

The Liberal Virus in Critical Pedagogy: Beyond “Anti-This-and-That” Postmodernism and Three Problems in the Idea of Communism

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Abstract

In the shadow of triumphalist and hubristic capitalism, many adherents to critical pedagogy promote “democracy” as a kind of anti-capitalist challenge to inequality, oppression and exploitation. However, American culture has gone global, immersing the world in the received wisdom of a variety of liberalisms or in the reaction formations of religious fundamentalism on the right and demotivated cynicism of postmodernism on the left. The impotence in critical pedagogy in the clarion call of “democracy for democracy’s sake” resides in common sense subordination to competing liberal assumptions and a political positioning along different lines of liberal critique: classical, modern, neoliberal or radical (i.e. left postmodernism and right libertarianism). Nevertheless, this liberal positioning in critical pedagogy evacuates many commitments to a positive program based on labour, socialist or communist beliefs. This inadequate commitment to “democracy in form” secures “liberalism in content” yet assumes somehow that liberal democratic capitalism can be harnessed for a yet-to-be named “something” that never arrives.

This article argues that critical pedagogues must once again commit to a communist pedagogy if any significant challenge to the imperialist, patriarchal, racist and capitalist order is to be undertaken in the near future. For the progressive critical intelligentsia the Idea of communism is central to a creatively renewed project for human liberation; however, this article also identifies three key problems in the development of a critical pedagogy in need of clearer articulation and related to the practical and contradictory logics of power, authority and social change. For power there is the conflict between personal versus social enlightenment, for authority there is the contradiction between enlightenment with unequal authority versus egalitarianism with equalized ignorance, and for social change there are theory and practice conflicts in the transition from a liberal democratic capitalist society to a communist society. How will power, authority and social change be adjudicated within a pragmatic yet revolutionary communist movement so that the errors of the 20th century are both internalized and reconfigured in developing a renewed positive program for liberation? It is still a good question yet to be answered.

Introduction

All those who abandon [the communist] hypothesis immediately resign themselves to the market economy, to parliamentary democracy – the form of state best suited to capitalism – and to the inevitable and “natural” character of the most monstrous inequalities.

Alain Badiou, 2010a, *The Communist Hypothesis*¹

Samir Amin (2004: 10) writes “the reconstruction of a citizen politics demands that movements of resistance, protest and struggle against the real effects of the implementation of [imaginary capitalism in neoliberal economics] be freed from the liberal virus.” In tracing a long and variegated genealogy from Holland and England to the United States, the Americans have perfected a particularly virulent form of Liberalism in both its classical and modern wings, and it is important to recall that it was at its strongest in its defence of chattel slavery (Losurdo 2011). Furthermore, American Liberalism germinates in a unique social structure and takes a rather distinctive form and vocabulary from its European cousins (Hartz 1955). As Unger (1975) points out, even the origins of its two dominant academic discourses (i.e. economics and psychology) are deeply imbued with the Protestant assumptions of John Calvin and Thomas Hobbes. In proclaiming Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness in a drama of bad cop and good cop, this particular liberal society promotes itself as either the defender of “Freedom *and* Liberty” (George W. Bush) or “Democracy, Equity and Opportunity” (Barack Obama). However, talking to Americans about “liberalism” is much like a socialist bird trying to tell an anti-capitalist fish that it is still swimming in liberal water. This *water* is Liberal political theology (Schmitt 1985; 1996) and is a civic religion sustaining an orthodox political culture and a greenhouse of competing political philosophies from Adam Smith (classical economic liberalism - *laissez faire*²), J. S. Mill (modern liberalism), John Rawls (welfare liberalism), Isaiah Berlin (liberal pluralism), Friedrich Hayek (new neo-classical economic liberalism, i.e. neoliberalism), Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman (1962) (neo-classical economic liberalism³) to Robert Nozick (libertarianism).⁴

The triad of core assumptions of political liberalism as a *good* society is (1) the ownership of unequally inherited properties in a system of increasing socioeconomic stratification (capitalism), (2) the formal equality of moral and political persons in a fair

¹ Promotional excerpt on the back cover. Also see Badiou (2010b).

² Adam Smith’s *neutrality* was NOT as an advocate of “self-regulating” markets or of a minimalist state. Markets were an instrument of state-craft and political economy was to provide advice for legislators whose policy considerations were social and political rather than economic. The “invisible hand” was seen as the instrument for a desirable society.

³ Milton Friedman is sometimes included as a neoliberal because he agrees with Hayek on the “spontaneous order” that supposedly exemplifies free markets as self-regulating. However, Friedman is more libertarian and disagreed with Hayek on the role the state.

⁴ See Kachur (2010) for a detailed discussion of neoliberalism in relationship to other liberalisms in the expansion of American Empire and the use of education in soft-power geopolitics. Also see Kachur (2008a) for an analysis of American political theology and civic religion and (2008b) for a critique of the global neoliberal crisis in education.

competition for just rewards (liberal democracy), and (3) the need to tolerate cultural difference (pluralism). For contemporary defenders of America, the triad of capitalist property-relations, equalized opportunities, and pragmatic accommodations are a matter of emphasis from freedom's power and promise (Starr 2007) to humanizing the worst aspects of capitalist expansion or religious war (Jumonville and Mattson 2007) and to new ways to enhance pluralism, tolerance and cosmopolitanism (Gray 2000). Nevertheless, Liberalism as a civic religion illuminates about as much as it mystifies in its actually-existing form, as Simon Critchley (2012: 75) points out when commenting on cultural accommodation: "This is like the old joke that in America you can believe in anything you like, you can be a Muslim, a Buddhist, or a Scientologist just so long as you're a Protestant Muslim, a Protestant Buddhist, or a Protestant Scientologist." Similarly, you can be a critical pedagogue of any sort as long as you're a liberal pedagogue who demonstrates the correct articles of catechism and exhibits Rousseau's "sentiments of sociability." To speak about the liberal virus in critical pedagogy also requires inoculating critical pedagogy against liberal tendencies that either reproduce the social order or promote false, fictional, or delusional challenges in the name of radicalism. Furthermore, the seduction of speaking *against* capitalism and *only* for democracy must be resisted. An appeal to communism is required to inoculate critical pedagogy from the worst tendencies of liberal habits of thought – especially in the defence of transitional discourses of radical democracy or socialist feminism; however, because of the hegemonic power of actually-existing liberal modernity such a discursive positioning will necessarily appear to transgress *liberal* social etiquette as either bad manners or a return to barbaric tastes.

However, it must be emphasized that in the competition between the three political categories of neo-communism, religious fundamentalism, and military neoliberalism it is the actually-existing *military neoliberalism* that underpins expansionist liberal modernity which is barbaric. As Simon Critchley (2012: 81) pithily remarks, "At the heart of this category is the idea of the unification of neoliberal economics with a certain universalization of democracy and human rights talk – which is ultimately backed up with military force. So the situation we're in is one where other regimes have to accept the logic of capitalism, accept the ideology of democracy and human rights – and if they don't accept that they are going to be bombed." The difference separating President Bush II from President Obama is that the Obama will talk to you before he bombs you.

This new imperialism of Empire combines a state of permanent war and an expansionist commodity market (including the cultural commodities produced by its leading educational institutions, Kachur 2010). "Foreign wars" are the policing-actions of a supranational state that is only partially accountable to a domestic democratic polity controlled by a plutocratic class of super-capitalists. Extremely unequal private property, the fiction of self-regulating markets, and the ideology of tolerant cultural accommodation *is* the virus; it is the Americanization of the world. This insight should alert critical pedagogues to the historically objective and hegemonic form of critical pedagogy as it emerged in the US with its Marxist edge blunted and its communist assumptions subordinated to liberal pragmatism or neoliberal postmodernism, that is, you could be a "Marxist," feminist, anti-racist, or anti-poverty activist as long as your

political commitments were not to labour, socialism or communism. Even one step further by the early 1990s, the radical liberal critique was stripped of allusions to capitalism and class and sought proxy euphemisms in the rainbow of diverse “oppressions”: race, gender, sexuality and disability. In short, off the agenda was any talk of the property system and “critical” conversation was reduced to market-based allocations of opportunity supplemented with a recognition of cultural diversity. Radical *liberals* did venture into anti-racist, anti-sexist, de-colonializing and eco-sensitive politics. However, a defence of cultural difference can also be used to defend socioeconomic inequality. In calling for cultural accommodation within a liberal framework radicals implied support for unequal property ownership and intergenerational inheritance as a part of the politics of difference, an easier insight once upon a time in America. For example, novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925) in his short story “Rich Boy” wrote “Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me....” Ernest Hemingway (1936) responded: “...Yes, they have more money.” In a more current example, in a London press conference at the G20 meetings after the global market meltdown, President Obama (CBS News 2009, emphasis mine) explained his culture to European leaders and the global public: “We -- I strongly believe in a free-market system, and as I -- as I think people understand in America, at least, *people don't resent the rich; they want to be rich. And that's good.* But we want to make sure that there's mechanisms in place that holds people accountable and produces results. Okay?”

Furthermore, American soft power exports liberal assumptions around the world as educational commodities, and as part of the sales package, critical pedagogy offers no positive program other than a hollowed-out construct of “democracy” and a series of critiques against colonialism, capitalism, sexism, racism and so on. However, in this therapeutic mode of righting wrongs critical pedagogy as an ethico-political disposition does little more, at best, than enhance the adaptive capacity of global capitalism and deepen inequalities in private property or, at worst, provide more ammunition for pan-nationalist communities of difference that regress into warring traditionalisms. According to Alain Badiou (2010a, 2010b), the solution is to believe in the *resurrection* of the Idea⁵ of communism. “The very nature of the crisis today is not, in my opinion, the crisis of capitalism, but the failure of socialism.... So it is the crisis of the idea of revolution. But behind the idea of revolution is the crisis of the idea of another world, of the possibility of, really, another organization of society, and so on. Not the crisis of pure possibility, but the crisis of historical possibility of something like that is caught in the facts themselves.

⁵ The capitalization of “I” in “Idea” follows Badiou’s usage so that three philosophical distinctions might be drawn. First, the “Idea” of communism acts somewhat as a quasi-transcendental signifier to distinguish it from the multiple connotations of the “idea” that may be attributed to the Idea, much as Liberalism can be distinguished from the various liberalisms. The Idea, therefore, functions much like a Kantian regulative ideal or Platonic abstract form. Second, it allows for the separation of discussion about the Idea of communism from the *actually-existing* communism of the former Soviet Union, the moribund states of North Korea and Cuba, or the guiding power of the Communist Party over a rising neoliberal China. In a similar vein, the Idea of liberalism requires a different kind of criticism than do the varieties of actually-existing liberalism. Third, and more difficult to comprehend because of contemporary philosophical and theological debates following Lacan and others, is to understand the Idea as an “empty” signifier a clearing in the darkness which is immanently present in thought through its absence in actuality. As Ernesto Laclau suggests, empty signifiers are rhetorically important to draw disparate people together in a chain of equivalences (see Szkudlarek 2007).

And it is a crisis of a conception of negation which was a creative one” (Badiou in Houpt, 2012: 1). This crisis extends into the Idea of education. Jacques Rancière (2010) identifies: there are still major problems that need to be addressed before proceeding with a communist pedagogy. Along with other suggestions, I call for an infusion into French Theory of a communist pragmatics rooted in Anglo-American Marxism and supplemented with global insights from inter-civilizational dialogue as one way to proceed in developing a post-2008 post-American revolutionary pedagogy - only because of the Anglo-American Marxist’s long fight *for freedom and equality* in the Idea of communism within, against, and beyond a radicalization of a liberal democratic framework.

The Idea of Communism

Imagine Francis Fukuyama’s (1992) thesis is correct and a realistic pedagogy would have to follow: that the 1989 collapse of Soviet-style Communism signalled the End of History and the triumph of liberal democratic capitalism. All that would be left for us to do would be to recognize and respect each others’ differences and to work for equalizing opportunities so that each individual might compete fairly for ever expanding wealth and unequally proportioned property. For those not blessed with liberal democratic capitalism, the road to the future would be clear and the purpose of education would be to facilitate the journey.

Now imagine a different path, one argued by Alain Badiou (2008: 15), that the failure of the 20th century revolutions should reaffirm our faith in the Idea of communism:

The communist hypothesis remains the right hypothesis, as I have said, and I do not see any other. If this hypothesis should have to be abandoned, then it is not worth doing anything in the order of collective action. Without the perspective of communism, with this Idea, nothing in the historical and political future is of such a kind as to interest the philosopher. Each individual can pursue their private business, and we won’t mention it again.

What purpose would critical pedagogy serve without the Idea of communism? The collapse of the East Bloc/USSR meant that any talk of communism lost much of its caché as a result of the accumulated anti-Communist invective of Cold War politics, that is, until the global capitalist crisis in 2008. The hypothesis of history ending with American liberal democratic capitalism was no longer self-evident. According to Douzinas and Žižek (2010: viii), the geopolitical reorientation of historical possibility provokes a new question: “Is ‘communism’ still the name to be used to designate radical emancipatory projects?”

Amongst leading Left scholars, the meaning of communism evokes a diversity of opinion; nevertheless, there is general agreement (1) that a resurgent neocapitalism expanded exploitation and domination through the enclosure of the commons and that the conceptual connection between communism and building a new commonwealth was worth exploring; (2) that communism could induce new political subjectivities and popular agency in response to mass de-politicization and the politics of state security and

containment of conflict; (3) that the lessons of the 21st century along with some distance from economism and statism might fruitfully inform communism as the idea of radical philosophy and politics; and (4) that the aim of communism is to bring about freedom *and* equality.

What value is there in resurrecting the Idea of communism as we might start to revision critical pedagogy and critical pedagogy studies in the post-2008 world? According to Bosteels (2010: 59), Alain Badiou's communist Idea is defined, on the one hand, "by a series of axiomatic invariants that can be found whenever a mass mobilization directly confronts the privileges of property, hierarchy and authority and, on the other hand, by the specific political actors who historically and with varying degrees of success or failure implement those same communist invariants."

On the resurrection of the Idea of communism there is much to be debated. Judith Balso identified that the communist hypothesis as a political hypothesis that failed and now politics proceeds on its own, and because of the material disaster of the 20th century, history precipitates the collapse of the Idea. So naming communism has its problems. But not naming communism also has its problems because it fails to connect the Idea with the variety of important progressive pedagogies that were invented, developed and transmitted throughout the history of communism from Zoroaster to Spartacus to the Russian Revolution to Cairo's Tahrir Square. For others, specifying the communist Idea in conjunction with the Marxist idea still retains its purchase in many ways that should be explored: for example, related to the potentials of left communism (Bruno Bosteels), messianic reconstructions of time (Susan Buck-Morss), the paradoxes of human rights (Costas Douzinas), the material preconditions of revolutionary activity (Terry Eagleton), rethinking the common in Marxist communism (Michael Hardt) and its relationship to the concept and practice of communism (Antonio Negri).⁶

In discussing the Idea of communism and to probe its positive potentiality for social practices related to education in general and schooling in particular, I suggest that a critical pedagogy should promote a post-liberal communist Idea of pedagogy. By post-liberal, I mean thinking about communist pedagogy as something that does not reject the lessons of liberal freedom in contemporary life as somehow anathema to the Idea of communism. The Idea of communism must absorb the strengths and surplus validity found in liberalism in the promotion of freedom and equality in community. Critical pedagogy must commit to something like the proposition of *egaliberté* that Étienne Balibar (1990: 20, 21, 22 cited in Callinicos 2000: 22-23) specifies as not "the intuitive discovery or the revelation of an identity of the ideas of Equality and of Liberty" but rather

it is the historical discovery, which one could in fact call experimental, that their extensions are necessarily identical. To put it plainly, that the situations in which each is present or absent are necessarily the same.... [In other words], there are

⁶ Each author has a chapter in *The Idea of Communism* (London: Verso, 2010): see pages 155, 158, 160 for the points made here.

no examples of restrictions or suppression of liberties without social inequalities, nor of inequalities without restriction or suppression of liberties.

I suggest *something like* Balibar's proposition because, as a caution, I would tend to agree with Hannah Arendt (1973), Agnes Heller (1999), Claude Lefort (1986, 1989, 2007) and Dick Howard (1989) on the importance of freedom and the centrality of the Anglo-American revolutionary tradition in understanding it.⁷ I would emphasize also the importance, co-emergence and co-implication of re-emerging civilizations and their singularities in response to the new spirit of global (American) capitalism, the penetration of Anglo-Saxon culture, and the ideological force of neoliberal cosmopolitanism⁸ in a variety of new manifestations: for example, Slavic, Sinic, Indic, Turkic, Arabic, Hispanic, Afro and Indigenous singularities. Variations in specifying the Idea of communism should be encouraged. Exploring these avenues for philosophy, politics and education are important in rethinking a communist pedagogy. Here, within an intercivilizational politics, I would point out the importance of developing critical pedagogy as framed by pragmatic communism.⁹

Critical Pedagogy and Problems with the Idea of Communism

Developing critical pedagogy requires conjoining committed adherents in a discourse dedicated to the Idea of communism, formulating and debating ideas about communism and pedagogy, and asserting an intellectual line of argument (inside and outside communist fora) that pragmatically accounts for the problems of *power*, *authority* and *social change*. This debate assumes an immanent logic in the development of communist ideals and practices and relates to the production of communist theology, world-views, philosophies, historical materialisms and social theories; the identification of political ideologies, identities, and interests; and the formulation of insights on appropriate

⁷ Each of these theorists took the political forms of the state as important, especially the US state.

⁸ Peter Gowan (2010: 4) writes that liberal internationalism holds a "vision of a single human race peacefully united by free and representative institutions.... [It] sought to create a global order that could enforce a code of conduct on the external relations between states. But it essentially accepted the Westphalian system that granted states jurisdiction over their own territories. [¶] The new liberal cosmopolitanism, by contrast, seeks to overcome the limits of national sovereignty by constructing a global order that will govern important political as well as economic aspects of both the internal and external behaviour of states.... It proposes a set of disciplinary regimes - characteristically dubbed, ... 'global governance' - reaching deep into the economic, social and political life of the states subject to it, while safeguarding international flows of finance and trade. In this system, sovereignty is reconceived as a partial and conditional license, granted by 'the international community', which can be withdrawn should any state fail to meet the domestic or foreign standards laid down by the requirements of liberal governance."

⁹ Not to be confused with American liberal pragmatism. Key pragmatic questions regard the role of the liberal democratic state as a potential vehicle for revolution. For the most part, French and Italian theorists disappointed in post-1968 politics (e.g., Badiou, Negri) tend toward anti-statism or left communism whereas East Europeans, like Slovenian Slavoj Žižek, follow a more Leninist line, calling for communist restructuring of the liberal state. There has been a long tradition of communist thought in the Anglo-American world on how to use and reform the liberal state (e.g., Raymond Williams on the long march through the institutions of liberal society). Even Marx and Engels wrote on the English state and identified a democratic revolutionary program for communists within the liberal democratic state (see e.g., MacGregor 1992). Similarly, the trials and tribulations of parliamentary Eurocommunism or the failure of Salvador Allende's democratic Chilean revolution have much to teach adherents to the communist Idea.

strategies and tactics. However, there are three key problems in the development of critical pedagogy within a pragmatic communist paradigm related to questions of power, authority and social change. For power there is a tension between personal enlightenment versus social enlightenment; for authority there is the contradiction between enlightenment which presupposes unequal authority) versus egalitarianism which presupposes equal ignorance); and, for the relationship between the theory and practice of communism, there is the transition from a liberal democratic society to a communist society.

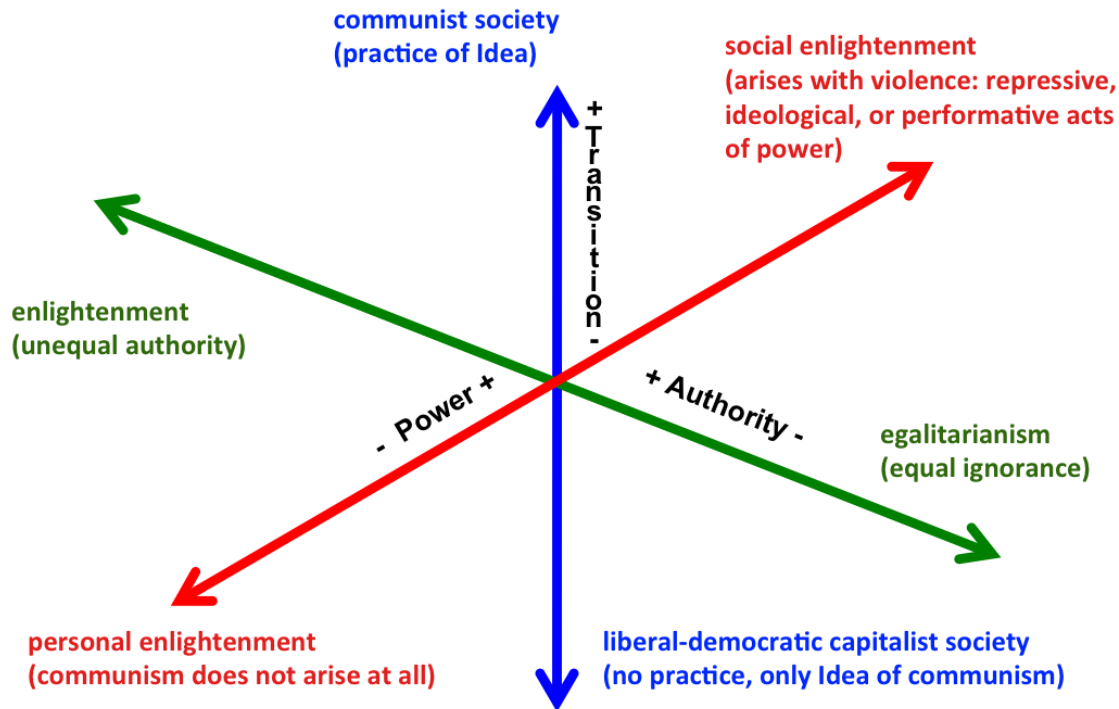


Figure 1 The Three Dimensions of Politics for the Idea of Communism

The above mapping of the inherent conflicts in communism must be adjudicated in order to develop an intellectual and political line of correct action. According to Jacques Rancière (2010: 166-178), the communist hypothesis is the hypothesis of emancipation intrinsic to the very practices of emancipation and, fundamentally, a pedagogical problem that must be solved before anything worthwhile is worth doing. For him there are two fundamental tensions tearing at the relationship between enlightenment and equality: one between the idea of individual emancipation versus the idea of social emancipation through education; and, two, between the idea of emancipation and the idea of egalitarianism in education.

First, on individual emancipation and social emancipation, Rancière suggests that the key difficulty in answering the question of power is NOT about the inequality of authority but

that the communism of intelligence is different than the forms of social implementation of this communism. Rancière (2010: 169) asks:

How far can the communist affirmation of the intelligence of anybody coincide with the communist organization of a society? Emancipation is a form of action transmitted from individuals to individuals and is opposed to the logic of social bodies. Anybody can be emancipated; a society can never be emancipated. How can the collectivization of the capacity of anybody coincide with the global organization of a society?

The communist society will not arise accidentally or spontaneously; therefore, it will either not arise at all from a pre-communist society (such as liberal democracy that reproduces itself through the generation of new inequalities) or it will rise in the name of enlightenment but use repressive or oppressive practices that impose themselves on the ignorant with a future promise of an egalitarianism which never comes.

What, then, would the discipline of emancipation look like *as an Idea of communism*? According to Rancière (2010: *ibid.*), a tension exists between individual communists and the community. The settlement of a social order either (1) erases heterogeneity through the logic of emancipation with respect to the logic of development and erases what is the core of emancipation, that is, heterogenetic forms of individual freedom or (2) undermines the capacity for gaining and transmitting intelligence about the possibility of communism. Disillusion rests on a presupposition: individuals are impotent in gaining the very competence that is required to change the social order without breaking with their egalitarian principle.

Understanding this point in a more concrete way requires the identification of the primary axis of political power is between authoritarianism and anarchism. Neo-communist politics, for example, must address the relationship between a neo-Leninist Left versus neo-anarchist Left that goes back to the Marx-Bakunin split in the 19th century or the split between Red and Green politics in the Germany in the 1970s. In pedagogical debates this tension is represented in debates about the emancipatory possibilities for state-based schooling or institutionalized education. The anti-statist orientation of anarchist in the free-school movement (e.g., Summerhill) and deschooling movement (e.g., Ivan Illich, Walter Mignolo) identifies that individuals or communities should be left to spontaneously localized practices of personal enlightenment.

However, Lenin's critique in *The State and Revolution* identified anarchists as unrealistic and naïve and inherently bourgeois. They cannot accept the necessity of institutions or the cruelty of everyday reality. They fail to understand or condone the progressive necessity of physical and symbolic violence as inherently linked to freedom or the fact that individual persons or local communities (however altruistic with each other) will be unable to defend themselves against more powerful foreign enemies and more institutionally organized territorial aggressors. In authoritarian politics for liberation, the state must be seized, not ignored or evaded. State-based education is transformed for imperatives defined for the communist revolution. Generalized enlightenment as symbolic violence is imposed on a population in need of re-education. Because I have

articulated the existence of such a harsh posture on the relationship between politics, violence, emancipation and education today will strike those who were socialized through liberal education as strangely anachronistic or positively evil (i.e. forgetting, of course, that the English Revolution, the American Revolution, and the American Civil War laid the basis for Anglo-American liberal education today).

On a broader scale, in the interests of revolutionary education, the Russian Revolution needs revisiting as an historical record and not as an artefact of Cold War myth. The logic of authoritarianism versus anarchism was reproduced even within communist circles in USSR in the 1920 debates between the Traditional Pavlovians and the Nietzschean Communists over how to remake the new education system. Lenin created The Commissariat of Enlightenment, and through his People's Commissar of Education, Anatoly Lunacharsky, and Deputy Commissar of (Adult) Education, Nadezhda Krupskaya, he initiated a truly revolutionary mass curriculum for the whole population. State-based education broke with elitist Russian traditionalism and Orthodox mystification and the new system also produced two generations of upward mobility for women, ethnic minorities, and the working class (Fitzpatrick 1970, 1979, 1992). Lenin, thus, pragmatically mediated a middle way through the core paradoxes of institutionalizing enlightenment in renovating Russian schools. Today, important thinkers on education are highly praised for their pedagogical insights, such as Lev Vygotsky and Mikhail Bakhtin; yet, these thinkers are rarely acknowledged as significant *communist* pedagogues in the USSR before Stalinization set in. While the Bolshevik revolution also led to the tragic elevation of the state, Russian chauvinism and many human disasters, the good and bad lessons of communist pedagogy and state reformation should be recovered and re-evaluated.

If analysis moves from the axis of power, another problematic exists for communist pedagogy: the axis of authority relations whereby the relationship between the unequal authority of the enlightened conflicts with the equalizing authority of the ignorant. According to Rancière (2010: *ibid.*), not only is there a conflict between the idea of individual emancipation versus the idea of social emancipation in education, there is a conflict between the idea of individual enlightenment and individual equality. The emancipation of one's own self-knowledge via self-critique to a higher education as a matter of self-creation (emancipation as enlightenment) can only happen for individuals without the conditions of authority. However, the free conditioning in the development of a community of equals is not a problem for liberals because liberalism justifies a community that reproduces the inequality of property ownership while at the same time supposedly freeing morally equal individuals to compete for a position in the hierarchy they are creating. Because liberalism assumes that the starting and end point is a hierarchy of enlightened authority, there is no paradox in leading the minority culture of the subordinate group (e.g., children) into the majority culture of the community (e.g., adults) so individuals cannot be left to their own means because they may go astray.

Built into the assumption of an individual's emancipation and the logic of Enlightenment is the schoolmaster who starts from the situation of ignorance which belongs to the student and who works to replace ignorance with knowledge, leading the student to

science and republican progress. The cultivated elites guide the ignorant and the superstitious onto the path of progress. The promise of equality infinitely reproduces the inequality. The gap separating the intelligence of the master from the intelligence of the ignorant is the knowledge of ignorance. The master's knowledge of ignorance presupposes an inegalitarian principle built into the division of labour, that is, the pedagogical act is necessarily marked by an inequality in knowledge. Here, equality is not the goal; it is a starting point for verification of the potential equality of intelligence between student and master whereby the student's new knowledge is the knowledge of one's own ignorance. Since liberals have only equality of opportunity as a goal, the paradox is not a problem for them in the same way and is built into the very Idea of liberalism as a fact and value in life; however, the Idea of communism demands not merely equality of opportunity to learn but presumes also the precondition of the equality of the learners. The communist pedagogue must claim both (1) the authority to enlighten and presuppose a precondition of unequal authority or (2) claim equality as an ignorant "schoolmaster" and presuppose a precondition with no authority.

As a concrete case today, pedagogues can witness the liberating and detrimental aspects of a liberal education that promotes a child-driven and anti-teacher model based on mobilizing consumer desire for commodities; however, traditional authoritarian models of teacher-directed discipline have fallen out of favour. For students on the margins of power, without an intensive socialization contrary to liberal modes of control, they never develop the discipline to challenge the capitalist system in an organized and systematic way. On the other hand, too much and the wrong kind of authoritarianism can create a weak ego and subordination to capitalist power. On the broader political level, this mirrors the debates between those calling for an enlightened "vanguard" to lead and teach others the hard lessons of history and those calling for all of us to just wait for the "spontaneous" revolution to unfold through the natural intelligence of the population – or, what might be called, the Forrest Gump philosophy of anti-intellectualism popularized by Tom Hanks in the 1994 Hollywood film. Paulo Freire clarifies his position about the tension and falls in line with Marx, Lenin, and Gramsci's critique of authoritarianism and anarchism: "The mythification of popular knowledge, its superexaltation, is as open to challenge as is its rejection. As the latter is elitist, so the former is 'basist'. Still, both elitism and basism, so sectarian in themselves, when taken *in* and *at* their truth become capable of transcending themselves" (Freire and Freire 2004: 71).

The liberal defence of child-driven education infantilizes children and extends infantilization into adulthood in the name of "positive thinking," self-expression, and the self-esteem agenda. The resulting demotion of critique, science, intellect and social resilience increasingly focuses the processes of learning on sustaining mandatory happiness and no longer understands education as the *making* of a substantively informed and intelligently creative and critical person. In this way, the market plays an increasingly important role in defining an "educated" person as one who buys and sells commodities and *is* a commodity (Barber 2007; Ehrenreich 2009). On the other hand, a communist pedagogy that ignores the emotional fulfilment and happiness of children and adults will create a cold-hearted future and terror for the soul.

Rancière (2010: 171-173) captures the problematic. If intelligence is treated as One and does not belong differentially to any single student, legislator, or artisan, emancipation (freedom and equality in community) will mean the appropriation of one intelligence that belongs to all participants as communal property. Emancipation in the communal sense means a communism of intelligence that must be enacted in the demonstration of the capacity of the “incapable”: the capacity of the ignorant to learn by herself on her own. In, an extended quotation, he writes:

The communist hypothesis is the hypothesis of emancipation... [but] we must not forget the historical tension between the two hypotheses. The communist hypothesis is possible on the basis of the hypothesis of emancipation, meaning the collectivization of the power of anyone. It is possible on the basis of the egalitarian presupposition. At the same time, the communist movement - meaning the creation of the communist society as its goal - has been permeated from its inception by the opposite presupposition: the inegalitarian presupposition with its various aspects: the pedagogical/progressive hypothesis about the division of intelligence.... The hypothesis of emancipation is a hypothesis of competence. But the development of Marxist science and communist parties mixed it up with its contrary, a culture of distrust on the presupposition of incompetence... [It is illusory to return to the debates of spontaneous freedom versus disciplined organization]. If something has to be reconstructed under the name of communism, it is the form of temporality singularizing the connection of those moments [and of collectivizing the power of the equality of anyone with everyone].

However, as illustrated in Figure 1, the Idea of communist pedagogy has to address Rancière’s two contradictions (i.e. a fourfold problematic) regarding (1) enlightened authority versus egalitarian ignorance and (2) personal versus social power in the enlightenment process. In addition, Alessandro Russo (2010: 179-194) identifies a third major contradiction.¹⁰ This third contradiction relates to the *transition* from communist theory within a liberal democratic capitalist society to communist practice for a communist society: that is, there is the conflict between a pedagogy that intends to transition from a non-communist society to a communist society versus developing a pedagogy that lives out the kind of teaching and learning that should exist in a communist society.¹¹ The third logic evokes the interesting problematic about means and ends, that is, between acting as a communist in the present versus acting in non-communist or liberal ways to bring about the communism in the future. What is the best way to teach communist democracy in a liberal democratic capitalist society?

For example, Paulo Freire has written extensively about the praxis of liberation and could be given a neo-communist turn by emphasizing his quasi-Marxist Left Hegelian

¹⁰ I.e., with Rancière and Russo there is an eightfold problematic in giving communist pedagogy meaningful direction.

¹¹ This dilemma raises critical sub-issues about communist means and communist ends as well as about the role of the State and the relationship between political knowledge and philosophical knowledge in the modern political *épistème* along the three primary dimensions of contemporary political culture: “(i) the party-state, as the sole seat for politics; (ii) the class-based vision of politics and the state; and (iii) the most decisive figure of the worker into the state” (Russo 2010: 183).

Liberation Theology. However, Ronald Glass (2001: 15-25) gives us some indication of the pervasiveness and power of liberal modernity, the Idea of liberalism and how anarchist tendencies in critical pedagogy reproduce bourgeois habits of mind. Glass takes up a liberal line in addressing the problematic of theory and practice with a historical humanist argument for the liberating power of modernism and its critique of dehumanization. He (2001: 15) sees Freire as someone who “recognizes the malleability and contradictions of identity, embraces epistemic uncertainties and the varieties of reason in knowledge, and respects the plural conceptions of the good which can shape moral and political life.” Exhibiting anarchist tendencies he naively concludes that liberation education be based on an ethics grounded in militant nonviolence – clearly showing affinity with a kind of weak-kneed liberalism that I have already addressed. Glass simplistically assimilates the anarchist praxis of liberation into radical liberal education for a liberal society without moral standing or commitment to anything beyond liberalism. Such *radicalization* does not lead to socialism or communism because it lacks commitment to any Idea other than liberalism. Fukuyama would be satisfied: we are at the end of history. So where does radical democratic *liberal* education lead us? Peter Berkowitz (2007: 25), a leading *liberal* theorist, makes Lenin’s point about the bourgeois connection between liberalism and radicalized liberalism (i.e. anarchism, postmodernism):

The greatest source of instability in the liberal spirit is the momentum that freedom develops in a free society. . . . It dissolves toleration into indifference or neutrality; it dissipates generosity into busybodiness or bossiness; it unravels reason and leaves in its place creativity and self-assertion; and it collapses enlightened self-interest into petty selfishness. By placing the individual at the center, freedom also creates fertile ground for the growth of age-old vices, particularly narcissism, vanity, and sanctimoniousness. At every turn, the spread of freedom emboldens the liberal spirit’s inclination to expose and overthrow claims of arbitrary authority. However, as the claims of freedom themselves acquire authority in a free society, the liberal spirit has difficulty limiting its campaign against authority to that which is arbitrary. With each new success, the liberal spirit comes closer to viewing all authority as arbitrary. Eventually, the liberal spirit turns upon the authority of freedom itself, attacking the very source of its moral standing. Thus does postmodernism arise out of the sources of liberalism.

So, even if the Idea of communism can be resurrected and transmuted from a variety of conservative and liberal conversations from around the world and a variety of different persons and communities, translating the Idea of communism into a theory of critical pedagogy as communist practice has its own specific social logical contradictions which have yet to be worked out.

The error, delusion, fiction or lie in liberal and communitarian (republican) commitments to pedagogical liberation is that working for the equalization of individual or group opportunity is neither necessary nor sufficient in itself to challenge the stratified systems of property ownership, whether it be the capitalist economy, bureaucratic state, patriarchal family or white-supremacist ethnoculture. In fact, in believing that equalizing

opportunity is also reducing hierarchical stratification of properties, well-intentioned liberals and communitarians unintentionally work to increase structural inequalities that act through the practical logics of modernity: the logics of capital, violence, sexuality and distinction.¹² However, critical pedagogy must explore the “gap” within and between the suturing of liberal and communitarian commitments to the Idea of education as enlightenment and equality in community to specify an idea of communism and an idea of a “socialist” transition or what Marx called “the lower stage of communism” that can address distributional issues that also challenge the privileges of property, hierarchy and authority. Furthermore this pedagogy must articulate the emergence of the many past and present moments of singularity as they connect with the communist hypothesis.

However, I pose the eightfold problematic in the Idea of communist pedagogy to suggest that Rancière and Russo seem to assume that the most relevant insights are those that can be garnered from the axis of communist politics that has emerged outside the Anglo-Saxon-Nordic. The potential for an Idea of pragmatic communism that addresses the contradictions specified by Rancière and Russo finds some purchase in attempts to address these struggles within North American liberalism rather than French republicanism (e.g., Cohen 1995; Cunningham 1987; Macpherson 1964, 1973; Sayer 1987). Also, this struggle has been played out in critical pedagogy’s failure to inoculate itself against the worst elements of radicalized liberal education.

Due to its unique history and socio-spatial expansion, the US has emerged as a unipolar Empire on the global stage. American liberalism has increasingly dominated thinking about education in Anglo-American countries (e.g., USA, UK, Canada, Australia, NZ, Northern Ireland) as well as having significant influence on global practices through the rule-oriented International Organizations (e.g., WTO, WB, OECD), relationship-oriented bilateralism (e.g., NAFTA, APEC) and various states of exception (e.g., The Velvet and Colour Revolutions, Arab Spring etc.) which it dominates in directing and developing. Responses to critical pedagogy in defence of “democracy” have mirrored the general tendencies of liberal education when asserting it in more radicalized forms instead of developing post-liberal modes, strategies, and tactics of education (e.g., labour, socialist, communist).

The influences of globalization and empire in the semi-core, semi-periphery and periphery provide new opportunities for rethinking critical pedagogy and teaching the core new lessons as long as it recognizes that critical pedagogy has become 1) too micro-politically oriented (i.e. too anti-systemic); 2) too ultra-egalitarian (i.e. anti-elitist and anti-enlightenment); and 3) too anti-authoritarian and anti-authoritative (i.e. too easily

¹² These logics and their categorization are debatable. For example, Agnes Heller (1999) argues for three logics of modernity: (1) technology-science; (2) division of social positions, functions, and wealth; (2) political power (domination). Feminist urgings no doubt require considering the logical primacy of sexuality in modernity and patriarchal contradictions in social development: see for example, Pierre Bourdieu (2001) *Masculine Domination*.

genueflecting to “democracy” as a cure all for social ills).¹³ In short, it suffers from ultra-leftism, the post-modernized condition of Lenin’s infantile disorder.

I recommend four analytical projects for the emerging global intelligentsia of the Left. First, more social theory and historical materialist contextualization and the development of a practical-critical revolutionary consciousness which modifies the critical traditions of Franco-Germanic Republicanism (e.g., Poststructuralism [e.g., Foucault, Deleuze, etc.], Post-marxism [Balibar, Badiou, Rancière, etc.] with an infusion of Anglo-American Marxism oriented toward a revolutionary pragmatic and democratic communism [e.g., Derek Sayer, E. P. Thompson, C. B. Macpherson, G. A. Cohen, etc.]). Second, draw less on liberal postmodernism and beware of its anarchist tendencies, compliance with neocapitalism, and the emergent ideology of imperialist neoliberal cosmopolitanism. Third, draw more on the intellectual resources and cultural understandings of non-liberal and illiberal states and identify their *revolutionary* democratic responses to American domination and hegemony and the expansion of “liberal democracy” in both its domestic, international and geo-regional dimensions (e.g., “Arab Spring”). That is, consider the hegemonic power of Roosevelt’s ground rules which organize the post-Cold War global security system along with how inter-civilizational dynamics play themselves out in the struggle between the Anglo-Saxon centre and the Euro, Slavic, Sinic, Indic, Turkic, Arabic, Hispanic, Afro and Indigenous variations of capitalism. And, fourth, develop intellectual institutions for making pragmatic judgements from the core and periphery about the world system with an eye on the selective integration of marginal and minority points of view.

The Idea of Communist Pedagogy

What would a communist post-liberal education look like? The origin of critical pedagogy was a creative event that tested the commitment of its practitioners to the Idea of communism. Critical pedagogy emerged as a socialist export from Latin America but its hegemonic form became firmly planted in the soil of anti-communist America. As an ideological export around the world, it has increasingly become a commodity for neoliberal cosmopolitanism and selling the American Dream. This is why Marx is the most important figure in the first wave of critical pedagogy yet Marx is neglected in the second wave of critical pedagogy as it turned toward ultra-leftism (e.g., anarchism, French postmodernism) or sanitized versions of anti-Communist liberalism (e.g., Dewey’s pragmatism, Rorty’s neopragmatism) in alliance with the New Right to roll-back the welfare state.

Critical thinkers, teachers and researchers must address the epidemiology of liberal infection: (1) re-engage with the Marxist tradition (e.g., see Kolakowski 2005); (2) re-interrogate theoretical precursors of first wave critical pedagogy (e.g., John Dewey,

¹³ Even Adam Smith - along with Karl Marx - argued that democracy could not end serfdom in Europe nor chattel slavery in the Americas and it took the armies of Napoleon and Abraham Lincoln to prove them right on the need for pedagogical dictatorship over the property holders of other humans: see Domenico Losurdo (2011).

Frankfurt School/Critical Theory, Paulo Freire) in a more profound way; (3) rethink the important strengths and limitations of the second wave theorists and the emergent and confluent libertarian, liberal and postmodern politics; and (4) pay serious attention to the insights generated by the left-wing communists, especially their concern for local creativity, radical reinvention, and the emergence of the NEW.

Again, a third wave of critical pedagogy has emerged and has taken up the importance of Marx.¹⁴ I suggest, however, that these exceptions prove the rule that critical pedagogy is trapped in the Idea of liberalism and romanticism, and at best the critiques are *against* racism, sexism, homophobia, imperialism, colonialism and capitalism and without a positive communist or intermediate socialist project. Critical pedagogy dedicated solely to democracy without substantive communist commitments can be appropriated. At best, defending “democracy” will strengthen global liberal democratic capitalism with a human face (i.e. neoliberal cosmopolitanism) and further facilitate expanding cultural and economic inequalities (i.e., more social stratification) or, at worst, it will provide more sustenance and allies for reactionary, conservative, and anti-capitalist movements, each challenging liberal or capitalist modernity. Furthermore, a pedagogical program which poses “democracy” as a positive paradigm appears to assume that the Trojan Horse of liberal democracy can achieve socialist democracy. Furthermore, liberal democracy will be insufficient in achieving the liberal goal of equalizing opportunity *and* the socialist goal of reducing social stratification as a counter to Fukuyama’s end-of-history thesis: first, because it presupposes *liberal democracy* as the dominant definition of democracy – even in its more radical or romantic forms - and, second, it ignores the dark side of democracy related to ethno-nationalism and fundamentalist readings of the republican general will, posing grave problems for weaker minority communities susceptible to discrimination, ethnic cleansing and genocide (Cunningham 2002; Held 2006; Mann 2005). Critical pedagogues must go further than just defending liberal democratic pedagogy and more explicitly take up the Idea of communism in a positive program for education. In doing so, critical pedagogues must emphasize that ethico-moral acts and judgements should not be solely directed toward more character development, as would conservative pedagogues, or toward a big change in identity with an eye on realizing a new political constitution, as would liberal pedagogues. Communist pedagogues must contextualize education and character development along with the politics of constitution, legislation and policy within a social structural framework.

As the American Empire exports critical pedagogy as a cultural commodity and extends its soft power, different civilizations and geopolitical regions must repurpose the functional processes and substantive goals of critical pedagogy according to Badiou’s (2010a) “communist hypothesis.” School teachers, community activists, and university researchers have the potential to use critical pedagogy as a way to promote the emergence of post-liberal democracy and to establish a good relationship with the Idea of communism.

¹⁴ For example, *Marxism Against Postmodernism in Educational Theory*, edited by Dave Hill, Peter McLaren, Mike Cole and Glenn Rikowski (2002).

The communist hypothesis is a cautionary tale about the dangerous contagion of global capitalism, neoliberal cosmopolitanism, and the radical and not-so-radical liberalization of critical pedagogy. For those who still live without the freedom of liberal democracy, liberalized critical pedagogy may provide important new benefits and help create new political spaces. The communist hypothesis is not about remembering the past nostalgically or evoking magical solutions through signs of demise in the present by assuming that merely changing a word will change the world. It is about starting again, seeking novelty, a new NEW¹⁵ which connects the past in social memory with a commitment to make the world conform to our desires for a better world. In desiring the NEW as a response to indignation in the present we must pay attention to the holes in our knowledge and the gaps that open up in the exploration of different sensibilities. For what is new to me, may be familiar territory to you; what we experience together as original and innovative may be the common understanding of the people next door; and what is NEW to the social world may indeed be absolutely new to humanity in its singularity, a humbling experience that demonstrates our equality as ignorant learners who are forever in need of the Zen wisdom for enlightenment: to empty our tea cups so they might be filled again.

We must explore together our ignorance and learn how to act on the potential destruction of our planet, the reengineering of our genetic inheritance and the very privatization of our general intellect because these threats now attack the very biopolitics of being. A critical pedagogy committed in good faith to the Idea of communism will find its critical emergence in creative events dedicated to confronting the privileges of property, hierarchy and authority as well as the theft of our shared commons. This critical emergence of the NEW will be our *enlightenment*,¹⁶ and as the poet Leonard Cohen in “Anthem” writes, “there is a crack, a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in,” and there is a light in every classroom, in schools, in village cafes, and in those walking the country roads or driving the city freeways, all heading toward Liberation Square, all going to where the light can gather again.

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¹⁵ This “new NEW” identifies the historical emergence of new human forms, substances, and practices or what Badiou calls an *event*, drawing insight from Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians (1:27-8): “to bring to nothing things that are.”

¹⁶ Contrary to contemporary critical orthodoxy of the West, the Idea of Enlightenment as the enemy of ignorance did not originate in the West but in the East with roots in Zoroastrianism and Buddhism. Enlightenment is NOT the core concept of Western thought; whereas, Sin and Redemption IS. For starters see John. J. Clarke (1997).

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