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From the Imaginary to the Real: Towards a Critical Teacher Education[1]

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Teacher education has weathered strategic assaults from both the educational left and the right for decades. Especially at this time of corporate infiltration of education, and the resurgence of the revanchist right who want to take back the losses of the recent election, the stakes have been very high for the left. Yet it's important to recognize that teacher education is never static; it's always in the process of being transformed. The question is, of course, in what direction is it moving? And, just as important, who will transform the transformers, and to what end, and in whose interest?

Conservatives have frequently argued that the egregious achievement gap in school outcomes among ethnic groups and social classes is the result of students' failure of being assimilated into the values of the dominant culture. For them it is a question of socialisation, of symbolic embeddedness into society, community and the family. School failure occurs because of a *deficit* of *culture*. Such a model has been associated with *individual positivism* – school failure occurs not because of material inequalities or differences in culture but because of a lacking of a fully accepted and

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moralistic *absolutist* culture. The second approach is also a deficit model: but it is a deficit model from the left—the achievement gap is an artifact of a lack of material goods linked to hierarchies of exploitation within capitalist society. The achievement gap in this view is a result of absolute deprivation; students fail because they are not included in the economy. This position represents a form of *social positivism*. Of course, school failure is not simply a case of absolute deprivation but *relative* deprivation. Here we need also to include the subjective experience of inequality and unfairness that are related to meritocracy not merely an opportunity to sell one's labor power for a wage (although if we are to make a major contribution to the elimination of the achievement gap between and among different ethnic groups and the working class and ruling class, the elimination of necessity through class struggle would be a good way to begin). True, we live in a social universe saturated with capitalism and dripping with the logic ofconsumption. But just as crime is not a result of absolute deprivation but of cultural and social pressures (linked, of course, to the logic of capital) stemming from the heart of capitalist society, so too is the achievement gap the result of both structural and cultural dimensions of social life (a gap, by the way, that is still pronounced after 20 years of standards-based reform). Flipping the mirror, an equally problematic image will appear. In other words, if we reverse the dictum of individual positivism and argue that the achievement gap between various groups in schools is not a result of a lack of culture but of embracing a specific form of culture, namely, the culture of monetary success and possessive individualism and if we rearticulate social positivism as not material deprivation *per se*, but deprivation in the context of living with a culture of conspicuous consumption (known as 'American Dream' culture) where students are promised that they will be rewarded for their hard work in the spirit of meritocracy, then we can view the achievement gap more clearly as a crime against humanity that occurs when there is *both cultural inclusion and structural exclusion*. When students from various ethnic groups and social classes are being assured that in our multicultural society, they are all incorporated in ways founded upon the principle of equality as a result of their individual effort, and then they brush up against a society that has copious and seemingly intractable structural constraints that prevent them from succeeding like their more materially and racially advantaged counterparts (i.e., their white counterparts), then students tune out, sometimes lash out, or are more frequently pushed out (structural constraints include everything from unearned male advantage and conferred dominance to unsafe neighborhoods with gang violence, poverty, lacking a space for study, disparities in per pupil expenditures between states and within states due to local tax bases, being homeless, a legal system that privileges the law for white people of property, attending schools with high teacher attrition and low teacher retention rates, decaying buildings and lack of equipment, the naturalization of white privilege within the Anglosphere, etc., and where you are located in the system of capitalist exploitation). To perpetuate the belief in the rewards of hard work in our so-called meritocratic society as an *ex post facto* cure for a social order that is failing our children through class exploitation packaged in a swindle of belief. If you are failed by the educational system you just haven't tried hard enough to succeed since hard work is the single regulative ideal that will assure you that the fruits of your efforts will be just and fair. This is the logic of meritocracy, and it a discourse

that helps to fuel the myth of liberal democracy.

Jock Young has traced the transition of our society from modernity to late modernity, from a society that is inclusive to one that is exclusive. In *The Exclusive Society* (1999) Young argues that changes in the marketplace (both in the spheres of production and consumption) give rise to an increase in levels of crime and disorder where rules are more readily broken but also more regularly questioned. Civil society becomes more segmented and differentiated and people tend to become more suspicious of each other (Young, 1999a) as a result of increased levels of ontological insecurity (living in a plural world where individual biographies are less certain) and material insecurity (a world of economic risk and uncertainty). Exclusion in the market gives rise to exclusions and divisions within civil society which, in turn, give rise to quantitative and qualitative changes in the exclusion imposed by the state. Young's thesis is that the combination of a rise in *difficulty* (crime, disorder and incivilities) and of an increase in *difference* (the growth of diversity and debate over rules themselves) results not only in a qualitative change in civil society but in a change in the system of social control, resulting in the rise of what he calls an "actuarial" system of justice. I believe there are parallels here to the question of school failure.

According to Young (1999; 1999a), in contrast to the social order that housed the denizens of modernity (the immediate post-war period) those of us struggling to survive within late modernity (the last third of the twentieth century up to the present) do not fear diversity, or try to assimilate and rehabilitate it in the name of the established order; rather, we consume a vast menu of diversity and recast it as a commodity as much as we debate and celebrate it. Yet at the same time as we celebrate diversity, we defend ourselves against obdurate people and threatening social classes. Whereas modernity was *anthrophagic*, late modernity is *anthropoemic* (these are categories of inclusion and exclusion suggested by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques* where so-called primitive societies deal with strangers and deviants by injesting them [i.e., social cannibalism], by making them their own and by gaining strength from incorporating them in contrast to late modern societies which are anthropoemic and vomit out the deviants and outcasts and rebels, keeping them outside of society or enclosing them in special precincts (which I would consider to be barrios, ghetto schools, or places of incarceration). Within modernity, outsiders were "swallowed up" (i.e., absorbed into the social order) and pacified; criminals were rehabilitated and immigrants assimilated. Groups with alternative or oppositional lifestyles and values were simply lacking in the 'correct' values of the establishment and it was possible with the right institutions and techniques to "cure" them (this could involve anything from residential schools for first nations peoples, reform schools and other correctional facilities, opportunity schools, behavioral modification, corporal punishment, electric shock treatment or performing a lobotomy on 'deviants' sent to mental institutions). So while "difficulty" was not a major threat in modernity, "diversity" was roundly despised and explained away as a type of deviance and any relativity of value was met with an iron fisted ethical absolutism ("my way or the highway"). In other words, while diversity was not tolerated within

modernity, "difficulty" (i.e., difficulty in controlling outsiders and non-conformists) was generally tolerated as rebels and outsiders were seen as more of a challenge to rehabilitate and reform, and with the scientific gains made in understanding human behavior, would eventually be assimilated into the system (Young, 1999).

Within late modernity difference (the politics of diversity) and difficulty (crime and risk to self and society) both increased and intensified, with difficulty becoming less tolerable and diversity becoming more tolerable—even differences in lifestyle were becoming celebrated. Society began to transition from a modernist world of inclusion and incorporation (anthrophagic) to a late modernist world of exclusion (anthropoemic) that became in dire need of new modes of social control to cope with a society of increased difference, where crime and disorder were more widespread and even perceived as normalized and naturalized and thus a greater risk to individuals and collectivities (the presence of the "outsider within"). This involved a transition to a moral order marked by what Zygmunt Bauman (1995) calls "adiaphorization" where there is no longer as much a concern with justice as with community defense and protection and where causes of crime and deviance are not seen as important to overcoming the problem—a mode of social control that Jock Young (1999) terms *actuaralism*. More specifically, it is a world of "damage control" whose inhabitants engage not so much in acts of moral condemnation or reprobation as in defending themselves against both perceived and real external and internal threats, a social universe where the "other" is everywhere, including within us, having been absorbed within our own personhood. We have become the ubiquitous "other." So the preeminent dilemma within forms of actuaralist social control is no longer the question of judging or analyzing right and wrong behavior and more the case of how you can in a practical and immediate sense avoid becoming victimized—the prime initiative, in other words, is to avoid trouble and not to understand it. The challenge is to minimize risk rather than morally condemn behavior (Young, 1999a). Young (1999a) argues, following up on some insights by Robert Merton (1938), that perhaps the best metaphor for today's advanced industrial society—is one that is *both* anthrophagic and anthropoemic—a society that devours people, incorporates them through education systems and the media (which socially construct unrealistically, naively, and sometimes deceptively what we all can expect from the American Dream) and then violently ejects them—in short, a *bulimic* society. Perhaps we can even go further than Young in stating that some people in today's transnational capitalist society are not even seen as worthy of incorporation. These subaltern groups who are seen as unemployable and worthless denizens of our planetary slums might even welcome the opportunity to be ejected—at least in such a scenario they would be recognized as exisiting!

In the United States, the situation Young and Bauman have described has become perilous and impacts the educational system. Education is being used as a vehicle primarily to generate and promote the value of capitalist society. When we understand why this is the case and why alternatives to the logic of capital are not being taught in schools across the country, then we will be one step closer to knowing what has to be done to obliterate capitalism as the centerpiece of our lives. Schools

have become transformed into corporations in themselves, dedicated to engorging students, assimilating them into the culture of consumption, and then vomiting them out—some the students, of course, will be in a better position to consume (knowledge, material goods, life itself) than others. Schools are producing students who are less likely to want to create meaningful knowledge and interactions in themselves, and more likely to create the kind of knowledge that will help them succeed in standardized tests and to navigate successfully through the system until graduation. Unfortunately, this can lead to condition that Freire described as "semi-intransitive consciousness" (a form of "false consciousness" historically conditioned by social structures which do not enable the subject to objectify reality sufficiently enough to know it in a critical way) as students forgo critique and critical self-reflexivity in pursuit of manipulating the system for advantages for themselves in the unequal playing field of neoliberal capitalism. This is accompanied by forms of corporatist, bottom-line or means-ends thinking—a thinking that advances singular advantage as opposed to collective well-being, that offers a means to achieve an individual end and not a collective measure to advance solidarity and moral cohesion around the imperatives of creating a just and equitable society. It is all about manipulating the rules to maximize individual advantage. This is part of a late-modern sensibility which Zygmunt Bauman terms *adiaphorization* – "the stripping of human relationships of their moral significance, exempting them from moral evaluation, rendering them 'morally irrelevant (1995, p.133). Bauman sees this as a separation of "pleasure/use value" from any "pledge/commitment" to "love, honor and obey". The underlying message is: if knowledge can't advance students into the world of consumption and pleasure, then it isn't worth engaging. Consequently, students consume facts in the classroom in a way that is severed from the production of knowledge. What occurs in many of our classrooms is the *transmission of information*, not the *production of knowledge,* and still less the *production of meaningful knowledge*. Students will often resist those knowledges that demand argumentation and critical discussion, since it distracts them from the kind of means-ends rationality that will get them ahead within the high-stakes testing system and, similarly, teachers will often resist teaching meaningful knowledge because they are pressured to teach to the multiple choice tests in this selfsame predatory world of teaching. This is not to suggest, of course, that students don't resist incorporation via schooling into mainstream society with its specific means of producing normativity and common sense through strict rules of conduct and zero tolerance (the Gitmoizing of the cultural life of the classroom), and a curriculum that lacks cultural and historical relevance for Latino, African-American and other minority populations. They resist in many ways the teaching of destructive worldviews and practices. But often their very means of resistance becomes co-opted by larger narratives of inclusion and exclusion linked to the social relations of capitalist production. The inertia embodied within dominant educational priorities and practices produced by blue-chip think tank jockeys, often CEOs of major corporations and appointed by the state, glaringly demonstrate a studied amnesia which it comes to the role capitalism plays in our educational system. Teacher educators need to engage in a critical pedagogy that includes an in-depth critique of neoliberal globalization as unsustainable, both socially and environmentally. An historically materialist critique

of the dominant knowledges produced in our schools and workplaces is socially necessary labor for the abolition of capital and the creation of a new post-capitalist democracy.

Another topic that has been on courses of teacher education—often as some kind of panacea—is multiculturalism. Both Young (1997) and Bauman (1995) argue that the existence of a diverse world of value that poses an increasing threat to ontological security has been diffused by multiculturalism—a celebrating of diversity (*mixophilia*) yet at the same time suggesting that such a pluralism is not a product of choice but of pre-ordained culture (the notion that people inhabit different ethnicities as types of "essences") that leads to an embrace of absolute standards of identity (the quest for an "authentic" identity) concomitant with a debasement, scapegoating, demonization and inferiorization of the other (*mixophobia*). So that the process of understanding one's essence as a person becomes uncovering one's ethnic roots and protecting one's distinct identities, which is fine as far as it goes but it often collapses into xenophobic nationalism and fundamentalism and imposing a rigid uniformity on the ideal image of ethnic or class identity that often congeals into stereotypical behavior (from which white racism feeds), rather than understanding how appearances in our society are constructed as essences and the moral significance of both our separate identities and our common humanity and how these are dialectically related. The essentialism that often accompanies identity formation (ethnic or otherwise) greatly facilitates the process of social exclusion since social exclusion both confirms and realizes essentialism (Young, 1999a). We are not suggesting that an investigation of and appreciation for our ethnic, gender, religious or national identities is not important, of course it is; We are suggesting, however, that we avoid the trap of essentialism in which we, in search for our 'authentic selves', would jettison our unconditional being-for the Other for the purpose of being-for ourselves.

From the Imaginary to the Real America

These dominant drifts in teacher education have been accompanied by a sustained and increasingly complex system of beliefs and ideals that circulate in the capitalist commonplace or what we might call the capitalist "imaginary"**.** At question here is the necessity for educators to develop an awareness of the dominant discourses and tropes that shape teacher education reform and to understand the historical relationship that exists between education and capitalist society. Too often a de-theorization of the teaching encounter has taken place, stripping educators of the opportunity to develop a critical awareness or consciousness of education as a central and important practice and setting for the formation of our subjectivities and our political agency. Instead of introducing educators to history, theory, and encouraging the development of a philosophical praxis (see Hudis, 2006), many of our teacher education programs, both in the U.S. and abroad focus on the managerial, instrumental or technical (i.e., "delivery system") aspects of the profession (see Hill, 2007; Huerta-Charles, 2006). A great proportion of teacher education programs today emphasize 'skill sets' over philosophy, and 'standards training' over pedagogy. When educators are introduced to the more abstract, philosophical questioning that can lead to a more nuanced

understanding of the basis of school settings, it is commonplace to hear the quip, 'what does this have to do with my everyday practice?' At some point, the knee jerk reaction that many educators have to theory and philosophy is expected.

Teacher education is both a business and a high-stakes field that requires 'practical' and deliberative action. Educators pay for their credentials, and hiring agencies require numerous tests for placement purposes. Teacher educators want to keep it simple, "tell us what we need to know so we can work" is one of the many daily mantras wielded in teacher education programs. But teacher educators require and benefit from a language and a schema that can assist them in charting out the educational enterprise. It cannot be only self-interest that motivates teacher educators, but a moral and ethical imperative to provide service to a citizenry in addition to the knowledge and technical skills that make education possible. When it comes to a philosophy of education we are faced with two choices: we can either over-complicate matters to the extent of unintelligibility, or follow Albert Einstein's dictum "make things as simple as possible, but not simpler." For the purposes of this chapter, I will make an attempt at the latter, and invite you to consider some insights that help frame where philosophy in teacher education has been, and where we might think about taking it.

In the late 1980s the communications theorist and social critic Anthony Wilden wrote a groundbreaking text, *The Imaginary Canadian,* where he adopted key terms (similar to, but not identical with) from the psychoanalytic philosopher Jacques Lacan --the Imaginary and the Real-- to designate the individual and structural determinants that shape hierarchical relations within capitalist society. Wilden attempted to personalize the abstract dimensions of consciousness and develop a conceptual architectonic to explain how people from dominant and subordinate positions in capitalist society related to one another in 'real' economic and social terms. Writing specifically about the Canadian context, Wilden describes the Imaginary thusly:

> …the Imaginary presently dominates our understanding of social and economic relationships. This means that we do not primarily perceive and understand our relationships to the many different kinds of people in Canadian society on the basis of real images and real concepts. Rather we depend on Imaginary images and Imaginary concepts. These are in effect socially defined and accepted fantasies which are commonly assumed to be real. (p. 65)

For Wilden, an analysis of Imaginary relations consisted of two basic questions: one, the distinction between Imaginary relationships and real ones and second, the "contradictions and inconsistencies within the Imaginary viewpoint itself" (p. 65). The general architecture of capitalist society, for Wilden, rested on human experience and interactions predicated on the Imaginary. Imaginary images and concepts represented the socially defined and accepted "fantasies" which, for Wilden, were commonly assumed to be real by the majority of the public. The central

determining characteristic of the Imaginary is the 'image.' Here we can substitute for 'image' the concepts that give society their meaning, whether it is 'democracy,' 'equal-opportunity,' or any other term that we hold steadfast in our everyday practice. Wilden's analysis attempts to contrast prevailing beliefs – their formation and circulation – against the concrete, 'real' social and economic terms in which people operate on an everyday basis. Wilden further notes,

> The dominance of the Imaginary over our actual social and economic relations in our kind of society is a collectively experienced and collectively supported system of mirages. This collective experience leads to apparently individual and apparently psychological behavior. In fact, this behavior has its primary source in social and economic relations. The reason that it may appear 'inherent' in the 'individual' is simply that this behavior is characteristic of the social and economic system which brings us up to behave as we actually do." (p. 66)

Adapting Wilden's contributions on the Imaginary and the Real to the U.S. context, we can consider society as a series of constraints that we often discuss in binary terms: man versus woman, black versus white, poor versus rich, and so forth. The tensions that emerge between people (and depending on how they are socially categorized) are often considered along individual terms, based on the *patterns* of individual behavior. But what is often missed in understanding how social constraints emerge, and as Wilden elaborates, is the acknowledgement of how our socioeconomic system co-establishes the conditions in which people interact. For instance, racial, sexual, ethnic, and cultural hierarchies are constitutive elements of the general economic system of capitalist society. And as Wilden insightfully notes, they assume individual and 'imaginary' qualities that often "explain away" concrete sources of oppression within hierarchical social structures. This brings to mind George Orwell's remark: "To see what is in front of one's nose needs constant struggle." The point to be made in situating Wilden's insights within the social and political dimensions of teacher education, socially and politically, is to reveal how schools – as social media – are the expression of real social and economic conflicts. They constitute, in other words, not binary oppositions in some metaphysical domain, but real dependent hierarchies.

A central feature of the U.S. imaginary has historically been shaped by the notion that capitalism is compatible with democratic social formations. From the onset, schooling in the United States has served an important purpose in an evolving capitalist economy, supporting the values of individualism and 'merit' most closely aligned with fitting a populace to the demands of capitalist 'democracy.' Consequently, formal legal frameworks and social institutions such as education – the face of government – emphasized the notion of 'equal opportunity' as the central characteristic of a capitalist democracy. Constitutional amendments, Supreme Court Justice rulings banning the racial segregation of public schools, and federal education policy aimed at alleviating poverty and cultural/linguistic discrimination in a school's curriculum and operating structure, made important gains in remedying the historical

legacy of sexism and racism in the country, but they did so still operating within the Imaginary ideal of U.S. society.

The problem with the Imaginary of equal opportunity in capitalism is that it consequently obscures the structural limitations and boundaries that condition human activity in social institutions, such as schools. Rather than drawing attention to the social organization and social relations between and among different actors in the education, the Imaginary of capitalist democracy reproduces the belief that academic failure is largely the result of individual characteristics. Whether the blame is placed on educators and administrators as ineffective, lazy, unqualified, etc., or on the families themselves as poor, uninformed, culturally dissonant, or otherwise, the predominant belief systems in education attribute blame to either or both groups for paltry academic outcomes. This forms part of what Wilden calls the projection, identification, and objectification of the 'other' for legitimizing the pervasive Imaginary social view.

As Wilden writes, an Imaginary projection of the other, "is the process by which we are induced, by the combination of apparent personal experience and social norms, to select a particular other or a group of others as the supposed source of the alienation we feel, and to blame these others for our alienated feelings" (p. 67). In the context of education, we can consider the feelings of alienation that an educator might feel when she does not speak the language or share cultural attributes with her students. Her perceived 'problem' is not that she lacks the repertoire or knowledge to move outside her immediate feelings of discomfort and into a productive pedagogical space where she can identify with her students, but that her students are the sole cause for her inability to connect with them. The Imaginary process of identification and objectification differs from projection in that they reflect processes by which we "identify the image of our 'self' with the image of the other; or else we identify our 'self-image' in opposition to the other. In both cases, we are defining the image of the other (as distinct from the reality of the other) as essential to the image of our self" (p. 67). Here, the other satisfies the image of that we prefer not to become, or identify with; the other becomes an object separate from ourselves. By separating our image from others, we can differentiate – confirm or disconfirm—how we choose to see ourselves. "I" can judge my actions, values, ethics based on what "I" find missing/extreme in the 'other.' This is qualitatively different than identifying 'difference' among us; it implies a moral, ethical and cultural response to objectifying the other based on the value we place on him/her/them to construct our self image. And when the history of racial hierarchies and patriarchy that have contributed to a collective image of both the 'self' and 'other' upset our subconscious, we can more readily blame the 'other' for our sense of alienation. In other words, there is not self image without the other; they are always mutually constitutive. We are always already self/other.

These are complicated arguments to make and my intent here is not to suggest that educators must undergo intensive psychoanalytic training to help make sense of how they do or do not relate to students who differ from themselves. But Wilden's

points on the Imaginary do offer important insights that help make sense of the tensions, contradictions and relationships that transpire within educational settings.

Too often educational practice is severed from the symbolic, subjective and concrete realms that condition human interactions. My purpose is to illuminate the two governing worldviews that have historically characterized U.S. society. There is the world of the Imaginary, where dominant ideas and beliefs about the role of education in a capitalist operates as a mechanism for distributing equal opportunity to its citizens has a prescient quality, and the concrete worldview shaped by the actual historical and social contexts that people inhabit. The concrete worldview includes an analysis and understanding of the hierarchies that take place in real time and on real terms. The concrete worldview expresses real social and economic conflicts and demonstrates an awareness of the dominant-subordinate hierarchies within capitalist society.

Many of the gains made in expanding 'equal opportunity' in education to oppressed subaltern groups have resulted from the concrete struggle of peoples who, on the one hand, understood how social hierarchies operated within U.S. society, and who, on the other, believed in the imaginary ideals of a capitalist democracy. Following the civil rights movement and the economic depression of the mid-1900s, social stratification along race, ethnic, gender and class lines, assumed greater significance as the courts and educational systems began to remedy the historically *unequal* structural dynamics that limited educational opportunities to the 'other' – non-white, female, poor, or any combination thereof. In light of the unequal distribution of educational opportunities and outcomes for the colonized and dominated peoples of U.S. society – indigenous, women, low-wage laborers, the formerly enslaved, and immigrants – educators and philosophers began to question the underlying ideals communicated through differential educational systems and their effect on nascent democratic formations. Put in Wilden's terms, the Imaginary was contrasted with the concrete, and people struggled to surpass the contradictions between 'what was' and 'what could be.' In education, the liberal-progressive tradition emerged as an attempt to restructure teaching and learning in pursuit of reconciling the ideals of 'democracy' with historically unequal educational practices. Operating against the seemingly detached and authoritarian practices of what has been called the essentialist or perennial tradition in education – a teacher-centered approach that privileges principles over the pursuit of 'truths,' canonical texts over literatures based on diverse experiences, the teaching of basic skills to fulfill a function in society over the development of human agency to change society -- social pragmatism began to gain momentum and its impact on education was both profound and endearing. It was not so much that the wider economic and political arrangements associated with the social stratification inherent in capitalist society came under question; rather, a focus on the capacity for intelligent problem-solving across peoples irrespective of race, class, or gender differences was given greater significance for alleviating social ills.

Liberal-progressive attempts to remedy education

Most influenced by the work of educators such as John Dewey, the progressive educational tradition, or what came to be described as a critical social pragmatism, focused on connecting the mind with body and transforming the educational encounter to one that centralized communication and human experience for intelligent problem-solving. Here, the pursuit of 'true ideas' in the 'natural unit of society' (Hardie, 1962) was a move that attempted to help us make sense of how knowledge came about. Dewey was concerned with the age-old separation between mind-body, knowledge-activity and the hierarchical relations that resulted from such binary thinking. He adamantly opposed 'ranking' knowledge from the 'higher' cognitive world of 'ideas' to the more mundane world of 'doing' (or vice versa). For Dewey, the interaction between thought and action led to a "securer, freer and more widely shared embodiment of values in experience by means of that active control of objects which knowledge alone makes possible." (1929, p.30)

In John Baldacchino's assessment, Dewey's educational thought "teaches us how to philosophize. By his example, we are taught how to move around and understand a multiplicity of experiences that are different and indeed diverse in nature and import" (2008, p.151). Philosophy, in other words, can be the basis for establishing an educational praxis linked with the pursuit of pluralism. Key to Dewey's conception of knowledge was a process of reflectivity that entailed the power of reasoning. Baldacchino asserts (following Gert Biesta, 1994) that Dewey's philosophy was most concerned with the exchange of ideas and conjoint student activity as a form of democratizing *communication*. The argument so follows that by reflecting on the development of ideas that takes place in everyday activities we approach clarity of thought. With clarity of ideas "understanding cannot be subservient to anything but the truth that we recognize (sic) by dint of our growth and by which we lay claim upon an open-ended form of reflective thinking through the development of our own dispositions. Truth, therefore, does not emerge from a grammar of clarity. Rather, any grammar of clarity emerges from the dispositional truth by which humans exercise their power of reasoning" (Baldacchino, 2008, p. 151). Here, reason as a discovery of truth is grounded in a reflection of one's surroundings and experiences. In Dewey's words, "reason affords the basis of certainty…we ascend from belief to knowledge only by isolating the latter from practical doing and making" (1929, p.26).

The pragmatist view of education is at the heart of the liberal/progressive movement in U.S. education. Linking the formation of knowledge with the direct experience of students in the context of their environment established (in theory) more participatory and inclusive models of educational practice that sought to overturn the authoritarian focus of schooling. Rather than catering to the educator as the 'all-knowing' deliverer of ideas and beliefs, students and their environments became the focus of educational practice, building upon the notion of democracy as a mode of associated living. Here, the communication of experience established the consensus of 'difference.' Moving away from the Cartesian preoccupation with the 'mind' and

'consciousness,' the liberal progressive tradition attempted to emphasize communication as "participation in conjoint activity" (Biesta, 1994). Educators were asked to abandon their tendencies towards rote memorization and curricular control and advance in their stead, grounded methodologies and practices that were shaped largely by the level of the 'unknown.' Unknowing in this sense is driven by an intellectual imperative towards knowing, so that the realm of student experience and context refracted the always partial understanding that an educator had about her subject matter and students with whom she worked. Faced with the 'unknown' educators were asked to engage their students in what could be described as a "liminal zone" that is absent in the usual hierarchies and reference points found in the more traditional pedagogical encounter, to move away from preconceived conceptions of knowledge and to spaces of joint activity. They are the spaces where the locus of control has much less to do with affirming an educator's rank or grasp of material, and more with the inherent possibilities of generating knowledge that has direct relevance to students' experiences and daily realities. Teacher educators, in turn, were conceived as social scientists, with the capacity and ability to organize educational practice based on their assessment of students' needs and experiences. The importance of developing agency on behalf of the educator and student alike became the bedrock of radical liberalism and social intelligence came to be conceived as the conduit for social change vis-à-vis rational conduct (Brosio, 1990).

Over time, Dewey's ideas have garnered greater attention and have been adapted into various teacher education efforts to make the classroom more experiential, less teacher-centered, and more sensitive to the realities and experiences of students. This is not an issue of concern if and when we think of education as separate from the ideological and material dynamics that condition human experiences. But when we recognize that the everyday and seemingly individual characteristics of experience generate commonalities as well as difference, and that life outside the classroom is as much a part as what takes place inside, then we recognize that communication alone cannot bring about new knowledge(s) or new practice(s) in and of itself. Communication is a necessary component of democratic formations and of generating more inclusive, ethical, and pedagogical means to helping students connect with their environment, the mind with the body, and so forth. But communication as reasoning is not a value-free practice. Lacking a critical interrogation into how people perceive reality, why they perceive it the way that they do, and the historical context of such reasoning, communicative interactions tend to reproduce the very Imaginary worldview from which dominant ideas originate (remembering that it was Marx who argued that the ruling ideas in society are the ideas of the ruling class). Obscuring the real contexts of relations between people as "relations of communication" has the tendency to support the representation of the Imaginary as "relations between subjects and objects" (75). A closed communication system between a person and her immediate social setting or between people within a structured educational setting, with its rules and social customs of conduct, leads to an either/or relationship in the Imaginary. Or as Wilden put it thusly, "In the Imaginary, there is only one subject in the world – you (or me!) and in this either/or relationship in the Imaginary, everyone else is simply an object floating around in your 'field of

view' (or mine)." (p. 75)

Dewey's philosophy can be useful in expanding our discussion of the Imaginary. There are various interpretations of Dewey's philosophy and this chapter is not concerned with determining *fait accompli* the contributions or the limitations of Dewey's thought. Dewey himself recognized the constraints placed on educators and educational practice at a time in U.S. history when capitalist, private control over public services was relatively minor as compared to today. He strongly supported the formation of teacher and professorial unions as a way to safeguard from the "business mind-set" that threatened an educator's freedom and legal protection for teaching and engaging in serious research, some of which might be deemed in conflict with prevailing ideological sentiments or conventional social reasoning (see Best, Nocella and McLaren, forthcoming). And his determined belief in the facts about "human activity" signaled a move away from the Imaginary realm of unquestioned ideas and images about society, and into the Real, concrete and material formations that shape experience. The issue at hand has more to do about the various mainstream and traditional interpretations of Dewey's philosophy, and the liberal-progressive view in general, that on the one hand recognizes the unequal opportunities within society, but that supports, on the other hand, the belief that adjustments to the system vis-à-vis establishing lines of communication and dialogue can bring forth a more democratic society.

Towards a critical teacher education

In contemporary capitalist society, education and training play an incredibly key role in the *social production of labor power* – which Glenn Rikowski (2007) reminds us is the single commodity on which the expansion of capital and the continuation of capitalist society depend. Thus, it behooves us mightily as critical educators to understand the processes by which education and training increasingly operate as vehicles of labor- power production, and—it is crucial to remember that it is not labor but rather labor-power that generates value. Value is the substance of the social universe of capital. Education and training thus have a key role to play in the *maintenance and expansion of the social universe of capital*. As educators, as students, we are all involved in socially producing labor-power, although teachers have more social power in this regard than do students. If we are part of the endless social drive to enhance labor-power quality then we are at the same time participating in a process that necessarily creates an inequality of labor-power values, and works against what education in capitalist society should be about, which is labor-power equalization.

The key here is to recognize the fundamental contradiction between the drive to enhance labor power quality, and the real necessity of labor power equalization. In the US the process of educating students' labor power for capital is increasingly standardized—we make sure students can take standardized, multiple-choice exams that stifle their thinking and make them less able to develop the critical skills that can help them figure out that they are fodder for the reproduction of capitalist social

relations. God forbid that students might question the representatives of capital! So the task for the education establishment becomes: Who can compete best in enhancing the quality of labor power of students to further the efforts of neoliberal globalization? We, as teachers, labor for labor power production! We are learning to labor for labor power enhancement, not labor power equalization.

So how can we disturb this process? How can we subvert, unsettle, resist, rupture and confound this process? We need to focus not only on social relations within the classroom but to take into serious account the *quality* of social relations in all organizations seeking to transform capitalist society. Here, all of us—whether we are teachers in classrooms, or workers in factories, or working in retail at the local boutique—are encouraged to become critical educators.

As teachers we need to sharpen our pessimism of the intellect and shed some of the avoirdupois that holds in check our optimism of the will, face our choices more consciously and see their moral contents more clearly. It is imperative that we reestablish sustainable human/nature relationships via a counterhegemonic place-based educational praxis, that focuses on environmental issues and questions that affect the biosphere and sustainability and the overall health of the planet. School reform and a transformation of the social order that schools are designed to nurture and to serve will not come about with students chanting in chorus, "I have confidence I can learn!", or "Yes, I can, I know I can!", or "If it's to be, it's up to me!" or trying to reach testing benchmarks. Flame-throwing epithets like this against walls of silence and indifference will not yield academic success or lead to a better future for our youth.

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