

**ANTONIO GRAMSCI AND PAULO FREIRE  
SOME CONNECTIONS AND CONTRASTS <sup>1</sup>**

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Carlos Alberto Torres and Pedro Noguera (eds.), *Social Justice Education for Teachers.  
Paulo Freire and the Possible Dream, Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei: Sense Publishers.***

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Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) and Paulo Freire (1921-1997) are certainly two of the most cited figures in the debate concerning critical approaches to education. Their respective cultural and political work occurred in different contexts and at different times (Gramsci in Europe in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Paulo Freire in Latin America, N. America, Europe and Africa in the second half of the century). Nevertheless, a whole generation of writers, positing a critical approach to education, especially those subscribing to what is commonly referred to as critical pedagogy, constantly draw on Gramsci's and Freire's powerful insights into the relationship between education/ cultural work and power. <sup>2</sup> The two figures are often accorded iconic status in this literature.

In this paper, I shall attempt to draw theoretical and, when appropriate, biographical connections between the work of the two, also highlighting some obvious contrasts. In so doing, I shall reproduce key points made in my earlier published work on these two figures, notably my book length study <sup>3</sup> in which I sought to derive insights from their respective writings for a

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Dr Paula Allman and Professor Peter Roberts for their valuable comments on the first draft of this paper. Any remaining shortcomings are my responsibility.

<sup>2</sup> See the recent anthology, in which references to the work of Paulo Freire are constantly made, and which includes the work of leading critical educationists in the USA, Europe and Latin America. Carmel Borg, Joseph A. Buttigieg and Peter Mayo (eds.), *Gramsci and Education* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Peter Mayo, *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education. Possibilities for Transformative Action* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

process of transformative adult education relevant to contemporary times. In this piece, I also hope to provide fresh comparative insights not found in the earlier work.

### **Systematic Comparisons of Gramsci and Freire**

The literature on either Gramsci or Freire is indeed a burgeoning one. I shall confine myself here to that literature which seeks to bring the ideas of the two authors together.<sup>4</sup> Paulo Freire posits this connection between his ideas and those of Gramsci:

...I only read Gramsci when I was in exile. I read Gramsci and I discovered that I had been greatly influenced by Gramsci long before I had read him. It is fantastic when we discover that we had been influenced by someone's thought without even being introduced to their intellectual production. <sup>5</sup>

There is some very important work focusing on Latin America that inevitably establishes connections between Gramsci and Freire. A significant literature emphasizes the influence of Antonio Gramsci on Latin American left wing politics <sup>6</sup> and popular education <sup>7</sup>, the latter being

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<sup>4</sup> There is a significant literature consisting of studies on the work of Paulo Freire in relation to the ideas of other major social theorists and/or revolutionary activists. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> Paulo Freire research conference, this paper was presented in a panel which also included presentations on Freire and Dewey (Douglas Kellner) and Freire and Rousseau (Danilo Streck). Dewey seems to be an obvious figure with whom to compare Freire's work. Other works on this subject are provided by Carlos Torres and Walter Feinberg, and by Ali Abdi.. See Walter Feinberg and Carlos Alberto Torres, 'Democracy and Education: John Dewey and Paulo Freire' in *Education & Society*, ed. Joseph Zajda (Melbourne: James Nicholas Publishers, 2001) pp. 59-70; Ali. A Abdi 'Identity in the philosophies of Dewey and Freire: Select analyses' in *Journal of Educational Thought* 35,2 (2001): 181-200. This section will also make reference to work discussing Freire's ideas alongside those of the recently deceased Ivan Illich and Ettore Gelpi. Further important studies comparing Freire's ideas with those of others are Peter McLaren, *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire and the Pedagogy of Revolution* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000) and Raymond A. Morrow and Carlos Alberto Torres, *Reading Freire and Habermas. Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Social Change* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> See Paulo Freire, 'Reply to discussants' in *Freire at the Institute*, eds. Maria Figueiredo Cowen and Denise Gastaldo (London: Institute of Education, University of London, 1995) pp. 63-64. I am indebted for this point to Marjorie Mayo, *Imagining Tomorrow. Adult Education and Social Transformation* (Leicester: NIACE, 1997), Ch. 8, p. 171.

<sup>6</sup> Jose` Arico`, *La Cola del Diablo. Itinerario de Gramsci en America Latina* (Caracas: Editorial Nueva Sociedad, 1988); Carlos Nelson Coutinho, 'In Brasile' in *Gramsci in Europa e in America*, ed. Antonio A. Santucci (Rome and Bari: Sagittari Laterza, 1995), pp.133-140 ; Osvaldo Fernández Díaz, 'In America Latina' in ed. Santucci, op.cit., pp.141-157 ; Antonio Melis, 'Gramsci e l'America Latina', in *Antonio Gramsci e il 'Progresso Intellettuale di Massa'*, eds. Giorgio Baratta and Andrea Catone (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 1995) pp. 227-234;

the one area with which Paulo Freire's work and ideas are strongly associated.<sup>8</sup> La Belle goes as far as to state that Gramsci is the most invoked Marxist theorist in popular education in Latin America; he underscores the relevance of Gramsci's ideas concerning the Factory Councils to the task of organizing the masses through popular education.<sup>9</sup>

Prominent among the English language works establishing connections between Gramsci and Freire, within the context of popular education, are the writings of Raymond A. Morrow and Carlos Alberto Torres<sup>10</sup> who argue that there has been a certain degree of polarization with respect to the reception of Gramsci in Latin America. One side links him with a "technocratic" perspective which places the emphasis on a critical appropriation of dominant knowledge, a position that is not at odds with the Leninist revolutionary vanguard theory but which has been perceived as contrasting with the position adopted by Freire. The other side, which argues for a confluence between his ideas and those of Freire, stresses the link between Gramsci's specific view of civil society and that of popular education, conceived of as an important element in the process of democratization of Brazilian society.<sup>11</sup> This polarization is the result of the apparently paradoxical features of Gramsci's work, features which led Morrow and Torres<sup>12</sup> to provocatively pose the question: are there "two Gramscis"?

7 Timothy Ireland, *Antonio Gramsci and Adult Education. Reflections on the Brazilian Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); Thomas, J. La Belle, *Non Formal education in Latin America and the Caribbean. Stability, Reform or Revolution?* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

8 Carlos Alberto Torres, *The Politics of Nonformal Education in Latin America* (New York: Praeger, 1990); Liam Kane, *Popular Education and Social Change in Latin America* (London: Latin American Bureau, 2001).

9 La Belle, op.cit., p.185. See also Carmel Borg, Joseph A. Buttigieg and Peter Mayo, 'Introduction. Gramsci and Education. A Holistic Approach' in Borg, Buttigieg and Mayo, op.cit., p. 14.

10 Raymond A. Morrow and Carlos Alberto Torres, *Social Theory and Education. A Critique of Theories of Social and Cultural Reproduction*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995); Raymond. A. Morrow and Carlos Alberto Torres., 'Gramsci and Popular Education in Latin America. From Revolution to Democratic Transition' in Borg, Buttigieg and Mayo, op.cit., pp. 179-200.

11 On this point, apart from Morrow and Torres' chapter in Borg, Buttigieg and Mayo, op.cit., see also Morrow and Torres, op.cit. 2002, p. 79.

12 Ibid.

Across the Atlantic, there have been a number of works combining insights from Gramsci and Freire. In Marjorie Mayo's *Imagining Tomorrow* <sup>13</sup>, market-led perspectives are contrasted with those centering on adult education for social transformation with the focus, in the relevant chapter, being on the work of Gramsci, Freire and Ettore Gelpi. Less supportive of attempts to bring Gramsci and Freire together is Diana Coben who, in a book length study of these two figures' writings, considers their work incompatible and therefore rejects their linkage in the adult education literature.<sup>14</sup>

With respect to writings outside the field of education, one must mention the work of Ransome, Leonard and Ledwith .<sup>15</sup> The first of these deals with Gramsci's work in general and brings Freire into the reckoning in the section on intellectuals. The second draws on insights from Gramsci and Freire for a critical approach to social work. Margaret Ledwith advocates transformative action in the area of community development rooted in critical pedagogy and the writings of Gramsci and Freire, to which an entire chapter is devoted.

As far as education is concerned, and specifically a critical approach to education, one must mention the work of Paula Allman.<sup>16</sup> In her earlier chapter on education for socialism, Allman draws on the ideas of Gramsci and Freire, alongside those of Illich, in the context of a sustained discussion on ideology.<sup>17</sup> This is an issue with which Allman and participants in a

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13 Marjorie Mayo, op.cit., Ch. 1., pp. 23-27.

14 Diana Coben, *Radical Heroes. Gramsci, Freire and the Politics of Adult Education* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998).

15 Paul Ransome , *Antonio Gramsci . A New Introduction* (London: Harvester / Wheatsheaf, 1992); Peter Leonard, 'Critical Pedagogy and State Welfare - Intellectual encounters with Freire and Gramsci, 1974-86' in *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*, eds. Peter Leonard and Peter McLaren ( New York and London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 155-168; Margaret Ledwith, *Participating in Transformation: Towards a Working Model of Community Empowerment* (Birmingham, Venture Press, 1997).

16 Paula Allman, ' Gramsci, Freire and Illich: Their contributions to education for socialism' in *Radical Approaches to Adult Education. A Reader* ,ed. Tom Lovett ( London: Routledge, 1988) pp. 85-113 ; Paula Allman,, *Revolutionary Social Transformation: Democratic Hopes, Political Possibilities and Critical Education*, (Westport, Connecticut and London: Bergin & Garvey, 1999).

17 Allman, 1988, op.cit.

diploma course she coordinated at the University of Nottingham had to contend as they sought signposts for a socialist approach to adult education. Allman sees adult education as part of the "prefigurative work" which, Gramsci insisted, had to precede every revolution : “Every revolution has been preceded by an intense labour of criticism, by the diffusion of culture and spread of ideas among masses of men.....”<sup>18</sup> Allman’s later book length work<sup>19</sup> projects a vision for transformed democratic social relations predicated on a pedagogical approach characterized by a revolutionary as opposed to a reproductive praxis, an approach that echoes Marx’s dialectical conceptualization and that is reflected in the writings of both Gramsci and Freire.<sup>20</sup>

### **Marxian underpinnings**

The reference to Allman immediately leads me to stress one fundamental and obvious point of contact between Gramsci’s and Freire’s respective works – their being rooted in Marxism and more specifically Marxian thinking.<sup>21</sup> That Gramsci is indebted to such thought goes without saying. In volume IV of his edited critical edition of the *Quaderni del Carcere* (Prison Notebooks), Valentino Gerratana provides the list of texts by Marx and Engels that Gramsci cites in the Notebooks. These include *Capital*, the *Theses on Feuerbach*, the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right (Introduction)*, *The Holy Family*, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, numerous letters and articles such as the one on the Spanish revolution

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18 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings (1910 - 20)* , eds. Quintin Hoare and John Matthews (New York: International Publishers, 1977).

19 Allman, 1999, op.cit.

20 This theme constitutes the leitmotif of her most recent work. See Paula Allman, *Critical Education Against Global Capitalism. Karl Marx and Revolutionary Critical Education* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Bergin & Garvey, 2001).

21 Throughout this section, I reproduce, verbatim, sentences from my review of Paula Allman’s 1999 book. See Peter Mayo, review of Paula Allman, *Revolutionary Social Transformation in Adult Education Quarterly*, 51, no. 3 (2001): 256-258.

in the *New York Tribune*, among others.<sup>22</sup> After all, Gramsci is credited with having “reinvented” some of Marx’s concepts when discussing important aspects of his native Italy’s post-Risorgimento state. One of his more enduring contributions is arguably that of having stressed the cultural dimension of revolutionary practice. He has thus made a significant contribution to various aspects of Marxist theory, including the debate around the ‘Base-superstructure’ metaphor. At the same time, one must not lose sight of his over-arching political analysis, lest one lapses into cultural reductionism.

Despite the criticism that Freire is too eclectic in his approach, drawing on a broad range of sources, including Christian-Personalism and Liberation Theology (which generally accommodates Marxist class analysis), one cannot deny the Marxian and Marxist underpinnings of his writing and specific mode of conceptualization. Unlike Gramsci, Freire could draw on a wide range of early writings by Marx, notably *The German Ideology*, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, the *Theses on Feuerbach* and *The Holy Family*. These early writings by Marx provide important sources of reference for some of the arguments raised in Freire’s best known work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.<sup>23</sup> Later writings by Marx, however, feature prominently in such works as *Pedagogy in Process*<sup>24</sup> where Freire attempts to come to grips with the social relations of production in an impoverished African country (Guinea Bissau) that had just gained independence from Portugal. In this work, and precisely in letter 11, Freire adopts Marx’s notion of a ‘polytechnic education’<sup>25</sup>, arguing for a strong relationship to be

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22 Valentino Gerratana in Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del Carcere* (Edizione Critica), (Turin: Einaudi, 1975) 3062-3063

23 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1970).

24 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy in Process. The Letters to Guinea Bissau*, (New York: Continuum, 1978).

25 See David Livingstone’s reference to Castles and Wustenberg. Stephen Castles and Wiebke Wustenberg, *The Education of the Future: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Socialist Education* (London: Pluto, 1979); David W. Livingstone, *Class, Ideologies and Educational Futures* (Sussex: The Falmer Press, 1983), pp. 186, 187.

forged between education and production. <sup>26</sup> Marx had specifically developed this notion in the Geneva Resolution of 1866. <sup>27</sup>

Most importantly, though, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is written in a dialectical style which, as Allman points out, is not easily accessible to readers schooled in conventional ways of thinking, often characterized by a linear approach.<sup>28</sup> She demonstrates clearly that one cannot fully appreciate Freire's work without anchoring it within Karl Marx's dialectical conceptualization of oppression. The more one is familiar with Marx's "tracking down" of "inner connections" and "relations", that are conceived of as "unities of opposites" <sup>29</sup>, the more one begins to appreciate *Pedagogy of the Oppressed's* Marxian underpinning.<sup>30</sup> This is not the only book Freire has written, but it is the most compact and consistent as far as the dialectical conceptualization of power is concerned. <sup>31</sup>

## **Ideology**

Gramsci's and Freire's respective works are embedded in a Marxian conception of ideology based on the assumption that "The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal

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26 Freire, 1978, op.cit.

27 Livingstone, op.cit., p. 187.

28 Allman, 1988, op.cit.

29 Allman, 1999, op.cit, pp. 62, 63. In a situation characterized by the ongoing struggle for a critical and humanizing pedagogy, the actions of educators and learners are guided by the goal of 'negating the negation' of a dehumanizing relation, occurring under conditions of 'banking education.' Under Banking Education, the educator supports, deliberately or unwittingly, a dehumanizing structure of oppression that can only be solved through the termination of this oppressive and dehumanizing relation that denies both teacher and learner their humanity. This, I would argue, remains an ongoing struggle with no point of arrival. In my view, 'banking education' and 'dialogical education' ought to be conceived of as ends of a continuum. There are several tensions which prevent the 'negation of the negation' in the educational relationship from being realized fully, such as the tension between 'authority and freedom' to which I shall return later.

30. For a thorough exposition of dialectical thinking, see Allman , 2001, op.cit. pp. 39-48.

31 Paula Allman with Peter Mayo, chris cavanagh, Chan Lean Heng and Sergio Haddad, ' "the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love..." in *Convergence*, XXX1, 1 & 2 (1998): 9 - 16

expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make one class the ruling one, therefore the ideas of its dominance.”<sup>32</sup> Not only does the ruling class produce the ruling ideas, in view of its control over the means of intellectual production,<sup>33</sup> but the dominated classes produce ideas that do not necessarily serve their interests; these classes, that “lack the means of mental production and are immersed in production relations which they do not control,” tend to “reproduce ideas” that express the dominant material relationships.<sup>34</sup> After all, as Marx and Engels had underlined, “...each new class which puts itself in place of one ruling before it, is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones.”<sup>35</sup>

Gramsci saw ideas that reflect the dominant material relationships as residing in those areas he identifies with ‘common sense’ which contains elements of ‘good sense’ but which is, in effect, a distorted and fragmentary conception of the world. It is, according to Gramsci, a “philosophy of non philosophers”, namely “a conception of the world absorbed uncritically by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average man (*sic.*) develops.”<sup>36</sup> This contrasts with ‘philosophy’ that is “intellectual order, which neither religion nor common sense can be.”<sup>37</sup> For Gramsci, common sense is “...the folklore of

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32 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, ed. C.J. Arthur (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970), p.64 .

33 Ibid.

34 Jorge Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1983), p.24.

35 Marx and Engels, *op.cit.* 1970, pp. 65, 66.

36 Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del Carcere, Edizione Critica*, ed. Valentino Gerratana (Turin: Einaudi, 1975) p.1396. See Carmel Borg and Peter Mayo, ‘Gramsci and the Unitarian School: Paradoxes and Possibilities’ in Borg, Buttigieg and Mayo, *op.cit.*, pp. 87-108. Translation from Italian original by Carmel Borg.

37 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 325. See Larrain, *op.cit.* for an excellent discussion of this



philosophy.”<sup>38</sup> Gramsci draws connections between popular religion, folklore (a specific body of beliefs, values and norms <sup>39</sup> that is uncritical, contradictory and ambiguous in content) and common sense.<sup>40</sup> Religion is, for Gramsci, “an element of fragmented common sense.” <sup>41</sup> The challenge, for Gramsci, is to supersede this common sense through a ‘philosophy of praxis,’ the “conscious expression” of the contradictions that lacerate society,<sup>42</sup> that would undergo a process of elaboration similar to that experienced by Lutheranism and Calvinism before developing into a “superior culture”<sup>43</sup> or ‘civiltà.’<sup>44</sup>

Freire’s view of consciousness is also reminiscent of Gramsci’s distinction between common sense and good sense. He too sees popular consciousness as being permeated by ideology. In his earlier work, Freire posited the existence of different levels of consciousness ranging from naïve to critical consciousness, indicating a hierarchy that exposed him to the accusation of being elitist and of being patronizing towards ordinary people.<sup>45</sup> Similar accusations can easily be directed at Gramsci with respect to the distinction he draws between common and good sense. In his early work, Freire reveals the power of ideology being reflected

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distinction within the context of Marxism and ideology. See also Jorge Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology* (London: Hutchinson, 1979).

38 Ibid.

39 Leonardo Salamini, *The Sociology of Political Praxis - An Introduction to Gramsci’s Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

40 Borg and Mayo, 2002, op.cit., p. 91.

41 Gramsci, op.cit., 1971, p. 325.

42 Larrain, op.cit., 1979, p. 81.

43 Sergio Caruso, ‘La riforma intellettuale e morale’ in *Gramsci: I Quaderni del Carcere. I Una riflessione politica incompiuta*, ed. Salvo Mastellone (Turin: UTET Libreria, 1997). pp.85, 86.

44 It can be assumed that Gramsci intended much of what Allman calls ‘prefigurative work’, referred to earlier, to be geared towards this goal. However, Jorge Larrain provides the important caveat that such prefigurative work can never result in “total ideological domination” prior to the conquest of the state since, as Gramsci maintains, “class consciousness cannot be completely modified until the mode of life of the class itself is modified, which entails that the proletariat has become the ruling class” through “possession of the apparatus of production and exchange and state power.” First part of the quote in English translation is found on the page where Larrain makes this important point. See Larrain, op.cit. 1983, p.82 The second part of the quote is my translation from the original tract by Gramsci, entitled, ‘Necessità di Una Preparazione Ideologica di Massa’, found in Antonio Gramsci, *Le Opere. La Prima Antologia di Tutti Gli Scritti*, ed. Antonio Santucci (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1997) p. 161.

45 Kane, op.cit., p. 50.

in the fatalism apparent in the statements of peasants living in shanty towns who provide ‘magical explanations,’ attributing their poor plight to the ‘will of God’.<sup>46</sup> While Gramsci regards religion as an element of ‘common sense,’ Freire, a self-declared ‘man of faith,’ is less categorical. He extols the virtues of the ‘Prophetic Church,’ with its basis in liberation theology, and attributes ‘false consciousness’ to the “traditionalist”, “colonialist” and “missionary” church that he describes as a “necrophiliac winner of souls” with its “emphasis on sin, hell-fire and eternal damnation.”<sup>47</sup> This is the sort of Church to which Gramsci is likely to have been exposed in his native Sardegna and that could easily have been a propagator of the kind of ‘folklore’ that he despised.

Like Gramsci and a host of other writers, including important exponents of Critical Theory, Freire provides a very insightful analysis of the way human beings participate in their own oppression by internalizing the image of their oppressor. As with the complexity of hegemonic arrangements, underlined by Gramsci and elaborated on by a host of others writing from a neo-Gramscian perspective, people suffer a contradictory consciousness, being oppressors, within one social hegemonic arrangement, and oppressed within another.<sup>48</sup> This consideration runs throughout Freire’s oeuvre ranging from his early discussion on the notion of the ‘oppressor consciousness’ to his later writings on multiple and layered identities<sup>49</sup> where he

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46 Freire, 1970, op.cit., p.163.

47 Paulo Freire, *The Politics of Education* (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey, 1985), p. 131.

48 For book length expositions of Paulo Freire’s philosophy, see Paul V. Taylor, *The Texts of Paulo Freire* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993); John Elias, *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation* (Florida: Kreiger, 1994); Moacir Gadotti, *Reading Paulo Freire. His Life and Work* (Albany: Suny Press, 1994); Peter Roberts, *Literacy and Humanization. Exploring the Work of Paulo Freire* (Wesport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey, 2000); Antonia Darder, *Reinventing Paulo Freire. A Pedagogy of Love* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002); Peter Mayo, *Liberating Praxis. Paulo Freire’s Legacy for Radical Education and Politics* (Boulder: Praeger, 2004) . See also various papers in McLaren and Leonard (eds.), op.cit.; Peter McLaren and Colin Lankshear (eds.), *Politics of Liberation. Paths from Freire* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994); Part 2, ‘The Man with the Gray Beard’ in McLaren, op.cit., 2001.

49 Paulo Freire, ‘A Response’ in *Mentoring the Mentor, A Critical Dialogue with Paulo Freire*, eds. Freire, P (ed.) with James W. Fraser, Donaldo Macedo, Tanya McKinnon and William T. Stokes (new York: Peter Lang, 1997), pp. 303-329.

insists that one's quest for life and for living critically is tantamount to being an ongoing quest for the attainment of greater *coherence*. Gaining coherence, for Freire, necessitates one's gaining greater awareness of one's 'unfinishedness'.<sup>50</sup>

### **Resources of Hope**

Both Gramsci and Freire accord an important role to agency in the context of revolutionary activity for social transformation. The two explicitly repudiate evolutionary economic determinist theories of social change. Gramsci regards them as theories of "grace and predestination." while Freire sees them as being conducive to a "liberating fatalism",<sup>51</sup> a position to which he adhered until the very end, stating, at an *honoris causa* speech delivered at Claremont Graduate University in 1989, that "When I think of history I think about possibility – that history is the time and space of possibility. Because of that, I reject a fatalistic or pessimistic understanding of history with a belief that what happens is what should happen."<sup>52</sup> He sees persons as conditioned but not determined beings.<sup>53</sup>

The emphasis on voluntarism and on the cultural and spiritual basis of revolutionary activity is very strong in the writings of the young Gramsci.<sup>54</sup> This emphasis is also to be found

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<sup>50</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom. Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, 51, 66). As I have argued elsewhere, this makes nonsense of the criticism, directed at Freire in North America, that he fails to recognize that one can be oppressed in one situation and an oppressor in another and that he posits a binary opposition between oppressor and oppressed. If anything, the relations between oppressor and oppressed have always been presented by Freire as dialectical rather than as binary opposites. Peter Mayo, 'Remaining on the same side of the river': A Critical Commentary on Paulo Freire's Later Work' in *Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies*, 22, no. 4 (2001):369-397. Also see Allman, 1999, op.cit., pp. 88-89, for an insightful exposition in this regard.

<sup>51</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, ed. Louis Marks (New York: International Publishers, 1957), p. 75; Freire, op.cit., 1985, p.179.

<sup>52</sup> Paulo Freire in Darder, op.cit., p.x. On the issue of history as possibility, see also Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the City* (New York: Continuum, 1993), p.65; Paulo Freire, *Politics and Education* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1998), p. 88

<sup>53</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, op.cit. p. 54

<sup>54</sup> Raymond. A. Morrow, 'Introducing Gramsci on Hegemony. Towards a Post-marxist Interpretation'. Paper delivered at the Colloquium on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Gramsci's death, Edmonton, Dept. of Educational Foundations, The University of Alberta, 27th April, 1987.

in Freire's early writings, especially the work based on his doctoral thesis, 'Education as the Practice of Freedom.'<sup>55</sup> This particular aspect of the two writers' work is generally regarded to have been the product of strong Hegelian influences. In Gramsci's case, however, it would be more appropriate to speak in terms of 'neo-Hegelianism', the kind of idealist philosophy derived from Croce.<sup>56</sup> In Freire's case, the Hegelianism may have partly been derived via the writings of such Christian authors as Chardin, Mounier and Neibuhr.<sup>57</sup> In later writings, however, this idealist position becomes somewhat modified as both Gramsci and Freire begin to place greater emphasis on the role of economic conditions in processes of social change.

Both rejected the view that the conditions of their time determined the limits of what is possible. Both recognized developments within capitalism, witnessed during their lifetime (Taylorisation / Fordism in Gramsci's time and Neo-Liberalism in Freire's), for what they were - manifestations of Capitalist reorganization to counter the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, owing to the 'crises of overproduction'.<sup>58</sup> In his notes dealing with 'Americanism and Fordism', Gramsci points to the need for Capitalism to reorganize itself periodically to counter such a tendency. Taylorisation constituted the earlier means in this regard.<sup>59</sup> The intensification

55 Included in Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum, 1973).

56 Angelo Broccoli, *Antonio Gramsci e l'Educazione come egemonia* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1972); Morrow, op.cit., p.2.

57 Frank Youngman, *Adult Education and Socialist Pedagogy* (Kent: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 159.

58 Paula Allman and John Wallis, 'Challenging the Postmodern Condition: Radical Adult Education for Critical Intelligence' in *Adult Learning Critical Intelligence and Social Change*, eds. Marjorie Mayo and Jane Thompson (Leicester: NIACE, 1995), pp. ; Griff Foley, *Learning in Social Action. A Contribution to Understanding Informal Education* (London and New York: Zed Books, 1999).

59 Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith in Antonio Gramsci, op.cit, 1971, p.280. Argument reproduced from Paula Allman and Peter Mayo, 'Freire, Gramsci and globalisation: some implications for social and political commitment in adult education' in *Crossing Borders breaking boundaries - research in the education of adults. Proceedings of the 27th Annual SCUTREA Conference*, eds. Paul Armstrong, Nod Miller and Miriam Zukas (London: Birkbeck College University of London, 1997), p. 8.

of globalization is the latest form of Capitalist reorganization.<sup>60</sup> Understanding the contemporary stages of capitalist development according to what they represented was a crucial step for both writers to avoid a sense of fatalism and keep alive the quest for working to attain a better world driven by what Henry A Giroux calls an anticipatory utopia prefigured not only by critique of the present but by an alternative pedagogical/cultural politics.<sup>61</sup> The fatalism of neo-liberalism, buttressed by the propagation of an ‘ideology of ideological death’<sup>62</sup> was a key theme in Freire’s later writings and was meant to be the subject of the work he was contemplating at the time of his death.<sup>63</sup> Like Gramsci, who explored, through a multi-varied analysis of Italy’s historical and contemporary conditions, directions to pursue in the quest for an ‘intellectual and moral reform,’ Freire could well have been on the verge of embarking on an exploration of the conditions that the present historical conjuncture, characterized by Neo-liberalism, would allow for the pursuit of his dream of a different and better world. Alas, this was not to be.

### **Education in its broadest context**

Gramsci’s engagement in a broad process of analysis of the historical and contemporary conditions of Italy, with a view to exploring the conditions likely to engender an ‘intellectual and moral reform’ of a scale that would render it the most radical reform since primitive Christianity,

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<sup>60</sup> See Griff Foley with respect to the implications of such reorganization for Capitalism. Griff Foley, ‘Adult Education and Capitalist Reorganisation’, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 26 no. 2 (1994): 121 –143; Foley, op.cit. 1999.

<sup>61</sup> Henry Giroux, *Public Spaces/Private Lives. Beyond the Culture of Cynicism* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

<sup>62</sup> Paulo Freire, *Teachers as Cultural Workers. Letters to those who dare teach* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), p. 14.

<sup>63</sup> Ana Maria (Nita) Araujo Freire, ‘A bit of my Life with Paulo Freire’ in *Taboo. The Journal of Culture and Education*, 11, Fall (1997): 3-11, p.10.

64 renders his conception of education quite expansive. Gramsci, very much involved in adult education, as part of his work in the Italian Socialist and subsequently Communist parties, wrote of the existence of “altre vie” (other routes) when it comes to education and learning. Gramsci saw progressive and emancipatory elements within these “altre vie” that can complement the kind of Unitarian school he proposed to advance the interests of the Italian working class.<sup>65</sup> Gramsci held a view similar to what Suchodolski would call an “education-centred society”<sup>66</sup> or what is fashionable to call, nowadays, the ‘learning society.’ Gramsci scholar, Joseph A. Buttigieg, writes: “...the role of education in Gramsci’s thought cannot be properly appreciated unless one recognizes that it resides at the very core of his concept of hegemony. ‘Every relationship of ‘hegemony’ is necessarily an educational relationship,’ he wrote.”<sup>67</sup> For Gramsci, therefore, a meaningful process of education must extend beyond schooling and adult education centres to be wide ranging. It is primarily located within the terrain of civil society<sup>68</sup> wherein these educational / hegemonic relationships are consolidated, as is the case with much of contemporary society, and challenged. In the latter case, the challenge can possibly be part of what Raymond Williams would call a ‘long revolution.’<sup>69</sup> Gramsci constantly writes about the

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64 Saverio Festa, *Gramsci* (Assisi: Cittadella Editrice, 1976).

65 See Stanley Aronowitz, ‘Gramsci’s Theory of Education: Schooling and Beyond’ in Borg, Buttigieg, Mayo, op.cit., pp.109-120 ; John Baldacchino, ‘On a Dog Chasing its Tail. Gramsci’s Challenge to the Sociology of Knowledge’ in Borg, Buttigieg, Mayo, op.cit., pp. 133-146; Borg and Mayo, 2002, op.cit.; Joseph A. Buttigieg, ‘Education, The Role of Intellectuals and Democracy. A Gramscian Reflection’, 2002a in Borg, Buttigieg, Mayo, 2002, op.cit., pp.121-132; Henry A. Giroux, ‘Rethinking Cultural Politics and Radical Pedagogy in the Work of Antonio Gramsci’ in Borg, Buttigieg, Mayo, op.cit., pp.41- 65.

66 Bogdan Suchodolski, ‘Lifelong Education – Some Philosophical Aspects’ in *Foundations of Lifelong Education*, ed. Ravindah H. Dave, ( Oxford: Pergamon Press; Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education, 1976).

67 Joseph A. Buttigieg, ‘On Gramsci’ in *Daedalus*, Summer (2002a): 67-70, pp. 69-70.

68 Gramsci uses ‘Civil Society’ in a manner that is different from the way it is used nowadays. The term, as used by Gramsci, refers to the complex of ideological institutions (print and broadcasting media, religious institutions, mass organizations, adult education institutions, parties, unions, factory councils etc.) that primarily serve to sustain and cement the present hegemonic relations but which also contain spaces within them wherein these relations can be challenged and gradually, probably through a ‘long revolution,’ be transformed.

69 Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1960).

need to secure alliances of progressive forces in a historical bloc and even encourages (something he himself did) collaboration with progressive individuals such as Piero Gobetti.<sup>70</sup> He insisted that the name of the Communist Party organ should be ‘L’Unita’, which signifies a unification of all the popular forces, including the Catholic masses, in a historical bloc.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, he attributed a central role, at the heart of this educational and political action for a moral reform, to the party that he conceived of as the Modern Prince. The Modern Prince had the task of unifying these forces in a national-popular bloc, just like Macchiavelli’s Principe had the task of unifying the country. In the words of John Holst, “the party was to maintain hegemony..” and “...not allow the other alliance forces to steer the movement into reformism or economism...”<sup>72</sup>

The idea of a larger terrain for educational action is also at the heart of Freire’s work. Throughout his writings, Freire constantly stressed that educators engage with the system and not shy away from it for fear of co-optation.<sup>73</sup> Freire exhorted educators and other cultural workers to ‘be tactically inside and strategically outside’ the system. As with Gramsci, Freire believed that the system is not monolithic. Hegemonic arrangements are never complete and allow spaces for “swimming against the tide” or, to use Gramsci’s phrase, engaging in ‘a war of position.’<sup>74</sup> In most of his work from the mid eighties onward, Freire touches on the role of social movements as important vehicles for social change.

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70 Antonio Gramsci, *The Southern Question*, ed and trans. Pasquale Verdicchio (West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera Incorporated, 1995), pp. 44, 45.

71 Giorgio Amendola, *Antonio Gramsci nella vita culturale e politica Italiana* (Naples: Guida Editori, 1978), p. 39.

72 John D. Holst, *Social Movements, Civil Society and Radical Adult Education* (Westport, Connecticut, London: Bergin & Garvey, 2002), p. 112.

73 Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, *We make the road by walking. Conversations on education and social change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); Miguel Escobar, Alfredo L. Fernandez and Gilberto Guevara-Niebla, with Paulo Freire, *Paulo Freire on Higher Education. A Dialogue at the National University of Mexico*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

74 Freire, in Escobar et al, op.cit., pp. 31, 32.

He himself belonged to a movement striving for a significant process of change, of radicalization, within an important institution in Latin America and beyond, namely the church. This stands in contrast to Gramsci who however saw enough progressive elements in the Catholic masses to stress the need for an alliance with them. When Education Secretary in São Paulo, a position that allowed Freire to tackle education and cultural work in their broader contexts, Paulo Freire and his associates worked hard to bring social movements and state agencies together.<sup>75</sup> These efforts on behalf of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) continue to be exerted by the party itself in other municipalities, most notably the city of Porto Alegre, in Rio Grande do Sul, where the PT has been in government since the late eighties, and presumably the other municipalities and states where the party won the elections in the Fall of 2000. One should also mention that, at present, there exists the possibility of engaging in such efforts throughout the entire country now that the PT leader, Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva, has won the federal presidential elections. The last years of Freire's life were exciting times for Brazilian society with the emergence of the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*.<sup>76</sup> The Movement allies political activism and mobilization with important education and cultural work.<sup>77</sup> The movement is itself conceived of as an "enormous school."<sup>78</sup> As in the period that preceded the infamous 1964 coup, Paulo Freire's work and thinking must also have been influenced and reinvigorated by the growing movement for democratization of Brazilian society. In an interview with Carmel Borg and me, Ana Maria (Nita) Araujo Freire states :

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<sup>75</sup> See María del Pilar O'Cadiz, Pia L. Wong, and Carlos Alberto Torres (1997), *Education and Democracy . Paulo Freire, Social Movements and Educational Reform in São Paulo* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); María del Pilar O'Cadiz, 'Social Movements and Literacy Training in Brazil: A Narrative' in *Education and Social Change in Latin America*, ed. Carlos Alberto Torres (Melbourne: James Nicholas Publishers, 1995), p. 163-173.

<sup>76</sup> Literal translation: Movement of Rural Workers without Land. The abbreviated title is Movimento dos Sem Terra (MST - Movement of Landless Peasants). This is arguably one of the two most vibrant movements in Latin America, the Frente Zapatista in Chiapas being the other.

<sup>77</sup> Kane, op.cit., Ch.4.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, p.97.



“Travelling all over this immense Brazil we saw and cooperated with a very large number of social movements of different sizes and natures, but who had (and continue to have) a point in common: the hope in their people’s power of transformation. They are teachers - many of them are “lay”: embroiderers, sisters, workers, fishermen, peasants, etc., scattered all over the country, in favelas, camps or houses, men and women with an incredible leadership strength, bound together in small and local organizations, but with such a latent potential that it filled us, Paulo and me, with hope for better days for our people. Many others participated in a more organized way in the MST (*Movimento dos Sem Terra*: Movement of Landless Peasants), the trade unions, CUT (*Central Única dos Trabalhadores*), and CEBs (Christian Base Communities). As the man of hope he always was, Paulo knew he would not remain alone. Millions of persons, excluded from the system, are struggling in this country, as they free themselves from oppression, to also liberate their oppressors. Paulo died a few days after the arrival of the MST March in Brasília. On that April day, standing in our living-room, seeing on the TV the crowds of men, women and children entering the capital in such an orderly and dignified way, full of emotion, he cried out: “That’s it, Brazilian people, the country belongs to all of us! Let us build together a democratic country, just and happy!”<sup>79</sup>

Freire insisted that education should not be romanticized and that teachers ought to engage in a much larger public sphere.<sup>80</sup> This has been quite a popular idea among radical activists in recent years, partly also as a result of a dissatisfaction with party politics. The arguments developed in these circles are often based on a very non-Gramscian use of the concept of ‘civil society.’ In his later work, however, Freire sought to explore the links between movements and the state<sup>81</sup> and, most significantly, movements and party, a position no doubt influenced by his role as one of the founding members of the PT. Authors such as John Holst<sup>82</sup> have argued that social movements theorists writing on the relevance of Antonio Gramsci’s ideas for adult education tend to ignore the central role which Gramsci attributed to the Party in the process of social transformation. In view of this criticism, Freire’s ideas concerning the relationship between party and

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79 Nita Freire in Carmel Borg and Peter Mayo, ‘Reflections from a "third age" marriage: Paulo Freire's pedagogy of reason, hope and passion. An Interview with Ana Maria (Nita) Araujo Freire,’ in *McGill Journal of Education*, 35, no.2 (2000): 105-120, p.109.

80 Paulo Freire in Ira Shor and Paulo Freire, *A Pedagogy of Liberation. Dialogues on Transforming Education* (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey, 1997), p. 37.

81 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the City* (New York: Continuum, 1993); O’Cadiz et al., op.cit.

82 Holst, op.cit.

movements are quite interesting and suggest a link with Gramsci's conception of the historical bloc involving an alliance between the party and mass organizations.

Freire argues that the party for change, committed to the subaltern, should allow itself to learn from and be transformed through contact with progressive social movements. One important proviso Freire makes, in this respect, is that the party should do this "without trying to take them over." Movements, Freire seems to be saying, cannot be subsumed by parties, otherwise they lose their identity and forfeit their specific way of exerting pressure for change. Paulo Freire discusses possible links between party and movements. This brings to mind the possible links between such movements as the MST and the PT, the party that, according to Carlos Nelson Coutinho, constitutes one of the major contemporary repositories for Gramsci's ideas in Brazil.<sup>83</sup>

Today, if the Workers' Party approaches the popular movements from which it was born, without trying to take them over, the party will grow; if it turns away from the popular movements, in my opinion, the party will wear down. Besides, those movements need to make their struggle politically viable.<sup>84</sup>

Both Gramsci and Freire, therefore, explore links between the party and movements within the context of a strategy for social change. While Gramsci is adamant on a directive role for the party in this process, Freire is less categorical in this regard, although events in Brazil tend to suggest a leadership role for the PT in the process of the democratization of Brazilian society. The PT enjoys strong links with the trade union movement, the Pastoral Land Commission, the MST and other movements. It has exercised its leadership role when forging alliances between party, state and movements in the municipalities in which it has been in power. The Participatory Budget project in Porto Alegre, an exercise in deliberative and participatory democracy, provides some indication of the direction such alliances can take.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Coutinho, *op.cit.*

<sup>84</sup> Freire, in Escobar et al, *op.cit.*, p. 40

<sup>85</sup> Daniel Schugurensky, 'Transformative Learning and Transformative Politics. The Pedagogical Dimension of Participatory Democracy and Social Action', eds. Edmund O'Sullivan, Amish Morrell, and Mary O'Connor, *Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning* (New York: Palgrave, 2002a), pp. 59 – 76. See also Angie Gallop's interview of the same author : Schugurensky, D (2002b), 'From South to North: Can the Participatory Budget be Exported?', [www.rabble.ca](http://www.rabble.ca),

## Praxis

The discussion has veered towards a macro-level analysis. It would be opportune now to bring the discussion back to the micro level with an emphasis on concepts that lie at the heart of the pedagogical relation as propounded by both Gramsci and Freire. The two figures regard *praxis* as one of the key concepts in question. The kind of philosophy which Gramsci contrasts with ‘common sense’ and which warrants elaboration to provide the underpinning of an intellectual and moral reform is referred to as the ‘philosophy of praxis’ which, in contrast to the bifurcation advocated by Benedetto Croce (philosophy for intellectuals and religion for the people), is intended to be a philosophy that welds intellectuals and masses together in a historical bloc.<sup>86</sup> It is intended to be an instrument for the forging of a strong relationship between theory and practice, consciousness and action.<sup>87</sup>

Praxis is also at the center of Freire’s philosophical approach and becomes a constant feature of his thinking and writing. It constitutes the means whereby one can move in the direction of confronting the contradiction of opposites in the dialectical relation. For Freire and others, it constitutes the means of gaining critical distance from one’s world of action to engage in reflection geared towards transformative action. The relationship between action-reflection-transformative action is not sequential but dialectical.<sup>88</sup> Freire and other intellectuals, with whom he has conversed, in ‘talking books’, conceive of different moments in their life as forms of praxis, of gaining critical distance from the context they know to perceive

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November, 1-9; Luiz Armando Gandin and Michael W. Apple, ‘Thin versus Thick Democracy in Education: Porto Alegre and the creation of alternatives to Neo-liberalism’ in *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 12, no.2, 99-115, 2002.

<sup>86</sup> Carmel Borg and Peter Mayo, 2002, op.cit., p.89.

<sup>87</sup> Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith in Gramsci, op.cit, 1971, p. X111.

<sup>88</sup> Allman, op.cit., 1999.

it in a more critical light. Exile is regarded by Freire and the Chilean Antonio Faundez<sup>89</sup> as a form of praxis, a situation that recalls Gramsci's predicament in prison where the brain, which was meant to be stopped from working for twenty years, found the space, albeit for a ten year period, for profound critical reflection on the world of the Sardinian's action.<sup>90</sup> The idea of critical distancing is however best captured by Freire in his pedagogical approach involving the use of codifications, even though one should not make a fetish out of this 'method'<sup>91</sup> since it is basically indicative of something larger, a philosophy of learning in which praxis is a central concept that has to be 'reinvented' time and time again, depending on situation and context.

### **Authority and Freedom**

There are connections between Gramsci and Freire also with respect to the teacher-student dynamics. It might appear that Gramsci's view of schooling, as expressed in his two notes on the Unitarian School, contained in Notebook 4, provides a stark contrast to Freire's pedagogical approach.<sup>92</sup> Harold Entwistle, for instance, argues that the emphasis which Gramsci places, in these notes, on the acquisition of a baggage of facts suggests that Gramsci "held a view of learning which is not inconsistent with the notion, now used pejoratively, of education as banking".<sup>93</sup> This would seem to contrast with what Freire advocated. And yet, Gramsci had, for instance, denounced the popular universities (adult education institutions **for** the working class) precisely because their directors and educators filled the stomach with bagfuls of victuals ('sporte di viveri') capable of causing indigestion but that left no trace and did not

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89 Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez, *Learning to Question. A Pedagogy of Liberation* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1989). On this see also Frei Betto and Paulo Freire, *Una Scuola Chiamata Vita* (Bologna: EMI, 1986), p. 58.

90 Mayo, op.cit.1999, p. 91.

91 Stanley Aronowitz, 'Freire's Radical Democratic Humanism' in McLaren and Leonard, op.cit., pp. 8-24.

92 Borg and Mayo, op.cit., 2002; Mayo, op.cit., 1999.

93 Harold Entwistle, *Antonio Gramsci. Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 47.

touch the learners' lives to the extent that a difference could have been made.<sup>94</sup> He also states that the popular universities are reminiscent of the old Jesuitical schools where learning is static rather than dynamic; it was not the culmination of a long process of inquiry.<sup>95</sup>

To what extent did Gramsci favor the kind of pedagogical approach Freire argued against, namely 'banking education'?. A close reading of Gramsci's text, one which devotes great attention to his choice of words, would indicate that he was averse to the encouragement of uninformed dialogue. For Gramsci, a process of uninformed dialogue is mere rhetoric. It is mere *laissez faire* pedagogy that, in this day and age, would be promoted under the rubric of 'learning facilitation' (sic). This is the sort of pedagogical treachery that provoked a critical response from Paulo Freire. In an exchange with Donaldo P. Macedo, Freire states categorically that he refutes the term 'facilitator', which connotes such a pedagogy, underlining the fact that he has always insisted on the *directive* nature of education.<sup>96</sup> He insists on the term 'teacher,' one who derives one's *authority* from one's competence in the matter being taught, without allowing this authority to degenerate into *authoritarianism*.<sup>97</sup> "Authority is necessary to the freedom of the students and my own. The teacher is absolutely necessary. What is bad, what is not necessary, is authoritarianism, but not authority."<sup>98</sup>

Gramsci seems to be advocating a process of education that equips children with the necessary acumen to be able to participate in an informed dialogue. This is why Gramsci writes

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<sup>94</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *L'Alternativa Pedagogica*, ed. Mario Alighiero Manacorda (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1972), p. 83.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. pp.84, 85.

<sup>96</sup> See for instance Paulo Freire in Ira Shor and Paulo Freire, op.cit. p.103; Paulo Freire and Donaldo P. Macedo, 'A Dialogue: Culture, Language and Race', in *Harvard Educational Review*, 65, no. 3 (1995): 377 - 402. p. 394; Freire op.cit, 1993, p. 116; See also Freire in Moacir Gadotti, Paulo Freire and Sergio Guimarães, *Pedagogia: Dialogo e Conflitto*, eds. B.Bellanova and F.Telleri (Torino: Societa` Editrice Internazionale), p.50;

<sup>97</sup> Freire and Macedo, op.cit., p. 378.

<sup>98</sup> Freire, in Horton and Freire, op.cit., p.181. See also Freire in Shor and Freire, op.cit. p.91.

in terms of a “nexus between instruction and education”.<sup>99</sup> Recall Freire’s crude statement, in the conversation with Myles Horton, that there are moments when one must be “50% a traditional teacher and 50% a democratic teacher”.<sup>100</sup>

Emphasis is being placed, in this context, on ‘authority and freedom’, the distinction posed by Freire<sup>101</sup> but which echoes Gramsci’s constant reference to the interplay between “spontaneità e direzione consapevole” (spontaneity and conscious direction).<sup>102</sup> In his piece on the Unitarian School, Gramsci calls for a balance to be struck between the kind of authority promoted by the old classical school (without degenerating into authoritarian education) and the ‘freedom’ advocated by the then contemporary proponents of ideas associated with Rousseau’s philosophy as developed in *Emile*. The latter type of education, for Gramsci, had to develop from its ‘romantic phase’ (predicated on unbridled freedom for the learner, based on her or his spontaneity) and move into the ‘classical’ phase, classical in the sense of striking a balance.<sup>103</sup> This is the balance between freedom and authority that has been the subject of much debate in Freire’s work.<sup>104</sup> In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire argues that the educator’s “directivity” should not interfere with the “creative, formulative, investigative capacity of the educand.” Otherwise, the directivity degenerates into “manipulation, into authoritarianism”.<sup>105</sup> Referring to this aspect of Freire’s work, Stanley

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<sup>99</sup> Gramsci, op.cit., 1971, p. 36.

<sup>100</sup> Freire, in Horton and Freire, op.cit., p.160.

<sup>101</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*.

<sup>102</sup> See, for instance, the anthology, Antonio Gramsci, *Passato e Presente* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1998), pp. 70-74.

<sup>103</sup> Gramsci, op.cit., 1971, pp.32, 33.

<sup>104</sup> For a useful discussion on this, see Moacir Gadotti, *Pedagogy of Praxis. A Dialectical Philosophy of Education* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).

<sup>105</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope* (New York: Continuum, 1994), p. 79.

Aronowitz is on target when stating that “...the educator’s task is to encourage human agency,<sup>106</sup> not mold it in the manner of Pygmalion.”<sup>107</sup>

There is an interesting contrast between Gramsci and Freire also with respect to another curricular issue. Gramsci’s piece on the Unitarian school places importance on what he sees as the finer qualities of the ‘old’ classical school, the school which enabled him personally to transcend his formative environment, replete with the ‘folklore’ he despised, to gain that sense of cosmopolitanism which he regards as key to preventing people from remaining on the periphery of political life. It has been argued, by the leading Italian Gramsci scholar, Mario Alighiero Manacorda, that what Gramsci has provided in his notes on the Unitarian school is an epitaph for the old classical school, an epitaph celebrating what that school was and what it cannot be any longer given that the social reality has changed.<sup>108</sup> It was a school that had to be replaced by one more in tune with the reality of Gramsci’s times. For Gramsci, however, the reforms the Gentile educational administration sought to introduce (la riforma Gentile), based on the stark division between classical and vocational schools, represented a retrograde step and not a progressive one: “It will be necessary to replace Latin and Greek as the fulcrum of the formative school, and they will be replaced. But it will not be easy to deploy the new subject or subjects in a didactic form which gives equivalent results in terms of education and general formation...”<sup>109</sup> Highlighting the most salvageable aspects of the ‘old school’ ties in with what has been a constant feature of Gramsci’s cultural writings, namely his advocacy of the need for subaltern groups<sup>110</sup> to gain the means to critically appropriate established ‘high status’ cultural forms and knowledge with a view to moving from the margins to the center.

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106 On the issue of ‘agency’, see Carmel Borg, Joseph A. Buttigieg and Peter Mayo, ‘Introduction. Gramsci and Education. A Holistic Approach’ in Borg, Buttigieg and Mayo, op.cit.

107 Stanley Aronowitz, ‘Introduction’ in Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, p. 10.

108 Borg and Mayo, op.cit., pp.102-103. Mario Alighiero Manacorda in Antonio Gramsci, op.cit.1972, p.xxix.

109 Gramsci, 1979, op.cit. pp.39-40.

110 For an insightful discussion on the issue of subaltern groups and subaltern culture with reference to the relevance of the term ‘subaltern’ to such areas as colonialism, see Chapter 5 in Kate Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

This represents an important point of contrast with Freire in whose work emphasis is placed, almost exclusively, on the popular, with ‘high status’ culture hardly featuring except for discussions concerning standard language as opposed to dialect. This is true not only of his writings on popular education but also of writings by sympathetic researchers, combining theoretical insights with empirical data,<sup>111</sup> concerning the school reform he helped carry out in São Paulo when he was Education Secretary there. The schools involved were, after all, designated ‘popular public schools’. This is as it should be given the need to strengthen the school’s link with the pupils’ immediate culture through which these pupils can experience a sense of school ownership and identify with the culture it fosters. And yet Freire has always insisted that the popular constitutes only the starting point of the educational process. We find, in the literature on these reforms, ample material regarding the handling of social themes, derived from the pupils’ immediate surroundings, which constitute the basis of these schools’ curricula. There is however little material concerning the learning process occurring with respect to those subjects and their content areas which somehow relate to the dominant culture. The short-lived nature of the reforms, which were, to a certain extent, echoed in Porto Alegre,<sup>112</sup> could have played its part in denying one sufficient time to temper the initial enthusiasm for a highly innovative and refreshing approach to communal learning with some consideration concerning the effectiveness of this approach in enabling the poor children of the megalopolis to appropriate the skills and high order knowledge necessary to transcend their state of material impoverishment and powerlessness. Given Freire’s insistence that the popular constitutes only the entry point to knowledge and is not the be all and end all of the learning process, then one would have relished some insightful considerations concerning the ‘popular public’ curriculum on the lines we have come to

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111 O’Cadiz, Wong and Torres, 1998, op.cit. See also Peter Mayo’s very favorable review of this work in *Journal of Transformative Education*, 2004, op.cit. forthcoming.

112 Gandin and Apple, op.cit., 2002.



associate with Gramsci and more recently, with respect to high status literary texts,<sup>113</sup> including ‘texts of empire’, intellectuals such as C.L.R. James and Edward Said. On the other hand, as O’Cadiz et al. <sup>114</sup> demonstrate forcefully, there is much in the reforms carried out in São Paulo that can be of value to a process of curriculum development that draws on Gramscian insights.<sup>115</sup> The organization of knowledge into generative themes gleaned from research by teachers and collaborators carried out in the school’s surrounding community can help “render popular culture an integral feature of the learning process where the focus does not lie solely on the written word, a limitation in Gramsci’s cultural (including popular culture) writings.”<sup>116</sup> All this would be in the interest of developing a radically democratic ‘popular public’ education with a national and international character.

### **Conclusion**

The last point might help to underscore the often complementary nature of the ideas expressed by Gramsci and Freire that are relevant to education; I had stressed the complementary nature of their works throughout my previous book length study <sup>117</sup> and related papers on the subject. In this paper, I have limited myself to a consideration of some important connections in the thinking of Gramsci and Freire. This is just a limited selection that incorporates only a few of the several points of similarity and contrast I outlined in the book. I would like to think, however, that my writing of this paper for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Paulo Freire International Research Conference Proceedings has allowed me to explore some fresh connections between the work of these two major social theorists. I consider the exploration of further connections between Gramsci and

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113 For insightful discussions on Gramsci and literature see Ch.4 on the use and misuse of Gramsci in certain sections of the US literature on literary theory and cultural studies and Ch. 7, ‘Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. Notes on Antonio Gramsci’s Theory of Literature and Culture,’ both in Gregory L. Lucente, *Crosspaths in Literary Theory and Criticism. Italy and the United States* (California, Stanford University Press, 1997).

114 O’Cadiz, Wong and Torres, 1998, op.cit.

115 Buttigieg, 2002b, op.cit, p. 130.

116 Borg and Mayo, 2002, op.cit., p. 103

117 Mayo, op.cit., 1999.

Freire to be useful given that their work continues to remain a source of inspiration to many, especially those seeking new directions for a transformative and socialist pedagogical politics.