

Converging Self/ Other Awareness: Erich Fromm and Paulo Freire on
Transcending the Fear of Freedom
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Chapter Six

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Historical Encounters between Freire and Fromm

Of all of the Frankfurt School writers that have influenced Paulo Freire, there is more concurrence with the work of Erich Fromm than any of the others. Of course Freire cites or alludes to the influence of Marcuse, Habermas and Gramsci in his work, but Freire's work more directly converges with Fromm's social vision and humanist readings of philosophy in ways that create possibilities for individual and collective release from both inward and outward oppression. Both Fromm and Freire devoted one entire book on the subject of hope (Fromm, 1968, Freire, 1994). Hope for both men was never a passive concept or wishful thinking, but always predicated on action toward freedom that leads to a humanist vision of a better world. Freire visited Fromm more than once in the late 1960's in Cuernavaca, Mexico in a meeting arranged by Ivan Illich (Funk, 2000, p. 138). Freire cites a conversation with Fromm concerning the "difficulty that the oppressed have in localizing the oppressor outside themselves" (1995, p. 105). In this dialogue Freire says that Fromm stated with "his blue eyes flashing that "an educational practice like that is a kind of historical-sociocultural and political psychoanalysis" (ibid.). In this chapter we will discuss the significance of this kind of analysis as we explore some of the ways that Freire

was directly influenced by Fromm's work, and suggest ways that the impact of this influence offers us a complementary and holistic view that has the potential to lift people out of outward environments of oppression and while at the same time exposing and releasing them from the oppressor within their own being. Of course Freire himself would be one of the first to recognize the dangers of heeding artificial boundaries between the fields of educational sociology (Freire) and humanist psychology (Fromm), yet as is often the case when looking at the origins or "roots" of an idea, the newly imagined and created spaces for theory and praxis often transcend categorization. Also from the outset we recognize that Freire was drawn to the psychology of liberation. We are sure that is the reason he cites Fromm so often either directly or indirectly in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. We also recognize that Fromm thought much about sociology, Fromm & Maccoby (1970) and education in a stunning foreword that he wrote for A.S. Niel's *Summerhill* (1960). Likewise, Freire studied the psychology of language so there is much overlap between the two theorists. If we can look through the multiple lenses of their work together, we will find a richly complicated conversation that creates a dialogical dynamic that has the potential to release the oppressed from both inward chains as well as outward circumstantial effects of oppression. So, let us jump right into the conversation.

Freire (2003) refers to Fromm in chapter one of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* when he writes about oppression and consciousness (p.59) and also when he refers to the power of necrophilic behavior to "transform man into a thing" (p.59, 65). Freire cites Fromm further on this topic when he contrasts biophilia, the love of life and living things, with necrophilia which is the root cause behind oppression as the means of absolute control.

While life is characterized by growth in a structured functional manner, the necrophilous person loves all that does not grow, all that is mechanical. The necrophilous person is driven by the desire to transform the organic into the inorganic, to approach life mechanically, as if all living persons were things. Memory, rather than experience; having, rather than being, is what counts. The necrophilous person can relate to an object ~ a flower or a person ~ only if he possesses it; hence a threat to his possession is a threat to himself, if he loses possession he loses contact with the world. He loves control, and in the act of controlling he kills life. (Fromm cited in Freire, 2003, p. 77)

Origins of the Fear of Freedom in Fromm and Freire's Work

Fromm's book *The Fear of Freedom* was published in England in 1942 when Nazi Germany was at the zenith of its power. The book has far-reaching implications not only for that time in history, but since it explores why people choose domination over freedom, the text remains strongly relevant for the present time as well. Freire does not directly reference Fromm in his discussion of the fear of freedom anywhere in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, but a thorough reading of Fromm's works demonstrates that this idea, as used by Freire, originated with Fromm's theory of the fear of freedom. The idea of the fear of freedom is integral to the development of pedagogy of freedom from oppression. Freire uses the idea of the "fear of freedom" to develop his theory of conscientization, but, falls short of developing it fully by not exploring the impact it might have on displacing the effects of the oppressor within. This omission leaves a gap in Freire's pedagogy of freedom and praxis. In this chapter we suggest that the importance of the notion of the fear of

freedom is integral to Freire's pedagogy of liberation and as such needs to be drawn out and developed more fully to enhance Freire's theory. Developing this idea and attempting to incorporate it into Freire's theory of liberatory education will advance Freire's work and help individuals move towards achieving their ontological vocation of becoming more fully human.

Humanization, according to Freire, is the people's vocation but it is constantly negated in an oppressive society. Freire believes that eventually those who are oppressed will seek to overcome their oppression because the ontological vocation, or calling towards fuller humanity, will lead them to engage in the struggle for liberation at some point. A humanizing pedagogy, then, is a tool that educators can use to help the oppressed develop a critical understanding or consciousness of their oppression. It is this critical consciousness that is necessary for liberation.

According to Freire, to overcome the oppressive situation which they find themselves in, the oppressed "must first critically realize its causes so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity" (2003, p. 47), but often they are afraid of running the risk associated with liberating themselves, and convincing others to do so, because of the fear of freedom. Freire acknowledges that the presence of this kind of fear creates a difficult choice for the oppressed.

The oppressed suffered from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet although they desire authentic existence, they fear

it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and recreate, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account (Freire, 2003, p. 48).

Freire goes on to say that pedagogy for the oppressed is one which “makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation.” A pedagogy of the oppressed will help them to recognize the duality of their existence as oppressed beings desiring liberation and that this consciousness-raising, problem-posing education they will come to see themselves as no longer oppressed or oppressor, “but humans in the process of achieving freedom” (2003, p. 49).

In this same chapter, Freire references Fromm, but he does not point to Fromm as the originator of the idea of the “fear of freedom.” We suggest, however, that this idea originated with or was based in Fromm’s writings in several books, but especially *Escape from Freedom*. As we have already seen in this chapter, Freire certainly read Fromm, and many of his ideas come directly from him, so it would not be a stretch to say that the fear of freedom is closely related to, and possibly directly tied to, Fromm’s theory of the fear of

freedom. Moreover, this notion needs to be fully explained as Fromm theorized it. Although Freire sees this fear of freedom as the tragic dilemma that pedagogy of the oppressed must take into consideration, we suggest that this work would be greatly enhanced by focusing on the psychological component that blocks people from truly becoming liberated from oppression. This psychological component is an integral part of the process of conscientization.

While the fear of freedom is acknowledged as being a factor that keeps people mired in an inauthentic life because it keeps them from becoming beings for themselves, it is not adequately addressed from a perspective of the psychology of the individual. Because Freire takes a structural view of society and the individual, in which the individual only exists in dialogical relationship with the societal, he neglects to pay adequate attention to the psychological phenomena that he himself identifies as an important barrier to liberation. By focusing for the most part on one's ontological vocation in relation to others, Freire's work needs the further development of a pedagogical strategy that addresses the psychological fears and attachments of the individual subject. As with many theories, just because people *do* have an ontological drive towards full humanization, (an idea that is founded on Freire's spiritual life) this does not mean that they will know how to go about achieving fuller humanity¹.

Freire's educational paradigm, which strives to raise people's awareness about oppression and its causes from a very political/social perspective, would be more complete

¹ Achieving fuller humanity, a notion which will be discussed more fully later, means (for Freire) becoming humanized (as opposed to being dehumanized as in oppressive relationships).

and would better help move learners towards liberation if it also strove to raise people's awareness of self and the internal / psychological dynamics which often compel them to behave in oppressive rather than liberating ways. Also, Fromm's insight into the interrelatedness of the individual and society, and his unusual grasp of the nature of contemporary, industrial, capitalistic society and its impact on modern man's² striving for freedom are further compelling reasons for summoning Fromm into this conversation. We can glean insight from Fromm that will contribute to a more comprehensive pedagogical strategy for liberatory education.

Inward and Outward Freedom

Because Freire insisted upon the subjectivity of the individual in his educational paradigm, it would stand to reason that he would not object to an assessment that there is subjectivity within each individual oppressed person, and hence that subjectivity must be nurtured through education. Although he did not see the individual as self-liberating, but believed that the individual was only self-liberating in dialectical relationship with others, We propose that subjectivity itself implies an internal depth, hence there is an "I" and an internal subjectivity of that "I" and that that internal subjectivity demands attention and is worthy of reflection.

Freirian critical pedagogy aspires to create a liberated, democratic society, a goal premised on the freedom of its individual members. The pedagogical method Freire

² The use of "man" in this paper is the consequence of quoting Freire and Fromm, both of whom referred to all of humanity as such. We make no excuses for either theorist's failure to recognize the importance of using gender free writing techniques, and we recognize the problems associated with the lack of use of gender free writing. As a result, we attempt to use both pronouns "she" and "he" and/or "her" and "him" whenever we are not referencing a statement made by Freire or Fromm.

suggests using towards this end is “problem-posing” education. Problem-posing education is the means of achieving critical consciousness and becoming a being of praxis, one who reflects *and acts* on the world in order transform the situation of oppression. Problem-posing education is the alternative to “banking education” which Freire says treats students as empty receptacles sitting by passively and taking in information given to them from the all-knowing “teacher” without questioning or critically assessing it. Banking education, for Freire, is oppressive. It does not allow for human agency. It is objectifying and dehumanizing and does not allow for individuals to become agents in their own learning, nor agents in the world around them. Problem-posing education, on the other hand, creates subjective agents who attempt to read the world as they learn to read the word (Freire, 1987). The connection to becoming liberated is obvious, critical thinking and reading the world is part and parcel of critical literacy.

This kind of problem-posing education is important according to Freire because it is the oppressed themselves who are in the best position to liberate both themselves and the oppressor since only they have the knowledge and unique experience of having been oppressed which allows them alone to best understand oppression and hence the need for liberation. Freire states, “Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation? They will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it” (2003, p. 45).

However this doesn't seem to be enough, even for Freire, for individuals to transform the situation of oppression. Freire admits, "But almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors.' The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity" (2003, p. 45). Freire goes on to describe how what happens to oppressed beings is that they "adopt an attitude of 'adhesion' to the oppressor" (2003, p. 45). Their way of being, their understanding of oppression is their worldview. It shapes their thoughts. It has taken over their psyche. They recognize that they are oppressed, but they do not know any other way of being than to be oppressed. Hence, one important element towards becoming a truly liberated being of praxis is to break the psychological chains which keep them bound to the oppressor and to oppressive thinking. "Because of their identification with the oppressor, they have no consciousness of themselves as persons or as members of an oppressed class . . . It is a rare peasant who, once 'promoted' to overseer, does not become more of a tyrant towards his former comrades than the owner himself" (2003, p. 46).

Another aspect of this connection to the oppressor, according to Freire, is the oppressed "fear of freedom," which must be overcome in order to become truly liberated from the physical as well as psychological bonds to the oppressor. Freire states, "The fear of freedom which afflicts the oppressed, a fear which may equally well lead them to desire the role of oppressor or bind them to the role of oppressed, should be examined" (2003, p.

46). Having internalized the prescriptions and image of the oppressor, the oppressed are fearful of freedom because it would “require them to reject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility” (2003, p. 47).

There is a clear concern about becoming truly liberated from the oppressor (in psychological terms) that Freire plainly recognizes and discusses and rightly mentions in his quest towards pedagogy of freedom from oppression. It is at this point that Fromm’s work becomes a vital complement to critical pedagogy which is by its very nature an ongoing and incomplete project. In this case the intellectual root stock of Erich Fromm has much more to contribute to Freire’s work through Fromm’s emphasis on the depth of the psychic internalization of oppression. Through individual self-reflection on the fear of freedom that exists within the individual psyche, a person might be enabled to discover the extent to which she is truly free to act according to her own will once she acknowledges that she has internalized the oppressor’s mindset. Perhaps this level of exploration of the unconscious was beyond the realm of Freire’s understanding of psychology. We know from reading Freire’s body of his work, that he always wrote on those things that enabled him to speak “his own word” (2003, p. 33). Who knows what that word might have been if he had lived longer? Nevertheless, the fear of freedom is, as Freire states, “*the* (emphasis added) tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account” (2003, p. 48).

Finding Convergence in Freire and Fromm

The next part of this chapter will attempt to show how Fromm’s explanation of the fear of freedom seems to be the same as the one espoused by Freire. It will also attempt to

show the depth of the fear of freedom, how it arises in individuals, and how it can keep them from authentic existence, i.e. freedom in Freire's terms. However, since it is *the* tragic dilemma that the education of oppressed persons must take into account, it should be fully examined and incorporated into Freire's pedagogy of freedom from oppression. Indeed, one cannot fully be liberated from oppression until this fear of freedom is resolved because it impedes action and liberation.

Freire's educational paradigm, which strives to raise people's awareness about oppression and its causes from a very political/social perspective, will be more complete and in perhaps more fully help move learners towards liberation if it also strove to raise people's awareness of self and the internal/psychological dynamics which often compel them to behave in oppressive rather than liberating ways. Moreover, Fromm's social psychological understanding of the interplay of the individual and society, as well as his understandings of contemporary, industrial, capitalistic society and its impact on modern man's² striving for freedom are further compelling reasons for drawing Fromm into the ongoing conversation of critical pedagogy.

Because Freire insisted upon the subjectivity of the individual in his educational paradigm, it would stand to reason that he would not object to an assessment that there is subjectivity within each individual oppressed person, and hence that subjectivity must be nurtured through education. Although he did not see the individual as self-liberating, but believed that the individual was only self-liberating in dialectical relationship with others, we maintain that subjectivity itself implies an internal depth, hence there is an "I" and an

internal subjectivity of that “I” and that that internal subjectivity demands attention and is worthy of reflection.

Fromm’s social-psychoanalytic insight into the nature of humans provides a compelling and complementary contribution to Freire’s theory and also helps us to understand the direction in which education must move if it is to create individuals capable of the action component of the praxis equation.

Freirian critical pedagogy aspires to create a liberated, democratic society, a goal premised on the freedom of its individual members. Erich Fromm defines freedom as the ability to make decisions according to one’s desires. In *Escape from Freedom*, Fromm states, “[Man] would be free to act according to his own will, if he knew what he wanted, thought, and felt” (quoted in Freire, 1998, p. 6). Freire’s freedom which comes about through the achievement of critical consciousness does not necessarily lead to freedom in Fromm’s terms because it does not necessarily cause one to recognize her own will, thoughts, fears, and desires, upon which rest her decision-making power. This recognition is an internal state that comes from self-realization and from a psychological understanding of one’s desires, thoughts, and drives and what motivates those drives. Freire himself recognizes that we are most human when we are free and most free when we can choose (Collins, 1977, p. 28), and that “choice is illusory to the degree it represents the expectations of others” (Freire, 1998, p. 7). However, often the choices that people make are not made from *true* choice. Often, though one may believe she is making a choice based on her own convictions, she is really making a choice that is not necessarily based on her own convictions, but on the convictions of the oppressor that she is unaware of. Having a

dominated consciousness, which she has been socialized into through all of the social institutions of her society, she has incorporated the dominant ideology of the oppressor. From this we can extrapolate that the choices one makes are not truly authentic, in terms of being chosen freely according to one's own moral and ethical principles, because those principles really are not her own.

So, because freedom comes from true or authentic choice, one must become aware of dominated consciousness, but more importantly, she must become attuned to and begin to develop her own values and beliefs. She must understand how they have developed and decide if they are truly her own or are merely based on the conventions of the society which she has been socialized into. This requires autonomy and responsibility, which must be developed through thoughtful reflection on the self. Unless one is truly choosing freely from her own conscience, she is not making the most authentic choices. Authentic choice comes from self-understanding, self-reflection, and constant awareness of one's self and one's moral foundation. These aspects of critical, self-reflective praxis need to be addressed and cultivated in any true expression of liberatory education.

Freire recognizes that freedom comes from authentic choice, and suggests that once the oppressed recognize that they have adopted the oppressor's consciousness they will expel that consciousness and embrace freedom. For Freire, once freed from the chains of oppression, through recognition of that oppression, people will act to liberate themselves. However, as Erich Fromm (1992) asserts, "Man can be a slave without chains" (p. 7). Often, according to Fromm:

The outer chains have simply been put inside of man. The desires and thoughts that the suggestive apparatus of society fills him with, chain him more thoroughly than outer chains. This is so because man can at least be aware of outer chains but be unaware of inner chains, carrying them with the illusion that he is free. He can try to overthrow the outer chains, but how can he rid himself of chains of whose existence he is unaware.

(Fromm, 1992, p. 7)

Fromm (1941, 1947, 1955,) explains the fundamental psychological problem that keeps people from embracing freedom. “Freedom from” external oppression causes a separation from nature and from other human beings which leads to feelings of loneliness and isolation, and what people fear most is isolation. When people feel isolated and alone, they often seek security outside of themselves and often end up resubmitting to external authority or exerting their own authority upon others, and in turn relinquish authentic existence and freedom, albeit unwittingly. Freedom entails autonomy and responsibility, and Fromm contends that the isolation which is caused by becoming aware of one’s own autonomy and responsibility is what leads them directly back into becoming oppressors themselves or submitting to another’s oppression because they are looking for answers.

Freire, like Marx, by whom he was heavily influenced, speaks to uncovering conflicts in the socio-historical and political context. Fromm, who was also heavily influenced by Marx, also recognized these influences but at the same time attempted to uncover internal conflicts within the individual psyche. Fromm suggests that once one is freed from external oppression, he can still be enslaved, by his own internal discord. This

perspective is vitally important because without looking at internal conflicts, it is easy to fall into naïve thinking that, once freed from external chains; one is automatically free to become more fully human.

Liberation for Freire comes about through awareness of external and politically systemic oppression. Liberation for Fromm is more concerned with awareness of our psychological fears of freedom, isolation, and separation from man and nature. Fromm looks at the conflicting tendencies in man more from the lens of psychology while Freire's lens is more or less focused on emerging sociological patterns of oppression. Fromm (1992) states that man's thinking and being are not identical, nor are man's thinking and actions. This goes deeper than Freire's notion that once an oppressed person recognizes her oppression she will behave in a non-oppressive way herself.

Fromm asserts "A person who has not been completely alienated, who has remained sensitive and able to feel, who has not lost the sense of dignity, who is not yet 'for-sale,' who can still suffer over the suffering of others, who has not acquired fully the having mode of existence - briefly, a person who has remained a person and not become a thing - cannot help feeling lonely, powerless, isolated in present-day society. He cannot help doubting his self and his own convictions, if not his sanity" (1992, p. 65). Fromm is suggesting that even the person who is most fully human, suffers from this lonely, isolated, and powerless existence. So, although one may be free from oppression, she still suffers. She fears the freedom that she has gained. Others may not oppress her, but she is still oppressed.

Liberation for Fromm entails more than becoming aware of and acting against the oppressor. Of course as Freire states, it entails becoming free from false consciousness and a dominated ideology, but it *also* entails liberation from the internal conflicts that keep us engaging in behaviors that enslave us. Hence, freedom “from” external (political or social) oppression is *not a sufficient condition* for the achievement of freedom, and unless people progress to a positive, freedom, a productive life in Fromm’s terms, escaping from negative freedom will only produce psychological disturbances in the individuals which will thwart her or his pursuit of freedom, and since psychological factors impact the quest for freedom, an educational program which desires to help people fulfill their quest for freedom *must* address internal factors of cognition and emotion as much as the external factor of social injustice.

People engage in destructive, oppressive behavior because they fear the isolation, aloneness, and separation from man and nature that comes along with the freedom from dominating authority. Fromm contends that the uncertainty of life, the fear of isolation which comes with becoming a being for oneself, and the fear of the autonomy and responsibility that comes with freedom, are what lead people back into oppressive relationships and so must be addressed in one’s education.

Necrophilia and the Fear of Freedom

Because freedom is so frightening, according to Fromm, people tend to respond in one of three ways. They attempt to escape from freedom by (a) looking for security outside of themselves again, in terms of looking for an authoritative person, belief system, or other external power source, to relieve them of the responsibility of being free (masochism), or

(b) seeking to become the authority over others so that they do not feel so alone (sadism), or (c) falling into mindless (automaton) conformity. Fromm states, “In our effort to escape from aloneness and powerlessness, we are ready to get rid of our individual self either by submission to new forms of authority or by a compulsive conforming to accepted patterns” (1941, p. 134). Looked at in this light, being freed from an oppressor will not necessarily lead to non-conformity, and/or healthy non-oppressive relationships. In another section of the same book (1941) Fromm states that what will lead to healthy/no-oppressive relationships is the spontaneity of love and productive work:

That man, the more he gains freedom in the sense of emerging from the original oneness with man and nature and the more he becomes an ‘individual,’ has no choice but to unite himself with the world in the spontaneity of love and productive work or else to seek a kind of security by such ties with the world as destroy his freedom and the integrity of the individual self. (p. 21)

So, before we go any further, we will discuss examples of these choices as expressions of Fromm and Freire’s use of necrophilia and biophilia as they relate to the praxis of critical pedagogy that leads to inner liberation. First let’s think about ways that the fear of freedom results in necrophilic behavior. Remember in the beginning of the chapter that Fromm used necrophilia to describe the love of control to the degree that the oppressed are reduced to passive objects? The above mentioned three aspects of escape from freedom into necrophilious behavior are

just as relevant today as they were when Fromm first wrote about them during the rise of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

One has only to remember that the Patriot Act that was signed into law in the United States, less than two months after the September 11, 2001 attacks on targets in New York and Washington D.C. is an expression of Fromm's first type of response. People have submitted to a masochistic system of one-sided surveillance for the sake of feeling "protected" from terrorism by a higher authority, in this case the government. We will leave it to you the reader to decide if the price of this "protection" is too great.

Sadism is the next aspect he mentions. This phenomenon may take many forms ranging from a military dictatorship to a male chauvinist or more likely, someone that just has to be in control in order to feel validated and when they are not in charge of things, they often sink into pouting or depression. In some ways, sadism parallels Freire's notion of the "banking model of education" wherein the teacher expects the student to give back only the knowledge that has been "deposited" into them by the passive receiving of "knowledge". The teacher maintains one-sided unquestioning authority in this model. However we must also remember that the "banking model" can occur with all the chairs in a classroom arranged in a circle, and the topic being discussed may be about critical pedagogy. Even in this environment there may be a "bully" sadist present who intimidates the others into outward acceptance of their opinion or procedure with the others deferring to this person just to "keep the peace".

The third aspect of the fear of freedom is mindless “automaton conformity”. Once again fear of economic loss is played upon to maintain the mindless automaton/necrophiliac power relationship. This is often the case when teacher performance pay is tied to achieving passing scores on standardized tests. The result is that teaching has been reduced to the role of “clerks of the empire” (Giroux, 2010). In the same article Giroux describes the deskilling of teachers in a way that we are certain that both Fromm and Freire would affirm.

As the space of public schooling is reduced to a mindless infatuation with the metrics of endless modes of testing and increasingly enforces this deadening experience with disciplinary measures reminiscent of prison culture, teachers are increasingly removed from dealing with children as part of a broader historical, social and cultural context. As the school is militarized, student behavior becomes an issue that either the police or security forces handle. Removed from the normative and pedagogical framing of classroom life, teachers no longer have the option to think outside of the box, to experiment, be poetic or inspire joy in their students. School has become a form of dead time, designed to kill the imagination of both teachers and students. (Giroux, 2010, n.p.)

These problems in education are all clearly point to a system that is rife with necrophilic oppression and compel to look for biophilic liberatory education in both Freire and Fromm’s terms.

Biophilia and Inward Freedom

Biophilia is a word that Fromm uses in his famous humanist credo. In the following passage, he uses biophilia to holistically describe love for life in nature, humanity and self that results in freedom.

I believe that the man choosing progress can find a new unity through the development of all his human forces, which are produced in three orientations. These can be presented separately or together: biophilia, love for humanity and nature, and independence and freedom.(1994, p.101)

As we have already seen, Freire used necrophilia to describe the banking model of education, and uses the term biophilia in much the same way, to describe the praxis of liberatory education. Freire describes his vision of education as “biophilic” (1985, p. 82) and credits Fromm with giving him the term. Biophilia is indeed one of the strongest points of convergence between Fromm and Freire’s work. Here are a few examples of biophilic praxis leading to inward freedom. Our first one expresses biophilic pedagogy as the ability to engage in curriculum as conversation.

One of the central themes in all of Freire’s work is that the way unjust power is maintained is through seeing others as “object” (2003). This is certainly true in education as well as in the thousands of criminal acts that are committed against others every day!

The ability to listen to people comes out of biophilia because, by it, we are opened to the polyphonic aspect of meaning, not just the narrow sounds of cliché or the kind of inward thoughts that cause knee-jerk reactions to what we hear. A necrophilous person is only in tune with themselves. Curriculum as conversation “is a matter of attunement, an auditory

rather than visual conception, in which the sound of music (for Aoki, jazz specifically) being improvised is an apt example” (Pinar, 2004, p. 189). Curriculum as conversation can serve to tune the ear to participate, to resonate with the voice of others. This is no scripted endeavor, but like the jazz analogy, there is a certain aspect of the spontaneous that is welcomed. In the shared dimensions of spontaneous dialogue, there is a fuller experience of knowing. Freire is very strong on dialogue as a shared way of knowing: “I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing” (1995, p. 379). Genuine dialogue is not the product of preformulated questions and responses. In Freire’s view (1970), dialogue must be open-ended in ways that enable us to reach beyond our own thoughts and patterns of thinking.

Sidorkin (2002) offers further insight into the nature of curriculum as conversation by saying that relations cannot be described by one person’s perspective. He states that “relation in general is possible only in the presence of difference. Totally identical entities cannot relate to each other. Relations result from plurality, from some tension born of difference” (p. 98). This difference is not something that needs to be overcome by a “fifty/fifty split.” Every voice needs to be heard, not lowered to the least common denominator!

Sidorkin goes on to say that one of the greatest needs in schools is the cultivation of curriculum as conversation by focusing on the:

ability to “read” relationships to reflect on these cases, to talk and write about relationships. The key skill here is the ability to reconstruct the other voice. A teacher must develop this ability to hear what has not been said, to formulate what

his students are not able to articulate, to engage in a dialogue when the other party may not be willing or ready to engage. The ability to understand human relations relies heavily on the heightened ability to hear and respond without preconceived notions of truth. (p. 100)

This ability to read relationships will carry over into all content areas. In fact, our praxis becomes more relevant, and potent, to the degree that we are in tune with the voice of others. Biophilia can open our being in ways that provide insight into the ways language is *perceived or received* by others and creates connections that Fromm states is integral to a productive and biophilic life.

Our next example of biophilic praxis emerges out of a love of nature that can produce inward freedom and wholeness of self. Richard Louv is one of the primary voices for a growing movement called *No Child Left Inside*. In his wonderful book, *Last Child in the Woods* Louv (2008) masterfully describes a condition he calls “nature deficit disorder” (p.10) as one of the primary causes of attention deficit disorder (think necrophilic education here). Later in the book he cites a story from *San Francisco* magazine which serves as a powerful case study for Freire’s problem posing education and the love of nature.

The back page of an October issue of *San Francisco* magazine displays a vivid photograph of a small boy, eyes wide with excitement and joy, leaping and running on a great expanse of California beach, storm clouds and towering waves behind him. A short article explains that the boy was hyperactive, he had been kicked out of his school, and his parents had not known what to do with him-but they had observed how nature engaged and soothed him. So for years they took their son to beaches, forests, dunes,

and rivers to let nature do its work. The photograph was taken in 1907. The boy was Ansel Adams. (cited in Louv, 2008 pp. 102-103)

Our last example expresses biophilic pedagogy that displaces the fear of freedom by identification with another. In a program called *The Roots of Empathy*, a curriculum that originated in Canada in 1996, a baby and mother visit a classroom once a month for the first year of the child's life. This relationship was chosen because as founder Mary Gordon believes it "is the best example of emotional attunement there is which is why I chose it as a model of empathy for children to experience" (Gordon, 2010, n.p.)

In Roots of Empathy, students explore the inner consciousness of a baby as they observe and describe what the baby is feeling and how the parent is paying attention to the baby's needs. The students then extend these observations outwardly as they identify and reflect on their own thoughts and feelings and those of others. Ten years of data show a significant decrease in aggression, and increase in emotional understanding and care. (Schonert-Reichl, 2009). One of the most dramatic stories comes from Gordon's (2009 book).

Darren was the oldest child I ever saw in Roots of Empathy class. He was in Grade 8 and had been held back twice. He was two years older than everyone else and already starting to grow a beard. I knew his story: his mother had been murdered in front of his eyes when he was four years old, and he had lived in a succession of foster homes ever since. Darren looked menacing because he wanted us to know he was tough: his head was shaved except for a ponytail at the top and he had a tattoo on the back of his head. The instructor of the Roots of Empathy

program was explaining to the class about differences in temperament that day. She invited the young mother who was visiting the class with Evan, her six-month-old baby, to share her thoughts about her baby's temperament. Joining in the discussion, the mother told the class how Evan liked to face outwards when he was in the Snugli and didn't want to cuddle into her, and how she would have preferred to have a more cuddly baby. As the class ended, the mother asked if anyone wanted to try on the Snugli, which was green and trimmed with pink brocade. To everyone's surprise, Darren offered to try it, and as the other students scrambled to get ready for lunch, he strapped it on. Then he asked if he could put Evan in. The mother was a little apprehensive, but she handed him the baby, and he put Evan in, facing towards his chest. That wise little baby snuggled right in, and Darren took him into a quiet corner and rocked back and forth with the baby in his arms for several minutes. Finally, he came back to where the mother and the Roots of Empathy instructor were waiting and he asked: "If nobody has ever loved you, do you think you could still be a good father?"(Gordon, 2009, pp. 5-6)

Through this experience, Darren began to imagine himself differently and perhaps he experienced a small shift in his sense of personal agency and inward freedom. Fromm recognizes that "freedom" is possible only to the extent that a person's psychological need for attachment and relatedness to others is met. He believes that there are other psychological needs that correspond to the need for freedom that must be met if people are to maintain non-oppressive relationship. Fromm sees freedom as resulting only when

one's psychological needs for security, love, productive work, and relatedness to the world have been met. In Darren's case as well as our own, we often find that these needs are met not as we receive them for ourselves but as we give them to others. Biophilia comes out of "being" not "having". Biophilia increases when we align with the replenishing power of nature in dynamic selfless love. Fromm states that we are:

prone to think that the problem of freedom is exclusively that of gaining still *more* freedom of the kind we have gained in the course of modern history, and to believe that the defense of freedom against such powers that deny such freedom is all that is necessary. We forget that, although each of the liberties which have been won must be defended with utmost vigor, the problem of freedom is not only a quantitative one, but a qualitative one; that we not only have to preserve and increase the traditional freedom, but that we have to gain a new kind of freedom, one which enables us to realize our own individual self, to have faith in this self and in life (1941, pp. 105-106).

Freedom is in Being Not Having

Capitalism, according to Fromm, has freed man further spiritually, mentally, socially, politically, and economically. Man, under the capitalist system learned to "rely on himself, to make responsible decisions, to give up both soothing and terrifying superstitions . . . [he] became free from mystifying elements; [he] began to see himself objectively and with fewer and fewer illusions" (i.e., to become critically conscious), and hence he became increasingly free from traditional bonds, he became free to become more.

As this freedom “from” grew, “positive” freedom (the growth of an active, critical, responsible self) advanced as well. *However*, capitalism also had other effects on the process of growing freedom as well. “It made the individual more alone and isolated and imbued him with a feeling of insignificance and powerlessness” (1941, p.108). It also increased doubt and skepticism, and all of these factors made man more anxious about freedom.

The principle of individualist activity characteristic of a capitalistic economy put the individual on his own feet. Whereas under the feudal system of the Middle Ages, everyone had a fixed place in an ordered and transparent social system under capitalism, if one was unable to stand on his own two feet, he failed, and it was entirely his own affair. Obviously this is not productive work which leads to freedom and biophilia but rather it is oppressive and necrophilious.

That this principle furthered the process of individualization is obvious and is always mentioned as an important item on the credit side of modern culture. But in furthering ‘freedom from,’ this principle helped to sever all ties between one individual and the other and thereby isolated and separated the individual from his fellow men (1941, pp. 105-106).

The results of Capitalism in terms of increasing freedom “from” and the strength of the individual character which it built, have lead people to assume that modern man “has become the center and purpose of all activity, that what he does he does for himself, that the principle of self-interest and egotism are the all-powerful motivations of human activity” (1941, p. 109). “Yet, much of what seemed to him to be *his* purpose was not his” (ibid). Rather, the capital that he earned and created no longer served him – he served it.

“Man became a cog in the vast economic machine . . . to serve a purpose outside of himself” (1941, p. 110). Man became a servant to the very machines he built, which gave him a feeling of personal insignificance and powerlessness. Those who did not have capital and had to sell their labor to earn a living suffered similar psychological effects, according to Fromm, because they too, were merely cogs in the great economic machine, and hence instruments of “suprapersonal economic factors.”

Modern man believed that he was freeing himself, but was really submitting to aims which were not his own. As such, he became untrue to himself. He did not work for himself, his happiness, or his freedom, rather, his work was done either to serve more powerful others or to acquire capital. This further isolated and alienated him from himself and his fellow man. But why did this happen? Paulo Freire theorizes that once one becomes more critically conscious of oppression, one will act to liberate themselves and others. Yet Fromm suggests that as modern man becomes more conscious of and works towards freedom from oppressive bonds, he also becomes more alienated and isolated, and he begins to feel insignificant. Fromm attributes this to the fact that negative freedom was never fully developed into positive freedom. While it did create positive freedom in some ways, i.e., by providing humans with economic and political freedom, the opportunity for individual initiative and growing rational enlightenment (1941. p. 121) it did not provide people with a means to realize all aspects of positive freedom including productive work, love of others, and independence and inward liberation.

Positive freedom, according to Fromm’s definition, is the capacity for “spontaneous relationship to man and nature, a relationship that connects the individual

with the world without eliminating his individuality” (1941, p. 29). The foremost expression of which, according to Fromm, are “love and productive work because they are rooted in the integration and strength of the total personality” (ibid). So according to Fromm, positive freedom equals wholeness of the personality, i.e., integration. But, because relations between people have also become alienating in the modern capitalistic world, human relationships assume the character of relations between things rather than between beings further creating a sense of isolation. Fromm states:

But perhaps the most important and the most devastating instance of this spirit of instrumentality and alienation is the individual’s relationship to his own self. Man does not only sell commodities, he sells himself and feels himself to be a commodity [and] if there is no use for the qualities a person offers, he *has* none; just as an unsalable commodity is valueless though it might have its use value. Thus the self-confidence, the “feeling of self,” is merely an indication of what others think of the person . . . If he is sought after, he is somebody; if he is not popular, he is simply nobody (1941, p. 119).

Fromm believes that “the need to be related to the world outside oneself, the need to avoid aloneness” is as imperative to man as is the physiologically conditioned needs (like hunger, the need for sleep, etc.) “To feel completely alone and isolated leads to mental disintegration just as physical starvation leads to death” (1941, p. 17). The mode of capitalistic production, because it has made man an instrument for suprapersonal

economic purposes and increased his sense of individual insignificance, has also increased his feeling of isolation and powerlessness.

Likewise, human relationships have suffered because they have assumed a spirit of manipulation and instrumentality and have lost their sense of connectedness and relatedness. There is no sense of solidarity in modern society. Human relationships under Capitalism have ceased to be relationships between people who have an interest in one another as fellow human beings, and have become relationships based on mutual usefulness. The instrumentality of relationships is clearly seen in relationships at all levels, from employer/employee, to businessperson/customer; to one's relationship with one's own self. As such humans have become "bewildered and insecure" (1941, p. 120) rather than strong and secure beings who are capable of loving and liberating both themselves and others.

So it appears that man in modern times has won a freedom that has not made him any happier, but only more fearful. Freire's theory supposes that freedom *from* oppression leads to authentic existence, the freedom to become more fully human - happier, more fulfilled, more able to love one another in a non-oppressive manner. It also assumes that people will act in solidarity with one another once they are conscious of oppression. In a complementary way, Fromm's focus on positive freedom takes into account that people need more than economic independence in order to overcome alienation, isolation, a sense of powerlessness, and fear so they do not themselves become oppressors or look for someone to oppress them (after overcome alienation, isolation, a sense of powerlessness, and fear).

Fromm maintains that this fear is an illness of the mind which people want to liberate themselves from at any cost. The fear which results from isolation and alienation is unbearable to people, hence they will seek to escape the psychological toll of fear. The way to transcend this fear of freedom is to take steps toward positive freedom. Fromm writes that this occurs when people seek to:

Relate spontaneously to the world in love and work, in the genuine expression of emotional, sensuous, and intellectual capacities; and thus become one again with man, nature, and themselves, without giving up the independence and integrity of their own individual self. The other course open to him is to fall back, to give up his freedom, and to try to overcome his aloneness by eliminating the gap that has arisen between their individual self and the world. (1941, p. 139)

These efforts can create a worse condition than the previous state because the person “never reunites them with the world in a way he related to it before he emerged as an ‘individual’” (ibid.). The resulting condition may be one that is characterized by “complete surrender of individuality and integrity of the self” (1941, p.140). Obviously this course is “not a solution which leads to happiness and positive freedom . . . it assuages an unbearable anxiety and makes life possible by avoiding panic; yet it does not solve the underlying problem and is paid for by a kind of life that often consists only of automatic or compulsive activities” (1941, p. 140). The unproductive means by which people attempt to relieve themselves of such anxiety, Fromm terms “mechanisms of escape,” i.e., sadist, masochist, automaton conformity.

The individual in a sick society sacrifices genuine freedom and happiness for the security of fitting in with the rest of mankind, that is, for the security of feeling a sense of belonging and connectedness with other humans. It is even possible that “his very defect may have been raised to a virtue by his culture, and thus may enhance feeling of achievement” (1941, p. 140). In U.S. culture today, for instance, ambition for fame, and greed for money and possessions are defects which have become so accepted that they are no longer even considered defects.

In the United States today, the fear of freedom has manifested itself in an overwhelming desire to have. In fact, Fromm says that a “having orientation” predominates amongst those in the western world today. Those with a having orientation tend to focus on obtaining, possessing, and consuming, and they are defined by what they have. According to Fromm, one form of having, consuming is perhaps the most important one for today’s affluent industrial societies. He states that “Consuming has ambiguous qualities: It relieves anxiety, because what one has cannot be taken away; but is also requires one to consume ever more, because previous consumption soon loses its satisfactory character” (1976, p. 15). The modern consumer identifies his or herself by the formula: *I am = what I have and what I consume* (ibid). The attitude inherent in a having orientation is that of incorporating something so that in a sense, one is incorporating its power. By incorporating power from an external source, one in essence believes they possess its strength. Individuals who believe themselves to be powerless, then, gain a sense of power and strength which they are lacking. A society centered around things rather than people, as Western industrial society is, creates individuals with a need to have in

order to feel important, since “To acquire, to own, and to make a profit are the sacred and unalienable rights of the individual in the industrial society” (1976, p. 57).

Having-oriented people focus on consuming, obtaining, and possessing because they are defined by what they have. However, Fromm contends that “I have it” tends to become “it has me,” and people become driven by their possessions. Spiritual traditions have described this behavior in various ways. For example, “The Buddha has described this method of behavior as craving, the Jewish and Christian religions as coveting; it transforms everybody and everything into something dead and subject to another’s power” (1976, p. 64).

While it is necessary to have in order to live in the world, placing too much emphasis on having (to the neglect of being) causes us to suffer. Our psychological need for belonging and relatedness, therefore, cannot be attained through having because a having orientation leads to further alienation and objectivity rather than to rootedness and transcendence (which Fromm maintains are the distinctive human needs that need to be fulfilled in order to move people toward a reunion with one another and with the natural world, i.e., to move toward productive, positive freedom) because it separates us from ourselves and from those around us.

Freire maintains that the oppressed have so fully incorporated the image of the oppressor into their very existence that rejecting that image and replacing it with autonomy and responsibility is far too frightening, and hence is what keeps the oppressed from becoming free and existing authentically. This is why education must address the individual as a subjective being who has deeply internalized the oppressive mindset of the

oppressor. Education must help people to understand the psychological hold that oppression has on their psyche, and it must also help them to develop the ego strength and wisdom to break that hold and to replace it with care for the self and hence for others, while raising critical consciousness about oppressive forces in society. Such an education will go further in allowing individuals to resolve the fear of freedom and move towards a productive life.

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