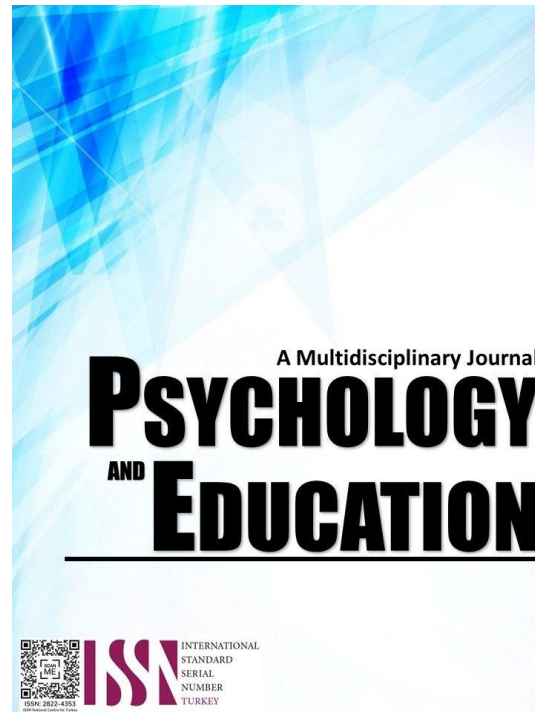


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PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

Volume: 18

Issue 9

Pages: 903-912

Document ID: 2024PEMJ1725

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10973335

Manuscript Accepted: 03-14-2024

The Political Angle of Critical Pedagogy: Exposing Paulo Freire's Theory of Domination

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Abstract

Paulo Freire's contribution to pedagogical discourses is commonly encapsulated behind the notions of the "banking method" and "culture of silence" which connotes classroom practices that subjects the learner into domesticating pedagogical methods and contents. In Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, this phenomenon is not only restricted to classroom dynamics, but in fact, reflective of domination in the public sphere. In this work, therefore, I will discuss the political angle of Freire's critical pedagogy founded in his analysis of domination and anti-dialogical praxis. Hence, this work will expose the way in which Freire translates the power dynamics of anti-dialogical culture and politics into an alienating classroom environment. In this light, this paper also aims to provide a conceptual grammar in analyzing the contemporary direction of pedagogical practices. Though the aim of this work is simply exposing Freire's theory of domination, on the one hand, its theoretical underpinning could guide and direct modern pedagogues in cultivating the learner's critical consciousness. On the other hand, I believe the discourse of critical pedagogy holds a comprehensive approach to domination which will provide a formidable theoretical framework in the pursuit of political consciousness – realizing Freire's conscientized learner.

Keywords: *critical pedagogy, domination, politics, critical consciousness, banking method*

Introduction

In Paulo Freire's magnum opus, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the critique of the "banking method of education" appears to take a central idea. Freire's contribution to theories of education and discourses in contemporary socio-political movements are also eclipsed by this concept. Having been influenced by the likes of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and Herbert Marcuse, his exposition of domination and the prospect of social transformation took an uncharted turn to pedagogy. It is for this reason why his political analyses are distinguished as his primary contribution to the discourses of liberation and post-colonialism has been contextualized immediately to contemporary criticisms of traditional pedagogical practices. Though I will articulate his pedagogical theory in this work, I believe that it is critical to first begin with his socio-political analysis and his interpretation of man's ontology in order to problematize the notion of domination as a historical reality. The second phase of this work would discuss the anti-dialogical strategies behind domination. Here, I will also expose the power dynamics behind the banking method of education which, as I will discuss later, restricts the creative and critical consciousness of the individual. Lastly, I will present the parallelism between his pedagogical alternative to the banking method, that is, the problem-posing method and the political alternative to anti-dialogical power dynamics. Again, I argue that by realizing the praxis behind Freire's critical pedagogy, a holistic understanding of the political life and its realities could be unveiled.

The prospect of liberation and emancipation captures the vision of most critiques concerning discourses of domination and post-colonial theory. This is because, intuitively, a radical alternative has to be posed in presenting the obvious ramifications brought forth by colonialism and oppressive regimes. The destructive impact of colonialism and its oppressive modus operandi does not dissolve within a single generation of social consciousness, but in fact, survives and remains pervasively like a "trojan horse" in the succeeding generations. Thus, the need for liberating and transformative socio-political theories becomes inevitable. This is evident in the recurring response of revolutionary thinkers which either pose the possibility of a violent retaliation towards oppression as a means to fully emancipate the individual physically and mentally from the shackles of control or propose an alternative of renewed and transformed consciousness which liberates the mind from oppressive ideas of colonial cultural apparatus. The consensus, however, is the undeniable impetus towards emancipation regardless of its methods. As can be known, Freire advocates the notion of emancipation through the conscientization of the individual's consciousness. He contends that as much as the oppressor have been instrumental to the dehumanization of the oppressed, they are also dehumanized by virtue of their denial of humanity and thus, also needs to be emancipated. Therefore, the options of physically violent retaliation against the oppressor, for Freire, is against the praxis of the revolutionary movement.

Freire begins his socio-political analysis by affirming the ontological vocation of the human individual, that is, the prospect of humanization. He argues that the ultimate goal of humanity is to become "more fully human" which implies that there are threats against this possibility. Instinctively, this claim arises from the historical reality of oppression and domination which, therefore, appears to be a prevailing theme for most of humankind. It is indeed apparent that antagonism and conflict predominates human civilizations – thus, a perennial and overarching theme that persists in the dynamicity and continuum of the social and political life. Moreover, Freire perceives humanization as a constant struggle to be recognized and completed which reveals by contrast the culprit that negates its monumental actualization. Freire calls this "dehumanization" which is concretely revealed in the violence and exploitation exercised by the oppressor over the oppressed. For Freire, dehumanization is the direct manifestation and indication of domination and oppression. All forms of domination and exploitation point back to the possibilities of a dehumanized subject. Domination could take many forms, but its praxis is always geared towards the disintegration and degradation of the individual. It is also for this reason why

dehumanization is not a given destiny or a static historical reality, but a result of an unjust social order which could be overcome by restoring and redeeming the person's reduced (if not completely lost) humanity.

By deploying varied modes of domination, as I will discuss later, the oppressor safeguards their legitimacy and supremacy to govern the people and maintain their control of power. Knowing this reality of oppression and injustice, the oppressed confronts the responsibility to emancipate themselves from the perils of oppression and pursue the restoration of their humanity by exposing the depth of domination. Before delving into the goal of critical pedagogy in the succeeding sections, let me first articulate distinct forms of domination in Freire's critical theory which will be followed by a brief discussion of his alternative praxis that will aid a revolutionary movement in its pursuit of social transformation.

Discussion

Anti-Dialogical Praxis and Freire's Dialogical Alternative

In the fourth chapter of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire exposes the oppressor's strategy in maintaining his socio-political and cultural control and the alternative to anti-dialogical praxis is grounded on dialogical action. Thus, Freire's critical theory does more than critique the concrete reality of domination as it attacks the stronghold of oppression through the formation of dynamic consciousness towards liberation. In order to achieve emancipation, the revolutionary movement ought to thoroughly eliminate praxis and ideas derived from the oppressor and adapt an alternative guided and anchored on the vision of humanization. In this regard, he sets a formidable standard in determining which theory of action could be utilized in the revolutionary movement and in the pursuit of social transformation. In the formation of revolutionary praxis, he contends that "dialogue" plays an indispensable role in establishing a relationship between the leaders and the people. The failure to exercise a consistent communication between the leaders and the people might indicate the possibility of a monological, manipulative, and prescriptive social movement, which, in this regard will fail to recognize the role of individual citizens to reveal and recreate concrete manifestations of social injustice. It is precisely for this reason why a significant portion of the last chapter of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* mainly pinpoints theories of anti-dialogical action, that is, an exposition of the technique, strategies, and modes of action that the oppressors exercise in maintaining and sustaining their control.

Freire begins with the idea that in the attempt to transform society, there could not be a designation of mere thinkers and doers, that is, the positioning of leaders and followers as mere thinkers or doers in the prospect of transformation. This means that under dialogical praxis, the leaders and thinkers are in solidarity in speech and acts towards transformation. Freire insists that the oppressed individual and their revolutionary leaders are equal contributors to the cause of transformation. Otherwise, if the oppressed are treated as mere followers, they are reduced to possessions and objects that blindly conform to dictates and orders which further subject them into alienation. Though Freire maintains the innate responsibility of leaders to guide, coordinate, and direct the people towards transformation, their praxis should never be invalidated by adopting the monological strategies of the oppressor characterized by the denial of the individual's capacity to intellectually and experientially contribute to the movement. In this regard, Freire pinpoints the utmost necessity to reject not only the contents of anti-dialogical praxis, but also, its methods that dehumanizes the individual. He articulates that "manipulation, sloganizing, depositing, regimentation, and prescription cannot be components of revolutionary praxis" as these are strategies used to maintain the grip of domination. Otherwise, if these methods are retained by the leaders in their pursuit for social change, the movement has already failed to become transformative. It is for this reason why Freire contends that the oppressed ought to be involved in the revolutionary process bearing with them the "critical awareness of their role as subjects of the transformation." As discussed earlier, the function of dialogue holds utmost importance in the revolutionary process which renders the oppressed as equal contributors to the pursuit of transformation. This dialogical dynamic, however, is not a favor or a gift to the oppressed nor a tactic for the oppressor to prolong and legitimize his authority, but an act of communication and openness to the people." In this light, the oppressed bear the noble obligation to expose and critique the oppressor's exploitative strategies. In the sections below, therefore, I will discuss the manifestations of domination as Freire articulates them in the fourth chapter of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* highlighting key indications of oppressive praxis – conquest, divide and rule, manipulation and cultural invasion.

Domination through Conquest

Freire contends that "the first characteristic of anti-dialogical action is the necessity (and deployment) of conquest." For him, the way in which domination is established and sustained is through the oppressor's act of conquest, that is, the imposition of "objectives" on the oppressed consciousness depriving them of their capacity for autonomy. For Freire, the act of conquest does not only remove the individual's capacity for autonomy, but also reduces them to the "status of things." It follows the same dynamic in the banking method wherein the students become listening objects that absorb and deposit information from the teacher. Conquest, therefore, as an anti-dialogical action reduces the "conquered" and the oppressed individual to possessions incapable of overturning domination and transforming her reality. In turn, they are made to adjust and adapt to the oppressor's socio-political order. As can be seen, this paradigm that normalizes the oppressor's conquest of the individual's consciousness is necrophilic, a praxis steered by the love of death and the absence of love and trust toward the people which clearly cannot hold a spot in the attempt for social transformation. Yet conquest, for Freire, could yield an effective ground in perpetuating domination as it does not only truncate the individual's capacity to pursue social change, but also reconstructs his perception of the world in the form of "myths." This is achieved through a series of methods that the

oppressor devises to show the oppressed a world that is a “fixed entity, as something given and as something to which men, as mere spectators, must adapt.” Freire expands this idea in verbatim:

For example, the myth that the oppressive order is a “free society”; the myth that all men are free to work where they wish, that if they don’t like their boss, they can leave him and look for another job; the myth that this order respects human rights and is therefore worthy of esteem; the myth that anyone who is industrious can become an entrepreneur as the owner of a large factory...

In relative parlance, Freire shows how the oppressor promotes a narrative of hope and endless possibilities of success in a socio-political order actually driven by the narrative of alienation, legitimized by the people’s passivity. The oppressor would intuitively put a premium on desensitizing the people’s consciousness of concrete social reality in order to perpetuate their domination and control. The objective is to simply retain the people’s passivity and bombard them with the false narrative that the oppressive social order is a historical destiny. This is fortified by the oppressor’s false generosity – an oppressive strategy to prolong the oppressed individual’s dependency to the oppressor. Freire contends that in order for the oppressor to remain relevant as saviors, the causes for “false charity” ought to be maintained, that is, the social order that oppresses and restrains the people from emancipation should be perpetuated. It is for this reason why Freire insists that the oppressor’s seeming attempt to extend their hands towards the oppressed is simply a *modus operandi* to console and “soften them up.” Yet, the oppressor’s generosity would never cross the boundary of concretely pursuing social transformation and emancipation with the oppressed. For Freire this is simply done to satisfy the immediate needs of the people, that is, to give “bread and circus” and pacify their agony. Conquest, in this regard, could clearly manifest itself in the form of deceit in perception, with or without the utilization of false generosity, but the ultimate goal of passivity and alienation is achieved through the normalization and substantiation of myths as truths. By employing this strategy, its impact towards the individual is pervasive and blinding. Needless to say, conquest, for Freire, is effective if its appearance leaves an impression of a positive appeal to the individual.

Domination through “Divide and Rule”

Alternatively, in order to keep the oppressor’s grip of domination over the populace, the people would have to be divided and dispersed. Any attempt to form a socially cohesive movement, much more if it identifies as being critical to the oppressor, could be interpreted as threats against their supremacy. In that regard, the efforts to unify, organize, and consolidate the people’s voices in the context of emancipation and social transformation heralds a huge threat to the oppressor’s hegemony. It is for this reason that the oppressor would always opt to divide and stir indifference among the people in order to perpetuate control. For Freire, the means through which this is accomplished varies from “the repressive methods of the government bureaucracy to the forms of cultural action with which they manipulate the people by giving them the impression that they are being helped.” Here, Freire pinpoints a concrete instance of divide and rule in the context of “community development projects” which are most commonly conducted by trickling down the scope from the totality of the nation into smaller parts, i.e., regions and areas. In this sense, instead of having a totalistic view of reality and its problems, the approach succumbs to a focalized perception which, in turn, raises the possibility of alienation. Freire further articulates this phenomenon verbatim:

...these focalized forms of action, by intensifying the focalized way of life of the oppressed (especially in rural areas), hamper the oppressed from perceiving reality critically and keep them isolated from the problems of oppressed women and men in other areas.

For Freire, the more naïve and alienated people are from either having viewed themselves merely as members of a local community and not a part of a whole, the easier for the oppressor to divide and rule. The oppressed group’s perception of larger concrete social realities, as a result, is bounded by the limitations of their isolation. Furthermore, Freire pinpointed another instance of divide and rule in the context of leadership training programs which are mainly organized to promote a community by subjecting its leaders to training. The assumption in these procedures is to develop and promote the community by promoting the “parts.” These “parts” are necessarily the ones that show “sufficient leadership capacities” which are then promoted to the status of trained leaders, consequently taking back with them the resources and values foreign to their comrades. These values and resources enforced and deployed, for Freire, are designed to “promote” the community patterned after the oppressor’s model of leadership which inherently bears the inevitable tendency to alienate the people it encounters. These trained leaders by virtue of their training, “in order not to lose their leadership status,” as Freire insists, will manipulate the community to bend their will and consciousness. In turn, the people further become divided not only from the totality of reality, but also among themselves. As can be seen, the obvious goal of the oppressor is to maintain their dominance through the alienation and depersonalization of the people from their communal identity and the pressing circumstantial problems alongside it. Thus, in order to perpetuate and fortify the grip of domination, the anti-dialogical act of division holds utmost importance. Freire pinpoints that the oppressor would even attempt to “present themselves as saviors of the men they dehumanized and divide.” This seeming messianic imagery is not meant to save the oppressed, but to “save themselves” by portraying their presence as indispensable figures whom the oppressed are indebted to. Yet, Freire argues that the oppressor can neither save themselves nor their resources, “salvation can be achieved only with others.” In the oppressor’s paradigm, however, this could not be the case since the goal is to perpetuate control and not dissolve it in miscalculated benevolence. In fact, this is exactly why the oppressor employs false generosity not only to mask the oppressive reality, but also to psychologically soothe the tremors caused by their “sense of guilt.” For Freire, moreover, with false generosity, the oppressor does not only attempt to “preserve an unjust and necrophilic order, but to “buy” peace for himself.” Yet, this is not possible as peace cannot be bought and achieved genuinely within the realms of oppression, rather, only in “solidarity and loving acts” with the people. Thus, the oppressor’s ultimate *modus operandi*, as discussed in the earlier section

is to secure their position by dividing the people to “preserve the status quo,” and thus conceal their intentions from the oppressed.

Domination through Manipulation

By having conquered and divided the people’s voices and consciousness, the remaining task for the oppressor is to convince the oppressed to be in conformity to their goals and objectives. Freire maintains that the “greater the political immaturity of these people, the more easily the latter can be manipulated.” In this regard, the oppressor will attempt to lead the oppressed towards an unauthentic organization and divert them from the possibilities of a genuine yearning to be unified as people. In reality, the oppressed merely have two viable options confronting them, that is, to conform and succumb to the oppressor’s manipulative ends or authentically organize for their liberation. The oppressor, as Freire articulates, will “instinctively use all means, including physical violence, to keep the people from thinking” and realizing their need to emerge from the oppressive reality to pursue the struggle for emancipation. A concrete manifestation of this technique is the inculcation of bourgeoisie appetite and mentality to individuals to chase after personal success. As can be seen, the inclination towards this possibility is carried out directly by the elites or indirectly, through populist leaders themselves whose appeal to the people’s frustrations and hopes of social change renders the oppressor’s image as messianic. Freire underscores that such leaders “serve as intermediaries between the oligarchical elites and the people” which practically makes them polymorphous to two entities. In other words, these leaders are torn between two identities which demand two completely different directions, that is, the need to please the elite and to pacify the people with which his power is mainly anchored. The attempt to completely join the cause for the emancipation of the oppressed, however, requires a total abandonment of the oppressor’s image. This is better phrased in the words of Freire worthy of quoting at length:

Since the populist leader simply manipulates, instead of fighting for authentic popular organization, this type of leader serves the revolution little if at all. Only by abandoning his ambiguous character and dual action and by opting decisively for the people (thus ceasing to be populist) does he renounce manipulation and dedicate himself to the revolutionary task of organization.

Put simply, Freire maintains that the populist leader holds an image of a potential revolution by having the support of the people, yet his means of control is manipulative and therefore, cannot become an agent of emancipation. However, once a leader completely resists and rejects his former praxis and commits in solidarity to the liberation of the oppressed, Freire predicts: “the elites immediately join forces to curb him.” Freire contended that even a populist leader’s slight inclination towards the well-fare of the oppressed will be “curbed” by oligarchic powers if it becomes a threat to their interest. Otherwise, acts of social welfare and charity merely serve as an “anesthetic” to desensitize and distract the oppressed from concrete manifestations of oppression as well as the root causes of their problems. Yet, as I have articulated earlier, the seeming attempts to uplift the oppressed individual’s plight is merely a façade to maintain their power-hold of the status quo.

Domination through Cultural Invasion

This strategy bears a similar mechanism with conquest as discussed earlier. In this method, however, the oppressor invades and sometimes, eradicates the individual’s or a community’s heritage and identity – their culture. This is achieved through the oppressor’s interference with the people’s cultural make-up by imposing “their own view of the world.” As can be seen, this strategy necessarily benefits from the impact of conquest which prepares the people to be off-guard and vulnerable to the oppressor’s ideals. Freire, however, pinpoints the possibility of cultural invasion, though potentially violent, to come in the guise of friendship and charity. Yet, whether “urbane or harsh,” cultural invasion seeks to truncate the oppressed individual’s connection to their own cultural identities and its expressions and in exchange, adhere to the imposed values and standards of the invaders. For Freire, in order for this to be possible, the invaders would have to establish their superiority over the oppressed as to legitimize their invasion of the people, whereas the oppressed should be “convinced of their inferiority” in order to validate the oppressor’s dominance. The efficacy of invasion and domination hinges on the oppressed individual’s perception of themselves coming from the lenses of the oppressor. Having internalized the oppressor’s perception of their own identity, they begin to “mimic the invaders” and adhere to their imposed culture efficiently paving the way for the oppressor to dominate them effectively. Once the oppressor establishes and normalizes the values and standards imposed as well as the legitimacy of his superiority over the oppressed, the task left for him to do is to ensure and maintain the perpetuity of his dominance which, as Freire would have us believe, is determined by how the oppressed “apprehend reality.” Yet, the end goal is not to discover and develop the oppressed individual’s perception of reality and make it critical, but to limit their consciousness by the virtue of “dominating them more effectively.”

As can be seen, the oppressor’s anti-dialogical actions as discussed in the previous sections reveal a coherent strategy that subjects the oppressed individual to dehumanization. The oppressor’s task to perpetuate domination by controlling and shaping the individual’s consciousness into the oppressor’s desired form, for Freire, is not only an act that defies the individual’s freedom, but more importantly, his humanity. This is exactly why Freire assigns a monumental regard to the notion that a human being’s only vocation is to humanize himself. The contradiction of this vocation, therefore, could never hold a place in one’s pursuit for emancipation. In such a manner, Freire’s response to the manifestations of anti-dialogical action is a complete reversal and anti-thesis of the oppressor’s praxis. This is why the task of the leaders involved with the oppressed in confronting the traces of domination is an immense one, yet the burden of emancipation is shared with the people in mutual trust and love. In this light, for Freire, the leaders must be delicate in guiding and directing the people so as to not imitate the oppressor’s manipulative tactics. This is why dialogue with the people remains critical in the attempt to pursue an authentic social transformation. The direction and vision for social change hinges mainly on this courageous

dialogue. Freire reiterates this in his words:

Its (revolution) very legitimacy lies in that dialogue. It cannot fear the people, their expression, their effective participation in power. It must be accountable to them, must speak frankly to them of its achievements, its mistakes, its miscalculations, and its difficulties. The utter disregard of these principles endangers the revolution to fall into the pit of anti-dialogical praxis which denies communion and avoids dialogue for the fear of enabling the people to pursue social transformation themselves. Freire notes that this is the “fear of freedom” – a turning point of a social movement towards authenticity. Therefore, it is only under these conditions of trust, communication and dialogue with the people where a dynamic and “unshakable solidarity” is birthed. In this light, the individuals will cease to remain observers but become thinkers and doers participating in the pursuit of social transformation. In the succeeding and final section, I will discuss Freire’s dialogical theory of action to stand in complete contradiction with the oppressor’s praxis.

Domination and The Banking Method

Paulo Freire’s work is commonly recognized as a revolutionary pedagogical theory in the 21st century, extensively connecting the missing link between class analysis, power dynamics, and pedagogy. Though his work radically transforms aspects of education and classroom dynamics, its classification merely as a theory of education is clearly a reductionist interpretation. This is because critical pedagogy, for Freire, does not only rest in the four corners of the classroom, but also has bearing on the moral responsibility to intervene in the public space. The emphasis and impetus behind critical pedagogy, however, could be traced to a pedagogical problem he rigidly subjected to critical analysis. For scholars, this pedagogical problem is an indication and perhaps, a manifestation of a much wider social and political problem brought about by the operative mechanisms of oppression. In extending the discussion on the specifics of his critical pedagogy, let me briefly discuss his critique of the banking method.

As can be known, Freire’s critical pedagogy centralizes on the critique of the banking method as a form of oppression in the classroom which, as I will discuss later, manifests itself also in the wider socio-political context. For Freire, this method of pedagogy fosters a culture of silence or mutism wherein learners are not given any voices to engage and question contradictions and issues embedded in the socio-political reality, while also being truncated from the prospects of fulfilling their role in its transformation. In relative parlance, the banking method of education restricts the students’ creative curiosity by having absorbed the imposed values of the social order in the guise of pedagogical contents. It is understood that mutism as a result of the banking method has its initial grip on the learner by having utilized a monological set-up. The barrier established through the absence of dialogue and discourse, for Freire, produces learners who are passive recipients of information. This occurs through educational contents and methods that amplify detachment and disconnectedness from the totality of reality which could give the learners significance in their roles as agents of transformation. To further examine Freire’s thought, below are the dynamics of the banking method and the power relation between the educator and the student:

(a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught; (b) the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing; (c) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about; (d) the teacher talks and the students listen – meekly; (e) the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined; (f) the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply; (g) the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher; (h) the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it; (i) the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to freedom of the students; (j) the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects.

Above, Freire provided a precise imagery of the pedagogical dynamic driven by banking method where the learners are merely depositories of knowledge and information without having the ability to contest its veracity. The teacher, in this paradigm, becomes the culprit of domestication by means of dictating and managing the input of information digested by the learners. Freire argues that through this act of depositing, “the less they (the students) develop the critical consciousness...” which could only be attained by affirming the individual’s innate capacities to transform the world. For Freire, indeed, this strategic dictation of pedagogical contents is an attempt to change the consciousness of the oppressed, but “not the situation that oppresses them.” He contends that through the oppressor’s utilization of the banking method, the more well-adjusted the oppressed becomes to the socio-political situation making their consciousness more manageable and their yearning for independence extinguishable. This is clearly not an overnight feat, the gradual yet consistent imposition of an alternative and deceitful narrative is crucial for the oppressors. To achieve this, Freire underscores that “the oppressors use the banking concept of education in conjunction with a paternalistic social action apparatus, within which the oppressed receive the euphemistic title of “welfare recipients.” It is because of the constant bombardment of this narrative that the oppressed are submerged into oppression. In this regard, the oppressor finds the legitimacy to impose the need to change and “transform” the way in which the oppressed act, speak, and even think. This is why, in the context of classroom dynamics, the learners are always presumed to know nothing while the teacher knows everything. That being the case, the teacher does not only become the source of knowledge, but the determinant and evaluator of whether the learner has effectively memorized and internalized the banked information. This is apparently done through examination, evaluation, and tasks set in contrast against guidelines and standardized tests.

It is apparent at this point that the goal of the banking method is to have a grip of the learner’s consciousness in order to set a cap into the formation of their worldviews and their perception of themselves as potential agents of transformation. Freire argues explicitly that what follows “logically from the banking notion of consciousness [is] that the educator’s role is to regulate the way the world ‘enters

into' the students." The educator also function as the "organizer" of what pieces of information are absorbed and tasked to train the learners in receiving knowledge effectively. This is why Freire insists that "the humanism of the banking approach masks the effort to turn men into automatons – the very negation of their ontological vocation to be more fully human." It is exactly for this reason that authentic thinking – a thinking concerned about reality—cannot happen through the disconnectedness of the banking method, but only through communication. At this point, it is already made explicit that students are geared to become mere passive recipients of knowledge and being so, are made capable of adapting to prevalent socio-political order. In this light, however, Freire contends that a truly humanizing pedagogical method seeks to change the socio-political order for the individual to become "beings for themselves," that is, to overturn the unjust socio-political order not through adaptation or "integration." Though the banking concept may not be easily viewed as an oppressive practice given its seemingly non-violent nature, Freire insists that this method "serves the interest of oppression" which, in turn, is nourished by necrophilia – the love of death. This is because the banking model turns the individual into mere objects and passive recipients of information which indicates that it is driven by a "mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness (that) transforms students into receiving objects." Simply put, Freire underpins the idea that the banking method "attempts to control thinking and action, leads individuals to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power."

Now, having exposed Freire's critical analysis of domination, its elements and dynamics, the ontological condition of the oppressed can be better understood. As can be seen, the individual, for Freire, is victimized by various modes of control and domination which, in its efficacy, produced a disciplined subject whose values and beliefs might have been simply a result of their adherence to the oppressor's model of humanity. Yet, this reality of manipulation and domination seems to have been masked by the oppressor's pursuit to normalize a pro-oppressor social order that the oppressed consented manifested in their false consciousness and understanding of reality. In such a manner, the next section will articulate the impact of domination and oppression, as discussed above, towards the oppressed and later, Freire's response to anti-dialogical praxis.

The Oppressor and the Oppressed

As is well known, Freire's critical pedagogy highlights the central role of the individual to bear the identities of either the oppressed or the oppressor. Such identities could not be exclusively dictated by being identified with a particular social and economic class since the ontology of the oppressor could be embodied by the oppressed through adhesion. In relative parlance, the oppressed could be oppressors themselves if they failed to reject the praxis and values imposed to them in their subjection to oppression. The same way the oppressor could, by miscalculation of their exercise of power, become subjected to the avenging spirit of the oppressed. In such a way, Freire does not intend to overturn the dynamics of oppression by displacing the power to the oppressed. In this manner, Freire's critical theory and analysis of oppression involves the need for the oppressor class to be emancipated as much as the oppressed class. In fact, Freire does not only identify the oppressed as the victimized class of domination, but also the oppressor who are dehumanized by the praxis of violence.

In relative parlance, Freire's central claim concerning the ontology of the human person is that "dehumanization" is pervasive as it does not only represent the oppressed, but also the oppressor. Thus, indeed, the task of liberation in Freire's critical pedagogy deals with the necessity to restore the individual's humanity of both the oppressed and the oppressor. The weight of this struggle for emancipation, however, rests on the shoulders of the oppressed. As the oppressed are charged to liberate their own people, they are also vested with the task to regain the humanity of their oppressors. Although controversial and politically unorthodox, Freire refers to the messianic proverb of "loving your enemies" which has been quite reflective of Freire's attitude towards the agents that catalyze domination. This is because the oppressor themselves have been dehumanized by exercising their powers to oppress and maintain a social and political order advantageous to the dominant class. It is for this reason that Freire argued that the oppressor could never take the mantle of social transformation unless they are fully committed in solidarity with the oppressed in overturning the unjust social order. For Freire, this possibility supports the idea that the oppressor has "relinquished his power to dominate and therefore, joined the cause of the oppressed." Yet, for Freire, there remains another possibility that explains this phenomenon, that is, that the oppressor had lost his own power through miscalculation or the failure to perpetuate the status quo.

Clearly, however, this is not the case and the possibility of solidarity with the oppressed undeniably is counterintuitive to the praxis of domination which is to manipulate and conquer through alienation and therefore, becomes overwhelmed by anti-dialogical action in fortifying the oppressor's grip to power. In this manner, Freire highlights the oppressor's strategic scheme in maintaining their power. He notes that the oppressor tones down the appearance of domination through false generosity. This charitable exercise, for Freire, intuitively ensures the stability of status quo further sustained and justified through realities of death, despair and (prolonged) poverty. For him, these nuances are porous situations that the oppressor strategically prolongs and even hypocritically attempts to eradicate. This is shrewdly endeavored in order to maintain the significance and relevance of their identities as leaders and saviors vis-à-vis "false charity." Freire observes that false generosity is simply an "attempt to 'soften' the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed." This strategy is also utilized to further establish the legitimacy of the oppressor's superiority over the oppressed by having them extend their hands farther in supplication. In preserving the status quo, Freire contends that the efforts of the oppressor often rendered as charitable initiatives never transcend the breaking point of emancipation. This is exactly why the oppressor, as Freire analyzes, "become desperate at the slightest threat to its source (oppression)." In relative parlance, the oppressor will do anything within his power to maintain the conditions of domination in order to keep their messianic social and political significance. In fact, the oppressor sustains an "unjust social order...nourished by death, despair, and poverty to "have the continued opportunity to express

their ‘generosity’.”

In this way, Freire believes that the oppressor could never take the role of liberator in the emancipatory attempt unless their efforts are geared towards a total and complete rejection and abandonment of oppression, that is, a genuine solidarity with the oppressed. In this light, Freire sketches in broad strokes the dynamics of social emancipation by gravitating on the core principle that the oppressed should lead the project of social transformation. Understandably, the immediate problem is simply the capacity of the oppressed to consciously lead the struggle against domination. Since Freire has already identified the entity fit to liberate the oppressed, the quest for social transformation begins to have a direction. Yet, a question remains, that is, how could the oppressed liberate their own oppressed kindred if their historical identity had been forged since time immemorial to adhere to the values of domination? Put simply, the oppressed, intuitively, do not have in their intellectual and ontological condition the capacity to lead a struggle unless they have recognized and discovered the depth of exploitation and violence normalized by the oppressor’s maintenance of the status quo. Freire reiterates the idea that “even revolution, which transforms a concrete situation of oppression by establishing the process of liberation, must confront this phenomenon...” that is, the people’s fear of freedom that manifests itself in the mandate to lead the struggle for social change in the absence of the oppressor’s praxis. Freire understands that the “shadow of their former oppressor is still cast over them.” As he contends, the model of humanity that the oppressed had been molded to is conformed to the character of the oppressor. This is obviously still a result of the oppressor’s imposition of his character and values to the oppressed through conquest. Therefore, the oppressed at the dawn of possible liberty becomes defeated almost by default by the oppressor’s model of humanity, even if not completely. In such a way, Freire argues that “they (the oppressed) will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it.” Thus, the individual’s conscious awareness of concrete manifestation of domination requires an intentional endeavor not only to expose realities of domination, but to overturn them and fight side-by-side with the other oppressed in their quest to transform the world. It is for this reason that Freire’s critical pedagogy emphasizes the need for conscientization or the development of one’s critical awareness in exposing the oppressor’s *modus operandi*.

Again, the way in which society is to be transformed should never be modeled after the ontology and identity of the oppressor. This is because a genuine social transformation does not work under the praxis of fanaticism, but on autonomy and creativity of the individual’s consciousness. As has been observed, this could be a problem as the oppressed bears the tendency to imitate the ideals of their own superiors. This tendency to adhere to the oppressor’s model of humanity is a result of what Freire calls “prescription” or the “imposition of one man’s choice upon another.” In fact, even the behavior and consciousness of the oppressed is a product of their internalization of the oppressor’s manhood. In fact, as Freire notes, “...their (oppressed) ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity.” Further put, the *raison d’être* behind this tendency to idolize the oppressor is the oppressed individual’s fear of freedom to pursue their independence in establishing a new model of humanity. This direction of autonomy is not a gift, but an outcome of the intentional and deliberate struggle to emancipate the consciousness of the oppressed. Freire further articulates matters related to this context, i.e. in the pursuit of agrarian reform, the oppressed do not actually desire equal distribution of land through agrarian reform, but instead, to become landowners the same way as the oppressors were. Clearly, this is because the oppressed yearns to achieve the model of humanity they have internalized and adhered to from time immemorial. Hence, it follows that the initial step towards emancipation confronts another challenge which, as Freire would have us believe, is the individual’s internalized concession to domination. As discussed earlier, the oppressor’s strategic use of conquest, division, manipulation, and cultural invasion takes effect in the consciousness which, in turn, subjects the people into an unjust social order in a perpetual loop. The clear problem, as can be seen, is that the oppressed individual’s “perceptions are impaired by their submersion to the reality of oppression.” Hence, in the dawn of emancipation, if the oppressed have embraced the values brought about by an oppressive reality, the oppressed themselves could become like the oppressors.

This attitude of adhesion to the oppressor’s model of humanity, for Freire, manifests itself even in a revolutionary movement, and more particularly, even in the absence of the oppressor as the ultimate icon of the former social order after which the oppressed has patterned his manhood. In such a way, the myths of the former social order recapture the consciousness of the oppressed which relinquishes the hard-earned liberty yearned for by the cries of the victims of violence and exploitation. Freire recognizes the potential resurgence of oppression not because of the oppressor’s attempt to redeem the former social order, but because of the eventual transition of the formerly oppressed as present oppressors. This is exactly why Freire reiterates that the project of humanization is not simply a transition from dehumanization as an event, but a conscious struggle to reform the internalized values of domination towards genuine emancipation. Thus, for Freire, “even revolution has to confront this phenomenon of manhood.” This is because the oppressed inevitably carry with them the “myths of the old ... (which will) make the revolution an individualistic one.” Such predicament defeats the aim of the struggle for emancipation as well as the attempt of the oppressed to humanize their damaged identities. In relative parlance, the myths of the old social order and the false consciousness that comes alongside this paradigm bears the capacity to distort the oppressed individual’s noble attempt to transform the social order.

As is well known, the *raison d’être* behind this phenomenon is the people’s fear of freedom, that is, the burden and weight to redefine the movement and direction of social transformation away from the oppressor’s praxis. For Freire, this fear of freedom is the result of the individual’s domesticated consciousness which he or she had explicitly identified as prescribed behavior. Further put, a prescribed behavior implies that there are pieces of information and rigid guidelines that are imposed to the oppressed which are then internalized in the consciousness manifesting in the individual’s behavior. In turn, for Freire, this results into the domestication of the individual’s

consciousness and the replacement of autonomy and responsibility with adherence to the former social order. At this point, the oppressor no longer operates as catalyst for domination; rather, it is the oppressed themselves by having internalized the values of the prescription. For Freire, therefore, the project of emancipation and the struggle through which it could transpire is “acquired by conquest and not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. This is exactly why Freire puts a premium on the awakening of the individual’s critical consciousness or conscientization in enabling the individual to expose and reject anti-dialogical praxis. As is well known, Freire’s critical pedagogy is the alternative educational practice that envisions making the learners aware of their concrete socio-political condition. The ultimate goal, however, is to restore the individual’s humanity by exposing and overturning threats of oppression and dehumanization. For Freire, as much as unjust social orders constitute concrete historical realities, the pursuit of its reversal could also historically materialize. This pursuit of humanization, clearly, is the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion.” Thus, the struggle for emancipation, as Freire would note, requires the recognition of the oppressed of the overarching reality of internal dehumanization, the identification of modes of domination employed by the oppressor and lastly, the redemption of the individual’s oppressed spirit. This is why Freire puts a premium on the exposition of domination as a concrete historical reality and the empowerment of the oppressed to lead the struggle for liberation.

Freire’s Theory of Dialogical Action

By having discussed the oppressor’s anti-dialogical action and the result of this towards the oppressed and the oppressor’s humanity, Freire’s theory could better yield a grounded alternative and also provide an in-depth exposition of his ideology. As can be seen, the discussion above has clearly set in place the dynamics of oppression and domination manifested in the individual’s consciousness and behavior. This final section, therefore, will show an alternative praxis anchored in dialogue which Freire contends to be crucial in pursuing a genuine social reform. To begin with, Freire argues that cultural revolution “takes the total society to be reconstructed.” This is to say that for society to be transformed, the impact of the revolution has to be all-encompassing and therefore, ought to subject everyone and their activities to critique. This prospect of cultural transformation is initiated by revolutionary leaders who emerged from the reality of oppression having realized the need to confront the oppressor’s negation of humanity. These revolutionary leaders usher the people into an “invitation to participate in the reconstruction of society.” Though the role of these leaders is to initiate the discovery and expose the anti-dialogical praxis of the oppressor, it is critical to bear in mind that the people still hold an indispensable role in the pursuit of transformation not only as followers, but also as thinkers in dialogical relation with their leaders. This is critical to point out, as the leaders still need the people to follow and support their leadership in pursuing transformation, yet the possibility of indifference between leaders and the people could possibly trigger the impetus to control and manipulate them in the same way as was done in the oppressor’s brand of leadership. Having rationalized the people’s “intrinsic deficiency,” the leader might succumb to the tendency to opt and revert to the anti-dialogical theory of action. To quote Freire’s words in extent:

...Just like dominant elites – they try to conquer the people: they become messianic; they use manipulation and carry out cultural invasion. By advancing along these paths, the paths of oppression, they will not achieve revolution; or if they do, it will not be authentic revolution.

This is precisely why Freire warns that it is possible that as the people de-mythicize the world, the “cultural remnants” that the oppressor imposed would still emerge and therefore, “hinder the edification of a new society.” Interestingly enough, the possibility of invasion as a result of these cultural remnants would not be carried out by the dominant elites, but by the people and new leaders who have internalized these values and standards themselves. For Freire, this is what Althusser meant in what he calls “reactivation of old elements” which ceases to exist in the new social order. Thus, the values of cultural invasion could still be lurking behind the frontiers of revolution as long as its traces remain. The need to abandon the old order and its ideological remnants, therefore, becomes crucial in achieving the edification of society. In this manner, the oppressed ought to “leave behind the status of objects to assume the status of historical Subjects if necessary” and their leaders ought to “follow the path of dialogue and communication.” In this light, Freire introduces four dialogical theories of action that ensure the authenticity of a social movement, namely: cooperation, unity for liberation, organization, and cultural synthesis. In the following section, these notions in a synergistic manner will be discussed.

In the dialogical dynamic, the individual is no longer a possession or an object that a leader can control and manipulate toward their political end but an equal contributor and sojourner in pursuit of emancipation. Having a horizontal relation and dynamic, even though leaders wield a command in pursuing social transformation, it is vital that “subjects meet in cooperation.” Otherwise, the threats of the old order may manifest themselves not particularly in substance, but in the approach of the revolutionary movement. Freire insists that the people are not owned by their leaders and their salvation is not a gift from the leaders, but a result of a cooperative effort. This notion of cooperation, for Freire, is a product of communication and dialogue between the leaders and the people which envisions to engaging concrete social realities and transform them in what he called – “a critical analysis of a problematic reality.” As Freire proposes, the trust and adherence between the people and their leaders come into fruition in the latter’s attempt to consistently unveil the myths of domination for them. Eventually, the existence of trust and confidence in a dynamic and relation of cooperation is essential, otherwise, any prospect of social change would be rendered impossible. Thus, a relation built on trust is a reflection of the people’s confidence in their leaders and inversely, the leader’s confidence in the people. Therefore, this dialogical relation and cooperation implies an inherent “communion” between the leaders and the people, yet its authenticity remains to be anchored on empathy, love, communication, and humility. This dynamic necessarily engenders unity between the people and the leaders, the result of which, for Freire, is the fundamental goal in the dialogical theory and in achieving liberation. In pursuing unity, however, the common ground

with which people identify as a binding force must not be overlooked and forgotten. It is imperative that the movement consciously eradicate their connection to the myths and magic of the old social order that feeds off traces of oppression and that the movement unites not in the name of their old nature, but of “cultural action” and as Freire would have us believe – cultural revolution. For Freire, the uniting force among the people and the leaders are actions anchored on dialogical praxis negating the alienating and oppressive narrative of oppression.

As can be seen, the unity of the people guarantees the strength of dialogical praxis. In unity, the communion and cooperation among the people and their leaders are presumed which enables the movement to fortify the defenses against the lurking threats of oppressive cultural remnants, and against manipulation. Having discussed the anti-dialogical nature of manipulation in the earlier part of the previous section, its counterpart could be more sensibly situated. For Freire, apart from the people’s unity and cooperation, it is crucial to not only defend the social movement, but to also assault and antagonize the manipulative strategies of the oppressor through organization. Here, organization should be seen as a natural stage in the development of the people’s communion and cooperation, as it is a “constant, humble, and courageous witness emerging from cooperation in a shared effort – the liberation of men – avoids the danger of anti-dialogical control.” The attempt to organize not only defends the movement from manipulation, it also enables the people to bring about an authentic understanding of their historical and political reality as well as the virtues to live by to serve as witness to their praxis. The failure to establish a “witness,” for Freire, is to “absolutize and mythologize the relative; alienation then becomes unavoidable.” In other words, a course of action and reflection that is not grounded on concrete historical facts endangers not only the accuracy of the movement’s analysis of reality, but its very authenticity. The act of organization, therefore, guarantees the resoluteness and formidability of dialogical action which makes itself immune from the threats of manipulation by means of superseding its inauthenticity.

In contrast to how the oppressors organize themselves to manipulate and divide the people for their own ends, an authentic organization is the unification and communion between the leaders and the people which prevents one to “say their own words.” In this paradigm, the leaders do not utter their own words as means to manipulate and control the people; instead, their utterances are results of their communion and cooperation with the people. For Freire, this is not to destabilize the leader’s authority and let the people dictate the direction of the revolution, but an affirmation of authority and freedom. Since freedom and authority are inseparable notions in dialogical theory – “there is no freedom without authority, but there is also no authority without freedom.” As can be seen, the exercise of authority without having ensured the people’s freedom might fall into authoritarianism; and freedom without having been bounded by the protection of authority might fall into the pit of anarchy. All things considered, the dialogical act of organization ensures protection in accordance with the values and standards that the social movement upholds while also safeguarding its leaders from the violation of their praxis.

Now, the last dialogical action – cultural synthesis is a “systematic and deliberate” attempt to antagonize oppression and domination. Being opposed to cultural invasion, cultural synthesis confronts the cultural values and standards that the oppressor embodies. Yet, the goal of cultural synthesis is not to eradicate the antagonism and contradiction between the oppressor and the oppressed which the dialectic brought into fore, but to confront the anti-dialogical action enshrined in domination by pursuing the people’s liberation. Otherwise, the complete elimination of the contradiction implies the removal of a whole class of people which apparently is not the goal of dialogical action, but to liberate both the oppressed and the oppressor. Cultural synthesis is, therefore achieved by completely abandoning the oppressor’s manipulative praxis of imposition or in the case of pedagogy, the utilization of the banking method. Thus, on the contrary, cultural synthesis does not aim to change the people’s values and standards, but “to learn with the people, about the people’s world.” As discussed in the earlier sections, critical pedagogy relies on the discovery and understanding of the people’s thematic universe and epochal units through thematic investigation. This means that, in this paradigm, the leaders or teachers do not impose values, investigate and analyze the people for the ends of potentially training them, but learn the way in which the people view the world in order for them to perceive the world through their own lens. In so doing, the problems and contradictions is subjected into thematic investigation through the people’s understanding. This mode of investigation aims to “establish a climate of creativity” which is aimed towards further engagement of the people with their concrete reality.

This is clearly in contradiction with the method of the oppressor that culturally invades the people’s capacity to experiment instinctively killing their “creative enthusiasm” by being obliged to follow their leaders’ predetermined plans. In cultural synthesis, however, the leaders and the people “create the guidelines for their action” which indicates a cooperative effort between parties towards transformation. Here, for Freire, they are “reborn in new knowledge and new action” by having exposed the alienating culture of the oppressive reality and the transformative impact of cooperation and organization among the leaders and the people. This is not to completely pursue the people’s voiced aspirations limited to their worldview or completely disrespect the people’s aspirations to trail their own interest, but to identify the people’s concern while bringing into light the issues that may pose problems and deepen the understanding of issues that may, in fact, emerge as a symptom to a greater underlying problem. The solution, for Freire, hinges on the possibility of organization and deliberative dialogue with the people to determine concrete solutions inclined towards the humanization of the individual.

It is for this reason that dialogue and communication hold a redemptive role in awakening the individual’s critical consciousness which, as can be seen, bears a monumental importance in achieving authentic social change. The impetus behind the goal of critical pedagogy, therefore, as much as it holds interest in building up a formidable citizenry of intellectuals and doers, is to contribute to a substantive



democracy where moral and political issues are engaged intellectually and critically. The maintenance of a status quo anchored on the culture of silence and subservience inevitably heralds the misfortune of a socio-political collapse of the demos. For Freire, therefore, the prospect of social transformation is not an accidental or a reactionary subversion to the current order of society, but a noble pursuit to affirm the person's humanity and to recover one's consciousness and independence from the shambles of conquest, manipulation, and division.

Conclusion

As discussed in extent, Freire's pedagogical theory holds potent ideas which modern pedagogical practitioners could appropriate. Given the dominance of pedagogical practices that are geared towards objectives and outcomes-based evaluations, in Freirean critical pedagogy, there is a huge possibility of domesticating the individual to become subservient to the ruling socio-political order. In this manner, a critical education becomes vital in forming a citizenry that are conscious of the contradictions in concrete social and political reality. For Freire, again, this is achieved through an alternative he calls "problem-posing" method of pedagogy where learners and teachers are mediated by the world. A point in pedagogical process where the teacher facilitates the learning journey with the student as a sojourner in understanding and transforming reality. It follows, for Freire, that the leadership strategies in the greater public sphere of politics and social relations do not adhere to the ideals of the oppressor class, that is, it does not utilize anti-dialogical strategies or praxis in maintaining control and dominance. Otherwise, this form of political practice succumbs to the old social order and fails, by the virtue of its methodology, to achieve an authentic social transformation. For Freire, an authentic movement for social transformation, mirrors the pedagogical atmosphere of dialogue, communication, and cooperation among the people. In the case of pedagogy, critical consciousness is attained by grounding the learner's awareness of reality to concrete social issues, while in the context of the public sphere, the leaders' journey with the people in shaping and transforming reality together not through manipulative strategies of populism, but through genuine dialogue and cooperation.

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