Freire at his most eloquent:

---

45 ibid., pp. 46-7.
47 ibid., p. 151.
"Educating, and educating oneself for the purpose of liberation, is the task of those who know that they know little (for this very reason they know that they know something and can thus succeed in knowing more) in dialogue with those who almost always think they know nothing. Their aim is that the latter can also know more by the transformation of their thinking that they know nothing into the knowledge that they know little."  

The Emancipation of the Oppressor

I noted earlier how a system of oppressive education affects not only the oppressed but also the oppressors, not only the students but also the teachers. Freire refers to it as "a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human." Institutions do not just happen, but are created and maintained by human beings who may choose to reproduce dehumanising structures of human relationship or may alternatively choose to transform them. Either way, there is a choice involved. In their very nature institutions operate conservatively - particularly those of a very stratified or hierarchical nature. This is because the further one moves up the decision-making hierarchy, the more removed one becomes from the day-to-day problems and dilemmas of the people "lower down" so to speak.

This phenomenon needs no further comment except to say that the proliferation of management courses aimed at resolving this problem of management alienation, of the acquisition of better "leadership skills", or for "flattening the authority structure" testifies to the problem. Top-down hierarchical decision structures are inherently dehumanising, because they insulate each level of the stratified system from the ones above and below, render the human participants into inanimate "things", devoid of compassion and understanding and only able to make management decisions in the name of efficiency rather than humanity.

Freire maintains that insulated as they are from the effects of their oppression, the oppressors can never change the circumstances of oppression. This is especially true, because any attempt by the oppressor to alleviate the suffering of those whom they oppress without relinquishing the power and authority which lies at the base of their oppression is in reality a false generosity, which simply masks from the oppressed the root causes of their suffering, and in the end stands as yet a further act of oppression disguised as benevolence. The impulse for real change can only come from the oppressed themselves. They alone hold the key to the emancipation not only of themselves, but also of those who oppress them:

48 ibid., p. 99.
50 There are a plethora of such documents available. For a significant example see: Senge, P. M., et al. op. cit., 1994.
"The central problem is this: How can the oppressed, as divided, inauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation? Only as they discover themselves to be "hosts" of the oppressor can they can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy. As long as they live in the duality where to be is to be like the oppressor, this contribution is impossible. The pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanisation.\(^{51}\)

For the oppressed, liberation means coming to recognise the extent they have internalised their view which the oppressor holds of them, and to the extent which, they choose to reject the oppressor or come to despise themselves for wishing to be like the oppressor. The process of liberatory education requires that the learning experience itself - the relationship between the "teacher" and the "learner" become the vehicle whereby this realisation and liberation is affected. For the oppressor, the act of liberation cannot simply be reduced to a gifting, but requires the relinquishment of a whole way of life - a recognition of their status as oppressor and a surrendering of the power and authority which goes with it and from which it draws its nourishment. Freire maintains that this is tantamount to the psychological death of the oppressor, as a kind of "class suicide," followed by a rebirth:

"Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth. Those who undergo it must take on a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were."

The process has similarly been likened by one who has experienced it as "crossing the river of fire", also a process of death and rebirth - death to a life as oppressor and rebirth into a solidarity with the oppressed.\(^{52}\) It is described thus to convey the difficulties experienced by the oppressor in participating in the process of transformation, of emancipation. By virtue of their insularity, they do not witness themselves as oppressors, and of their oppressor-status must be brought home to them as an exteriority by those whom they oppress. The hard-pressed teacher in the classroom carrying out a curriculum accepted by all of her colleagues, faced with unruly teenagers, and mindful of a personal desire to educate them to the very best of her ability does not usually think of herself as acting oppressively towards her charges.

\(^{51}\) Freire, P., op. cit., 1972, p. 25.
What is at stake here is a reframing of the concept of oppression which extends it beyond the normative boundaries of physical intimidation or violence and to recognise its institutionalised quality. The institutionalisation of violence oppresses the oppressor as well as the oppressed, the teacher as well as the student. An education for freedom therefore takes as its central theme the need to recognise the manifest ways in which the system oppresses all participants and the necessity to engage in collaborative acts of resistance and transformation. Education is a form of institutionalised oppression, even in the face of the best intentions of individually concerned and compassionate teachers to humanise the learning experience. In this sense, a pedagogy of liberation must extend beyond a mere recognition of the means by which the students themselves are the objects of oppression, to uncover the systemic nature of oppression as it bears down on teacher and student alike.

I agree with Freire that, within this context, there exist only two alternatives, a pedagogy of liberation and a pedagogy of domination, and that the former requires of the concerned and compassionate teacher that he or she recognise the ways in which the institutionalised forms of learning require a participation in alienating pedagogical practices and curricula. It means that the liberatory educator must continually confront the locus of authority upon which he or she bases their permission and/or right to teach. While the individual teacher might not identify herself readily as someone who practices domination, nevertheless, the system of education and the pedagogical practices which she tacitly accepts as the basis for the maintenance of her own authority ensure that this is the case.

This is why Freire says that the system of oppression taints not only the oppressed but also the oppressors. It is also why the act of overthrowing oppression requires more than the simple reversal of the roles between oppressor and oppressed. What is required is not simply a reversal of these roles but their complete elimination in the forging of a new set of relationships built upon a mutuality of respect and an acceptance of equality. This requires the acceptance and practice of a new pedagogy, a pedagogy of liberation which is structurally different than that which operates at the moment which is based upon principles of domination which are integral to the banking model of knowledge.

Furthermore, the construction of this new relationship between the formerly-oppressed and the formerly-oppressor cannot be bestowed, since this would merely represent an extension and reproduction of the present system of oppression. A pedagogy of liberation can therefore only be achieved by the oppressed and by the oppressors together, in a dialogue where the pedagogical content includes not only the present abstract forms of curriculum knowledge, but a reflexive critical unpacking of

---

these forms in the context of the relationship of power between the oppressed and the oppressor in which they have historically evolved. In this context a new set of roles emerges through a process of dialogue.\textsuperscript{54}

**The Importance of Dialogue to the Learning Experience**

The imperative to adopt an emancipatory pedagogy cannot be simply added as another component of a repressive curriculum, as another "deposit" to be conveyed to the student. It must spring from the (joint) realisation of mutual dehumanisation which is engendered by the pedagogy of oppression. This realisation can only emerge through dialogue, and a pedagogy of liberation must therefore begin with dialogue which reflexively takes as part of the content of its discourse the processes of oppression upon which it is based. In this way, for the teacher, the false dichotomy between knowing and professing is eliminated, while for the student, the passivity of receiving ready-made deposits of knowledge disappears under the enlivened critical co-investigation of form and content of both curricula, overt and hidden.\textsuperscript{55}

We have seen that the pedagogy of the oppressed involves the naming of the world for others. It is self-evident, therefore, that a pedagogy of liberation cannot do this. It cannot, by definition, involve the imposition of one person's world upon another. It follows from this, that dialogue must take place between equals, as Gregory Baum, cited earlier (p. 45), has made clear. On the other hand, as Habermas as clearly indicated, an equality of power in dialogical relationships - the conditions of the claim to reason in what he calls the "ideal speech situation" are rarely met in actuality.\textsuperscript{56} This is because the participants engaging in dialogue do not initially enter into the process in a state of trust.

**Dialogue and Trust**

Trust is something which the dialogical process itself produces and which becomes one of the focus elements of dialogical production. This process takes time as each participant experiences the others in the context of a critical appraisal of the consistency between their pronouncements and their actions:

"Trust is contingent on the evidence which one party provides the others of his true, concrete intentions; it cannot exist if that party's words do not coincide with his actions. To say one thing and do another - to take one's own word lightly - cannot inspire trust. To glorify democracy and to silence the people is a farce; to discourse on humanism and to negate man is a lie."\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54} ibid., p. 53.
\textsuperscript{55} ibid., pp. 53-4.
\textsuperscript{57} Freire, P., op. cit., 1972, p. 64.
Conversation by itself is not enough to engender trust nor, therefore, to encourage true dialogue. The creation of dialogue is a shared event which involves a working together - working on the process of conversation, but also working upon building the trust only upon which dialogue might be created.\(^58\)

But we are involved in a circular pursuit. True dialogue can only be based on trust, but trust only emerges out of true dialogue. Giroux notes that the avoidance or exclusion of power and authority as an object of dialogue cannot form a basis of trust. Nor, indeed, is it possible to simply discuss the issue of disparities in power in the hope of achieving trust. What is required are concrete actions which signify the abandonment of power relationships - a surrendering of normative authority to the dialogical ensemble. It is against such actions that the words of the oppressor can then be assessed and the basis of trust established. Actions as they say, speak louder than words.

Against this, the discussion of power as an abstraction constitutes a depoliticisation of difference which ignores crucial aspects of the reality of oppression for the oppressed. It is for this reason that Habermas’s theory of communicative action fails to address the reality of oppression in the context of a liberatory dialogue. Before the establishment of what we might call the ideal relationship of trust, participants must begin with some trusting basis for entering into the process of dialogue in the first instance, and from this moment, dialogue itself must be experienced simultaneously as both the process and the product of its own existence and operation.\(^59\) The dialogue of a pedagogy of liberation cannot therefore be a "false dialogue" in which one of the participants pretends to relinquish authority, because it is precisely the internal consistency between word and deed that is the object of the dialogical investigation.\(^60\) Where inconsistencies do exist, they become clearly identified in the critical perspective that participants bring to their relationship. Freire notes, for instance that:

"It is very common to find intellectuals who authoritatively discuss the right of the subordinated classes to liberate themselves. The mere act of talking about the working class as objects of their reflections smacks of elitism on the part of these intellectuals. There is only one way to overcome this elitism, which is also authoritarian and implies an inconsistency in intellectuals' revolutionary..."
discourse. These intellectuals ought to stop speaking about and start speaking with the working classes. When educators expose themselves to the working classes, they automatically begin to become re-educated.661

Critical to the emergence of dialogue then, is an internal consistency between what is said and the way in which one says it. When all participants initially accept the critical interrogation of the relationship between these two aspects of speech as the rightful object of the dialogue itself, it is the mutual acceptance of this datum for dialogue which provides the initial basis of trust upon which true and evolving dialogue proceeds in increasingly mutual respect and acceptance, and where authority is equally shared in the context of personal autonomy and integrity.

A Radical Provisional Morality

This mutual acceptance forms part of the necessary existence of what Giroux has called a "radical provisional morality," which is to say, along with Freire, a common bond of agreement to work towards emancipation in the context of a profound love for the world and for its human beings.62 In other words, the participants agree to engage in the process of dialogue as though the world which they wish to create were already a reality while simultaneously recognising the limitations which their personal histories have placed upon its realisation.

They presume the prior existence of Habermas' ideal speech situation while at the same time maintaining a critical perspective upon the operation of speech acts as they evolve in the context of the dialogue, in the emerging awareness of their own colonisation.

What this means, is that the participants in true dialogue hold, as their central and shared ideal, the transformation of the world into a more loving and equitable place. This suggests a sense of solidarity, a faith in mankind, as the a priori basis for dialogue.63 It is this basis which provides the foundation for the creation of and broadening of the domain of trust upon which dialogue might grow and expand.

Dialogue is therefore not only non-hierarchical, but also anti-hierarchical, in that it desires to create a world without hierarchy. Nor is dialogue competitive, since within the framework of the dialogical relationship all voices, all realities, all personal

---

61 Freire, P. and Macedo, D. op. cit., 1987, p. 136. When we later look at the implications for a critical pedagogy in design education we shall be stressing this dichotomy between an education for liberation and an education for oppression in the context of abstract design programmes which steal from the student the opportunity to engage with the real problems of real people - of being with the people, and at the same time recognising the need, in dialogical encounters with the people, for what Seyla Benhabib and other have called the presence of a "concrete other", rather than an abstracted and fictitious "client". See: Benhabib, S., “The Utopian Dimension in Communicative Ethics”, New German Critique, No. 35, Spring, 1985, pp. 93-4.


63 ibid., p. 63. This is a very important issue, which impacts directly upon the attitude which young professionals bring to their work with lay people in the context of community design.
experiences are of equal validity and weight. To presume one person's experience to be more valid than another's, *even in the context of technical or professional matters* is to engage in an act of invalidation, of dehumanisation which is anti-dialogical, and therefore oppressive.⁶⁴

It follows from the desire to change the world through dialogue, through a joint naming of the world by equals in dialogue, that the intent of dialogue is not simply to talk, to participate in an "armchair critique of the world", as Freire puts it, but to act upon the world as an integral aspect of the reflective dialogue itself. In other words, implicit in an engagement in dialogue is a parallel commitment to action. This suggests that an essential pre-requisite for dialogue is a condition of *hope*, rather than despair.⁶⁵

Participants in dialogue must be able to imagine that, through their actions, a better and more equitable world is possible and will indeed emerge. Henry Giroux and Stanley Aronowitz have captured this same feeling when they call for the creation and use of a "language of possibility", through which oppressed groups may move, in solidarity, beyond the pessimistic rhetoric of much contemporary critical education theorising.⁶⁶ They point to the example of liberation theology, which has abandoned abstract themes of universal liberation or the goodness of humanity and has focussed instead upon the issue of human suffering, while at the same time establishing a principle of hope in solidarity, without relinquishing its critical social position.⁶⁷

**Pedagogy of Possibility**

Along with Roger Simon, Giroux has elevated this demand for a language of possibility to encompass the entire field of critical pedagogy, calling for what they call a "pedagogy of possibility", through the full integration of popular cultural productions (Mills and Boon novels, for instance) within the legitimacy of what is considered appropriate knowledge, and extending the dignity of knowing and learning as a cultural experience to include otherwise excluded and disenfranchised groups through an acceptance and validation of their values and artifacts.⁶⁸

---

⁶⁴ Freire goes to great lengths to critique the role of extension agents, in Latin America, for instance. Their job is to advise peasants on technical agrarian matters such as erosion prevention, crop types etc. His thorough critique shows how, in spite of their greater technical expertise, the extension agents invariably fail in their task of educating the peasants because their pedagogical style is non-dialogical. I will return to this matter in more detail later in the context of design education and community design projects. See: Freire, P., "Extension or Communication" (trans) Bigwood, G., and Marshall, M., in Freire, P., *op. cit.*, 1973, pp. 93-164, esp. pp. 114-118.

⁶⁵ Freire, P., *op. cit.*, 1972, p. 64.


⁶⁸ Giroux, H. A. and Simon, R. I., "Schooling, Popular Culture and a Pedagogy of Possibility", in: Giroux, H. A and Simon, R. I., et al., *Popular Culture, Schooling and Everyday Life*, Bergin and Garvey, 1989, pp. 219-235. In the context of design, the issue of popular cultural artifacts (garden gnomes, ceramic flamingos and wrought iron butterflies, etc.) looms large. These objects, vilified in high-culture, are nevertheless representative of a consciousness seeking personal expression and growth. The important
Other theorists have also spoken about the need for a liberation politics to move beyond the rhetoric of despair. Theodor Adorno, the consummate critic of modern alienating social structures, together with Walter Benjamin, have both pointed out the urgency for proactive and creative language and strategy. In support of Benjamin, Adorno wrote:

"The only philosophy which can be responsibly practiced in the face of despair is to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption: all else is reconstruction, mere technique. Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world; reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as it will appear one day in the messianic light. To gain such perspectives without velleity or violence, entirely from felt contact with object - this alone is the task of thought."^69

Echoing Freire, Ernst Bloch, too, has spoken passionately about the need to hope, and to present to the world not simply a negative critique shackled to a gloomy picture of what is or what was, but to offer a vision of the future which might enliven our theories and our actions.^70 Nevertheless, despite the need to sustain a vision of the future, a pedagogy for liberation based upon dialogue cannot abandon the language of critique, but must combine it with its language of possibility.^71 Critical theorising, in dialogue, thus remains an indissoluble part of the process of social transformation. Freire contrasts critical thinking with what he calls "naive thinking" - an awareness of the present as the objectification of and an evolution of the past - a belief that the world as it is is unavoidably given and non-transformable.

Naive thinking denies the agency of human beings in the creation of history and accepts the inevitability of the present as a dead historical weight. In contrast, critical thinking acknowledges that human beings make history and that today's social, political and material circumstances can and should be changed. Furthermore, critical thinking unpacks the social forces and tendencies which have led us to this present and through a process of critical reflection, defines ways in which these processes between human subjects might be transformed. Hence critical thinking is essential to the process of true dialogue and only true dialogue can generate critical thought.^72

This is an extremely important point, because it suggests that dialogue in a critical

---


pedagogy is not only about critical thoughts, but once again that it is itself also the object of critical discourse:

"Education which is able to resolve the contradiction between teacher and student takes place in a situation in which both address their act of cognition to the object by which they are mediated. Thus, the dialogical character of education as the practice of freedom does not begin when the teacher-student meets the students-teachers in a pedagogical situation, but rather when the former first asks himself what his dialogue with the latter will be about. And preoccupation with the content of dialogue is really preoccupation with the programme content of education."\(^{73}\)

In other words, the participants in a dialogical critical pedagogy do not imagine that they themselves are immune from the social forces and circumstances which they are critiquing in the wider society, but that these same social forces and circumstances are at work in the very process of the dialogue about these issues itself and in which they are reflexively engaged. Hence each participant within the framework of such a dialogue carries a responsibility (if the dialogue is to be and remain a true dialogue) to interrogate not only these social factors in the manner and behaviour of his or her colleagues, but in his/her own thoughts and representations. This is why a critical dialogue in the practice of freedom requires an enormous amount of trust, as well as a shared commitment to mutual acceptance and understanding, because only where such trust exists, can the voice that is afraid to be heard be spoken. Only under these circumstances is it possible for participants to reveal to themselves and to those with whom they are in dialogue those aspects of themselves of which they are ashamed or of which they are otherwise afraid to speak.

**Cultural Blindness and Reflexive Dialogue**

What is being suggested here is that knowledge is always personal, is always knowledge from a particular point of view which is determined and shaped by the past experience of the knower. In order to "place" this knowledge in its proper social context, it is therefore important to also place the experience of the knower within a social framework which will help to make sense of the perspective from which it is viewed. With respect to education, for instance, it is important to realise, that women and people of colour, who have often been the objects of particular forms of oppression will often find it difficult to express their view of the world in the presence of the oppressor, without important safeguards for their dignity and sense of safety.

The white, male, mature, middle-class professor, who has not experienced these same forms of oppression will invariably not see himself as oppressor and will,

---

\(^{73}\) ibid., p. 65.
consequently, probably not take into account his own passive influence upon the form of the dialogue. To give a more concrete example (and one based upon personal experience), the European instructor who fails to account for the prior background experience of Asian students raised under the spiritual umbrella of Confucius (based upon a profound respect for the authority of elders) will also fail to comprehend their "lack of initiative", their "inability to think independently", their "wanting me to tell them what to do".

The instructor in such a circumstance will almost inevitably judge negatively the creative capacity of the student, to the detriment of the student.

It is therefore incumbent upon the teacher to situate these judgements reflexively in a discourse which reveals his or her own partiality, rather than seeking to mask or obscure this partiality behind a veneer of institutionalised authority. Comprehension of these responses by the instructor can only take place when the content of the dialogue itself becomes the critical focus of the programmatic content of the course - when form and content are critically apprehended as a whole, and when words and actions are seen in critical relationship to each other in the context of openness and safety. As Giroux notes:

"The production of knowledge... is a relational act. For teachers this means being sensitive to the actual historical, social and cultural conditions that contribute to the forms of knowledge and meaning that students bring to school."\(^{74}\)

Or as Freire summarises the situation:

"For the anti-dialogical banking educator, the question of content simply concerns the programme about which he will discourse to his students; and he answers his own question by organising his own programme. For the dialogical problem-posing teacher-student, the programme content of education is neither a gift nor an imposition - bits of information to be deposited in the students - but rather the organised, systematised, and developed "re-presentation" to individuals of the things about which they want to know more."\(^{75}\)

What this also means is that the dialogical relationships in a pedagogy for social transformation must not hide from but must confront the real differences which participants bring to the dialogue. Speaking of this need to reflexively confront the "hard questions" within the framework of a dialogical pedagogy, Henry Giroux,


\(^{75}\) Freire, P., op. cit., 1972, pp. 65-6. This is in fact an excellent description of what takes place in the design studio, where instructors decide the programme, present it to the students, help to shape the student responses and then evaluate the end production, while all of the time complaining that the students lack initiative.
amongst others, has noted the importance of stories as a basis for establishing a student voice.

Within the framework of a dialogical relationship, however, he reminds us that we must be constantly mindful that stories are never neutral, being always tied to particular memories, modes of experience, narratives and histories. We must move beyond the naive belief that participants are innocent, and within the framework of a critical dialogue, interrogate them as part of a political project which reveals the moral consistencies and inconsistencies which are reflective of their formative social contexts. In other words:

"It is important to construct a pedagogy of voice and difference around the recognition that some practices (voices/stories) define themselves through the suppression of other voices, support forms of human suffering, and require an explicit moral and political condemnation on the part of the teacher. Questions of racism and sexism, for instance, cannot be treated as topics of merely academic interest."76

**Knowledge as Dialogical Creation**

In the context for a pedagogy for freedom, which requires that the reality of oppression be also the object of dialogue this means that racism, sexism and other models of oppression cannot be dealt with abstractly but must become contextualised as an important aspect of the dialogical relationship itself. In other words, sexism, racism and other forms of a cultural oppression which are operating within the dialogue must be directly rather than abstractly confronted. In the context of existing relationships of power and authority this is clearly not possible because to expect the oppressed to expose themselves in the context of asymmetrical power constitutes another form of a oppression. It therefore falls to the oppressor him/herself to first make him/herself vulnerable to the judgement of the oppressed.

The act of "civic courage", as Giroux calls it, must be modelled by the oppressor, through the revelation and sharing of stories which place the act of oppression in the context of both personal responsibility and social and cultural reality. The oppressed must publicly own their oppressiveness while situating it in the context of cultural and political mediations. Beyond contested stories lies the central theme of critical education theory, that knowledge is not a neutral artefact passed from one participant to another in the educational setting but a social construction which is forged in the true dialogue of a pedagogical process.

Whereas traditionally, radical educators viewed knowledge as a form of ideological indoctrination, in which the content was conceived by the teacher and

---

76 Giroux, H. A., *op. cit.*, 1988 (A), pp. 160-1. Note that Giroux here naively presumes the teacher to be immune from the exigencies of racism and sexism, and the students to be less aware.
passed onto the naive student (as, for instance portrayed in the Seligman Report noted earlier), Freire's and Giroux's conception of a pedagogy for freedom recognises that knowledge is actually created through a process of interactional writing, discussing and debating what constitutes legitimate knowledge in a dialogue which reflexively accounts for its own partiality and for the partiality of each of its participants. According to Giroux, the notion that knowledge cannot be constructed outside a pedagogical encounter is lost in the misconceived assumption that the truth content of knowledge is the most essential feature of the teaching/learning situation.\textsuperscript{77}

As a consequence of this socially-constructed division between knowledge creation and knowledge transmission which is the hallmark of the normative view of education, there results a corresponding division of labour which equates the former with universities and the latter with the "lower" orders of the educational hierarchy, where knowledge is not "produced" but merely "reproduced".

In architecture, this division of labour itself corresponds to that which operates in the realm of material production between designers (professors), workers (teachers) and consumers (students). Hence we will see that the recent incursion of economic theorising into academia operates not only to extend the realm of the marketplace into the domain of knowledge production and hence render each academic institution more competitive (the stated political aim!), but to reinforce and consolidate the rigid hierarchies which operate within the educational domain and in doing so to further cement in place the conservative retrenchment of tradition and the hegemony of the status quo power - to prevent change and to preserve the existing social order, in other words.

A critical pedagogy for liberation, on the other hand, acknowledges that knowledge is a social creation formed in an engagement in critical dialogue in which both the knowing and the knower are mutually and interactively revealed. This has profound implications for how we perceive the boundaries between different disciplines, and for how we conceive of the ownership of knowledge - not, it might be added, in ways disconnected to property rights. As David Lusted puts it:

"Knowledge is not produced in the intentions of those who believe they hold it, whether in the pen or in the voice. It is produced in the process of interaction between writer and reader at the moment of reading, and between teacher and learner at the moment of classroom engagement. Knowledge is not the matter that is offered so much as the matter that is understood. To think of fields of bodies of knowledge as if they are the property of academics and teachers is wrong. It denies an equality in the relations at moments of interaction and falsely privileges one side of the exchange, and what that side "knows" over the other. Moreover, for critical cultural producers to hold this view of

\textsuperscript{77} ibid., p. 163.
knowledge carries its own pedagogy, an autocratic elite pedagogy. It's not just that it denies the value of what learners know, which it does, but that it misrecognises the conditions necessary for the kind of learning - critical, engaged, personal, social - called for by the knowledge itself.\textsuperscript{78}

The presence of institutionalised authority over domains of truth stands as an implacable obstacle to cultural dialogue. While we may be able to accept relatively uncritically the need for an education which is based upon principles of social and personal emancipation, and while we may be equally comfortable with the notion of student voice and dialogical encounter, it is impossible to engage with the principle of equality of voice within the framework of a dialogical practice of an education for freedom without also confronting the central issue of authority.

**Authority and Assimilation**

The traditional pedagogical forms - the pedagogy of domination by Freire's definition - establish their legitimacy upon the unquestioned authority of the teacher as the font of knowledge and experience and as a purveyor of truth.

If we move to relinquish the model of knowledge upon which this practice is based - if we acknowledge, in other words that knowledge is produced only under conditions of dialogical equality, then we must be prepared to confront the problem which arises through the concurrent and related delegitimation of the teacher-authority figure.

A critical pedagogy for liberation, in other words, fundamentally problematises the socially-constructed category of authority, and this is particularly the case since, as we have seen, the content of the critical dialogue in a pedagogy of liberation is also the content of the education itself. In other words, the status of authority in the dialogical encounter becomes the actual focus of the educational enterprise. The teacher, within the framework of a critical dialogue is required, by definition, to

continually and critically question the basis of the authority upon which s/he "professes" to know, or, as Freire perceptively and simply puts it: "Those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly." The presence of institutionalised authority over domains of truth stands as an implacable obstacle to cultural dialogue.

A critical re-examination of authority must account not only for the supposed "knowledge" which as a professional or technical expert s/he brings to the dialogue, but also for the racial, gender and class histories and experiences which s/he brings along at the same time, and which are undoubtedly implicated in the power, authority and knowledge under examination. It is too easy for the white male professor to presume and to voice a technical authority (as I once did) in the face of a black working class, Vietnam Veteran student, who simply pointed out that the design ideals and values through which I was critiquing his design, were a means of silencing serious cultural issues and stories which were important to him and which were (were I only able to relinquish the protection of my authority role) quite visible in his design.

**Border Pedagogy and Difference**

Henry Giroux calls situations such as these areas of "border pedagogy" where teachers and students dialogue across cultural boundaries which must encounter and take seriously a politics of difference:

"In the postmodern age, it becomes more difficult to define cultural differences by means of hegemonic colonialist notions of worth and possibility, and more difficult to define meaning and knowledge through the master narratives of "great men". The modernist emphasis on totality and mastery has given way to a more acute understanding of suppressed and local histories, along with a deeper appreciation for struggles that are contextual and specific in scope. In addition, in the age of instant information, global networking and biogenetics, the old distinction between high and popular culture collapses, as the historically and socially constructed nature of meaning becomes evident, dissolving universalising claims to history, truth or class. All culture is worthy of investigation, and no aspect of cultural production can escape its own history within socially constructed hierarchies of meaning."

For the teacher-student, engaging increasingly in areas of border pedagogy, confronting social and cultural difference not as a peripheral but as a central component of the pedagogical experience, the reflexive connotations of privilege and

---

79 Freire, P., *op. cit.*, 1972, p. 36.
80 Personal experience with a first year architecture student, Berkeley, 1972.
power which have always been assumed, and have always been previously denied or suppressed have become the very essence of the form and content of not only the process of cultural production in the learning situation, but of the cultural products which are therein created. In other words, each pedagogical encounter must engage each time anew with the reflexive interrogation of authority in the context of suppressed histories through the previously tacit acceptance of dominant culture assumptions.

Within this context, it is the presumed authority of the teacher-student, perhaps even more than cultural background of the students-teachers which forms the basis of a postmodern critique of knowledge. This has been particularly true for this author in the design field in New Zealand, working across the boundary which separates Maori from Pakeha (European) culture. In this context, the question of who possesses the authority to evaluate Maori knowledge, and on what basis this authority is founded, have become the central issues of education in ways which promise to critically destabilise normative conceptions of all disciplines as dominant culture, ethnocentric categories.