

V: PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED: FREIRE MEETS BOURDIEU

Thus, in a society in which the obtaining of social privileges depends more and more closely on possession of academic credentials, the School does not only have the function of ensuring discreet succession to a bourgeois estate which can no longer be transmitted directly and openly. This privileged instrument of the bourgeois sociodicy which confers on the privileged the supreme privilege of not seeing themselves as privileged manages the more easily to convince the disinherited that they owe their scholastic and social destiny to their lack of gifts or merits, because in matters of culture absolute dispossession excludes awareness of being dispossessed.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977 [1970]: 210)

For Bourdieu education is symbolic domination par excellence. In a society where the dominant class can no longer invoke rights of blood to pass on their inheritance, nor appeal to ascetic virtue as a justification of success, academic certification becomes the vehicle to justify and transmit its domination. Education attests to and consecrates the merits and gift of the bourgeoisie, while concealing their distinction as an out-growth of their privilege, concealing it, that is, not only from themselves but also from the dominated who see themselves as undeserving because unmeritorious. *Reproduction*, which brought Bourdieu and Passeron into the public eye both in France and abroad, offers a deeply pessimistic account of the role of education in reproducing domination through simultaneously privileging and hiding the cultural capital inherited by the dominant. It is designed to dispel illusions that schooling can be a vehicle of social transformation, although that still didn't stop Bourdieu using his place in the education world to promote change.

Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the originating, most popular text of critical pedagogy, appeared in 1970, the same year that *Reproduction* was published in France. Neither makes any reference to the other, yet they embark from a similar criticism of the conventional pedagogy and its optimism about formal education's progressive contribution to social change. Freire sets out from the assumption that the dominated have internalized their oppression, and that this domination is reinforced through a "banking" system of education in which teachers pour knowledge into the supposedly empty brains of their students. There is, however, an alternative pedagogy, Freire argues, based on dialogue between teacher and taught around problems originating with the student. This requires working with students outside of formal education, bringing education to their communities, neighborhoods, and villages.

Bourdieu and Passeron may not refer to Freire by name, but they condemn all such "populist pedagogies" as misguided. Rather than challenging domination they effectively consolidate symbolic domination. Their own solution, to which they refer in the conclusion to their earlier book *The Inheritors* (1979 [1964]) but all but abandon in *Reproduction*, is "rational pedagogy" – the attempt to counteract inequalities in the cultural preparation of different classes, not by making concessions to subjugated cultures but by inculcating dominant culture into disadvantaged groups. They freely admit this to

be a utopian project in the context of class domination, but the attempt to realize it would have the benefit of unmasking the inequity of cultural preconditioning.

Here then are two antithetical approaches to the same problem – the way education reproduces domination. Where Bourdieu can only conceive of a countering of domination by creating universal access to the cultural achievements of bourgeois society, that is, by extending bourgeois civilization to all, Freire, on the other hand, sees in this the perfection of domination. He seeks an alternative pedagogy that extricates and cultivates the good sense that remains within the oppressed despite internalized oppression – a pedagogy that starts out from lived experience.

In the conversation that follows, I first examine the argument of Bourdieu and Passeron, and then construct Freire’s antithesis, before seeking a synthesis in Gramsci’s writings on education and politics. Gramsci, after all, did believe in the “common school” which would induct everyone into the dominant culture, arming potential organic intellectuals with the wherewithal to identify, elaborate and protect the good sense of the working class. In this view Freire’s separatist solution underestimates the power of ideological hegemony – a power that calls for contestation on its terrain as well as developing an alternative culture.

Schooling as Symbolic Domination

Bourdieu had a continuing interest in education throughout his life, which is perhaps fitting for a reflexive sociologist whose career was made by excelling in the academic world. The abiding fascination with education was surely triggered by his own life of upward mobility -- an anomaly his theory could not explain. His self-portrait -- a son of a rural postal worker who made good through education -- subscribes to the ideology of “merit” and “gift” that his sociological writings systematically discredit. Not surprisingly he returns again and again to the question of education that had been central to his own life, but also to French society in general.

In 1964, only 4 years after he had returned from Algeria, Bourdieu joined Jean-Claude Passeron to publish *The Inheritors* that examined the critical but hidden role of cultural capital not only in selecting students for university but also in subjecting them to a pedagogy which privileged the culturally advantaged. They made the argument – provocative at the time – that even if there were equality of opportunity, even if the children of the wage laborer had the same chance of entering university as the children of the senior executive, still the school would reproduce the domination of the latter over the former. Teaching in the university presupposes and reinforces the privileged up-bringing of the middle and upper classes. For those who are looking for origins *The Inheritors* prefigures so much in Bourdieu’s corpus – the relationship of different classes to culture as laid out in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984[1979]), the self-delusions of the academic world elaborated as scholastic fallacies, the idea of social structure as a game presented in *Pascalian Meditations* (Bourdieu, 2000[1997]), the battle of the disciplines worked out in *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1988 [1984]), strategies through which the dominant class reproduces itself through the Grandes École presented in *State Nobility* (Bourdieu, 1996 [1989]). But most significantly *The Inheritors* is a prolegomenon to its theoretical

deepening and detailed elaboration in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. Written with Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction* is an uncompromising critique of education that brought fame and infamy to its authors.

Education exemplifies symbolic domination. Schooling *secures* the active participation of students and teachers in the pursuit of credentials that entails the learning of legitimate culture, while *obscuring* the reproduction of class domination that is the effect of such participation. Securing participation is education's technical function (inculcation) while obscuring class domination is its social function (class selection) (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977 [1970]: 164-7). Thus, they criticize the economists for emphasizing the technical functions of education at the expense of its social functions and they criticize the critical theorists for focusing on the social at the cost of the technical functions of education. At the heart of symbolic domination is the *combination* of enthusiastic participation and systematic misrecognition. To examine one without the other is to misunderstand the symbolic power of education

Central to their model of reproduction is the way relative autonomy of the educational system has the effect of naturalizing its two-fold arbitrariness: the imposition of a cultural arbitrary (legitimate culture) through an arbitrary power (class domination). The source of relative autonomy lies with the cadres of teachers, specially trained and recruited as professionals and thus vehement defenders of the autonomy of their practice, but also on the standardization and routinization of education, in other words subjection to its own principles of regulation. Relative autonomy gives the (false) impression of neutrality with respect to class, rendering class selection all the more profound.

The argument rests on the assumption that primary pedagogical work (PW) in the family produces an enduring and irreversible primary habitus that sets the conditions for subsequent schooling.

Insofar as PW is an irreversible process producing, in the time required for inculcation, an irreversible disposition, i.e. a disposition which cannot itself be repressed or transformed except by an irreversible process producing in turn a new irreversible disposition, primary PA [Pedagogic Action] (the earliest phase of upbringing), which is carried out by PW without any antecedent (primary PW), produces a primary habitus, characteristic of a group or class, which is the basis for the subsequent formation of any other habitus. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977 [1970]: 42)

The primary habitus inculcated by the dominant classes bestows cultural advantages on their children. The primary pedagogical work (PW) in the family transmits linguistic and cultural dispositions to take advantage of the symbolic mastery – abstract bookish learning -- taught at school. The children of the dominated classes -- having received a more functional, utilitarian up-bringing – face an alien school environment and pedagogy. Although it appears neutral and universal school learning presupposes the cultural capital of the dominant class, and disparages the culture of the dominated. The power of the school system is redoubled by the labor market, which rewards academic success, which further consecrates legitimate capital of the already privileged and denigrates the dominated culture.

The more unified the market on which the value of the products of the different PAs is determined, the more the groups and classes, which have undergone PA inculcating a dominated culture arbitrary, are likely to have the valuelessness of their cultural attainment brought home to them both by the anonymous sanctions of the labour market and by the symbolic sanctions of the cultural market (e.g. the matrimonial market), not to mention the academic verdicts, which are always charged with economic and symbolic implications. These calls to order tend to produce in them, if not explicit recognition of the dominant culture, then at least an insidious awareness of the cultural unworthiness of their own acquisitions. (Bourdieu 1977 [1970]: 28)

To be sure, there are those, like Bourdieu, who manage to overcome their class background, but they only serve to intensify the obsession with achievement while further mystifying the relation between education and class. Such upward mobility also turns attention away from the more pervasive phenomenon, namely the exclusion of so many from education at different levels, many of whom quietly eliminate themselves rather than go through the humiliation of being eliminated.

Alternative Pedagogies

The picture painted here is very different from that of Paul Willis (1977), for example, who argues that some working class children do, indeed, rebel against the middle class culture thrust upon them in school, embracing their own down-to-earth manual practical culture (with all its problematic sexism and racism), and, furthermore, it is this hostility to middle class school culture that makes them enthusiastic to re-enter the working class. This rebellion exhibits what Willis calls a “partial penetration,” – the lads clearly understanding the bias of the school, but end up reproducing their own subordination. Willis proposes the creation of schools where teachers would validate working class culture, elaborating it into a full-blown critique of capitalism. Bourdieu and Passeron dismiss any such sociological relativism as a populist illusion.

This could lead students to demand that the parallel cultures of the disadvantaged classes should be given the status of the culture taught by the school system. But it is not sufficient to observe that school culture is a class culture; to proceed as if it were only that, is to help it remain so. (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979 [1964]: 72)

The populist illusion recognizes the social function of education but misses the technical function, namely the inescapable importance of acquiring credentials that can be utilized for survival. Increasingly, those working class jobs will not be available to working classes who do not have basic schooling. Thinking perhaps of himself, Bourdieu mocks the very idea of endorsing working class culture as paternalistic and insulting to the ambitions and capacities of the dominated.

If popular pedagogies that celebrate class cultures of the dominated, end up channeling the disadvantaged back to the bottom of society, soft pedagogies that focus on alternative ways of teaching ignore and further mystify the importance of class.

...the ideologies of PA as non-violent action – whether in Socratic and neo-Socratic myths of non-directive teaching, Rousseauistic myths of natural education, or pseudo-Freudian myths of non-repressive education – reveal in its clearest form the generic function of educational ideologies, in evading, by the gratuitous negation of one of its

terms, the contradiction between the objective truth of PA and the necessary (inevitable) representation of this arbitrary action as necessary ('natural') (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977 [1970]: 13)

The soft pedagogies become ideologies that don't recognize the role they play in the reproduction of class domination. As we shall see Freire's problem-based dialogic pedagogy, although not mentioned explicitly, is clearly one of those ideologies that hides from itself its own implication in class domination.

So what then is the solution? It is what Bourdieu and Passeron call "rational pedagogy" which must not only cancel out inequality of access to education but also counteract the advantages of the dominant class habitus by inculcating the relevant aspects of that habitus in all classes.

It may be wondered whether a type of secondary PW which, conversely, took into account the distance between the pre-existent habitus and the habitus inculcated, and was systematically organized in accordance with the principles of an explicit pedagogy, would not have the effect of erasing the boundary which traditional PW recognizes and confirms between the legitimate addressees and then rest. Or, to put it another way, whether perfectly rational PW – i.e. PW exerted ab novo in all domains on all the educable, taking nothing for granted at the outset, with the explicit goal of explicitly inculcating in all its pupils the practical principles of the symbolic mastery of practices which are inculcated by primary PA only within certain groups or classes, in short a type of PW everywhere substituting for the traditional mode of inculcation the programmed transmission of the legitimate culture – would not correspond to the pedagogic interest of the dominated classes (the hypothesis of the democratization of education through the rationalization of pedagogy). But the Utopian character of an education policy based on this hypothesis becomes apparent as soon as one observes that, quite apart from the built-in inertia of every educational institution, the structure of power relations prohibits a dominant PA from resorting to a type of PW contrary to the interests of the dominant classes who delegate its PAu [Pedagogic Authority] to it. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977 [1970]: 53-4)

What Bourdieu and Passeron present as the only solution in *The Inheritors* – true democratization of education – they now dismiss as utopian. Even utopias have their function in alerting us to the true nature of reality but in *Reproduction* Bourdieu and Passeron bend the stick in the opposite direction to demonstrate that there cannot be any alternative education so long as the class structure is what it is. This sounds like a call for revolution, but of course there's never a hint of that in their writing, so different from Paulo Freire for whom education and revolution are intimately connected.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Paulo Freire began his interest in education through the development of literacy campaigns so that peasants could participate in Brazilian education. *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that first appeared in 1970 is a manifesto for Third World Revolution that parallels Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. You might say that it is an elaboration of the relation between radical intellectuals and peasantry that we found so unelaborated in Fanon. Like Fanon he had far more faith in the revolutionary potential of the peasantry than the working class, which "lack revolutionary consciousness and consider themselves

privileged” (Freire, 1970: 148). For Freire critical pedagogy is a necessary part of revolution.

Freire and Bourdieu start out from similar places – domination -- although Freire uses a word with a more revolutionary connotation – oppression. Where Bourdieu thematizes symbolic violence in France as opposed to physical violence in the colonies, Freire thematizes internal as opposed to external oppression. The counterpart to symbolic violence is *internal oppression* – the introjection of the oppressor into the psyche.

The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their idea is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity. This phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience, adopt an attitude of ‘adhesion’ to the oppressor. Under these circumstances they cannot ‘consider’ him sufficiently clearly to objectivize him – to discover him ‘outside’ themselves. This does not necessarily mean that the oppressed are unaware that they are downtrodden. But their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression. (Freire, 1970: 45)

Leaving aside the question of masculinizing the oppressor and oppressed, at first blush this is no different from Bourdieu’s notion of social structure being inscribed on the body or internalized in the habitus. Yet, of course, whereas Bourdieu does not see how education could ever liberate the dominated, for Freire this is exactly the purpose of critical pedagogy.

Still, they agree that formal education only reproduces domination/oppression. But here they begin to diverge since for Bourdieu class domination is socially invisible, being the product of formally neutral education whereas for Freire it lies in the pedagogy itself – the so-called banking model in which knowledge is deposited in student as object, in which teacher is teacher and student is student, what unites them is a relation of unidirectional authority that inhibits creativity, promotes adaptation, isolates consciousness, suppresses context, nurtures fatalism, mythologizes and naturalizes domination. Students are subject to a cultural invasion by professionals so that “the invaded come to see their reality with the outlook of the invaders” (Freire, 1970:153). For Bourdieu’s socio-analysis, Freire substitutes a heavy dose of psycho-analysis.

But Freire is much more optimistic than Bourdieu for he sees within the psyche two selves, the humanistic individual and the oppressor, the true self and the false self.

The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being... They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves and being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within and not ejecting them; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors... This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into account ... (Freire, 1970: 48)

For Freire, then, critical pedagogy must eject the oppressor within, which can only be accomplished through a problem-centered dialogue between teacher and student, in which each learns from the other, the educator too must be educated. When placed in their own context, tackling their own problems, the oppressed can develop critical faculties through collaboration with others. Interrogation of folk theory (or thematic universe) of the oppressed leads from problems (or generative themes) to a decoding that focuses on context and thus the historical totality. At the heart of such a pedagogy is the dialogue not only between intellectual and oppressed, but between action and reflection. To veer in one direction or another – activism or verbalism – is to threaten the critical process. Liberation comes through acts of solidarity and collective attempts at social transformation guided by an emergent understanding of historical constraints and possibilities. As in Marx and Fanon, ultimately it is struggle that dissolves inner oppression.

All too little is said about the teacher, who must forge a pedagogy with and not for the oppressed. Freire does acknowledge the danger, that coming from the oppressor class, they bring with them prejudices about the oppressed.

...[C]ertain members of the oppressor class join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation, thus moving from one pole of the contradiction to the other. There is a fundamental role, and has been so throughout the history of this struggle. It happens, however, that as they cease to be exploiters or indifferent spectators or simply the heirs of exploitation and move to the side of the exploited, they must always bring with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people's ability to think, to want, and to know. Accordingly these adherents to the people's cause constantly run the risk of falling into a type of generosity as malefic as that of the oppressors... [They] truly desire to transform the unjust order; but because of their background they believe that they must be the executors of the transformation. They talk about the people but they do not trust them; and trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change.(Freire, 1970: 60)

Through the eyes of Bourdieu “the pedagogy of the oppressed” is a dangerous fantasy of intellectuals who think they can overcome first, their own habitus as intellectuals (dominated fraction of the dominant class) and second, even more difficult, foster the transformation of the habitus of the dominated. Critical pedagogy is an intellectualist illusion that privileges “conscientization” (consciousness raising). It misunderstands the depth of oppression. It conspires to do what educational ideologies generally do, namely focus on the pedagogic relation and thereby obscure its class underpinnings. Freire might retort that Bourdieu is focused on the transmission of the dominant culture and cannot see beyond a banking model of education. When education is taken to the dominated, conducted on their terrain, working from their problems and issues -- rather than enrolling the dominated into the alien schools of the oppressor class – then emancipatory action is possible. Is there a resolution between these mutually opposed positions? I am going to seek one in an unlikely place – the writings of Antonio Gramsci.

Gramsci's Common School and the War of Position

If one had to place Gramsci within this conversation between Freire and Bourdieu, it would most likely be on Freire's side. Like Freire, Gramsci's optimism lies in the postulated good sense of the dominated qua working class that springs from its place in production. Cultural invasion there is but never to the extent of blotting out that good sense at the core of the common sense – a good sense which needs elaboration by organic intellectuals engaged in dialogue with the working class, that is, dialogue not in formal schooling but in the workplace, in the community. Despite manifest differences in their views about the revolutionary potential of peasantry and proletariat, the centrality of the political party, civil society and much more, largely due to Gramsci's far richer contextualization of struggle, nonetheless Gramsci and Freire do share a faith in the capacity of the dominated to see through their domination and engage in struggle to oppose that domination. This shared revolutionary optimism contrasts with Bourdieu's critical pessimism, especially in *Reproduction*.

Therefore, one may be astonished to discover Bourdieu and Passeron's ideas prefigured in Gramsci's notes on education that were written in the context of the fascist regime's call on the one side for vocational education and on the other side for an active pedagogy that downplays conventional instruction. Gramsci reasserts the importance of instruction, calling for the introduction the "common school," which would bestow classical education (Bourdieu's legitimate culture) on all to close the cultural gap between classes. Anticipating Bourdieu and Passeron, Gramsci writes:

In a whole series of families, especially in the intellectual strata, the children find in their family life a preparation, a prolongation and a completion of school life; they "breathe in", as the expression goes, a whole quantity of notions and attitudes which facilitate the educational process properly speaking. They already know and develop their knowledge of the literary language, i.e. the means of expression and of knowledge, which is technically superior to the means possessed by the average member of the school population between the ages of six and twelve. Thus, city children by the very fact of living in a city, have already absorbed by the age of six a quantity of notions and attitudes which make their school careers easier, more profitable, and more rapid. (Gramsci, 1971: 31)

Gramsci goes even further down the road of Bourdieu and Passeron in calling attention to the bodily hexis that gives the intellectual classes advantage in the school.

Undoubtedly the child of a traditionally intellectual family acquires this psycho-physical adaptation more easily. Before he¹ ever enters the class-room he has numerous advantages over his comrades, and is already in possession of attitudes learnt from his family environment; he concentrates more easily, since he is used to "sitting still", etc. (Gramsci, 1971: 42)

Being a hunchback from a poor rural family Gramsci is perhaps even more aware than Bourdieu of the inherited disadvantages of class – not just the economic but the cultural disadvantages that he emphasizes here. Perhaps Gramsci was thinking of himself and the

¹ Gramsci's use of the male pronoun throughout jars with contemporary sensibilities, and leads him to miss the gender side of education as important as the class dimension. Bourdieu and Passeron are more sensitive to contemporary usage, but they too are primarily focused on the significance of class.

enormous discipline it took to write the prison notebooks – so meticulously presented and worked out -- when he wrote about the importance of bodily training early on in life.

In education one is dealing with children in whom one has to inculcate certain habits of diligence, precision, poise (even physical poise), ability to concentrate on specific subjects, which cannot be acquired without mechanical repetition of disciplined and methodical acts. Would the scholar at the age of forty be able to sit for sixteen hours on end at his work-table if he had not, as a child, compulsorily, through mechanical coercion, acquired the appropriate psycho-physical habits? (Gramsci, 1971: 37)

Gramsci may have prefigured the argument of *Reproduction* but his response was very different. Where Bourdieu and Passeron pose the idea of a “rational pedagogy,” only to dismiss it as utopian, Gramsci builds the idea into a concrete conception of the “common school,” whose *raison d’être* is to equalize cultural capital across classes.

In the basic organization of the common school, at least the essentials of these conditions [of the families of intellectuals] must be created – not to speak of the fact, which goes without saying that parallel to the common school a network of kindergartens and other institutions would develop, in which even before the school age, children would be habituated to a certain collective discipline and acquire pre-scholastic notions and attitudes. In fact, the common school should be organized like a college, with a collective life by day and by night, freed from the present forms of hypocritical and mechanical discipline; studies should be carried on collectively, with the assistance of teachers and the best pupils, even during periods of so-called individual study, etc. (Gramsci, 1971: 31)

We note here a Freirean flavor with the emphasis on collective discipline and collaborative studies, which is not without significance for the future society Gramsci is imagining. Not surprisingly, and again anticipating the arguments of Bourdieu and Passeron, Gramsci points to the centrality of the teacher, the pivotal conveyor of the dominant culture to the children of the dominated classes.

In the school, the nexus between instruction and education can only be realized by the living work of the teacher. For he must be aware of the contrast between the type of culture and society which he represents and the type of culture and society represented by his pupils, and conscious of his obligation to accelerate and regulate the child’s formation in conformity with the former and in conflict with the latter. (Gramsci, 1971: 35-6)

We see that the idea of the common school is not as far-fetched as Bourdieu and Passeron claim. Indeed, examples of such schooling could begin with the notorious boarding school, normally the privilege of the dominant classes, one of which Bourdieu himself attended. He may have hated it – who said remedial education would be fun? – but it seemed to have worked, bringing him from culturally deprived Bearn to the pinnacle of French higher education. Why does he not reflect sociologically on his own schooling as a flawed expression but an expression nonetheless of rational pedagogy, instead of bemoaning the humiliations he suffered? After all Bourdieu himself writes that changing habitus requires a comprehensive process of counter-training, involving repeated exercises (Bourdieu, 2000 [1997]: 172).

Moving farther afield one might recall the not unsuccessful attempts to reverse class differences in the Soviet Union, or the more thorough going Kibbutzim. The passage above with its reference to a network of “kindergartens and other institutions” and the collective life of learning anticipates such modern day experiments as the Harlem Children’s Zone that cordons off an urban area, providing children and their families with extensive social services to counteract cultural disadvantage. Better to examine the attempts to realize a rational pedagogy, and examine the obstacles it confronts as demonstration of the limits of possibility – and the truth of one’s theory -- than to dismiss it as a worthless utopia.

Their insights into education are very similar, but the projects of Gramsci and Bourdieu are very different. Bourdieu and Passeron are contemptuous of those who harbor the illusion that schooling can be a “mechanism of change” capable of “creating discontinuities” and “building a new world” (1977 [1970]: 65). Yet this is precisely what Gramsci has in mind, which is why he wants to subject everyone – not just the children of intellectuals and the dominant classes -- to classical education. He wants everyone to learn Latin as a way of developing objectivity and disinterestedness, as an appreciation of logic but also a sense of history so we can recognize who we are. Schools can play a progressive role in countering folk beliefs and localistic ties inherited from a feudal world that refuses to disappear, preparing citizens for their role in modern world of politics and civil society.

Scientific ideas were intended to insert the child into the *societas rerum*, the world of things, while lessons in rights and duties were intended to insert him into the State and into civil society. The scientific ideas the children learnt conflicted with the magical conception of the world and nature which they absorbed from an environment steeped in folklore; while the idea of civic rights and duties conflicted with tendencies towards individualistic and localistic barbarism—another dimension of folklore. (Gramsci, 1971: 33-4)

Gramsci envisions the common school as a school for democracy, “forming him [the child] during this time as a person capable of thinking, studying, and ruling – or controlling those who rule” (Gramsci, 1971: 40).

Gramsci was not only concerned to bring children into the modern world but also to advance the project of social transformation, which brings him into direct engagement with Freire. In the field of education, we might say that Freire represents war of movement that seeks revolutionary opposition to oppression, appropriate where civil society is less developed. The advance of a war of position in worlds with a strong civil society, requires an extended battle on the terrain of bourgeois hegemony, and for that one needs the weapons of classical education. The struggle for the common school, therefore, is part of such a war of position. It would be the crucible of the organic intellectuals of the future – intellectuals who would not only elaborate the good sense of the working class but contest the bourgeois ideologies that they had imbibed at school.

Conclusion

Bourdieu and Passeron make every effort to debunk any notion that the school can be a vehicle of social transformation. Their critique of Freire would focus on his

failure to see the broader importance of class domination within which schooling takes place, and how the pedagogy of the oppressed leaves that domination unchanged. Moreover, Bourdieu and Passeron would be very skeptical that members of the dominant class could ever leave their habitus behind when they turn to the peasantry or that the habitus of the peasantry could be transformed.

Recognizing Bourdieu and Passeron's critique of the "pedagogy of the oppressed," namely the penetration of capitalist culture, Gramsci would call for the common school as part of a war of position in civil society, forging intellectuals who are equally at home with legitimate culture as they are with the culture of the dominated class. Gramsci himself, even when in prison, never lost touch with his rural family and his working class associates. But that did not prevent him from being steeped in the dominant Italian culture, so that much of the Prison Notebooks can be seen as a dialogue with Croce, Gentile, Pirandello, Machiavelli and others. This idea of deploying dominant culture against the dominant classes is a familiar aspect of South African history. African Nationalist leaders such as Mandela and Tambo were in no way deceived by their missionary education but used it as a sort of "common school," arming them for the struggle against apartheid. Interestingly, Robben Island became known as a "university of struggle," a school to so many of the leaders of the anti-apartheid movement.

Gramsci also understood that you cannot extricate schooling from broader historical processes. The fight for the common school was part of a fight for the broader transformation of society. Again, this is not a strange idea in South Africa where schools and universities have been at the forefront of the transformation of society. The Soweto rebellion was organized against the dominant culture and became a catalyst in the struggles to overthrow apartheid. Even if Bourdieu and Passeron would make colonial societies an exception, we only have to turn to May 1968 to see the ways French students could be a force for social change, could challenge the existing order. It is fascinating to note that neither in *Reproduction* which appeared in 1970 nor in the Epilogue to *The Inheritors* written in 1979, do Bourdieu and Passeron refer to May 1968. For all the talk of the devaluation of credentials, the bamboozling of a generation, that epilogue seeks to show how student frustration was accommodated and class reproduction secured. Only in *Homo Academicus*, written in 1984, does Bourdieu address the student revolt, using the same framework of the devaluation of credentials, the mismatch of objective chances and subjective expectations, opportunities and aspirations, while downplaying the self-understanding of the participants and the ideologies that galvanized the rebellion. Still, finally, there is an attempt at studying the place of education in what was the unfolding crisis in French society.

Once we adopt a broader theoretical canvas and forsake dry statistics for historical process, we quickly grasp the ways in which education becomes a terrain of struggle that fosters social change as well as social reproduction. Despite himself, Bourdieu must have believed this, as he was so deeply committed to the advance and teaching of sociology as a progressive form of education whether in school, university, the pages of *Le Monde* or in his own widely read books. Once again Bourdieu's practice was at odds with his theory.