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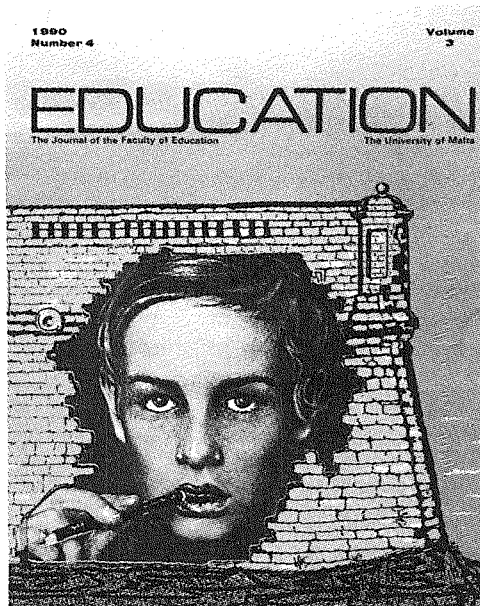
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CONTENTS

Editorial	1
The Challenge of Critical Education Ronald G. Sultana	2
The Hope of Radical Education A conversation with Henry Giroux	10
Why do the Maltes ask so few questions? Jeremy Boissevain Alfred Sant C.J. Farrugia Joe Friggieri Peter Serracino Inglott Jeremy Boissevain	16
Karl Mannheim's Contributions to the Development of the Sociology of Knowledge Peter Mayo	24
Critical Economics Godfrey Baldacchino	31
Notes on Contributors	36

Editorial

More than twenty years ago, the Dutch anthropologist Jeremy Boissevain, having "gone native to" carry out his fieldwork in Malta since 1956, queried "Why do the Maltese ask so few questions?" His article, which first appeared in *Ferment* in July 1968 - a landmark of a year for Europe's if not Malta's youth - is being reprinted to serve as an introduction to a major educational movement which has taken root in a large number of developed and developing countries. "Critical education" - which also appears under such diverse names as "radical education", "problem-posing education" and "dialogic education" - is specifically about the asking of questions, the rendering problematic of common-sense assumptions and practices, the challenging of beliefs, values, ways of seeing and acting which have fossilised over the years. This is no mere pedagogic exercise. The goal is to critically examine social structures which are inequitable and undemocratic in order to develop conceptual tools so that such an inquiry can in fact take place.

The papers by Dr Alfred Sant and Professors Charles Farrugia, Joseph Friggieri and Peter Serracino Inglott in response to Boissevain's article seem to suggest that the paradigm shift required by critical education has still to take place in Malta, and that an analysis written a few years after our political independence still applies. In other words, the authors agree that while there have been important changes in the local economic, cultural and ideological spheres, the general approach to knowledge and social practice is still framed by a traditional valuing of absolutes and certainties. Such an approach encourages an uncritical consumption of knowledge and information, where minds and bodies are schooled to be silent rather than educated to bring into question so that progress can come about.

Peter Mayo's paper traces the roots and development of a problem-posing education which encourages a critical social analysis of the production, circulation and consumption of educational knowledge. Mayo therefore gives an account of the work of Karl Mannheim and argues that knowledge can never be neutral or value-free, but always embodies the vested interests of those who produce and promote it. Knowledge can never be divorced from the social context of its emergence. Godfrey Baldacchino applies these insights to the practical context of the economics curricula taught in Maltese schools, arguing that the fact that it is taught as a science rather than a value-system has important political implications.

My paper and that of professor Henry Giroux trace the boundaries of the project here being referred to as "critical education and pedagogy", and place the three articles mentioned above in their relevant theoretical context. Professor Giroux's work has already been introduced in an earlier issue of this journal. Here we have an interview with him in the course of which he defines education in a way that is radically different from that which has been customary to do so locally. My hope is that all five papers will encourage readers to critically engage with the issues raised and to examine their practice as educators. It is only through such reflexive exercises that these important agendas can be brought to the centre of educational deliberation in Malta.

The Challenge of Critical Education

Ronald G. Sultana

Introduction

One of the major theoretical currents sweeping across the educational world today is "critical education". Paul Hirst, best known for an educational philosophy located in the analytic tradition, has recently suggested that in the consideration of formal schooling, "Perhaps the most promising discussions... are to be found quite outside the particular context of educational theory, in the contemporary study of critical theory" (1983, pg. 27). This is an important and significant shift on the part of a highly influential thinker whose original position differed so fundamentally from the method and epistemology of critical theory and education, and in itself signals future directions for educational theory and practice.

There have been various attempts to define this multi-faceted movement which I am here bundling under the term "critical education". It is important to first of all locate it within a particular philosophical tradition which gave rise to it and to which critical educators constantly turn for theoretical sustenance. I am referring here to the Frankfurt School of thought, represented by a group of social philosophers such as Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1982), Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Eric Fromm (1900-1980), Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), and more recently Jürgen Habermas (1929-). While there are important distinctions between these members and associates of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, and each one looked at different areas which included political economy, mass culture, music, literature, psychoanalysis, religion and sociology, these authors are all representative of the "Critical Theory" which became the hallmark of the School.

While holding that Marx was basically correct in his analysis of the roots of oppression and exploitation in capitalist societies, these thinkers drew on major philosophical traditions - Kantian, Hegelian, phenomenological, psychological, psychoanalytical - and generally argued that historical developments necessitated a revision of the orthodox Marxist programme away from its deterministic roots. Horkheimer thus outlined three agendas for "Critical Theory", and these were to include the economic analysis of contemporary developments in capitalism, the social psychological investigation of the societal integration of individuals, and the cultural-theoretical analysis of the mode of operation of mass culture (Honneth, 1987). Such agendas were to be pursued within a context which acknowledges that theories cannot be divorced from the social context in which they arose, and nor are they neutral with regards to

the practical context of their application. In other words, Critical Theory - in contrast to the positivism of "traditional theory" - set out to engage the "what is" of social life in order to promote the "what could" and "what should" be, an alternative social order which promoted dignity, freedom and self-argues, determination for one and all. This was the kind of reflexive thinking encouraged by Critical Theory, aimed at "improving the nature and conduct of social life", rather than "a 'value-free' science offering solutions to instrumental problems about how to achieve given practical ends" (Carr, 1987, p.290).

Critical education follows closely the agendas and concerns of its parent philosophy. The same key issues and concerns are there, including the strong belief that, as Roger Simon (1985) - a major exponent and exemplar of critical education - argues, knowledge is socially produced, distributed and legitimated within the school, and that it therefore is not value-free but represents specific interests and values. Because of this, critical educators purposefully work in schools for the realisation of "the essential, inevitable motion of all rational, self-conscious beings who are bound to strive (perhaps incoherently) for ever greater freedom, fulfilment, and self-critical awareness" (Inglis, 1985, p.16). Such an education necessarily involves the critical interrogation of what passes as everyday, common-sense activity in order that social forms and practices, including those that prevail in schools, become liberatory and empowering - and especially so for those who have traditionally been discriminated against, i.e. girls and students coming from working class and ethnic minorities.

This paper will tackle some of the issues and themes raised by critical education by exploring what such a perspective has to say about four specific aspects of schooling, namely its structures, its curricula, its cultural system and finally its pedagogic styles. The constraints and possibilities which currently prevail in the acceptance of critical education in Malta are considered in the concluding section of this article.

Critical Education and School Structures

Critical education first of all points out that schooling as an institution cannot be considered in a vacuum. The forms schooling takes, the structures, knowledge, ideologies, curricula, pedagogic relationships, assessment practices - one and all promote ways of thinking, feeling and valuing in

groups and individuals which either help these to fit into the wider social order (and hence reproduce it), or to critically engage with it in order to transform it into another version of life. In other words, schooling cannot be divorced from the wider social order, and schools and educators are not and cannot be "neutral" and "apolitical" channels for equally "neutral" and "apolitical" knowledge. Whatever we make happen in schools - constantly and inevitably - gives messages defining what it means to be "human", "good" and "normal" in particular social contexts.

Critical education is very much aware of the socio-historic context of the emergence of schooling as an institution. Williams (1961) has shown how in nineteenth century Britain, for instance, "industrial trainers" fought an ideological battle with "public educators" and "humanists" so that their interests prevailed in the formulation of the social sites to be known as schools. Bowles and Gintis (1976, p.190) point out that by 1916 in the U.S.A., though businessmen and professionals represented less than 11% of the non-agricultural labour force, they accounted for almost 80% of the school board members in a sample of 104 cities. Carnoy and Levin (1985, p.10) comment that under the guidance of this business and professional group, "the schools moved away from the concept of a uniform curriculum by initiating vocational curricula, particularly for children from working class and immigrant backgrounds".

We have our local version of ideological encroachment, where dominant classes, be they the colonial masters or members of the clerico-professional strata, struggled to promote versions of schooling (in many cases, hindered schooling from actually developing) which worked in their favour. Frendo (1979, p.32) reports a letter written by Lieutenant Governor Hely-Hutchinson in 1883, who advised his colonial service to ensure the propagation of English among the Maltese population as a counterfoil to Italian influences which might threaten the British hegemony. Schools were recognised as an important ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1971), and the Lt. Governor insisted "Look well after your primary schools, see that the boys and girls are taught Maltese and English. And in twenty years there won't be a chance for the propagation of Italianist ideas".

The local catholic church too was interested in the development of a particular version of schooling, one which strengthened its hold on the Maltese. It is highly significant that on taking the archbishopric of Malta in 1944, for instance, Michael Gonzi requested primary and secondary school teachers to meet him at St John's co-cathedral, and there he said: "The teaching of religion for half an hour a day is not sufficient to ensure the necessary Catholic atmosphere. Everything in the school must have a Catholic bearing - the whole system, the programme, the books and the teachers, without any exception. Moreover, the benign supervision of the Church is

as important in the school" (*The Teacher*, 1944, p.17).¹

The ultimate result of such ideological battles between interest groups are what we know today to be schools, and despite substantive differences between educational systems in a variety of countries, critical educators note a formal resemblance in their structures, be these schools in North America, Britain, Australia, or Malta for that matter. While schooling is generally thought to be a good thing, it is striking to read so much educational research which argues that in many ways these institutions fall far short from the way education should be in a good society. Bowles and Gintis (1988, pp235-236) clearly express three objectives for such an education. They argue that:

1. Education should foster the personal development of each member of society. This is not limited to the acquisition of knowledge and cognitive skills, but also those affective and interpersonal skills which allow individuals to control their lives, and foster the self-esteem and sense of personal dignity which lead them to demand the resources to exercise such control.
2. Education should act as an equalizing force, removing obstacles to substantive social equality and tempering the tendency for social privilege, and more importantly, social deprivation to be transmitted from generation to generation.
3. Education should be a stabilizing force in the good society, fostering what John Dewey called the social "continuity of life" by training youth to accept and affirm dominant culture and its institutional expression.

Bowles and Gintis however argue that such goals are only realisable in a democratic society, because it is only in such a context that "the personal development of individuals at the same time promotes social equality and affirms dominant social institutions and their cultural forms" (*ibid.*, p. 236). They recall the insights generated by their classic work on the American educational system (1976) and which have stood the test of time to be re-appropriated by critical educators, namely that schools are selecting and sorting mechanisms which treat students from different classes differentially, directing dominant class students to dominant jobs, and working class students to working class jobs. Moreover schools, like workplaces, tend to be motivated by the imperatives of profit and domination rather than by the consideration of human needs. In other words, there is a correspondence between schools and work, so that when young people live the social relationships developed at school, they are socialised into accepting - or recognising as legitimate and "natural" - similar relationships in industry.

One of the obvious similarities between schools and industry is that both organise relationships in an hierarchical fashion, with "vertical authority lines from administrators to teachers and students". Schools also generally tend to promote alienated

labour, where "student's lack of control over his or her education, the alienation of the student from the curriculum content, and the motivation of school work through a system of grades and other external rewards rather than the student's integration with either the process (learning) or the outcome (knowledge) of their educational 'production process'" (Bowles and Gintis 1976, p. 10). Finally, schools, like industry, encourage fragmentation "reflected in the institutionalized and often destructive competition among students through continual and ostensibly meritocratic ranking and evaluation" (*ibid.*, p. 10).²

The problem with such a correspondence is of course the fact that the economic systems in many countries are far from the democratic and humanising social constructions which persons yearn for. Schools should surely have better models to emulate and mirror! It is for this reason that John Dewey resisted attempts by Sneddon to make schools correspond closely to industrial workplaces, arguing that "the kind of... education in which I am interested is not one which will 'adapt' workers to the existing industrial regime: I am not sufficiently in love with the regime for that" (Dewey, 1915). His desire was that schooling would be organised in such a way as to produce "a projection in type of the society we would like to realize, and by forming minds in accord with it gradually modify the larger and more recalcitrant features of the adult society" (Dewey, 1966, p. 317). Schools were therefore to approximate as much as possible to participative democracies so that students, learning democracy by living in a democracy (Wain, 1987) would challenge the undemocratic structures they encountered at work and in other social sites.³

Dewey would therefore have affirmed Bowles and Gintis' preoccupation with the way school structures social relations in the same way that the economic system does. As the authors note, central problems for political democracy are inverted and reversed by the central concerns of the economic system, as follows:

Democratic Government sets out to:	The economic system sets out to:
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- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * ensure the maximal participation of the majority in decision-making; * protect minorities against prejudices of the majority; * protect the majority from any undue influence on the part of an unrepresentative minority. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * ensure the minimal participation in decision-making by the majority, i.e. the workers; * protect a single minority (capitalists/managers) against the will of the majority; * subject the majority to the maximal influence of this single unrepresentative minority. |
|--|---|

Critical educators are fully aware of the socio-political context of schooling, and would have schools differ from and transform the economic system

rather than emulate it and feed young people into it. Critical educators consider the criteria required by a political democracy, and reflect on the way schools promote or thwart full personal development, attenuate or legitimate social inequality. It is areas such as these that need to be researched and given priority in our deliberations on the Maltese educational system, rather than the increasingly sole human-capital approach that characterises present official educational discourse.⁴

Critical Education and Curricula

Education in Malta is often understood to be a transmission of information and skills. The curricula constitute an "inert" kind of knowledge (Whitehead, 1962) which neither educator nor student are involved in producing, but which must be transmitted and learned in order to be reproduced in examinations. Such an alienating process - an excellent example of what Freire (1972) calls "banking education" where bits of information are deposited in what are presumed to be empty receptacles - is rewarded by certificates. Roger Simon (1987) however argues that critical educators consider curricula not as a body of received and legitimate knowledge but rather "as a process of production and regulation of our social and physical world". Simon (1987) and Inglis (1985) for instance, consider curricula as a form of story-telling: teachers are involved in telling stories about how the world is and should be, and how we as human beings act or should act in that world. Simon thus proposes that "Every time we help organise narratives in our classroom we are implicated in the organisation of particular ways of understanding the world and the concomitant vision of one's place in that world and in the future" (Simon, 1987, p.377). As such, school subjects are "not objective bodies of knowledge but rather selective practices from particular ways of seeing, showing and saying" (Inglis, 1985, p.27).

This is a major point which critical educators owe to the development of the "new" sociology of education in the early 1970's - itself founded on a sociology of knowledge which was developed first by Karl Marx and Karl Mannheim (cf Peter Mayo's paper in this issue), and then by phenomenologists such as Schutz, and Berger and Luckmann. Such insights into the political roots of knowledge have still to reach our local educational shores. The "new" sociology switched from a technical focus on the extent of absorption of a specific curriculum by students to asking an even more fundamental question, i.e. why do we give legitimacy to this particular knowledge and not to other knowledge? What the "new" sociology argued and what critical education has taken up as well is that any selection of knowledge betrays specific interests and favours particular agendas. It is interesting, for instance, that in my Trade School Research Project I discovered that close to 80% of over 600 fifteen year-old Maltese respondents could not give a definition of

"trade unions" - such knowledge is not allocated a legitimate space in the curriculum, and such "selective traditions" (Williams, 1978) are vital in our understanding of the kinds of narratives we make available to our young. Another case in point is Baldacchino's account in this issue of the stories we tell student about economics - and the political implications of such narratives.

What we teach, and what we choose not to teach, is a political issue inasmuch as knowledge or ignorance forms our capacity to understand and act on structures which we find in the real world we inhabit. Critical education therefore asks some very cutting questions regarding the ensemble of knowledge we pass on to our students. Such questions as the following need to be addressed locally:

What counts as knowledge? How is such knowledge produced? Do different groups in the community value different forms of knowledge? If so, are these fairly represented in the school curriculum? How is knowledge transmitted in the classroom? What kinds of organisations and relationships are developed in the classroom? Are these designed to reproduce the values and norms embodied in the "accepted" social relationships of the work force? Who has access to knowledge, and who controls this access? Whose interests does this knowledge serve? How do prevailing methods of evaluation (tests, exams etc.) serve to legitimise existing forms of knowledge? What ideological appeals justify the system? (Adapted from Ramsey, 1984, pp. 9-10)

In the light of such questions, curricula in our Maltese schools can be subjected to a number of criticisms. These bodies of knowledge are often dictated by examination boards in foreign countries,⁵ and hence our students are twice alienated from themselves, from their communities and needs. They are twice removed from the real not only because they have little or no say in the production of knowledge, but because this production of knowledge is set in far-away England, another of the umbilical ties still to be cut from our past colonial masters. This double alienation means that students are twice as likely to fail to become empowered to understand and act on their immediate world.

Critical education therefore encourages a move from a "technocratic rationality" which is concerned with "what works" (i.e. the ways and means to get to curriculum), to an "emancipatory rationality". The latter involves a critical examination of those very same ends and goals, a practice which we are so unaccustomed to that Simon calls this - in a forthcoming book of his - "Teaching against the Grain". Such an education is concerned with the development of critical social intelligence, founded on a practice of reflective self-knowledge which will enable persons to improve the rationality of their own practical judgments and actions. Wilfred Carr locates such an approach within themes developed by that contemporary giant of social philosophy,

Jürgen Habermas. In the latter's view, knowledge and right action cannot and should not be divorced:

"Habermas has returned to the classical notion of 'practical philosophy' and, in particular, to the aristotelian notion of praxis. For Aristotle, ethics, politics and education were not theoretical sciences producing rigorous 'objective' knowledge. They were 'practical sciences' whose theory comprised the reflectively held ideas and beliefs which informed practice and were constantly being revised in the light of their practical consequences. 'Theory' and 'practice' were indivisible elements of the single process of praxis - a process whereby practitioners simultaneously reflected on their 'practice' and the 'theory' that informed it." (Carr, 1987, p.291).

This move from reproduction of accepted knowledge to creative production of knowledge that leads to praxis is in itself emancipatory because it invites individuals "to treat the subjective assumptions and common sense beliefs shaping their social reality as objects for rational re-appraisal, offers them the opportunity to re-construct their social reality for themselves" (Carr, 1987, p.293).⁶ It is a move from ignorance and habit to knowledge and reflection, from mere knowledge consumption and acquisition to the creating of meaning and culture. The set curriculum gives way to a dialogue in a community of learners, producing knowledge which challenges common-sense assumptions and leads directly to the "good life". Rob Young (1988), drawing on Habermas (1984) and Kleinig (1982), distinguishes between an education that teaches through coercion and one that teaches through reason. According to his criteria, our strict adherence to curricula in academic-oriented schools comes closer to indoctrination than education, for it involves students coming to hold a view in such a way that it is not open to rational assessment.

Such coercive processes can be observed in a recent educational initiative in Malta, the introduction in 1989 of the National Minimum Curriculum, legally binding for state and private schools alike. While there are a number of positive elements in this initiative, both process and form do not live up to the democratic ideals of critical theory. Not only was the "National" minimum curriculum not open to public fora for debate, but there is a clear implication of that familiar straightjacketing rather than the expansion "of the range of possible social identities people may become" (Corrigan, 1987). Thus, the primary school curriculum rejects the notion of forum and dialogue in favour of the inculcation of "a good behaviour and character formation in the moral and religious field, in order that children may learn to act according to what is right, to love their fellow man and to revere God" (Council of Europe, 1989, pp. 26-29). Simon (1987) points out that what is often meant by "character formation" is "a particular narrowing of human capacities to fit particular forms" (p.374), and then draws on Roland Barthes (1982) to argue that we often set out to

teach through ways that silence, which do not allow "multiple voices" to emerge in a dialogic encounter. Simon concludes: "An education that creates silence is not an education" (ibid., p.375).

Critical Education and Culture

This brings us nicely to the point that critical education questions not only the kind of knowledge that is given legitimacy in schools, but also the cultural systems that are allowed to develop in those sites. I am defining culture here in the manner that Jerome Bruner, in the tradition of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, does. Culture is therefore "a forum for negotiating and re-negotiating meaning and for explicating action" (Bruner, 1986 p. 65). It is an "ensemble of tools of discourse that a group employs towards exchanging information, expressing states of consciousness, forming bonds of solidarity, and forging common strategies of action" (Bowles and Gintis, 1988, p.22).

It is this idea of forum and dialogue which is once again missing in schools, and the overriding emphasis in local educational discourse is the idea of culture as a "set of rules and specifications for action" (Bruner, 1986, p.65). Pierre Bourdieu - a French sociologist whose research has had a tremendous impact on the way we think about education - argues that in the communicative site that is the school, information and knowledge are exchanged through the use of only one set of tools of discourse. It is the children of the dominant classes who have the "cultural capital" to converse with these tools (master-patterns, linguistic codes, relations to language and culture, familiarity with symbolic and iconic representation) - other groups, specifically those coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds, have their own discursive tools, but these are neither recognised nor given legitimacy. For some, schools represent a familiar continuation of the home culture, for others it is a sharp break creating dissonance. In assuming that this "cultural arbitrary" is universal, some groups are recognised as being "intelligent" and others less so. This leads to processes of "learned ignorance" and a "symbolic violence" whereby style matters more than content, and where, in Gramsci's words, the children of the working class have to pay with tears and blood to achieve that which comes "naturally" to the children of the privileged.

It is in recognition of such cultural violence that Simon (1984, p.382) proposes that "instead of talking about 'the culture', we must always consider the cultures that are produced in the crucible of dominant and subordinate lived relations. Furthermore, culture as a political phenomenon includes the power of a specific class or group to articulate, distribute, and legitimate specific meanings, message systems, and social practices in order to lay the ideational and material foundations for a specific way of life".

Locally it seems that there is an implicit recognition of such cultural factors at work in the link between schooling, justice, and educational achievement. This is evident in the current education Minister's decision to have kindergartens available free of charge for children from the age of three onwards. Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds would thus theoretically have the same opportunity as their more well-off counterparts to get used to some aspects of school culture, such as learning in groups (cf. Ministry of Education, 1989, p.1) It is also true, however, that the same Ministry tends to show a predilection for "elite culture" (so called because of its association with an elite class) and very little appreciation of the legitimacy of popular culture. This silencing of the popular voice is also evident in other areas of contemporary Maltese cultural legitimating industries and celebrations. In this regard, it is highly significant that in a series of fourteen papers delivered at a national conference purporting to represent "Malta's Cultural Identity" (1989) only one - that of Dr Paul Sant Cassia - recognises the educational and political value of popular culture in any intelligent and non-condescending manner.

Critical Education and Pedagogy

What has preceded this section has already given a fair indication of what critical educators consider "good" pedagogy. The emphasis on dialogue, democratic participation, the notion of forum, a focus on process rather than pre-selected goals and ends, the awareness of "the complicity involved in teaching isolated skills and the cultural and socio-political formations it legitimates" (McLaren, 1988, p.3), one and all contribute guidelines towards the formulation of what has come to be termed "critical pedagogy".

It is clear that there is a choice in favour of that kind of pedagogy which Freire (1972) terms "problem-posing education" where in a dialogic relationship between teacher-student and student-teacher, persons are involved in a co-operative search for knowledge and the good life. The quest is for school and classroom practices which are "organized around forms of learning which serve to prepare students for responsible roles as transformative intellectuals, as community members, and as critically active citizens outside schools" (Giroux and McLaren, 1986, p. 237). Such a pedagogy encourages the asking of questions, the engagement with students' experiences which, although as Bates and Rowland (1988) have argued, is not in itself sufficient for the development of learning, yet is an essential component of critical education both on epistemological and pedagogical grounds. Young (1988) makes this point, showing that often teachers direct students' learning in such a way that teaching approximates more to indoctrination than to education because goals (which

in themselves might be unobjectionable regarding validity claims) are pursued "in a manner which tends to result in students' accepting these claims on grounds other than reasons which seem valid to them in their own frameworks of relevance" (p.57). Moreover, such a process is not only indoctrinating but also "results in a shallow kind of knowledge, unconnected with students' deepest beliefs, which is soon forgotten after leaving school" (*ibid.*, p.57).

Critical pedagogy looks for ways to enhance reflexive learning, where students are actively encouraged to examine taken-for-granted knowledge claims and to accept or reject these after due discursive consideration is given. There is therefore a healthy scepticism of schooling systems like ours where the emphasis is on exams and pedagogies which insist on young minds to name the world in terms of other people's perceptions, not their own. Bruner (1986, p.123) considers this a pedagogy that "derives from another time, another interpretation of culture [i.e. other than a forum and negotiation and creation of meaning], another conception of authority - one that looked at the process of education as a transmission of knowledge and values by those who know more to those who know less and know it less expertly". The implications of such a pedagogy - and in this regard as in so many other regards, time seems to have come to a standstill in Malta - are that "there should be something rooted out, replaced or compensated. The pedagogy that resulted was some view of teaching as surgery, suppression, replacement, deficit filling, or some mix of them all" (*ibid.*, p.124).

A new and critical pedagogy, according to Schneidewind (1987), involves a fivefold process goals approach, i.e. (a) the development of an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust and community in the classroom; (b) shared leadership; (c) cooperative structures; (d) integration of cognitive and affective learning; (e) action. These are not, of course, new themes. Maxine Greene for instance notes Dewey's contribution to the theory and practice of critical education and promotes his attempts to re-create classrooms where "there would be continuing and open communication, the kind of learning that would feed into practice, and inquiries arising out of questioning in the midst of life. Critical thinking modelled on the scientific method, active and probing intelligence: these, for Dewey, were the stuff of a pedagogy that would equip the young to resist fixities and stock responses, repressive and deceiving authorities" (Greene, 1986, p.434).

Thus, critical pedagogy is about empowering young people to "recognise and name injustice...to act against their own and others' oppressions" (Ellsworth, 1989, p.300). While recognising the structural boundaries of these endeavours, aware that "people make history, but in circumstances not of their own making", it nevertheless believes that individuals are not structural dopes: people involved in education, including students, can react against structures which they find oppressive, undemocratic,

stifling, and such resistance can lead to the formulation of alternative structures and practices. Indeed, critical education is situated right in the nexus of the classic dialectic between agency and structure, freedom and determinism, insisting that "the more individuals understand about the social determinants of their actions, the more likely they are to escape from the constraints to which they were previously subject" (Carr, 1987, p.291). The political goals are clear: the critical appraisal of these conditions so that people are empowered to develop social structures which are more humanising in sites which include - but are not restricted to - the school. As Ellsworth (1989, p.300), reviewing over thirty major studies on the subject, puts it: "The goal of critical pedagogy [is] a critical democracy, individual freedom, social justice and social change - a revitalised public sphere characterised by citizens capable of confronting public issues critically through ongoing forms of public debate and social action. Students would be empowered by social identities that affirmed their race, class and gender positions, and provided the basics for moral deliberation and social action".

Conclusion: Towards A New Beginning?

The thrill of ending a study on critical education is that it often ushers in - or in any case, should usher in - a new beginning. This is no circular journey. Rather, we are here directly involved in the dangerous realm of dreaming for education that future it deserves, an idealism not unaware of the very real constraints in which that dream is being articulated.⁷ The Maltese educational system, like our local political system and general public sphere, desperately needs a sense of true dialogue, the working towards what Habermas calls an "ideal speech situation". With regards to the educational system, this requires the development of fora at policy-making as well as school and classroom levels. Imagine the contribution critical education and pedagogy can make to the dream of a democracy if students are constantly involved in the practice of a rational consensus reached purely by the force of the better argument, where, by means of systematic self-reflection, there is a diminishing of the existing obstructions to the realisation of genuine social relations, where action is taken after all pertinent evidence is brought into play and nothing apart from logical, reasoned argument is involved in an ensuing consensus!

True dialogue at the site of the school and in other social sites cannot, however, take place - in Malta as elsewhere - because, according to Habermas, the necessary *a priori* presuppositions of discourse - i.e. the procedural principles of truthfulness, meaningfulness, justifiability and sincerity - are missing. Habermas makes the point that we speak in ideologised speech, a speech deformed and laden with vested interests and hidden

world views related to domination and power. To "dialogue" on these terms is impossible because of the dishonesty of the context, and the only possibility of genuine language rests in a critique of ideology implicit in the context. Ellsworth (1989) in fact suggest that for dialogue to occur, there must exist:

- (a) a harmony of interests in the community;
- (b) a will by dominant people to work for equality;
- (c) a feeling of safeness for all members of the community to speak in the space provided (or, as Habermas puts it, a situation which permits the unimpeded flow of argument and equal opportunities for all participants to engage in dialogue and debate free from external pressure and controls).

Ellsworth (1989, p. 316) however rightly argues and concludes that "dialogue in its conventional sense is impossible in the culture at large because at this historical moment, power relations between raced, classed, and gendered subjects and teachers are unjust...Conventional notions of dialogue and democracy assume rationalized, individualized subjects capable of agreeing on universalizable 'fundamental moral principles' and 'quality of human life' that become self-evident when subjects cease to be self-interested and particularistic about group rights. Yet social agents are not capable of being fully rational and disinterested, and they are subjects split between the conscious and unconscious and among multiple social positionings".

It is these "horizons of prejudices", the overwhelming emphasis on competitive rather than co-operative social relations, the reproduction and re-inforcement of privilege based on social class and gender membership, the selective and streaming procedures which damage children's present and future - it is these educational practices which a home-grown critical education and pedagogy should address. Such an agenda for progressive action needs to become part of the process of dialogue within a context which approximates as far as possible to an "ideal speech situation". It is only then that our future can be emancipated from a colonial heritage where others think on our behalf, from an over-concern with politics tied to purely personal interest, and from a political illiteracy which leaves individuals and groups incapable of transcending the cognitive frameworks and normative world of their immediate milieu.

Notes

1. This information was kindly provided by my colleague, Mr Joseph Fenech.
2. There are, of course, many other similarities. Dreeben (1968) for instance notes a number of parallel structures and functions between modern industry and schools, many of which have now assumed a taken-for-granted quality about them. Such similarities include the separation from the household, the distinction between the worker as person and the position s/he occupies; activity in large-scale organisations with both bureaucratic and professional forms of authority; individual accountability for the performance of tasks judged according

to standards of competence.

3. While authors from the critical education perspective hold Dewey in high esteem, and as Morrison (1989) has argued, the two approaches are ultimately complementary, it is nevertheless important to point out that Dewey made a much less trenchant analysis of the way political powers outside of the school influence what actually takes place within educational systems. This point is well made by Spring (1985) in his review of one of Dewey's more well known contemporary followers, Arthur Wirth (1983).
4. Vella's analysis (1989) seems to suggest that attempts to link educational goals narrowly and exclusively to the needs and requirements of industry are largely unavoidable given Malta's economic dependence upon - and peripherality within - the international capitalist economic system.
5. Even when there are local innovations, such as the much discussed "systems of knowledge", the apparently progressive intentions of the course of studies are subverted by the students' - and teachers' - approach to studying and teaching in other areas of the curriculum, i.e. uncritical absorption and cramming on the one hand, and top-down "banking education" on the other. It is ironic - and extremely relevant in the construction of local curriculum histories - that "soft" subjects like religion and social studies which are even more apparently suited than say Mathematics or Physics for a dialogic, problem-posing pedagogy, attempt to emulate the higher status subjects by taking on some of the latter's characteristics. These include such uneducational features as fixed syllabi and assessment by means of formal and national exams.
6. One way of doing this is through a critical examination of the subjectivities produced by the very language we use. McLaren (1988), drawing on the work of Michel Foucault for instance, likens language to a semiotic text which introduces us to ways of socially constructing our knowledge of the real. Locally, Frendo (1989) makes a point which Gramsci had made earlier in a more explicitly political context, namely that the common-sense knowledge hidden in popular sayings and proverbs often produces frames of mind which are functional to dominant classes and groups in a particular society. Our past colonisers, as well as the present dominant classes in Malta would surely applaud proverbs such as the following: "Kull deni hudu b'gid" (i.e. Every cloud has its silver lining); "Jinghalaq bieħ, jinfetħa iħor" (i.e. when one door is closed, another is opened); "Mill-mitluf tieħu li tista" (i.e. Make the best of a bad deal); and "ħobb l-id li tixtieq maqtuħa" (i.e. Love the hand you would see cut off). Zammit (1984) makes similar points in relation to that contemporary form of servilism, the transmutation of colonialism to clientalism.
7. Any theory of action needs to be aware of such limitations. In Malta I would consider these to be the excessive intolerance (religious, cultural, political); the relative success of industry in defining educational agendas within human-capital terms; the divide between educational system administrators (i.e. the Department of Education) and those who work on research and theorising (Faculty of Education); the proliferation of private schooling which is now catering for 30% of Maltese students; the violence on children caused by inter- and intra-school selection and streaming systems.

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The Hope of Radical Education

A Conversation with Henry Giroux*

**This interview is reprinted from the 'Civic Arts Review' (Vol.1 No. 1, 1988) with the kind permission of Henry Giroux and Bernard Murchland.*

CAR - What is radical education?

Giroux - Radical education doesn't refer to a discipline or a body of knowledge. It suggests a particular kind of practice and a particular posture of questioning received institutions and received assumptions. I would say in a general way that the basic premises of radical education grew out of the crisis in social theory. More specifically, we can distinguish three traits: radical education is interdisciplinary in nature, it questions the fundamental categories of all disciplines and it has a public mission of making society more democratic. This last point is perhaps the principal reason why radical education as a field is so exciting. We can take ideas and apply them.

CAR - Almost like having your own laboratory?

Giroux - Something like that. I prefer to think of it as a public sphere. Most disciplines don't have that. As a result their attempts to construct a public discourse become terribly academized and limited. That is why I find radical education so exciting both theoretically and politically.

CAR - How close is the tie between the two?

Giroux - Very close. We can add that as another distinguishing trait. Radical education joins theory and praxis.

CAR - Is radical synonymous with critical?

Giroux - Yes, I think they have to be. I can't conceive of a radical position that is not at the same time, and even in the first instance, critical both in historical terms about the ways schools have evolved in this country and ideologically in terms of the particular kinds of values that operate in our schools and in our practices of education. Critical education operates on two basic assumptions. One, there is a need for a language of critique, a questioning of presuppositions. Radical educators, for example, criticize and indeed reject the notion that the primary purpose of public education is economic efficiency. Schools are more than company stores. They have the much more radical purpose of educating citizens. Which is why the second basic assumption of radical education is a language of possibility. It goes beyond critique to elaborate a positive language of human empowerment.

CAR - We hear a lot about empowerment these days. How do you understand that term?

Giroux - It is the ability to think and act critically. This notion has a double reference: to the individual and to society. The freedom and human capacities

of the individuals must be developed to their maximum but individual powers must be linked to democracy in the sense that social betterment must be the necessary consequence of individual flourishing. Radical educators look upon schools as social forms. Those forms should educate the capacities people have to think, to act, to be subjects and to be able to understand the limits of their ideological commitments. That's a radical paradigm. Radical educators believe that the relationship between social forms and social capacities is such that human capacities get educated to the point of calling into question the forms themselves. What the dominant educational philosophies want is to educate people to adapt to those social forms rather than critically interrogate them. Democracy is a celebration of difference, the politics of difference, I call it, and the dominant philosophies fear this.

CAR - Is your position that our assumptions were at one time sound and became outmoded or were they faulty to begin with?

Giroux - If we are talking about traditional perspectives, I think the traditionalists have always been wrong about the nature of education.

CAR - How can you say such a thing?

Giroux - Let me put it differently and say that within the field of education the languages that have dominated have generally been languages that have highly instrumentalized the purpose of schooling by either privileging certain groups of elites who become the managers of society or narrowing the scope of education so severely that schools become mere factories to train the work force. The traditionalists lack a language of possibility about how schools can play a major role in shaping public life.

CAR - But surely the liberal arts tradition has not been instrumentalist in that way?

Giroux - I say that liberal education in any ideal sense of that term has always occupied a subordinate position vis-à-vis the dominant languages. And that is unquestionably true in this country since the 1950s. If we are talking about the public schools then the instrumentalist argument is very, very powerful. And this has been true from the beginning. If we are talking about higher education then it depends on what kind of schools we have in mind. We all know our educational system is tiered. Some institutions are vocational. Others are places of real learning, although primarily for the elite. Harvard will never define itself as an institution whose primary mission is the promotion of industrial growth! It appeals to the life of the mind, the good life, and so

forth. The higher rhetoric! We can distinguish different missions. But if we look at higher education in general I argue that the instrumentalist ideology prevails.

CAR - Hasn't the wave of reforms we have had lessened the dominance of that ideology?

Giroux - I don't think so. Most of them have to my way of thinking been misguided. What has been the thrust of these reforms? Back to basics, merit pay, a standardized curriculum, raising test scores, evaluation criteria, and the like. This is just another version of the technological fix that ignores the philosophical questions. It is quantifying the educational process in a belief that the outcome will be some kind of excellence or economic competence. All of this suggests to me that those who are pushing these reforms have no educational philosophy at all. We have to ask what the purposes of education are, what kind of citizens we hope to produce. To say that test scores are the answer is to beg the question of 'What do test scores measure anyway?' Here is a story that perfectly illustrates the point. Joe Clark, a school principal in Newark, has been touted by many reformers as the paragon of what an inner school educator should be. How does Clark operate? He marches through the halls of his school with a bullhorn and a baseball bat, publicly berating anybody who flouts his authority. When students misbehave they must learn the school anthem and sing it over the P.A. system. Clark is given credit for restoring authority to the school and for raising the test scores of his students. What that report omits is that some nine hundred students, most of them minorities, have been expelled to roam the streets with bleak prospects. One has ask: What educational philosophy motivates this kind of action? What sense of learning do students get? How do teachers teach in such a context?

"Radical educators look upon schools as social forms which educate the capacities people have to think, act and be subjects."

CAR - Has there ever been a time when schools met your criteria?

Giroux - No, although there is a discernible tradition of dissent and vision that argues for a connection and the imperatives of a critical democracy. It is an important and powerful tradition, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s in this country. But we are not talking about much history here. Prior to the 20th century there wasn't much education of the sort we think appropriate for a democracy for the simple reason there wasn't much democracy.

CAR - Does democracy have to be critical democracy to be genuine?

Giroux - That's what I mean. Dewey talked about

democracy as a way of life that has to be made and remade by each generation.

CAR - The existentialists use the word appropriation to cover all questions of making our ideals meaningful in a lived context.

Giroux - I like that word. It brings to the fore for me the crucial role of pedagogy and the question of how we learn to become subjects who engage not only our own self-formation but the possibilities for society at any given time. How does one come to self-understanding? How does one situate oneself in history? How do we relate questions of knowledge to power? How do we understand the limitation of our institutions, or even of our age? Those are pedagogical questions. Radical educators understand them to be political questions as well. But let's face it, this is a lost discourse. None of the many recent reports about educational reform even scratches the surface of this problem.

CAR - What problem is that again?

Giroux - The relationship between pedagogy and power.

CAR - How do you assess Bennett's tenure as Secretary of Education?

Giroux - I give Bennett credit for putting education front and center on the national agenda. Education has become one of our most exciting debates. Bennett has both politicized and polarized that debate. It should have been politicized but not polarized. Still, many as a result have had to come to critical grips with their common sense assumptions about what schooling is. For that I applaud Bennett. He has initiated a terrific dialogue. But having said that, I want to make it clear that I have no respect for his opinions.

CAR - None of them?

Giroux - None at all. There is nothing that he has said that suggests he has anything positive to offer for a theory of education. He follows a policy that resembles our immigration policies in the 1920s and 1930s, a policy that doesn't rest upon a serious theory of public life and denies the politics of difference. The values Bennett espouses are authority, elitism and cultural uniformity.

CAR - But Bennett has fought hard against anti-intellectualism.

Giroux - It is a fact that anti-intellectualism in American education is rampant, influencing even those whose intentions are actually opposed to the closing of the doors to genuine learning. We know that the environment in most universities is inimical to broadly based, philosophically informed scholarship and dialogue concerning burning questions of politics and culture. In a few places, liberal and radical intellectuals are building micro-institutions (centers, institutes, programs) within the universities as outposts that attempt to resist the large trends toward instrumentalized curriculums. These programs wisely accept that they are engaged

in an intellectual as well as political project but, for the most part, their influence is confined to the already initiated. I don't think Bennett has the cure for anti-intellectualism.

CAR - Are radical educators a heard voice in the land?

Giroux - They are an argument on the block, especially since 1976 when Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis published their path-breaking *Schooling in Capitalist America*. I would argue that that book, along with some seminal works in the sociology of education, provided the foundation for a new language that went beyond the earlier critical tradition of Dewey and his colleagues. In the last ten years this influence has become quite evident in what is published, what is taught and what is talked about at professional meetings.

CAR - Does radical education draw its inspiration primarily from Marxism?

Giroux - It did. Bowles and Gintis did. But as I look at the work of radical educators today I would find it difficult to say that Marxism is the primary influence on it. And where the Marxist influence exists it is pretty crude stuff.

CAR - You mean not good Marxism?

Giroux - It is more a question of how good Marxism is to begin with. We can appropriate a number of good things from Marxism but do we want to appropriate the paradigm itself?

CAR - It seems the radical educator has to do just that in some sense because Marxism has supplied the principal language of critique in the 20th century. Where else would you look?

Giroux - I would say that to be a radical educator today you have to engage the Marxist tradition. And there is no question that Marxist discourse dominated in the beginning because in the beginning most work in radical education was about reproduction theory.

CAR - What is that?

Giroux - It is a Marxist category which says that the basic functions of the schools is to reproduce the dictates of the state in the economic order. It was a rather simple and mechanistic view but not entirely false and it had important consequences for politicizing the debate about the purpose of schools, which is something that the paradigm itself completely ignored.

CAR - But are there other traditions?

Giroux - I myself draw from a number of positions. There are critical traditions in feminist literature, in literary theory and in liberation theology that I find useful. But it is hard to put a label on all of this. I would like to call myself a good working-class, radical American.

CAR - As in populist?

Giroux - Sure. A critical populist who includes

some elements of the IWW, Bill Haywood, C. Wright Mills, Martin Luther King and Michael Harrington. In other words, people who speak to people in language that dignifies their history and their experience. I don't understand how you can speak to people if you don't celebrate their voices.

CAR - How did you become interested in this field?

Giroux - I went to college on a basketball scholarship. I started off in the sciences but then the Vietnam War came along and all of a sudden social theory became very important. The more I read the more I became interested in teaching. Not only did I see that as a way to make an impact but I saw teaching as a wonderfully noble profession. And I still feel that way. One of the things I try to impress upon my students is how important this field is.

CAR - What did you do your Ph. D. dissertation on?

Giroux - It was a study of curriculums. I was interested in the different ways in which subject matters get selected for the curriculum. Where I grew up learning was a collective activity. But when I got to school and tried to share learning with other students that was called cheating. The curriculum sent the clear message to me that learning was a highly individualistic, almost secretive, endeavor. My working class experience didn't count. Not only did it not count, it was disparaged. I was being reproduced according to a different logic. I think schools should be about ways of life. They are not simply instruction sites. They are cultures which legitimize certain forms of knowledge and disclaim others. The language for understanding this phenomenon in some pretty sophisticated ways is now starting to emerge.

CAR - For example?

Giroux - Take the work being done on ideology and language in schools. It's rich. If you believe that language actively constructs as well as reflects social reality, the language always develops out of a sense of difference - if something is this it is not that - and that language always embodies particular kinds of values then you can raise questions. You can ask: What is the relationship between what is learned and the pedagogies in place? Where does the language they use come from? Whose interests does it promote? What are its value assumptions? And the like.

CAR - One thinks of inner city schools. It seems to be the case there that the kind of education offered mismatches the experience of those to whom it is offered.

Giroux - In my mind we have instrumentalized the process of education so much that we have forgotten that the referent out of which we operate is a white, upper middle-class logic that not only modularizes but actually silences subordinate voices. If you believe that schooling is about somebody's story, somebody's history, somebody's set of

memories, a particular set of experiences, then it is clear that just one logic will not suffice.

CAR - Not many people believe that.

Giroux - Well, I'm surprised how many do. Even people of a very conservative cast are much more open to the kind of argument I am making. They, too, see schools as cultural institutions, as cultural frontiers if you will, and not merely boot camps for the economy. They see the value dimension. Unfortunately, their understanding is not very democratic. I used Bennett as an example a moment ago. My point is that learning has to be meaningful to students before it can become critical. Our problem is that we have a theory of knowledge but no theory of pedagogy.

CAR - Isn't this all pretty abstract? After all, schools are run bureaucratically on the principles of delegated responsibility and dictated policies. And that seems clearly what the majority of Americans want.

Giroux - But that's another question altogether, although related to the first question. The first question is: Can learning take place if in fact it silences the voices of the people it is supposed to teach? And the answer is: Yes. People learn that they don't count. The second question is: What are the necessary conditions to educate teachers to be intellectuals so they can engage critically the relationship between culture and learning and change the conditions under which they work? As I put it in some of my writings, we need to redefine the role of teachers as transformative intellectuals.

"The environment in most universities is inimical to broadly based philosophically informed scholarship and dialogue concerning burning questions of politics and culture."

CAR - Would you elaborate on that intriguing idea?

Giroux - Michael Waltzer speaks of intellectuals as engaged critics. They do not operate from an aloof perspective that legitimizes the separation of facts from values. They understand the nature of their own self-formation, have some vision of the future, see the importance of education as a public discourse and have a sense of mission in providing students what they need to become critical citizens. So to give you a somewhat schematic sense of what I mean by teachers as transformative intellectuals, I would say, first, that teachers are engaged. They are partisans, not doctrinaire. They believe something, say what they believe, and offer their belief to others in a framework that always makes it debatable and open to critical inquiry. Second, to talk about teachers as intellectuals is to say they should have an active role in shaping the curriculum. Think of intelligence

as a form of currency that enables teachers to have a role in shaping school policy, defining educational philosophies, and working with their communities in a variety of capacities. Transformative intellectuals are aware of their own theoretical convictions and are skilled in strategies for translating them into practice. Pedagogy is always related to power. In fact educational theories, like any philosophy, are ideologies that have an intimate relation to questions of power. So learning must be linked not just to learning in the schools but extended to shaping public life and social relationships. The proletarianization of the teaching profession has made educators too dependent and powerless. Does that give you some idea?

CAR - That's fine. Wouldn't you want, for much the same reasons, all professionals to be transformative intellectuals?

Giroux - To be sure. But bear in mind that the teaching profession alone has the primary responsibility to educate critical citizens whereas we might argue that the first responsibility of, say the medical profession, is healing. Educators have a public responsibility that by its very nature involves them in the struggle for democracy. This makes the teaching profession a unique and powerful public resource.

CAR - Are schools of education moving towards this thinking?

Giroux - The short answer is that they are starting to move but very slowly. And I have to say without naming names, that some of our most progressive schools of education have become disappointingly reactionary. They tend more and more to hire people in the business manager mode and there are few, very few, critical voices to be heard.

CAR - Talk a little about your teaching experience.

Giroux - It's both very gratifying and very challenging.

CAR - Tell us about the challenging part.

Giroux - Most of our students are very comfortable with defining themselves as technicians and clerks. For them to be all of a sudden exposed to a line of critical thinking that both calls their own experience into question and at the same time raises fundamental questions about what teaching should be and what social purposes it might serve is very hard for them. They don't have a frame of reference or a vocabulary with which to articulate the centrality of what they do. They are caught up in market logic and bureaucratic jargon. We can't defend what we do that way. We can't make our best case. We always wind up on the defensive and appear to others as second rate and marginal. If, on the other hand, we make the case for critical democracy we can at the same time make the case for the centrality of the teaching profession. Of one thing I am sure, the older paradigm is dying not only in terms of its

effectiveness but in terms of its legitimacy as well.

CAR - That's usually referred to as positivism and it has been stated more than once that positivism is dead. Yet it seems to be a very lively corpse.

Giroux - Oh, it's not dead. I am not saying that at all. What you call positivism I would want to call technocratic rationality or scientism which identifies the idea of progress with an idea of efficiency which in turn defines itself by abstracting from questions of power and politics and values. What I am saying is: that paradigm is breaking down, not dead. Look at the urban school systems. They are falling apart all over the country.

CAR - Do you find some teaching techniques more effective than others?

Giroux - My courses are all seminars. I prescribe the materials I think are important but the students have to write papers and defend their positions. This is the basis of a 15 week working through process. I don't care what positions the students take. I want them to be able to justify whatever position they do take so they come out with a clearer sense of what they believe in and what effects that might have. I think what I really do is politicize the process of education in the minds of the students. As soon as you say people can be agents in the act of learning you politicize the issue of schooling. It becomes political in the best sense of the word, which is to say that students have to become self-conscious about the kinds of social relationships that undergrid the learning process. That's a political issue. Another thing I take very seriously in my teaching is illustrating principles with a sense of voice, with somebody's story. There are experiences out there that illuminate larger questions of educational philosophy. We can, for example, talk about the hidden curriculum of racism, about what black kids have to give up to become academically successful and we can do this through their own voices. Or we can talk about people who have no community of memories. We can talk about people who are defined by such a nonbelief in the common good that they can't even imagine an alternative vision according to anything other than highly individualistic and egotistical norms. Those stories are important. That is one of the reasons I have a lot of trouble with liberal and procedural morality. It eliminates the stories in favor of abstract rules. Of course, we need to understand that these stories by themselves do not always speak for themselves. But they can become the basis for analyzing a whole range of considerations that are often hidden in the stories. Experience never simply speaks for itself. The language that we bring to it determines its meaning.

CAR - Speak further to the point about student voices. How do you deal with the objection that students are virtual tabula rasas who don't have much to bring to the table?

Giroux - Let me say what student experience is

not. It is not a romantic celebration of adolescence as it sometimes was in the 60s. It is something very different. I am arguing that the notion of experience has to be situated within a theory of learning, within a pedagogy. You can't deny that students have experiences and you can't deny that these experiences are relevant to the learning process even though you might say that these experiences are limited, raw, unfruitful or whatever. Students have memories, families, religions, feelings, languages and cultures that give them a distinctive voice. We can critically engage that experience and we can move beyond it. But we can't deny it.

CAR - What about the white, middle class voice?

Giroux - That's a voice too.

CAR - But isn't it more than a voice. Isn't it the model we set? Doesn't it encapsulate the best experiences we want to emulate? To be blunt, isn't the best voice an urban minority student can adopt that of the white middle-class?

Giroux - In an instrumental sense that is true. But it is a truth that conceals dangers. The problem with that position is that it makes it hard for people to realize how important the question of voice is. We become unquestioning and fail to realize the symbolic violence the dominant voice can exercise. And I will say this: even for the white middle-class majority education often, most often, functions to silence rather than empower them.

CAR - A telling point. You make teaching sound like very hard work.

Giroux - It is very hard work. That is why teachers need to be intellectuals, to realize that teaching is a form of mediation between different groups of persons and we can't be good mediators unless we are aware of what the referents of the mediation we engage in are. Teaching is complex, much more complex than mastering a body of knowledge and implementing curriculums. The thing about teaching is that the specificity of the context is always central. We can't get away with invoking rules and procedures that cut across contexts.

CAR - Your view of education seems to make tradition irrelevant.

Giroux - As I mentioned before, the nature of our educational problems is new and unprecedented. In that sense there is no tradition to appeal to. But there are elements of a critical pedagogy in all traditions. The radical educator deals with tradition like anything else. It must be engaged and not simply received. Traditions are important. They contain great insights, both for understanding what we want to be and what we don't want to be. The question is: In what context do we want to judge tradition? Around what sense of purpose? We need a referent to do that. If we don't have a referent then we have no context to make sense of tradition. It doesn't supply its own referent.

CAR - Your referent is probably clear by now but could you state it briefly again?

Giroux - My referent is how do we make this country a real critical democracy.

CAR - Where do you stand on liberal arts education?

Giroux - A lot of people think everyone should have a liberal arts education. I disagree with that vehemently. Schooling has its own context. Often that context generates methods of inquiry that aren't likely to surface in the liberal arts disciplines.

CAR - You have a new book coming out. What is that about?

Giroux - It's called *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life: Critical Pedagogy in the Modern Age*. It will be published by the University of Minnesota Press in the Fall of 1988. It is different from my other books in a number of ways. I attempt to redefine the relationship between schooling and democracy and I look at particular traditions to contextualize this effort. I look at the social reconstructionists of the 1920s, I look at certain traditions in the feminist movement, and I look at some liberation theologians and their sense of struggle and hope. Hope is very important. We have to be able to dream. I also spend a lot of time developing a radical provisional ethic, which is to say an ethic that steers a course between a transcendent, ahistorical referent and a relativity which does not permit an ethic to defend its own presuppositions. Radical educators in this country are capable of a lot of moral indignation but really don't know how to define and justify in an ethical

"Educational theories are ideologies that have an intimate relation to questions of power."

language what they want to do - the particular forms of authority they might want to exercise, the particular programmatic innovations they want to bring about or, to take on the largest ethical issue of all, what is the nature of the life we want to defend and how do we do that in ethical terms. We can't always operate in the logic of resistance. We must be able to speak the language of possibility as well. I chart out the theoretical basis of such an ethic in this book. Another thing I do is talk about student voices. I think the primacy of student experience is crucial. But I have already talked about that.

CAR - Can you, as the clock winds down, summarize your educational philosophy?

Giroux - Probably not, but I'll try. I find myself frequently falling back on a distinction John Dewey made over forty years ago between "education as a function of society" and "society as a function of education". In other words, are schools to uncritically serve and reproduce the existing society or challenge the social order to develop and advance its democratic imperatives? Obviously, I opt for the latter. I believe schools are the major institutions for educating students for public life. More specifically, I believe that schools should function to provide students with the knowledge, character and moral vision that build civic courage.

CAR - The expression "civic courage" has a nice ring to it.

Giroux - We are going to need a lot of it.

Why do the Maltese ask so few questions?

Jeremy Boissevain*

* This is the substance of a short talk Prof. Boissevain gave on July 19th, 1968 to the elementary and secondary school teachers attending refresher courses held at the Mater Admirabilis Teacher College at Tal Virtu'. It appeared in an edition of "Ferment" that same year. It is reprinted in this context with the author's permission, and is followed first by four responses written specifically for this issue of "Education", and then by Professor Boissevain's reaction to these responses.

Persons who have taught in Malta as well as abroad, whether at university, training college, or secondary school level, often remark that Maltese students as compared to foreign students ask virtually no questions. This disturbs them: the only sign a teacher has that his students are actually thinking is when they ask questions. Faith in the infallibility of a teacher is possibly necessary with very young children. With older students, however, such faith is perhaps touching but it is a sign that the students have not yet learned to think for themselves. In short that they have not yet learned to ask questions. In Malta there are, of course, as many intelligent people as there are anywhere else in the world. Nonetheless, the views of the teachers indicated above as well as those expressed by some of the contributors to *Ferment* (see the Editorial, and article by Lino Spiteri in *Ferment* May 1968) all suggest that there is a dearth of active intellectual discussion in Malta. In short that there is little awareness of the Maltese proverb: *Il-Mistoqsija oħt il-għerf*, 'The question is the sister of wisdom'. Why should this be so?

As I am a sociologist, I shall try to give a sociological answer to this question.

In Malta there are a number of social and cultural obstacles which prevent the asking of questions. One might say that this is always so in a small, traditional island society. But this begs the question. There are, I believe, at least four important factors which stifle the enquiring mind in Malta. These are the colonial heritage, the hierarchy of infallibility, the smallness of scale, and the language barrier. I shall discuss them in this order.

By the colonial heritage I mean the social and cultural legacy left by the long line of paternalistic foreign rulers who governed Malta's affairs until 1964. These rulers, whether Romans, Arabs, Knights or British, often provided the basic necessities of life. That is, they arranged for the importation of scarce foodstuffs and provided a certain amount of employment. Nonetheless, they all wielded big sticks that made discussion with them very one sided. This inequality of power has encouraged in Malta a tradition of dependency on outsiders and their culture. This is still evident today in the dutiful preference for anything that is foreign, whether clothing, manners, or language. It is widely believed that if something is foreign it is better.

Besides the unquestioning acceptance of what is foreign, there is another important colonial legacy.

People were not encouraged to ask questions. The *status quo* had to be preserved. When critical problems were formulated, they were passed upwards. Decisions were handed down by the foreign elite who monopolised the right and ability to ask and to answer questions. Asking questions might jeopardise the *status quo* and therefore questioning was curtailed. If the questioning of basic colonial premises took place it was suppressed by the superior power of the colonial rulers. This is just what happened in the past during the (therefore) brief periods of self-government. When the representatives of the people began not only to ask questions but to demand answers, the constitution was simply suspended, and governor's rule reimposed (1903, 1930, 1933, 1958). In short, during the colonial period a premium was placed upon dependency, submission and conformity without questioning. This frame of mind is still firmly rooted in all segments of Maltese society. That it is so is really quite understandable after so many centuries of paternalistic foreign rule.

The second major obstacle to asking questions is what I have called the hierarchy of infallibility. By this I mean that Malta is by and large a hierarchically organised society. It is believed that the views of persons who occupy superior position should not be questioned. If a person is superior in rank or office he is therefore right. This is an attitude which permeates Maltese society. This attitude is obviously partly derived from the recent colonial past; but it also derives from the very strong position of the Church. Both colonial powers and the Church are hierarchically organised institutions. Neither are institutions which tolerate questioning. The commands, sermons, ex-cathedra pronouncements, and, alas, the traditional practice of lecturing to students, allow little room for discussion. Discussion after all is no more than the asking and answering of questions.

New ideas usually enter institutions with young people who question the established order controlled by the older generation. The older generation usually has a vested interest in maintaining things as they are. These questions are thus healthy. They must be listened to and answered. In a hierarchy this does not usually take place. Those who have superior positions take decisions which their subordinates are expected to obey. Questioning is regarded as insubordination. Insubordination is punished. Again we see a premium placed upon conformity; a person who asks no questions is not punished.

The third reason why questioning is difficult in Malta is the island's smallness. The hierarchy of infallibility and the strength of the colonial heritage is based partly on this smallness of scale. In Malta each person is at the centre of a large network of people whom he knows, and of whom many know each other. Unusual behaviour or ideas are quickly made known throughout this network. *Malta żgħira imma n-nies magħrufa*, 'Malta may be small but its people are well known', notes the proverb. This points clearly to the high degree of social visibility people in Malta have: it is difficult if not impossible to be anonymous. Most people want others to be like themselves. Certainly they do not want to see them shine or rise above them. Consequently those who ask questions and express new ideas are quickly set upon. Through the network of gossiping relatives, neighbours, and friends these people are pressured into conformity. I need not tell you that this pressure is intense in Malta. It is strongest in the villages and the long established neighbourhoods of the towns and cities where everyone knows everyone else and almost everything they do or think. It is for this reason that students from the villages often find it more difficult to develop a questioning frame of mind than persons, say, from Sliema, where a person can remain relatively anonymous. Persons who live in villages are so used to having each word weighed and filed away for immediate or future use against themselves that they are extremely cautious about expressing opinions which differ. All Maltese face this problem in various measures, for you all have a wide range of contacts all of whom expect you to behave and to think the way they think you should. If you don't they apply pressure. Such a restrictive environment works against asking questions.

The language barrier provides the final and perhaps the most serious obstacle to questioning. To ask questions you must be able to express yourself. In Malta the teaching of all subjects, with the exception of religion and Maltese, is carried out in English. English, however, is spoken and understood imperfectly, especially in the primary schools. Consequently the subject matter itself is generally imperfectly understood. Thus when pupils or students think about their subjects or discuss them informally, they do so in Maltese. Yet if students wish to ask formal questions about their subjects or challenge any ideas, they must do so in English, a foreign language which those they challenge (teachers, superiors) speak better than they. Consequently those who are challenged can dominate the discussion due to their superior knowledge of the language in which the discussions must be carried out. It follows that those whose command of English is not adequate simply do not dare or are not able to ask questions, a situation which reinforces the hierarchy of infallibility.

Furthermore, I suggest that because of the inadequate comprehension of English, students of many primary and secondary schools are placed at a further disadvantage. Basic subjects are

inadequately taught, not only because the students do not understand everything, but also almost every lesson becomes at least partly an English lesson. This takes valuable time away from vital subjects.

It is also often claimed that it is important for everybody to speak English because so few people in the world speak Maltese. For this reason, it is argued you must begin to learn English early. Is this the real reason for trying to learn English in the primary school? Holland is also a small country but the teaching of English, German, and French begins in secondary schools. The chief reason it is started so early in Malta, I suggest, is to be able to pass the Civil Service examinations which require a detailed knowledge of English. This requirement was imposed by the English rulers so that employees could carry out their official correspondence in English. This was necessary so that the British could understand what was going on. Conditions have changed. The British have gone. Those who have replaced them, the elected government and the civil servants, all read Maltese and speak it to each other. Why should the early teaching of English not now be abolished?

I suggest that especially at the primary and secondary school level the teaching and learning of basic subjects would be improved immensely if teaching were carried out in Maltese rather than English. It is worth noting that this has long been recognised by the Church in Malta, which wisely insisted that the teaching of religion should be carried out in the language of the country. English could be taught as a foreign language during the last two years of the primary school and, intensively, throughout secondary school. This would provide (as it does in Holland) the knowledge of English required for commercial and governmental contacts with the outside world, contacts with tourists, and the language knowledge that students would require at the secondary and university level.

The point I wish to stress is that if Maltese were to become the language of instruction and discussion at the primary school level, children would be able to formulate questions in their own language. This is after all the language in which they think and in which they discuss with friends and colleagues. Questioning could then begin at an early age.

The traditional emphasis on English is part of the colonial heritage. It was taught so that commands of the English rulers, who refused to learn Maltese, could be widely understood. These rulers have gone now. Surely it is not logical to defend the inadequate teaching of basic subjects such as mathematics and history in the primary schools by arguing, as is so frequently done, that it helps to teach English to future emigrants? Should the educational policy of a country with limited resources be formulated in order to give greater benefits to those who leave rather than to those who remain?

Thus I end by posing a question. It is one which only you can answer. To do so you will have to ask many other questions. I have indicated certain

obstacles to the asking of questions; undoubtedly there are others. Once, however, you become aware of obstacles, I think it becomes possible to overcome them. Independent Malta is faced with new problems which call for careful planning. It is up to you to lay the basis for this through stimulating teachers, colleagues, and students to ask questions. Insist that you get an answer, and don't accept the answer without questioning. The key to planning is, after all, merely the ability to ask intelligent questions about the future.

Contemporary responses to Jeremy Boissevain's 1968 paper by: Dr. Alfred Sant, Prof. Ch. Farrugia, Prof. J. Friggieri and Prof. P. Serracino Inglott.

Alfred Sant

"On putting questions to Ivory Idols"

Is Professor Jeremy Boissevain's article "Why do the Maltese ask so few questions?" (dateline July 1968) still relevant? The article appeared in *Ferment*, a University students' magazine which was published during the second half of the sixties. The question presupposes that the article's conclusions were relevant at the time they appeared.

Boissevain's article did highlight features of social communication and control among us that inhibit the asking of questions – not least in the educational context. Quite prudently, the article stopped short of relating these features to some overall view of the internal organisation of our society. This would presumably have led to a description of the distribution of influence and power between different Maltese classes and strata, to which then, Boissevain's listing of colonial, hierarchical, smallness and language effects could have been tied. These conditioned the ways by which inquisitive and critical thinking/communication was inhibited, *given the existing distribution of power, prestige and social influence*.

The magazine *Ferment* itself is an instance of what I have in mind. It was set up around mid-1965 by a group of students, six to seven, one of whom I was. We told ourselves we wanted to promote "independent expression", with a society to back these aims. We launched the first initiatives – debates in public and issue of *Ferment* – on an *ad hoc* basis organisationally. Then in mid-1966, we held the first open general meeting to "democratically" elect a proper committee.

That meeting was swamped by student seminarists, all dressed in black, who had never come to any of our meetings before, or showed any interest in what we were doing. All those who had launched the original venture were swept away by a block vote, which we later learnt had been mounted against "the socialists". Well over half of our original number were nationalist or non-committed. Some

Jesuit and seminarist students had helped us with the preparatory work; they would know about the coming block vote but never warned us. Subsequently, the publication of *Ferment* lost steam, while public debates were quietly dropped by the new committee, whose members were not much interested in the venture anyway.

The hierarchy of infallibility described by Boissevain, reflected then the fact that social and economic power in Maltese society has traditionally belonged to trading, professional and priestly classes, within the context of the foreign colonial rule also mentioned by Boissevain. Not surprisingly, the dominant strata sought to maintain their influence from generation to generation, by ensuring wide acceptance of the *status quo*. The language question (also in a way featured by Boissevain) revolved around ongoing attempts by the privileged traditional classes to restrict the rest of the population to very limited codes of communication and action. Such restriction would then, by default, promote the maintenance of traditional forms of power.

In this context, critical and inquisitive thinking was tantamount to subversion. Moreover, due to the smallness of the local economy (another of Boissevain's listed factors), the major scope for upward mobility was provided by the civil service. Its very structure reinforced the need for submissive and acquiescent attitudes. Almost always, lower class entrants into the civil service were coopted as supporters of the traditional establishment though theoretically on the basis of their social origins, they should have been antagonistic to its interests.

The point I am trying to make is that Boissevain's description then and now, could only be considered relevant if put in a wider "political" perspective. Thus, the large majority in the group which had launched *Ferment* came from working class to lower middle class families, with no social or family links to clerical and professional networks.

The traditional establishment needed to inhibit critical thinking and had the means to do so. Its forms of social control, although usually falling short of visible coercion, were in Malta extensive and clearly authoritarian in character.

Perhaps inevitably in the circumstances, to be successful, attempts to promote the asking of questions, and therefore to subvert the basis of influence, wealth and power, needed an authoritarian and monolithic component. Assuming that critical thinking and action could develop through well-meaning efforts to encourage spontaneous, grass roots debate was a very naive idea, and doomed to failure, as the *Ferment* experiment demonstrated on a small scale.

So, 22 years or so after publication of Boissevain's article, how have matters changed?

The seventies and eighties undoubtedly witnessed a shift and an erosion of the social power of the privileged trading, clerical and professional

classes. This happened mainly due to government sponsored reform, that partly relied on authoritarian methods of conception and implementation. The final links with the colonial past were severed, although many features of neo-colonialism are still alive and well. The growth and redistribution of social welfare transfers provided the working class with a new resilience, while industrial and tourist development opened up Maltese contacts with the outside world. State initiative and controls diminished somewhat the autonomy of the trading and clerical interests. There was a distinct widening of those strata of the populations having some access to position of decision making and influence.

These developments led to new problems. In and of itself, social change creates disorientation and resistance among people who have to alter lifestyles and thought habits because of it. In Malta, reforms that were conceived or implemented inadequately increased the disorientation and resistance. Moreover, upward mobility ironically served to promote conservative views among people who had just benefited from social reforms. Since they now had acquired something to lose . . .

Most importantly, the traditional power elites did not allow themselves to be cowed by the ongoing social change. They regrouped and modernised their approach. Where formerly they used to dominate by manipulating cabals of notables, now they exert their influence through mass mobilisation and extensive public relations. Their language has been updated to incorporate pluralistic human right platforms, combined with clerical callsigns, designed to keep in line different segments of public opinion. Thus the traditional elites have been very successful in coopting newly emerging, upwardly mobile strata.

The wide ranging tension created by the swift attack on the roots of traditional power during the seventies, and the response to this attack, have led to the contemporary forms of political polarisation. The latter has always existed in our society; indeed it reflects the continuing struggle to dilute the status and power of traditional elites. Today, as in the sixties, people who declare their hand one way or the other -- by asking questions, for instance -- understand that this approach carries its own penalties and rewards, not least in the educational context. As in the sixties, the strategies of personal interaction and presentation that students adopt in classes and elsewhere, will reflect their perception of the penalties they will have to pay, and the rewards they are likely to get for their critical or non-critical stances.

The fact is that the educational establishment is still dominated by representatives of traditional world views and interests. They protect and reward like minded students, at the same time that by their attitudes, they inhibit the open development of views that are critical of the perspectives and interests they hold. In this sense, and despite the rhetoric, May 1987 did not represent a turning point, one

way or the other. To illustrate my point concretely, I will mention two cases, one happening prior, the other following the last election.

In 1986 I was asked to serve as an additional examiner for a first degree dissertation at the University, on Maltese international relations. I have rarely seen a work that was so badly drafted from the technical and academic points of view; the thesis also happened to be a very inadequate restatement of partisan journalistic outpourings in the right wing press. The main examiner wanted to give this "dissertation" an A; I wanted to fail it and gave a detailed explanation for my conclusion. That explanation was ignored and I was interpreted as acting on partisan political grounds. I believe that student got his A.

In 1989, as editor of the quarterly policy magazine *Society*, I received an interesting and unsolicited contribution on the local educational system, from a youth whom I did not know but who seemed to have something valid and heartfelt to say. Following some editing, his script was approved for publication. He then contacted me to ask whether he could withdraw his article; he had liked the editing very much, but had just been accepted as a student at the University, and obviously was afraid that his article in *Society* could affect his academic chances negatively.

The mechanisms of control and indoctrination in the educational field remain totally dominated by traditional interests. These still view the momentum for change as a naive and resistible extension of Leoporello's complaints and aspirations: "Notte e giorno faticar /Per chi nulla sa gradir, /Piova e vento supportar /Mangiar male a mal dormir! /Voglio fare il gentiluomo /E non voglio piu servir..."

In short run, critical attitudes -- questions -- will not be allowed unless they can be manipulated for public relations purposes. In the medium run, people will be pushing for a rigorous analysis of the way by which the clerical, trading and professional interests have found it possible to undermine the basis on which social reform could be launched in the seventies.

For those who may feel uncertain about such a conclusion, let it be stressed that we are still fully in the territory first charted by Boissevain in his 1968 *Ferment* article, where he enquired why the Maltese ask so few questions ...

Charles Farrugia

Professor Boissevain's observations are basically still valid today. However, twenty-two years later, I would change the question to "Why do the Maltese ask the wrong questions?", a tendency which applies to Educational issues as to others. Consider, for example, the current discussion on professional status for teachers. The questions asked do not seek answers of substance, such as: "What

are the characteristics of a professional occupation? Which are the special qualities that distinguish professional from non-professional teaching? Do all Maltese teachers operate to the required standards? Can teachers lose their professional status as well as gain it?" Instead, one hears: "Do teachers get a salary rise with their professional status? Will professional status for teachers disrupt the relativity scale in the civil service? Why is so-and-so entitled to the Teacher's Warrant and I am not?" Many questions are asked, most relate to personal rather than universal concerns.

The causes identified by Professor Boissevain still apply, although some have evolved with time and social change. The colonial inheritance survives to the extent that we still regard foreign ideas and products as superior to local ones, even when it is not the case. The school curriculum is one distinct example. Over the years, the Maltese educational system adopted without question curricula that originated in Britain, in the belief that anything which stems from the home of the colonisers has to be unquestionably "good". Since Independence, curriculum changes have been only cosmetic due to a combined attitude of dependency and *laissez-faire*. It was the policy of the colonisers to imbue the colonised with a sense of submission reinforced by material and cultural dependency. Undoubtedly, the discouraging of pertinent questions formed part of the strategy and many Maltese whose employment depended on the British learned to serve without question. It was a mutually convenient arrangement: the masters did not have to justify their orders, the locals simply followed the rules. In case of mishaps, the latter could not be held accountable. It is not surprising that the mentality survived among those civil servants who had been trained to act precisely that way. It is depressing and self-defeating though, that the avoidance of accountability and haphazard work ethic have become a way of life for too large a number of young public and private employees. Twenty-five years after Independence, the accusing finger cannot be pointed to the wicked ways of the ex-colonial power. We have to ask the right penetrating questions, and seek the correct, even if painful answers.

Professor Boissevain will want, I am certain, to review his analysis of the strength of paternalism and authority in Malta. A decade-and-a-half dedicated to socialist egalitarianism coupled with ten years of nationalist civil disobedience have weakened considerably the local base of authority. The former aimed to obliterate the influence and power of the Church and the so-called ruling class, the latter to undermine the authority of the party in power. Both movements were profoundly successful to the extent that Government Ministers now bemoan "citizens' arrogance". Similarly, parents complain of children's insubordination, teachers of students' indiscipline, priests of people's irreverence, and husbands of women's lib. One could regard these as healthy developments which point to a less docile, more

socially aware community, indicators of a mature society that questions the *status quo* in order to improve the social, moral, cultural, economic and physical environment. In truth, however, the questioning smacks more of contentious selfish bargaining than a genuine desire to enhance the community's lot. The tendency is very evident in education where the questions asked do not attempt to penetrate through and establish principles, but to make comparisons, often odious ones. Such questions as "Who is he to tell me what and how to teach, his foreign Ph.D has no relevance to the local situation!", or "Why should her children attend a private school/junior lyceum and not mine?" should be replaced by an honest evaluation of the expert's views and proposals, or a critical analysis of education that is best suited to one's children. Are many Maltese suffering from a severe bout of envy? I suspect so.

The factor of scale, the fact that we Maltese live a fish bowl existence, where everybody practically knows, or knows about everyone else, still plays a prominent part in our social relationships. Often we do not ask penetrating questions as we believe we already know the answer. In our transparent society, it is very hard to keep a secret, and I suggest that it is always very unwise to lie: people either will soon get to know the truth, or they will make it up!

The small scale factor has another dimension which was not so pronounced in 1968. Since then Malta has taken on many national and international obligations, an ever increasing array of tasks and duties which need to be performed regardless of the limited material and human resources. The situation raises questions of priorities: what needs to be done first, what can be left till later. However, the questions asked and the resulting answers reveal a predominant concern with issues that carry strong propaganda appeal. In the educational field, for example, free books, free meals, free transport continue to consume vast sums of education revenue and valuable energy, when the scarce human and material resources can be devoted to improve teaching personnel, curriculum development, sophisticated assessment procedures, more and better remedial education, etc. Do we dare ask the right questions to establish the real priorities?

There was a period in the '70s when it was unpatriotic to speak any language but Maltese. At all levels of schooling, including lecturing at University, everyone was expected to use the vernacular. The practice did not inhibit students from asking the wrong questions. Basically however, Professor Boissevain is correct, for in spite of the wider spread (not necessarily a better quality) of English, many Maltese students are not comfortable speaking a foreign language. I wonder, however, whether this really is a question of language deficiency or whether it reflects attitudes emerging from a weak education. Professor Boissevain hints as much in his last paragraph. We have come a long way in education, but we still have a long way to go precisely because

we have been asking the wrong questions. We have neglected to ask "What is the best type or types of education that our country needs? And how can we best provide it?" Instead we have been saying "How can we expand our educational system? How can we provide more school buildings regardless how ill-maintained; how can we employ more teachers, regardless whether they are sufficiently qualified; how can we keep more young people at school longer regardless of the quality of schooling they receive?" In asking the the wrong questions, we have neglected to seek the right answers. As a result a large section of our young people feel alienated from schools, another large portion regard the process of schooling as most irrelevant, and a high proportion of the rest are filled with book, inert knowledge, conditions which do not encourage any questioning, least of all critical questioning. The great pity of it all is that we all mean well, our shortcomings are benign not malicious. I suspect they result from our fear to face the truth about the real extent of our limitations. By not asking questions, or asking the wrong ones, we need never face the stark truth.

Joe Friggieri

I think that, by and large, Professor Boissevain's analysis is still relevant today, twenty-two years after its publication. One further reason which might be added to the four he suggests is the negative influence exercised in this respect by the media, especially newspapers, radio and television.

Our newspapers all serve the narrow interests of their owners. They are dogmatic in their views, sectarian in approach, and leave no room for intelligent and informed debate. Those which are not directly controlled by a political party rely so heavily on advertising that they are not likely to shine as examples of radical thinking. As long as there is a steady supply of juicy apples, nobody will feel a strong urge to upset the apple-cart.

A specific example will clarify this point. In the past fifteen or twenty years Malta's leading newspapers in the English language have thrived on the revenue of property dealers, estate agents and land speculators, all savagely competing for advertising space. How can such newspapers consistently and convincingly promote the view (editorially or otherwise) that Malta just cannot tolerate so much 'development'? And yet this is one of the questions which ought to be raised and discussed as a matter of urgent national interest. The indiscriminate buying and selling of agricultural land for building purposes, the greed of speculators in the tourist business, the total lack of concern for areas of natural beauty and sites of outstanding historical interest, are hidden under the glossy facade of property advertising and full-colour supplements displaying the luxury of new five-star hotels and tourist "complexes".

The destruction of the Maltese countryside, the privatisation of long stretches of the Maltese coast, the rape of Gozo and the villages, are all taken for granted, accepted as inevitable, perhaps even desirable aspects of economic growth. The feeble voice of those who dare ask the critical question is drowned by the cacophony of a horde of traders selling their wares on the free market. The cards are too heavily stacked against the question-raisers.

The same and more can be said about our State-controlled radio and television, whose efficacy as means of propaganda for official government policy has been tested over the years and never found wanting. Questions may be asked on our broadcasting media, provided they fall within the framework of party-political diatribe. Outside that framework there is very little room for criticism. In-depth, investigative journalism is as rare as smooth roads. New ideas for reform, or for a radical change of course beyond the given parameters, are conveniently discarded either as unimportant (not of "current" or "topical" interest) or as too controversial to be aired in public. State bureaucracy is allowed to get on with its oppressive, systematic inefficiency at the expense of the bewildered, tax-paying citizen. The same applies to private firms and parastatal bodies in their dealings with clients. Many 'services' are offered, but means of redress for jobs badly done are practically non-existent. Hospitals, public transport, telephones, customs, licencing offices, infrastructural works, bear the marks of sheer disorder and crass inefficiency. Delays at the law-courts form part of our folklore: *Meta tidhol taf, meta tohrog ma tafx*.

So here is one major problem - bureaucratic inefficiency at all levels and failure to provide a quick remedy against injustice - which the media can tackle for the benefit of the common citizen. Instead, they prefer to follow the example of the three monkeys who saw no evil, heard no evil, and spoke no evil. That story has its local variant in the popular maxim of Maltese conventional wisdom *Rajt ma rajtx, smajt ma smajtx*.

In many countries viewers and listeners are given the opportunity to air their grievances. The media play an important role as agents of change and social reform by providing a forum for popular criticism. Not in Malta. Here facile assumptions are made about such fictions as the "mentality of the Maltese" or "the likes and dislikes of the man-in-the-street", on the basis of which those who control broadcasting decide what should or should not be shown.

As a result, very few official policies or decisions get challenged or discussed.

Sociological factors have militated in the past, and to a large extent still do, to discourage Maltese from asking questions. This is clearly and convincingly shown by Professor Boissevain. Better use of the media might help us overcome some of the obstacles he mentions, and lead to a state of affairs where all

matters of public concern are freely and openly discussed.

Peter Serracino Inglott

Professor Boissevain's question: "Why do the Maltese ask so few questions?" seems to assume that there is a simple (and known) answer to the question: "What is a question?"

Let me say at once that I am not raising this point as a philosopher out of admiration for that arch-questioner, Socrates. Quite the contrary. It comes rather out of my direct experience of the reform of religion-teaching in the early sixties. An important aspect of that reform, commended by Prof. Boissevain, was the use of Maltese, instead of English, as linguistic medium. Another was the substitution of the question-and-answer format of the traditional post-Tridentine catechism with a method derived from Cardijn's See-Reflect-Act pedagogy originally conceived for his young workers' movement.

In that context, the question to be faced was, in a way, the converse of that posed by Prof. Boissevain - not "why do pupils ask their teachers so few questions?", but rather "why do teachers ask their pupils so many questions?" The shift from the first to the second question practically forces one to distinguish between *kinds* of question. Anthony Xerri, a Maltese researcher working in the United States, found out empirically that no less than sixty per cent of the utterances of a teacher in a one-hour lesson were cast in the grammatical form of questions; but almost all were rhetorical. The teacher trundled out all the proper answers, and the pupils were expected to learn them. The question-form, as in the catechism, was not a stimulant to inquisitiveness, but rather an instrument of dogmatism.

This may be so with questioning of teachers by students no less than of students by teachers. Another Maltese writer who has devoted some attention to the art of questioning, Edward De Bono, has espoused the categorisation of questions into two main classes: the 'hunter' and the 'fisherman' types. The hunter shoots with a precise and definite target; the fisherman casts about without knowing precisely which fish will bite, if any. Now had we Maltese asked Prof. Boissevain lots of "hunting" questions, would this not have lent rather more powerful support to his four hypotheses (about the effects of colonialism, hierarchism, etc.) than even no (or few) questions?

In fact, asking no questions is quite liable to very different interpretations. For instance, rather than acceptance of any (colonial, ecclesial, etc.) authority's claim to superiority; it could be the expression of a refusal to play the game. It could be opting out of an exchange which assumes that it is up to the authorities to provide the answers! Silence can sometimes be the most challenging response not only to certain

questions but also to the expectation of questions, when questioning could be an implicit acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the answerer's status.

I do not think that the Maltese phenomenon is susceptible of any such simple explanation. However, it may be that some more complicated variation of it may be quite relevant. To get such an answer, the question posed by Prof. Boissevain may need some spelling out. As Thomas Aquinas and Wittgenstein among others, would have agreed: to ask the right questions is generally more difficult than giving the right answers. I also agree that the sociological approach is the most promising in order to find the right answer to the question posed, although the path is more complex than that he could follow in the circumstances of writing. In fact, the meaning of the act of questioning is only partly determined by identifying, as I have already said, the *kind* of question asked; it is determined above all by the cultural context in which it occurs.

I am certainly not as competent and have even less place here than Professor Boissevain to formulate and test any complex theory. Like him, I will only throw out some intuitive - and alternative - guesses for discussion.

Could it be that it is not in the Maltese tradition to accept any statement (or indeed any offer at all) at face-value? We need not think of Freud, Marx, Nietzsche or any other "master of suspicion", nor recall Troy, to know that every gift-horse should have its teeth examined; but it is not deemed polite to do it openly.

I have found personally that hardly any of my students need to be told, as I used to tell them, that they should disbelieve whatever I told them in class until they themselves could prove it to be true. But they do not usually show their acceptance of my pedagogical advice by addressing questions to me. Almost habitually they go to my colleagues - sounding-boards which almost always end up by ricocheting the problem to me. They also look up what the books say and occasionally confront me with the holy-odoured printed pages saying the opposite to what I did. I do not think that this is evidence simply of the Boissevain "four causes" at work.

Might it not be just a rhetorical preference? - A preference for what Kierkegaard called the 'indirect method of communication', for thinking that a lateral deviation may be more appropriate than a straight question.

The interrogative mood is, from a formal logical point of view, reducible to the imperative; yet there seems to be a fetishism associated with the grammatical form of the "question". Yielding to it, I ask: Could it be that our pupils in comparison with their teachers show an inversely proportional tendency to ask questions, *inter alia*, because of a preference for wiliness over simplicity?

Jeremy Boissevain: Reflections and Reactions

I am grateful to the four discussants for finding time to reflect on an article I wrote more than twenty years ago. It was interesting to note that they feel that the analysis still largely holds up. Or does it? I think only partly. The four factors which I suggest inhibit questioning, though still present, are all less pronounced.

While there are still traces of the "colonial heritage", they are not as pronounced. Many still think that what is foreign is better, but their numbers are dwindling. Maltese plays, for example, increasingly share the stage with Pirandello and Shakespeare. There is also a new, often intense, pride in local achievements, like the establishment of Air Malta. This pride in things Maltese is new.

The "hierarchy of infallibility", is still present but has been modified. The recent Socialist regime certainly did not discourage "dependency, submission and conformity". Nor did it encourage questions. It sat very heavily upon those who dared to question it. Today people do not look over their shoulders as often before expressing an opinion. Moreover, the pronouncements of the Church are no longer regarded as infallible. Witness, among others, the increase in contraception, bikinis and raucous external celebrations of parish saints.

Malta's smallness still constrains behaviour. But the many new residential areas are expanding social space. They provide anonymous havens for unmarried couples, whether hetero- or homosexual, and young adults who wish to escape stifling parental pressure.

The "language barrier" is less pronounced. Less English and more Maltese is being spoken. The vernacular has finally become the language of instruction in state schools. But many ambitious parents are still crippling their children's ability to learn to speak correct English by imposing their own version on their toddlers. Numerous private schools continue to cooperate with this malformation. I am convinced that teaching a second language is a task for specialists.

Professor Farrugia suggests that a weak education may explain why "many Maltese students are not comfortable speaking a foreign language." Comfort comes with fluency. The latter requires practice. Malta's English language university is one of its most important assets. Naturally students speak Maltese together out of class. But if more class room discussion were stimulated, it would provide practice and encourage questioning. This would require a new approach to teaching: less lecturing and more discussion. The physical lay-out of classrooms at the university illustrates my point. How many seminar rooms — where participants sit in the round — are there? None to speak of. Classrooms at Tal-Qroqq resemble those in secondary schools. Students are seated in rows facing the teacher.

Teaching is thus structured like a one-way street: information flows from teacher to student. Note taking and memory are the skills required, not thinking, ideas or ability to discuss.

I exaggerate to make my point. I know that tutorials exist to provide opportunity for discussion. But I am also aware of how little time Maltese lecturers can spend on tutorials. Many must rush off after their lectures to other jobs to supplement their university pay to be able to support their families. They lack the time needed to conduct tutorials and seminars, not to speak of research. A university requires full-time teachers. But to obtain full-time commitment, staff must also receive a salary commensurate with its responsibilities.

Professor Friggieri eloquently points to the failure of the media to stimulate thinking. I concur. Malta's leading English language newspapers, because they are independent of government and party control, could do much more. They remind me of well fed pets. They have been taught to bark at politicians and wag their tails at those who bring food. They never chase people. For thirty years I have vainly searched their pages for interesting local news. What a pity that they do not invest their growing advertising revenue in a good investigative journalist. He or she could have a field day: environmental pollution, land speculation, drugs, prostitution, abortion clinics, bureaucratic inefficiency....! This would liven up the papers, inform the public, provoke discussion and so help contain these abuses.

Professor Serracino Inglott, as always, provokes thinking. His points are well taken. The reluctance to ask questions is certainly more complex than my four hypotheses can deal with.

Avoiding confrontation by remaining silent or begging questions is indeed an often used strategy for survival. It is employed, among others, by Mexican Indians, Dutch peasants and wily students everywhere.

Dr. Sant provides an elegant analysis of Maltese society. I find myself agreeing with him on virtually all points. I disagree, however, with his pessimistic conclusion. I do not believe that the social reforms set in motion in the seventies have been undermined. It would be suicidal for a party with a precarious electoral majority to dismantle the Maltese welfare state. Secondly, I believe the basis of the electoral thrust of the winning party in the last election was broader than the "clerical, trading and professional interests." Moreover, both Malta's dominant parties have substantial trading and professional interests that always manage to achieve an accommodation with government, whatever its colour.

I am left with a question. Why, of the various articles and books that I have written on Malta, was this the one to provoke discussion? Was it because it dealt with education? Is this a sign of the times?

Karl Mannheim's Contributions to the Development of the Sociology of Knowledge

Peter Mayo

Karl Mannheim's work in the area of Sociology of Knowledge is generally considered to be his greatest contribution to sociological research. In his writings on the subject, the Hungarian theorist posits that a sociology of knowledge is possible and that there exists a relationship between forms of knowledge and social structure. His major contention in this respect is that ideas relating to definitions of social reality are existentially-determined.

In this paper, I shall attempt to provide an exposition of Mannheim's ideas regarding the existential determination of knowledge, taking into account:

- (a) the various schools of thought and social factors which influenced his thinking;
- (b) his interpretation of the concepts of ideology and utopia;
- (c) the way he sought to grapple with such pertinent issues as the validity or otherwise of existentially-determined knowledge;
- (d) his attempts at preventing his theory from lapsing into relativistic nihilism, and finally,
- (e) the various criticisms levelled at his work on the Sociology of Knowledge.

The Social Setting and the various philosophical influences

Mannheim was active as a writer exploring the relationship between knowledge and existence at a time during which Central Europe was still reeling from the effects of the First World War. The 'Front Generation' of the First World War was shocked not so much by the violence and the human as well as economic losses as by the fact that 'reality' had revealed itself in a different and terrible light (Kecskemeti, 1968: 2):

"What everyone had taken to be reality itself now stood revealed as an illusion. A complete re-orientation was felt to be necessary; a re-examination of all traditional ideas about reality, all values, all principles ... one no longer lived in the shameful situation of taking the unreal for the real, of trusting illusory authorities and values."

(Kecskemeti, 1968 : 2)

The overriding concern appeared to be that of shattering the illusion. Traditional ideas had to be re-

examined. Similar concerns appear in Mannheim's work on the Sociology of Knowledge as well as in his other writings related to the subject. Mannheim's work deals with such issues as the relativism of truth - an issue widely discussed in Germany at the turn of the century. In this respect, his work stood in marked contrast to that of the Phenomenological School which had come to be identified with the theory of absolute, objective as opposed to relative, subjective values (Kecskemeti, 1968:8).

Max Scheler was the chief proponent of the objectivist theory of value and yet, quite surprisingly, he later became arguably the first social theorist to employ the term 'sociology of knowledge' (Kecskemeti, 1968:8), using it in the wake of a strategic campaign against Positivism, in which he wanted to show that, despite its pre-eminence, science is not a superior form of knowledge, having greater validity than, say, religion or metaphysics (Kecskemeti, 1968:16). According to Scheler, it is only given greater importance in bourgeois, capitalist societies, societies dedicated to the control and manipulation of things, whereas those which promote other values would, according to Scheler, generate other types of knowledge (Kecskemeti, 1968:16, 17).

Mannheim regarded Scheler as a 'Conservative' thinker who, nevertheless, acknowledged that the mind depended on material factors (Kecskemeti, 1968:17). Unlike the Positivists, whom Scheler attacked, Mannheim maintained, in the essay 'On Interpretation of Weltanschauung' (1923), that methodologies used in the natural sciences could not be applied in relation to the social sciences and other cultural objects (Larrain, 1979:101). He argues that, when analysing social life, a specific kind of understanding ('verstehen') is required, "since the object of knowledge partly involves the subject" (Larrain, 1979:100). In Mannheim's view, therefore, a distinction between 'Geisteswissenschaften' and 'Naturwissenschaften' is made. This is very much in keeping with the Historicist tradition which Mannheim observes (Larrain, 1979:103). Mannheim appears to go as far as to intimate that natural sciences should be excluded from "the direct determination of social factors" (Larrain, 1979:103). On the other hand, knowledge and ideas that are existentially-determined, and these include historical, political and cultural matters (Larrain, 1979:103), are "bound to a location", albeit differently, within the social set up and historical process (Coser, 1977:431).

Mannheim states that cultural objects and phenomena can be dealt with in two ways: they may be understood either from the inside, so that their immanent meanings may be revealed, or from the outside, that is to say, they may be viewed as a reflection of the social process in which their producer is involved, the latter being the method of the Sociology of Knowledge (Coser, 1977:430). Mannheim's view, therefore, is "that all thoughts in the humanities and social sciences are determined in form and content by non-theoretical factors" (Remmling, 1975:9).

This is very much in accordance with the tenets of Historicism which incorporated historical relativism and stressed that "each thought and each human action could only be understood and judged in terms of its cultural matrix" (Coser, 1977:452).¹

The influence of Marxian thought is too obvious to pass unobserved. The notion of the social conditioning or social determination of thought was expressed by Marx in such early works as *The German Ideology*, wherein he stated that the dominant ideas in every epoch are the ideas of the dominant class (Tucker, 1978:172). As Remmling (1975) maintains, "it was Marx who first interpreted ideas as mere reflections of their producer's position in the 'process of production', of his class position" (p.56).

Both Marx and the exponents of Historicism sought to establish a strong relationship between ideas and the social structures within which the producers of such ideas are located. In this respect, the issue of relativism becomes relevant to any consideration of their discussion of the relationship between knowledge and society. As already indicated, the same applies to any discussion of Mannheim's work on the Sociology of Knowledge.

Mannheim asserted that thought was "group thought" in that it is rooted in "group action": (Ditterberner, 1979:13): "... knowledge is from the very beginning a cooperative effort of group life, in which everyone unfolds his knowledge within the framework of a common fate, a common activity, and the overcoming of common difficulties (in which, however, each has a different share)." (Mannheim, 1936:29).

For Mannheim, ideas are very much related to the 'group' to which their proponent belongs.² In this respect, one cannot overlook Marx's notion that ideas are relative to the social class of those who espouse them. For Marx, therefore, class was the main determinant of knowledge. For Mannheim, however, the range of 'groups' that determined knowledge was much broader, including not only social class but also status groups, occupational categories and (Coser, 1977:433) age groups. The last mentioned were accorded great importance by Mannheim.³

The Concept of Ideology

One aspect of Mannheim's work which inevitably invited comparisons with that of Karl Marx is his treatment of the concept of ideology. In Marxian theory, the concept assumes great importance and refers to "a class rationale of supposedly universal ideas that actually masked class interests" (Ditterberner, 1979:1). It is widely used in Marx's work as "illusion, 'false consciousness'" (Ditterberner, 1979:1), or, as Raymond Williams puts it, 'an upside down version of reality'.

Mannheim, for his part, distinguishes between what he calls a 'particular' and a 'total' conception of ideology. The former refers "only to specific assertions which may be regarded as concealments, falsifications or lies without attacking the integrity of the total mental structure of the asserting subject" (Mannheim, 1936:266). As such, the particular conception of ideology was limited only to the content of an opponent's assertion and indicates that only part of his/her argument is "ideological", while the total conception of ideology calls into question the entire 'Weltanschauung' (world view) of an adversary (Ditterberner, 1979:15,16). It refers "to a phenomenon revealing concern 'with the characteristics and composition of the total structure of the mind' of an age or social group" (Larrain, 1979: 108). The total conception operates at a sociological level, whereas the particular conception operates at a psychological level, the total conception of ideology presupposing that there is a correspondence between a particular standpoint or perspective and a given social location (Ditterberner, 1979:16). Ditterberner (1979) considers Mannheim's notion of the total conception of ideology to be akin to Marx's notion of false consciousness, however with a difference (p.16). In Marxian theory, Ideological and, hence, 'false' thinking was the characteristic of non-Marxists (p. 12). Marxists held their ideas to be true and non-ideological in as much as they served as an expression of a class without any privileged interests to safeguard (Coser, 1977:431). Mannheim posited that all ideas were ideological, including those expressed by Marx. Ideological thought was the characteristic of everyone (Ditterberner 1979:12). Therefore, Mannheim's notion of the total concept of ideology "was purged of Marx's notion of truth and therefore without the invidious note associated with false consciousness" (Ditterberner, 1979:16). Unlike the particular conception of ideology, which is associated with "falsity" (Mannheim, 1936:265), the total conception is devoid of all "moral and denunciatory intent" (Mannheim, 1936:266). Absolute truth and falsification are values that do not apply to Mannheim's total conception of ideology.

Therefore, because of its moral connotation, the term "ideology" is finally dropped by Mannheim and substituted by the term "the Sociology of

Knowledge" which he regards as "a research interest which leads to the raising of the question when and where social structures come to express themselves in the structure of assertions, and in what sense the former concretely determine the latter" (Mannheim, 1936:266).

Since social structures determine the structure of assertions, then thought inevitably comes to be regarded as perspectivistic. The same object is viewed differently by different persons, depending on their place in historical time and social structure.(Coser, 1977:431):

"Perspective is something more than a merely formal determination of thinking. It refers also to qualitative elements in the structure of thought, elements which must necessarily be overlooked by a purely formal logic. It is precisely these factors which are responsible for the fact that two persons, even if they apply the same formal-logical rules, eg. the law of contradiction or the formula of the syllogism, in an identical manner, may judge the same object very differently." (Mannheim, 1936:272)

As such, "Human thought is 'situationally relative'" (Coser, 1977:432). Inevitably, this exposed Mannheim to a flood of criticism on the grounds that his theory degenerated into relativistic nihilism. He himself is on record as having concluded, at one stage, that since all thought is 'ideological' in nature, then "all thinking is false" (cf. Otto Dahlke's criticism in *Contemporary Social Theory*, referred to in Kecskemeti 1968:28).

Mannheim sought to escape such criticism in various ways. In *Ideology and Utopia*, he states that perspectivistic thought is not necessarily invalid but "might merely represent a partial view" (Mannheim, 1936:284). After all, he had stated that, at times, particular groups can have greater means of understanding a social phenomenon than other groups but no group can have complete means (Coser, 1977:431). Partial truth remains a possibility in a situation where thought is perspectivistic. However, the attainment of absolute truth remains out of the question.

Mannheim calls this version of his theory "relationism", the term he employed in order to counter that of "relativism" which "denies the validity of any standards and of the existence of order in this world" (Mannheim, 1936:283). Mannheim(1936) insists that the "analyses characteristic of the Sociology of Knowledge are by no means irrelevant" for the determination of truth(p285). As Larrain(1979) indicates, he asserts that sociological interpretation does not merely posit a relationship between the cultural object and the social world(P.107) but represents an attempt to "particularize its scope and the extent of its validity" (Mannheim, 1936:284). By virtue of particularization, "relationism 'restricts' the claim to truth.", limiting the extent to which knowledge is valid (Larrain, 1979:107).

Mannheim took great pains to steer clear of relativism. He asserts that Relationism "signifies merely that all the elements of meaning in a given situation have reference to one another and derive their significance from this reciprocal interrelationship in a given frame of thought" (Mannheim, 1936:86).

Mannheim maintains that the 'dynamic relationism' he advocates is the only means whereby one can synthesize the multiplicity of competing ideologies, each one of which is existentially determined(Ditterberner, 1979: 18). In 'Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon', Mannheim maintains that synthesis can emerge from a situation of polarisation (Kecskemeti, 1968:25). Competing viewpoints would be assimilated until a relatively total conception of reality would emerge (Ditterberner, 1979:18). Mannheim claims that the Sociology of Knowledge can lead to such a synthesis.

Kettler, Meja and Stehr (1984), point out that, in Mannheim's view, "enquiry into social genesis will, if comprehensively done, bring about a synthesis of valid elements in the ideologies, relocating them in a development context which will not so much falsify the ideologies as cognitive structures as render them obsolete - displaced by a new comprehensive vision" (p.61).

The people who, in Mannheim's view, are ideally situated to carry out this 'synthesis' are those who belong to the "classless stratum" of the 'free-floating' or 'socially unattached intelligentsia' (freishwebende intelligenz), the term he borrowed from Alfred Weber. Mannheim believed that 'unattached' intellectuals had two options available to them to get out of their classless situation. They could either choose to become what Gramsci would term 'organic intellectuals', in that they would attach themselves to a particular class, or else they could engage in "scrutiny of their own social moorings"(Mannheim, 1936:158). Mannheim believed that, if they chose the latter path, they would arrive at a new consciousness, one which would allow them to discover that they are in a position from where a total perspective can be attained (Ditterberner, 1979:18, 19).

Mannheim believed that such a choice is possible in that, although these intellectuals do have class links and hail from most diverse social backgrounds, these differences become subordinate to that particular factor which brings them together - education (Larrain, 1979:116):

"It is ... peculiarly characteristic of this new basis of association that it preserves the multiplicity of the component elements in all their variety by creating a homogeneous medium within which the conflicting parties can measure their strength ... This acquired educational heritage subjects him (the Educated Man) to the opposing tendencies in social reality ..." (Mannheim, 1936: 155, 156). It is from this position that the educated person, the 'free-floating' intellectual, can engage in the sort of

'syntheses' that could lead to a total conception of reality.⁴ And the Sociology of Knowledge was considered by Mannheim to be of crucial importance to the intellectuals in carrying out this task, (Kettler et al, 1984:6). Mannheim's belief in a 'vanguard' of intellectuals was reaffirmed in his later, British writings on the Sociology of Planned Reconstruction. There he wrote in terms of a chosen scientific elite of social planners, moral leaders and sociologists with a new orientation (Coser, 1977:440). As far as his writings on the Sociology of Knowledge go, the hopes which Mannheim pinned on a classless stratum of intellectuals left him open to a barrage of criticism. Most of his critics considered his attempts to avoid lapsing into nihilistic relativism as unconvincing and hardly successful (Coser, 1977:436).

Mannheim tried other means of grappling with the problem of validity. The notions of 'pragmatic adjustment' and what he calls 'the quest for reality' constituted such means. It would be amiss to explain such notions without referring to the distinction which Mannheim draws between ideological and utopian thought. In Mannheim's view, both ideology and utopia distort reality in as much as the ideas which they comprise are not congruent with it. The former is viewed by Mannheim as a kind of distortion which fails to take into account the new realities characterising a situation (Larrain, 1979: 114).

Ideas relating to past realities which, nevertheless, enable their proponents to retain their privileges (e.g. Conservatism) may be considered as ideological. The utopian distortion, on the other hand, transcends existing reality and is projected 'beyond the present' (Larrain, 1979: 113).⁵ So Mannheim argues that both types of thought are inadequate and situationally incongruous, since, in his view, ideology conceals reality while utopia exceeds its limits (Larrain, 1979: 114).

The avoidance of these distortions should, according to Mannheim, be conducive to a "quest for reality" (Larrain, 1979: 14). He states that "thought should contain neither less nor more than the reality in whose medium it operates" (Mannheim, cited in Larrain, 1979: 114). This is very much in keeping with the principle that "every idea must be tested by its congruence with reality" (Mannheim, cited in Ditterberner, 1979: 17). The implication of this statement is that such thought would have a measure of validity in that it would be free from the kind of "distortion" referred to above.

Critique of Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge

The criticism levelled at Mannheim's proposition and formulation of the relationship between knowledge and existence has been widespread and varied. Robert K. Merton, who attempted something very much on the lines of a sociology of knowledge, in his study on 'Puritanism, Pietism and Science' (Ditterberner, 1979:35),

criticizes Mannheim on the grounds that too many kinds of thoughts are grouped together by Mannheim under the same category of the Sociology of Knowledge, stating that the same considerations are applied to "ethical, aesthetic, political, religious and scientific judgements" (Ditterberner, 1979: 36). Speier alludes to virtually the same thing when he states that the considerations which Mannheim makes apply to the thought of men of action but could not be applied to philosophical thought which, he argues, could not be understood only in social terms (Ditterberner, 1979: 32).

Some critics (e.g. Speier) argue that there is also an inconsistency in the use of the term 'ideology'. In his distinction between ideology and utopia, Mannheim refers to the former as a situationally inadequate thought. Elsewhere, he refers to all existentially-determined thinking as ideology (Ditterberner, 1979: 32). Another inconsistency concerns the issue of validity. At one stage, Mannheim asserts that "all thinking is false" whereas, elsewhere, in a bid to confound his critics who accused him of veering towards nihilistic relativism, Mannheim provides a modified version of this statement by positing something to the effect that since thought is perspectivistic it can have partial validity. Merton (1957) also refers to a fundamental indecision on Mannheim's part regarding specification of "the type or mode of relations between social structure and knowledge" (p.498). In the relevant chapter in Merton's book, a number of terms, pointing to the nature of the relationship between thought and social structure, are listed. Such inconsistencies and indecisions are indeed glaring. Nevertheless, they can be excused on the grounds that Mannheim was merely proposing an area of sociological enquiry, one whose theories were in constant need of reformulation. His work in this field is therefore characterised by its "groping and tentative nature" (Coser, 1977: 430).

Mannheim has often been criticised on the grounds that his work is self-contradictory. As Otto Dahlke maintains:

"The notion of relativism or relationism, as developed by Mannheim, is self-contradictory, for it must presuppose its own absoluteness. The sociology of knowledge must assume its own validity; if it has to have any meaning."

(Cited in Kecskemeti, 1968: 28)

He seems to have been re-echoing Von Shelling who stated that "the traditional concept of truth was both implied and denied - implied for Mannheim's own thought, denied to others" (Ditterberner, 1979:22).

"Since à la Mannheim, the total structure of consciousness is included in the ideology concept, and since, consequently, there cannot be any thinking but ideological thinking, therefore even scientific thought, and especially in the social sciences, falls under this concept and becomes "functionalized" with respect to social factors.

Consequently, according to our author, its objective, impartial validity is destroyed.” (Von Schelting, cited in Ditterberner, 1979: 22)

This appears to be the consequence of the formulation of a theory with strong relativistic overtones. After all, Mannheim himself acknowledged that all thinking is ideological, including his own. As such, he seems to be undermining his theory's validity. Going by Mannheim's own criteria, the truth expressed in his theory can only be partially valid, unless he saw himself as one of those 'free floating' intellectuals aspiring to develop a total conception of reality.

The concept of the 'socially-unattached intelligentsia' may indeed have been the product of his own existential-situation as a young intellectual in his native Hungary. Judging from the literature it appears that the existence of a socially unattached stratum of intellectuals was indeed possible in this country during and after the First World War. Coser (1977) writes that he belonged to an "increasingly self-conscious group of Budapest intellectuals", a high proportion of whom were of Jewish origin, just like Mannheim (P.441). Coser (1977) states that like the Russian intelligentsia of the previous century, these Jewish intellectuals were "largely men without firm attachment to any of the major strata and classes of their society. They were conscious of their isolation and unhappily or proudly aware of their marginality" (Coser, 1987:442).

Even so, the present writer finds it hard to believe that a similar strata of intellectuals can be found in academic circles in Western society today. There is ample literature in the Sociology of Education to show that the formal system of education in Western capitalist society tends to favour the middle class. As such, the majority of academics and intellectuals, who normally feature prominently among the beneficiaries of the school system, are likely to hail from the middle-class. This may serve to repudiate Mannheim's argument that intellectuals are likely to emerge from diverse social backgrounds as a result of which an academic in an educational establishment is likely to be exposed to different perspectives. One ought to remark that when Mannheim formulated this theory of the Intelligentsia, German universities were full of intellectuals who were openly attached to particular social classes and their political interests (Remmling, 1975:71). The majority embraced views which were an amalgam of "reactionary conservatism and nationalism" (Remmling, 1975:71).

Furthermore, as Larrain (1979) remarks, the theory of the social determination of knowledge appears to be "incompatible" with that of the socially unattached intelligentsia (P.116). It appears incongruous that the producers of that very same knowledge which is existentially-determined should be socially unattached: "The fact that all existentially determined thought is relativized to a social situation is inconsistent with the lack of attachment of its

authors" (Larrain, 1979:116).

Furthermore, Mannheim's belief in the ability of an 'elite' of socially unattached intellectuals to arrive at a total conception of reality has implications for a theory concerning the manner in which knowledge is to be disseminated. Judging from Mannheim's views, knowledge is to be disseminated in a most traditional manner - from above. It may be existentially-determined but it is not likely to emerge from the educatee's cultural base. That kind of knowledge can only be partial, perspectivist. Knowledge relating to a total conception of reality can only be derived from above, that is from a vanguard of 'socially-unattached' intellectuals.

The other means through which Mannheim sought to come to terms with the problem of truth was provided by the notion of the quest for reality: "thought should contain neither less nor more than the reality in whose medium it operates" (Mannheim, cited in Larrain, 1979:114). One feels inclined to ask whether Mannheim regards 'reality' as a social-construct. Judging from Mannheim's own assertion that thought is existentially-determined, one expects reality to be viewed differently by different people (Larrain, 1979:114).

The same applies to the notion of adjustment contained in the related statement that "A theory ... is wrong if in a practical situation it uses concepts and categories which, if taken seriously, would prevent man from adjusting himself at that historical stage" (Merton, 1957:503). This is what is generally referred to as the theory of pragmatic adjustment. As Robert K. Merton (1957) points out, social adjustment is "a normative rather than an existential concept" (p.503). And, needless to say, the construct to which the individual is expected to adjust is reality which, in itself, constitutes no criterion for establishing truth. Furthermore, as Coser (1977) points out, judgements as to which ideas contributed to adjustment in a given historical period are likely to be made ex-post facto (p.435).

One of the criticisms levelled at Mannheim's work on the Sociology of Knowledge concerned his separation of immanent and functional meaning. Mannheim distinguishes between idea and ideology, the former referring to an intellectual proposition when considered from within and the other referring to a similar phenomenon when considered from without (Larrain, 1979: 119). As Larrain (1979) argues, this contrast is conducive to an "epistemological dualism which separates the ideological from the intrinsic meaning of thought" (p.119). It appears as though Mannheim considers only functional meaning as valid, rejecting any consideration of an immanent meaning and so the Sociology of Knowledge which he proposes appears incapable of criticizing the content of a theory or thought since it insists upon its social setting (Larrain, 1979:120).

A theory which serves to unmask social contradictions and which may be in the interests of

those who suffer, as a result of such contradictions, can have both 'immanent' and 'functional' validity. One feels that a theory can be judged 'per se' as well as in relation to its social function.

The theory of the Sociology of Knowledge is widely regarded as an outgrowth of Historicism (Coser, 1977:452), according to which every epoch "can only be understood in its own terms (Abercrombie, *et al*, 1986:10). Ideas are therefore considered to be determined by the existential conditions prevalent during the historical period during which they are formulated. This appears to be a tenet of both Historicism and the Sociology of Knowledge. According to this theory, cultural products, including literary works, contain ideas that are relative to the historical, cultural and social settings in which they are produced. As such, judging from Mannheim's theories, they have only partial validity and can only be understood following a process of 'verstehen'. Such theories, however, do not explain why societies as historically remote from each other as Fifth Century B.C. Athens, Elizabethan and Jacobean England and Nineteenth Century Russia have managed to produce works of art that seem to convey identical insights into the human condition, despite the fact that they are the product of completely different cultures and were written in unrelated languages. Going by Mannheim's theory, this could hardly have been possible, considering that the ideas expressed by the various writers were directly related to their respective age, culture and society. One may, perhaps, argue that ideas and insights that reappear across different times and cultures may be regarded as having validity.⁶

Having outlined the criticisms levelled at and the problems related to Mannheim's proposition of the Sociology of Knowledge, one may conclude this paper by acknowledging that Mannheim has shed some important light on the nature of the relationship between knowledge and existence. His work has served to call into question several assumptions which, for years, had been formulated as absolute truths. Furthermore, building on the work of such predecessors as Scheler, he has indicated that historical, cultural and social ideas have to be judged by criteria which are different from those applied in relation to the natural sciences, stressing that such ideas are conditioned by the social situation of their proponents. In this respect, he has indicated that the range of sources determining such knowledge is more varied than Marx would have us believe. The chains to which men of knowledge were bound, to adopt Coser's metaphor (Coser, 1977:437), include not only class but also age, status and occupational groups (in this respect, Mannheim's concept of social differentiation is closer to the Weberian than the Marxian model).

Mannheim was active in a period rocked by tremendous political upheavals, the insecurity of which was partly reflected through such concepts as

'nihilism' and 'relativism', the latter being so widespread that it even made its presence felt in cultural productions of the age (e.g. the plays of Luigi Pirandello). To his credit, Mannheim took great pains to steer his theory of the sociology of knowledge away from relativism. The fact that he was hardly successful in this regard should not detract from his merit in having identified the problem of truth and validity as an area of major concern for those who later were to attempt to develop the theory he helped pioneer.

Finally, the issue of the socially unattached intelligentsia may have rendered him vulnerable to criticism. Nevertheless, given the political and social turmoil characterising the period in which he was active, including the later English years, which were affected by the advent of Nazism, it appears quite understandable that he should pin his hopes on intellectuals. They may have appeared to him to constitute the only crag of sanity in an ocean of madness.

Notes

1. Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge can be regarded as having grown out of the Historicist tenet, propounded by such theorists as Wilhelm Dilthey and Ernst Troeltsch, that every epoch can only be judged in its own terms (Coser, 1977:452).
2. Mannheim asserts that such young persons provide ideas that are intended either to "change the surrounding world of nature and society" or to "maintain it in a given condition", depending on "the character and position of the groups to which they belong" (Mannheim, 1936: 4). The point that thought is related, in Mannheim, to the intention to change or maintain nature and society is stressed by Steven Seidman in a footnote to the introduction to his book, *Liberalism and the Origins of European Social Theory* (cf. Seidman, 1983:302).
3. The essay on 'Generations' deals with this particular determinant of knowledge. Mannheim posits that generation is not a 'concrete group' in that it has neither an organisational framework nor a 'community character' (Kecskemeti, 1968:23). Nevertheless, one's generation does have a bearing on certain facets of one's behaviour and thinking. Members of the same age group will, however, have nothing in common, unless they belong to the same culture and society (Kecskemeti, 1968:23,24). Moreover, even within the same historical community, members of the same generation can be split up into clearly defined sub-groups with different orientations based on political or class lines (Kecskemeti, 1968:24). Mannheim calls these sub-groups 'generation units'. Knowledge may therefore be conditioned by an interplay of generational, cultural and social factors.
4. Mannheim attached a lot of importance to Education and Intellectualism elsewhere in his writings, most notably those related to his 'British' period. He regarded Education (including Adult and Parent Education) and Religion as the cornerstone of his plan for social reconstruction (Coser, 1977:439). They were deemed necessary for Western society, which was haunted by the spectre of Nazism and was regarded, in a manner reminiscent of T.S. Eliot (cf. 'The Wasteland'), as being devoid of its moral fibre and in need of regeneration.
5. Mannheim drew a further distinction, namely between absolute and relative utopias. He regarded the former as ones which 'in principle can never be realised' while the latter are those which appear to be unrealizable only from the standpoint of a given social order (Larrain, 1979:113).

6. I am indebted, here, to two persons, namely Mr. Paul Spiteri and Prof. Anne Marie Decore. The former raised and developed this issue in a personal letter sent to me, while Prof. Decore, a teacher of mine at the University of Alberta, discussed it with me, maintaining that this observation can open an avenue towards establishing validity, and that ideas and insights which recur across time and cultures may be identical to those whose validity is established by 'free floating intellectuals'.

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Critical Economics

Godfrey Baldacchino

"In my view, every economic fact whether or not of such a nature as to be expressed in numbers, stands in relation as cause and effect to many other facts, and since it never happens that all of them can be expressed in numbers, the application of exact mathematical methods to those which can is nearly always a waste of time, while in the large majority of cases it is positively misleading; and the world would have been further on its way forward if the work had never been done at all"

Alfred Marshall (1)

Introduction

Economics is today recognised as a key social science discipline in the Maltese school curriculum. Elements of economic life figure in the subject matter of civics/social studies from an early, primary level. Students come across these in increasing complexity and detail up to Ordinary or Advanced Level standard. The option also exists to pursue economics as a major area of study leading to a Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Arts Degree at the University.

Mainstream economics takes great pains to project itself as a science. It seeks to base itself on sound and empirically testable hypotheses about human behaviour in the context of a competition by users for scarce resources. Its vocabulary and procedures borrow much from mathematics and statistics, couched as they are in calculus, graphs and numerical equations. The subject's major concern is with value-free, therefore neutral, fact (2).

This approach has its evident spinoffs. Foremost is the respectability which scientific status enjoys in this modern day and age. The attraction of 'scientism', however, goes beyond its dignifying image. It also includes a steadfast commitment to analyse what is to the exclusion of what should be (3). This orientation purges all that is non-positivist from the discussion and relegates it to the concern of politicians, sociologists, prophets or priests (4). In this way, economics spares itself from social, political and moral content and the associated painful and unscientific issues of choice, of policy, of decision-making. The option to remain positivist and therefore prestigious may have been secured not only at the cost of irrelevance to explain the real world (5); but it also appears to serve as an apologetic, an acquiescing drug to the way things are (6).

This short article seeks to identify and justify a more critical and pragmatic orientation for economics education. It is hereby argued that the teaching of economics should go beyond the exercise of devising mathematical parameters about human attitudes in relation to scarce resources. Per se, the exercise may appear scientifically valid yet it is dangerously devoid of normative content, political concern or critical inquiry. Admittedly, the discipline of economics, as with the other social sciences, should

be scientific in the sense that it offers training possibilities in orderly methods for analyzing certain types of problems, for collecting information, for a systematic elaboration of research hypotheses, methods and results. Systematicity and, where relevant, repeatability, are crucial aspects of the scientific method which militate against the potential of blatant dogmatism: they render, in a spirit of humility which acknowledges human bias and possible human error, the issue at stake to open scrutiny and debate. This stance should not however be adopted to the exclusion of training in the awareness of the political dimension to the issue, the social implications of the research findings, the various policy alternatives which result and the values governing the "best" choice.

Radical economists may deride scientism as a bourgeois construct for legitimating capitalism and for alienating academics from pressing social problems. Orthodox economists may ridicule the black sheep of their profession as leftist upstarts who are inviting trouble to themselves by venturing recklessly beyond the safe and solid realm of neutral science. The argument, which has raged already for over a century, can too easily be interpreted as an inevitable appointment with the painful choice of allegiance to one of the two warring camps. Yet, after scratching away the respective rhetoric, a happy combination based on the logical approach of one school and the social concern of the other appears possible in practice. In this way, the teaching of economics may indeed lead students to achieve "economic literacy" (7), mastering more successfully the economic dimension of their social existence.

Starting from first principles

The Concise Oxford Dictionary describes economics as the 'practical science of the production and distribution of wealth'. The subject is also defined as the science which gives guidance as to the optimum allocation of scarce resources - land, labour and capital, in particular - for the maximisation of human welfare. This already suggests an obvious relationship to political issues since both wealth distribution and resource allocation are intimately involved with the issues of power,

interest representation and conflict resolution. Whereas the 'invisible hand' of the free market may indeed serve as an optimal allocative and self-regulatory mechanism, the history of economics in the real world can be seen as none other than a permanent continual attempt to distort and usurp the free market to one's individual or collective advantage.

The crucial independent variable of most economic analysis - economic man with his fixed pattern of tastes, values and attitudes about which he is fully informed - may be a good starting point for a theoretical model. But is it correct to assume that he really exists when it is clear that so many social forces have a vested interest that this *Homo Economicus* feels, acts, consumes and works in certain ways?

The issue of welfare maximisation should also be critically assessed. While the purpose of economics is presumably to increase human welfare, then one has to ask what human welfare is all about. It is certainly much more than (if at all) the mere quantifiable maximisation of production and consumption. Human welfare is a more complex condition: it includes health, mental, emotional and spiritual matters as well as social and environmental issues. It goes much beyond materialism.

Classroom Exposure

While there is likely to be a general agreement on many of the above points, the actual classroom atmosphere suggests that students who pursue economics courses come to think otherwise: teachers generally enjoin students to foster an understanding - implying an acceptance - of the wealth creation process and a recognition that industrial growth, consumerism and new technology are synonymous with progress (8). The orientation of economic policy boils down to the student mind (if not also to the responsible practitioners') to mean the pursuit of economic growth as indicated by an increasing Gross National Product. However, not only is GNP a misleading indicator as is discussed below; it also equates growth with welfare, which is more dangerous. It fails thus to ask three vital questions: Growth of what? Growth for whom? Growth with what side-effects? The decision to omit these considerations from the domain of economics teaching is, even in itself, a contributor towards an eventual non-critical attitude to such matters in future civic and occupational life (9). Instruction in economics may be thus producing highly competent and professional technocrats and statisticians who can develop highly sophisticated models of economic behaviour. However, both these few practitioners and the larger masses who do not end up with economics-oriented careers may emerge moulded with an unquestioning, blind attitude to real socio-economic phenomena which they take as a 'given' and which,

in turn, makes them vulnerable and ripe for manipulation.

For Economic Literacy

School is meant to engrain students with the disposition of which "good" citizens and "good" workers are made of. Over and above this, school is also meant to prepare students for the demands of a democratic environment, of which a critical attitude and a competence to pursue and articulate one's interests via available or created channels of representation and participation are essential components (11). Hence, the argument for economic literacy is as strong as that for civic and occupational competence (12).

What, therefore, is to be included in a curriculum geared to develop economic literacy? The following major themes are suggested for inclusion. They are ideal for classroom discussion and each can be developed for different age-groups and capabilities. The themes share a concern for the political, social and moral repercussions of economic policy:

- a) **The environment** - Economics should reformulate its perspective on Land as being merely worth what is potentially commercializable and exploitable either as real estate, agricultural produce or raw material. Much global environmental depletion and degradation is today taking place which is not only omitted from the costs of development but at times even equated to development itself (13). Economics should include an assessment of the repercussions of ecologically irresponsible growth or commercial policies, and include a proper consideration of alternative models (14).
- b) **The firm** - The firm in neo-classical economic theory is the single consistent decision-taking unit (other than the individual person or household) seeking to achieve the common goal of maximising profits. This perspective misses to analyse the composition of 'the firm' and, within this 'black box', fails to question the logic of the "ownership = control" relation. It therefore takes for granted a private capitalist orientation of production. This highlights the poverty of the theory of the firm to explain the plethora of other forms of organising production: Public, household, cooperative, labour-managed, mutual aid, self-employment, barter and skills exchange, community organisations, voluntary activity. For many of these, the main *raison d'être* is not profit maximisation in the classical sense (15).

The model firm thus reflects only a fraction of total human productive activity. Students ought to be made aware of this limitation and should be encouraged to consider the other sites of productive practice on their own merits. Much of these practices are indeed looked down upon and treated disparagingly in terms of

underground, black, informal, illegal or invisible activities, even though they serve a very useful purpose in real life. Is this an indication of their ability to escape clear monetization and therefore inclusion within scientific GNP-based data?

- c) **Social relations** - The organisation of production, distribution and consumption which characterises the economic circuit is not simply an impersonal activity, explainable in quantity terms. It also brings people together in relations of superordination or subordination (16). The nature and effects of social relations of production has mostly been developed in terms of class or normative conflict at the workplace (17). Social relations are however none the less significant in matters of allocating resources and consuming them. At a macro level, the political system and the state are not just firms writ large, other black boxes which merely channel functions and supports (18). They are the sites of intense lobbying and pressure levelling, seeking to sway particular resources and policy choices in particular directions (19). At the micro level, individual producers and consumers are subject to different and widely ranging experiences from different milieus. Once again the theory is rich in the sphere of workplace production: certain work environments breed more militancy; some tolerate more discretion and initiative; others are more vulnerable, operating in unstable/seasonal markets; in others the work process is dominated by sophisticated machinery. These varied occupational contexts generate, even at the individual level, different tendency responses to job satisfaction, job security, skill development and trade unionism. The variety of responses increases further when one introduces other factors such as age, gender, race and size of firm (20).

- d) **For exchange or for use?** - While mainstream economic theory remains tied to commodity production - that is, goods and services produced with the intention of them being sold on the market - there is an evident disregard if not an outright disrespect for non-commercialisable goods and services or those which cannot be profitably produced. The preference for exchange-oriented in lieu of use- or need-oriented value diminishes the importance of all (informal) activity not dictated by the profit motive. Such an orientation is fundamentally related to the growth motive in economics, whereby 'progress' is measured by economic expansion which, in its turn, implies the inducement by those who have the means to 'need' or 'want' more and thus increase effective demand. Those who can't buy more remain insignificant others in the system. The arising situation is the paradoxical one where great affluence and great poverty can and do coexist, even when there is common agreement that

the capability is available to solve much abject material suffering, poverty and deprivation. The provision of basic human needs for the world-wide poor is not a profitable venture and - therefore - not of major economic interest. The impetus for need-creation - via advertising, effective marketing and public relations exercises - is channelled up-market, full of potential seductible customers. "How much" supercedes "how" and "what" things are produced and consumed. The latter orientations usurp the commodity maximisation straightjacket and are therefore more disposed to analyse the quality of life and to discuss comprehensively the issue of human welfare (21).

Implementation

If economics deals with understanding the workings of society and discussing ways of achieving improved states of human existence, it cannot then fail to explore the myriad and subtle nuances of social activity. Indulging in pure models which wholeheartedly embrace mechanical/quantifiable manipulation is abstract and artificial at best, and escapist and apologetic at worst. The potential is there to cultivate, over and above fact-finding and model-building, a certain political awareness of social phenomena even among primary and secondary school students. But how to go about this in practice?

Curricular design involves many practical questions: texts must be readily available and up to date; the teachers must know what they are supposed to teach; the students what they are supposed to learn. (22). Especially where examinations and syllabi set abroad are concerned, the space available for curricular manoeuvre appears highly restricted. In such cases the approach adopted may be much more important than the content (23). The prospects for reform are brighter in the primary and early secondary school period.

Irrespective of whether curricular reform takes place or not, the onus of the responsibility for adopting effectively a critical approach to economics education falls invariably on the teacher. Admittedly, the pressures not to venture into political oriented economics loom large and ominous: Maltese students, parents and peers by and large have today grown to accept and expect that classroom economics deals in quantities and abstract models, not in the analysis of the real world, especially if that highly emotional of terms - "politics" - is involved. The mainstream positivist orientation is also less demanding of the educator, in the sense that he/she is not forced to delve into value judgements and other insecure areas which escape the relieving and comfortable domain of value-free statistical representation. It is nevertheless this shying away from political consideration that makes individuals all the more prone to demagogery and political consumption.

For the teachers motivated to enhance the social relevance of the available curriculum, supportive resources, both human and material, exist while others may be developed. Text books with this critical dimension to economics education as well as suggestions for different ways of organising classroom activities based on economics themes are readily available in print (24). Unfortunately, most of these resources are not of a local origin and therefore require some adaptation. Other aids and texts await to be developed. Still, it would not be a wild guess to state that much useful pedagogic material has already been developed by scattered individual educators. But, lacking a knowledge of each other's methodology and common orientation to the subject, they have not learnt and matured from each other's teaching aids and experiences.

The importance of imparting a critical economic consciousness is not restricted to formal education. Space is not available here to account for the crucial role which a critical knowledge of the workings of the socio-economic order has on the sound development of educators, political activists, personnel managers, trade union leaders, environmentalists and others involved in labour, civic and consumer organisations (25). Centres for adult education and trade unions in particular should show a keen interest in taking further this hitherto unorthodox approach to a key discipline. Their task should be simpler since, being non- or post-formal educational institutions, they are spared from the very many pressures to "toe the line" as well as from the rampant examination fever which still grips most of formal schooling (26).

A Contested Terrain

It has been forcefully argued that the relationship between education and work is a dialectical, two-way phenomenon, composed of a perpetual tension between two dynamics: the dynamics of capitalism and those of democracy in all their forms (27). The struggle between positivist and critical economics can be considered as one small insight into this dialectic as it occurs inside the school. It is nevertheless not utopic to envisage a truce being forced on this contested terrain, whereby both the "socialising" branch and the "liberating" branch of economics education coexist, in realistic recognition of their validity and complementarity (28).

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8. As evidenced from recent ethnographic studies. For example see Sultana, R.G. (1988) 'Schooling tomorrow's worker: Trade Union Education in Secondary Schools', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 13, pp. 3-20.
9. "The decision to teach X in a program with time constraints is also a decision not to teach Y... Silence transmits the status quo". This condition, referred to as the "null curriculum" is described in Eisner, E.W. (1979) *The Educational Imagination*, New York, MacMillan, p. 97 and Eisner, E.W. (1985) *The Art of Educational Evaluation*, Sussex, Falmer Press, p.123. It is related to Veblen's concept of "trained incapacity".
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Corgi Books; Blyth, A. et. al. (1976) *Curriculum Planning in History, Geography and Social Science*, Bristol, Collins. For a touch of local colour see Borg, C. (1988) 'Developing a theme in Social Studies: An alternative approach', *Education, Journal of the Faculty of Education*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 5-10. These texts can themselves lead on to other useful references of both a general and specific orientation to the subject matter at hand. There is also a host of organisations and periodicals to which one may subscribe for the regular receipt of information, activity suggestions and still more references. See Ekins, P. Ed., op. cit., pp. 367-374; Fisher, S. & Hicks, D., op. cit., pp. 182 et. seq.

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CONTENTS

Editorial 1

The Challenge of Critical Education

Ronald G. Sultana 2

The Hope of Radical Education

A conversation with Henry Giroux 10

Why do the Maltes ask so few questions?

Jeremy Boissevain
Alfred Sant
C.J. Farrugia
Joe Friggieri
Peter Serracino Inglott
Jeremy Boissevain 16

Karl Mannheim's Contributions to the Development of the Sociology of Knowledge

Peter Mayo 24

Critical Economics

Godfrey Baldacchino 31

Notes on Contributors 36

