CRITICAL THEORY AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Edited by

Peter L. McLaren and James M. Giarelli

The contributors to this anthology bring North American research traditions into conversation with the latest advances in French, German, British, and Latin American schools of social thought. Challenging the very precepts of many empirical and analytical approaches to understanding educational phenomena, this collection of essays is indispensable for educators wishing to understand present philosophical debates.

The future of educational research in the United States will largely depend on how teachers and researchers deal with the urgent issues raised in this timely and iconoclastic book.

"These essays suggest, indeed insist, that we rediscover, even reinvent, our self-images as researchers, our practices of research, and our ideas of the aims of inquiry. They present models, ideas, examples, and theories to prod that reflexivity, but have no interest in offering the false solace of method. Where emancipation is the interest, all methods give way to dialogue. These essays stand on the hope, the basic belief, that such dialogue is possible and invite your participation."

—from the Introduction by Perter L. McLaren and James M. Giarelli

Peter L. McLaren is Professor at the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles.

James M. Giarelli is Professor at the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University.

A volume in the SUNY Series,
Teacher Empowerment and School Reform
Peter L. McLaren and Henry A. Giroux, editors

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS

ISBN 0-7914-2367-0

McLaren and Giarelli

CRITICAL THEORY AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

CRITICAL THEORY AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

EDITED BY

PETER L. McLAREN AND JAMES M. GIARELLI

14

We Can Reinvent the World[1]

Paulo Freire and Moacir Gadotti
Translated by Rudolf Wiedemann

The educator Paulo Freire does not like being interviewed. He complains about the journalists distorting his declarations. Announcing the pedagogic project he intended to introduce when he assumed the Municipal Secretariat of Education in the City of São Paulo in 1989, a headline in a big São Paulo newspaper declared the following day: "From now on writing wrong will be correct."

To overcome that resistance *Nova Escola* magazine had an idea: what about inviting Moacir Gadotti, also an educator, personal friend and chief-of-cabinet in Paulo Freire's secretariat, to talk to him? That would have the additional advantage of providing a more open and richer conversation, a dialogue between two educators deeply committed to transforming Brazilian schools.

It worked. The outcome was a lesson of life, with Paulo Freire using his sharp intelligence to reflect upon his experience as secretary of education, upon the course of public schooling, upon freedom and democracy, and to speak about his hope which he portraits in the book *Pedagogy of Hope—A Re-encounter with Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Paz e Terra). The hope that it is possible to put an end to oppression, misery, and intolerance and to transform the world into a place that is more agreeable and more just to live in. "Hope makes part of me just like the air that I breathe," he declares.

Being the most important Brazilian educator, known and appreciated all over the world, Paulo Freire has already written more than thirty books, among them *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1968, a milestone in Brazilian pedagogy and which has influenced educators in all parts of the world. At the age of seventy-two, Freire continues producing at an impressive rate. Since he left the secretariat in 1991

he has already written four books—*Education in the City* (Cortez); *Teacher Yes, Auntie No—Letters to Those Who Dare to Teach* (Olho D'Agua) and *Politics and Education* (Cortez), besides *Pedagogy of Hope*. He is finishing the fifth book, which will be called *Letters to Cristina*. Cristina is a niece of his, also a teacher, to whom he used to write during his exile.

Due to his liberating pedagogy and his political militance, Paulo Freire was exiled after the military coup of 1964. He returned to Brazil in 1980, after an amnesty. Being in exile he developed projects in several countries in Latin America, Europe, Africa and lectured at Harvard University in the United States. Most of the time he worked for the World Church Council with headquarters in Geneva.

Nine years after his return he assumed the Municipal Secretariat of Education of the City of São Paulo during the government of Luiza Erundina from the Workers' Party. He occupied the job for two-and-a-half years. He has been the target of accusations from the current São Paulo municipal administration, headed by Paulo Maluf, which are similar to the ones which were made against him during the military regime: accusations of developing a pedagogic proposal that is politicized and ideological. Paulo Freire defends himself against these accusations in his discussion with Moacir Gadotti, another important Brazilian educator and author of fifteen books. His latest two books—*History of Pedagogic Ideas* (Atica) and *Pedagogy of Praxis* (Paulo Freire Institute)—have come out recently.

Moacir Gadotti: Brazilian people are living from their hopes. However, one after the other have been lost and there has always been frustration afterwards. That happened with the direct-elections-now movement, with the Constitutional Assembly, with Collor. . . .Today we are living a moment of uncertainty, it seems that the ground we step on is moving and that we, in Brazil, cannot see tomorrow. Where does the hope that it is possible to transform the world that you refer to in your book *Pedagogy of Hope*, come from?

Paulo Freire: Although succinct, it is a question that requires reflection upon ourselves. What are we in the world? John, Mary, Charles? It does not matter the social class, although it has a considerable influence upon the way we are. But what are we, why are we, how are we, who are we? This gives me the chance to make comparisons. For example: I am looking at my small backyard now and I see other living beings there, but

of natural order—a jaboticaba and the kennel where Jim is, a German shepherd dog—and I can already establish comparisons among how I am, how the jaboticaba is and how Jim is. Without going too far, I come to a first conclusion that the relationship existing between me and my jaboticabas and between me and Jim is not the same as the one between me and you. There is a different quality in these relationships. A second conclusion is that I can take as a reference, to distinguish myself from the other two beings (Jim and the jaboticabas), that—although all three of us are finite, unfinished, uncompleted, imperfect—only I know that we are finite, unfinished and uncompleted. The jaboticaba does not know. It has another kind of knowledge.

Gadotti: That is what you want to say when you write in your book "I am hopeful by existential imperative" ?

Freire: That's it, too. I am hopeful because I cannot give up being hopeful as a human being, This being that is finite and that knows that it is finite is—due to the fact that it is unfinished knowing that it is so—necessarily a being that is in search. It does not matter that the majority is not seeking. Not seeking is the result, the immobilism imposed by the circumstances in which we could not seek. However, it is not the being's nature. Therefore, the large suffering masses, more immersed than emersed in the social, political, and economic reality, as I call it in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, are prevented from being. Therefore, they become apathetic. Hope does not flourish in apathy. Struggling for hope is up to the pedagogue, the philosopher, the politician, to those who understand the reason of the masses' apathy—and sometimes the reason for their own apathy. I cannot give up hope because I know, first of all, that it is ontologic. I know that I cannot continue being human if I make hope disappear and the struggle for it. Hope is not a donation. It is part of me just as the air that I breathe. Unless there is air, I will die. Unless there is hope, there is no reason for history to continue. Hope is history, do you understand? At the moment you definitely lose hope you fall into immobilism. Then you are as much a jaboticaba as the jaboticaba itself.

Gadotti: Is hope a mark, is it the ontological expression of the human being?

Freire: Hope is an invention of the human being that is part of our nature today, that has been constituted historically and socially. That means, hope is a project of the human being and is also the viabilization of the project. Therefore, dictators annihilate—as much as they can—the masses' hope. Sometimes under fright, fear, terror. Sometimes under assistentialism [state charity]. I am not against assistance because it is not possible that you can see a person dying and not give him bread because it would be assistential. This is wrong, it is a crime. What we cannot be is assistentialists, which means transforming assistance into a strategy. As a tactic, however, it is absolutely valid.

Gadotti: What is new about your new book and what remains from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*?

Freire: Many things have remained. Besides belief and hope, a respect for a conviction of the importance of the role of subjectivity has remained. When the Marxists—and also the non-Marxists—of a purely mechanistic nature of thinking used to criticize me in the 1970s, they accused me of being, idealistic, Kantian, in the best of the hypothesis of being neo-Hegelian, due to my proposals of conscientization, which came into conflict with the idea that the superstructure conditions consciousness. Today we see emerge secure and serious criticism of that mechanistic explanation of Marxist origin, which had not been competent to explain the proper role of its struggle against the capitalist project—a struggle in which it annulled the individual's liking, the individual's fear, the individual's pleasure, the individual's presence.

Gadotti: So you continue criticizing this mechanistic explanation which sustains the thesis of the human being's inexorability and the idea that there is a succession in history that will inevitably lead to socialism?

Freire: Of course. Just look at the enormous contradiction in this inexorability: people used to quarrel about inexorability. If the event will come tomorrow anyway, why should I die today struggling for it? I will wait. This mechanistic hypothesis should even lead to apathy. And it has been proved that it is not like that.

Gadotti: Look what a strange thing: in *Pedagogy of Hope* you say that "class-struggle is not the motor of history, but certainly is one of them." You—who was criticized in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* for not using the term class-struggle—know that now you will be criticized for using it.

Freire: That is interesting. Do you know one of the risks we will encounter at the beginning of the millenium—and which we already encounter today? It is that many people from the left were so impacted by the fall of the Berlin Wall that they lost their parameters and feel themselves immobilized. These people are perplexed about history, precisely because they thought that tomorrow was inexorable. They did not have time to reconstruct and rethink themselves.

Gadotti: But what are these risks?

Freire: First of all, the risk that a minority of these people manage to get into power and reactivate, odiously, Stalinist manners. The second risk is that some of those who have been impacted fall into such immobilism that they begin to believe in the neo-liberal discourse: that the struggle between the social classes has come to an end, that ideology has come to an end, that history has come to an end. This second group constitutes an enormous danger to progressivity itself, and strengthens the majority of the right and the minority of the left that intends to reactivate Stalinism. A third risk we will have to encounter at the beginning of the millenium due to this historic disorder is exactly the power of neofascism, which has been growing especially in Europe but also in the Third World (see the outbreak of neo-Nazism in São Paulo, the threats of killing people from the northeast of Brazil, the racism from the right). It is a frightening threat that is of a material nature but above all distant from that preoccupation. It has to be discussed at primary school, in the children's own language.

Gadotti: You have also been worried about about sectarianism, haven't you?

Freire: In *Pedagogy of Hope* I advance a little in relation to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where I had already criticized sectarianism. There I had been radical and not sectarian. Today I consider myself more radical—and even more distant from sectarianization. It has been historical experience and, therefore, political and social experience that has taught me that I have to convince myself of not being so sure about my convictions. Instead of killing the adventure of hope within me, this certainty about uncertainty, about uncertainty's search, has lead me further on toward the adventure of hope. That means, at the moment I discover that I cannot be any longer so sure about my convictions, I hope that I will discover a bit of light in the uncertainness. So I will be more curious, more inquiring, more competent. And this will necessarily cause me to be more nonconciliatory; to understand the difference and not to deny it.

Gadotti: What is the meaning of respecting the difference? Is it just as the bourgeois ideology says, respecting the poor, respecting the blacks. . . .?

Freire It is about getting into his or her skin and learning too.

Gadotti: In the book *The Mestizo Philosophy* (Nova Fronteira), that is fantastic, the French educator Michel Serres affirms that all of us are mestizos and that there is no education unless one can understand—more than understand, assimilate—another culture that is not one's own. Do you agree?

Freire: The position I call substantively democratic sets out to understand a need. It is not like a favor. It is necessary to understand someone different from me if I want to grow. Therefore, my radicality ends in the the present moment, Gadotti, the moment when I refuse to understand that which is different from me. When I understand that which is different, I discover that there is antagonism, which is the more radically different, I also discover that even with the antagonism I learn. Therefore, I cannot close myself sectarianly. Intrinsically, my quarrel is not against the others; it is against myself, in the sense of not allowing myself to fall into sectarianization. And sectarianization is the negation of the other, the negation of the contrary, the negation of the different, the negation of the world, the negation of life. That means, nobody can stay alive if he or she sectarianizes him or herself. Note how Stalinism was antilife, how Nazism was antilife. And democracy is only authentic when it is life. And the latter is only life when it is mobile, when it is afraid. It is necessary to open oneself as much as possible to emotions, joy, desires, even to the antilife of scientificism. Scientificism is antilife because this dream of an absolute rigorousness of knowledge against the non-rigorousness of knowledge is the negation of life too.

Gadotti: In *Pedagogy of Hope* you approach the question of women, of the pitfall that language represents, for example, when we affirm that men make history or when we say—to defend ourselves against certain questions which women ask about the use of language—that the woman is necessarily included when I speak of man. How can we escape from this pitfall?

Freire: First of all, we have to acknowledge that language is a social production, with an individual presence in that social production. In the second place, language is an ideologic body: It is not possible to think of language without ideology and without power. In the third place, grammar itself is born historically as a regulation of the powerful, of the one who has got power. It is obvious that in machist cultures language is molded according to that machism. In a progressive perspective it is absolutely fundamental that language is also reinvented, because it is not possible to democratize a society, leaving away one of the fundamental aspects of society's tasks, the one of human language. At a time of searching for equality, of overcoming restrictive ideologies, it is not possible that there remain syntaxes prohibitive to women. Some time ago, talking to an audience of fifteen hundred women, I suddenly saw the face of a man and said: "Todos vocēs" [masculine plural for "all of you"]. This is not grammar. This is ideology. I really have to say "todas vocēs" [feminine plural]. I write in that book

that it is possible that someone could say that the invention of language, before the invention of social structures, was pure idealism. It is not. At the moment you do not consider history as determinism but as possibility, reinventing language becomes part of reinventing the world. So you can even begin with the struggle of reinventing language.

Gadotti: This question is linked to another pitfall of language which you explain in your book *Teacher Yes, Auntie No.* On page 25 you say: "The attempt of reducing the woman teacher to the condition of auntie is an innocent ideological pitfall through which—trying to give the illusion of sweetening the teacher's life—one tries to smooth her capacity of struggling to divert her in her fundamental tasks." What do you want to say to that?

Freire: That one mustn't take away from the female teacher the duty of being a teacher, the duty of loving not only the child but the process itself, of which she forms a part as one of the subjects, that is teaching, that is formation. What she must know is that when she is called auntie, in the kernel of this auntie there is—not always lucidly to the headmistress—the following: auntie cannot go on strike. The more you reduce professionalization to parental affection the less the teacher will be able to struggle. At least that is what ideology is expecting. I also say that she may like being an auntie and may prefer being called auntie. Nothing against that. However, she must know about the ideological artifice when she is called auntie.

Gadotti: Another preoccupation expressed in the book concerns the children's cultural identity, which school ignores. Given this system of just one idea of culture, a monocultural curriculum, what can a teacher do in the classroom in order to transform this school and this curriculum?

Freire: A large number of male and female teachers feel absolutely handcuffed by an authoritarian administration. This form of administration encourages the female teachers to become aunties, the concept by

which they explain or accommodate themselves to the immobilism that authoritarianism expects from them. However, I believe that it is possible to practice popular education at school. Of course, swimming with the stream is one thing and swimming against it is another thing. If one has an open-minded, democratic administration, one will be swimming with the stream if one defends a number of open political-pedagogical positions. And one will be swimming against the stream if the concept of participation is forbidden, is a sin. It is difficult then to defend participation and, above all, to live participation. However, it is possible.

Gadotti: As a teacher, what would you do in the classroom?

Freire: One of the things the teacher should do is, for example, understanding culture in a multicultural way, commenting with the students on the differences and pointing out that this part of the curriculum is not universal, it has its regional dimensions, even of the family, and there also enters the class problem. It is also necessary to know how to reinvent language, to understand the diversity of its syntaxes, to recreate language in a correct form. As a teacher one witnesses its shape every day and understands very well the dialectical relation between tactics and strategies. That means, one has the strategic dream that is multiculturality, but one must have tactics to talk about it, because one may fall into exaggerations in one's discourse—which are idealistic, voluntaristic—and one might lose one's job. And it is not the question of losing one's job; you have to maintain your job and help your dream come true. I think there aren't any formulae for that. Every day one has to recreate one's tactics to overcome the exclusivism of a narrow cultural comprehension.

Gadotti: Your experience at the Secretariat of Education has given you a strong impulse to write. What are your plans for the next fifty years?

Freire: I wish I had these fifty years. . . . At the moment I am writing a book I like very much, which is full of affection, which will be called *Letters to Cristina.* Cristina is a niece of mine who has been in cor-

respondence with me since her childhood, when I was in exile. One day I got a letter in which she wrote: "Until today I have heard about uncle Paulo from my mother, my father, and my grandmother. And now at university I start to get to know another Paulo, through somewhat frightening references (we were still under military dictatorship); not any longer of uncle Paulo but of the educator Paulo Freire. And I am so interested in learning about Paulo Freire, uncle of all the others not only mine, that I'd like to ask a favor: send me letters about your life, about your childhood." I thought it was great and I answered her that I would do that.

Gadotti: And after that book?

Freire: I dream of writing an essay about Amilcar Cabral [revolutionary leader who founded the liberation movement of Guiné-Bissau and Cabo Verde in Africa]. I think it is very opportune working a bit on that. At a moment when people think that there will never again be a revolution, I, on the contrary, do believe that there will be one. Not the day after tomorrow and not like those we have already had. We must understand that history has not come to an end. What has come to an end is the way of making history. Today we have begun living a new way of being historical and we must notice that. We must do everything we can to make that clear.

Gadotti: Talking about making things clear, what do you say about the criticism that the current municipal secretary of education, Solon Borges dos Reis, has made of the previous administration, of which we formed a part? He announced the deactivation of MOVA [Adult Literacy Movement] because it had political-ideological objectives. He also intends to work more with professionalization, in contrast to those of us who worked more with school autonomy and participation—words which, according to professor Solon, are associated to the liberating pedagogy of Paulo Freire. He says that he will give emphasis to pedagogy for responsibility. First of all, I have to point out that Professor Solon has the obligation of trying to affirm his administration as secretary in the

position and political-pedagogical option he has, which the government he belongs to has. In this sense he is as political as we are. The neutrality he refers to does not exist. He is not neutral. He is trying to canalize his administration not only into a pedagogic perspective but into a political-ideological option that diverges from ours, that is opposed to ours. It is his right. By the way, he confesses that when he says that "the values of the Workers' Party administration are not the values we want for education."

Freire: Exactly. In the book *Politics and Education*, there is an article on education and responsibility in which I discuss the comprehension of reponsibility associated with education and emphasize the question of the political option, of the need for pedagogical responsibility. I defend Professor Solon's right to defend his option. Therefore, I also say in that article that it is not possible to have rigorous administrative continuity when a conservative administration succeeds a progressive administration. How can I, an educator who considers himself as progressive, continue a reactionary work? And how can a reactionary, a conservative person, continue a progressive work? There are very few purely administrative aspects. Any administrative problem is illuminating and founds a political question. For example, the priorities are political, ideological.

Gadotti: This fact does not strengthen the idea that is important, indeed, to strengthen the political-pedagogical proposals of the schools themselves, so that they can further administrative discontinuity.

Freire: I think so, but that also concerns the political power of those who are in the central administration. For example, how can a conservative administration, first of all, accept the proper idea of school autonomy? It cannot, for one of the characteristics of conservativism is exactly a centralization of power. When you ask what the meaning of school autonomy itself is, the answer has a political and ideological starting point. It is not a question only concerning administration sciences, it is not a question the answer of which depends on pedagogy. The education practice will

reflect the political-ideological dream of whoever defines autonomy. Something else: it is absolutely wrong to say that we did not make an education for responsibility or responsible education. However, our responsibility was based on other values. Our responsibility had to do, above all, with ontology, with the human being's quality of being. My responsibility concerns that. Therefore, I speak of ontology. I am responsible in my educational practice in the sense of helping myself and helping others become more. And it is not possible to become more without liberation. Thus, a pedagogy of liberation is profoundly responsible.

Gadotti: What is the difference between pedagogy of liberation and the one that is being put into practice?

Freire: The difference between the first one and the latter, which is said to be responsible—and which is as responsible as we are—is that the conservative one is responsible in relation to the interests of the dominant group. To argue, however, that to be responsible in relation to the interests of the dominant group is the only measure of responsibility is absurd. I can't say either that we are the only responsible ones. However, I have to distinguish at which point I am responsible. My utopia is not the conservatives' utopia. The conservative wants to preserve, therefore, he is reactionary—for it isn't necessary to preserve what is legitimate; one struggles for preserving what is illegitimate.

Gadotti: What balance would you make today of what was done during your administration?

Freire: I don't have any balance, but if you ask me if I regretted something, I would tell you that—despite the legitimacy of regret—I don't regret anything. I would do the same thing again. When we came together to administer the Secretariat, we didn't think that we were the greatest educators in the State. None of us thought that for that reason only we would be able to do something positive. None of us thought that we had been chosen by God to save education in São Paulo and in Brazil later on. What we knew was that we were doing the job seriously and we

would bet, without any false modesty, that we were able. And we had political options. We knew, for example, that we defended the idea that a school, being public, should become a popular school. And you, Gadotti, added that it was necessary to make clear what the popular was: when we want public school to become popular, efficient, democratic, we don't think of making a bad school for the children who were born rich. We were convinced that we should make a school that, having the taste, the smell of the popular, wouldn't have disgust for the bourgeoisie. We wanted that school to have a Brazilian face, therefore, an open school, happy, critical, one that would encourage the children's creativity and not their fear. Therefore, we needed an administration which would also be like that. It is not possible to think of the democratic dream of school having an authoritarian administration.

Gadotti: Therefore, you encouraged changes in the structures of power at the Secretariat?

Freire: We made a structural change through which the secretary possibly lost 60 percent of the arbitrary power it had. I couldn't even appoint a school secretary. There were indications from the base. Unless we break with the colonial character of the administration—in which it was even up to the secretary to deal with the teacher who had missed lessons in the month of September the year before—one cannot speak of school autonomy. We searched for the School Councils, created by Mário Covas in 1985 and archivated by Jñio Quadros. The School Councils were an extraordinary step towards the parents, the pupils, and the teachers achieving a place that exceeded the headmaster's power.

Gadotti: Do you think that this desire for freedom, autonomy, and participation is a mark left by your administration that will persist?

Freire: I believe in that. Even if this desire will suffer moments of suffocation, where it will feel that it cannot express itself. For in the end, the desire of being forms part of the ontology of being. Nobody

can decree that men and women stop dreaming. That is a dictator's business.

Notes

1. Reprinted from *Nova Escola*, ANO VIII, No. 71, Novembro, 1993, pp. 8–13.

15

Collisions with Otherness: "Traveling" Theory, Postcolonial Criticism, and the Politics of Ethnographic Practice—The Mission of the Wounded Ethnographer

Peter L. McLaren

Qualitative Research as a Discourse of Power[1]

. . .the most eloquent parts of the work [traditional philosophical works] are the wounds which the conflict in the theory leave behind.

—T. W. Adorno, "Der Wunderliche Realist: Uber Siegfried Kracauer"

This essay will discuss qualitative research in general and critical ethnography in particular from the perspective of new developments within critical social theory over the last several decades, particularly neo-Marxist and poststructuralist variants of critical postmodernist discourse.[2] Those strands of more orthodox anthropological fieldwork, including both liberal and conservative accents, that continue to enjoy uncontested power in contemporary educational research situate the challenge of field analysis in largely instrumental terms, or in what the Frankfurt School theorists refer to as "instrumental rationality." From the perspective of a defanged and defamed modernism, ethnographic research generally has been normalized to mean those practices in which researchers engage in order to gain entry into the field site, establish an ongoing rapport with subjects through the generation of a reciprocal trust, maintain the confidence of the subjects, and achieve a longevity in the field by remaining as unobtrusive as possible, sometimes affecting an almost bold detachment to the point of self-