FROM PHILOSOPHY TO PRAXIS

Antonio Gramsci

“"The first step in emancipating oneself from political and social slavery is that of freeing the mind.""

Paulo Freire

- **Praxis is action that is informed** (and linked to certain values).
- Dialogue wasn’t just about deepening understanding – but was part of making a difference in the world. **Dialogue in itself is a co-operative activity** involving respect.
- The process is important and can be seen as **enhancing community and building social capital** and to leading us to act in ways that make for justice and human flourishing. Informal and popular educators have had a long-standing orientation to action – so the emphasis on change in the world was welcome.
- But there was a sting in the tail. Paulo Freire argued for **informed action** and as such provided a useful counter-balance to those who want to diminish theory.
THE ORGANIC INTELLECTUAL

Gramsci

Whereas the traditional intellectuals contributed to the passive revolution by denying to the masses the access to the intellectual resources they needed in order to engage in an expanding dialectic of activity and consciousness, these permanent persuaders would find their intellectual resources precisely in their organic integration with the masses, in a reciprocal relationship of ‘democratic pedagogy’ in which the intellectuals would be at least as often ‘the educated’ as ‘the educators’. They would be intellectuals who were ‘organically the intellectuals of these masses’, working out and making coherent the principles and problems which the masses had posed in their own practical activity, and thus building a cultural and historical bloc (Q 11, 12, iii)

Freire

- The idea of building a ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’ or a ‘pedagogy of hope’ and how this may be carried forward has formed a significant impetus to work.

- An important element of this was his concern with conscientization – developing consciousness, but consciousness that is understood to have the power to transform reality’ (Taylor 1993: 52). This consciousness must be developed among, “We the People”.

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Gramsci

At the level of the intellectuals, those whose role it was to articulate and organise such a new popular Weltanschauung, it called for the creation of a qualitatively new type of intellectual which would be both adequate to the specific tasks of the emerging class, and capable of exercising hegemony on the terrain of ‘intellectuality’ over and against the already established traditional intellectuals of the dominant class. ‘

The assimilation and “ideological” conquest of the traditional intellectuals’, Gramsci argued, will be ‘quicker and more effective the more the given group elaborates simultaneously its own organic intellectuals’ (Q 12, 1).

Freire

- Insisted on situating educational activity in the lived experience of participants has opened up a series of possibilities for the way informal educators can approach practice.

- His concern to look for words that have the possibility of generating new ways of naming and acting in the world when working with people around literacies is a good example of this.
Gramsci

Armed with his concept of the integral state as the terrain on which competing classes contested for social and political hegemony, however, Gramsci was well placed to understand the transformation of these once organic intellectuals into traditional intellectuals and their subsequent dominance of definitions of intellectual activity as themselves products and symptoms of the hegemony of the class whose interests they served and organised (whether consciously or not).

Freire

- **Oppressors–oppressed distinction**, differentiates between the two positions in an unjust society, the oppressor and the oppressed.

- Hegemonic processes continue when the intellectual abilities of all are not developed. The process of educating needs to be purposeful, disciplined and organized.
PRACTICES FOR A PURPOSE

Civil Rights Movement

- Leaders from SNCC and Core to the Highlander Center used these practices.

Labor/Community Organizing

- The new ‘labor movement’ is also using the praxis as described in the previous slides.
CONTEMPLATION

Essence of the Problem

Freire champions that education should allow the oppressed to regain their sense of humanity, in turn overcoming their condition.

Nevertheless, he also acknowledges that in order for this to occur, the oppressed individual must play a role in their liberation.

Objective for Study

No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption (Freire, 1970, p. 54).
FROM ORGANIZING TO SCHOOLING

Freire believed education to be a political act that could not be divorced from pedagogy. Freire defined this as a main tenet of critical pedagogy.

Teachers and students must be made aware of the "politics" that surround education. The way students are taught and what they are taught serves a political agenda.

Teachers, themselves, have political notions they bring into the classroom (Kinzeloe, 2008).[8] Freire believed that "education makes sense because women and men learn that through learning they can make and remake themselves, because women and men are able to take responsibility for themselves as beings capable of knowing — of knowing that they know and knowing that they don't" (Freire, 2004, p. 15)