

# LÁPIZ

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*FROM*

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→ Though in our first issue we ordered the papers according to their chronology during the symposium, the writings in this issue called to us in a different way. Hearing that call, we've ordered the pieces according to their complex balances of general and particular, applied and theoretical, large-scale and small-scale relations between neoliberalism and education.

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

# **AN INVITING SPACE FOR FRIENDS OF LAPE**

To be invited as a speaker at our Annual Symposium is to be invited into dialogue amongst friends. From its conception, LAPES has held the core belief that an important part of what we want to do is bring together as many voices to talk about Latin American Philosophy of Education as we can. No matter what discipline you come from, or what area of education you are in, you are our friend and if you are interested in the topic we have extended an invitation to you to be a part of any and all events we have held. Among others, practitioners, activists, students, philosophers, historians, economists have joined us at various events during the years—hopefully feeling welcome. We strive to create a hospitable space where all friends of LAPE can come into dialogue with each other, thus promoting an intimate atmosphere of learning-and-teaching.

Lápiz—our journal—is hence not only the written artifact that preserves the proceedings of each year's symposium. It is the continuance of the dialogue among friends of LAPE: an open and inviting space where presenters/authors approach LAPE from their different disciplines and areas of knowing. We are grateful that this edition has brought together a varied ensemble of authors. Their ideas, approaches, and contributions widen our vision of LAPE inviting all those interested in the topic to reflect on what Latin American Philosophy of Education is, was and could be.

Sincerely,  
Cecilia Diego

# INTRODUCTION

**Jason Thomas Wozniak**

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Volume N°2 of *Lápiz* begins on page forty-four. There are forty-three pages missing. Since *Lápiz* is a journal which focuses on questions pertaining to Latin American Philosophy of Education, one would like to think that these forty-three pages could have been filled with the thoughts and hopes of forty-three teachers-to-be from the Raúl Isidro Burgos Rural Teachers' College of Ayotzinapa. But these teachers-to-be, at the time of our symposium, and as I write this nearly a year later, are missing. Arrested. Kidnapped. Disappeared.

The second annual Latin American Philosophy of Education Society's (LAPES) symposium was held in the shadows of this violence, one of the worst crimes ever committed against teachers, against education. For two days in March of 2015 scholars, university students, K-12 teachers, and activists, gathered at the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race (CSER) at Columbia University in New York, to discuss and debate the symposium theme: *Post-Neoliberal Latin American Philosophy of Education: An Education Always Already Present, or an Education Yet to Come?* This volume of *Lápiz* represents a sample of the conversations that took place at the symposium.

Wendy Brown has argued convincingly that “in its differential instantiations across countries, regions, and sectors, in its various intersections with extant cultures and political traditions, and above all in its convergences with and uptakes of other discourses and developments, neoliberalism takes diverse shapes and spawns diverse content and normative details, even different idioms.”<sup>1</sup> One might try and define neoliberalism in accordance with David Harvey as “a theory that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve such a framework.”<sup>2</sup> Or influenced

1 → Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 21.

2 → David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

by Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, neoliberalism could be conceived as “the set of discourses, practices and apparatuses that determine a new mode of government of human beings in accordance with the universal principle of competition.”<sup>3</sup> Though no one stable definition of neoliberalism exists, one thing is clear. If we recall John Dewey’s description of “mis-educative experience” as that which “has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience,” and as an experience which “engenders callousness,” and produces “lack of sensitivity and of responsiveness,”<sup>4</sup> we can assert with confidence that neoliberalism produces education projects that are at their core “mis-educative.” Working according to the rubric of capitalist market ideology, neoliberal education projects employ a variety of techniques to shape individuals as human capital and/or as micro-enterprises. In doing so, neoliberalism formulates education endeavors which delimit human potentiality and impoverish individual and collective experience.

Taking the above into consideration, the LAPES symposium was organized around a philosophical-pedagogical-political position: Education history, has not, we claim, ended with the era of neoliberalism. Beginning from this assertion, which some might say is naïve, but which we prefer to say is full of radical hope, we studied in collective fashion the history of neoliberalism in Latin American education. We examined how it influences Latin American education theory and practice today, and what forms post-neoliberal education philosophy and practice might adopt in, and outside of, the region of Latin America. Over the course of the symposium we inquired into how Latin American philosophies of education have contested neoliberal ideology, and how such contestation may help us open up the possibilities for thinking and practicing education outside of a neoliberal framework.

Neoliberalism has been, is, and just might remain, firmly entrenched in Latin America, influencing societies and individuals in profound manners. In particular, it has drastically altered the pedagogical

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2005), 2.

3 → Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, *The New Way of the World: On Neo-Liberal Society*. Trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2013), 4.

4 → John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1938), 25-26.

landscape of the region. But it is also true that there have been, and still are, countless efforts (including those of the students of Ayotzinapa) to imagine and struggle for post-neoliberal politics and pedagogies, post-neoliberal philosophies of education and educational institutions.

In one way or another, and at one time or another, efforts to imagine education outside of neoliberal rationality must address the following questions: Who, or what, will shape, give form to, in other words, *educate*, post-neoliberal thought, feeling, and ways of living? How might neoliberal subjectivity be de-formed, and post-neoliberal subjectivity<sup>^</sup> formed? The papers gathered here represent individual and collective efforts to heighten the stakes of these questions by thinking with, and through, a variety of Latin American traditions of thought.

What the authors of this volume of *Lápiz* attempt to do is re-appropriate education from neoliberal rationality. They do this by making past political-pedagogical struggle contemporary (Hernández), by directing our attention to current resistance against neoliberalism (Caffentzis), and pointing us towards curriculums (Luzardo) in which the ends of teaching and learning are not tied to the *telos* of the market. They offer ideas of education as *buen vivir* (Monzó), and calls for us to imagine a poetics of education which engenders utopian thinking (Perisic) that has the potential to inspire political-pedagogical praxis which involves a learning to no end (Nunes).

We may not all legitimately be able to claim to be Ayotzinapa (*Ayotzinapa Somos Todos*), but all of us who believe that another world outside of neoliberalism is possible inherit not only the violence against the forty-three teachers-to-be of Ayotzinapa, but also their struggle against neoliberal ideology and governmentality. Hence, the question always to be asked again and again: How will we take up this inheritance, how will we respond to it? In a sense, one might consider the articles presented here as initial, albeit forever incomplete, efforts to do so. ■

# CARIBBEAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE CHALLENGE TO NEOLIBERAL IMAGINATION

**Alexandra Perisic**  
University of Miami

ORIGINALLY PRESENTED  
March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 3:00 p.m.

The argument of this article is fairly simple: it is time for a post-neoliberal education, one founded on a new form of utopian, relational thinking that encourages students to envision new realities and empowers them to change the conditions of the present. This argument has been long in the making, but appears to me even more urgent now, due to a course I have taught recently.

In the fall of 2014, I taught an undergraduate college course entitled "Cultures of Resistance in the Francophone Caribbean." Through a study of texts and films from the French overseas departments of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Guyana, as well as the Republic of Haiti, the course introduced students to the history and culture of the Francophone Caribbean. More specifically, we examined how throughout the twentieth century, culture (including journalistic writing, literature, film, and even radio shows) has been mobilized as a mode of resistance against different forms of racial, economic, and social oppression. While I was teaching this class, street protests erupted in Ferguson, Missouri. Michael Brown, an African-American teenager, was killed by a white police officer, leading to protests across the country and the emergence of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. This was not an isolated case, as Michael Brown was not the only African-American to suffer at the hands of the police and state institutions. In response, Black communities and their allies took to the streets, expressing their outrage over centuries of social and economic inequality maintained by state violence.<sup>1</sup> Since in my

1→ See Monica Davey and Julie Bosman, "Protests Flare After Ferguson Police Officer Is Not Indicted," *The New York Times* (November 24, 2014.), <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/25/us/ferguson-darren-wilson-shooting-michael-brown-grand-jury.html> (accessed June 5th, 2015), and Chris Branch, "Looking Ahead After Ferguson Protests: What Happens Next?" *Huffington Post*

class we were dealing with questions of race, class, gender, and inequality, I wanted to connect what we were reading to what was happening in the country: I asked my students for their opinions on what was happening in Ferguson and for some possible solutions.

My students' reactions were twofold: most of them agreed that Mike Brown should not have died; they were critical of the U.S. justice system and the country's long and troubled history of race relations. Yet, they also thought there was nothing they could do about it. They held a firm belief that it was those in power who needed to instigate change. This led me to reflect on the two core values of our current, neoliberal<sup>2</sup> system of education: critical thinking and diversity. Under this existing paradigm we are increasingly producing students who are critical, but who feel powerless, especially outside of existing institutional frameworks.<sup>3</sup>

In what follows, and drawing on my experience teaching literature and culture of the Francophone Caribbean and Francophone Africa in the United States, I would like to make the following argument: in the framework of a post-neoliberal education, we must embolden students to envision and enact new, different realities. In order to achieve this, we need to begin cultivating utopian thinking and an understanding of diversity based on relation, and not merely on respect. I will begin by discussing the notions of critical thinking and diversity (based on respect for others' differences) as two pillars of neoliberal higher education that perpetuate

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(December 2, 2014), [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/02/ferguson-protests-end-goal\\_n\\_6256292.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/02/ferguson-protests-end-goal_n_6256292.html) (accessed June 5th, 2015), and Alicia Garza. "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter movement." *The Feminist Wire* (October 7th, 2014), <http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/> (accessed June 1st, 2015).

- 2 → When using the term neoliberalism, I rely on David Harvey's definition in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*: "Neoliberalism is a theory that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve such a framework—if markets don't exist then they must be created and state action is necessary." David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.
- 3 → I should specify that I teach at a private university and that at a different institution students' responses may have been different. I have, however, encountered a similar response in other contexts, outside of the institution where I teach.

the existing system of governance. I will then introduce two Francophone Caribbean texts in order to demonstrate what it would mean to think about utopias/critique/diversity/relation/respect in a different manner. In my discussion of utopian thinking, I rely on the definition of utopia coined by Martinican writer and philosopher Édouard Glissant: "*L'Utopie n'est pas le rêve. Elle est ce qui nous manque dans le monde.*" (Utopia is not a dream. It is what we are missing in the world.)<sup>4</sup> The question I am posing here is this: How can we construct an education based not on what the world is, but on that which is missing in the world, in an attempt to bring it into being?

This question is particularly salient now, as we witness the rise of the neoliberal university. Run under a corporate management model, the neoliberal university relies on an inflated administration and a contingent and part-time faculty. It sees students as consumers and faculty as providers of a commodity: professional skills that can be auctioned off on the free job market after graduation. It buries students so deep in debt that they do not have the time or the energy to thoroughly think about their role in the world.<sup>5</sup> In a recent interview, Henry Giroux declared that "education under neoliberalism is a form of radical depoliticization, one that kills the radical imagination and the hope for a world that is more just, equal, and democratic..."<sup>6</sup> In this context, instead of simply trying to adapt to the existing system and accepting it as inevitable, we must begin to think about a post-neoliberal education. The "post" in "post-neoliberal" does not need to be a continuation or intensification of the current model. It can be a radical break that does not conceive of education as just another

4 → Édouard Glissant, *La cohée du Lamentin* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 16. All the translations from French are my own, unless otherwise noted.

5 → See Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, "The Neo-Liberal University," *New Labor Forum* No. 6 (Spring - Summer, 2000): 73-79, and Leigh Scott, Debra. "How Higher Education in the US Was Destroyed in 5 Basic Steps." *Alternet* (October 16, 2012), <http://www.alternet.org/how-higher-education-us-was-destroyed-5-basic-steps> (accessed June 1st, 2015), and Henry A. Giroux, *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education* (New York: Haymarket Books, 2014).

6 → Victoria Harper, "Henry A. Giroux: Neoliberalism, Democracy and the University as a Public Sphere." *Truthout* (April, 22nd, 2014), <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/23156-henry-a-giroux-neoliberalism-democracy-and-the-university-as-a-public-sphere> (accessed June 23rd, 2015).

commodity. This "post" will come, and it is up to us, educators and students, to shape it.

This essay, however, does not claim to present a conclusive answer, model, or argument for what a post-neoliberal education could or should be. It should be read as a sketch, an attempt at utopian writing, an attempt to delineate that which is missing in the classroom in order to begin calling it into being. I would also like to make clear that while I am proposing the concept of utopian thinking, I am not actually solving the pedagogical problem of how to move from critical towards utopian thinking in the classroom. That is a question that I hope will be taken up by educators and philosophers reading this piece.

## THE CARIBBEAN TEXT AS A SITE OF REEDUCATION

Before focusing more specifically on neoliberal education, I would like to write a few words about literature, philosophy, and education in the Francophone Caribbean. As I will rely on contemporary Caribbean texts in my discussion of utopian, relational thinking, I would like to begin by placing these texts in a cultural history based not solely on criticising that which is, but also on envisioning that which is not. In this article I will focus only on Martinique and Guadeloupe, the situation of Haiti being somewhat different.

Both Martinique and Guadeloupe were colonised by France in the seventeenth century, and became French overseas departments after World War II. As a result, Martinique and Guadeloupe followed the French educational system, with students studying French history, literature, and philosophy. At times, more radical currents in literature and philosophy have perceived this as a Eurocentric form of cultural assimilation, and have tried to resist it by setting up alternative models of education.

Particularly in Paris throughout the 1920s and 30s (which at that time was the predominant meeting place of students from the Francophone Caribbean, Francophone Africa, and African-American artists) we start seeing a challenge to this kind of cultural assimilation,



and efforts instead at radical reeducation.<sup>7</sup> Literary and cultural journals became the primary site of this, as exemplified by the growing popularity of radical student publications such as *La Revue du monde noir*, *Légitime défense*, and *L'étudiant noir*.<sup>8</sup>

For instance, in 1932, a group of Caribbean students including René Ménénil and Etienne Léro founded a journal called *Légitime défense*, which altogether published only one issue. Inspired by Marxism and Surrealism, the group offered a powerful critique of French colonialism and the Caribbean bourgeoisie, which strove to act, think, and write like the French. They were particularly critical of a literary style known as “doudouisme,” which promoted exotic images of the Caribbean as a paradisiacal setting filled with sexually available black women. In its place, they proposed a new form of surrealist poetry, thus not limiting themselves to a critique of the existing system, but further striving to create a new reality.<sup>9</sup> Surrealist poetry, with its emphasis on the unconscious, the irrational and the oneiric, allowed them to break away from the European tradition founded upon logic and reason. Free from the cultural weight of Europe, they were also able to reintroduce and revalorize African elements in Caribbean cultural production.

Similarly, Aimé Césaire, a Martinican poet and politician, one of the founders of *L'étudiant noir* and the Negritude cultural movement, began to question the Eurocentric nature of his education during his time as a student in Paris. According to Gregson Davis, Césaire was

[...] experiencing the incipient cultural alienation that afflicted other Third World students thrown together on the metropolitan scene in the latter half of the prewar decade. Students of color, in particular, sooner or later found themselves drawn, if only in self-defense, into a radically critical stance towards European civilization and its arrogant claims to superiority.<sup>10</sup>

7 → By “reeducation” I understand the emergence of new cultural and ideological models; new ways of thinking and being aimed at changing the status quo.

8 → Brent H. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003).

9 → René Ménénil, *Légitime défense* (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1979).

10 → Gregson Davis, *Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 7.

Within this context he published, in 1935, in the third issue of *L'étudiant noir*, an article entitled "Conscience Raciale et Revolution Sociale" (Racial Consciousness and Social Revolution) where he formulated his position against cultural assimilation in the Caribbean and used the term *négritude* for the first time:

*Un mal étrange nous ronge, en effet, aux Antilles: une peur de soi-même, une capitulation de l'être devant le paraître, une faiblesse qui pousse un peuple d'exploités à tourner le dos à sa nature, parce qu'une race d'exploiteurs lui en fait honte dans le perfide dessein d'abolir "la conscience propre des exploités."*<sup>11</sup>

Négritude's goal was to define the common values of the Black world, in order to create a revolutionary consciousness. The movement was founded upon a strong critique of the Caribbean bourgeoisie's desire, which was promoted in part by the existing education system and its guiding axiom "*Nos Ancêtres les Gaulois*" (Our ancestors the Gauls): to be French; to reproduce French culture; to write and think like the French. It also strived for a new culture, a literature and philosophy based on the revalorization of African influence in Caribbean culture.<sup>12</sup>

I do not want to spend too much time on this particular chapter in history, though it is an incredibly fruitful and influential one. I do want to suggest that throughout the twentieth century and through to this day there have been attempts in the Francophone Caribbean to use philosophy, poetry, and literature as sites of reeducation that challenge official educational systems, as well as our writing and reading of history. Fiction became, and remains, a platform for reintroducing that which had been

11 → A strange disorder is consuming us in the Antilles: a fear of ourselves, a surrender of being to appearance, a weakness that makes an exploited people turn their back on their own nature, because a race of exploiters makes them ashamed of it, with the treacherous purpose of eradicating "the consciousness that belongs to the exploited." Aimé Césaire cited in Christopher L. Miller, "The (Revised) Birth of Négritude: Communist Revolution and 'the Immanent Negro' in 1935," *PMLA* Vol. 125, No. 3 (May 2010): 743-749.

12 → See Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Négritude & Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (University of Chicago Press 2005), and Soulaymane Bachir Diagne, "Négritude." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (May 24, 2010), <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/negritude/> (accessed June 23d, 2015).

erased by official education and official versions of history, including slave resistance and the influence of African traditions.<sup>13</sup>

In light of this historical context, to what extent can we think about contemporary Caribbean texts as sites of reeducation, and as offering us gateways into a vision for a post-neoliberal education? I will begin with my first proposal: in the framework of a post-neoliberal education, we need to move from, or perhaps rather connect, critical thinking to the notion of utopian thinking.

## FROM CRITICAL TO UTOPIAN THINKING

The word “critical” in “critical thinking” derives from the Greek *kritikos* (critic) and implies the capacity of judgment or discernment.<sup>14</sup> The literature on critical thinking is extensive, with no consensus on the exact origin, definition, or set of characteristics of the concept and its practice. It has been defined as: “A persistent effort to examine any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the evidence that supports or refutes it and the further conclusions to which it tends,”<sup>15</sup> and “a thinking about one's thinking in a manner designed to organize and clarify, raise the efficiency of, and recognize errors and biases in one's own thinking.”<sup>16</sup> While the exact definitions vary, most studies on critical thinking agree that the main skills fostered by this method are: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, and explanation. It is a form of thinking informed by evidence, involving an “explanation of the

13 → Examples of historical novels of this kind include: Maryse Condé, *Moi, Tituba sorcière--: noire de Salem* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1988), and Daniel Maximin, *L'isolé soleil: roman* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981), and Édouard Glissant, *Le quatrième siècle: roman* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964).

14 → Lesley Brown, *The new shorter Oxford English dictionary on historical principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 551.

15 → Edward M. Glaser, *An Experiment in the Development of Critical Thinking* (New York, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941.)

16 → James Elkins, “The Critical Thinking Movement: Alternating Currents in One Teacher's Thinking” Presentation at the session on Reading, Thinking, Writing, at a Workshop on Reading Critically, at the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) (New Orleans, January 7, 1999), <http://myweb.wvnet.edu/~jelkins/critproj/overview.html> (accessed June 24th, 2015).

evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based.”<sup>17</sup>

These are not bad skills to have. In my classes, I want my students to be able to examine their preconceptions and recognize how ideological systems function. I want them to challenge stereotypes and evaluate given situations. I thus do not intend to say that there is no value in thinking critically or that we should not strive to develop these skills in our students. However, this is not enough. Understanding how “bad” things are, if not combined with a search for alternatives, can and very often does lead to the formation of critical students who do not believe in the possibility of change. While we are training our students to “objectively” analyze and examine their everyday realities, we are not encouraging them to intervene in this reality (aside from in very pragmatic and limited ways) and even more importantly, to re-envision said reality. The re-envisioning or reimagining of a given reality cannot be based solely on rational, analytical, evidence-based thinking. This form of thinking leads us to understand the way things are. It thus has to be combined with the belief that that which is not, that which is missing in the world, can be created through reflection, imagination, and practice. In conjunction to that which is, it has to focus on that which is not but which could be. Our students often enter our classrooms as passive, disillusioned, skeptical observers, and they often leave unaltered. This situation perfectly serves the current power structures. A population of disillusioned, skeptical observers is what upholds the neoliberal system of governance. Critical thinking serves neoliberalism as long as it exists within the framework of an unchanging present. If we are to challenge neoliberalism, we need to resurrect both the memory and the possibility of something different.

A lot has recently been written about the role of “critique” and its limitations in our current socio-economic system. In *The Agony of Power*, French theorist Jean Baudrillard writes that the main characteristic of hegemony is the absorption of all critical negativity: “What

17 → Pater A. Facione, *Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts* (Insight Assessment, 2010), 26. See also P.A. Facione, C.A. Sanchez, N.C. Facione and J. Gainen. “The disposition toward critical thinking.” *The Journal of General Education* 44, no.1 (1995): 1-25, and Harvey Siegel, “Critical thinking as an educational ideal,” *The Educational Forum* 45, no.1 (1980): 7-23.

is the impact of a film like Darwin's nightmare, which denounces racial discrimination in Tanzania? It will tour the Western world and reinforce the endogamy, the cultural and political autarky of this separate world through images and consumption of image."<sup>18</sup> Baudrillard further uses the example of the BNP (a French bank and financial services company) slogan "*votre argent m'intéresse*" (I am interested in your money) to argue that under global capitalism our ultimate power has been stolen, the power to denounce. The logic of capitalism relies on the constant incorporation of negative elements, the system incorporates criticism by performing its own denunciation. In the face of capitalists who willingly admit that their only interest is profit, "the privilege of telling the truth eludes our grasp."<sup>19</sup> In other words, is there a purpose in denouncing what no one contests?

Fredric Jameson makes a similar argument in *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* when he claims that global neoliberalism admits that people have different values, lifestyles, and opinions, as long as they accept economic globalization as the ultimate, inevitable reality. Criticism is welcome in so far as it remains within the very reality that it criticizes. This is why Frederic Jameson characterizes the contemporary era as "infantile capitalism." Modernism, according to Jameson, is associated with incomplete modernization, a period where the "pre" or the "non" modern could still be remembered. In our current era, the era that could be named both late and infantile capitalism, the memory of something different has been lost:

Everyone has been born into it, takes it for granted, and has never known anything else, the friction, resistance, effort of the earlier moments having given away to the free play of automation and the malleable fungibility of multiple consumer public and markets: roller skates and multinationals, word processors and overnight unfamiliar postmodern downtown high rises.<sup>20</sup>

18 → Jean Baudrillard, *The agony of power* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2010), 60.

19 → Ibid.

20 → Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 367.

As far as the system in place is concerned, there is no harm in criticizing global capitalism and representing its negative sides, since this gesture does not challenge it as the unique, irrevocable reality. As Jameson argues, the inefficacy of critique stems in part from our inability to historicize, our belief that we are trapped in an eternal, unchanging present. Neoliberalism promotes this model of development and progress where the present is seen as an overcoming of the past. Past struggles are thus no longer fully relevant since we have progressed beyond them.

In order to free ourselves from this unchanging present, it is the memory of something different that we need to salvage and invent. Such a memory can be the first step towards imagining a different future. And yet we are not working to salvage or invent this memory. As educators and theorists, we are holding onto the tradition of critical thinking in order to claim that it no longer has any use. The notion here is that there is nothing left to criticize, and that even if there was, the critique would remain “within” the reality it is criticizing. Jacques Rancière analyzes this paradox of “the critical paradigm” in his groundbreaking work *The Emancipated Spectator*. Rancière argues that the critical paradigm has always aimed at discovering and ousting the “true” reality behind the reign of images. However, whereas several decades ago this process was used in order to incite action, today it is merely used to denounce its own ineffectiveness, and to assert both that there is nothing left to criticize, and that any criticism is immediately absorbed by the system:

I have contrasted this right-wing frenzy of post-critical critique with left-wing melancholy. But they are two sides of the same coin. Both operate the same inversion of the critical model that claimed to reveal the law of the commodity as the ultimate truth of beautiful appearances, in order to arm the combatants in the social struggle. The revelation continues. But it is no longer thought to supply any weapon against the empire it denounces. Left-wing melancholy invites us to recognize that there is no alternative to the power of the beast and to admit that we are satisfied by it. Right-wing frenzy warns us that the more we try to break the power of the beast, the more we contribute

to its triumph. But this disconnection between critical procedures and their purpose strips them of any hope of effectiveness.<sup>21</sup>

Rancière relies mostly on examples from art history in order to support his argument. For instance, he contrasts Martha Rosler's piece from her 1970's series *Bringing the war home* and Josephine Meckseper's 2006 *Untitled* piece. In the former, an image of a happy suburban American family is juxtaposed with images from the Vietnam War. This contrast is meant to raise awareness of how the system of domination functions, and to invoke the viewer's complicity in that system. The war is also waged at home and it must also be fought at home. On the other hand, Meckseper's piece combines images of the Iraq civil war with those of anti-war protests in New York City. In one of them, next to a group of demonstrators is an overflowing dustbin. According to Rancière, an equivalence is thus created between the group of demonstrators and the dustbin: the trash was probably created by the demonstrators underscoring the fact that the protests are themselves caught in the logic of consumption and spectacle. Unlike in Rosler's piece, there is no longer an outside to the universe of images.

I concur with Baudrillard's and Jameson's analysis of the limits of critique. But while theorists are increasingly denouncing the waning effectiveness of social critique, we are insisting on the importance of critical thinking in higher education. We are teaching students to analyze, evaluate, and critique reality while also contending that the mere act of critiquing is futile, since there is no possibility for change. We are left teaching how bad things are and how little we can do about it. If we are to create a post-neoliberal education, maybe it's time to let go of the critical paradigm. Rancière proposes focusing on "a new topography of the possible."<sup>22</sup> I propose cultivating utopian thinking.

I would like to now return to the question of the Caribbean text and how it can be used to foster utopian thinking. I will focus on a

21 → Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009), 40.

22 → Ibid, 49.

Guadeloupean historical novel *Isolé Soleil* (*Lone Sun*), written by Daniel Maximin, which proposes a different understanding of time, history, and social change.<sup>23</sup>

*Lone Sun* forms part of a novelistic trilogy that narrates three centuries of Guadeloupean history through five generations of one family. The title of the novel is an anagram, by rearranging the letters in “isolé” one obtains “soleil.” This anagram is also a metaphor for the novel as a whole, which attempts to permute historical events and figures in order to produce a new configuration of history. Due to a lack of official historical sources attesting to modes of slave resistance, it falls to fiction to recreate these forgotten stories. Since official Caribbean history has been written from the point of view of the white master, the novel resurrects marginalized and suppressed voices of slaves, free black men and women, and local revolutionary leaders.

The plot of the novel is difficult to summarize as it operates through an enmeshment of different voices and stories, past and present. It begins in 1962, when 17 year old Marie-Gabriel falls from a tree in the yard of her childhood house in Guadeloupe. At the same moment, her father dies in a plane crash in the vicinity of the Soufrière volcano. This episode inspires Marie-Gabriel to pursue writing. In what follows, the reader is exposed to excerpts from her upcoming novel; her correspondence with Adrien, a friend in Paris; as well as the notebooks, journals, and letters of her ancestors and different historical figures.

The part of the novel entitled “Le Cahier de Jonathan” (Jonathan’s notebook) is a reproduction of a notebook of a free black man, Marie-Gabriel’s ancestor, who died in 1802. Jonathan’s notebook is a record of the lives of two twin brothers, Jonathan and George, and is set against the unsuccessful nineteenth century Guadeloupean uprising led by Louis Delgrès, against Napoleonic troops trying to reinstitute slavery. While Jonathan joins the maroons and from the beginning fights with Delgrès, George stays in the lowlands. Both however

23 → Daniel Maximin is a Guadeloupean novelist, poet, and essayist, born in 1947. As a teenager he moved to France, where he studied at the Sorbonne and served as literary director of the journal *Présence Africaine*. He returned to Guadeloupe in 1989 as Regional Director of Cultural Affairs.



ultimately die in the famous collective Matouba suicide.<sup>24</sup> At the very end of the novel the reader discovers that the nineteenth century twin brothers were named in homage to the African-American Jackson brothers. Maximin has clarified this connection:

*Le choix des prénoms, Georges et Jonathan se réfère aux frères de Soledad, les frères Jackson, George et John, militants de la cause des noirs américains, pris dans le même mouvement qu'Angela Davis: l'un mort en prison, le petit frère, assassiné au tribunal où il avait surgi, mitrailleuse à la main, pour délivrer son frère aîné, George. Les frères Georges et Jonathan de 1802, rendent en quelque sorte hommage, par anticipation, aux frères de Soledad qui ont marqué ma génération. C'est encore l'idée de cycle, l'idée qu'on peut commencer par la fin, qu'on a pas à enfermer l'auteur dans la ligne droite du déroulement chronologique. Suivre la spirale qui n'est pas retour au même point [...]*<sup>25</sup>

As explained by Maximin, George Jackson was a member of the Black Panther Party and co-founder of the Black Guerrilla Family while incarcerated in the 1960's.<sup>26</sup> He achieved fame as one of the Soledad Brothers, three African-American inmates charged with the murder of a white prison guard at California's Soledad Prison in

24 → After realizing they could not defeat the French troops, Delgrès and 400 of his men and women set their gunpowder supplies on fire, committing collective suicide in the process. See Laurent Dubois, "Haunting Delgrès" in *Contested histories in public space: memory, race, and nation* 2009, ed. by Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer (Duke University Press, 2009), 312.

25 → The choice of the names, Georges and Jonathan, refers to Soledad brothers, the Jackson brothers, George and John, militant activists for the cause of Black Americans, who belonged to the same movement as Angela Davis: one died in prison, the little brother, killed in the court, where he appeared, carrying a machine gun, in order to free his older brother, George. The 1802 brothers Georges and Jonathan, in a way pay tribute, by anticipation, to the Soledad brothers who marked my generation. It is again the idea of a cycle, the idea that we can begin by the end, that we do not need to enclose the author in the straight line of chronological development. To follow the spiral, which is not the return to the same point [...] Daniel Maximin cited in Christiane Chaulet-Achour, *La Trilogie caribéenne de Daniel Maximin : Analyse et contrepoint* (Paris, Karthala, 2000), 69.

26 → See George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (Toronto, Canada: Longmans Canada Limited, 1970).

1970. His brother, Jonathan Jackson, brought three guns registered to Angela Davis into the courthouse during the trial of the Soledad brothers, which he used to take the judge and three female jurors hostage. Upon exiting the courthouse, he was shot and killed by the police. George Jackson died a year later, killed by guards, during an alleged escape attempt. The courthouse incident led to the famous trial of Angela Davis, a contemporary figure who also appears in the novel. In fact, she appears in three different incarnations: as Angela, a small girl that is murdered at the age of seven in eighteenth century Guadeloupe; as Angela, a girl that Siméa (Marie Gabriel's mother) takes care of in a 1943 asylum; and finally as Angela Davis herself, who Marie-Gabriel meets at the end of the novel.

How can this small gesture of naming two brothers in nineteenth century Guadeloupe after two Black Panthers change our understanding of time, social change, and ultimately post-neoliberal education? As Maximin has himself stated, this is a tribute by anticipation. Maximin embraces the idea of historical cycles but also the fact that we can begin by the end; we do not need to be trapped in the logic of linear development. He is writing against linear history and using instead the model of the spiral, a spatial model which represents a different understanding of time. The spiral conveys chronological movement but also historical return; it is repetition but with a difference. Maximin has written that in his choice of the spiral, he was influenced by the Haitian literary movement known as spiralism. In her groundbreaking work *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon*, Kaiama Glover explains the meaning of the spiral for Haitian writers:

From the structure of the double helix that defines every living being, to the swirl of stars, gas, and dust that compose the galaxy, the very foundations of the universe unfold in a spiral, implicitly putting even the most dramatically isolated beings into relation. The spiral is connected, moreover, to certain region-specific elements of Haitian reality. It is present in the bands of the hurricane winds that regularly ravage the island, and it makes up the

structure of the conch shell, an object that functions symbolically to recall the rallying cries of Haiti's revolutionaries.<sup>27</sup>

What does it mean for the lives of two free black men in nineteenth century Guadeloupe to be connected to the lives of two Black Panthers through a spiral? What does it mean for nineteenth century Georges and Jonathan to anticipate the existence and struggles of the Soledad Brothers and Angela Davis? And what would it mean for my students to understand the relation between the two?

What we learn from this juxtaposition is that every rebellion contains the seed of every rebellion to come; that we are in a direct relation with the history of resistance; that we do not ever overcome the past yet are also not at a standstill. This vision of history offers an important role to the imagination. Jonathan, a nineteenth century Guadeloupean Maroon is able to imagine all the futures to come, opening up the opportunity for us to imagine all the pasts that have been. Furthermore, it is important to notice that the tribute by anticipation is transnational; Maximin purposefully does not choose twentieth century Caribbean figures but instead establishes a link with the Black Power movement in the U.S., encouraging us to think about social change across borders.

George and Jonathan Jackson appear at the end of the novel, during their trial. This episode is followed by a letter Marie-Gabriel writes to Angela Davis, announcing their death: "*George et Jonathan sont morts. J'avais prévu les initiales. Il faut réinventer des frères pour la fraternité.*"<sup>28</sup> (George and Jonathan are dead. I had foreseen the initials. We have to reinvent brothers for fraternity). Marie-Gabriel acknowledges that she had predicted the initials of the two brothers while not forgetting to say that the brothers need to be continuously reinvented.

The novel ends with an opening, a hunger to create a future:

*Le désir fera ouvrir nos bouches pour continuer notre histoire à livre*

27 → Kaiama Glover, *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), viii.

28 → All translations are from Daniel Maximin, *Lone Sun* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989).

*fermé, au rythme solidaire des tambours de nos veillées, avec le jeu pour liaison, l'amour présent, la faim d'avenir, la peur à dépasser.*<sup>29</sup>

This future is not determined in advance, it cannot be decided by the author, but it is there to be created:

*Pas de dénouement pas de fin : encore de la soif, avec le feu du cœur et du volcan, le vent des cyclones et des baisers, l'eau des sources et de la mer.*<sup>30</sup>

I want to again reiterate that my overall argument is not against the act of thinking critically: Maximin himself has said that the purpose of literature is to provoke questions and raise doubts, questions and doubts that it will not be able to, and need not, answer. However, the questioning proposed in the novel is, I argue, a form of utopian questioning, a questioning that opens a space for an improved, if yet undetermined future. Like Maximin, in order to move beyond the neo-liberal model of education we need to begin relating critical thinking to utopian imaginings, to the ability to imagine past and present resistances to come. The refusal of utopias is often seen as a refusal of ideology, a refusal to impose pre-designed, pre-established political models. But to claim the impossibility of change is to impose a political model on the future: the model of the present. Utopian thinking is a thinking that does not predetermine alternatives but embraces their continuous envisioning; it is an open and never-ending process. After offering his definition of utopia, Glissant continues: "*Nous sommes nombreux à être réjouis que le philosophe français Gilles Deleuze ait estimé que la fonction de la littérature comme de l'art est d'abord d'inventer un peuple qui manque. L'Utopie est le lieu même de ce peuple.*"<sup>31</sup> (Many of us are thrilled that the French philosopher Gilles

29 → Desire will open our mouths to continue our story with the book closed, to the rhythm of solidarity of the drums of our wakes, with play for liaison, love present, hunger for the future, fear to get past. Maximin, *Lone Star* (p.282).

30 → No outcome, certainly no ending: more thirst, with fire at the heart of the volcano, wind in the cyclones and kisses, water of springs and the sea. Maximin, *Lone Star* (p.282).

31 → Édouard Glissant, *La cohée du Lamentin* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), p.16.

Deleuze considers the function of literature and of art to be the invention of a people that is missing. Utopia is the place of that people.) What if our educational system were also to encourage the invention of that people?

A post-neoliberal education could, and needs to, reignite this hunger for the future, in order to free us from the everlasting frozen present. In order to teach us how to put in conversation a Guadeloupean Maroon and a Black Liberation activist of the twenty-second century. In *Lone Sun*, Marie-Gabriel writes that “*le premier devoir de l’écrivain est d’écrire révolutionnairement, pas de décrire la révolution*” (the first duty of the writer is to write revolutionarily, not to describe the revolution.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, the role of the educator is not simply to describe a past revolution, but to encourage revolutionary thinking.

I would also like to point out that a utopian impulse initially formed part of critical pedagogy. Ben Agger, in his book *The Discourse of Domination: From the Frankfurt School to Postmodernism*, underlines the transformative aspect of critical theory: “As its own political metalanguage, critical theory is a praxis. It talks about the world as it assesses the social potential for freedom.”<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, Paulo Freire, considered one of the fathers of critical pedagogy, wrote:

One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be. After all, without hope there is little we can do. It will be hard to struggle on, and when we fight as hopeless or despairing persons, our struggle will be suicidal. Hence the need for a kind of education in hope.<sup>34</sup>

For Freire, the task of critical thinking was not to simply reproduce the past and understand the present. It was, above all, to enter

32 → Maximin, *Lone Star* (p.276).

33 → Ben Agger, *The Discourse of Domination: From the Frankfurt School to Postmodernism* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 226.

34 → Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 3.

into dialogue with the past in order to transcend the present and construct a different future. It offered a way of producing hope.

Exemplifying a way of producing hope and encouraging relation, *Lone Sun* strives to think the past in relation to the present and to relate different geographical relations, two gestures inherent to utopian thinking.

## FROM RESPECT TO RELATION

Another difficulty my students have is thinking relationally. They are often interested in the Francophone Caribbean (or in Ferguson and the #BlackLivesMatter movement for that matter) but they do not see it as directly relating to their lives in any way. They acknowledge that the situation in Haiti or in Ferguson is “bad,” and should not be such, but the link between what is happening “over there” and how we live our lives “over here” is difficult to convey. I want to suggest that this is in part due to the neoliberal concept of diversity, which is founded upon respect for differences. This notion also influences predominant modes of teaching: when we teach we focus on bringing the materials to transparency, not necessarily into relation. I would also like to use Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation* in order to propose a different way of understanding diversity,<sup>35</sup> one that emphasizes relation and to suggest that this is the type of diversity we need to activate in the classroom.

Critical thinking, diversity, and multiculturalism are current catch phrases of the neoliberal university. We, the faculty in languages and cultural studies, are tasked with providing access to a multicultural education, which is supposed to both respond to and lead to further diversity on campus. Critical thinking and diversity are in turn related.

35 → Édouard Glissant was from the island of Martinique, which he left in 1946 for Paris in order to pursue his studies. In 1959, he established, together with Guadeloupian poet and political activist Paul Nègre, the Front Antillo-Guyanais pour l’Autonomie, as a result of which Charles de Gaulle barred him from leaving France between 1961 and 1965. He returned to Martinique in 1965 and founded the Institut martiniquais d’études, a private high-school in Fort-de France. Until his death in 2011, Glissant divided his time between Martinique, Paris and New York where he was Distinguished Professor of French at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Critical thinking is meant to encourage appreciation of diversity; whereas more diversity is meant to offer more opportunities for critical thinking.

But a few words about neoliberal diversity: first of all, it generally does not include class. Because if it did, U.S. universities would have to admit that diversity on their campuses is very limited.<sup>36</sup> Diversity is also most of the time presented as respect and appreciation of differences, be it cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, etc. However, mere appreciation and respect still allow me to occupy a bystander position; they allow me to observe from a distance. I am thus not necessarily urged to think about differences in relation; to understand how my own positionality (social, economic, racial, ethnic, etc.) determines and is determined by other positionalities. I do not need to affect or be affected by these differences. Diversity in this framework becomes a form of tolerant coexistence. We are taught to tolerate the existence of a different other, without necessarily equalizing our social and institutional positions.

This is why, for instance, we prefer to talk about poverty rather than inequality. In order to alleviate poverty, the other simply needs to do better; I can “help” that other but the way I live my life does not affect, and is not affected by, the other’s poverty. On the other hand, inequality implies that we are inherently in relation, since remedying inequality requires a redistribution of resources.<sup>37</sup> I am thus inherently involved in this process. In order to circumvent the process of redistribution, we increasingly discuss class (and its interconnection with race, ethnicity, gender, etc.) in the same way as we discuss cultural differences: we have to respect different economic “lifestyles” as we do cultures. We have to show respect to those from low-income backgrounds as we do to those from high-income backgrounds, since coming from the latter is not necessarily better than coming from the

36 → See Richard D. Kahlenberg, *Left Behind: Unequal Opportunity in Higher Education* (New York, N.Y.: Century Foundation, 2008).

37 → See Peter Marcuse, “Poverty or Inequality: Does it Matter?” *Inequality.org* (January 28th, 2015), <http://inequality.org/why-economic-language-matters/> (accessed June 24th, 2015), and Peter Marcuse and Ronald van Kempen. *Of States and Cities: The Partitioning of Urban Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

former. And since both backgrounds are of equal value, there is no inequality to address. Thus, current power structures and power relations are not questioned.<sup>38</sup>

Walter Ben Michaels makes a similar argument in *The Trouble with Diversity* when he states: “But classes are not like races and cultures, and treating them as if they were—different but equal—is one of our strategies for managing inequality rather than minimizing or eliminating it.”<sup>39</sup> I concur with his argument that we increasingly see diversity as the appreciation of and respect for difference, a respect that keeps us at a distance from the other and allows us to avoid questioning our own participation in power structures that maintain different forms of inequality.

Neoliberalism is willing to diversify (to a certain extent) access to ruling institutions, including the university. However, while a more diverse student body and a more diverse faculty are extremely important, in themselves they do not prevent the various forms of exploitation the neoliberal university is founded upon, especially since their power to affect institutional change is waning at a rapid pace.<sup>40</sup> Some of the main issues that still remain unaddressed in this setting are: the massive amounts of debt that leave low-income students of color disproportionately unable to decide their futures;<sup>41</sup> the increasing salary gap between university administrators and low-wage university workers,<sup>42</sup> including construction and food workers; the fact

38 → See Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth. *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London: Verso, 2003).

39 → Walter B. Michaels, *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 10. Missing from Ben Michaels' study is however the notion of intersectionality- the fact that class, race, gender, etc. are mutually constitutive of one another.

40 → See Benjamin Ginsberg. *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

41 → See Sophia Kerby, “How Student Debt Impacts Students of Color.” *Americanprogress.org*. (April 26th, 2012), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/higher-education/news/2012/04/26/11375/how-student-debt-impacts-students-of-color/> (accessed June 24th, 2015), and Mekela Panditharatne, “What color is your student loan?” *The Huffington Post* (January 16th, 2015), <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mekela-panditharatne/> (accessed June 24th, 2015).

42 → See Jonah Walters, “The Exploitation University,” *The Jacobin* (May 23d, 2015), <https://www.thejacobin.com/>



that private universities continuously act as real-estate developers, leading to the displacement of low-income communities.<sup>43</sup> This is a form of diversity that does not strive for systemic change.<sup>44</sup> It is also present in the classroom where students analyze, observe and try to understand culturally diverse materials, without necessarily thinking about how they relate to it. How then can we use Édouard Glissant's philosophy of relation in order to challenge this mode of thinking about diversity?

At the beginning of the *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant contrasts the notion of the rhizome (that he borrows from Deleuze and Guattari) with that of the root. The root is one and unique; it is totalitarian. On the other hand, the rhizome implies a "demultiplied network," the bringing into relation of multiple roots, neither one of which is the center or the origin. The rhizome is at the basis of his poetics of relation. What is particularly important in Glissant's understanding of relation, is that the primary elements do not only create a third element as they enter into relation but are furthermore themselves transformed in this process.<sup>45</sup>

For Glissant, in many ways, the Caribbean is exemplary of this politics and poetics of relation. First of all because of the initial mixing of African, European, and Indigenous populations and cultures. But

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[www.jacobinmag.com/2015/05/nyu-abu-dhabi-forced-labor-report/](http://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/05/nyu-abu-dhabi-forced-labor-report/) (accessed June 25th, 2015).

43 → See Laur M. Jackson, "The Hypocrisy of Revitalization: Universities in Black Communities." *The Huffington Post* (December 15th, 2014), <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/12/no-its-not-gentrification-its-something-else/383645/> (accessed June 1st, 2015), and Peter Moskowitz, "Philadelphia Universities' expansion drove wider gentrification, tension," *Al Jazeera* (December 31st, 2014), <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/12/31/philadelphia-universitiesexpansiondrovewidergentrificationtensionio.html> (accessed June 1st, 2015), and Ed Pilkington, "Harlem takes on university in battle of town versus gown," *The Guardian* (November, 20th, 2007), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/nov/20/highereducation.architecture> (accessed June 24th, 2015).

44 → See Milton Fisk, "Multiculturalism and Neoliberalism," *Praxis Filosofica*, 21 (2005): 21-28, and Deborah Orr. "Diversity and Equality are not the same thing," *The Guardian* (October 22nd, 2009), <http://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2009/oct/22/diversity-equality-deborah-orr> (accessed June 25th, 2015).

45 → Édouard Glissant, *Poétique De La Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

also, because according to Glissant, the Caribbean is an archipelagic space where each island can only be understood in relation to other islands. The Caribbean is also the space of rupture; the middle passage created a breach that will forever impede a linear understanding of history. As Michael Dash writes: "It is precisely the inability to restore historical continuities or to assume the smug assurance and insularity of continental masses that represents for Glissant the Caribbean's potential to establish new transversal connections, and be a model for the non-polarised postcolonial world to come."<sup>46</sup> There is thus, in Glissant's work what Dash further calls "a utopian thrust," an insistence on the possibility of new transversal connections; lateral relations between small countries that no longer pass through established centers of power, and where each country is equally affected by the other one. However, for these transversal relations to become possible, we need to begin thinking what Glissant calls "*l'Autre de la pensée*" (the Other of thought).<sup>47</sup>

Glissant establishes a difference between "*la pensée de l'Autre*" ("the thought of the Other") and "*l'Autre de la pensée*" ("the Other of thought"). The thought of the Other is a thought that accepts the principle of alterity but asserts that we can think alterity without being altered ourselves, without that thought removing us from ourselves. On the other hand, the Other of thought is at the basis of the aesthetics and ethics of turbulence, an ethics and aesthetics that is not predetermined in advance. The Other of thought is the very process of altering; the process of altering oneself, one's thoughts, one's course. It is this Other of thought that leads to transversal relations where each side of the relation is transformed.

Our understanding of diversity is equivalent to Glissant's thought of the Other, an acknowledgment and respect for the other, yet at the same time a removal from the other, in order to preserve our positions and ourselves. Critical thinking encourages the thought of the Other, because it keeps the student at a distance, as the one who

46 → Michael Dash, "Homme du tout-monde," *Caribbean Review of Books* (January 25, 2011), <http://caribbeanreviewofbooks.com/crb-archive/25-january-2011/homme-du-tout-monde/> (accessed June 24th, 2015).

47 → Glissant, *Poétique De La Relation*, 183.

evaluates and observes in an objective and detached manner. In order to begin practicing the Other of thought in the classroom, we need to transition to utopian thinking. As suggested earlier, utopian thinking can only be relational; its role is to envision new transversal relations, new solidarities, and new possibilities. A subject who thinks in a utopian fashion cannot remain unaltered, precisely because utopian thinking implies alternative ways of being, living, and relating to others. It encourages the creation of forms of existence outside our current, neoliberal structures.

Glissant's philosophy of relation is also closely linked to his defense of the other's opacity. In fact, in several works Glissant argues against the notion of transparency and opts for what he terms a writing of opacity, a writing that does not strive for full comprehension or explanation. According to Glissant, the act of comprehension is simultaneously an act of violence as it brings the other back to the same, the known. In order to understand you, I have to bring you back to a transparency and thus reduce you to already known norms. On the other hand, opacity, while it doesn't prevent a relation with the other, prevents the reduction of the other to known norms and categories, it prevents the reduction of the other to the same. Opacity is not an enclosure into an impenetrable autarchy, it does not prevent relation, but it's a relation that respects the other's irreducible singularity.

*Non pas seulement consentir au droit à la différence mais, plus avant, au droit à l'opacité, qui n'est pas l'enfermement dans une autarcie impénétrable, mais la subsistance dans une singularité non réductible.*<sup>48</sup>

As suggested earlier, when we teach, especially for those of us who teach foreign languages and cultures, our focus is on bringing the material to transparency but not necessarily into relation. We could, however, like Glissant, strive to preserve opacity while insisting

48 → Agree not merely to the right to difference but, carrying this further, agree also to the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence within an irreducible singularity. Glissant, *Poétique De La Relation*, 203. Translation from Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 190.

on transversal relations. This would prevent us from using the other as a mere object of knowledge, from simply critiquing or approving of it, and would entice us to think of our relation to the other as a site for new historical possibilities.

I do not have a full-fledged answer to how this is to be practically done in the classroom. I do, however, believe that we can use fictional and theoretical texts like those of Maximin and Glissant, to practice new forms of thinking and teaching: ones that allow for the existence of different, better futures; futures which we can inhabit only as interconnected subjects. This type of thinking is already being implemented in the world. Social movements in Quebec, Chile, Turkey, United States, Spain, Greece, are standing up to the neoliberal logic of privatization, austerity and atomization. They are repossessing public spaces, redistributing resources, building collective kitchens, clinics, schools and other ways of being together.<sup>49</sup> It is thus no longer a question of whether the world will move from critical towards utopian and relational thinking. It is a question of whether we, whose role is to educate, will follow course. Without utopias, writes Glissant, “*nous manquons au monde à notre tour. Et maintenant, est-il possible- dans l'aujourd'hui- de manquer au monde?*”<sup>50</sup> (we are, in our turn, missing the world. And now, is it possible, today, to miss the world?). The question we need to answer is: will we continue to miss the world? ■

49 → Marina Sitrin and Dario Azzellini. *They Can't Represent Us!: Reinventing Democracy from Greece to Occupy* (London and New York: Verso: 2014).

50 → Glissant, *La cohée du Lamentin*. Paris: Gallimard, 16.



# LEARNING TO NO END: TENSION AND *TELOS* IN PEDAGOGY AND POLITICS

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Learning to No End

I would like to address the question concerning post-neoliberal education in Latin America—of whether it is always already present or yet to come—in a very broad sense. That is, not by discussing the history, farther or nearer, of the practice and theory of education in the subcontinent, nor by looking at whatever changes or new experiences in the field can be discerned in the last decades that would signal a shift towards something that might be identified as post-neoliberal education, or post-neoliberalism *tout court*. Rather, I would like to reflect on the present conjuncture, after almost two decades of left-leaning governments in the region, from a point of view that is central to much Latin American thinking of education: that of political processes understood as pedagogical processes, as collective learning—what Paulo Freire once referred to as the “eminently pedagogical character of the revolution”.<sup>1</sup>

This approach automatically reframes the question as: can the political processes of the last decades also be understood as processes of collective learning leading to something that could be called post-neoliberalism? That, in turn, could be rephrased in two intimately connected, but nonetheless distinct ways. The first: have these political processes produced conditions of sociability that are beyond those of neoliberalism, or which can provide material and political support for a post-neoliberal project? The second: are these political processes widely appropriated, by the least privileged sectors of society in particular, as having a post-neoliberal sense—in the double sense of “meaning” and “direction”?

1 → Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Begman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2005), 67.

It is difficult to provide unequivocal answers to those questions if looking at political processes as different (and internally differentiated) as those of Venezuela, Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil; such an intention, at any rate, would be best served if it were to be the object of a collective enquiry. My scope here, accordingly, will be more modest, and focus on the Brazilian case in relation to which I should say straight away that I would answer both questions in the negative. Thinking through the reasons of that failure will consequently be my starting point.

Doing so also requires me to think through the legacy of the conception of politics as pedagogy that runs as a red thread through the political culture that produced the ruling Workers' Party (PT) and all major existing Brazilian mass movements, from the pioneering work of Paulo Freire and others in the 1960s up until the Liberation Theology *comunidades eclesiais de base* (ecclesial grassroots communities) of the 1970s and the popular organizing of the 1980s. This reference is three times justified. Firstly, because this legacy is an essential component in the common background of many of the protagonists of recent Brazilian politics, and therefore significant to how they interpret and justify their circumstances and actions. Secondly, because, despite its transformation into something quite different or its instrumentalization into disputable narratives, it still possesses that insistent virtuality of the "always present", offering us useful elements for a critical examination of what is happening today. Finally, because the question of its inheritance is truly at stake now: the seemingly irreversible wane of the main organizations spawned by the political culture, and their discredit among a younger generation of militants,<sup>2</sup> places the transmission of that legacy—by which I mean not only a shared set of ideas, values and practices, but also what that culture itself would call *vivência*, a shared lived experience—in doubt. That, in turn, not only entails a potential break in the learning process whose accumulation began in the 1960s and has continued into the present in spite of two

2 → I have discussed this generational break in reference to the protests that took place in Brazil in 2013 and 2014, in Rodrigo Nunes, "Juin N'est Pas Fini," *Les Temps Modernes* 678 (2014): 4-32; Rodrigo Nunes, "Generación, Acontecimiento, Perspectiva. Pensar el Cambio a Partir de Brasil," *Nueva Sociedad* 251 (2014): 42-54.



decades of military dictatorship, but has significant consequences for any “post-neoliberal” projects in the years to come.

The place to start would then be an evaluation of the present conjuncture in Brazil, whose impasse I have elsewhere described as the paradox of the Workers’ Party rule: namely that now, thirteen years into what can be broadly construed as a leftwing government, we seem farther rather than closer to the structural transformations that the prospect of PT in power always carried as a promise. Since the last elections, however, for reasons that combine the deterioration of the economy and the government’s disastrous handling of the 2013 and 2014 protest wave, that diagnosis needs to be taken one step further. It is not only that the already considerable inertia and insularity of the political system have grown. What is more, the government’s *Realpolitik* has led it into a corner in which it is increasingly beholden to the interests of finance, agribusiness and other corporate sectors; the forces that would resist any deepening of the positive changes brought about in the last decade, or even try to revert them, have become stronger, the recently elected parliament being regularly described as the most conservative since the military dictatorship; and even the potential for finding widespread social support for measures that would make Brazil “go on changing”—Dilma Rousseff’s slogan for the 2009 elections—seems to have shrunk.

In short, we have gone from the impasse of a centre-left government under a political hegemony of the centre-right to a situation in which the far right has gained traction and the prospect of a rightwing *social* hegemony is not inconceivable. In the process, from the early editions of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre until now, PT has increasingly gone from “another world is possible” to “there is no alternative”. Not only a political failure, then, in the sense of the impossibility of anything that could be conceived as a post-neoliberal transition, but a bona fide pedagogical failure, in that it might eventually fail to find support even among those who benefited the most from it.

How did it come to this? I am not particularly original in suggesting that the seeds of failure were already present in PT’s success. It is by now a familiar narrative, how the cycle of expansion of rights and drastic reduction of poverty in Latin America was made possible by the China-driven commodity boom that preceded the global financial

crisis. This meant that the then newly elected leftwing governments could fulfill the mandate of change handed to them by the ballots without having to change *much*, in two senses. First, by maintaining their countries' productive matrix and position as primary commodity exporters in the global market, generating what Uruguayan sociologist Eduardo Gudynas has dubbed "neo-extractivism".<sup>3</sup> Second, by taking advantage of that in order to surf on a win-win situation in which the rich could get richer and the poor, less poor, meaning that it was possible to avoid or postpone picking the fights that initiating structural reforms would inevitably involve.

For as long as the international scenario was propitious, this solution worked. But in the case of Brazil, and to different degrees in other countries as well, this had three major long-term consequences. First, not only did it leave the existing structures of political, economic and media power intact, it strengthened sectors such as mining and agribusiness without ever truly shaking the grip of finance, further empowering those that would stand to lose from structural reforms if these were attempted. Second, it inevitably led to the opening of new frontlines of violent accumulation by dispossession, such as the encroachment on indigenous lands and the Amazonian territory, as well as property speculation and the attacks on the urban poor, of which the World Cup and the upcoming Olympics are but the most visible example. Third, while it created the buffer that allowed for anti-cyclical spending when the global crisis first hit, it wagered the government's legitimacy on the capacity to maintain that win-win balance (what in Brazil has become known as the "*Lulista* pact"), so that when the rainy days arrived and it became impossible not to choose sides, there was little room for maneuver for, even if the government so wished, choosing the side of the poorest.

All of this is true to a greater or lesser extent of all the so-called "Pink Tide" governments, but Brazil now stands as a good candidate

3 → Eduardo Gudynas, "Diez Tesis Urgentes sobre el Nuevo Extractivismo. Contextos y Demandas Bajo el Progresismo Sudamericano Actual," *Extractivismo, Política y Sociedad* (Quito: Centro Andino de Acción Popular and Centro Latino Americano de Ecología Social, 2009).

for the title of country where this model ended the worst.<sup>4</sup> Truth be told, this may also be because it was one of the places where it started the worst: unlike those countries that were coming out of a period of upheaval, like Argentina and Venezuela, or where social movements were on the rise, as in Bolivia and Ecuador, when PT came to power, its transformation into a regular parliamentary party was well under way and its social base's capacity for mobilization was already in decline. What is more, the economy was in a delicate state, there was great pressure from global finance and the national media, which to this day remains firmly under the hegemony of neoliberal dogma, and the idiosyncrasies of Brazil's political system made it impossible for any party, let alone a left or centre-left one, to build a political majority. As a consequence, even before the elections, PT had already signaled that no sudden radical changes were to be expected, and that the pillars of the neoliberal macroeconomic policy of the previous decade (inflation targets, fluctuating currency rate and primary superavits in public accounts) would be upheld.

For years to come, one of the most thought-provoking interpretations of the Lula period will no doubt be André Singer's *Os Sentidos do Lulismo*,<sup>5</sup> which has the added importance of having been written by an intellectual with close ties to PT and who participated in the party's first term in power. That lends it both analytical and political importance: it formulates something like an *ex post* rationalization that not only can be publicly invoked by members of government in their defense, but may very well be something that several members of that government will tell themselves in private.

4 → At the time of writing, polls indicate that president Dilma Rousseff's approval rates are down to 8%, while her administration is rejected by 71%. This is a consequence of several factors, the three major ones being an ongoing corruption scandal in state oil company Petrobrás, rising inflation and unemployment, and the introduction of an austerity package that goes against everything that was promised during the 2014 presidential campaign. For an attempt at an overview of the present state of Latin America's progressive experiments, see Salvador Schavelzon, "El Fin del Relato Progresista en América Latina," *La Razón*, June 21 2015, [http://www.la-razon.com/index.php?url=/suplementos/animal\\_politico/fin-relato-progresista-America-Latina\\_O\\_2292970735.html](http://www.la-razon.com/index.php?url=/suplementos/animal_politico/fin-relato-progresista-America-Latina_O_2292970735.html).

5 → André Singer, *Os Sentidos do Lulismo. Reforma Gradual e Pacto Conservador* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012).

In a nutshell, the argument runs as follows: the decision not to break with neoliberal macroeconomic policy—and perhaps also more ominous ones, such as becoming integrated into the existing political system—was not merely a defensive move in the face of a hostile conjuncture, but “political and ideological”<sup>6</sup> in a positive sense. That is, it was strategic not only in that it effectively was the path of least resistance, but in that it communicated with a social sector until then practically untapped by the left—those who Singer, following his father, Paul Singer, an economist himself long associated with PT, identifies as the “subproletariat”: “domestic workers, wage workers hired by small direct producers, generally workers lacking the minimal conditions of participation in the class struggle.”<sup>7</sup> Whereas the organized, unionized proletariat that is PT’s historical base have legal and collective means at their disposal, and so will tend to be less fearful in the face of moments of instability, the subproletariat do not. Their weak and atomized condition makes them constitutively more susceptible to agitation against the risk of “disorder”, and generally politically more conservative. The choice for “a fight against poverty within order,”<sup>8</sup> therefore, at once neutralized this sector’s natural resistance to a left-wing government and prioritized it through public policy: direct wealth transfer programs, the valorization of the minimum wage, and the expansion of credit. This produced both the electoral and political shifts that Singer identifies with *Lulismo*; namely, PT becoming the party of the subproletariat *par excellence*, and its ideological move from a proletariat versus bourgeoisie to a poor versus rich cleavage.

There are many merits to Singer’s analysis, which has been the most rigorous attempt so far to propose an interpretation of what has happened under Lula and afterwards. There are also some problems, not least of which that it obscures the fact that sectors of this subproletariat were also at some point successfully organized, not necessarily as workers as such, but for example into neighborhood movements, by activists in PT or close to it; and that their allegedly “natural”

6 → Ibid., 74.

7 → Paul Singer, *Dominação e Desigualdade. Estrutura de Classes e Repartição de Renda no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1981), 83.

8 → Ibid.

conservatism was intensified by the penetration of the neopentecostal “theology of prosperity” that filled the vacuum left by the dismantling of Liberation Theology during the papacy of Karol Wojtyła. In any case, what interests me here is the currency that a certain compression of Singer’s argument has acquired among partisans and detractors of the government. It runs as follows: if the government turned out the way it did, it is either because (according to its partisans) there was only so far it could go starting from a hostile conjuncture and a conservative middle ground; or because (according to critics), taking that conservatism for granted, it overestimated the inertia of its initial conditions, and thus rather than test and force the limits of the conjuncture so as to transform them, it accommodated itself to those initial constraints, which as a consequence grew more and more restrictive.

It would of course be possible to fall back here on the familiar narrative of the betrayal of leaders who detach themselves from those whom they purport to represent in order to perpetuate themselves as mediators between the masses and a political system that can only allow for the latter’s representation for as long as it remains within certain bounds. Though not untrue, that would perhaps be a little too easy. It would assume an already constituted political subject, conscious of its interests and ready to fight for them, that would have been betrayed—thus minimizing the fact, acknowledged in both the partisan and the critical accounts, that a lack of social mobilization was also an important factor in things turning out the way they did. It is true, as someone like Singer himself would point out, that *Lulismo* made the conscious decision to put the brakes on extra-parliamentary action so as not to endanger its parliamentary project. It remains the case, nonetheless, that this was a game that PT’s organized social base accepted to play; that the mass of people who rose from poverty have so far not constituted themselves as a political subject in their own right; and that it was only with the 2013 protests that a new source of pressure from below emerged—when arguably it was, or it became clear it was, too late.

It is important to notice, then, what exactly is the nub of the accusation leveled by critics against PT. If the party is faulted for failing to relinquish the position of leaders, choosing to mediate rather than facilitate organization from below, it is also, in a sense, charged with shunning its responsibility to fully occupy that position. In other words,

it failed to perform the role of the *leader as educator*; it forfeited its pedagogical role. To the extent that it assumed in its social base a natural conservatism that it was necessary to adapt to rather than work to transform, we could ironically conclude that, in this respect, its sin would have been not distancing itself from the masses, but not distancing itself *enough*: taking as a given what should have been the object of a pedagogical process.

The irony deepens if we consider that the choices that have led to the present impasse could be defended with the invocation of the old Liberation Theology maxim according to which “it is better to be wrong with the people than right without them.”<sup>9</sup> This sentence no doubt expresses an attitude that is central to the tradition of grassroots organizing and popular education that was the backbone of the political culture out of which PT emerged. It is the idea that emancipation is autotelic: it aims to produce itself, that is, subjects “who discover themselves as [reality’s] permanent re-creators.”<sup>10</sup> And consequently, that a politics that is not a process of collective learning and does not temper its urgencies with the rhythm proper to that process is bound to either dissolve into an aestheticized assertion of radicalism for its own sake or work against its own ends by its choice of means—since “one does not liberate men by alienating them”<sup>11</sup> and a “revolution *for* the people” is “a revolution *without* the people.”<sup>12</sup>

There is little doubt now that there are those who, if they invoked that defense, would be doing so in bad faith; but the most thought-provoking truth is that there are many who would still do so earnestly. This double irony—that the failure of that pedagogical process could be blamed on a lack of leadership, and that this lack could be defended on pedagogical grounds—takes us to the heart of the problem that I would like to discuss here.

What is at stake in this irony or paradox is something we could call, following the French philosopher Gilbert Simondon, “haecceity” or “tension of information”, by which is meant “the property that a scheme

9 → Clodovis Boff, *Como Trabalhar com o Povo* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1988), 72.

10 → Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 69.

11 → Ibid., 79.

12 → Ibid., 127. Italics in the original.

has of structuring a domain, of propagating in it, of ordering it".<sup>13</sup> That property is relational to the extent that "signification is relational":<sup>14</sup> "a signal [alone] does not constitute signification", since signification is something that happens between an external signal and a domain that has intrinsic qualities of its own. Thus, "there is, in the *possible couplings* of matter and form, a certain freedom, but a *limited freedom*"; not any signal can structure a domain, and one "that strays too far from the structurable field's characteristics no longer has any tension of information in relation to [it]."<sup>15</sup>

In other words, a signal's haecceity or tension of information varies according to its difference in relation to the field to be structured. But, and here is the crucial thing, this variation has not only a superior threshold beyond which the tension drops to zero—"for signals to have a sense within a system, it is necessary that they do not convey something entirely new"<sup>16</sup>—but an inferior threshold: the closer the signal is to the system, the less tension, and so the less likely it is to have an effect on it.

[I]f signals do no more than correspond exactly to local reality, they are no longer information, but merely the external iteration of an internal

13 → Gilbert Simondon, "Forme, Information, Potentiels," *L'Individu à la Lumière des Notions de Forme et Information* (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 2007), 544. "Haecceity of information" is first proposed as an alternative to "quality of information"—for the reason that "quality seems to be the absolute property of a being, while we are dealing here with a relation"—as a way to designate "what makes it so that this is information and is received as such, while that is not received as information." Simondon, *L'Individu à la Lumière des Notions de Forme et Information* (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 2007), 222-3.

14 → Simondon, *L'Individu*, 223.

15 → Simondon, "Forme, Information, Potentiels," 546. Italics in the original. Simondon draws a distinction between his hypothesis and that of Claude Shannon's theory of information to the extent that "*a theory of the tension of information supposes an open series of possible receivers: the tension of information is proportional to a scheme's capacity to be received as information by receivers that are not defined in advance*". Ibid. 544. Italics in the original. This means that "while a probabilistic theory of information [such as Shannon's] can measure the quantity of information in a predicted exchange between an emitter and a receiver, a measure of tension of information can only be established experimentally [par expérience], in actuality at least."

16 → Simondon, *L'Individu*, 223.

reality; if they are too different, they are no longer apprehended as meaningful, no longer signifying, so they cannot be integrated [...]<sup>17</sup>

That inferior threshold, beyond which there can be no learning because there is no tension, is at once what puts in question the attempt to excuse “weak reformism” with the idea that it is “better to take one step with a thousand than a thousand steps with one”<sup>18</sup> and what explains that one could criticize leaders for *too little* rather than *too much*.

The trauma of the horrors perpetrated in the name of emancipation in the last century<sup>19</sup> instinctively lead us to think as if the only possible sin were excess. Thinking in this way allows us the comfort of simplifying the pathologies of leadership into the story of masses with an inexhaustible and unambiguous potential for good led astray time and again by those who betray them. What an experience such as Brazil’s maybe calls us to do is to recast the problem of leadership in more complete, thoroughly relational terms, and consider that it is equally possible to sin through *lack*. For politics as pedagogy, even while it aims at eliminating the difference between leaders and masses *as a result*, nonetheless recognizes its necessity *as a starting point*, both historical—people concretely exist in situations of bondage—and for the pedagogical process itself: there is process because there is tension, and there is tension because there is difference. Rather than something to be denied or expiated like an original sin, this tension *as such* is the object of the highest skill that the educator must have: the capacity to manage it for the benefit of the process, avoiding the extremes of lack and excess, searching for the balance best suited for each situation, being sensitive to the fluctuations that the process undergoes—and, above all, being aware that he or she is not the only one who is or should be responsible for that regulation.

Seen under that light, pedagogy as politics does not idealize an absolute equality that could be taken for granted but, on the contrary,

17 → Ibid.

18 → Boff, *Como Trabalhar com o Povo*, 82.

19 → “Our catastrophe—our Thebes—is the seventy years from 1914 to 1989.” TJ Clark, “For a Left With No Future,” *New Left Review* 74 (2012): 60.



is a meditation on “[t]he correct method for a revolutionary leadership.”<sup>20</sup> That this method is based on dialogue does not mean that it is linear; that this dialogue is respectful does not mean that it is smooth or seeks easy consensus; and while it has equality as an aim, it necessarily does not start on an equal footing. To speak of “revolutionary leadership,” “educator” (Freire) or “external agent” (Boff) indicates that the starting position is one of “pedagogical *difference* or *otherness*,”<sup>21</sup> which quite often will be a consequence of the fact that the reality that the pedagogical process starts from is that of “the social division of labor between intellectual (decision) and manual labor (execution).”<sup>22</sup> While the aim of the relation is overcoming that difference, otherness must be occupied with neither superiority nor a false egalitarianism that would be no more than disavowal:

If someone is or becomes an agent, it is because they have something to offer to the people, they have a contribution to make to their journey. The agent is an agent because she is different. This must be taken into account and acknowledged.<sup>23</sup>

“Leadership” names the site of that otherness: the *formal* position of the one who initiates a pedagogical process, without indicating anything about who comes to occupy it [they may come from inside as well as outside a community, may be an individual or a group, etc.].<sup>24</sup> In fact, if emancipation is autotelic in that it produces “permanent re-creators”, this means it is less about eliminating that formal position than making it circulate freely. While each new process of re-creation would

20 → Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 67.

21 → Boff, *Como Trabalhar com o Povo*, 23. Italics in the original.

22 → Ibid., 15. Both Freire and Boff’s reflections arise not from an ideal situation, but from their actual experience in a country with extreme social disparities in which “ [u]sually [the] leadership group [among the dominated] is made up of men and women who in one way or another have belonged to the social strata of the dominators.” Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 163.

23 → Ibid., 24.

24 → “This role may be political, technical, pastoral, educational. For lack of a more appropriate word, we could speak of a *pedagogical function*, so as to bring together all the functions relating to the integral development of the community or the people.” Boff, *Como Trabalhar com o Povo*, 23. Italics in the original.

involve some difference, and hence the reinstatement of that otherness, the goal would be to arrive at a situation in which extrinsic factors such as disparities in wealth, gender, race or formal education could not prevent anyone from occupying that position.<sup>25</sup> Conceiving the pedagogical relationship in this way did not prevent the likes of Freire and Boff from believing that what they proposed was not a repetition of the “dominant pedagogical model” in which “the most advanced guide the less advanced, in order to reduce their backwardness,” nor that it could not but “infinitely [reproduce] the backwardness it is supposed to reduce.”<sup>26</sup> This was because they did not substantialize this formal difference into a simple disparity between those who possessed a correct scientific knowledge and those who did not, which was why it could not be resolved by means of a one-way transfer of knowledge. Instead, the pedagogical process was understood as a confluence of different knowledges held by “teachers” and “students” alike, and as striving towards whatever emancipation participants managed to produce together, rather than the realization of some pre-established goal set in advance and from the outside.<sup>27</sup>

25 → See Gramsci: “The pedagogical relation cannot be limited to specifically “school” relations [...] It exists throughout society taken as a whole and for each individual with respect to other individuals, between intellectual and non-intellectual strata, between elites and followers, between leaders and those led, between vanguards and army corps. Every “hegemony” relation is necessarily a pedagogical relation...” Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del Carcere* (Turin, Einaudi, 1977), vol. II, 1331.

26 → Jacques Rancière, Todd May, Saul Newman, Benjamin Noys, “Democracy, Anarchism and Radical Politics Today: An Interview with Jacques Rancière,” trans. John Lechte, *Anarchist Studies* 16(2008):182.

27 → “In fact, the pedagogical process is a two-way thing: it consists in the *reciprocal encounter* between the agent and his knowledge and the people and their knowledge. And this takes place in a *context of reciprocity*, dialogue and vital sharing. It is only in the exchange of knowledges that the education process can develop, on the side of the people as well as on the side of the agent.” Boff, *Cómo Traballar com o Povo*, 30. Italics in the original. It is worth comparing this to a recent, well informed analysis of Black Lives Matter: “Those who romanticize the concept of leaderless movements often misleadingly deploy Ella Baker’s words, “Strong people don’t need [a] strong leader.” Baker delivered this message in various iterations over her 50-year career working in the trenches of racial-justice struggles, but what she meant was specific and contextual. She was calling for people to disinvest from the notion of the messianic, charismatic leader who promises political salvation in exchange for deference. Baker also did not mean that movements would

That otherness is at once the thing to be abolished and the instrument of that abolishment is the reason why its essential nature is tension: *too little* and nothing will happen, *too much*<sup>28</sup> and it will be reinforced. Hence why the appeal to a “primacy of practice” can be seen as having a deeper meaning than merely a pious gesture by which theory pays lip service to the humble realities of the everyday: if practice is the ultimate “criterion of truth,” it is because tension can only be dealt with and verified experimentally, *par expérience*, in actuality.<sup>29</sup> Hence also why the “correct pedagogical relationship”<sup>30</sup> should be constantly characterized in the terms of what Deleuze and Guattari would call “an art of dosages,”<sup>31</sup> balancing extremes of lack and excess: “neither frivolous pragmatism nor coarse activism,”<sup>32</sup> “neither objectivism nor subjectivism,”<sup>33</sup> neither “voluntarism” nor “spontaneism.”<sup>34</sup>

This control of measures does not always seek consensus or balance; there is no “golden mean” that would be applicable to all situations. It is an art of “calculated risk.”<sup>35</sup> Mastery of an art of dosages necessarily involves a strong sense of timing and the political tact to choose which instruments to employ: it is a matter of *when, how much and how*, “the moment, the measure and the means [*o momento, a medida e o*

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naturally emerge without collective analysis, serious strategizing, organizing, mobilizing and consensus-building. (...) Baker was not against leadership. She was opposed to hierarchical leadership that disempowered the masses and further privileged the already privileged.” Barbara Ransby, “Ella Taught Me: Shattering the Myth of the Leaderless Movement,” *ColorLines*, June 12 2015, <http://www.colorlines.com/articles/ella-taught-me-shattering-myth-leaderless-movement>.

28 → In the case of Joseph Jacotot, which Rancière generalises from in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, the tension did not inexist—it was given in the very fact that students and teacher could not communicate. See Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster. Five Lessons on Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

29 → Cf. Simondon, “Forme, Information, Potentiels,” 544.

30 → Boff, *Como Trabalhar com o Povo*, 20.

31 → Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit), 198.

32 → Ibid., 10.

33 → Ibid., 68.

34 → Ibid., 80.

35 → Ibid., 10.

*modo*].”<sup>36</sup> Neither is there any linearity to it, because “[t]he people’s journey can be accelerated by [...] historical opportunities (*kairós*).”<sup>37</sup> The agent is not only someone who coordinates or assembles “the collective word,”<sup>38</sup> she can also “incite the community to leap ahead”<sup>39</sup> if the occasion arises. “Taking risks is indispensable.”<sup>40</sup>

If attentive and respectful listening are among the top qualities the agent must have, *listening* to the people does not mean necessarily *going with the first thing that is said*. There is nothing “less educative” than aversion or disdain towards the people’s word, but respect does not “imply automatic approval.”<sup>41</sup> If “the group manifests a particular desire or expectation, it must be respected and taken seriously. But it is the agent’s duty to question that desire, to problematize that expectation,”<sup>42</sup> even if the right to criticize can only be earned by “respecting the people’s freedom of initiative and their final decision.”<sup>43</sup> There is only process if there is movement, there is only movement if there is tension, there is only tension if there is difference. The agent, leader or teacher must always be ready to “meet people halfway”—a reciprocal encounter—but the very object of the relationship consists in constantly redefining where “halfway” is.

This idea of tension explains then why a politics of “weak reformism” or “passive revolution” does not necessarily follow from nor can be too easily justified by appealing to the dialogism advocated by Freire or Boff. According to the latter, in fact,

36 → Ibid., 20.

37 → Ibid., 81.

38 → Ibid.

39 → Ibid., 65.

40 → Ibid., 81.

41 → Ibid., 48. This corresponds to the distinction drawn by Carlos Nuñez Hurtado between a “*basista*” (literally, “grassrootist”) leadership and a “*saber preguntar*” (“knowing how to ask”) one: whereas the first raises the people’s immediacy (of attitudes, opinions, etc.) to the level of an argument of authority, the second sees its own role as building alongside the people. I thank one of my anonymous reviewers for this observation. See Carlos Nuñez Hurtado, *Educar para Transformar, Transformar para Educar* (Quito: CEDECO, 1987).

42 → Ibid., 69.

43 → Ibid., 49.

[...] the simplified disjunctive—reform or revolution—is false. For a reform can have a revolutionary content. That is when it takes on a revolutionary orientation, when it signifies one more step in the direction of social transformation. The real disjunctive is reformism versus revolution, for here reform no longer poses the perspective of creating a new society, but only the [improved] continuity of the existing one.<sup>44</sup>

But if the criterion according to which good and bad reform can be differentiated is the direction in which they point, this necessarily poses the problem of *telos*: what direction? Who gets to decide it? How to stop it from becoming a program imposed by “the most advanced”, regardless of whether they are “external” or “internal” agents, on “the less advanced”? These questions, of course, speak directly to the anxieties around political action that we have inherited from the tragic history of revolutionary movements in the last century, which are summarily expressed in remarks such as these:

Since the 19th century, great political institutions [...] have confiscated the process of political creation; that is, they have tried to give to political creation the form of a political program in order to take over power.<sup>45</sup>

But the idea of a program [...] is dangerous. From the moment a program is presented, it becomes a law, an interdiction against invention.<sup>46</sup>

[That] has always, or nearly always, led to abuse or political domination from a bloc—be it from technicians or bureaucrats or other people.<sup>47</sup>

It is for precisely those reasons that the idea of goals, ends and directions have for some time now been handled with suspicion. And yet, is it not the problems of forsaking any kind of *telos* or strategic horizon that we are discussing here? In the absence of any sense of a direction towards which to strive, is it at all possible to differentiate what one does from the “business as usual” management of present states of affairs?

44 → Ibid., 95. Italics in the original.

45 → Michel Foucault, “Une Interview: Sexe, Pouvoir et la Politique de l’Identité,” *Dits et Écrits* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), vol. II, 1565.

46 → Michel Foucault, “L’Amitié comme Mode de Vie,” *Dits et Écrits*, vol. II, 986.

47 → Michel Foucault, “Une Interview,” 1565.

And should we not recognize that when we inquire into something like 'post-neoliberalism,' it is of something like a *telos*, however indeterminate, provisional or processual, that we are talking?

Out of the impasse between the fear of program-driven politics and a politics without goals (and hence without transformative orientation or immanent criteria), one temptation would be to sever the relation between act and finality: to obviate the problem of *telos* by conceiving of a political act that is self-contained, not a means to something but an end in itself. This is only possible, of course, if time is flattened into a single moment, process compressed into a concentrated gesture. If by revolution we understand a transformation that takes place over time, made up of moments that are "coordinated over the mid- to long-term towards ultimate objectives," this move would amount to substituting the idea of revolution with that of an insurrection or revolt that "suspends historical time, establishing a time in which everything that is done has a value in itself, independently of its consequences and of its relations with the transitory or perennial complex that constitutes history."<sup>48</sup>

Such an alternative would, of course, be unacceptable to Freire or Boff; for them, the aspiration for a self-contained act would probably appear as no more than an abstraction of actual politics, a quest for purity that leads to a preference for an imaginary model over the humbler, more ambivalent realities of practice. If "what matters is not the step as such, but its orientation," it makes no sense to conceive of an act in abstraction of a process; "[t]he weight of an action comes from the direction in which it points."<sup>49</sup> Ignoring that is the basis for an aestheticization of politics in the form of either a celebration of its impossibility or the "coarse activism" that would rather take a thousand steps on its own rather than walk more slowly with others.

48 → Furio Jesi, *Spartakus. The Symbolism of Revolt*, ed. Andrea Cavaletti, trans. Alberto Toscano (Calcutta: Seagull, 2014), 46. An example of this temptation can be found in The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011). Another manifestation of it is the ethos of "the lulz" in Anonymous—a non-instrumental critique-as-mockery that does not distinguish between worthy and unworthy targets in any *a priori* way, and thus enables the denunciation of "moralfags" (members of Anonymous who would wish to harness its capacities in favor of campaigns with concrete goals). See Gabriella Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous* (London: Verso, 2014).

49 → Boff, *Como Trabalhar com o Povo*, 94.

We should identify in Freire and Boff another alternative, which is neither the elimination of every *telos* nor the separation of act from finality. If emancipation is in some sense autotelic—it aims to produce itself, or the conditions of its own reproduction—then *telos* cannot be mistaken for a program that leaders or educators would already carry with them from the start. It is a *learning to no end* in the sense that it is an unfinishable task by definition; there is no final state in which it could be said to be complete. But that does not mean that it has “no end” in the sense of no inherent direction, not least because it is a fact that some concrete social situations are more enabling than others when it comes to everyone being a “permanent re-creator” of reality. What matters is that, at every moment, this direction and the steps that it implies be “*taken on by the people* as [their] potential protagonist.”<sup>50</sup> This means, in turn, that the tension of the pedagogic relationship never stops acting back on the direction itself, which is continuously transformed in the very process of being taken on by those who participate. *Telos*, then, not in the sense of a program, but of something like what Simondon called a “structural germ”, which structures a field according to the potentials that are present in it; not the realization of something already given (the program), but the individuation of something new, unique to the process itself. ■

50 → Ibid., 90. Italics in the original. See Foucault again: “Without a program does not mean blindness—to be blind to thought. [...] [B]eing without a program can be very useful and very original and creative, if it does not mean without proper reflection about what is going on, or without very careful attention to what is possible.” Michel Foucault, “Une Interview,” 1565.

# EUGENIO MARÍA DE HOSTOS: NINETEENTH-CENTURY PROGRESSIVE EDUCATOR

**Orlando José Hernández**

Eugenio María de Hostos Community College  
of the City University of New York

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March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 10:30 a.m.

ORIGINAL TITLE

Eugenio María de Hostos: Progressive Education  
in Nineteenth-Century Caribbean  
and Latin America on the Fringe of Empires



"If anything in this world is in need of radical revolution, it is the educational system. The system is privileged when it is accessible to only part of society; incomplete when it is based on the particular development of certain faculties or the training of specialists for specific individual goals. In both cases it is faulty, in both cases harmful to freedom and civilization, in both cases contrary to human nature."

E. M. Hostos, *The Cuban Problem*, 1874.<sup>1</sup>

In the year 2000, Julia Alvarez published *In the Name of Salomé*,<sup>2</sup> a book of historical fiction that tells the story of the life and work of Salomé Ureña. Ureña was a noted nineteenth century Dominican poet, who played a major role in the educational reforms led by Eugenio María de Hostos in Santo Domingo in the 1880s.<sup>3</sup> Through the novel, Alvarez, a Dominican

- 1→ Eugenio María de Hostos, *America: The Struggle for Freedom (Anthology)*, ed. Manuel Maldonado-Denis, trans. Vivian Otero and Shannon Lachicotte (San Juan, Puerto Rico: jointly published by the Office of Cultural Development of the City of San Juan, City University of New York, and the Institute of Hostosian Studies, University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras, San Juan, 1992), 182.
- 2→ Julia Alvarez, *In the Name of Salome* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books, Chapel Hill, 2000).
- 3→ Unfortunately, Ureña's work has been sparsely translated into English. See Daisy Cocco de Filippis and Sonia Rivera-Valdés, eds. *Documents of Dissidence: Selected Writings of Dominican Women* (New York: Compass Comps, 2000). For literary criticism and biographical information in Spanish see Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, *Salomé Ureña y el Instituto de Señoritas; para la historia de la espiritualidad dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Academia Dominicana de la Historia, 1960); Silveria R. de Rodríguez Demorizi, *Salomé Ureña de Henríquez* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta López, 1944), <http://www.cielonaranja.com/salome-bio.pdf>; Sherezada Vicioso, *Salomé Ureña de Henríquez (1850-1897): a cien años de un magisterio* (Santo

feminist author, connects with her roots and celebrates the influence of Hostos, a Puerto Rican educator, humanist, and intellectual-activist. This paper examines, from a historical perspective, his contributions to education in Chile, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and his native Puerto Rico.

Salomé Ureña's nationalist poems were written at a time when her country, Santo Domingo (as it was known then), was profoundly fragmented by anarchy and instability. The chaos that reigned for more than three decades was caused by the competing warring factions of various *caudillos* and by the imperial designs of the European colonial powers and the United States. Salomé's love poems are daring in ways that are not so obvious these days, as they break through the repression and self-censorship that resulted from the prevailing social mores. She wrote poetry in a country at war with itself and in a society that imposed clear limits on what women were allowed to say publicly about their feelings. A nationalist, she aligned herself with the Liberals, who opposed annexation to the United States and worked for the creation of a modern state with democratic institutions, including a state-supported educational system. The Liberals that Hostos and Salomé associated with were radical agents for political and social change, situated at the opposite end from their Neoliberal successors.<sup>4</sup>

Salomé became an important voice in support of her *patria*, and her writings evoked and affirmed nationhood. Furthermore, her commitment to the advancement of women was highly significant. As a result, Hostos, who had lectured on the right of women to a scientific education during his sojourn to Chile in 1873, recruited Salomé to become

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Domingo: Comisión Permanente de la Feria del Libro, 1997); Diógenes Céspedes, *Salomé Ureña y Hostos* (Santo Domingo: Biblioteca Nacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña, 2002); Jacobo Moquete de la Rosa, *Salomé Ureña de Henríquez en el sector educación* (Santo Domingo: Instituto Superior de Formación Docente Salomé Ureña, 2008).

4 → Nineteenth-century Liberalism in Latin America was an anti-clerical and republican political force that could span diverse views. It often represented urban interests versus the landed aristocracies, and in some instances, radical Liberals assumed anti-imperialist and feminist positions. In a number of countries, including Chile, Argentina, Mexico and the Dominican Republic, liberals were involved in the tasks of creating national institutions in the newly-independent countries.

one of his collaborators. She became the co-director of the *Instituto de Señoritas* (School for Young Women), which they co-founded in 1881, and which six years later would be promoted to a normal school.<sup>5</sup>

Alvarez's characterization of Hostos in the novel is discreet but powerful. In her narrative, the young Dominican reformers refer to Hostos as *Maestro* or *Apostle*. Salomé's admiration for Hostos in the novel is sublimated and depicted in moral terms. This attraction probably owes to Hostos's charisma, imbued with a heightened sense of ethics and commitment. As she reflects on her situation, she realizes how odd it seems:

And so I, too, began to listen closely to what Hostos had to say. I was in moral love—does that make sense? A moral love that took over my senses and lightly touched my whole body with an exquisite excitement whenever the apostle was in the room.<sup>6</sup>

The admiration was mutual. When Salomé died of consumption in 1897, Hostos, then living in Santiago de Chile, wrote a eulogy praising her contributions. These are the words of the historical Hostos:

Salomé Ureña de Henríquez was not content with being a poet and

5 → Normal schools, also called teachers colleges, were instituted to train teachers for various levels of instruction. They can be traced back to 1685, where, in Reims, France, Jean Batiste de La Salle founded what is considered the first such school. They derive their name from their purpose: to establish teaching standards, or norms. According to Alicia Itatí Palermo, the first normal schools in Latin America were founded in 1822, in Lima, and 1825, in Buenos Aires, following Lancaster's model, but they did not last. See "Mujeres profesionales que ejercieron en Argentina en el siglo XIX", *Convergencia. Revista de sociología* 12, no. 38: (2005) 59-79; cited by Sonia Ruiz Pérez, "Línea de tiempo. Desarrollo del concepto de la escuela normal," in *Eugenio María de Hostos. Educador puertorriqueño en Chile* (Mayagüez: Impresos RUM, 2013). Originally the normal schools in the United States and Latin America trained teachers for primary education in public schools. They evolved to include institutions for training secondary-education teachers, such as the Instituto Pedagógico de Chile (1890), and the Instituto Nacional de Profesorado Secundario, in Argentina (1904). In the U.S., a number of normal schools became teachers colleges. See Edgar Ewing Brandon, *Latin-American Universities and Special Schools* (Washington: G.P.O., 1913).

6 → Alvarez, *In the Name of Salomé*, 172.

a patriot through the use of words, but she also practiced her poetic enthusiasm and patriotic devotion, dedicating herself body and soul to the saddest and most arduous of society's tasks, but also the most transcending one: she devoted herself to teaching.

Naturally, she was not going to be an ordinary teacher, so she took upon herself the task of contributing to the educational reform that was then taking place amidst great hardships to the reformers. This reform, applied to the education of women, gave a useful and fruitful occupation to that noble soul, who was so eager to improve the lot of others.<sup>7</sup>

In his short piece, Hostos evoked<sup>8</sup> Salomé's role as a mother, a ministry that he claimed enhanced her standing and was intertwined with her pedagogical and literary undertakings. His remarks would be hardly surprising in any Hispanic society, in which motherhood is ritually glorified. But they also echoed Heinrich Pestalozzi's views on the major influence of mothers on the educational and emotional development of children.<sup>9</sup>

However, the word "wife" was nowhere to be found in Hostos's eulogy, and this signaled a different outlook that grants full professional and individual autonomy to women. Instead, the phrasing related to Hostos's thinking about the condition and status of women: "the miseducation of women in Latin America," women becoming "better owners of themselves," and "more knowledgeable about the fate of women in society." These were some of the major themes in his persistent campaign to empower women through education.

Alvarez's novel then is about the need to connect with key foundational elements of "Dominican-ness." It is about ideas and struggles that helped to shape the nation and that—she seems to say—still reverberate into its future: popular education, nationalism, nation-building, gender equality, social and intellectual development. Ethics, politics, history are part of the story.

7 → Eugenio María de Hostos, "Salomé Ureña," in *Hostos en Santo Domingo*, ed. Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófilos, 2004), vol. II, 101-104. Unless otherwise stated, I will be using my translations from Spanish.

8 → I have chosen to sidestep the convention of the literary present in most cases throughout this paper, except when discussing contemporary texts, to avoid its incongruous proximity with the historical past.

9 → Johan Heinrich Pestalozzi, *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children; Pestalozzi's Educational Writings* (University of Michigan, 1977). See particularly Parts III and IV.

While the novel depicts Hostos as an inspirational figure, we do not learn much about him in the narrative. What we do learn is that Hostos is a major character in Dominican history, a powerful educator, and a legendary intellectual that needs to be reckoned with. The reckoning involves a recovery of Hostos's contributions to education. It is also a response to the undermining of the major role that public institutions and national identities have historically played in Latin America, in the face of a neoliberal perspective that has produced and popularized a tendentious bias against them.

## A BRIEF NOTE ON HOSTOS'S POLITICAL INITIATION

Hostos (1839-1903) was born and brought up in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. The island was then one of the few remaining Spanish possessions, and Hostos would devote most of his adult life to ending colonialism in Cuba and in his native country. At age 12, he was sent to Bilbao, Spain, where he received his secondary education at the Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza. He started law school at the Universidad Central de Madrid in 1860, but did not finish his degree. However, he was exposed to the progressive philosophy of Karl Friedrich Krause through the writings and lectures of Professor Julián Sanz del Río. Krause's thinking was republican, anti-monarchic, abolitionist, and supportive of women's education. It purported that education could transform individuals and societies and that harmony could be attained through ethical conduct.<sup>10</sup> Krause's philosophy was a major influence on Hostos and left an important mark on the new generation of Spanish educational and political reformers.<sup>11</sup> Hostos also became immersed in the political and intellectual debates taking place in *El Ateneo*—an important center of literary and political discussions—and in the Spanish press.

10 → Karl Krause, *El ideal de la humanidad para la vida*, trans. J. Sáenz del Río (Madrid: Orbis, 1985).

11 → Among his notable disciples were Nicolás Salmerón, José María Labra, Segismundo Moret, and Francisco Giner de los Ríos. The latter would later found the important *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, in Madrid, in 1876. See Antonio Jiménez García, *El krausismo y la institución libre de enseñanza* (Madrid: Editorial Cincel, 1985).

In Madrid and Barcelona, Hostos earned a living as a journalist and wrote articles that argued for the recognition of the political rights of Cuba and Puerto Rico. He supported the Liberal leaders, who helped to depose the monarchy and establish the first Spanish republic in 1868. However, Hostos had expected that the new republican government would seek a dignified and democratic solution to the grievances of the Antilles. But there was little support for restructuring Spain's relationship with its colonies and establishing a non-colonial federation, similar to the British-Canadian model that had just been installed and that Hostos favored. Soon he became disappointed with the new regime and left for New York, where he would support the Cuban war for independence and would try to promote an anti-colonial revolution in Puerto Rico.

## HOSTOS'S JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY THROUGHOUT SOUTH AMERICA

After he spent a year in New York, in October 1870, at age 31, Hostos initiated a journey throughout Latin America that had a critical impact on his views and ideas. His observations and insights of that journey are collected in two memorable volumes of his *Obras completas: Mi viaje al sur* and *Temas sudamericanos*,<sup>12</sup> in which he demonstrates his commitment to a Latin-americanist agenda on a regional scale. As the trip unfolded, he became the most inclusive nineteenth century Latin American thinker, an early advocate in the struggle for human rights, and a precursor of continental unity. One of the initiatives that he tried to advance from this Latin-americanist perspective was a diplomatic conference on Cuba. Peruvian president Manuel Pardo seemed inclined to support the idea, but the proposal made little headway.

As he traveled South, Hostos became a voice for the marginalized in Latin America, his vision of humanity rooted in a profound sense of

12 → Eugenio María de Hostos, *Obras completas*, segunda edición, facimilars de la conmemorativa del Centenario (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1969), tomo VI (*Mi viaje al sur*) and VII (*Temas sudamericanos*) (respectively).

ethics and justice. From 1871 to 1872, Hostos lived in Perú, where he again worked as a journalist and denounced the oppressive working conditions of Chinese indentured servants and *cholos*, or *mestizos*, and argued for enfranchising them.<sup>13</sup>

## THE FIRST CHILEAN VISIT: ON THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY ABOUT WOMEN

The next stop in Hostos's journey was Chile. During his stay in that country, admission of women to the state university generated a public debate on the rights of women. Martina Barrios had just translated John Stuart Mill's essay *The Subjection of Women*.<sup>14</sup> In December of 1872, Antonia Tarragó, director of the Colegio de Santa Teresa, a school for women, submitted a petition to the Board of the University of Chile to allow her students to take the qualifying exams. This petition would not be addressed by the Education Minister, Manuel Luis Amunátegui, until 1877. However, soon after submission it triggered an important discussion on the intellectual merits of women and whether they should be granted admission to the university.<sup>15</sup>

Hostos decided to enter the fray. He delivered a two-part lecture at the Academy of Fine Letters in Santiago on "The Scientific Education of Women," in which he vigorously defended the right of women to a scientific education. He commented extensively on their marginalized condition and placed responsibility squarely on men:

[W]e, men, who monopolize the forces that we almost never know how to use in a fair way; we, who monopolize the social power that we almost always handle with a weak hand; we, who legislate laws for ourselves,

13 → Hostos, "El cholo," in *Obras completas*, tomo VII (*Temas sudamericanos*), 152-155.

14 → It was published as "La esclavitud de la mujer" in the influential magazine *La Revista de Santiago* in 1872.

15 → See Sonia Ruiz Pérez, "Intervenciones a favor de la educación de la mujer. Chile 1872-1877" in *Eugenio María de Hostos. Educador puertorriqueño en Chile* (Puerto Rico: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 2013).

for the masculine sex, to our liking, recklessly leaving out half of the human race; we, are responsible for the evils that are caused by our continuous violation of the elemental laws of nature.<sup>16</sup>

He called women's rights "the issue of our times," and observed that women were the most significant factor for change in Latin America.

In this lecture, Hostos laid out three basic arguments to support his views on women's right to a scientific education:

- 01 Women are rational beings. So the equality of men and women is a law of nature. To deprive women of their right to develop their reasoning and educate their intelligence violates their integrity as rational beings and the laws of nature.
- 02 There are very important social benefits that would be obtained by preparing women to perform their roles as mothers and first-teachers. Women are the first teachers of our children. Therefore, the more knowledgeable they become, the better teachers they will be, and the better off their children will be also, a Pestalozzian idea that can be found in *The Education of Gertrude's Children*.
- 03 Since women are their spouse's companions, education would make them intellectual partners.

In the ensuing years, Hostos's views on women would deepen to take into account and bring forth women's own sense of themselves and their particular needs and aspirations as individuals. So in 1881, while he was discussing the creation of the Institute for Young Women in Santo Domingo, he added a crucial fourth argument:

16 → Hostos, "La educación científica de la mujer," in *Obras completas*, tomo XIII (*Forjando el porvenir americano II*), 10. See also Yolanda Ricardo, "Estudio preliminar," in *Hostos y la mujer* (Río Piedras: Publicaciones Gaviota, 2001), 3-138. Gabriela Mora, prologue to *La educación científica de la mujer* by Eugenio María de Hostos, (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1972); and Ramonita Brea, "Una nueva lectura de Hostos: dos textos feministas relegados al olvido," in *La educación científica de la mujer* (Santo Domingo, República Dominicana: Archivo General de la Nación, 2007), 9-41.



- 04 Women's individuality needs to be recognized. By means of an education, they could better fulfill themselves as individuals.

In the lecture that Hostos gave in Chile, he insisted that knowing the laws of nature would enable women to be treated equally, and that knowing the laws of life would allow them to be in command of their rationality. He then proposed a series of lectures that would provide scientific instruction to women, based on the educational model that Auguste Comte had proposed for men. There is no record of this program of lectures having taken place, but it followed Hostos's known practice of putting forth a plan of action to redress injustices.

Hostos's lecture provoked a public letter by Luis Rodríguez Velasco in the Chilean press, defending traditional views on women. Hostos responded vigorously, while avoiding any personal attacks—a principle that he maintained throughout his life. He started out with a cordial gesture: “Señor Rodríguez Velasco: Let me exchange the vocative señor for that of amigo. I greet you, extend my hand, and respond.”<sup>17</sup> Then he got to the crux of his argument:

The education of women should be scientific, since it should be rational, as it relates to rational beings, and it should be complete, as it relates to beings who have more than feelings.

[S]ince [women] are rational beings, they are men's equals; if men have the right to improve their moral and physical life by cultivating their faculties, why shouldn't women have the same right? Men have the right to liberate themselves from error, why shouldn't women have that right as well? Men have the right to know the universe face-to-face, why shouldn't women have it too?<sup>18</sup>

Ultimately, Hostos considered the denial of women's right to an education as an act of repression and violence against their integrity, equivalent to amputating a physical organ:

17 → Hostos, “Carta-contestación al señor Luis Rodríguez Velasco,” *Obras completas*, tome XII (*Forjando el porvenir americano I*), vol. 1, 34.

18 → *Ibid.*, 45-46.

As half of humanity, they are the coefficient of human life in all its manifestations; to impair their exercise of the highest manifestations of their souls is to suppress violently one of the factors pertaining to the phenomenon of life. Before becoming loved ones, wives, mothers; before being the charm of our days, women as women, are rational beings who use reason to exercise, educate, and know the reality that surrounds them; to deny them knowledge of that reality is to deny them a rational life, it amounts to killing a part of their life.<sup>19</sup>

**He supported his arguments with clear statements about women's humanity and did not shy away from confronting the distorted, uninformed, or uncouth expressions of sexism leveled against assertive women:**

Women should be educated so that they can be human beings, so that they can cultivate and develop their faculties, so that they can exercise their reasoning, so that they can enjoy in their lives the full use of conscience, and not just assume in their social life the restrictive functions assigned to them. The more human that they will know to be and feel, the more womanly they will want to and know how to be.<sup>20</sup>

**When he gave his 1873 lecture in Santiago de Chile, Hostos was not yet a teacher. But he was already lured by the impact of education on people's lives and was already asking what education ought to be: "Before and above everything else, isn't education about growth and reflection?"<sup>21</sup> His journey, which also included Argentina and Brazil, proved to be an initiation to the region's complex and diverse societies and a grounding for future undertakings. He would come to realize that in spite of half-a-century of independence, decolonization in the independent countries would require a major reorientation in their educational institutions and social practices.**

19 → Ibid., 53.

20 → Hostos, "La educación científica de la mujer," in *Obras Completas*, tomo XIII (*Forjando el porvenir americano II*), 12-13.

21 → Hostos, "Carta-contestación al señor Luis Rodríguez Velasco," in *Obras Completas*, tomo XIII (*Forjando el porvenir americano II*), 54.

## CALIBÁN'S BECKONING

In the spring of 1874, after three-and-a-half years of travel, Hostos returned to New York City, where he tried to reignite the struggle against Spanish rule in his native Puerto Rico. It is revealing how Hostos arrived at the awareness of the need for an educational transformation as he reflected on the issue of colonialism. While largely engaged in political and journalistic activities, he pondered how to transform the colonial societies devoid of “reasonable and conscientious people.”<sup>22</sup> The first point on his agenda was to provide education to all:

[I]t is the time to be concerned and admit to ourselves that we will do nothing to build a society worthy of the goals expected of an Antillean society, if the education of the people (women, children, black, brown, rich, poor, peasants) does not produce in them a general reaction against all the formidable vices of their previous educational experience.<sup>23</sup>

Then he proposed a universalist program that would widen horizons and break open the closed boundaries of colonial, religious, and undemocratic education prevalent in the two islands:

It is therefore the first and last objective of our future education to put to use the primary faculties of the spirit. [...], to provide the students with a universal order more secure, harmonious, and sound than the one invented by religion, literature, and tyranny.<sup>24</sup>

Hostos had not yet found a methodology or a conceptual framework that he thought would enable the Antillean societies to transform themselves. This would come later, as he became more vested in creating institutions that could promote social change.

For the next two years, from 1875-1876, Hostos alternated between

22 → Eugenio María de Hostos, “The Cuban Problem” *America: The Struggle for Freedom (Anthology)*, 183.

23 → Ibid., 182.

24 → Ibid., 182-83.

New York and Puerto Plata, Santo Domingo, where he worked with General Gregorio Luperón and with Dr. Ramón Emeterio Betances to attain the independence of Cuba and Puerto Rico and to create an Antillean Confederation. During Hostos's two stays in Puerto Plata he published three different newsletters that were all closed down by the government: "Las Tres Antillas," "Las Dos Antillas," and "Los Antillanos." In March, 1876, a month before he was forced to leave the country for the second time, he started an organization with Luperón called *La Educadora*. This was perhaps his first attempt at adult education and a way of promoting republicanism. Its objective was to foster an understanding of the constitutions of the United States and Latin American countries. Soon thereafter, the Spanish government complained to the Dominican President Ignacio María González about the conspiratorial activities of the Cuban and Puerto Rican political émigrés and pressed for Hostos's expulsion. In April of that year, as he was being expelled from the country, he reflected on education in his customary unflinching manner:

But not on account of my being absent, will I stop having the preoccupation that I have, have had, and will always have for the education of the people, which is an illumination of the collective consciousness, and I want my last words to be a prayer for what has so much and so unceasingly been my preoccupation.<sup>25</sup>

Hostos's "preoccupation" for "the education of the people" would become a lifelong passion for human development as well as social and political change. He had realized early on that decolonization would not be possible without major reforms and that the only means to bring it about was through education:

A dense fog, a great deal of darkness is left by the effect of a colonial education on the colonized; there is but one—and only one—means for reforming the deformed human soul. In the language of speakers and poets, that means is called light; in the words of thinkers and statesmen, it is called education.<sup>26</sup>

25 → Santiago Castro Ventura, *Hostos en el perímetro dominicano* (Santo Domingo, República Dominicana: Editorial Manatí, 2003), 26.

26 → Hostos, "The Cuban Problem," *America: The Struggle for Freedom (Anthology)*, 182.

It is not surprising that his political work in the ensuing years led him in that direction.

## **ON GETTING MARRIED AND BECOMING A TEACHER IN VENEZUELA**

After Hostos was expelled for the second time from Puerto Plata in 1876, he returned briefly to New York and, shortly thereafter, left for Caracas, Venezuela. There he met and married María Belinda Ayala, a young Cuban woman from an exiled family. This is also where he became an educator—probably out of necessity—to support his marriage. It is worth mentioning that while he was in Caracas, on December 30, 1876, he delivered the keynote at the inauguration of Venezuela's Second Normal School, attended by President Antonio Guzmán Blanco, and ended his speech expressing the need for the creation of a normal school for women, a harbinger of things to come.

In 1877, he assumed the directorship of Colegio Nacional de la Asunción, equivalent to a high school, in Isla Margarita, and lived there for several months with his wife Inda. They then moved to the city of Puerto Cabello, where he was director of the Instituto de Comercio and professor at Colegio Nacional of that city. While living in Venezuela, he explored a deepening interest in both pedagogical theory and the emerging social sciences. In 1877, he was among the founders of the Instituto de Ciencias Sociales, one of the first of its kind in Latin America. A few months later, in January of 1878, Hostos proposed the creation of a school of “objective learning” to the Puerto Cabello City Council, in which we get a glimpse of his pedagogical ideas: “Knowledge is acquired as much through the senses as by means of abstract reasoning. Thus, and without going any further, the need to educate the senses.”<sup>27</sup> His views were inspired by Pestalozzi's ideas and based on scientific thinking and observation. He rejected metaphysics and theology, and included esthetic and moral qualities as educable aptitudes.

The school did not materialize, since Hostos was being harassed by authorities and decided to leave Venezuela. He had written an article

27 → Hostos, “Carta al Consejo Municipal de Puerto Cabello,” in *Hostos en Venezuela*, ed. Oscar Urdaneta Sambrano (Caracas, Venezuela: La Casa de Bello, 1989), 171-173.

that reflected negatively on former strongman Guzmán Blanco, who had been reinstated to the presidency after the mysterious death of his successor, President Francisco Linares Alcántara. Nevertheless, Hostos had begun to explore pedagogical theories, particularly the ways in which teaching and learning take place.

Hostos was also deepening his political and cultural views and commitment to what we would now call “Bolivarismo” or pan-Americanism: a utopian political concept that originated in Bolívar’s writings and was also prominent in José Martí’s thinking, and which is still central to Latin American radical politics. In a letter to social scientist José María Samper, Hostos elaborated:

[C]onsidering all of América my patria, I try to be useful to it in any parcel of American land where I may be staying. [...] all of my life’s purpose, all the painful writings of advocacy during my active years, and all of my efforts of understanding, of the will, and of the heart, have been oriented towards attaining the total independence of our continent and its moral and intellectual emancipation [...]<sup>28</sup>

## THE ESCUELA NORMAL AND THE INSTITUTO DE SEÑORITAS

After the *Paz del Zanjón*, the peace agreement of 1878 that effectively ended Cuba’s Ten Year War, Hostos tried to visit his father and his family in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. He seemed to be considering returning to his homeland, but his father sent him word not to disembark, since the Spanish authorities were planning to arrest him. So he continued his trip to Santo Domingo.

In Santo Domingo, the *Liberales*—or *los Azules*, as they were called—had become a force. After winning an election in 1879 and enduring a coup that deposed the reformist president Ulyses Espaillat, they gained control of the government with enough staying power to undertake important political and educational reforms. General Gregorio

28 → Hostos, Carta a José María Samper, in *Hostos en Venezuela*, ed. Óscar Urdaneta Sambrano, 169.

Luperón, one of the heroes of the Dominican War of Restoration and a strong opponent to the U.S. annexation attempt during Buenaventura Báez's regime, became provisional president in 1879 and sought Hostos's collaboration in organizing the country's educational system. This is when Hostos and Salomé Ureña met.

The creation of normal schools was not an original idea, but it lured educators because it was a way to professionalize education and to reform it through teacher training. Luperón asked Hostos to direct and develop this initiative, and he left a powerful imprint during the nine years that he was in charge of it. In 1880 he founded the Escuela Normal in the capital city of Santo Domingo, and the following year, he founded another one in Santiago de los Caballeros.

There would be roadblocks along the way, especially by a conservative and powerful Catholic Church that was being displaced from its control of education. It accused Hostos of fostering atheism through his plan of secular, rationalist, and scientifically-based education. This was—the Church claimed— *la escuela sin Dios* (the Godless school). Hostos, however, was adept at negotiating these obstacles by tailoring his ideas to the Dominican context. The pantheism present in the Chilean lecture dissipated as he learned to moderate his anti-clericalism. His verve, his fulfilling family life (four of his six children were born during that decade), his intellect, and moral certitude made him a formidable leader. He excelled at the opportunity to have an impact on a society that was dear to him. He succeeded in preparing competent, civics-oriented teachers. Moreover, his work led to the creation of *Normalismo*, a movement that offered a forum for developing leaders and for discussing the educational agenda.

Appointing Salomé Ureña co-director of the Instituto de Señoritas was clearly an act of empowerment. By challenging the prevalent perception that underrated women's leadership capability and intellectual worth, Hostos proved to be consistent with his beliefs. Although limited in scope, creating the school had a multiplying effect that spread education among women. Some of its graduates founded other schools and promoted education at all levels, which increased the pressure to provide professional opportunities for women. Among the 1902 graduates was Andrea Evangelina Rodríguez, the first Dominican female medical doctor.

Hostos's interests included early childhood education. In 1884 he founded a kindergarten, supported through donations, that emphasized games and activities to engage children physically and in sensorial perception. Choral singing and coloring helped to develop esthetic appreciation. In contemporary educational terms, this would be regarded as experiential learning. The influence of Friedrich Froebel's writings was palpable in the emphasis on games and the use of *gifts* or manipulatives.<sup>29</sup>

During this extraordinarily productive period Hostos also taught Constitutional Law and Political Economy at the *Instituto Profesional*, the only university in the Dominican Republic at the time. He also published two important books: *Lecciones de derecho constitucional* (1884), a treatise on constitutional law, and *Moral social* (1888), a treatise on social mores. As importantly, he wrote profusely and debated social and economic issues in the press, helping to frame a discourse for modernity that was based on material progress, integrity, democracy, and intellectual advancement of the people.<sup>30</sup> An aura of commitment, honesty, and respect nurtured the legend that Alvarez recovers in her novel. He would be el Maestro for future generations. The following year, 1889, he and his family were forced to leave the Dominican Republic, due to his criticism of dictator Ulysses Hereaux. Consequently, Hostos accepted an invitation by Chilean President José M. Balmaceda to work on the educational reform underway in Chile.

## A COMPLICATED CHILEAN EXPERIENCE

Hostos emerged from this third engagement in Santo Domingo as a major voice for educational reform in Latin America. His work during the following nine years in Chile was significant in terms of his

29 → Objects that children can handle and manipulate to help them visualize abstract concepts or principles. Froebel introduced this technique to early childhood education and called them "gifts." See his *Pedagogics of the Kindergarten*, trans. J. Jarvis (New York: D. Appleton, 1900).

30 → See Rodríguez Demorizi, *Hostos en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófilos, 2004), which collects his work written in that country.



pedagogical explorations. In 1889 he was appointed director of the Liceo de Chillán, in Southern Chile, and in 1890 he won the competition to become the director of the Liceo Amunátegui, a new high school that would become a model for the educational reform already in process.

In Santiago, Hostos maintained a very public presence, co-founding and directing various organizations, including the Santiago Atheneum (1890), the Scientific Society of Chile (1891), Chile's Scientific Congress (1894), and the Center of Chilean Professors (1895). He also published articles and books and taught International Law at the University of Chile. But his activities on behalf of the Cuban war of independence—he collected and sent money for arms and men to join the fighting, and wrote 67 public letters supporting Cuba—would provoke a reprisal from the conservative government.

Besides being director at the Liceo Amunátegui, Hostos also taught and wrote his own texts for history, geography, and Spanish. Early on, in 1889, he collaborated with scholars Víctor Letelier and Julio Bañados Espinosa in drafting a plan for the reform of the law curriculum that included sociology and economics.<sup>31</sup>

In response to a contest that the Ministry of Education sponsored to promote curricular development for the educational reform, Hostos earned a prize for his integrated study of geography and history for high schoolers. It appeared as *Programa de geografía e historia*.<sup>32</sup> His work was moving in the direction of what we have come to know as interdisciplinary integration, as an alternative to the fragmentation of knowledge into isolated disciplines.

Hostos then prepared a series of short books to teach geography, in which he put into practice a gradualist, “evolutional or concentric method,” partially derived from the *landeskunde*, or regional geography, that originated in Germany. A number of German educators had been invited to Chile as part of the educational reform. This granted Hostos direct contact with Pablo Stange, who

31 → Hostos, “Reforma del plan de estudios en la Facultad de Leyes,” in *Obras completas*, tome XII (*Forjando el porvenir americano I*), vol. 1, 171-202.

32 → Hostos, “Programa de Geografía e Historia,” in *Obras completas*, tomo XII (*Forjando el porvenir americano I*), vol.1, 470-486. See also Sonia Ruiz Pérez, *Eugenio María de Hostos. Educador puertorriqueño en Chile* (2013), 81-101.

was on the teaching staff at the Liceo Amunátegui and who appeared to have influenced his work.<sup>33</sup>

Through this “evolutional” method that built on the learners’ experiences, Hostos organized the instruction of geography in concentric circles. They started at home, with the study of places that are most familiar to the child, and moved progressively to neighborhood locations and institutions, then to the district, the province, the country, and the region. Map-reading, demographics, environment, ethnography, economics, history, architecture, political and social aspects, were integrated to foster an understanding of adaptation and cultural diversity.<sup>34</sup>

However, during this time relations between Hostos and the government had been deteriorating. In his “Memoria” that reported on the Liceo’s functioning during 1896, Hostos had expressed concerns about the excessive number of students, which surpassed 50, 60, and even 80 in one of the classes. “In such circumstances,” he wrote, “teaching was anti-pedagogic and ineffectual.”<sup>35</sup> He asked for additional sections, with no results. In the “Memoir” of 1897, he proposed that the institution offer a two-track program on the basis of the functions it performed: as a high school leading to practical employment, and a prep school leading to university studies.<sup>36</sup> Apparently this generated no response from the authorities either.

During the fall of 1897, due to discrepancies in the certification of the proficiency exams of a student, Hostos’s performance was called into question. The educational authorities requested the intervention of the Rector of the University to review the case, who in turn

33 → Carlos Pérez Morales, *La geografía. Eugenio María de Hostos, maestro de geografía* (sic), (San Juan: Editorial Isla Negra, 2001), 60.

34 → Hostos, “Geografía evolutiva,” in *Obras completas*, tome XX (*Ensayos didácticos III*), vol. 3, 7-112. See also: “Enseñanza concéntrica,” “La religión en el plan de estudios concéntricos,” “Los frutos del plan concéntrico,” in *Obras Completas*, tome XII (*Forjando el porvenir americano I*), vol. 1, 287-95, and 306-314 (respectively). See also Pérez Ruiz, *Eugenio María de Hostos. Educador puertorriqueño en Chile* (Puerto Rico: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 2013). Pérez Morales’s book provides much information on the subject. As part of this series, Hostos also wrote one of the first books on urban geography in Latin America, which unfortunately remains unpublished due to severe difficulties in its readability, as per conversation with Dr. Pérez Morales.

35 → Ruiz Pérez, *Eugenio María de Hostos. Educador puertorriqueño en Chile*, 86-87.

36 → *Ibid.*, 87.

commissioned the Dean of Humanities to investigate. Hostos was asked to explain in writing the perceived irregularities and an audit was subsequently conducted. In April he was asked to resign as the rector of the Amunátegui Institute.<sup>37</sup>

There is reason to believe that the government's actions were politically-motivated. Hostos's political activism in favor of Cuba, contrary to the government's conservative policies, appears to have been a factor in bringing about the audit that led to his resignation. Aided by his friend, Senator Guillermo Matta, Hostos took the matter to the president of the republic, Federico Errázuriz Echaurren, but chose not to challenge the outcome and requested instead a travel allowance that would enable him to go with his family to Venezuela. His family would stay with his recently-widowed mother-in-law. Subsequently Hostos would travel to New York to explore employment possibilities. In a letter to his friend Julio Bañados, he expressed a desire to look for a better climate for two of his family members, who were apparently sick.<sup>38</sup> His decision to leave Chile also seems to have been motivated by his interest in being close to the Antilles, given his growing concerns at a time when war appeared imminent in the region.

## PUERTO RICO: HOSTOS INVENTS AN NGO, TO NO AVAIL, AGAINST U.S. COLONIALISM

In the Spring of 1898, as a result of the United States entry into the war against Spain that Cuba and the Philippines had been waging, Hostos returned to New York. Soon after he arrived, he visited Washington on the eve of the invasion of Puerto Rico and was made aware that the U.S.

37 → Ibid. See also: Luis Riveros Cornejo, "Eugenio María de Hostos: Educador y político. Discurso del Rector de la Universidad de Chile con motivo del homenaje al educador," (Universidad de Chile, August 11, 2003), <http://www.uchile.cl/portal/presentacion/historia/luis-riveros-cornejo/discursos/5563/eugenio-maria-de-hostos-educador-y-politico>; and Carmelo Delgado Cintrón, *Biografía jurídica de Eugenio María de Hostos. 1857-2003*, Tomo II (Río Piedras, Universidad de Puerto Rico, DERECOOP, 2012), 580-593

38 → Cited in Pérez Ruiz, *Eugenio María de Hostos. Educador puertorriqueño en Chile*, 89-90, footnote 20.

planned to annex the island. He was disillusioned and momentarily considered going into business or finding a job.<sup>39</sup> However, he refused to give up on his commitment to the rights of Puerto Ricans and decided to pick up the fight by organizing them and using legal means.

Hostos worked with the leaders of the Puerto Rican Section of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in New York City to create a new nonpartisan organization to defend Puerto Rico's right to self-determination. The League of Puerto Rican Patriots was founded in that city on September 1, 1898. Its short-term objectives were to unite Puerto Ricans and to seek a prompt transition from the military occupation to a civilian government. It also sought to promote a plebiscite, or a direct vote by the people that would serve as a mechanism for self-determination. International law was still far from accepting national rights as legitimate, but President McKinley had stated that forced annexation of a territory by the United States was tantamount to "criminal aggression."<sup>40</sup> So Hostos, who admired the U.S. institutions and Constitution, thought it unthinkable that it would become a colonial empire. Nevertheless, McKinley, pressed by economic, political, and military interests, embarked on a colonial policy that changed the course of the United States. The following year, on January 21, 1899, a Puerto Rican Commission, of which Hostos was a senior member, met with McKinley and proposed a series of political and socio-economic initiatives that were completely ignored.

Hostos conceptualized the League of Puerto Rican Patriots as a vehicle for self-development and decolonization, an expression of what we now call *civil society*. Today the group might be considered an NGO (non-governmental organization).<sup>41</sup> For each of the

39→ Hostos, "Cartas a Inda del 27 de julio y 8 de agosto," in *Obras completas*, tomo III (Páginas íntimas), 292 and 304 (respectively).

40→ In his "First Annual Message" on December 7, 1897, addressing U.S. policy toward the Cuban War, McKinley stated: "I speak not of forcible annexation, for that cannot be thought of. That, by our code of morality, would be criminal aggression." See The American Presidency Project at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29538>.

41→ Hostos, "The League of Puerto Rican Patriots," in *América: The Struggle for Freedom* (Anthology), 275-279; See also "La Liga de Patriotas Puertorriqueños," in *Obras completas*, Edición Crítica, (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña/Editorial de la UPR, 2001), vol. V (América), tomo III (Puerto Rico

island's administrative districts, there would be a municipal institute that would sponsor community and night schools, a newspaper, and weekly lectures. Hostos was keenly aware of the inhibiting effects of the four-century-old colonial legacy on the psyche of the colonized. So he conceived the League as an incubator for social and economic initiatives that would help Puerto Ricans overcome their marginalization. He wrote about turning colonial politics upside down, not to attain political power, but to transform it into *el poder social*, or "social power." This would be the enabling and legitimizing factor that would bring about change through civic participation and democracy.

During the sixteen months that Hostos spent on the island, between September of 1898 and January of 1900, he gave two series of public talks to promote the program of the League of Patriots and to explain the organization and constitutional principles of the U.S. government. He also founded two elementary schools: one in the agricultural town of Juana Díaz, in the South, and a second one in Mayagüez, the third largest city and his hometown, on the Western coast.<sup>42</sup> The curriculum of the Mayagüez school used the "evolutional method," based on science, and included ethics and active learning as a means for decolonization.<sup>43</sup>

Unfortunately, the schools lasted only several months. In Juana Díaz, the city council accepted Hostos's proposal, but rather than starting a new school, it conflated his school with an existing one. Its director, Oscar Muñoz, challenged the arrangement, and the military authorities sided with him. In Mayagüez, there was controversy over administering the required admission exam and also over the number of students that the school would serve. Moreover, the Inspector of Schools, John Mellowes, protested to Mayor García Saint Laurent that the Council was unnecessarily spending money on independent schools—referring to Hostos's. Although strongly in his favor, the city council's vote on the budget assigned to the school was less than

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"Madre Isla"), 1era parte, 23-61.

42 → See Carmelo Delgado Cintrón, *Biografía jurídica de Eugenio María de Hostos*, tomo III, 540-546.

43 → Hostos, "El Instituto Municipal de Mayagüez," in *Obras completas*, Edición Crítica, vol. V (*América*), tome III (*Puerto Rico "Madre Isla"*), 1era parte, 57-61.

unanimous and that led to Hostos's resignation.<sup>44</sup> At that very same time, the military regime established a centralized educational system that excluded any independent initiatives, and did not seem interested or informed about what Maestro Hostos could offer Puerto Rico as an educator. Soon afterwards, he returned to Santo Domingo. Dictator Hereaux had been killed and a new government had been installed that was eager to bring him back so that he could continue his educational work.

Hostos's setbacks were not limited to the schools he founded. Despite his full commitment, his organizational efforts for the League of Patriots faltered. In the end, only a handful of Puerto Ricans joined his noble efforts, as he seriously misjudged the situation. Several factors were at play. The aura about the United States as a progressive and democratic nation carried much influence in Puerto Rico and created high expectations among its people that they would be treated fairly. The two reconstituted political parties, el Partido Federal and el Partido Republicano—extensions of the old parties under the Spanish colonial regime and fiercely opposed to each other—were incapable of overcoming political tribalism. They probably had little interest in aligning themselves with an outsider, who had no organizational base or power. They chose instead to pursue their own separate course of action, rather than join forces to create a common front, as Hostos had proposed. Repression also played a role. A number of journalists were jailed for writing articles protesting the abuses by the military. Hostos decried their jailing and initiated efforts to release several of them.<sup>45</sup> His was also one of the few voices opposed to a property-ownership requirement that would have restricted the right to vote,

44 → See Ángel R. Villarini Jusino, "Hostos in Mayagüez: educación cívica y reforma educativa," and "En Rojo," in *Claridad*, 31 de enero al 6 de febrero del 2003, 24-25; See also by Villarini Jusino, "Hostos en Mayagüez: su gestión educativa," in *Ceiba*, año 2, no.2, 2da época, agosto-mayo 2002-2003, 5-15.

45 → Hostos brought up the case of Dr. Manuel Guzmán Rodríguez in the meeting of the Puerto Rican Commission with President McKinley. He also wrote and circulated a petition to obtain the release of Evaristo Izcoa Díaz. See Hostos, "Contra la sentencia," *Obras completas*, Edición Crítica, vol. V (*América*), tomo III (*Puerto Rico "Madre Isla"*), 1era parte, 275-282. See also Delgado Cintrón, "Hostos defiende a Evaristo Izcoa Díaz," in *Biografía jurídica de Eugenio María de Hostos*, tomo III, 574-587.

negatively impacting the working class. By early 1900, frustrated and disappointed with the U.S. military occupation, and dispirited by the lack of support, he and his family left for the Dominican Republic.

## SANTO DOMINGO: THE EDUCATIONAL IMPERATIVE AND ITS PERSISTENT CHALLENGES

During his last sojourn in Santo Domingo, Hostos became Inspector General of Education and resumed the directorship of the Normal School. He traveled widely throughout the country and devoted much attention to the creation of schools outside of the capital. He also showed renewed interest in civic, nongovernmental organizations, like the *Liga de Ciudadanos* (League of Citizens), as his work was increasingly directed towards popular education. In his proposed General Law of Public Education, which failed to be enacted, he assigned funding to two night schools sponsored by women's organizations: *Amantes del Progreso* (Friends of Progress) in La Vega, and *Club de Damas* (Ladies' Club) in Puerto Plata. That kind of initiative marked a difference with respect to government centralization and set a precedent for a more independently-oriented community activism.

The *Normalismo* movement was rekindled in various cities throughout the country. Evening schools for workers and kindergartens were initiated, inspired by a new educational interest based on volunteerism and local support, as reported in the press.<sup>46</sup> Castro Ventura laments the fact that Hostos's "role as an orienting influence on the working class has been overlooked" and that "[h]is multiple improvised lectures to orient and organize the working class unfortunately were not recorded for posterity."<sup>47</sup> In fact, in 1888, he founded a night school for workers, about which we have little information.

The *Proyecto de Ley de Enseñanza General*, or Bill for a General Law of Public Education, was written by Hostos and submitted to the Dominican Congress by his supporters in 1901. It was a comprehensive

46 → Santiago Castro Ventura, *Hostos en el perímetro dominicano* (Santo Domingo, República Dominicana: Manatí, 2003), 154-160.

47 → *Ibid.*, 155.

plan that would have reformed the previous law enacted during the dictatorship and would have established free, universal public education, creating kindergartens, as well as agricultural, technical, and professional schools. As a sign of the changing times, the new schools would be coeducational, as Mary Wollstonecraft had championed in England more than a century earlier.

However, the conservative sectors, spearheaded by Archbishop Arturo Meriño and the Catholic Church, managed to prevent a vote on the bill; thus it was shelved. The loser was the Dominican people, whose highly stratified society exhibited a high rate of illiteracy.<sup>48</sup> To this very day, education remains a critical issue in the Dominican Republic. In light of its more recent economic advances, it would be fitting for the country where Hostos's memory is most venerated, and where he has been conferred hero status—as we have been rightfully reminded by Julia Alvarez—for it to finally come to terms with his vision of equality and educational access for all, regardless of origin, class, or gender.

## ON THE HOSTOS-FREIRE CONNECTION

The connection between Hostos's pedagogical efforts and Paulo Freire's more recent and highly significant work<sup>49</sup> exists as a continuing commitment to popular education and democracy. Freire rejects the hierarchy established by formal education between the teacher and the pupil, focusing on the process through a critical reflection that leads to an awareness of oppression in order to overcome it. By shedding the assigned roles, a different dynamic is introduced,

48 → Ibid., 168, footnote, 5. There are no precise literacy figures, but Castro Ventura estimates it at 95%, citing a 1902 memoir by the Justice and Education Minister, published in *Gaceta Oficial*, the government's newspaper, of April 19, 1902. It indicates a ratio of one for every 50 Dominicans attending school, as well as other figures on the number of schools, pupils and professors.

49 → Among other contributions see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970); *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973); *Education, the Practice of Freedom* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1976); and *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage*. (Lanham: Rowman & Little, 1998).



whereby the teacher is transformed into a learner and the learner, into a teacher. From the “banking model,” whereby knowledge is deposited or transferred from one “knowledgeable subject” to an “ignorant receiver,” the interaction is modified as it now implies two protagonists that transform themselves and transform each other in the process of teaching and learning. The transformation requires the active and reflective appropriation of knowledge through critical and dialectical thinking.

In his speech “La escuela normal,” Hostos used an epigraph that disrupts the same hierarchy in terms that are similar to the Freirean dialectics:

[...] *el alumno aprende a enseñar;  
el maestro aprende enseñando.*<sup>50</sup>

To illustrate that shift in perception and empathy, Hostos quoted English educator Joseph Lancaster, “To transmit knowledge it is necessary to put yourself in the position of the person who is going to receive it.”<sup>51</sup>

Both Hostos and Freire spoke to the awareness that social change is predicated on reaching a state of consciousness, and that critical thinking is one of education’s fundamental values. Both taught how to read reflectively, from the mechanics to the larger cultural implications of literacy. Hostos wrote: “Reading, **from the very first moment**, should be critical. He who reads without reasoning, has not read.”<sup>52</sup> He acknowledged the correlation between the two skills: “You teach to read **by writing**, and to write, **by tracing lines**.”<sup>53</sup>

Hostos and Freire’s common legacy is about critiquing oppression and engaging with the oppressed in social and political transformation. Their critique is relevant to our predicament: Only when learning is humanized can it become a liberating force and an equalizing factor.

50 → Hostos, “Procedimientos para la enseñanza de la lectura,” *Obras completas*, tomo XII (*Forjando el porvenir americano I*), vol. 1, 378.

51 → Ibid., 381-382.

52 → Hostos, “Los frutos de la normal,” *Obras completas*, tomo XII (*Forjando el porvenir Americano I*), vol. 1, 375. Hostos’s emphasis.

53 → Ibid., 378. Hostos’s emphasis.

## SOME FINAL THOUGHTS ON HOSTOS'S RELEVANCE

More than a decade ago, in 2001, a debate took place in Puerto Rico about Hostos's pedagogical ideas. It was provoked by the widely-held expectation among educators and interested citizens that Hostos's "educational philosophy" should be made more visible and play a guiding role in the island's educational system. Many intellectuals felt that his work had been excluded from the classroom largely for political reasons, particularly because of his pro-independence views. The organizers of the forum, Dr. Rafael Aragunde, at the time Rector of the University of Puerto Rico in Cayey, and Dr. Vivian Quiles-Calderín, then director of the Instituto de Estudios Hostosianos, at the Río Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico, promoted a debate that could shed thinking on this issue and divided it into two colloquia.<sup>54</sup> Important Hostos scholars from the island were invited to participate. The proceedings generated fertile discussions and were subsequently published.<sup>55</sup> The two events invigorated the practice of intellectual debate, so dear to Hostos.

Hostos's pedagogy was more synthetic than original, as was pointed out by some of the presenters in the colloquia. It was based on rationalistic empiricism and science, and oriented towards ethical values, which Hostos believed were also governed by the laws of nature. The ultimate goal, he proposed, was to help shape "complete human beings," through a holistic, multi-faceted process that integrated intellectual, physical, emotional, esthetic, and moral aspects. Reasoning

54 → The first colloquium was held at the University Puerto Rico in Cayey, on August 8, 2001, and titled: *La reflexión pedagógica de Hostos, ¿una agenda educativa para el Puerto Rico actual?* (Hostos's Pedagogical Thinking: An Educational Agenda for Today's Puerto Rico?). The second colloquium was held at the Universidad Carlos Albizu, in San Juan, on October 5, 2001, and was titled: *¿Se puede seguir a Hostos mediante la construcción de una nueva síntesis en el contexto de la tradición liberacionista latinoamericana?* (Can We Consider Hostos Through the Construction of a New Synthesis in the Context of Latin American's Emancipatory Tradition?)

55 → Rafael Aragunde and Vivian Quiles-Calderín, eds., *Eugenio María de Hostos. Un debate actual en torno a sus ideas pedagógicas* (Puerto Rico: Instituto de Estudios Hostosianos; Oficina de la Rectora, Universidad de Puerto Rico/Universidad de Puerto Rico en Cayey; Federación de Maestros de Puerto Rico, 2002).

and consciousness were central to that process.<sup>56</sup> His pedagogical and ethical views represent some of the most progressive thinking in nineteenth century Latin America, and they cause us to re-think education today in profound ways. Let us suppose that we took a number of themes and ideas that are crucial to our societies nowadays, and we looked at what Hostos had to say about them. This would be informative.

No educator in Latin America's intellectual tradition has articulated a sense of inclusiveness more encompassing than Hostos. He was an early supporter of human rights. His pronouncements on gender equality offer a strong and revealing affirmative perspective on this subject. Although Hostos did not write specifically on educational issues concerning people of African descent or indigenous peoples, he wrote compellingly about their rights and about the shared identity of human beings:

[W]hatever their color, whatever their nationality, human beings are the same rational beings everywhere. Therefore everywhere they are owed the consideration that comes with the morality, dignity, and activity of their nature.<sup>57</sup>

Students and teachers will also find thought-provoking his short autobiographical text "El miedo a los patagones" (Fear of the Patagonians), which focuses on the plight and intelligence of Native Americans in the Patagonian region.<sup>58</sup> The dignified treatment of all people is today one of our fundamental values.

Should the discussion turn to the ethical questions that surround the ecological preservation of our planet, Hostos, a naturalist,<sup>59</sup>

56 → See Caridad Oyola de Calderón, "La educación integral según Hostos," in *Hostos: Sentido y proyección de su obra en América*, ed. Julio Cesar López (Río Piedras: Instituto de Estudios Hostosianos; Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1995) 285-305. See also: Ángel R. Villarini, "La enseñanza orientada al desarrollo del pensamiento según Eugenio María de Hostos," in *Hostos: Sentido y proyección de su obra en América*, 307-326.

57 → Hostos, "Platform for the *Independientes*," in *América: The Struggle for Freedom (Anthology)*, 249-274.

58 → Hostos, *Obras completas*, tomo VI (*Mi viaje al Sur*), 214-217.

59 → See Carlos Rojas Osorio, *Hostos. Apreciación filosófica* (Humacao: Colegio Universitario de Humacao e Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1988).

broached the subject in several writings that deserve to be incorporated into today's curriculum. He emphasized the interconnectedness of all forms of life:

[I] sense a latent relationship that alternatively moves my feelings, provokes my reasoning, forces my will, disturbs my conscience.[...] It is in all my soul and successively it is a solicitation of my activity toward everything that surrounds it, an attraction of my feelings toward nature and life, a rational belief in the unity of all that exists, including me, an awareness that my life should be used to enhance, not to alter, the universal order that I have come to know.<sup>60</sup>

With regards to pedagogy, his use of the concentric method for the course he designed with an integrated, gradualist, interdisciplinary approach, deserves empirical testing and exploration. Such a course on geography would be rich in its possibilities. It stands as a magnificent example of curricular integration and student-centered instruction, two contemporary concepts that he explored well ahead of his time. Similarly significant, the idea of development is at the core of Hostos's thinking about education: "Education is voluntary and critical development."<sup>61</sup> It "should start and end with the physical, moral, and intellectual development of human beings."<sup>62</sup>

These issues and ideas are surprisingly current. Relevancy in Latin America should not only be measured by carbon-dating or by the latest scholarly trends. It should also be measured by the way a given production can amplify our understanding and help us make connections between our experience, knowledge, humanity, and the universe in which we still find ourselves. To his credit, Hostos's work—imbued with an ethical and scientific bent—promotes such an understanding.

In Hostosian thinking, civilization and progress, two terms that he used as banners—and that have become suspect—were inclusive and egalitarian concepts. In that sense, Hostos's ideas challenge the tenets of the Neoliberal ideology, anchored, as they are, in dignity and

60 → Hostos, "La educación científica e la mujer," in *Hostos y la mujer*, 205-208. My emphasis.

61 → Hostos, "Carta-contestación al señor Luis Rodríguez Velasco," in *Hostos y la Mujer*, 185.

62 → Ibid., 187.

equality, through shared intellectual, spiritual, and material pursuits. However, as a result of neoliberal policies and practices, education in Latin America has seen its potential and impact sharply reduced. Its neglect has curtailed its efficacy as a means to transform socio-economic structures, to enfranchise marginalized sectors, and to address various types of inequities. Yet the idea that progressive education can make a difference is far from dead. Despite its recent calamities, education can become a meaningful and powerful instrument for self-fulfillment, solidarity, and ethical action, as Hostos suggested.

When the educational and social issues that are paramount to our lives become part of the past, we will look at Hostos with our kindest regard and gratitude. Although his work is little-read and insufficiently-translated, it is full of opportunities for those who are seeking reform. Let it be known, disseminated, and put to good use. ■

# PUSHING BACK ON NEOLIBERALISM AND PAVING THE ROAD FOR A BETTER WORLD: LESSONS FROM AMERICA LATINA

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ORIGINAL TITLE

Pushing Back on Neoliberalism and Paving the Road for  
Class Struggle: Decoloniality, *Buen Vivir*, and other lessons  
from *América Latina*

We are living in a time of global crisis when the transnational capitalist class seems to stop at nothing in its quest for capital accumulation at the cost of lives, the destruction of entire communities, and ecological disaster. War, poverty, racism, sexism, and other forms of violence seem to be the order of the day. The exploitation and immiseration that capitalism breeds have been exacerbated in the past four decades through a neoliberal emphasis on privatization and accountability that threatens to dismantle social service programs that are the lifeblood of the working class, including public education.<sup>1</sup>

It is no surprise that it is the Global South who experiences the bulk of these atrocities.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, even within the highly industrialized, hyper-capitalist, and Eurocentric U.S., people of color live out the legacy of *el poder colonial*<sup>3</sup> in segregated, impoverished, and persecuted communities. Although the relationship between colonization and

1 → Faith Wilson, Lilia D. Monzó, and Dave Hill "Neoliberalism and the New Common Sense in Education: A Marxist Critique," in *The Solo Journal: Educational Foundations & Social Justice Education* (in press): 5.

2 → The Global South/Global North denotes the distinction between the economically "developed" and "developing" countries but can be a more useful category than that of West/non-West for decolonial scholars who seek to situate social, economic, and political forms of domination within the geo politic and the body politic.

3 → Anibal Quijano, "Colonialidad del Poder, Eurocentrismo y América Latina" in *La Colonialidad del Saber* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: CLACSO, Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, 2000), Section: Evolucionismo y dualismo. Retrieved <http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/lander/quijano.rtf>

capitalism is highly debated among scholars from different traditions, there is no doubt that currently capitalism and imperialism are highly aligned, each supporting and shaping the other.

Numerous scholars argue that unless stopped, capitalism will continue to churn the world into oblivion because, by definition, capitalism is based on a continuous growth imperative.<sup>4</sup> The question of if and how it will be stopped, however, is less clear. There has been escalating discontent and uprisings across the world in recent years as a result of the austerity measures and neoliberal policies that disproportionately affect the working class, including the Arab Springs, Occupy Wall Street, and mass demonstrations in Chile, Spain, Italy, and Greece.<sup>5</sup> This past year, here in the U.S., we have witnessed important uprisings in Ferguson and Baltimore in response to the killings of Black men by White police (Although in the case of Freddy Gray there were also Black Police officers involved). However, a global unraveling of the capitalist order will require massive dissent across the world, and especially against the wealthiest and most powerful transnational corporations and in the most politically powerful nations. Unfortunately, many of us go about our lives, seemingly unaffected, perhaps anesthetized to the pain and suffering of others by its omnipresence in the world and an ideological corporate campaign to hide the role that capital interests play in these atrocities against predominantly people of color across the world. We seem to have accepted that greed, violence, and prejudice are aspects of human nature<sup>6</sup>—that there is little that we can do to develop a world that can be more peaceful and more ethical, eroding our sense of social responsibility toward the welfare of our brothers and sisters and all life forms across the world, including the Earth that sustains us.

Of critical importance, then, is to examine the ideologies that keep us from rising against the capitalist class and their government

4 → Abel Collins, "Chomsky: Putting the Eco Back in Economy," *Huffington Post*, Feb. 13, 2014. Retrieved [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/abel-collins/chomsky-putting-the-eco-i\\_b\\_4757298.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/abel-collins/chomsky-putting-the-eco-i_b_4757298.html)

5 → John Harris, "Global Protests: Is 2011 a Year That Will Change the World?" in *Guardian*, Nov. 15, 2011. Retrieved <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/15/global-protests-2011-change-the-world>

6 → Yet various scholars have taken up the important task of discussing "human nature" as a social construction developed within a particular time and space.



allies and how these ideologies work to sustain the current capitalist structure of society and the relations of domination that can be traced back to colonial times. Toward this end, I draw upon Marx's historical materialist approach and dialectical method as well as the decolonial school of thought that derives from indigenous knowledges. I use these influences to make sense of how the social construction of what it means to be human, at this historical juncture, derives from the Western colonial expansion and supports capital relations.<sup>7</sup> My goal here is to begin to shake the very foundations of this Western capitalist order by questioning "common sense" notions about what it means to be human, why our social relations are structured in the ways that they are, and whether we can conceive of alternative ways of existing in the world. I then explore *buen vivir* as an example of the negation of the negation that allows us to produce new conceptualizations of existence in the world. I end with a critical pedagogy informed by Enrique Dussel's *La Pedagogía Latinoamericana* as a means to creating the dissent necessary to establish a socialist alternative, one that liberates the Other from the Western grip of "yearning"<sup>8</sup> toward a form of being that is more ethical and just for all.

## THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM AND THE NEOLIBERAL ORDER

Today's capitalism is increasingly transnational, as many corporations are multinational and their workers are often located in

7 → Although an important argument of the decolonial school is the need to decentralize established Western canons and give space and legitimacy to Indigenous and other colonized knowledges, I maintain that Western canons must be critically interrogated and weighed against the bottom-up theories of indigenous and Other oppressed groups but not dismissed solely on the basis of their Western roots. Further, I question whether Western knowledge rooted in the experience and support of domination and coloniality, can be attributed to those who work to challenge the structures that uphold these canons? Marx's historical materialist approach and dialectical method have acute explanatory power. In my view the important work of both Marx and decolonial scholars can co-exist.

8 → Maximiliano Valerio López, "The Empire of the Written Word: Modernity, Humanism, and Colonization," in *Lápiz 1* (2013), 64.

developing countries. Yet the coloniality of power remains with the Global North dominating international economic, social, and political structures, taking resources, accessing cheap labor, and maintaining a power matrix that establishes the worldwide dominance of White, heterosexual, Christian men (to name only a few of a long list of social categories of power).<sup>9</sup> Although transnational capitalism is diversifying the locus of capital, the defining social relation of ownership and domination remain as famously critiqued by Karl Marx—the mass of workers produce for the benefit of the few who own the means of production.<sup>10</sup> The owners of the means of production own the fruit of labor and the capital accumulated in the process of production for which only a portion of working hours is exchanged through wages.<sup>11</sup> In this relation of private ownership, the producers have no rights, except to the wages that they are given and therefore are dependent on the capitalist for their jobs and livelihood. This is a system of wage slavery.

Capitalism functions as a capital generating machine that must continually amass surplus value (profit), demanding the continuous development of new markets. It faces crisis if surplus production and re-investment are blocked. Yet there is an internal contradiction in capitalism that does just that—a rise in the rate of production, as a result of labor-saving technology, has the long-term effect of lowering surplus value as a result of greater investment of capital necessary for new technology in the production process.<sup>12</sup> Up until now, the capitalist class and their government allies have been able to step in and rescue capitalism from this internal crisis. Neoliberalism is

9 → Ramón Grosfoguel, “Decolonizing Post-colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political Economy: transmodernity, decolonial thinking, and global coloniality,” *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1 (2011): Section: Coloniality of Power as the Power Matrix of the Modern/Colonial World. Retrieved <http://dialogoglobal.com/texts/grosfoguel/Grosfoguel-Decolonizing-Pol-Econ-and-Postcolonial.pdf>

10 → Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 20–51.

11 → Ibid., 20–51.

12 → Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1967/1894), Chapter 2, “The Rate of Profit.” Retrieved [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx\\_Capital\\_Vol\\_3.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Capital_Vol_3.pdf)

the latest concerted effort to respond to this repeated crisis. David Harvey explains:

My view is that it is a class project that coalesced in the crisis of the 1970s. Masked by a lot of rhetoric about individual freedom, liberty, responsibility and the virtues of privatization, the free market and free trade, it legitimized draconian policies designed to restore and consolidate capitalist class power.<sup>13</sup>

Neoliberalism refers to the set of policies that reflect the assumption that the free market is more efficient and moral than other economic systems and that it is driven by unfettered individual property rights and competition. Under the neoliberal order, freedom is defined as the ability to pursue fully one's own economic interests.<sup>14</sup> Neoliberalism is thus opposed to state interventions and public services, viewed as lacking the competition and accountability that pushes individuals to maximum productivity and efficiency that is inherent in the market. Neoliberalism took hold in the 80s during the Thatcher and Reagan administrations. Since then, neoliberal policies and ideologies have become prominent across the capitalist world, attacking the effectiveness of "big governments," privatizing public services, creating competition among nations for world markets, establishing free trade agreements that generate great profits for the developed world while exploiting the "developing" world, including NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and the proposed TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) and TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership). Neoliberalism creates new markets and increases production and profits for the capitalist while simultaneously lowering the value of the commodity and the value of labor power, creating conditions that support lower wages and production costs. It, thus, serves to reset the capitalist process of accumulation until the next inevitable crisis.<sup>15</sup>

13 → David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10.

14 → Wilson, Monzó, and Hill, "Neoliberalism and the New Common Sense in Education," 3-6.

15 → Ibid., 3-6.

Neoliberal policies must be accompanied by an ideological campaign to make workers assume a state of economic crisis, which promotes resignation and acceptance among the working class that austerity measures, including wage loss, social service cuts, and higher levels of unemployment, are unavoidable; Meanwhile, the capitalist class significantly increases their capital. For example, in the United States between 2000 and 2007, the wealthiest ten percent of the population received 100% of the average income growth.<sup>16</sup> Thus we have evidence across the world and in our own society of continual immiseration and unfathomable extremes in the wealth gap. According to the Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report, 1% of the world's population owns 48.2%, almost half, of the world's wealth whereas the bottom half of global population owns less than 1% of the world's wealth.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, a report by the National Bureau of Economic Research shows that here in the U.S., the wealth gap is the widest it has been in three decades with the top 1% of Americans in 2012 owning 22% of American wealth. These include 160,000 families each with total net assets of more than \$20 million. The bottom 90% collectively owns only 23 percent of total U.S. wealth.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, the hierarchies established within the working class and across workers and capitalists reflect the coloniality of a power matrix, with women of color consistently placed at the bottom end of the hierarchy and White men at the top. Ideological constructions that are used to justify why some people fare far worse than others contribute to our common inertia and are so entrenched in the American “structural unconscious” that even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the majority of people remain loyal to them.<sup>19</sup>

16 → Peter McLaren and Mike Cole, “Austerity/Immiseration Capitalism: What Can We Learn from Venezuelan Socialism?” in *Truthout*, June 11, 2014. Retrieved from: <http://truth-out.org/news/item/24264-austerity-immiseration-capitalism-what-can-we-learn-from-venezuelan-socialism>

17 → Credit Suisse Research Institute, *Global Wealth Report* (Switzerland: Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2014), 11.

18 → Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, *Wealth Inequality in the United States Since 1913: Evidence from Capitalized Income Tax Data* (Cambridge, Mass: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2014), 1.

19 → Richard Lichtman, “Richard Lichtman: The Violent Disorder of Our Public Mind,” in *Truthout*, March 25, 2013. Retrieved <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/>

One of these ideologies is the myth of meritocracy, the belief that anyone can achieve whatever their heart desires if they are sufficiently skilled and motivated. This ideology serves to blame those whose opportunities for success are structurally limited even though there is ample evidence that economic disparities, racial discrimination, and other forms of structural limits are very real and have a significant impact on life opportunities. Relatedly, a Darwinian survival of the fittest ethos supports a competitive spirit that allows some of us to feel that we have every right to claim greater advantages than others.

Another ideology that is sustained is that the greatest atrocities happen “over there” where the people have not been able to secure the “democracy” that we enjoy. Following John Dewey, democracy involves the free and equal participation of each person in society in social, political, and economic life.<sup>20</sup> This definition, based on the false assumption that majority rule is always just, is fraught with complexities; Still, even a superficial notion of democracy as voting rights is unattainable when candidates can buy their way into office with their own funds, the lobbying of corporate-backed interest groups, and/or a corporate media looking out for its own capitalist interests,

Indeed we are currently living in turbulent times in the U.S. as a result of what seems to be not only greater media coverage (spawned by technological innovations such as social media and readily available video-cameras) of human rights violations against communities of color (the crimes themselves are not new), but also an apparent White supremacist arrogance and fearlessness to act with impunity toward the Other. Consider the string of unarmed Black men who were killed in 2014–15 by White police officers who did not even face indictment, including Michael Brown who was shot at least six times, Eric Garner who was choked to death even though he repeatedly warned police, “I can’t breathe,” and a 12-year-old boy, Tamir Rice, who was shot within two seconds for pointing a toy gun at police. These killings brought the communities of Ferguson and Baltimore and their allies across the country to their feet as they protested and marched demanding justice. The police response to an entrenched racial hatred amidst the pain and suffering

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item/15304-the-violent-disorder-of-our-public-mind

20 → John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Macmillan Co, 1916), 457.

of a community was to deploy military-grade gear and tear gas to control those presumed “unmanageable”<sup>21</sup> communities. Lest we believe these senseless killings a result of inadequate police training alone rather than a deep seeded racial hatred toward the Other, only a few months later, a Black community gathered in prayer at a Charleston AME Church was gunned down by a White man claiming “You are raping our women and taking over the country.”<sup>22</sup> He was invoking the common tropes against Black men and the presumed purity of White women to justify his attack against Blacks as was often done in the lynching of Black men during the Jim Crow era.

If we fail to see that the Other is not just Black, but anyone who is a member of a non-dominant group, although with different sociopolitical dimensions of repression (e.g. religion, immigration status) then we must remember the killings of three Muslim students in the North Carolina city of Chapel Hill.<sup>23</sup> The most insidious racism found in the negative stereotyping of the Other, is exemplified in Donald Trump's targeting of Mexican immigrants whom he publically labels as criminals and rapists, blatantly throwing around his white supremacist power and arrogance.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed predatory practices are institutionalized within the U.S. in ways that support the maintenance of a White supremacist capitalist order. Consider the school to prison pipeline that targets predominantly Black and Latino communities from very young ages. Also, consider the well-documented government practices (sometimes murderous) against national and international liberationist movements. A few of the most notorious activities with which the CIA and

21→ Lilia D. Monzó and Peter McLaren, “Red Love: Toward Racial, Economic and Social Justice,” in *Truthout*, Dec. 18, 2014. Retrieved <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/28072-red-love-toward-racial-economic-and-social-justice>

22→ Nick Corasaniti, Richard Pérez-Peña, and Lizette Alvarez, “Church Massacre Suspect Held as Charleston Grieves,” *New York Times*, June 18, 2015. Retrieved [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/19/us/charleston-church-shooting.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/19/us/charleston-church-shooting.html?_r=0)

23→ Jonathan M. Katz and Richard Pérez-Peña, “In Chapel Hill Shooting of 3 Muslims, a Question of Motive,” in *New York Times*, Feb. 11, 2015. Retrieved [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/12/us/muslim-student-shootings-north-carolina.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/12/us/muslim-student-shootings-north-carolina.html?_r=0)

24→ Henry Giroux, “The Racist Killing Fields in the US: The Death of Sandra Bland,” in *Truthout*, July 19, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/31945-the-racist-killing-fields-in-the-us-the-death-of-sandra-bland>

FBI have been associated (although never found guilty of) include the murders of Che Guevara, El Salvador's Archbishop Oscar Romero, and Black Panther leader Fred Hampton.<sup>25</sup> While these were very different liberation movements, they shared the commonality of fighting for the rights of peoples facing racialized subjugation in support of the White supremacist, imperialist, and capitalist order. These movements make the interrelationship between class and race quite apparent.

## CAPITAL, EMPIRE, AND EXISTENCE

Marx's historical materialism has often been attributed a class reductionism and determinism that belies his dialectical method. Although he argued that social relations of production were a key point of departure in examining social, economic, and political life because they provide the basis of life subsistence, he recognized the important internal relation between material and ideational reality.<sup>26</sup> For Marx, political economy, the exploitation of workers, and the organizing practices that could one day lead us toward a socialist alternative were directly related to the agency and moral character of human beings.<sup>27</sup> From a Marxist humanist perspective, capitalism is a totality within which ideologies, values, and beliefs are produced and these in turn continually maintain capitalist social relations and the process of exploitation that leads to accumulation.<sup>28</sup> An important outgrowth of this dialectical relation between ideational and material reality is what Erich Fromm has termed the "having mode of

25 → Michael Ratner and Michael Steven Smith, *Who Killed Che?: How the CIA Got Away with Murder* (NY: Or Books, 2011); Tom Gibb, "The Killing of Archbishop Oscar Romero Was One of the Most Notorious Crimes of the Cold War. Was the CIA to Blame?," in *The Guardian*, March 22, 2000; "The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther," Democracy Now. Retrieved [http://www.democracynow.org/2009/12/4/the\\_assassination\\_of\\_fred\\_hampton\\_how](http://www.democracynow.org/2009/12/4/the_assassination_of_fred_hampton_how)

26 → Jose Porfirio Miranda, *Marx Against the Marxists* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980) 4-7.

27 → Ibid., 152-155.

28 → Teresa Ebert, *The Task of Cultural Critique* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 195-196.

experience.”<sup>29</sup> This is a mode of experience in which all social processes are reduced to the common denominator within capitalism—a social relation based on private property—the social relation between the capitalist class who owns the means of production and the workers who produce surplus value for the capitalist class.<sup>30</sup> This is a relation of wage labor in which the workers are made dependent on the capitalist class for their very survival and are necessarily exploited and alienated. What is exchanged for wages under capitalism is not labor (this would be a direct exchange) but, rather, labor power—the potential to produce surplus value for the capitalist.<sup>31</sup> Exploitation of the worker is an inherent aspect of capitalism since production costs (wages, materials, equipment) equal only a fraction of the working day, leaving the rest of the day for the production of profits. Furthermore, only the capitalist owns the means of production, the commodities produced, and all profits from production.<sup>32</sup> Marx clarifies that “though private property appears to be the source of alienated labor, it is really its consequence [...] and later this relationship becomes reciprocal.”<sup>33</sup> While a value for personal belongings predates capitalism, it is under capitalism and the production of value that private property and continuous capital accumulation at a compound rate becomes an end in itself.<sup>34</sup>

Capitalism requires the circulation of capital. In the U.S. and all capitalist industrialized nations we experience a strategic corporate

29 → Erich Fromm, *To Have or To Be?* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 1976), 17-35.

30 → Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), Chapter 2: “Proletarians and Communists.” Retrieved <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/>

31 → Surplus value is the profit that is made after the cost of the subsistence of the worker has been recovered. It is maximized by increasing the number of hours in the working day or demanding greater production from the same amount of time.  
→ Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol I (Moscow, USSR: Progress Publishers, 1887), 557-567. Retrieved <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch16.htm>

32 → Ibid., 114.

33 → Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 80.

34 → David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 58.



campaign to make the commodity seem indispensable.<sup>35</sup> This campaign has created a *shopping mall politics* in which people go shopping as a means to assuage the alienation, insecurities, and sense of incapacity that capitalism breeds. Fromm explains:

The having orientation is characteristic of western industrial society, in which greed for money, fame, and power has become the dominant theme of life. Less alienated societies—such as medieval society, the Zuni Indians, the African tribal societies that were not affected by the ideas of “modern” progress—have their own Bashos.<sup>36</sup>

Examining the development of language, which both reflects and produces values and practices in society, Fromm points out that the having mode of experience has risen alongside the demand for capitalist private property. He notes that “to have,” indicates an expression of possession that is not common to all languages. For example, he remarks that in Hebrew, “it is to me” is the closest translation and that the expression is absent in societies built around “functional property” (for use-only). Further he states that the use of “I have” has grown in usage since the inception of capitalist production. For example, an idea is now conceived of as a possession, “as in I have an idea.” However, the reverse development has not occurred.<sup>37</sup>

Indeed, the value for individual property and *having* has come to define the very ways in which we think of almost all aspects of our world. Our worth as individuals has become tied to what and how much we have and in comparison to what others can claim to have. Thus, we live our lives constantly seeking to amass private property, particularly wealth and the things that society has come to consider, or made to be, “necessary”—a bigger house, a new car, and to develop fetishes that exploit our purchasing power. Some psychologists recognize that this need for more, bigger, and grander *things* has

35 → William Leach, *Land of Desire* (Toronto, Canada: Vintage Books, 1994), xiii

36 → Ibid., 16-17. Fromm's claim that non-western industrial societies have their own “Bashos” is a reference to Matsuo Basho who was a 17th century Japanese poet and writer.

37 → Ibid., 16-17.

become an epidemic wherein people are buying beyond what they can afford as a means to assuage personal fears that who we are is not worthy enough in the eyes of society. Rarely do we deny or critique the notion that this hoarding mentality and desire for never ending acquisition is not an individual right. In Fromm's words:<sup>38</sup>

To acquire, to own, and to make a profit are the sacred inalienable rights of the individual in the industrial society. What the sources of property are does not matter; nor does possession impose any obligations on the property owners. The principle is: "Where and how my property was acquired or what I do with it is nobody's business but my own; as long as I do not violate the law, my right is unrestricted and absolute.

This kind of property may be called *private* property [from Latin *privare*, "to deprive of"] because the person or persons who own it are its sole masters, with full powers to deprive others of its use or enjoyment.

Together, the demand for commodities to keep capital circulating and our developed "need" for possessions has come to mean that almost everything is commodified. Processes, defined as internally or externally mediated social activity,<sup>39</sup> are increasingly reified into things that can be marketed and sold as individual possessions, including ideas, education, and relationships (e.g. with a spouse). For example, consider the way we think about education as a something acquired once we graduate with a diploma, or the way marriage becomes a contract, where one spouse's love becomes a possession of the other. This reification of processes and people into things that can be possessed is especially true with respect to women and people of color, whose exploitation has been especially acute as commodities.

Of course those who lack the "right" possessions and enough of them are believed "unsuccessful" to others and to themselves. Thus people work harder and harder to amass possessions to buffer against potential losses, which creates more surplus value for the capitalist. Extending this analysis to a national level, many people

38 → Ibid., 57.

39 → Lev S. Vygotsky, *L. S. Vygotsky, Collected works Vol. I.* (R. Rieber & A. Carton, Eds; N. Minick, Trans.). (New York: Plenum, 1987/1934).

believe that we must continue to amass greater power by expanding our global reach through the conquest of other nations. Like the individual who fears the loss of her identity *sans* her things, the people too fear the loss of security that being the most powerful nation in the world ensures, thus we readily support greater military funding, international intelligence-gathering, and unjustified wars. An important point that Fromm's analysis makes clear is that in the having mode of existence or under capitalism, war is not, as we are often told, something we wage to secure peace or for our own protection, but rather is a perpetual state within which we sometimes take short respites of peace in order to recharge and plan our next conquest and plunder.<sup>40</sup> While wars have been waged since the beginning of time, Henry Giroux points out that we are now living "in a time of permanent war."<sup>41</sup>

A critical point that must not be lost in this discussion is that we do not condemn consumption of things *per se*, but rather the reification and commodification of human beings and processes. It is not our purchasing habits that must be eradicated but the process of production, which is based on private property and which produces ideologies and desires to amass things. Human exploitation, alienation, and suffering begin in the process of production. My goal here is to encourage us to think critically about the values that a capitalist society breeds, and how we can begin to recognize these as the pillars that hold up the structure of our society.

Fromm argues for a more ethical mode of experience—the *mode of being*. In this mode, *having* is limited to actual things, rather than processes, people, land (that which ought not to be thought of as things to be sold for a profit), and only to the extent that these are necessary for subsistence, including those things that allow us to be creative beings and to develop individually and for the good of society. These might include food, shelter, clothing, musical instruments, and books. In the mode of being there is no need to fear loss because most things are understood as processes that come and go rather than static things that belong to one person or another. The notion

40 → Fromm, *To have or to be*, 92.

41 → Henry Giroux, "Hope in a Time of Permanent War," in *Truthout*, Sept. 4, 2013. Retrieved <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/18578-hope-in-a-time-of-permanent-war#>

of monitoring what someone has or doesn't have, or who has more or less, is not important in this mode of being because people, and I would add other living things, have intrinsic worth, and are valued simply because they exist in the world—rather being valued in relation to what or who they own.

Further, Fromm demonstrates that the ideas for interdependence and fellowship, against the having mode, can be found in the spiritual teachings of Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Karl Marx.

The Buddha teaches that in order to arrive at the highest stage of human development, we must not crave possessions. Jesus teaches, "For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself or be cast away?" (Luke 9: 24-25). Master Eckhart taught that to have nothing and make oneself open and "empty," not to let one's ego stand in one's way, is the condition for achieving spiritual wealth and strength. Marx taught that luxury is as much a vice as poverty and that our goal should be to *be* much, not to have much.<sup>42</sup>

Being refers to more than identity but rather to existence. *To be* connotes that one exists in a particular way and in a particular historical moment and focuses value on human beings, relationships, and personal and collective development for the good of society, rather than individual competition for the purposes of capital accumulation. In the being mode, knowledge is not something that we acquire but an active process of knowing *more deeply* and it involves an understanding of the limits of our ability to know something fully. Knowing in the being mode, according to Fromm, is the "shattering of illusions" created by a common sense that is socially constructed: "Knowing means to see reality in its nakedness."<sup>43</sup> In my own interpretation, in the being mode we strip away the ideological lies that surround us to support the hegemonic order and are able to recognize the reality of

42 → Fromm, *To Have or To Be*, 3-4.

43 → Ibid., 28.

our oppression. This oppression is understood and experienced differently among the workers of the world and deeply influenced by our positions as people of color, as women and women of color, as members of the LGBTQ community, as Muslims, and as other marginalized groups. Fromm argues that the *being mode* refers to a process of *becoming*, which implies constant change and movement and the recognition that we are on a continual path of learning and development.

An important critique of this theory of becoming, however, is that this analysis of *becoming* has been used as an instrument of colonization wherein indigenous communities have been marked as sub-human savages who have yet to *become* a civilized people on par with the European rational and objective true human being.<sup>44</sup> This argument is a critically important one stemming from an analysis of the concept of humanity and its Western colonial roots. However, the critique is based on a faulty assumption that development is necessarily linear and singular. Neither Marx nor Fromm claimed a linear, singular or deterministic path to development. I deal with this misconception in the next parts of the paper.

## POSITIONED RATIONALITY, COLONIALITY, AND THE MAKING OF THE OTHER

The having mode of existence can be traced as far back as the colonial period when the North conquered the South to extract riches and slave labor from indigenous communities. In this mercantilist period, the theft and exploitation of indigenous communities from which capitalism spawned was already present. That the indigenous were characterized as “Other” is of critical importance. According to decolonial scholars<sup>45</sup> *el poder colonial* was established by the White, heterosexual, Christian men who landed in the Americas and forcefully normalized their own Western episteme as the objective and rational

44 → López, “The Empire of the Written Word,” 10-17.

45 → The leading figure of the decolonial school is Enrique Dussel. Prominent decolonial scholars who have pushed his ideas further include Ramón Grosfoguel, Walter Mignñolo, and Anibal Quijano.

essence of what it means to be human.<sup>46</sup> This “thinking” human being was said to perceive reality objectively and detached from his self-interests but was established in the White man’s image and thus served to mark the indigenous peoples as subhuman, incredulously justifying the violent history of genocide and *epistemicide* brought about by the invasion and colonization of the Americas.<sup>47</sup> Specifically, the *ego cogito* (I think therefore, I am) that constitutes Descartes’ modernity replaced the prior Christian dominant perspective of the West with a secular but still God-like, objective and monolithic politics of knowledge, attributing this episteme to the White man. This mind over matter ideology discredited the body politics and our felt emotions from rationality and dissociated the geopolitical positioning and material realities of the subject as crucial to the process of knowing. In this way the knowledges of the indigenous communities who suffered at the hands of the conquistadores was delegitimized and made to be irrational and self-serving in an unbelievable twist of reality wherein the actual self-serving interests of the conquistadores for capital were concealed as objective and “natural.”<sup>48</sup>

Ramon Grosfoguel argues that violence was foundational to establishing the Cartesian logic of Western epistemology. Specifically, the ideology of the *ego cogito* (I think, therefore I am) was made possible by the historically specific conditions created by the *ego conquiro* (I conquer, therefore I am) and the *ego exterminus* (I exterminate you, therefore I am). The *ego conquiro* was the foundation upon which the “Imperial Being” developed the sense that to conquer was a “natural” aspect of being human and, thus, legitimized colonial expansion as the primary purpose for the European invasion of the Americas. The *ego extermino* became the logic for genocide and *epistemicide* that mediated the “I conquer” with the “I think” and, therefore, defined

46 → Walter D. Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 7–8 (2009): 174.

47 → Ramón Grosfoguel, “The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the long 16th century,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* XI, no. 1 (2013): 77.

48 → Enrique Dussel, “Anti-Meditaciones Cartesianas: Sobre el Origen del Anti-Discurso Filosófico de la Modernidad,” *Tabula Rasa* 9 (2008): 162-167.

what was rational with the knowledges and ways of being of the White, heterosexual, and Christian conquistadores. Grosfoguel notes the four *genocides/epistemicides* of the 16th century which were carried out

- 01 Against Muslims and Jews in the conquest of Al-Andalus in the name of “purity of blood.”
- 02 Against indigenous peoples first in the Americas and then in Asia.
- 03 Against African people with the captive trade and their enslavement in the Americas.
- 04 Against women who practiced and transmitted Indo-European knowledge in Europe burned alive accused of being witches.<sup>49</sup>

Clearly the material conditions that lay the foundation for the monstrous greed that exists, and the Western project that justifies it, are dialectically related. As such any attempt to challenge capitalism, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression must be conjoined. In my view, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression will not cease to exist as long as capitalism continues to churn. Capitalism needs to maintain a highly exploited class of workers because it serves the ideological function of justifying oppression. At the same time capitalism will not cease to exist as long as people continue to remain divided on ideological and epistemological grounds that keep them from uniting against capital. A conjoined effort is needed. The negation of the negation takes the dialectic into account and suggests a pedagogy of liberation.

## THE NEGATION OF THE NEGATION: LOOKING TO THE SOUTH

Walter Dignolo has argued that to speak (know, act) from the geopolitical position of the South requires that we commit “epistemic disobedience.”<sup>50</sup> It requires that we interrogate the “naturalness”

49 → Grosfoguel, “The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities,” 77.

50 → Dignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom,” 163.

and “superiority” of Western knowledges and their claim to humanity. It requires that we begin to listen to, and learn from and *with* the silenced voices and ways of knowing of the colonized. However, we ought not fall prey to a similar mindset of the oppressor and claim indigenous and marginalized knowledges superior to a Western episteme nor assume that a geopolitical positioning of the South always embeds indigenous or other suppressed knowledges. The idea is to create the conditions that allow for the recovery of, and value for, indigenous and other marginalized epistemologies, and to legitimize them such that they may join the ranks of Western knowledges and can speak with and to them, interrogating and dismissing (what/who is interrogated/dismissed?)when appropriate. It is important to recognize that non-Western knowledges can refer more broadly to what Antonia Darder refers to as “border intellectuals:” indigenous groups, racialized groups, women, and radical critical scholars (including White men) who interrogate Western knowledges and seek to theorize about, and articulate solutions to, Western hegemony, capitalism, and other forms of oppression favored by the capitalist class.<sup>51</sup>

An important argument has been made that at the heart (lessness) of the Western epistemological campaign for wealth, power, and privilege, is the Western conception of humanity, where human beings were dissociated from other animals as having reached a more advanced state of development that marked us rational and logical, as opposed to “nonhuman” animals.<sup>52</sup> This separate categorization and distancing as well as the linear and unilateral progression to full development that it presumes became the basis for differentiating peoples. The White man was made to be fully human, whereas those who had different practices, values, and knowledges were made to be less developed, less rational, less logical, with subjective experiences, grounded in experience rather than having the ability to abstract and develop objectivity—in short, more like animals, subhuman.<sup>53</sup> This belief would then have served to justify the genocides and epistemicides that

51→ Antonia Darder, “Neoliberalism in the Academic Borderlands: An Ongoing Struggle for Equality and Human Rights,” *Educational Studies* 48, no. 5 (2012), 419.

52→ López, “The Empire of the Written Word,” 10-17.

53→ Ibid., 10-17.



were forged upon so many communities. The infantilizing of indigenous communities, based on a development model of continuous growth, thus accounted for the process of indoctrination of Christian views and Western ways of being. Lopez suggests that this narrative of development employed the concept of “*not yet*,” to create a “yearning” for the Western man for an ideal human to which they would aspire but never be able to reach.<sup>54</sup>

This is an important analysis and contribution that sheds light on the narratives that justified and brought about massive genocide and epistemicide, while also providing the impetus to begin thinking of new ways to define what and who we are – ways that recognize the value inherent in our existence as diverse life forms that are all interdependent. Marx’s dialectical approach can be quite useful in augmenting this approach. Marx argued that phenomena must be recognized in their historical specificity. His dialectical method involved understanding concepts as defined by a unity of opposites in which each was present in the other. Unlike Hegel who argued that objective reality was manifested through our thoughts and ideas, Marx believed that our concepts reflected or responded to our material conditions under capitalism. As such the internal relation between these two parts are always in tension, with one in a position of dominance over the other.<sup>55</sup> Liberation leads from the negation of the negation. The first negation negates its subjugation, and affirms itself equal worth to the dominant. This first negation however remains dependent on defining itself in relation to the object of its initial tension. The second negation disavows itself of the initial categories that had been established to define it, such that a new way of conceiving itself, on its own terms, can develop.<sup>56</sup>

Dialectics do not support a linear formation in which becoming human presumes greater linear development of “human” characteristics and leaving behind remnant “animalistic” aspects. A dialectical approach to

54 → Ibid., 31.

55 → Paula Allman, *Revolutionary Social Transformation* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1999), 61-64.

56 → Peter Hudis, “Marx Among the Muslims,” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 15, no. 4 (2004), 53-57.

the concept of humanity and what it means to be human would recognize that this concept involves a tension in the ways we define “human” and “animal.” Indeed the concept of being human exists only because we have the concept of non-human animal and vice-versa. Aspects of each of these are present in the other, such that the distinction has been purposefully made antagonistic. The first negation involves the negation of the Western definition and treatment of the non-human animal as having less value than the human animal and affirms fully it’s equal rights to that of humans within the world. However, this negation remains dependent on the original binary defined by Western dominance. The second negation disavows the initial premise upon which oppression occurs—allowing for a redefinition of what it means to exist as a life form with qualities altogether different from those that currently define human and animal as having opposite qualities under the Western paradigm. It is in the disavowal of what developed under specific material conditions of oppression that liberation ensues.

Although Fromm’s distinction between having and being fall into the trap of defining what can be in the language of capital, with the definition of being juxtaposed against having. This is a function of our inherent capitalist arrangement. That is, we can only draw upon what exists in this specific historical context but we can theorize about what can be. This is the reason for which Marx asserted that laying out a blueprint for our liberation was not possible, that it needed to be developed in the process of becoming.

Becoming, then, from a Marxist perspective is not a deterministic result of a linear progression that would presumably lead to full humanity. Becoming is an altogether new path, the result of the negation of the negation that gives us new ways of being, based on what is developed collectively in the process of asserting our liberation. It is a path defined on our own terms rather than dependent on the definitions imposed by a Eurocentric, capitalistic, male paradigm.

## ***BUEN VIVIR***

As a result of the increased poverty experienced in América Latina and cut backs across all forms of social services brought on by the neoliberal policies of the 1990s (with the exception of Cuba), América

Latina has become “the weakest link in the neoliberal chain,”<sup>57</sup> with the greatest number of left and center-left governments of any continent or major region and numerous smaller social movements growing. A pushback to the repressive regimes that endorsed neoliberalism began to take hold with the election of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela in 2001 and has been followed by other progressive regimes in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Paraguay.

Strong organized social movements, such as the Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico, are notable for their affirmation of indigenous rights and their ability to develop ideologies and policies that turn neoliberal and capitalist ideology on its head. They challenge the very foundations of what is perceived natural and inevitable, such as wealth disparities and private property and they point us toward alternatives previously considered impossible within our current world. Here, I highlight changes in the Andean region and the concept of *buen vivir*.

*Buen vivir* (or *vivir bien* as used in Bolivia) is a Spanish translation for a set of values and/or practices of the indigenous peoples of the Andean region in South America. The Aymara people refer to this concept as *suma qamaña*; the Quechua, *sumak kawsay*; the Amazonian groups of Peru, *ametsa asaiki*; and the Guaraní, *ñandereko*.<sup>58</sup> It is often translated into English as “the good life.” However, the indigenous version of this concept is significantly different from the Western one that emphasizes affluence. The central principles of *buen vivir* include:

- A A belief that human beings are only one part of a larger organic world that includes other animals, plants, and the Earth that we live in.
- B The recognition that all living things are interdependent and that we all have the social responsibility to care for one another.
- C Pluriculturalism, which recognizes and values different cultures and knowledges of all peoples and seeks

57 → Emir Sader, “The Weakest Link: Neoliberalism in Latin America” in *New Left Review* 52, July & Aug. (2008), 6.

58 → Admin En, “Notes for the Debate: Vivir Bien/Buen Vivir,” in *Systemic Alternatives*, July 30, 2014. Retrieved <http://systemicalternatives.org/2014/07/30/1099>

to decolonize against Euro-American imperialism and Western epistemology.

- D Equilibrium or harmony between the various aspects of one's life, including our social, economic, and spiritual needs.
- E A new approach to development that recognizes what is sufficient for the good life and a belief that everyone has the right to have their needs met and to live with dignity. At a national level this value translates as sustainability rather than a continual growth development model.<sup>59</sup>

In Bolivia and Ecuador, aspects of these central elements have been incorporated into these countries respective constitutions. These countries have high percentages of indigenous populations who have been able to mobilize sufficiently to bring to power leaders who are particularly interested in progressive social change.<sup>60</sup> However, each of the countries seem to emphasize different aspects of *buen vivir* and each has developed different policies.

In Bolivia, Presidente Evo Morales has declared a strong alliance between government and social movements and enjoyed mass support for his democratic approach. Here the pluricultural principle is emphasized.<sup>61</sup> The Bolivian constitution recognizes 36 different indigenous languages, most of which are spoken by fairly small groups of people. Presidente Morales' most notable achievement is the country's economic redistribution strategy that includes a bonds program, "Programa de Bonos de Desarrollo Humano," that distributes cash bonds to the neediest families, ranging from approximately \$30 to \$350 per year. The strategy also includes greater access to education and healthcare. Although these amounts seem small, these can be very helpful to families that sometimes only earn a few dollars a day. Approximately 30 percent of Bolivians benefited from this program in 2011.<sup>62</sup>

59 → Ibid.

60 → It is important to note that there is also strong indigenous opposition to the Governments in the Andean region.

61 → Lorenza Fontana, "Plurinational Citizenship in the Making," in *Politics in Spires*, Feb. 19, 2015. Retrieved <http://politicsinspires.org/plurinational-citizenship-making/>

62 → Sara Shahriari, "Bolivia's Economy Grows, but Challenges Still Persist," in *Indian*

However, the transition to a philosophy of *vivir bien* in Bolivia is only in its infancy and thus faces significant inconsistency and internal strife. The diversity of Bolivia and the fact that many Bolivians identify by city, profession, peasant or other organizations, presents the problem that these groups sometimes have different interests and different ideas about what *vivir bien* means. Furthermore, although the Bolivian constitution includes an entity for the protection of “Mother Earth,” it also supports Western development models of growth, such as the industrialization and commercialization of natural resources. Obviously the extractive industry is a complete contradiction to the rights of Mother Earth.<sup>63</sup>

In Ecuador, *buen vivir* has taken the form of a set of rights, including rights to water and food, rights to housing, health, education, rights to work and to protest, and the rights of nature. Unlike President Evo Morales of Bolivia, President Rafael Correa critiques the lack of organization and effectiveness of grassroots organizations and has himself been critiqued for “making a citizen’s revolution without citizen participation.”<sup>64</sup> However, he had enormous support from a wide range of groups when he was first voted in to office and has fought for, and made important social policy changes, in support of the people.<sup>65</sup> An important aspect of Ecuador’s constitution is that it recognizes “diverse families” and speaks to women’s rights, in line with Presidente Correa’s claim that his citizen’s revolution would have “a woman’s face.”<sup>66</sup> Indeed new legislation regarding women’s rights, gender identity, and homosexuality has been introduced. However, Correa himself has publicly come out against abortion rights and

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Country Today Media Network, May 10, 2012. <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2012/05/10/bolivias-economy-grows-challenges-still-persist-111906>

63 → Ibid.

64 → Thomas Fatheuer, *Buen Vivir: A Brief Introduction to Latin America’s New Concepts for the Good Life and the Rights of Nature*. (Berlin, Germany: Heinrich Boll Foundation, 2011), 27. Retrieved [https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/endf\\_buen\\_vivir\\_engl.pdf](https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/endf_buen_vivir_engl.pdf)

65 → Ibid.

66 → Ami Lind, “Revolution with a Woman’s Face? Family Norms, Constitutional Reform, and the Politics of Redistribution in Post-Neoliberal Ecuador,” *Rethinking Marxism* 24, no. 4 (2012), 536.

same-sex marriage. These contradictions undermine the possibilities for gender equality that come out of buen vivir, with its focus on Mother Earth and life.<sup>67</sup> In a similar vein as the Bolivian government, although the constitution upholds the rights of nature, the implementation of these rights in a country whose economic development has been based on the extraction and sale of natural resources is fraught with difficulties amplified by both internal and external pressures. For example, indigenous groups have not been given a say in development projects that extract oil and other resources from their lands and that dramatically affect their lands and ecosystems. In addition, although the constitution grants the right to protests, speaking out against the state or mining has been criminalized.<sup>68</sup>

Despite these challenges, buen vivir has the potential to disrupt and challenge Western superiority, coloniality, capitalism, and the having mode of existence. It champions the right of every life form to co-exist, recognizing that all life forms are interdependent. It functions in some ways as the negation of the negation in that not only does it negate the object of critique but as totality for a new philosophy of existence seems to be a new creation, rooted in indigenous thought but open to being shaped by all those living it in the moment. (this claim deserves further development, seems very important). However, as we consider the various central elements of buen vivir, perhaps as we seek the language with which to describe it, we cannot help but notice that many aspects are steeped in the old categories of development and therefore remain at the stage of the first negation.

As evidenced above, state intervention (constitutional rights) is no guarantee that policies (which policies) will automatically align, and this points to both internal and external conflicts that affect implementation and interpretation of buen vivir. Nonetheless, we can perceive the inclusion of buen vivir into these constitutions as a first and very important step in challenging neoliberalism and in creating

67 → Ibid., 537-541.

68 → Cecilia Chérrez, "Ecuador: Criminalization of the Social Protest in Times of the 'Citizen Revolution'", in *Upside Down World*, Sept. 27, 2011. Retrieved <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/ecuador-archives-49/3234-ecuador-criminalization-of-the-social-protest-in-times-of-the-citizen-revolution>

an alternative to capitalism. Indeed, both the governments of Ecuador and Bolivia publicly claim to be anti-capitalist and moving towards an alternative. Scholars and activists from all over the world are watching closely to learn how *buen vivir* plays out in future policy.

## REVOLUTIONARY CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND TEACHING AS AN ACT OF FREEDOM

Of critical significance, especially in hypercapitalist countries such as the U.S. and other highly industrialized nations, is to devise ways in which to recover subaltern knowledges that have either been exterminated or hidden by years of hegemonic rule and the illusion of benevolent and democratic institutions. This is where we as teachers and educators step in—this is our task in the changing of common sense—to create the conditions in our schools and in our classrooms that set the stage for creating new values and a new vision for the world. Paulo Freire argued that teaching was an act of freedom and an act of love. Following Freire, gaining a critical clarity about the conditions that define our existence as oppressed and oppressors is the first step in developing a revolutionary praxis, acting in accord with our growing understandings and demanding our liberation.<sup>69</sup> Revolutionary Critical pedagogues<sup>70</sup> point to a curriculum that interrogates and challenges capitalist social relations and the numerous antagonisms that it breeds, including racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, etc. Complicit with the capitalist mode of production is the Western epistemic dominance that has both justified and perpetuated the coloniality of power matrix that defined the White, heterosexual male as “human” and all Others as sub-human. Thus, an important first step in challenging the growth and accumulation imperatives of capitalism is to question the given nature of the way our society and our lives are structured and to conceive of new ways of engaging in the world. Dussel’s *La Pedagogía Latinoamericana*

69 → Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (New York: Continuum, 1970), 70-71.

70 → Save the work of Paula Allman, Henry Giroux, and Peter McLaren.

aligns well with the Marxist revolutionary approach that I have discussed in this paper. Dussel takes an analectic approach, as opposed to Marx's dialectical approach (discussed above), in which the teacher (the oppressor in the teacher/student relation), "*siendo conducido por la revelación de discípulo*" (having been led by the revelation of the disciple) steps outside the system and becomes the Other who leads the path to liberation.<sup>71</sup> Dussel reaches the same Hegelian conclusion that new categories must be created so that we are not confined to the language and structures of the oppressors and can develop instead concepts for engaging (engaging what?) that are not in contrast to existing ones (the "ones" refers to what?) but rather are based upon "*lo nuevo, lo que falta*" (what is new, what is missing).<sup>72</sup> Dussel argues that *lo pedagógico* (the pedagogical) refers not just to teaching or what is "discovered" in that process but to "*lo que se recibe de otro*" (what is received from the Other) in intimate, "*cara a cara*" (face to face) interaction.<sup>73</sup>

A revolutionary critical pedagogy also asks us to teach with our hearts—to love our students, seeing them as bounties of strength, courage, and possibility. When we really see them this way, our teaching will necessarily be transformed into contexts for critical reflection, epistemic diversity, and solidarity—all of which are necessary for our students to see themselves as the change agents they can be.

An important aspect of a critical pedagogy is to interrogate the foundations of our education system and to recognize and transform its hegemonic role. This is the fundamental task for the critical teachers who will bring up the next generation of leaders in our world. An important question we need to ask ourselves as educators is whether we wish to prepare students to succeed in an unethical world where our vision extends only as far as our own self-interests, or shall we dare to teach our students to work diligently to transform the world into a place that is socially just and in which we recognize

71→ Enrique Dussel, *La Pedagogía Latinoamericana* (Bogota, Colombia: Editorial Nueva America, 1980), 53. Translations of Dussel's work are my own.

72→ Ibid.

73→ Ibid., 11.



our interdependence and learn to love and care for one another and for all life forms. I would hope that as critical educators we would want nothing less. ■

# ZAPATISMO HOY

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WORKSHOP TOOK PLACE

March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 1:30 p.m.

ORIGINAL TITLE

Reports from the Escuelita:

A discussion of the Zapatistas' Epistemology

This essay describes the Zapatistas' self-transformation from being an army to becoming a vast experiment in living as much as possible autonomously, outside the sway of state and market. This epistemological effort has led to thousands of trials and errors as well as the daily testing of the principles developed in the experiences of "war" Zapatismo and in the five hundred years of indigenous resistance. My aim is to inform the reader about the remarkable intellectual and pedagogical work being done on a mass basis in Zapatista territory.

## 01 THE STRENGTH AND LIMITS OF THE EZLN

In order to understand the present situation (achievements and problematics) of the Zapatistas we must remember their origin. The Zapatistas first appeared to the world as an "army"—that is indisputable—but often it is forgotten what the Zapatistas understood an army to be. It is worth going back to the Zapatistas' *Declaration of War* (a document distributed by the EZLN on January 1, 1994), where there is a commitment to refuse the status of a guerilla entity, i.e., an irregular armed band that claims no control over the actions of its compartments, that goes into battle without uniforms, that kills its prisoners, and that lives on robberies, kidnappings and extortion. Choosing to be an army also includes a particular type of command structure, with the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee-General Command taking the top rank of the military decision-making.

The Zapatistas identified themselves not only as an army, but also as an army subject to the Geneva Accords: "We declare now and always that we are subject to the Geneva Accord, forming the EZLN as the fighting arm of our liberation struggle."<sup>1</sup> This is not just rhetoric; for abiding by the Geneva Accord committed and commits the

1 → Editorial Collective, *Zapatista! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1994), 50.

Zapatista Army for National Liberation to a stringent code of conduct. First and foremost, it meant/means taking responsibility for prisoners of war. The first test of this commitment happened during the revolution's early days. The Zapatistas arrested General (as well as former governor of Chiapas) Absalom Castellanos at his ranch and charged him with a variety of crimes. The Zapatista tribunal found him guilty of responsibility for horrible acts against the people of Chiapas, but instead of imprisoning him or executing him, the Zapatistas released him. Castellanos' punishment being his having to bear the knowledge that those he had harmed had given him back his life and liberty.

## 02 THE PROBLEMATIC OF QUASI-PEACE

What followed the revolutionary appearance of the Zapatistas in 1994 was ongoing insurgency warfare, sometimes hitting peaks of violence (e.g., the Mexican government's 1995 attempt to wipe out the Zapatistas militarily) as well as moments of negotiation (e.g., the San Andreas Accords) that went on until the year 2000 when the PRI's hold on electoral political power was finally broken and the PAN regime of Vicente Fox was voted in. There followed a period of quasi-peace. The Zapatista leaders were able to leave their enclaves without fear of arrest and the threat of another attempt to militarily eliminate them (as in 1995 and in the paramilitary's massacre of non-violent supporters of the Zapatistas at Acteal in December of 1997) was considerably reduced.

This major turning point in the struggle that took place in 2000 was a great victory but it also posed a political challenge to the Zapatistas. This was the problematic. The prime Zapatista organization was the EZLN, i.e., an army that had ranks as well as a General Command, the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee. The army had issued a series of Revolutionary Laws from the famous "Women's Revolutionary Law" to the less well-known ones like "the War Tax Law" and the "Revolutionary Agrarian Law." But these were presented in the form of decrees with the following explanation: "Revolutionary

Laws that will be enacted in the liberated territories in order to guarantee their revolutionary control and strengthen the bases so we can begin the process of building a new Mexico.”<sup>2</sup>

These laws were appropriate to what we might name “war Zapatismo” [similar to the period of “war communism” (1918-21) in the Soviet Union]. They constituted the revolution that would make a revolution possible.” But they can hardly be called a form of governance based upon freedom and autonomy appropriate for a territory of substantial size. For the most important legacy of the events of January 1994 was the recuperated land and the *ejidos* located in this territory that openly supported the Zapatistas.<sup>3</sup>

The geography and demography of this Zapatista realm are still something unclear to me, but it is substantial. For example, just judging the length of the arc of Zapatista ejidos from Roberto Barrios in the east to Oventic in the west is an arc of 100 miles plus. The number of ejidos in the vicinity of the arc are in the hundreds in jungle and mountains and the number of people (including children and youth in their early 20's who have lived all their lives in Zapatista territory) are in the tens of thousands.<sup>4</sup>

### 03 THE SOLUTION: GOBIERNO AUTÓNOMO

The process of beginning to create a non-military form of organization in the Zapatista territories was built upon the recognition that an army alone would not achieve what was demanded by the revolution in the first place: freedom and autonomy. There were simply too many questions simulated by pressing social forces that could not be handled by military logic. For example, with the beginning of the war in 1994 many people from other states in Mexico and from

2 → Translations of these laws can be found in Editorial Collective's *Zapatista! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1994).

3 → “Ejido” refers to non-commodified land (i.e., it cannot be bought or sold) which is common property of a family or a village; it also refers to a village.

4 → These are geographical and demographic estimates that I have made on the basis of observation over many years.

outside the country came to different towns in Zapatista territory. However, these extra-territorials brought with them money and skills that created an uneven situation with respect to money and access to resources among the Zapatista *ejidos* (villages). As Doroteo wrote in *Gobierno Autonomo I*: “So the political and military leader compañeros realized that a disequilibrium was taking place among the towns, or rather that it was not level, they realized that as much with the aid, as well as in the work that was being organized in each municipality, was not level.”<sup>5</sup>

Who or what was to decide how to deal with this situation that might lead to tremendous tensions in Zapatista territory? It could not become a matter for the General Command or the EZLN Comandante in the area. These kinds of decisions need to have “consent of the governed” as a pre-condition for their permanence. This was especially true for “economic” and “reproductive” decisions like, for example, would there be a special Zapatista money, a Zapatista bank that makes loans and a prohibition against alcohol and illegal drugs backed by punishments? But who would decide and according to what principles? These questions became clear once the immediate “existential” threat was lifted. One of the first steps to begin this vital project was in 2003 with the formation of the *Juntas de buen gobierno*. But an immediate question arose: should the members of a *junta* be paid or not? Eventually it was decided otherwise, after a lengthy debate (AGI, p. 9). Similar problems arose with the tripartite structure of representation: Ejido, Municipality, and Caracol, while questions like “Where do the *Juntas* fit in?,” “what is the civil authorities’ relation with the Army and the Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee?” remain to be worked out.

For a clear division of authority, for example, I will quote Victor:

In our *zona* Altos de Chiapas the majority of our Zapatista communities have their autonomous agent and autonomous commissions, which are the direct authorities of the community, these government

5 → *Autonomous Government I: First-Grade Textbook for the course “Freedom According to the Zapatistas,”* 8. Accessed September 1, 2014 at <http://escuelitabooks.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/first-book-available.html>

bodies are in charge of resolving the problems of the community, the autonomous commission is in charge of resolving the agrarian problems in the communities. If these government bodies do not find the solution to a problem they go to the autonomous municipality to which they belong; the autonomous authority of the municipality does everything possible to solve it, but if they cannot solve a problem they go to the *Junta de Buen Gobierno*, which is the final body of autonomous government.<sup>6</sup>

But there is no executive level like the General Command of the CCRI on the military side. There are hundreds of villages, dozens of municipalities, and five Caracols (made up of many municipalities) but no final arbiter, except the body of the whole (however that is defined).

Creating autonomous governance is hard work. For the Zapatistas must solve the fundamental problem of every revolution: who is to decide who is to decide? As Artemo writes:

We had many meetings and we made many agreements, not only was the agreement made, we saw that it is heavy work, it is not easy to do it. Why? Because we do not have a guide, we do not have a book to look at, to follow, we were working with our people in accordance with their necessities.<sup>7</sup>

This structure of governance is being developed very slowly and with many mistakes, as the Zapatistas openly admit. But it is a project that answers critiques of commons-centered politics (like David Harvey's) that point to the difficulty of "scaling them up," i.e., communal politics is o.k. for face-to-face organizations, but when they go beyond these intimate settings they breakdown. After all, the Zapatistas (both civic or military or both) have managed to preserve thousands of hectares of recuperated land for subsistence

6 → *Autonomous Government I: First-Grade Textbook for the course "Freedom According to the Zapatistas,"* 36 accessed September 1, 2014 at <http://escuelitabooks.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/first-book-available.html>

7 → *Autonomous Government I: First-Grade Textbook for the course "Freedom According to the Zapatistas,"* 44 accessed September 1, 2014 at <http://escuelitabooks.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/first-book-available.html>

agriculture and solved the problem of food, health, and education for tens of thousands of people.

The question that remains is: can the Zapatista project survive the crisis of Mexican narco- and petro-capitalism and thrive while its enemy, the *malgobierno*, disintegrates?

## 04 THE TWO HYPOTHESES

In order to answer this question, we should look to two conflicting hypotheses being tested in Chiapas today. The Mexican government officials, it seems, have largely come to believe that there is no need to directly repress the Zapatista movement because the huge economic and social forces at play in Chiapas will tempt the young to leave the Zapatista villages and their *milpas* and go to the cities of Mexico and the U.S. as they have done in the non-Zapatista regions of country. History is on their side, the Mexican government strategists think: it is just a matter of time when the Zapatista villages will be as empty as the thousands of other villages in the hinterlands of the world, without having to fire too many shots. At worst, they think perhaps, if the Zapatista villages do not disintegrate on their own, they will become closed and inward-looking places populated by the descendants of failed millenarians, like the Amish and Mennonites in the US.

There is, however, another hypothesis in the field, the Zapatista hypothesis which sees the “bad government” of Mexico rapidly disintegrating with its neoliberalism leading to the sell off of Mexico's resources (especially the petroleum reserves) and the development of a chronic civil war fought out by drug gangs with and against the biggest gang of all, the state. The peace and security the Zapatista communities’ “good government” emanate will become the pole of attraction that in time will lead to a rapid growth in their number, size, and geographical spread. The Zapatistas are clearly not concerned with all this happening tomorrow. On the contrary, the impression one gets is that their time horizon is counted in decades, but they are convinced that they are on the road.



The last year since the *Escuelita* has given strength to the Zapatista hypothesis.<sup>8</sup> The most decisive event has been the nationwide movement in response to the disappearance of the 43 students from Ayotzinapa with the connivance of the local and national police forces who “handed over” the students to a narco-gang for execution. I cannot say that the disappeared Ayotzinapa 43 have led to an increase in the number of people settling in Zapatista *ejidos*. But it is simply logical to conclude that the Zapatista critique of the murderous state has become common knowledge in Mexico and now is shared across the political spectrum (whomever one voted for). ■

8 → The Escuelita was a pedagogical experiment the Zapatistas organized three times (in the summer of 2013, in December of 2013 and January of 2014). They invited thousands of interested people to come to Chiapas to live with a family in a Zapatista village for about a week and study the theme “Freedom According to the Zapatistas” with the experts, the practitioners of “Freedom According to the Zapatistas.”

# TEACHING LATIN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY ON ITS OWN TERMS

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WORKSHOP TOOK PLACE

March 28th, 2015 at 1:30 p.m.

"[...] remind her that injustice on this land weighs heavier than elsewhere, this land, the ransom of injustice."

Chris Marker, *Description D'un Combat*

On its face, the task of putting together a new syllabus might resemble the production of an instruction manual, for student and teacher alike. The syllabus tells us what to expect, what we are to do, how things shall proceed. Yet having for the first time participated in this crucial, albeit bothersome, task, I am rather reminded of the composition of a script or a score to be performed. Even when it is left open to modification and even though it cannot possibly account for the behaviors and actions of the students (or even the teacher) at any given point, we may nonetheless say that a successful course, if nothing else, is the successful instantiation or "playing out" of the syllabus. There is a dramatic element present here, for the standard syllabus announces both its objective and the trajectory through which we, as a class, shall accomplish it, whether such an objective might be to obtain a cursory knowledge of Algebra or to gain the skills necessary to speak in public. Though the relationship between the objective and the trajectory designed to reach it might at times appear obvious, little experience is needed, as a teacher or as a student, to testify to the variety of ways in which learning can take place. Not just this relationship, but the terms themselves, "objective" and "trajectory" (and these are by no means essential categories, for any number of different terms and relationships could be analyzed in their place) open themselves up to further analysis. To have as a major objective that students gain an appreciation for the subtleties of jazz music is

to point towards much more than the rote memorization of information or the mastery of a practical skill. Similarly, the trajectory—the means through which the objective is accomplished—refers to much more than the readings we assign or the exams we design, it in fact refers to a network of procedures and constraints in which we place our students. It refers to a space, not unlike the space of the theater, designed to evoke a specific experience—and, most likely, a corresponding set of skills and/or information gained through such an *experience*—in a student. A school course is a kind of fiction, ranging from the kind of participative fiction of an interactive theater to the kind of unilateral fiction produced by Kierkegaard through the use of pseudonymously-written works, which expressed different views and varying levels of faith in order to “deceive [readers] into the truth.”

We may perhaps break down this fictional construct into four “levels”—which are also not essential categories, but mere heuristic devices—along which we could think about the network of procedures that make up a syllabus and its corresponding class/performance.

- 01 Textual. Quite simply, the texts we assign the students to read. These individual units ultimately make up the arc of the class and must be decided carefully. We must decide which authors to cover and which texts by those authors would best represent not just their ideas, but the general themes of the course.
- 02 Structural/Narrative. The arc composed through the juxtaposition of all the texts. It is here that a history is constructed (or deconstructed). Texts may follow one another chronologically or thematically or even tangentially, but inevitably, some meaning is produced, or rather, is interpretable, from any given sequence of texts. This is furthermore affected by the placement of assignments and exams within this arc, which often has the effect of separating this arc into temporal/thematic units, and which may ultimately cement or undermine the way in which these units are conceived and learned.
- 03 Administrative. The basic procedures dictating acceptable behavior and work within the confines of the class:

grade scales, seating arrangements, procedures for writing papers, etc. While these procedures and regulations would seem to be extraneous to the “content” of the course (and often are partially determined by the rules and policies of the department and university administration), they inevitably affect the way in which such content is conceived, produced, studied, and assessed, and thus may serve to support or undermine it.

- 04 Performative. The role of the teacher as it is made manifest in the class: through demeanor, body language, volume, the mode in which the class is conducted (lecture, discussion, etc.), and the very small yet very many elements which make-up student-teacher interactions. Like an actor-director, the teacher-architect need not collapse both roles into one, for “the teacher,” undeniably a performer, may only indirectly and implicitly serve the goals and objectives established by the architect of the class (by asking the “right” questions, refusing to state their own position, taking the position of the text, etc.)

Through their various intersections, these levels affect and determine each other in a variety of ways, and ultimately serve to make up the network of relationships out of which a “class” is composed. Thus, at any given level, we must ask ourselves what it is that we hope to accomplish, to evoke, to reveal, and to share, in order to determine what kind of space we hope to create and to open to our students.

But if such relationships, and thus, such decisions and commitments are arguably present in any given syllabus and corresponding class, what, then, gives the title of this text—“Teaching Latin American Philosophy on its Own Terms”—its particular weight? I must concede here at the outset that even the most traditional of philosophers could ask himself (and I use the masculine pronoun here purposively) such a question and it would in fact remain a compelling one. As with all disciplines, philosophy’s long history is rife with movements, cultural shifts, and re-definitions. In the most traditional terms, to ask oneself how to teach philosophy on its own terms is nothing less than to ask what, amongst the historical sediments that have accrued to

the term “philosophy,” is its real essence: what does wisdom tell us about the way in which we ought to groom its lovers?

Yet here we find the solace of the philosophers. Philosophy is not lacking in validation—even despite its increasing uselessness in the contemporary American education system—and to ask the question of its essence is to wade through the various histories, methodologies, and definitions offered to and by philosophy and to assent to those deemed most fitting to it—certainly not an easy process, but a viable one nonetheless. To ask of Latin American Philosophy what it would mean to teach it on its own terms, on the contrary, is to contend with its inherent resistance to such a question. The product of centuries of still-ongoing violence—physical, psychological, intellectual, economic violence—Latin American Philosophy, bastardized yet still dependent, cannot help but struggle with the question of its identity, which has both obsessed and eluded it throughout its history. To “do” Latin American Philosophy is, first and foremost and paradoxically, to question the possibility of its existence and to hear the truth that it speaks is always to forget, for an ecstatic instant, that it speaks in a language imposed upon it and with words never intended for such uses.

Here a quick clarification is in order. Though common perceptions and attitudes in the U.S. regarding the Latin American continent would likely (and, in my personal case, even despite growing up in South American, actually *did*) prevent us from imagining it, traditional European philosophy is in no way absent in Latin American schools and universities. (In Bogota, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, and other cities, I was surprised—and furthermore surprised at my surprise—to find cheap editions of texts by Descartes, Diderot, and Foucault being sold by regular newspaper stands and even by street salespeople, something I’ve hardly even encountered in New York City). There is no shortage of Latin American philosophers studying and writing about logic, Aquinas, Kant, and many others. This, by the simplest and clearest definitions, ought to be rightfully regarded as Latin American Philosophy—and in an increasingly globalized academic environment, the fact of its being Latin American need not be seen as a definitive fact about its constitutive thinkers and their work. In other words, the use of the term “Latin American” is here used (as far as it can be done) transparently, which is to say that it denotes only what it appears to: Latin American Philosophy is philosophy taking place in Latin America.

Yet this is certainly not the troubled, self-alienated and self-alienating philosophy being described above. This philosophy, which has not yet taken its own validity and identity for granted, is one for which the denotation “Latin American” is the theme and object of study. It is a philosophy for which being “Latin American” is an issue, and one which is furthermore at odds with being “philosophy.” Each of the two terms cancels and repels and overtakes the other. It is this philosophy, which cannot truly be subsumed under any general heading of scholarship (Medieval Studies, Kant studies, etc.), that I have and will continue to refer to here as Latin American Philosophy.

How, then, must the pedagogical drama of Latin American Philosophy, in the sense just clarified, play out? What secret essence does the playing out of the syllabus evoke and reveal in this case? Here the vertigo of responsibility makes itself felt. Here, at this juncture, I found only the elements of fiction, the stories, the constructions, the masks, the performances, yet no clear essence to reveal through them. Certainly—though not very long ago, this was hardly a certainty—there are dominant figures, texts, and currents in Latin American Philosophy: Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz’s “Reply to Sor Filotea,” Bolivar’s Jamaica Letter, De Las Casas’ testimony, Rodo’s *Ariel*, and many more. Yet within the context of U.S. academic philosophy, these texts are hardly, if at all, recognized as what constitutes proper philosophy, let alone as foundational texts for any philosophical discipline. If responsibility strongly manifests itself here, it is precisely because the slowly-dissipating obscurity of Latin American Philosophy affords a great and perhaps overwhelming sense of freedom, with no buttressing to be found in a concrete canon or student expectations. In search of an Archimedean point, I found only a collection of contradictory, fragmentary pursuits of an identity and a purpose, which succeed, interrupt, and undermine each other.

This, ultimately, is our heritage, a mestizo philosophy for a mestizo people. We have inherited a non-history, a peripheral history, of violence, of injustice, of disunity. An illegitimate history that is yet to be entirely unearthed. At its core—or precisely because it lacks a core, a center, and an essence—Latin American Philosophy is problematic. Thus, it calls upon us to teach it *problematically*. Beyond our students, our departments, and our own sense of self, the responsibility that strikes us at this

moment is a responsibility towards this non-history and the multiplicity of views, of voices, and more importantly of voiceless victims, which irreconcilably make it up.

How can we conceive of this responsibility more practically? Like any art, teaching is an organic, complex, multi-faceted process and to presume to speak about *what* one ought to do would be to reduce it to a mere mechanistic method. Having delineated four general levels along which to think about teaching, I will conclude by sharing three major temptations that may arise—or, in my case, that *did* arise—as one approaches this task. They are decidedly the temptations of Philosophy in its most traditional form, which, following its own conatus, will absorb and resolve the tension present in the term “Latin American Philosophy,” turning it into a transparent heading that merely denotes a geographical location.

- 01 First, one may feel—as I felt—the temptation to *utilize* Latin American Philosophy. By this, I mean the attempt to make Latin American Philosophy useful, for oneself and for students, within the context of philosophy as traditionally conceived in the academic landscape of the U.S. Thus, one may feel tempted to make visible the connections between Latin American texts and their various traditional European influences; one may in fact feel tempted to anchor a course in these connections, thus conceiving of Latin American Philosophy as an “off-shoot” of European philosophy, culturally different but ultimately cut from the same cloth. The hoped-for result, of course, is to make Latin American Philosophy *relevant* to students who may otherwise see it as un-philosophical or as simply too distinct from their research interests to invest in it. Words like “utility” and “investment” make obvious the *economical* nature of this issue, which is present all the way from the incoming freshman to the tenured professor: everything, all uses of time, space, and effort, must be materially productive. Every class and text must contribute towards an internship or graduate school, must serve a potential AOC (an academic’s



area of competence), must yield a few articles. Yet this economy must be resisted and criticized. To accommodate Latin American Philosophy within the larger history of European philosophy is to hide the many differences between the two, and furthermore to maintain the former's subordination to the latter in the guise of validation.

- 02 One may feel the temptation to *eschatologize* Latin American Philosophy. It is all too easy to see something like a history of Latin American Philosophy—causal, linear, and accessible—and furthermore to see this history as progressing towards a goal: liberation, individuality, independence, to name a few possibilities. To do so, however, would be precisely to validate the countless acts of violence and injustice of which Latin American Philosophy is a testimony; all eschatologies and all totalities, by their very logic, subordinate the particular, the individual, and the instant to the universal, the mass, and the (eternal) end. We must not be so blind as to deny that victories have been achieved and that obstacles have been surmounted, yet these are always accomplished piecemeal and are often seen only retrospectively, having arisen through a series of accidents, coincidences, and collisions rather than an active historical process moving towards a definitive goal.
- 03 Finally, we may feel the temptation to *canonize* within Latin American Philosophy. As stated above, there are certainly select texts which may be considered definitive for the study of Latin American history and Latin American Philosophy. These texts should certainly be translated, taught, and made easily accessible to students. The only harm, then, is in contributing to the slow formation and desiccation of something like a “definitive” and canonical history of Latin American Philosophy. In prioritizing specific texts and retroactively building a history around them, literary and academic canons serve to simplify both the texts and the discipline surrounding them. To accept the canonical version of the history of philosophy traditionally taught in an American university

is to remove the challenge of having to read a variety of media and genres from a variety of points of views, places, and eras so as to *construct* an intelligible, practical, and fair system of reference for a discipline, and instead to mount the fiction as truth—one in which Latin America, for example, did not exist until 1492 and, much like Africa, has hardly contributed to the linear legacy of philosophy and human knowledge. Thus, we must continue to read, to translate, to make known and to make accessible the many texts that make up Latin American Philosophy. We must include tangents and peripheries and miscellanea, and we must preserve the freshness and the fecundity of even the most traditional texts in our syllabi.

But are these temptations not just as prevalent when we teach any other philosophy class, and are they not just as destructive there? Certainly. Yet the stakes inevitably appear to be higher for the teaching of Latin American Philosophy, both because to teach it as exclusively, as dominantly, and uncreatively as philosophy is traditionally taught seems all the more unjust, and, more importantly, because it might not be too late to do justice to Latin American Philosophy. ■



EPILOGUE

# WHAT IS LATIN AMERICAN IN LATIN AMERICAN POST-NEOLIBERAL PHILOSOPHIES OF EDUCATION?

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A few years ago, I volunteered to chair the Latin America Special Interest Group for the Comparative and International Education Society. My idea, like that of other people involved in the SIG, was to carve out a space for Latin American scholars to commune, share ideas and approaches, and become more visible in the American academic scene. However, as soon as I began my term, I was faced with the central question grounding the existence of the SIG: Is there something beyond geographic location that brings us together? What ties me, a post-foundational curriculum studies scholar who happens to be from Argentina, to a policy maker studying indigenous universities in Mexico, to a post-positivist sociologist looking at class-based differences in high school examinations across the Caribbean? The answer at the time led me to distance myself from such geography-based groups, and form instead one grounded on theoretical affinities. But the question still haunts me, and I believe it haunts this issue of *Lápiz*. What is specifically or uniquely Latin American about Latin American post-neoliberal philosophies of education? Is there even a point in searching?

As I read the contributions to this issue, I had troubles at first locating an anchor for that question. Let me illustrate this with one specific case. Lilia Monzó's piece presents us with a paradigmatic paradox: she seeks to undermine Western thought by using a Marxist

frame to issue a call for critical pedagogy, and anchoring hope in the concept of *Buen vivir*. This is the trap that encapsulates the issue at hand, as Marxism is in fact one of the foremost framing devices we inherited from specific strands within European Enlightenment.

Orlando Hernández, on the other hand, seeks to save us from the 'Big Bad West' by rescuing a Latin American historical figure from obscurity. His narrative about Eugenio María de Hostos is engaging and powerful in its attention to detail and its call not to be swept by the latest trends, opting instead for a search of the intellectual wealth within Latin America's rich history. Hostos emerges from Hernández's writing as a true humanist, a constructivist pedagogue, and a Latin American cosmopolitan. That is, as a (western) man of the Enlightenment. Not only that, but the very tradition that Hernández draws from and needs is a system of thought foundational to the West. The idea of a linear timeline, in which the past serves as inspiration for the present, the notion of progressivist salvation inherent in it, and the role of the scholar as agent of change are all ways of thinking about the world and ourselves that would be unthinkable without the West.

The issue here, illustrated most clearly by the two texts discussed above, is related to two deeply interrelated problematics. The first one was famously termed by Michel Foucault the "blackmail of the Enlightenment."<sup>1</sup> Foucault responded to critics that accused him of being against the Enlightenment—and thus against reason—by explaining that one cannot be for or against western Enlightenment thought. Any critique of the Enlightenment is necessarily grounded on the critical tools given to us... by the Enlightenment. Western Enlightenment thought contains within it its own critique (by introducing, for example, the notion of the human being as agent of change—a change that could potentially be critical of the Enlightenment—, of an uncertain future that is in our hands, by creating the notion of freedom<sup>2</sup> we require to be critical). This is not, by any means, a conservative cry

1→ Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" In *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 32–50.

2→ Nikolas S. Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

about the impossibility of being *truly* critical. It is a strong statement, however, about the impossibility of stepping completely outside the power-knowledge relations that have constituted us, but it is also a call to embrace the critical, contradictory, paradoxical potential of Western thought, perhaps even to undermine itself, but always from within.

The other problematic, perhaps even more relevant to Lápiz's readers and to the articles comprising this issue, is that Latin America itself is a construct of western colonial thought. It is there in the name we use for it, *Latin*, *Latino*, the language (and system of thought) of the colonizer. *Lxs hermanxs latinoamericanxs*, *el continente unido*, even its open veins, are all necessarily an outcome of the ways in which Latin America was conceived as a product of colonial relations of power, regardless of whether we call it Latin America or *Latinoamérica*. Unfortunately, the extra vowel, the accent, and the beautiful pronunciation do not erase historical contingencies.

Does this mean there is nothing to search for in terms of Latin American identity? Going back to the question opening this epilogue, does the colonial production of Latin America make impossible the location of what is specifically Latin American about Latin American post-neoliberal philosophies of education? Yes and no, and it's complicated.

I hope that at this point one thing is clear: Latin American exceptionalism cannot simply be found in some absolute origin. Since geography itself, as social science, is also a product of western thought—no surprise there—, locating a particular thinker, concept, or trend on a specific location on a map will not get us closer to the answer. But what about that which has not been *tainted* by the 'Big Bad West'? What about one of the latest objects of salvation in our field, the "indigenous forms of knowing"? Aren't they, by definition, opposed to the western episteme? In one way, they may well be, but that does not get us out of the conundrum.

The act of studying the other in its uniqueness, in its difference to ourselves, to our normal ways of knowing, is a deeply colonial project. Attempts to rescue either them or us through exposition to, and explanation of, that which is seen as *native* have embedded in them a will to knowledge (and to power) that once again cannot escape their legacy. The issue here is not that the Mapuche way of knowing is inherently western, but the ways in which it is transformed the moment we study it, write about it, and try to save ourselves through it.

Here, we run against another one of the limits of our search for what is specifically Latin American in Latin American post-neoliberal philosophies of education. Not only are Marxism, progressive historiographies, notions of agency and linear time part of the legacies of the Enlightenment, but so are the institutions that support them, namely schools and universities, together with the ways in which they produce, circulate and organize knowledge.

When thinking about how to engage in pedagogical practices that valorize, humanize, and critically engage with local ways of knowing as ways of resisting western hegemony, it is easy to forget that schools as we know them not only originated in central Europe, but they were instrumental for the colonial project. Schooling was used as a tool to simultaneously *civilize* the natives—at least those possessing a soul and thus worth saving—as well as to effect an epistemic genocide aimed at eliminating from the field of possibility other ways of understanding and acting upon the world. I can see here the astute reader pointing at my complicity with this project by stating the impossibility of escaping western Enlightenment, thus re-inscribing the epistemic injustice more than five centuries later. I would like to respond to this potential accusation on two fronts. First, by making clear that I'm not saying that it is impossible to see the world otherwise, just that it is impossible *for us*. With this statement, I recognize myself as part of the academy, and as part of a system of thought that is definitely complicit with the colonial project. However, a return to Foucault's insight might allow for something more than a simple *mea culpa*. The tradition of the university, its ways of producing, circulating, and organizing knowledge, and the role of the intellectual as its agent contains both the seeds of the colonial project, and the tools to critique it and perhaps imagine it otherwise. But this is certainly not a west vs non-west, or west vs Latin America struggle. Critical pedagogy may very well play a crucial role in furthering a social justice agenda in schooling, but not by coming from outside western traditions, but by helping expose the contradictions of western thought—and schooling—from within.

Perhaps the way of understanding the problem I am proposing here is better understood by considering some aspects of two of the texts presented in this volume.



Rodrigo Nunes's piece makes significant strides at refusing to engage in larger narratives about (post)neoliberalism as a whole, treating the post-neoliberal as a conjuncture instead. That is, he does not attempt to define neoliberalism or post-neoliberalism, but looks at the actual political forms taking place in Brazil as a response to particular policies, in specific places at specific times. In doing this, Nunes both posits these responses as uniquely Latin American, yet not necessarily in opposition to the west, or to the Enlightenment. Yet then, Nunes attempts to *learn* from this, which as I will explain later on, has its own set of related problems.

Aleksandra Perisic on the other hand, is clearly *not* proposing to solve the problem. Perisic formulates a beautiful question to frame her text: "How can we construct an education based not on what the world is, but on that which is missing in the world, in an attempt to bring it into being?" Perisic's call for the cultivation of utopian thinking, grounded on franco-phone Caribbean traditions, is never proposed as a guaranteed solution for the problems of the world (in this case, the neoliberal common sense that predetermines the given coupled with her understanding of the limits of critical thinking for actually imagining things otherwise). In fact, it cannot work as a guarantee in the way in which narratives of progress—both on the left and the right—assure us of the future to come, because of her emphasis in how Deleuze and Glissant focus on what is missing. That which is missing cannot be predetermined before the enactment of utopian thinking, thus it cannot serve merely as a promise to fulfill. That which is missing is renewed in each pedagogical act, thus it is always to come. Could it be that Perisic's work can be seen as one way of approaching the attempt to escape the western episteme without pretending to engage it from the outside? Her focus on what is missing is dependent on the critique from within, as what is missing could never be assessed from outside western/neo-liberal thought. The people that are missing and the place that is missing emerge as a Latin American pedagogical cultivation of utopian thinking, precisely because they are the people and the place that is missing from Latin America, from the perspective of Latin America. In this sense, I am not certain that it is Perisic's text that is specifically Latin American, but maybe its practice in Latin America, as long as it is fully aware of the implication of Latin America in producing the absences of that which is missing.

And that which is missing, right now, is the 43 Mexican student teachers. If there is one thing that is indisputably Latin American, it can be located in Jason Wozniak's introduction to this issue of *Lápiz*: Ayotzinapa. Not our interpretations or readings of it, not our re-presentations of it, but the singularity of the event. Sadly, Latin America does not hold exclusivity rights over oppressive actions of a state against its people, and over targeting educators or youth. However, there is a surplus to Ayotzinapa that cannot be contained by previous or future categorization. As an event, Ayotzinapa cannot be anything but Latin American. Deleuze's and Glissant's call for the people that is missing is transformed from utopian thinking to an impossible cry for justice: *¡Vivos los queremos!*

What do we do with this? How is that absence, the specificity of a horror that is impossible (both conceptually and ethically) to compare to anything else, help us figure out the purpose of a publication such as *Lápiz* and its call for Latin American post-neoliberal philosophies of education?

The first path signaled here points to the need to event-alize Latin America, as opposed to seeking commonalities and categories of analysis that are solely geographically based. Ayotzinapa forces us not to try to force it into an analysis that compares it to "similar" atrocities. Such a move, or even the attempts to *explain* Ayotzinapa by placing it within the linear history of the continent, might provide us with some kind of insight, but it will undoubtedly also generate a loss in our efforts to come to terms with the specificity of the event. Furthermore, we need to mourn the requirement to *understand*—and thus in some way control (another legacy of Enlightenment thought)—what happened, as any such attempt will inherently present violence against what took place in Guerrero. Related to this point, seeing Ayotzinapa as an event stops the endeavor to learn from it in its tracks, to use it as a building block for critical thought, as the response to the issue may not lie outside of thought after all. This is a particularly difficult point for educators to deal with. As Biesta and Lewis have pointed out,<sup>3</sup> the learning paradigm demands from us that we establish

3 → Gert Biesta, *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006); Tyson E. Lewis, *On Study: Giorgio Agamben and*

goals and objectives in advance of the pedagogical encounter, that we value planning and fulfillment of potential, and that we establish ways to assess what has been learned. I would add that the learning paradigm also expects us to categorize the learning that is taking place, be it in a particular discipline or epistemic regime, or, in this case, as part of a larger narrative about the history of a people and/or a place. To relinquish the expectation to learn from Ayotzinapa opens up a set of interrogations into the event: what does it feel like to have an aesthetic encounter with the 43? What to do with the surplus that Ayotzinapa forces into the frames we have available for thinking? In what ways are we moved to consider the people and the places that are missing? Note how while none of these questions mentions Latin America, all of them are screaming at it.

If *Lápiz* is a publication dedicated to Latin American philosophies of education, then it needs to keep the question open as to what makes something Latin American. While the answer that points to the birthplace of the scholar or to mentions of particular countries and regions may be easier to implement as a gatekeeping mechanism, my essay has attempted to point out the limitations of such approach. Instead, I suggest treating Latin America as an event, irreducible to a progressive historical narrative or to oppositions towards what it purportedly is not (i.e., the Big Bad West). The search for Latin American philosophies of education, post-neoliberal or others, will have to give up on the attempt to understand Latin America, to encompass it in the totality of thought and learning. Instead, it will have to be moved by it. ■

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*Educational Potentiality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

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*¡Patria! ¡Patria! tus hijos te juran  
exhalar en tus aras su aliento,  
si el clarín con su bélico acento  
los convoca a lidiar con valor.*

(Mexican National Anthem)

*Dame la mano y danzaremos;  
dame la mano y me amarás.  
Como una sola flor seremos,  
como una flor, y nada más.*

*El mismo verso cantaremos,  
al mismo paso bailarás.  
Como una espiga ondularemos,  
como una espiga, y nada más.*

*Te llamas Rosa y yo Esperanza;  
pero tu nombre olvidarás,  
porque seremos una danza  
en la colina, y nada más.*

(Gabriela Mistral, "Dame la mano")

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OCT-2015