Critical Pedagogy and the Everyday Classroom

EXPLORATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

Volume 3

Series Scope

In today's dominant modes of pedagogy, questions about issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, colonialism, religion, and other social dynamics are rarely asked. Questions about the social spaces where pedagogy takes place - in schools, media, and corporate think tanks - are not raised. And they need to be.

The *Explorations of Educational Purpose* book series can help establish a renewed interest in such questions and their centrality in the larger study of education and the preparation of teachers and other educational professionals. The editors of this series feel that education matters and that the world is in need of a rethinking of education and educational purpose.

Coming from a critical pedagogical orientation, *Explorations of Educational Purpose* aims to have the study of education transcend the trivialization that often degrades it. Rather than be content with the frivolous, scholarly lax forms of teacher education and weak teaching prevailing in the world today, we should work towards education that truly takes the unattained potential of human beings as its starting point. The series will present studies of all dimensions of education and offer alternatives. The ultimate aim of the series is to create new possibilities for people around the world who suffer under the current design of socio-political and educational institutions.

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For my beloved, Myoungmee and Tony Michael

Contents

Introduction: Betting on Utopia

As I started to finish the first draft of this book and sat down to write this introduction towards the end of summer vacation, I had a terrible dream concerning the end of my world and, by extension as far as I could tell, our entire human world. In my nightmare a nuclear weapon exploded in New York City, the place I grew up and lived most of my life, the city that seems somehow larger than life, the metropolis I love. Like many of my dreams this one contained multiple perspectives interweaved seamlessly in such a way that defies coherent retelling through the printed or spoken word. One moment I was in a car with my wife, mother, and father, speeding *backwards* through the parking lot of a supermarket my family shopped at when we were children, a fireball on the horizon blossoming, bulging and expanding, coming for us, sweeping everything and all in its path asunder. The next moment my perspective was that of a grainy TV news camera filming the carnage in the aftermath of the detonation, the anonymous avenues and boulevards of residential Queens ablaze, actual tracts of asphalt converted to pools of fire, the skeletal remains of buildings smoking while others had entirely disappeared, engulfed in the conflagration, grievously wounded survivors staggering among the flames, disfigured, eyes molten in sockets dripping slick down blackened cheeks, a charred girl stumbling aimlessly, her fingers fused together in misshapen melted lumps.

Like most dreams, its dreadfulness was doubly effective as we feel most vulnerable when we sleep. Dead relatives, dead friends, and dead pets, somehow we are able to acknowledge their loss during our waking hours but at night their memories return, often unbidden, the void in our lives from their loss gaping before us, the presence of their absence haunting us. Most disturbing of all, unlike other dreams, this was no mere fantasy conjured by Rowling or Tolkein or Brooks, a fancy with little likelihood of ever being witnessed. I live in a country that harbors more than 10,000 nuclear weapons, has used them in the past, and continues in their research and development. I live in a land that has made enemies around the world, foes who would love to get their hands on such devices and turn them against us. These weapons, these "killers of giants" as Ozzy Osbourne sang, "threaten us all." The horror of my dream was all the more so because of the situation's distinct possibility in my lifetime or that of my children's. Unlike most nightmares that I am able to wake from and brush off, unlike most bad dreams which I can barely recall after

rousing, unlike other visions that leave me with a vague sense of unease but nothing more, this nightmare has stayed with me and grows ever more vivid.

Sometimes I try and take my dreams apart, not so much to interpret as dissect them. I want to know *why* I had them, what's going on in my life to spark their emanation from my subconscious. This dream has many possible origins. It was over a year ago that I read Cormac McCarthy's tremendous book, *The Road*, a chilling post-apocalyptic novel set in a ruined United States amid the nuclear winter. It's been almost 6 years since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 6 years since I sat in traffic on the Whitestone Bridge on my way home from my new job teaching in Westchester County staring in shock and disbelief at the plume of black smoke rising to the sky from lower Manhattan, from all that was left of the Twin Towers and all those people, a site my wife and I had visited only a couple of weeks earlier, from a hell my cop brother pulled up to amid indelible images of hysteria and office supplies wafting about and human limbs and a pair of high-heeled feet protruding from beneath a jet engine (Jason survived that day). Six years of feeling vulnerable, of waiting for the other shoe to fall.

The supermarket and its parking lot in my dream, a Keyfood from my childhood, are long gone, the property sold and converted into a school and schoolyard, the school named *The School of Heroes* after the hundreds of firefighters and police officers and thousands of men and women who perished at the World Trade Center, the schoolyard and its playground locked off to local residents in the evenings and weekends. A month or so before the dream I'd watched an HBO documentary *White Light, Black Rain* about the American-visited destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

I live in a country of mostly good people whose government has made many enemies, a government I see unraveling under a president with little regard for human life, American or other, a man who claims to act at the behest of a sky god as his administration deserts him, his closest advisors and attorney general resigning. For generations Americans were able to kid ourselves that we held the moral high ground, a falsity recognized as such by much of the rest of the world. September 11 and our government's actions since have laid naked the truth for those who dare to see. Our troops and proxies torture while our president says it isn't torture (Stolberg, 2007). Our mercenaries go on berserk rampages and we're reluctant to even call them mercenaries (Broder & Risen, 2007). Iraq was all about the oil, something we war-protestors *before* the war were claiming, but now even Alan Greenspan says its so and so it must finally be (Andrews, 2007).

The empire is on the decline, and I worry about the implications of this, what with those 10,000 weapons of mass destruction here at home and all the thousands of others elsewhere in the world. I worry knowing that humans have never *not* used a weapon they have made. I worry less the Charlton Heston character from the campy *Planet of the Apes* (d. Schaffner, 1968) prove a prophet, on his knees forlorn in the surf, fist clenched, staring up towards the jutting remains of the Statue of Liberty, acknowledging, "We finally did it. You maniacs! You blew it up! Ah, damn you! God damn you all to hell!" And all this bothers me the more so since the birth of our son and the conception of our second child, because this is not the world or the end I wish my little Monchinskis to inherit.

Which brings us to this book. Humanity's inhumanity is all too real, and this makes the nuclear threat all the more so. It hovers over our heads like a sword of Damocles, yet we take it for granted such that we go on about our daily lives having set it aside, as though it were *not* a distinct possibility, as if it did *not* directly involve and threaten us all *every* day. We wake up and read the papers or watch our TVs and learn about the latest affronts to humanity, about yesterday's murders here and around the world, of the Iraqi people, the jihadists and insurgents, of the American soldiers and mercenaries who perished the previous day in a war that didn't have to happen, a war that *shouldn't* have happened. I go to the school where I teach and there are kids who taunt one another and staff members who talk behind each other's backs. It can all get you down if you let it.

At the same time, humanity's benevolence is also apparent in our daily lives. I see it when I watch my wife Myoungmee's infinite patience and care and involvement with our son Tony Michael; I thought she'd be a good mom, but I could never have expected the wonderful mother she is. I see our species' goodness when I go to work and watch teachers, administrators, maintenance personnel, aides, and other staff members connect with kids and treat them decently and kindly, treating students the way they want to be treated, the way they deserve to be treated by dint of being human. I mentally weigh these and other often unsung daily acts of goodness against the evil and malfeasance that garner so much of our attention and news coverage. Some days the scales tilt in one direction, other days the opposite. Some days the shows of inhumanity and the arsenal of weapons available to those of malign intentions make me shudder. Other times the little acts of kindness leave me feeling optimistic, even euphoric.

Paulo Freire speaks of "betting on utopia" and immediately clarifies that "I don't mean utopia as something unattainable, but utopia as a possible dream" (1996: 110). The continued inhumanity of man to woman and woman to man, of the human species towards itself and all others, the specter of our species' self-induced extinction, these things are all possible. So long as some benefit from the suffering of others and continue to wield disproportionate economic and political power humanity's current path will go unchecked. Whether war is a part of the human condition or merely something we have been habituated to accept, it is never inevitable. We are human animals, conscious beings, beings conscious of our consciousness. We have agency. We can choose to try and talk out our differences before punches are thrown, before weapons are fired, before buttons are pushed. At loggerheads we can choose *not to* throw the punches, fire the guns, and push those buttons. We can make choices that make ours a better, safer, and saner world, choices that augment and enhance our humanity, that do not lessen and degrade it. When the *Galactaca's* Admiral Adama (Edward James Olmos) asks captured Cylon agent Sharon Valerii why her species hate humanity enough to want to destroy it, the Cylon reminds him that in a speech "You said that humanity was a flawed creation, and that people still kill one another for petty jealousy and greed. You said that humanity never asked itself why it deserved to survive. Maybe you don't." This is a book that will hopefully help us understand why we do deserve to survive and why we must, as well as how we can thrive as a species.

Education and critical pedagogy can help us understand the choices that will make us more, that will make ours a better world to live in. Freire posited "there can be no educational practice that is not directed toward a certain objective, which does not involve a certain dream, an idea of utopia" (1996: 127). One criticism of critical pedagogy is that it is "too political," that teachers committed to a critical pedagogy introduce a political dimension to the classroom that is an imposition and best left out. Already it is clear from this introduction that I harbor certain opinions of governments in general and governors in particular, of the Iraq war and occupation. I am "guilty" of what Andy Polsky, one of my professors at CUNY, would call *political* political science, but there is no such thing as political science or science or teaching or mathematics or any subject that is *not* political. When we don't question the status quo—whether our questioning is to criticize or bolster it—we are tacitly endorsing it.

If you're a teacher who thinks your subject matter is an esoteric field and only the smartest of students will "get it" and then be worthy, you have a vision of your own utopia, though one I argue against throughout this book. I believe that the everyday classroom is a site where we can challenge humanity's inhumanity, where we can work together *with* our students towards their humanization and our own, where we can critically examine our programming and conditioning and recognize that we are not determined beings but beings in process, fueled by hope, betting on achievable utopias. The everyday classroom is the place where, with our students, we anticipate tomorrow by dreaming today and acting on our visions now (Freire, 1987: 187).

The problems and difficulties that confront us in the classroom and in our lives are very real. We live with them and deal with them daily. What we are often unaware of is where these problems and difficulties come from. The institutional arrangements and systemic relationships go unnoticed and unchallenged. We focus instead on the failings of individuals within these arrangements and relationships, sometimes ignoring, usually unaware of, how these arrangements and relationships structure our lives and influence our decisions. For example, there was an article in *The New York Times* (Freedman, 2007) about a high school math teacher in New York City who flunked a student who'd missed a third of all class sessions and was late for 20 others, a student who'd handed in only half her homework assignments, failed almost all tests and quizzes, and skipped the class final but attended the senior prom. You can imagine the teacher's shock, disbelief, and anger when the principal at his school overrode his grade, allowed the student to retake the final after 2 days of intensive one-on-one tutoring, and passed the kid in the course. The teacher, who despite five out of six satisfactory observation ratings seemed to be having other issues with students and staff at the school, resigned. The student's mother opined that the teacher "needs to grow up and be a man" and expressed her relief that her daughter would be graduating as she couldn't afford to pay for another senior prom. I'm not making any of this up.

So, who's to blame in this story? Is the kid to blame for her absenteeism, for her tardiness, for not completing assignments, failing to seek out extra help and bombing all her assessments? Yes, sure she is. Were there problems with the teacher, who apparently missed 24 school days himself, 2 parent–teacher conference nights,

and reacted to his principal's move by not showing up to work for 2 days? Yes. Is the principal at fault for overriding the teacher's grade and socially promoting a student who should never have passed the class? Yes. Is the student's parent to blame for being more concerned with the price attached to a prom than her child's attendance and performance in school? Of course she is. There is no shortage of blame to go around in this story.

But there are other factors at play that go unmentioned in the story. What is this high school in Manhattan like? What is it about the place that the teacher would take off two dozen plus days during the year? What is it about the school that the student would cut class and entire days repeatedly? Why did the principal feel she had to change the teacher's grade and pass this student? Would there be repercussions from the Board of Education, from the state or the federal government, if too many kids like this one failed? What kind of family did the kid grow up in that allowed or were unaware of or didn't care that their kid was missing all these classes and failing, where a mother's main concern was the price of a future prom dress? What kind of neighborhood does this child and her family live in? How is education viewed in the family and community and why? This book will explore the structural relationships that make some choices—like cutting class or changing teachers' grades or not valuing education—possible, even more probable, than others.

One thing this book *is not* is an apology for bad behavior. I recognize that we can make choices and stop making excuses, that personal responsibility is very real and needs to be encouraged. At the same time I want to show how the range of options we perceive as open to us can be limited by factors external to ourselves, factors that may constrain our possibilities and potential, that may impede our dreams and utopian visions.

Allow me to illustrate my point. School administrations are answerable to the board of education and both the board and the administration seek to cut costs and save money. This is understandable. They're both responsible to the taxpayers, and no one who forks over their money to the government at any level wants to think their dollars are being misspent. Red lights go up when school districts appear to be hemorrhaging green.

One area in recent years that has proved vulnerable when trimming school budgets is special education. Special education programs have been scaled back and outright cut. Students receiving out-of-district services at many times the cost of an in-district education are brought back into the fold of their home districts even when appropriate programs don't exist for them. Districts actively look to fill slots with out-of-district kids and the huge tuitions their home districts deliver. Sometimes this has the unsavory result of less spots being available in special education programs for children living in a school district. Of course the principal rationale—saving money, fiscal responsibility—is usually not voiced. Instead administrators and district personnel say they're looking out for the child, that the literature and "the data" "prove" that mainstreaming works, that inclusion is in the best interest of the child. And indeed sometimes more kids are segregated in special education programs than should be and integrating them back into the mainstream is needed. But the impetus

towards this drive becomes all the more imperative when it's a question of money on the table, which casts suspicion on its desirability.

So imagine a classified eighth grader graduating the small, nurturing middle school program that has cared for him the last 3 years, providing him with a one-to-one aide in all his classes. The idea, so far as his parents, guidance counselor, and teachers were concerned, being he'd transition to a similar smaller nurturing program in the high school. But there's a problem. For one, the high school does not provide one-to-one aides. Another predicament is that one of the programs the boy could have transitioned into, an intense support program that provides high levels of one-to-one classroom student–teacher attention and separate classes when necessary, this program no longer exists. Another option once open to the child, a self-contained resource room type program, has also been done away with. What the boy gets is mainstreamed into a co-teach math class with 22 or 25 or more other kids.

There are two teachers in his math classroom but neither quite connects with the boy. After all, some teachers work better with some kids. As a special education teacher I often am aware of the teachers who work well with my kids and the ones who don't. I know teachers that, I can almost guarantee, should a child with special needs be plopped down into their class, there *will* be problems. On the other hand, some of these very teachers who don't work well with my kids may work very well with the "smart" kids or the English language learners or other groupings and kinds of students. But what happens to the boy of this example?

I've seen kids like this get overlooked and left behind. I've seen teachers who were unaware these children had individualized education plans (IEPs), unaware of their legal responsibility to be familiar with this document and implement any classroom or test modifications it calls for. One modification is "directions explained" on exams. I've seen special ed teachers who get kids and the way they might implement this modification versus regular ed teachers who do not and will not. To be fair I've also seen a number of regular ed teachers very concerned about classified kids in their courses who go above and beyond, and special ed teachers who only have their jobs because of tenure.

But let's imagine for the sake of argument that our kid is in his mainstream math class and he's lost and no one recognizes his needs. How will he react? He may shut down and do nothing. He may stare at his paper with the look of a cow munching grass. He could act up and act out. Who could blame these teachers for locating failure in the individual, in this case in this kid? After all, they have 20-something other students in the class they spend long hours planning for, and most of these are doing well. If the kids' parents don't get the kinds of answers they want to hear from the teachers they may approach the principal. The principal may write them off as annoying parents, or the principal may second guess his teachers, wondering if they're doing their jobs.

What we have here is an institutional situation that has structured failure and blame. Should the student strive to do his best? Of course he should. Should he throw up his hands in frustration and give up? Heck no. But we've already seen that the previous programs that catered to children like ours here now no longer exist.

Does anyone point out that these programs worked well with these kids? Usually the lack of these programs is accepted, with staff (and students) doing their best to work around the void. As much as the teachers might want to help this child, there is the fact that they have a couple dozen other kids in the room and they probably see over a hundred students each-day each-teacher. And as I said in the previous paragraph, most of these other students are probably doing well in class, and this can lull teachers into thinking that one size does indeed fit all, when in fact it does not. As his parents watch their boy flail and fail they may start thinking he's a dummy or that the school is unresponsive to their child's needs. Antagonistic relationships between home and school can and will develop.

An important point of this example that will recur throughout this book is that though the structures we live in and teach in and are schooled in condition us, they do not determine us. Ours is not a one-sided tale. Structures do not act on individuals unilaterally. We can still choose, and our choices, along with the choices of and action with others, can change structures. There is a constant give-and-take between individuals and the structures and institutions we inhabit. We make decisions that are influenced by our concrete circumstances and our decisions influence our concrete circumstances in—to borrow a word from my Marxist friends—a constant dialectical interplay. Though choices and outcomes are often probable, they are by no means inevitable. For example, it's no surprise that many abused children grow up to abuse children. We often take it for granted that abusers and serial killers and mass murderers were themselves abused. What is often surprising to people is the number of abused children who *don't* grow up to abuse children. There is always hope that our agency can override our conditioning. Hope exists because change is possible. If change were not possible hope would be but a bittersweet memory if that and we would all live out predetermined lives. And when we study history and see what individuals can do when they come together in social movements to right some wrong we can understand why betting on utopia is possible and we must do something.

The following six chapters attempt to illustrate what betting on utopia looks like in practice. The first chapter develops an overview, at the macro- and micro-levels, of the interplay between institutions and individuals. I draw on examples from history, philosophy, and literature to illustrate my points. The second and third chapters consider perverse and pervasive structures of inequality, namely the dominant Western ethical canon (specifically deontological and consequentialist models), and psychology and psychiatry, contrasting them with an ethic of care, Vygotskian psychology, and humanizing mental health practices. Chapter 4 explores the relationship between teachers and students as partners and comrades in the process of humanization, criticizing well-known "teachers' movies" that downplay and impede such relationships and progress. When we discuss what makes critical pedagogy critical pedagogy, you'll understand why I see myself as necessarily going out on a limb in Chapter 5. In it I attempt to illustrate critical pedagogies in action across and beyond subject areas. A high school special education teacher who has taught social studies and middle school mathematics, limiting and enabling factors in this chapter are my own experience and familiarity with the literature. John Dewey (1993: 60)

was of the opinion that the two major strands at play in human relationships are the democratic and the aristocratic, and I agree. Chapter 6 critically examines the allure of aristocratic elitism, drawing on the works of Nietzsche, Dostoyevsky, and Sartre, in the confirmation of democracy and the democratic faith.

This book could never have been conceived without the edification and inspiration provided by a host of others. I met Joe Kincheloe as a student at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Finishing up my course work in the Political Science Ph.D. program I decided to take a few classes outside the department and saw the Urban Education Department offered a "Critical Pedagogy" class. That's where I had the pleasure and honor to study with Joe, an unsung hero if ever there was one who along with his wife and comrade Shirley Steinberg has written and edited more than 40 books in the past 8 years. Prolific isn't the word. Ira Shor took the time to respond to a letter I wrote to him years ago about teachers and the production of surplus value when I was deep into my Marx and Engels phase and had just discovered Freire. I met Ira in Washington DC during a *National Coalition of Education Activists* conference and continue to study with him at the CUNY Graduate Center. He's a guy who I wish wrote *more*. Joan Tronto is an intellectual powerhouse, brilliant yet down to earth, unassuming but assured in her knowledge and her pedagogy, and above all immensely humane. Likewise Ros Petchevsky who in addition to the intellectual brawn packs a mean roundhouse kick and a laconic wit, and with whom I share a love for cats. Chapter 6 of this book is inspired and culled from various papers I wrote in classes with Marshall Berman and Joan Tronto. To Marshall I owe thanks for his seemingly tangential in-class rambling digressions that expose a staggering intellect at work in real time, always turning out to be neither tangential nor digressions. Marshall's political theory is written like fine literature and I know there is at least one novel if not more in him. Examples such as his encouraged me to study political theory and to be able to write a book like this one in your hands. This book would not have been possible without the support of Hermen van Paradijs and Marianna Pascale and the opportunity afforded to me by Springer.

There are those—scholars and activists—I have never met or met only briefly but who have inspired countless hours of rumination and immeasurable stimulation. No matter how many I name I will forget many more, and to these I apologize. Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, bell hooks, Gerry and Maria Coles, John Marciano, Bertell Ollman, Studs Terkel, all have educated, enlightened, and entertained me with their words, videos, lectures, letters, and company. As will become apparent in the chapters that follow, the good people at *Rethinking Schools* provide invaluable resources and lesson plans commensurate with critical pedagogies. I can't say enough good things about this publication or its contributors, check them out yourself on line at www.rethinkingschools.org. Also well worth keeping up with is www.fairtest.org, an organization that keeps track of standardized testing and its abuses.

To the students and staff at Fox Lane High School these past 7 years I owe my gratitude. My first 4 years in the district were spent at the Hillside alternative school and the students and staff members—especially Sandy Deane and Betsey Aquilino,

Chapter 1
Critical Pedagogy: Possibilities and Limit Situations

1.1 Theorizing Practice and Practicing Theory

This is a book about critical pedagogy and the everyday classroom. Critical pedagogy is a praxis, with praxis constituting "action and reflection" (Freire, 1985: 155). Praxis involves theorizing practice and practicing theory. Praxis is thinking about what and why you're going to do before you do it and then reflecting on what you did, how you did it, and how it turned out. Critical pedagogy involves an ever-evolving working relationship between practice and theory. It is a relationship that is always in progress, involving a constant give-and-take, a back-and-forth dialectical informing of practice by theory and theory by practice.

As a praxis, critical pedagogy cannot be stagnant. It demands reflection and reconceptualization between what goes on in our classrooms, why it goes on, and what and whose ends are served—which is what makes a book like this difficult to write. How presumptuous it would be of me to say what I just said about praxis and then offer a how-to guide. My hope is that critical pedagogy will allow you to understand your relationship to education, to the institutions—the schools and colleges, boards and departments of education—*in which* and your relationship to the individuals—students and parents, teachers, administrators, and community members—*upon whom* education plays out and is played out by. Critical pedagogy takes as its starting point the everyday classroom, whatever that might look like in your locality, region, country, and time period.

Critical pedagogy is also a discipline. You can go to university and, in everyday classrooms, attain master's degrees and doctorates studying critical pedagogy. But the praxis of critical pedagogy implies action and transformation beyond the individual. True, if your goal is to add more letters behind your name or more framed certificates on your wall, you could do that through the discipline of critical pedagogy. But while critical pedagogy recognizes the importance of the individual and her interests, it also recognizes that the individual and her fulfillment depend on her social relationships with others, inside and outside the classroom.

Critical pedagogy requires thought and deed together, reflection and action. One without the other does not amount to praxis. As Paulo Freire warns, "Cut off from practice, theory becomes a simple verbalism" (1985: 156). The opposite holds

equally true. "Separated from theory, practice is nothing but blind activism" (Ibid.). Thus, Freire cautions, "there is no authentic praxis outside the dialectical unity, action–reflection, practice–theory" (Ibid.).

Activist-scholars in critical pedagogy have much in common in their definitions and deployments of critical pedagogy while, at the same time, bringing their own and their students' subtle nuances to it. Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy seeks to "make oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed" with the hope that "from that reflection will come liberation" (1997: 30). Peter McLaren defines critical pedagogy as "a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state" (2000: 35). Henry Giroux recognizes critical pedagogy as a *political* pedagogy—indeed, critical pedagogy in all its forms recognizes that *all* pedagogies are political—aiming to connect "understanding and critical engagement with the issue of social responsibility and what it would mean to educate students to not only critically change the world but also be responsible enough to fight for those political and economic conditions that make its democratic possibilities viable" (2006: 209–210).

There is no trite, one or two sentence definition of critical pedagogy that explains exactly what critical pedagogy is at all times for all people. As Joe Kincheloe notes, "All descriptions of critical pedagogy—like knowledge in general—are shaped by those who devise them and the values they hold" (2004: 7). Critical pedagogy is context specific, which means a critical pedagogy on a 21st-century American Indian reservation is going to look different than a critical pedagogy centered in working class Staten Island, New York in the 1980s (see for examples, Grande, 2004; Shor, 1997). Even in one location at one time, various critical pedagogies are possible.

Yet there are common characteristics that transcend different critical pedagogies in practice. A critical pedagogy is both descriptive and prescriptive, or as Freire explains, it "formulates a scientific humanist conception that finds its expression in a dialogical praxis in which the teachers and learners together, in the act of analyzing a dehumanizing reality, denounce it while announcing its transformation in the name of the liberation of man" (1985: 57). By "man" Freire meant human beings, inclusive of women. Critical pedagogy is descriptive in that it critically analyses the world we live in. A teacher–student–scholar informed by critical pedagogy does not take the status quo as inevitable or unalterable. Critical pedagogy looks at how the pedagogical, political, social, and economic aspects of life play out and inform one another. Critical pedagogy asks why do these things exist the way they do? Who benefits from this way of things? Why? Who suffers? How? Asking these questions and working with your students and other teachers to develop answers are the path to critical consciousness.

Critical pedagogy is also normative in the sense that it is prescriptive. While allowing one to critically understand our world, critical pedagogy as a praxis *demands* we work to change that world. Critical pedagogy resonates with us because it affirms our suspicions that things aren't the way they should or could be. Critical pedagogy offers suggestions for change, but not cut and dried blue prints. Critical pedagogy

reaffirms the democratic faith in human beings' ability to make and remake our worlds. Critical pedagogy allows us to marshal reason and emotion in the service of understanding, transcendence, and transformation. Critical pedagogy will help us uncover situations that stifle humanization—limit situations. At the same time that these limit situations are recognized, limit acts or the untested feasibility of a dehumanizing situation become possibilities. Critical pedagogy offers us hope that things can change but it is up to us to change them.

A critical pedagogy must hold itself up to the same standards of criticism, assessment, and judgment that it does other pedagogies. Freire describes "the crux" of the matter as this: "I must be constantly open to criticism and sustain my curiosity, always ready for revision based on the results of my future experience and that of others" (1985: 11). Elsewhere he explains how a critical pedagogy must be continually "made and remade" (1997: 30). Any critical pedagogy, like the human beings it works to humanize, remains unfinished, constantly evolving, a work in progress. This is a good thing.

Because critical pedagogy is all these things and more, it makes writing a book like this complicated. If you have come to this book expecting step one–step two–step three suggestions for implementing a critical pedagogy, let me tell you right now you will be disappointed. The first time I read Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, I was excited. I finished it on a weekend and lay in bed that night thinking about "culture circles," "Problem-posing education," and "generative themes" (Freire, 1997). I confidently strode (strutted?) into my middle school classroom on Monday thinking I'd apply what I'd learned. It didn't happen that way. "Mr. Tony," said Tony Crisp, a seventh grader with the amazing ability—all too common among middle schoolers—to endear himself to me at the same time he made me want to rip all the hair out of my head, "Mr. Tony," he said, "why you wearin' those nut-hugger jeans?"—Tony's way of telling me he thought my pants were too tight.

"Funny, Tony," I told him, "but not appropriate," suddenly wondering if my pants *were* too tight. Before I knew it I was directing Tyrese to sit back down in his chair, asking Brandon to open his book instead of playing with the pick in his hair, wondering if that was cigarette smoke or marijuana I smelled coming off Chris, imploring Charlene not to pick on her little brother Gary . . . . In other words, Monday morning was looking a lot like Friday afternoon, with most of my time spent on classroom management. So much for "culture circles."

I wondered what *I* was doing wrong. Surely I had misunderstood Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a classic. His ideas had to be applicable to my 5th through 8th graders. If there was a problem, it was with me and my failure to tap into the man's ideas and implement them in this rural Johnston County, North Carolina classroom.

Turns out, I had misunderstood Freire, but not for the reasons I'd thought. I'd missed the whole point of critical pedagogy's context specificity: that what was applicable to Freire's work with illiterate Brazilian peasants in the 1950s wasn't necessarily equally valid in my American south public middle school in the 1990s. I'd missed the point that Freire's critical pedagogy was crafted in non-formal literacy circles and here I was entrenched in an institutionalized school setting. I'd

missed the point that critical pedagogy isn't some Michele Pfeifer or Edward James Olmos feel-good movie where an altruistic teacher serves as savior to her students. I understood every word in Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* but still I had to look up as the true meaning and implications of the book passed over my head.

1.2 How to Use This Book

Less the preceding paragraphs sound too dour a note—*Why'd I buy this book?* (Because it was on the professor's reading list?)—let me explain how I think this book will be useful to you. Critical pedagogy strives to help the individual develop critical consciousness or (in Portuguese, Freire's native language) *conscientizacao*. Critical consciousness "represents the *development* of the awakening of critical awareness" (Freire, 1974: 15; unless otherwise noted, throughout the book, the emphasis in quotations is always in the original). Critical consciousness is more than *knowledge of*, it is *action for*, "the process by which human beings participate critically in a transforming act" (Freire, 1985: 106). Donaldo Macedo clarifies that critical consciousness "refers to the process in which men [sic], not as recipients, but as knowing subjects achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality" (in Freire, 1985: 93).

Critical consciousness—recognizing limit situations for what they are and for who they serve—is the first step toward purposeful transformation. Before we set out *with* our students on making a better tomorrow, all of us have to understand today. We must also have some grasp of yesterday and all the days before that brought us here. What is it about the everyday classroom and the relationships it engenders that we don't like? How did things come about this particular way? By drawing as often as possible on real-world examples from classrooms I have taught and been taught in, I hope to illustrate what critical pedagogy can help us understand about the everyday classroom, its institutional–structural position, and the political–social–economic relationships in which it nests.

Transformation involves imagination and possibility. Different critical pedagogies offer different visions of and for the future, various utopias if you will. Where is change possible within the everyday classroom? What can this change look like? What shouldn't it look like? Critical pedagogy implies (or, as in Giroux's quote above, explicitly embraces) a faith in democracy as a way of life. As often as "democracy" is bandied about, by those with power as well as by progressives challenging them, the concept has been stripped of nearly all meaning. What is democracy and why do we think it is good? This is a question critical pedagogy must concern itself with, instead of making democracy just another word, an item of faith, or, worse, a shibboleth of the discipline. "Pssss . . . ." "What's the password?" "Conscientization, praxis, democracy. Let me in." This book attempts to tackle the issue of democracy, its problems, promise, and potential, what it could mean, and why its realization is important. I think this task alone is of no small importance given the constant temptations to pigeonhole democracy as a mere form of politics

or discard it altogether in favor of an aristocratic elitism, whether we call that special little group a "talented tenth," a "vanguard of the proletariat," or an "ubermensch" (Nietzsche's concept of the superhuman).

I said that as often as possible I want this to be a book about the everyday classroom, to show theory at work in practice along with the practicing of theory, and that is where I wish to go now. The examples I use in this book will be my own unless otherwise cited. My examples come from 10 years of teaching in the United States of America, the Caribbean, and South Korea. They also come from my numerous years as a student, both inside and outside of schools, but for the sake of this book mostly inside. Where I thought it necessary I have changed the names of students, teachers, administrators, and parents. This book is written with teachers in mind but can be read by a non-professional audience. Above all I have striven for clarity and ease of reading. So long as I have made my ideas and the ideas of others clear I will be satisfied, even if I leave you, dear reader, unconvinced.

1.3 Meet Pete

Let me tell you about a student. Pete is a tenth grader in an affluent suburban high school in New York State. High school staff were given a heads up at an "articulation" meeting toward the end of Pete's middle school 8th grade year that they would be getting a student who had a "history of violence," like the movie. No Viggo Mortensen, Pete was known for frequent fist fights with individuals, and, in one case, the infield of the baseball team. The usual cause of Pete's fights was other children and their picking on him.

Since the 6th grade, Pete had been served under a 504 Plan. Students recognized and/or labeled with disabilities in American public schools are served by either 504 Plans or Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Where IEPs require sometimes significant modifications in instruction and even the curriculum, 504 Plans offer students modifications aimed at helping them access the standard curriculum (as do IEPs). Around the time he was 10 or 11 years old, Pete's parents and teachers started to notice that he was "a bit slow on the uptake." Pete was the kid who "didn't get it" right away, whether "it" was a joke, new academic material, or social cues from peers. For example, Pete's teacher could be discussing one subject and 5 min later Pete would ask a question about the previous subject, something that was already old news for the rest of the class, which had moved on. Citing slow processing speed, a 504 Plan was jointly developed between school staff and Pete's parents that would provide Pete with extended time, teacher redirection, and checking for understanding in all his classes. Do you understand what I'm saying to you about Pete? (Checking for understanding). If not, I want you to go back two paragraphs and read them again, okay? Stop daydreaming while you're reading this book, okay? (Redirection). Otherwise you'll get to the end of this chapter but not remember a single thing you read about.

Pete worked hard throughout elementary and middle school and continued to do so in high school. His high school teachers were happily surprised to find that

his supposed belligerent behavior did not continue in the 9th grade. They quickly figured out that the reason Pete got into so many fights in middle school is because other students would make fun of him. Pete wouldn't "get" a joke, would have to verbalize it for several seconds and then break out in apparently inappropriate laughter.

Here's one that gets a kid like Pete rubbing his head. Daddy mole, mommy mole, and baby mole are running up the mole hole. Daddy mole stops short. What are mommy mole and baby mole left doing? Smelling molasses. (Thanks go to Jackie the Jokeman Martling). Thirty or more seconds later Pete would have an "a-ha" moment and burst out laughing. Problem is the rest of the class or his group of friends had moved on to something else, so the laughter really looked out of place and inappropriate. New material presented in class wouldn't sink in right away with Pete. The teacher would explain that "nationalism is love for one's country" only to have Pete immediately ask, "What is nationalism?" Some students laughed, pointed fingers, and called Pete names. In middle school Pete would then beat these kids up or try and beat them up.

High school was different for Pete because he was immediately placed in a small specialized program designed for emotionally fragile children. Students in Pete's program ranged in their fragility, from Pete, who felt "pretty much normal" other than feeling "I just don't fit in" to students who wouldn't go to the cafeteria on their own or feared transitions between classrooms when the hallways were crowded. Teachers and teachers' aides assigned to the program accompanied their students from class to class to cafeteria to gymnasium as needed. Here's how this looks in person. Pete would be sitting in his "mainstream" science class with 24 other students, the science teacher teaching the class, a teacher from his special program sitting near him or maybe in the back of the room. The teacher from his program found it best not to identify herself as being there "for Pete," offering her help to any student in the class who needed it. At the same time she kept a special eye out for Pete. If Pete asked a question the science teacher had just answered she went over to him and quietly explained it to him. If another student gave Pete a look like he was an idiot, she went over to *that* student and asked him how he was doing, effectively letting him know *she knew* how he was feeling, that his reaction was inappropriate, redirecting and refocusing the others' attention all at once.

Pete's story does not begin or end here, but let us stop and consider certain aspects of it before returning to it and others' like his in future chapters. There are certain aspects of Pete's situation that any teacher, committed to a critical pedagogy or not, would be concerned about. For example, even if one thinks wider issues of morality and justice are beyond one's influence, what goes on in our classrooms is under our sway.

The whole bullying situation, with Pete being picked on, is one that cannot be countenanced in our classrooms. Unfortunately it often is. Nearly 30% (over 5.7 million) of youth in America are involved in bullying as either the bullied, the bully, or both. Of 6–10th graders, 13% admit to bullying others, 11% admit to being bullied, and 6% admit to alternately being bullied and bullying (Nansel et al., 2001). I suspect, based on my observations as a teacher, common sense, and my experience

as both bully and one bullied, that these figures are lower than what actually goes on, as being identified as either bully or bullied carries with it social stigma. It's like rape in prison. It goes on a lot but is underreported.

Bullying occurs across cultures. Bodyguards have been made available to South Korean school children to address the issue of bullying (Watts, 2007). Bullying undoubtedly plays a part in the Japanese phenomenon of hikkimori, or extreme social isolation, where school students and others lock themselves away from the world for months on end.

Why does bullying occur? When I was a kid in school, alternately being bullied and bullying, we were told that bullies lacked self-esteem and bullied others because it made them feel better about themselves. Recent scholarship finds that instead of being existentially unsure of themselves, bullies are confident and have high self-esteem. Bullies tend to be hot-tempered, angering easily; impulsive, they lack significant levels of frustration tolerance; physically aggressive, they usually harbor pro-violence outlooks (Nansel et al., 2001).

Bullies do not grow up in a vacuum. From infancy children are looking around them to the adults in their lives for moral cues as to what is acceptable and desirable and what is not (Coles, 2000). What are they seeing in their homes, neighborhoods, schools, and on TV? According to the Federal Bureau of Information, in the United States husbands and boyfriends kill four women each day. It is estimated that 2–4 million American women are beaten and battered by their intimates annually. The United Nations Population Fund estimates that up to 5,000 women die yearly as a result of "honor killings," which are carried out, for example, against rape victims who are seen as bringing shame to their families. Some countries' laws (like Jordan's) allow for the premeditated murder of women by relatives who cheat on their spouses; others' (like Morocco's) make it legal only for the husband to kill a philandering wife. Other countries (like Turkey) sentence women to life imprisonment for cheating.

Women have struggled under the bullying yoke of patriarchy and testosterone for millennia. Traditionally men as a whole have been bigger and stronger than women and used their advantages to control political and economic power, lording it over women. Men have written history, and it has been a history that largely ignored women and accorded them subservient status and roles. Male-dominated religions with father-figure deities never tried to hide women's second citizen status: the Judeo-Christian tradition holds that women were created from man's rib to serve men; the Koran that "rebellious" women can be (depending on your favored translation) beaten, spanked, or abandoned by their husbands (MacFarquhar, 2007). The Enlightenment's appeal to reason and rationality was twisted such that these were identified with men while impugning emotion, which was held to be the purview of women and women-like men. Manly men have controlled political life, the public sphere, relegating women to the private life of the family with slaves and children. Interestingly enough a change appears to be underfoot, as the private is championed—less government, more "choice" in things like schools—and the public derogated, with public schools constantly under attack, with the welfare state derided as the "nanny state."

Of course not all men are culpable in the exploitation of women; history is full of examples of males who have stood with women to challenge it. The point is twofold: bullies pick on those they perceive as weaker than them, and life can be structured in such a way that unfair advantages are enjoyed by some over others, often with a country's or time period's legal, ethical, and social imprimatur. The victims of bullies tend to be anxious and insecure, with low self-esteem, perhaps socially isolated, and lacking social skills (Olweus, 1993). The bullied also have a way of not defending themselves when bullied. All too familiar are the stories of battered women who make excuses for the husbands and boyfriends who batter them, as if they themselves were partially responsible for their mistreatment.

1.4 Recognizing and Confronting Limit Situations

We live in societies where the subjection of women is condoned, encouraged, or turned a blind eye. In the United States, boys who sleep with many girls are considered "playas," "playboys," or "studs"; girls who sleep with many boys are "sluts" and "whores." Girls pledge their virginity to their fathers in bizarre prom-like ritual dances; there are no such equivalent soirees for boys (Baumgardner, 2007). Men wear "wife-beater" t-shirts and think nothing of describing these sleeveless white undershirts as such. Women with high school diplomas or their GED can expect to make $6,000 *less* than men with a similar credential; women with a Bachelor's degree or higher will earn $10,000 less than a similarly accredited male (US Department of Education, 2006c). This widening pay gap between female and male college graduates continues unabated even as women constitute 58% of college enrollment in the United States (Leonhardt, 2006). Despite the steady stream of female MBAs, only 16% of corporate officers at Fortune 500 companies are female, with women filling less than 2% of the chief executive jobs at Fortune 500 companies (Creswell, 2006). Female civil servants in India have been asked to discuss their menstrual cycles in job appraisal forms (Talwar Badam, 2007). Women are being brutalized in the Congo in numbers and severity—sexually assaulted with bayonets and wood chunks that destroy their reproductive and digestive systems—never seen before (Gettleman, 2007). Girls in America are being blamed for the declining number of boys who read because these boys are being "sent home with . . . new-wave young adult problem novels, which all seem to be about introspectively morose young women whose parents are either suicidal drug addicts or fatally ill manic depressives," and what boy would want to read that kind of dreck (Brooks, 2006)? Leaving DNA evidence all over the crime scene, O.J. Simpson can get away with double murder, then co-author a book explaining "If I Did It, Here's How It Happened" (on Simpson's guilt, see Bugliosi, 1997). Is it any wonder American women report being unhappier than men (Leonhardt, 2007a)?

Laws exist in countries like the United States to protect people from being victimized. As I wrote this book the Supreme Court shafted women when they ruled that workers could not bring law suit under Title VII unless they had filed a complaint with the proper federal agency within 180 days of their pay being set (Greenhouse,

2007b). Workers may not notice within 180 days that they're being unfairly paid. Because women are paid less than men for the same work, women will suffer disproportionately from this ruling.

The kid we discussed above, Pete, has a 504 Plan while other students classified as special needs students have IEPs. Pete is lucky enough to live in a country where the rights of the disabled are taken somewhat seriously or, at the very least, where ignoring or discriminating against those with special needs is outlawed. Pete's "disability" is mild compared to the 30 million other Americans identified as disabled. Postsecondary educations were once closed to the disabled; today 11.3% of undergraduates report some type of disability (US Department of Education, 2006c).

Bullying in our classrooms—of one gender by the other, of one race by another, of the disabled by their non-disabled peers, of the weak by the strong—is unacceptable. One needs no familiarity with critical pedagogy to be against bullying. But critical pedagogy can help shine a light on why we take a stand against bullying. Bullying is a limit situation in that it limits people from achieving the full realization of their humanity. Obviously the bullied are dehumanized, but critical pedagogy shows how the bullies also lose something along the way. "Dehumanization," notes Paulo Freire, " . . . marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it" (1997: 26). Consider: bullies are more likely to drink, smoke, and get into trouble than their peers and are very likely to experience legal and criminal problems later in life (Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993: 437). Bullies have often suffered bullying and/or abuse themselves. Children who grow up in homes where they are exposed to violence against themselves and their mothers are four times more likely to become violent juvenile offenders and five times more likely to commit or suffer violence as adults compared to their peers who grew up in homes lacking violence (http://www.now.org/issues/violence/stats.html). Bullying illustrates Freire's claim that "the situation of oppression is a dehumanized and dehumanizing totality affecting both the oppressors and those whom they oppress" (1997: 29).

By now some readers will be shaking their heads, saying, "Of course I wouldn't sit still for bullying in my classroom or home, but let's be realistic here: bullying has always gone on and always will." Dehumanization appears to be a fact of life. Okay, *let's* be realistic here. Some people are convinced they derive satisfaction from bullying, which is why it continues. Dehumanization serves certain groups, which is why it continues. Yet bullying and other forms of dehumanization are not inevitable. Freire considers humanization the vocation of the human race, today's "inescapable concern," what we strive for as a species (1997: 25). He admits that dehumanization, which he views as "a *distortion* of the vocation of becoming more fully human," happens and has happened, "but it is not an historical vocation" (Freire, 1997: 26). Dehumanization, "although a concrete historical fact, is *not* a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors . . . " (Ibid.).

Human beings need to be *more* human, not less. The problem occurs when some seek what they see as the road to their being more at the expense of others, instead of realizing that we're all in this together as a species, that my full realization and humanization as an individual is only possible with the realization of the

humanization of all men and women. That's an insight critical pedagogy offers that helps us understand why bullying is bad, not just to the bullied or even the bully, but to humanity as a whole. It also helps understand why critical pedagogy is a democratic exercise.

But how does critical pedagogy go further and help us analyze Pete's daily class life? Pete was identified as a student in a well-to-do suburban high school replete with special "articulation" meetings between middle and high school staff to alert the later of the arrival of 9th graders with special concerns. His is a high school with special programs, such as the one he is in, catering to "emotionally fragile" students. These things cost money. Lots of money.

Lots of things cost lots of money. There are things our money is spent on. The Iraq War, for example, costs American taxpayers $200 billion annually (Leonhardt, 2007b). The US Department of Defense has a budget of some $441.5 billion a year (Defense Industry Daily, 2006). Then there are the things we might like to spend our money on but do not. Universal Health Care for the 50 million Americans without it would cost $100 billion annually (Leonhardt, Ibid.). Universal pre-school in America, half days for 3-year olds, full days for 4-year olds, would run some $35 billion per year (Ibid.).

Notice the normative values revealed already in my examples. Obviously I think the war on Iraq is a waste of money—and lives, with over 27,000 American casualties and over a million Iraqis since the start of the war (Beaumont & Walters, 2007). I list the estimated prices of providing health care and pre-school to my fellow citizens, when I could have mentioned that a brand new 2007 BMW 328 xi Coupe runs somewhere in the $40,000 range. As much as I might like to drive a BMW, as a high school teacher this represents a luxury for me, a "dream item." A car with a $40,000 sticker price is part of a dream I may have, but we'll get into what makes and constitutes our desires soon enough. Further, raised with certain *values* like thrift, an appreciation for the value of a dollar, and other *values*, such that the car a person drives is a reflection upon the person only to the extent that she needs it to be and that *that* is a telling reflection in itself, if I *had* 40 grands to shell out on a car, I *wouldn't*. Universal health care and pre-school may be just as equally "dreams" of mine, about as likely as my achieving (less so actually) the ownership of a luxury sedan, yet they are important for me to mention, as a reflection of my values, of the world I want to live in, of the person I try to be.

1.5 Engaged Pedagogy

Again, the point: critical pedagogy is critical and prescriptive. Which brings us back to Pete's situation in high school. Critical pedagogy is *always* politically engaged. All too often we are asked to accept that school is a politically neutral site or, if not, somehow *should* be. Liberal professors, invoking their country's constitutional guarantee of free speech to bash that very country and its institutions, those guys are political (see www.studentsforacademicfreedom.org). Mentally unstable teachers like Professor Terguson (comedian Sam Kinnison's character in the 1986

film *Back to School*) who rant at their undergraduates that " . . . I was 'there' [the Vietnam War] . . . I was up to my knees in rice paddies . . . .Going in there, looking for Charlie, slugging it out with him. While pussies like you were back here partying, putting headbands on, doing drugs and listening to goddamn Beatles albums! Oh-oh-oh!" *they* are political (and probably mentally unhinged). Proponents of creationist-inspired challenges to Darwinian evolution like "intelligent design," these folks are political. Atheist teachers in classrooms, well, there shouldn't be atheist teachers in classrooms, right? But they're there and they're political. Forbidding high school students from using the word "vagina" in an assembly where the play "The Vagina Monologues" is to be mentioned, that's political (O'Connor, 2007). The idea is that the political, whatever it is, is relegated to the fringe, to the far-left 1960s burnout-leftovers or the far-right puritanical family's value proponents. Everything in-between, we are somehow supposed to believe, is somehow neutral ground, not political.

Critical pedagogy takes as its starting point that *everything* in schools is political. Everything. The way desks are arranged in a classroom is a political issue; what a teacher says or doesn't say when a student says something "is gay" carries political implications; the curriculum is political and the way it is taught is loaded with political import. The dreams, desires, and values our schools instill, uphold, enhance, and quash in us, these are all political. Kincheloe notes that "proponents of critical pedagogy understand that every dimension of schooling and every form of educational practice are politically contested space" (2004: 2). Education *is* politics and teachers, though we may not be out kissing babies and pressing flesh, are politicians. All these and many other examples will be explored later in the book. For now let us be clear that the word "political" needs to be understood broadly, as encompassing far more than mere partisan politics, and that everything that goes on in schools carries political ramifications.

Back to Pete and his school. Pete's high school has the programs it has, a special place for "emotionally fragile" children, because Pete's high school is located in a wealthy suburban school district. In the United States of America, local tax bases pay for more than half the cost of education. "Resources" (read: money) are allocated to schools in greater or lesser degree depending on the socio-economic status of the neighborhood a school is situated in. The federal government, which finds all sorts of ways to spend American taxpayer dollars on a "defense" budget (a politically loaded euphemism if ever there was one) and war (with war always taken for "defensive" purposes, whether as protection from supposed weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in 2003 or Hitler's and Stalin's fear that the mighty Polish cavalry posed a threat to German and Russian territorial integrity in 1939), this government allots a measly 9%, or $37 billion, of the annual $440 (fiscal year 2002/2003) spent on education in the United States. States and localities make up the rest. And in case you think all that money you spend on the lottery is bringing education coffers to the brim, sorry, but it just ain't so (Stodghill & Nixon, 2007).

So, differences persist between and across districts in school funding. In New Jersey's Hudson County, Hoboken City spends $19,363 per student for the school year 2006–2007; in the same county the same school year, Guttenberg Town spent

$7,426 per student (Hu & Fessenden, 2007). New York City sets aside $14,642 per year for each of its public school students. Less than an hour to the north, in Westchester County, Scarsdale allots over $21,000 per pupil per annum. As the NY State Education Department explains, in New York State "the spending per pupil in the lowest wealth districts is about two-thirds of the spending per pupil in the highest wealth districts ($10,028 versus $15,968)" because "the lowest wealth districts raise less than one-seventh of the local revenue per pupil that the highest wealth districts do ($1,480 versus $12,974)" (www.oms.nysed.gov).

The people of Scarsdale are, by and large, perfectly lovely people. My wife and I regularly travel down to Scarsdale to buy my comic books and eat at one of our favorite Korean restaurants. This is not meant as an attack on Scarsdale or its excellent, well-funded schools. What it's meant to point out is that all schools should be as well funded as Scarsdale's are, that the quality of school one attends shouldn't be dependent on one's luck in the genetic lottery, of being born to parents wealthy enough to live in a neighborhood like Scarsdale, where the average price of a home is $665,280 and median annual household income is $182,792. The people of Scarsdale are hard-working people who have earned their money, and its students are entitled to the finest education that can be provided. But there are a lot of hard-working people who don't see their work rewarded, whose children don't have schools like Scarsdale's, whose kids can't look forward to Advance Placement classes, after-school enrichment programs-clubs and teams, trips to Europe, programs for the "emotionally fragile," but to overcrowded, violent classrooms, a scarcity of up-to-date textbooks, high-stakes Regents exams, and asthma (Fernandez, 2006).

1.6 Alienation

The problems with America's—or any country's—schools is a structural problem. Things are set up in such a way that some benefit and some do not. Some appear to be humanized, others dehumanized, but in reality all are dehumanized.

Pretty strong words, humanized and dehumanized. What exactly do I mean? To illustrate I'd like to turn to an example from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx and Engels aren't so much in vogue nowadays as they once were, and maybe that's a good thing. Good in that some of the worst crimes against humanity have been perpetuated under the guise of their names; good also in the sense that, if Marx's comment to Engels that "All I know is that I'm not a Marxist" is any indication, neither man would appreciate the way a good amount of subsequent history appropriated their names and ideas. Yet the impact of Marx and Engels' work is undeniable, even if critical pedagogy itself does not always acknowledge their influence (though Peter McLaren never fails to do so) or does one, two, or more steps removed through the Frankfurt School or other Marx and Engels' inspired theorists.

A central concern of Marx and Engels is alienation. Marx and Engels argued that human beings are alienated from their work, themselves, their species, and nature. "Estranged labor" is work that does not serve the human needs of the individual for

sustenance combined with creativity (Marx & Engels, 1978: 75). Estranged labor robs one of her humanity by objectifying her existence in the object of her labor, an object that does not belong to her but to someone else who profits from it where the creator does not. Marx and Engels were addressing the division of labor under the rapidly industrializing capitalist mode of production, but they extended their critique backward in time to encompass slave- and feudal-based modes of production as well.

Humans are animals, and like other animals we wield tools and work, we have our own unique "life activity" which can manifest itself in various ways, but unlike other animals we are one or more steps removed from our life activity (Marx & Engels, 1978: 76). Think of a craftsperson. A skilled artisan can sit down, figure out what she wants to make, how she will make it, and then make it. The product of her labor isn't part of her the way a bee's nest or a beaver's dam is. True, a carpenter may build a house and then live in it, but he could equally as well build a house that others will live in, or build a house to satisfy an aesthetic desire, or build a Malibu Dream House for his Barbie dolls.

Humans conceptualize what we are going to do *before* we do it. Other animals have life-activities and produce, but their life-activities are one with what they produce and they produce what they need "one-sidedly," "under the dominion of immediate physical need." Ants, bees, and beavers follow instinct in producing their nests and dams, products of their labor that serve the immediate needs of themselves, their children, and their species. Marx and Engel's point is that the human animal is unique because we do not create for these reasons. Freire explains that "Men [sic] have the sense of 'project,' in contrast to the instinctive routines of animals" (1985: 44). Marx and Engels explain that, for human beings, "the object of labor is . . . the *objectification of man's species life*: for he duplicates himself, not only as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he contemplates himself in a world that he has created" (1978: 76). A carpenter creates a house, can stand back and look at it apart from himself, take satisfaction from a job well done, and not expect to move into the house.

Under the capitalist mode of production, the carpenter doesn't build for himself. He sells his labor to a boss who pays him a wage. When he is done building his *part* of the house—the division of labor under capitalism is unlike any other that has ever existed—that part of the house doesn't bring him satisfaction in and of itself. He may have satisfaction from the wage he has earned—but Marx and Engels argued that the peculiar nature of wage labor is that a boss gets more out of it in the form of surplus value than he pays for in wages—a wage that allows the worker to pay his bills, feed his family, and go out to dinner Friday night. But he is torn from his species life as "estranged labor makes man's [sic] species life a means to his physical existence" (Marx & Engels, 1978: 77) just like any other animal. Human life activity becomes nothing more than the "*means* of satisfying a need—the need to maintain the physical existence," and not the "life-engendering life" it should satisfy (Ibid.: 75–76).

Estranged labor tears a person away from the object of their labor. The kitchen cabinets in the house confront the carpenter who has built them at $24.00 an hour,

his wage. He has put a part of himself—his planning, his expertise, his blood, sweat, and tears—into those cabinets and now they are alienated from him as they will bring someone else more value than he received for the labor he put into them. The worker finds his labor "is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another" (Marx & Engels, 1978: 74). He finds himself also alienated from his species being in that this particular manifestation of his life-activity becomes a means to satisfy other ends, rather than an end in and of itself. Our wage worker "only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself"; he "is at home only when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home" (Ibid.).

In short, our carpenter is somehow *less* human than he could be. He is dehumanized. That's the central concern for critical pedagogy. Marx and Engels hold that workers are exploited by non-working capitalist bosses, a conception that doesn't ring true when even Harvard drop-outs like Bill Gates get up and go to work in the morning. The problem is systemic in nature, allowing for situations in which an individual like Gates can amass and be worth more than $50 billion in a country where the median annual income is $44,389 (http://www.census.gov), where the wealthiest 1% of the population accounts for 33% of the wealth, 20% of the income, and 34% of all stock owned while the bottom 80% accounts for 16% of the wealth, 41% of the income, and 11% of stock owned (Domhoff, 2006). *The New York Times*, using census data, reports that income inequality in the United States is greater than at any time since the Great Depression (Johnston, 2007). Bill and Melinda Gates' philanthropy—they have given away over $30 billion—is well known. The Gates are not evil people; they are actors in amoral institutional arrangements that allow and encourage dehumanization. Of course billionaire philanthropists like the Gates and SunAmerica Inc. founder Eli Broad have a vision of what public education for everyone should look like. They are spending $60 million in a political campaign to bolster nationwide curriculum standards, the lengthening of the school day and school year, and merit pay for teachers (Herszenhorn, 2007c).

1.7 Institutional and Systemic Dehumanization

In another work (Monchinski, 2007) I called these "structures of dehumanization," and I'd like to discuss a few examples here because in large part they form the central core around which this book is built. I want to explore a few examples to show how they work, how pervasive their influence is, and how it is we go about our daily lives immersed in these institutional arrangements, often thinking nothing of them, leveling our criticisms against other victims and not the structural architecture that makes dehumanization a daily reality.

Perhaps it will be useful to start with a discussion of the 1999 science fiction film *The Matrix* to delineate what I have in mind and what I do not. The first of the Wachowski brothers' trilogy of films is a visually slick, imaginatively scripted, over-the-top science fiction yarn blending Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Christian, and postmodern philosophy. Keanu Reeves' character, Thomas Anderson, spends his

days in his cubicle as a program writer for a software company. He spends sleepless nights on his computer as "Neo," his hacker alias, eaten up by the question, "What is the Matrix?"

Neo's life soon becomes complicated when cyber world legend, Morpheus (Lawrence Fishburn), he of the black trench coat and pince-nez sunglasses, enters it to save him from the clutches of three ominous sun-glassed and suited agents. Morpheus has knowledge of this thing called the Matrix, explaining to Neo that the Matrix is everywhere, "You can see it when you look out your window, or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth." Morpheus drops the bomb on Neo that the Matrix is a prison humans are born into, "a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch. A prison for your mind." Neo is offered a choice between two pills: a blue one will return him unawares to what he thought was his life in the real world but is actually life in the Matrix, a red one will allow him to stay in "Wonderland" and explore the depths of the rabbit hole he finds himself on the cusp of. He chooses the red pill.

Waking in a fluid-filled pod, sputtering for breath, Neo tears intubation and other tubes from his body. His eyes hurt because, as he is told, he has never used them. Onboard Morpheus' hovercraft, the Nebuchadnezzar, Neo is schooled in the way of things. He finds out he has spent his entire life inside the Matrix, a "neural-interactive simulation," a "construct-loading program," in short a computer program, a "computer-generated dream world built to keep humans under control." Humans have been programmed to believe that it is 1999 when in fact it is nearly a century *later*. Morpheus and his crew explain that artificial intelligence overcame the human race in the early 20th century, enslaving the species in pods. Human electromagnetic energy is harvested for the machines, and humans are fed their own liquefied dead.

The real world, beyond the Matrix, is a bleak, overcast "desert of the real." The last human holdouts hole up in Zion, an underground city near the Earth's core, fending off attacks from search and destroy sentinels. They await the return of "The One," a prophesied savior with the power to remake the Matrix and free the human species. Morpheus, prophet of this messiah, believes Neo is he. Neo, for his part, protests, "I'm just another guy," slow to accept his destiny. Back in the Matrix there are, in the words of sentient program and hunter, Mr. Smith, "billions of people just living out their lives, oblivious." Morpheus warns Neo that the Matrix is a system that has infiltrated the very minds of the people they're trying to save. Most people "aren't ready" to be unplugged from the Matrix. They will fight to defend that which enslaves them, which allows for Neo and gal-pal Trinity to blow away dozens of the enemy throughout the film.

The Matrix, which appears as streaming green code on a computer monitor, is the ultimate structure of dehumanization. Human beings within the Matrix play a part in their own domination, oppressing others, practicing the "horizontal violence" of the oppressed against the oppressed that Franz Fanon and Freire spoke of. The Matrix is all-encompassing, ubiquitous, mirroring the hegemonic status of the ideologies that pervade and shape our lives.

As enjoyable as the Matrix is as escapist fantasy, there are several points in the film a critical pedagogy has to take issue with. For one, the Matrix's separation of the real world versus the world of appearances smacks of philosophical idealism, which, going all the way back to Plato, posits that a world of ideas exists separately from the world of lived experience. This idealism and my criticism of it will pervade this book. Critical pedagogy holds that humans make and remake their worlds based on our material circumstances, the conditions we find ourselves in every day. The Oracle in the Matrix chides Neo for denying his destiny. Critical pedagogy doesn't accept fate; men and women have agency and make our own futures. These futures are not predetermined, not written in stone. They are futures of possibility. Though we find ourselves in often dehumanizing circumstances, with future dehumanization looming before us, humanization is also a future possibility.

Messianism pervades the Matrix trilogy, with Neo dying at one point and resurrecting to save humanity. "You're my savior, man," a character tells Neo, adding "My own personal Jesus Christ" in case the point wasn't clear. Critical pedagogy is a democratic project where people work to understand and shape the circumstances of our lives. Critical pedagogy is suspicious of any messiahs that want to come and "save" us. Paulo Freire speaks of "prophetic" thought, but his is a vision of prophecy tied to possibility, not inevitability, of prophecy as advocacy. While there are luminaries of a sort in the field of critical pedagogy, we have gone wrong if we elevate these men and women to god-like status. Instead we should study their ideas for their applicability to our lives. My first reading of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* described above, was in this misguided vein.

As much as I like the first Matrix film—and I really do, it works as escapist fantasy—there is one last criticism of it I must make. Throwing together a hodge-podge of historical myths and philosophy lends the Matrix an esoteric feel. Books have been written on the philosophy of the film (Faller, 2004; Irwin, 2002, 2005; Lawrence, 2004; Yeffeth, 2003). A lot of people spend a lot of time viewing and re-viewing the film, trying to tease out its thematic motifs. I "got" some of the motifs, and one of them that concerns me is the film's indebtedness to postmodern philosopher Jean Baudrillard. "The desert of the real" is a reference to Baudrillard's work; Neo secures an illegal minidisk in a hollowed copy of Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*. Baudrillard himself was not thrilled with the incorporation of his work with the film and refused to work with the directors on the two sequels (Poole, 2007).

Nearly a decade after its original release, *The Matrix* is still a mega hit, earning more than $600 million worldwide. I have students in my school who love this film, who walk around quoting lines and pursuing references from it. They come to Baudrillard, can't understand a word the guy is writing, and assume that means his work must be truly profound. That's my problem with Baudrillard in particular and certain strands of postmodernism in general. The temptation to become an academic icon—obituaries described Baudrillard as "a globetrotting academic superstar" and "the hero of the polo-necked, pointy-spectacled classes" (Poole, Ibid.; Harkin, 2007)—with its privileges, titles, and tenure is very real. MIT linguist and political activist Noam Chomsky points out that "part of the whole intellectual

vocation is creating a niche for yourself, and if everybody can understand what you're talking about, you've sort of lost, because then what makes you special?" (2002: 229). I agree with Marshall Berman (2002) that postmodernism's "most attractive quality" is "its skepticism towards everything," its charge that we "should always be self-scrutinizing and self-critical," attitudes I think very much in line with critical pedagogy. I take issue with postmodern scholars—like Baudrillard—who may have important things to say (for example, scholars I respect like Joe Kincheloe find worth in Baudrillard's concept of "hyper-reality") but who the hell can tell because their prose is indecipherable. And it's not bad translations or the profundity of their ideas that is to blame; some of these scholars' styles are *purposefully* abstruse, as though the greater the opacity, the greater the insights to be gleaned. If you have something important to say, say it clearly and say it so that people can understand you, otherwise you're guilty of mental masturbation.

This is not to deny that there are complicated ideas out there, but if "hard science" writers like Stephen Jay Gould, Richard Dawkins, and Susan Oyama can lay out punctuated equilibrium, selfish genes, and developmental systems in language that is accessible and open to the lay reader, is it too much to ask that writers in the fields of education and philosophy do likewise? "Whenever I hear a four syllable word I get skeptical," notes Chomsky, "because I want to make sure you can't say it in monosyllables" (2002: 229). Further, feels Chomsky, "it's extremely rare, outside of the natural sciences, to find things that can't be said in monosyllables . . . " (Ibid.).

Readers like myself are tempted to dismiss writers like Baudrillard when he claims that "the Child no longer exists"; that the 1991 Gulf War "did not take place"; that France is "a copy with subtitles" (Harkin, 2007); that *The Matrix* is "surely the kind of film about the Matrix that the Matrix would have been able to produce" (Poole, 2007); and that, of his own existence, his own ontology, "What I am, I don't know. I am the simulacrum of myself" (Ibid.). Readers like Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont show how Baudrillard makes use of "a profusion of scientific terms, used with total disregard for their meaning and, above all, in a context where they are manifestly irrelevant," a use meant to lend "an appearance of profundity to trite observations" (1998: 153). A temptation surely exists to spend countless hours pouring over and deciphering these works, somehow figure out—or think you've figured out—what they mean, and then assume a haughty attitude of "I understand so-and-so." "What makes you special," explains Chomsky, "has got to be something that you had to work really hard to understand, and you mastered it, and all those guys out there don't understand it, and then that becomes the bases of your privilege and your power" (Ibid.). Unfortunately I see this all too often in the department where I am working on my dissertation, among both professors but usually more forcefully among students. My gripe with *The Matrix* isn't that it borrows from postmodern philosophy, but that it borrows from *bad* postmodern philosophy.

Oppression in our classrooms, in our societies, in our world, emanates between humans. There are no tyrannical computer-program overlords dictating our lives and subjugating our species. Society and its relations—political, economic, cultural—develop from interactions between people. This is sometimes hard to remember because we are born into families, neighborhoods, countries, and societies that

appear to us pre-packaged, disconnected one from another, and, if not exactly await-ing our arrival, ready enough to absorb us upon introduction. Reality appears to us as something that has always been and always will be. Further, the dominant ideology of our time downplays our interconnectedness, attempting to make of us distinct islands in a vast stream. Yet Marx and Engels note that "The more deeply we go back into history, the more does the individual . . . appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole," that the human being, a political animal, is "an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society" (1978: 222–223). Sometimes it is hard to see the forest for the trees; difficult to recognize that societies and their mores change given the demands and desires of individuals and groups of individ-uals. Social conditions, John Dewey reminds, shape us (1954: 10). Everything and everybody is connected, even if we are not always aware of the connections. What I do affects other people. "Conjoint action" and "association" have consequences. Some of these consequences are foreseen, others are not (Dewey, 1954: 22). Some of these consequences have ends desirable for all, others not. Some of these conse-quences humanize those involved, others do not.

1.8 Power: Negative and Positive

Not everyone has an equal hand in deciding what a society values and considers important. Power exists, but it is not wielded equally by all at all times. Power conditions what we consider real, good, and possible (Therborn, 1980). Power forms us as subjects, conditioning our desires, dreams, our day-to-day reality.

Power is a subject that elides a simple one-sentence definition. Instead, I'd like to draw a few observations about power and illustrate power at work, sticking to the classrooms that are our chief concerns here to begin with. Traditionally power was conceived in negative terms, as the ability to say "no." The king dictated to his subjects what they must do; the state encroached on the liberties of the indi-vidual. Power was conceived as repression, as a boot in the neck. Indeed power like this exists, has existed, and isn't always bad. Parents and teachers tell their children "no" all the time, sometimes to protect their wards, sometimes just because they can.

Michel Foucault importantly points out that "power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress, if it worked only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage, and repression, in the manner of a great Superego, exercising itself only in a negative way" (1981: 50). Again, certainly power like this exists and continues to be wielded to censor, exclude, block, and repress. Yet, "if power were never anything but repressive," Foucault asks us to consider, "if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it?" (1981: 119). In schools students are asked to unquestioningly accept the authority of their teachers. A lament often heard nowadays is that "kids just don't listen." One way power works is to reward those who serve it while castigating those that do not. For example, if you give the teacher the answer he wants to hear, you're in his good graces, he might tell you how smart you are in front of the class, and you'll get good

grades. On the other hand, if you challenge the teacher or do not do what you are asked to do, he will in all likelihood make a mental note to keep an eye on you, associate you as a troublemaker, and be less likely to look favorably on you when it comes to assigning grades. I'm not glorifying bad behavior here. Some actions and attitudes shouldn't exist in a classroom. But neither should the only thing we award be docile, meek recitation of prescribed answers to vapid questions, which a good deal of education, at all levels, unfortunately continues to be.

History is replete with examples of people rising up and overthrowing oppressive power (alas often substituting other forms of repressive power which are, in turn, later challenged and overthrown). Through this all, power still "holds good" (Foucault, 1981: 119). We must beware that we do not limit our conception of power as a "phenomenon of one individual's consolidated and homogenous domination over others, or that of one group or class over others" (Foucault, 1981: 98). As Foucault explains it, "the interdiction, the refusal, the prohibition, far from being essential forms of power, are only its limits, power in its frustrated or extreme forms" (1988: 118).

There is a *positive* aspect to power; positive not in the sense that it is good—although power *can be* used for good, which we will talk about below—but in the sense that it does more than repress and negate. "The relations of power are, above all, productive," notes Foucault (1988: 118). Power "traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (Foucault, 1981: 119). Foucault likens power to "something which circulates" through and among individuals, "as something which only functions in the form of a chain" tying individuals together, some for the better, some for the worse (1981: 98). Power is best viewed in "a net-like organization," with individuals not just passively acted upon by power but themselves active "vehicles of power," caught in the web but "also always in the position [of] simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power" (Ibid.).

Consider this example from a high school social studies class. The class is studying the 1950s Civil Rights Movement. Reading aloud, they get to the story of Rosa Park deliberately sitting in the front of the bus, refusing to give up her seat, and being arrested. "That's gay," remarks one student, voicing her disapproval of segregation and racism. "You're gay," another student snaps, kidding around. "Shut up fag," retorts the first. "You shut up bitch," rejoins the second. "Ladies," says the teacher, "Can we continue our reading please?" The girls glance at each other, perhaps embarrassedly, then return their attention to the text as another student continues reading.

What just happened in that classroom? Kids were fooling around, jostling each other verbally, no harm intended. But harm has been done. "Gay" and "fag" are not synonymous with "wrong" and "stupid," although they are often used in our classrooms in just this way. "Bitch" is not a term of endearment, even if used as such in pop culture songs like DMX's "It's all good," the refrain to which goes, "I love my niggaz but where's my bitches?" (1998). This teacher glossed over the entire episode and was just happy to get the class back on track, to see that the words weren't escalating to something more verbal or physical. The teacher did not address the homophobia or misogyny exhibited. And *that's* the point. The kids in

that class just learned a lesson: it's okay to dismiss someone as a "bitch" or "fag," to deprecate something you don't like as "gay." But it's *not* okay to disrupt class; to interrupt the steady flow the teacher has going on. Never should we accept disruptive behavior in class that takes away from the educative process. Yet imagine if you're a gay child in that class or a child who thinks she might be gay. How would you feel? Actually, by the time you're in high school you'd probably be used to such antics, as homophobic and misogynistic speech is tolerated and encouraged in our society.

But forget the possibly gay student or students in the class for a minute. What do all the other students in the class learn by what just went down? Again, it's reinforced for them that using this kind of speech is acceptable. This is a concrete example of power at work. This teacher and her class are not the economic and political masters of the universe dictating how everyone live their lives. They're quite normal children and adults, living their lives, touched by power and perpetuating it. This is an example of Foucault's "capillary action" notion of power at work on and through individuals, wherein power acts upon individuals at the same time that "each individual has at his disposal a certain power, and for that very reason can also act as the vehicle for transmitting a wider power"(1981: 72).

The teacher calls the students out but doesn't address their bigoted remarks. The students learn that the authority of the teacher to head the class is not to be challenged. The students' transgression wasn't that they chided each other as "fags" and "gay," but that they interrupted the teachers' class. Again, I'm not arguing here that the teacher's authority necessarily *should* be challenged. But another type of authority is being reinforced, is being normalized and internalized as dominant, as natural, the way of things, the authority of heterosexuality. This is accomplished through the diminution of homosexuality, which is accomplished by allowing the words used to be used in the way they are, as puts downs, to diss. We can see how entrenched this is if we consider this: what if the kids had dissed each other as "too heterosexual" and the like? Do such disrespectful terms even exist? Where they do they're tied to misogyny, castigating females who enjoy sex or have "too many" sex partners. Tell a boy he's too heterosexual. Does that even have a meaning? Call that boy a "fag," though, and the meaning is clear to that child and all around him.

Power forms identities, conditioning subjectivities. Ask yourself: who are you as a person? Power plays a part in answering your question. "The individual," explains Foucault, "with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces" (1981: 74). Sticking with the example of homosexuality because, again homophobia is so rampant and still widely accepted, if you're born gay in America, you're born into a society that largely "devalues" you (Hardy, 2006). You're born into stereotypes and assumptions. You're born into a culture that argues whether you're even born gay or not, if your homosexuality is a lifestyle choice or a disease that can be cured. For instance, after a male prostitute who claimed to procure drugs for him also "outed" him, the former president of the US National Association of Evangelicals claimed to emerge "completely heterosexual" from a Christian center after only 3 weeks of treatment.

Foucault speaks of the "level of on-going subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviors, etc." (1981: 97). If you're gay in America you live in a society where you can go to school and study about the struggle for equal rights for blacks, women and the working class at the same time that people ignore *your* civil rights, dismiss you as a "fag," tell you you'll burn in hell, hold you in contempt, or even plan your death (Karoub, 2007). In less than a month period while I was writing these words, former NBA Miami Heat All-Star Tim Hardaway made it public that "I hate gay people" (Jackson, 2007); actor Isaiah Washington referred to a fellow actor as a "faggot"; and darling of the American right, Ann Coulter, called presidential candidate John Edwards "faggot." Coulter, who less than a year earlier dismissed former Vice President Al Gore as a "total fag" on national television (Buchanan, 2007), admitted on Fox TV to bullying but not homophobia, saying "The word I used has nothing to do with sexual preference . . . . It isn't offensive to gays . . . . It's a schoolyard taunt, meaning wuss" (Fox News, 2007). Sure Ann, that makes it okay. If someone called Coulter a nasty "cunt" would she dismiss the blatant misogyny exhibited? Doubtful. A Republican US senator looking for man-on-man love (okay, maybe not love) in the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport finds himself shunned by his own party even after swearing he isn't gay and wasn't looking for nookie playing footsy with the undercover cop in the stall next to his (Yardley, 2007). Born gay in America, you'll find yourself in a society that has largely turned its back on you, to the point that, in the struggle to fit in, you may marry a person of the opposite sex, leading yourself and lending to your spouse an unhappy life as you pretend to be someone you're not.

I want to be very clear that I do not think the teacher or the students in the above example are evil people. They might be wonderful people. At the same time they are making choices that foster dehumanization. Gay children in that class or in the lives of the children in that class are dehumanized. Heterosexual children in that class are dehumanized. We're all human. We're all in this—life—together. My fulfillment as an individual shouldn't depend on the denial of your humanity. I don't have to approve of homosexuality or embrace it for myself; but I need not knock you for it or hold you in contempt. This example might sound childish, but I remember back in high school, when all I wanted to do was connect with the opposite sex but doing so seemed so difficult, I thought that the more gay people there were the better for my potential dating opportunities.

As a teacher I have seen this on-going subjection via the formation of identities and subjectivities, but becoming a father has cast a new light on this same process. Before our son was born I could care less about what colors he might wear, even though in the United States baby boys are expected to wear blue and baby girls' pink. You might scoff and say "expected" is too strong a word, yet the societal expectation exists, less so in the negative form of power dictating than in the positive form of lending itself as an expectation, as an assumption, as common sense. Before my little guy was born, I could think this clothing practice through and attribute it to the influence of 18th century painter Thomas Gainsborough's *The Blue Boy* and *Pinkie*. After little Tony emerged things changed. I began to realize—or not—just

how caught up I am in how society arbitrarily defines gender. For instance, we'd go shopping and I found myself dismissing pink, red, and soft-colored outfits, opting instead for the darker, bluer, harder colors.

"You're the most beautiful baby boy in the world," I find myself telling him, words he doesn't comprehend yet and who's message—that he's in competition in a looks contest with all the other baby boys on Earth—I work on myself to stop perpetuating. "Look at how handsome you are," I tell him, honestly floored by his beauty. "The little girls aren't going to be able to keep their hands off you." I assume he'll be heterosexual and instead of worrying that little girls will touch him in ways he doesn't want I convey a message that he'll be desirable to the opposite sex and that their attentions—even those that violate his personal space and bodily integrity—are desirable. If I keep talking to little Tony this way, how might it affect his sexuality and what it means to be a man for him when he grows up? Will he grow up, as I did, assuming and normalizing heterosexuality? Will he emerge as an adolescent, a teenager, and then as a man who thinks "scoring" or "banging" as many women as he can is a good in and of itself? Why, for that matter, is heterosexuality from the male point of view so often painted in terms of dominating women, either violently as foes (we males *bang* women, *fuck*, *nail*, and *pound* them, *tap that ass*, *hit skins*, etc.) or as in a sports contest (we talk of *scoring*, *getting to second base*, etc.). I might add that the way I talk to my son isn't fueled by homophobic or lecherous inclinations. These words and thoughts just come "naturally" to me.

1.9 Ideology and Hegemony

This brings us to the next point in our exploration of power at work in institutional and systemic relationships. What comes "naturally" reflects power at work, the hegemony of ideology. In American high school history classes students are taught that ideologies are systems of ideas and beliefs. The subject of ideology is usually first presented to students in the context of the rise of European continental liberalism and conservatism, which usually is relegated—incorrectly—to the 19th century along with nationalism. When American students study totalitarian regimes like Nazi Germany or Stalin's Soviet Union, they are reminded that they are studying ideology. I don't doubt that these are examples of ideology, but I always try and stress to my students that ideology has a much broader sweep.

Antonio Gramsci points out that the original meaning of ideology was "science of ideas" (1971: 375). Ideologies, like the ideas they purport to understand and explain, surround us. They're not natural phenomena like the air we breath, independent of us; ideologies are in our heads, lived out by our actions, transmitted by our words and deeds. In this way we are immersed in ideologies, although we rarely see them because of their hegemonic status. Ideas come from somewhere (see Chapter 2) and not from thin air. Ideas are created by people and the people creating the ideas have the most to gain from them. Anthony Giddens explains that an ideology is "shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups" (1997: 583).

Like the power they reflect, ideologies would be vulnerable if they were only imposed on subjects from the outside. In my school district, for example, like most school districts, there is a big drive to save money and reign in costs. One way this is done is to cut back on the costs associated with special education. I have been in meetings with higher ups discussing the upcoming annual review of a student with special needs where my superiors told me "the committee [on special education, or CSE] will recommend" such and such. Wait a minute. I'm part of the committee. Committee decisions are supposed to be made *after* discussion with the *full* committee on special education, which includes the student's parents or guardians, any advocates (e.g., family friends, pastor, medical professional, even lawyer) they may have in their corner, and the student herself. There I was being told what my decision would be beforehand. It didn't sit well with me. I challenged it, along with some colleagues. But that is another story for another time.

A truly effective ideology works because it is hegemonic, it pervades our lives to such an extent that we accept its ideas as normal and natural, as common sense. In Michael Apple's words, ideologies "are not only global sets of interests, things imposed by one group on another," instead, "They are embodied by our common-sense meanings and practices" (1982: 249). Peter McLaren defines hegemony as "the maintenance of domination not by the sheer exercise of force *but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system, and the family*" (2006: 173).

Again I need to stress that power, operating through the hegemony of ideology, isn't always the power of a dominator class over a dominated class. Much power functions in the form of horizontal violence, where the oppressed commit acts of dehumanization against each other. For example, there are stories of sexist attitudes on the parts of males active in the black civil rights movement. Frederick Douglass describes arguments between slaves of neighboring plantations, with "Colonel Lloyd's slaves contending that he was the richest, and Mr. Jepson's slaves that he was the smartest, and most of a man" (1997: 12).

Power works within individuals. When my father was a young man, he was what some would call a "cocksman" or playa, having sexual relationships with a lot of women. I grew up aware of this, if not the exact details of his exploits. I remember in elementary school my dad asking me how my love life was. How was my love life? I was a shy kid lacking self-confidence. I couldn't figure out how to approach girls. But it bothered me that when my father asked me that question I didn't have what I thought would be a satisfactory answer—based on what I thought *he thought* would be a satisfactory answer. Was there something wrong with me? I found myself doubting myself. Why should it have been so important to me in the fourth, fifth, or sixth grade to have a girlfriend?

Here's an example of hegemony that I have felt throughout my life. I was born and raised in the Roman Catholic Church, even serving as an altar boy for many years while I attended a parochial elementary school. Somewhere in my early twenties I started to question my faith and by my mid-twenties I was completely non-religious. Thing is, America is a very religious country. According to a 2006 CBS

News poll, 82% of Americans believe in "God" (not "a god," but "God," like we all know who he—oh yes, he's a he—is) and 43% believe that the Bible is the actual word of this god (www.pollingreport.com). According to a Fox News poll, 84% of Americans believe in miracles, 79% in angels, 74% in hell, and 67% in the devil (www.foxnesws.com), and 51% of Americans believe this god created humans just as we are; 30% that our species evolved with this god guiding the process; and only 15% that our species evolved without any cosmic intervention (www.cbsnews.com).

Religion is something that I, as a nonbeliever, am always coming up against. For example, I watched my friends—few of whom attended church or were overtly religious—grow up and get married in church ceremonies, only because that was the way things were done and what was expected of you. I listened to couples tell stories of lying to their priest that they hadn't been sexually active before marriage. The girls I knew and dated where I grew up in the northeastern United States especially looked forward to these big church weddings followed by outrageous parties in private catering facilities. I've been to these ceremonies and parties, I've been able to enjoy them, but I always knew they weren't for me.

Marriage itself—as an institution—enjoys hegemonic status. Although the number of unmarried in America now outweighs the number of married—49.7% of households are made up of married couples (Roberts, 06)—there is enormous pressure still to grow up and get married. Older, never-married males and females are sometimes looked upon suspiciously, unless they're "swinging" older males like the Larry character on the sitcom *Three's Company*, too busy "scoring" with innumerable ladies to "settle down" with any one. If you're past a certain age, female, and not married, some people will still consider you an old maid. If you're past a certain age, not married, and male, people will wonder if you're gay. That said, the percentage of married American couples reaching their silver (25th) anniversary has fallen, meaning married Americans aren't remaining married as long as they once did (Roberts, 2007a).

What does marriage do? It joins two people legally. My wife and I used to talk about this. Would marriage make me love her more than I already do or she more I? No. If I gave her my word that she was the one for me and I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her, would marriage cement the commitment any more than my word, my bond? No, except in a negative, punitive way, with the threat of taking a financial and social hit come a divorce (Cowen, 2007). Marriage for my wife and I wasn't about religion; I identify as an atheist, she as a Buddhist. It wasn't about union before any god. We did marry but we married because the state sanctions marriage and given our circumstances—living in South Korea at the time, my looking to expedite my return to the States with Myoungmee at my side and not waiting for a girlfriend visa—marriage was the easiest way. Married taxpayers, we soon saw another way the state endorses marriage.

Again, to be clear: I am not knocking marriage as an institution here, although I think there are valid criticisms of marriage to be made. If you want to be get married that's great and I hope you get what you want one day. I also hope it works out for you in the long term. I just hope you understand why it is you want what you want. Is it what everyone else around you does so you figure you have to do

it? Because that's how power works, the hegemony of an ideology appears to us as what we want. Further, what we want may not always be "bad" for us. McLaren makes the important point that "not all prevailing values are oppressive" (2006: 175). When British Imperialism came to India it ended *sati*, the practice whereby grieving widows were expected to throw themselves on their husband's burning funeral pyres. Overall I think British Imperialism oppressive and dehumanizing, but getting rid of *sati* was a good thing in the context of a bad thing. As all powerful as hegemony may seem, it is capable of change, of being unmasked, overthrown, and replaced. Giroux describes hegemony as "a process of continuous creation [that] includes the constant structuring of consciousness as well as a battle for the control of consciousness" (2006: 21).

1.10 Power and *The Kite Runner*

Power suffuses societies and individuals. Power is not a Platonic ideal form, out there somewhere in the atmosphere. For power to mean anything we have to understand that power is exercised in human relationships, that "there are only individual relations of domination and control" (Flynn in Gutting, 1994: 34). These individual instances of power at work need to be examined on a case-by-case basis. Remember, power cannot be construed in a purely negative sense (Ibid.). When a parent stops his child from running into the street, he is exercising his power over the child, and rightfully so (Chomsky, 2002). What we must ask of any power relationship is if it is justified, and "the burden of proof for any exercise of authority is always on the person exercising it—invariably" (Chomsky, 2002: 201). If it cannot be justified it has no reason to exist and should be dismantled.

Power and the relationships power engenders structure institutions. Individuals grow up in institutional contexts—the family, the school, the Church, Temple, or Mosque, the state. Power conditions individuals through these institutions, acting on and through them. Institutions are structured, and these structures evolve. They are time and context specific. I'd like to illustrate by way of three examples, one from literature, one from history, and one from contemporary times.

The Kite Runner is physician Khaled Hosseini's first novel. Set in Afghanistan, it tells the story of Amir, son of a prosperous, well-respected businessman. Amir is accompanied through most of his childhood by Hassan, the child of Amir's family's servant. Hassan is a Hazara, a Shia Muslim in a majority-Shiite Pashtun country. His ethnicity brings Hassan and his father grief, as the Hazara are looked down upon by most of Afghan society. Amir depends on Hassan to play with; to read of the exploits of the warrior Rostam and his horse Rakhsh; as an audience for his own budding stories—Amir will grow up to be a novelist; to help him catch the kites they cut free in the annual kite fighting tournaments.

As much as Amir depends on Hassan, his behavior toward the others can be despicable. Amir is not above taunting the Hazara boy. The boy Hassan cannot read and Amir takes advantage of this fact, teaching Hassan that imbecile "means smart, intelligent. I'll use it in a sentence for you. 'When it comes to words, Hassan is an

imbecile' " (Hosseini, 2003: 25). Amir hides while Hassan is brutalized by Assef, the neighborhood bully, and his posse, the same group Hassan stood up against earlier to protect Amir from. Amir sets in motion the events that lead to Hassan and his father leaving Amir's family's service and their lives. The Amir character works because he is likeable at the same time he is despicable. As he mistreats his friend, the reader feels terribly for Hassan, but also bitter disappointment in Amir because we want to like him but his actions against Hassan knock him down in our estimation.

Kite Runner works on many levels. For the purpose of this book, I will attempt to show how the novel illustrates structures of dehumanization at work. In Afghanistan, Amir's father, Baba, enjoys larger-than-life status. Baba is almost more than a man in Kabul, where mythical stories of his wrestling a black bear are told. Baba is respected for his ability to overcome adversity—Amir's mother died in childbirth, leaving Baba to never marry again; his business acumen—defying naysayers to build and oversee "a wildly successful carpet-exporting business, two pharmacies, and a restaurant" (Hosseini, 2003: 13); his philanthropy—he funds and builds an orphanage; and, not least of which, his imposing physical presence—at six foot five a "towering Pashtun specimen with a thick beard, a wayward crop of curly brown hair as unruly as the man himself, hands that looked capable of uprooting a willow tree, and a black glare that would 'drop the devil to his knees begging for mercy' " (Hosseini, 2003: 11). Amir grows up in Baba's Kabul mansion fearing his father, whom he suspects holds him responsible for his mother's death.

Things change when Amir and Baba are forced to emigrate to America in the early 1980s following the overthrow of the Afghani government and the Soviet invasion. We see clearly that Baba in Kabul was a big fish in a small pond. In California, Baba's renown and reputation don't carry him anywhere beyond his fellow dislocated Afghani émigrés. Baba gets a job pumping gas, a job that, at the end of the day, leaves him with "nails chipped and black with engine oil, his knuckles scraped, the smells of the gas station—dust, sweat, and gasoline—on his clothes" (Hosseini, 2003: 112). He suffers various indignities, including being asked for identification when he writes out a check at a local market and being unable to throw the lavish parties he once hosted in Afghanistan. Baba goes from being a big man in Kabul to an everyman in Fremont. In Afghanistan Baba seemed invincible; in America Baba gets cancer.

The American economy almost breaks Baba. Unlike Andrew Carnegie and other "captains of industry" students learn of in American history classes, Amir's father's tale is not an immigrant rags-to-riches story. Instead, Baba's is an immigrant riches-to-rags-to-struggling-to-survive story. He works his way up to manage the gasoline station; to buy his son a used car; to send Amir to college; and to pay for Amir's wedding. Baba is a man of keen intelligence with liberal tastes that put him at odds with certain segments of traditional Afghani society. He isn't afraid to work hard, but the job opportunities available to him in America—where lack of language and credentials prove nearly insurmountable barriers—aren't what were available to him in his native country. In Afghanistan Baba was an entrepreneur; in America he and

Amir raid yard sales for salvageable items to mark up and sell on the weekends at flea markets.

The American economy is structured in such a way that not everyone who works hard or does an important job sees the fruits of their labors in their paychecks. For example, the median income of car mechanics is $33,050, school bus drivers $24,070, child care workers $17,050, home health aides $18,800, and graduate school teaching assistants $27,340. Compare those jobs to the median pay for lawyers ($98,930), computer programmers like *The Matrix*'s Neo ($63,420), and corporate chief executives ($142,440). The median pay for legislators in the US is $15,740; but keep in mind that many legislative jobs are sinecures or part-time gigs. Further, there are government officials like billionaire New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg who only accepts a $1 annual salary; of 435 members of the US House of Representatives, 123 have incomes greater than a million dollars and 40 out of 100 senators are millionaires. I'm not knocking legislators, although many of them deserve to be knocked. Nor is this to say that the work a lawyer or computer programmer does isn't important; it is. But so is the work of the man or woman who takes care of your family member, drives your kids to school, and cares for them during the day, fixes your car, and teaches your undergraduate son or daughter. The point is that workers in general are underpaid. The hierarchy in salaries and remuneration needs to be restructured. The federal minimum wage is $5.15 an hour in a country with one of the highest unemployment rates—officially 12.6% in 2005—in the industrialized world (US Census Bureau). Baba pumps gas and becomes manager of the service station, but we know he gets little reward, in satisfaction or money, from his labor.

While Amir is away, his native Afghanistan undergoes severe changes. The Taliban come to power. Women are forced to hide under the burqa, men behind beards. A Fatwa is declared against the Hazara, escalating the violence against this ethnic and religious minority. Bad things happen in Afghanistan and *The Kite Runner* shows dehumanizing structures bringing out the worst in people. Assef, the sadistic brass knuckle-wielding boy who took joy in tormenting Amir and Hassan, grows up to be a Talib. As a birthday present, the adolescent Assef presents Amir with a Hitler biography; Assef the man leads the public stoning of two alleged adulterers buried chest-deep in a sports stadium. The crimes of the Taliban are well documented, as is the American government's support for this regime (Coll, 2004; Rashid, 2001). Author Hosseini, through the Amir character, presents Assef to the reader as a sort of monster, with Amir even wondering if Assef's parents live in fear of their son. Amir uses the word "sociopath" to describe the boy Assef (Hosseini, 2003: 34). A bad situation nurtures the worst parts of Assef's nature—if indeed these are part of his nature—and rewards their manifestation.

Other characters in the novel resort to evil because of the situation they are caught up in. Traveling back to Talib-controlled Afghanistan years later as an adult to find Hassan's son, Amir visits an orphanage. Children cling to the director of the orphanage, Zaman, in his cracked glasses. Amir discovers that, in return for aid so he can feed the orphanage's children, Zaman allows a Talib official who visits to take a boy or girl with him. "If I deny him one child, he takes ten," Zaman attempts to justify

his actions to Amir and a companion. "So I let him take one and leave the judging to Allah. I swallow my pride and take his goddamn filthy . . . dirty money. Then I go to the bazaar and buy food for the children" (Hosseini, 2003: 225). Zaman feels he has no choice. Hosseini doesn't tell us, but we get a sense that Zaman was a good orphanage director before the Taliban came to power. He cared for the children and they for him. Zaman points out that when the Taliban came to power, he did not flee Afghanistan for Pakistan or Iran; he stayed with the children of the orphanage and did what he thought best for them, even if that included selling some children off into sexual bondage so that the others could eat and have a place to live.

Novels work because they ask us to consider something about the human condition that we may not routinely stop and consider. Fictional, they ask us to suspend our disbelief for a period of time. Yet belief is always there, lurking in the periphery, because these characters are people who—for all their differences—bear some resemblance to people we know, maybe even ourselves. Amir resonates as a character due to his quest for redemption. He treated Hassan horribly, in a context where treating Hassan such—although always a choice—was easy to do. Amir begins to regret his decisions in Afghanistan, but he doesn't confront them until he is living in America. Many of us have skeletons in our closets, things we regret, hide from others, hide from ourselves, and would "do-over" in an instant if we could. Amir's skeletons are writ large on the pages of *The Kite Runner*, as is his struggle to wrestle them, a struggle larger than any bear Baba may have grappled with. *The Kite Runner* is an historical novel that brings the agony of a character and a country to life, showing the whole time the part circumstances play in encouraging the best or worst of which we are capable.

Present-day Afghanistan hasn't changed much from the lawless land of the late 1990s that Hosseini paints. Six years after the American invasion, the Taliban still controls certain areas; opium cultivation continues to set records (93% of the world's opium comes from Afghanistan); Paramount Vantage has had to delay release of the film version of Hosseini's novel for fear of reprisals against its Afghani child actors; and terrorist mastermind Osama Bin Laden is still on the loose (Burke, 2007; Halbfinger, 2007; Rohde, 2007).

1.11 A Man Who Was Good at His Job

Unfortunately real life is all too replete with examples of structures of dehumanization at work on individuals, shaping and reshaping them, twisting and perverting them. Consider the example of Rudy. By all accounts, Rudy was a good family man who loved his wife and children. "Among his most outstanding characteristics," notes Joachim Fest, "were strict attention to duty, unselfishness, love of nature, sentimentality, even a certain helpfulness and kindliness, simplicity, and finally a marked hankering after morality . . . " (1999: 278). Rudy did his job and he did it extremely well, but it was a job that caused him no small amount of stress. He recalls nights when the pressures of work made "it impossible to go back to my home and family." Instead, Rudy would "mount my horse and ride" or "seek relief

among my beloved animals" (Hoss, 1959: 172). As much as he tried to convince himself that he was doing the right thing, that he was doing what was expected of him as an employee of his state, Rudy couldn't banish negative thoughts. "When I saw my children happily playing," he recounts, "or observed my wife's delight over our youngest, the thought would often come to me: how long will our happiness last?" (Ibid.).

Rudy's daytime job was unlike most: as commandant at Auschwitz, which he himself took some pride in describing as "the greatest human extermination center of all time," Rudolph Hoss oversaw the deaths of some 2 million human beings (Fest, 1969: 160). Unlike other Nazis, Hoss didn't have a sadistic side that reveled in cruelty (or at least didn't admit to one in his memoirs). Early on in the SS at Dachau, Hoss considered going to his superiors and explaining to them "that I was not suited to concentration camp service, because I felt too much sympathy for the prisoners" (1969: 87). He bore the Jews no special enmity. "I must emphasize here that I have never personally hated the Jews," he wrote, lumping them in with other "enemies of our people" and priding himself that "I saw no difference between them and the other prisoners, and I treated them all in the same way" (1969: 146). Hoss opposed the anti-Semitic pornographic weekly *Der Sturmer* because it "played on people's basest instincts" (1969: 144). During the Nuremberg trails and throughout his autobiography he maintained that he was doing his duty. Noting that "I could not allow myself to form an opinion" as to the necessity of the Holocaust, "for I lacked the necessary breadth of view," Hoss remembers, "I had been given an order, and I had to carry it out" (1969: 160).

How did Hoss arrive at a point in his life where he could plan and set in motion the machinery of the Holocaust? Where he could witness the gas chambers in action and execute prisoners with his own hand (Hoss, 1959: 92)? "I am completely normal," he wrote. "Even while I was carrying out the task of extermination I led a normal family life and so on" (Ibid.). Hoss recalls a childhood where his parents, who hoped he would grow up to be a priest, taught him "to be respectful and obedient toward all grown-up people, and especially the elderly, regardless of their social status. I was taught that my highest duty was to help those in need" (1969: 32).

Joachim Fest notes that Hoss, like many in the Nazi party, grew up without close ties to family or friends (1999: 280). "I always preferred to be alone," remembered Hoss, ". . . . I never had friends or close relationships with anyone, not even in my youth. I never had a friend. I never had any real intimacy with my parents—my sisters either . . . . I always played alone as a child" (1969: 29). Hoss secretly joined the German army during World War I. After numerous woundings and decorations, he became the youngest non-commissioned officer in service. After the war, Hoss had difficulty re-adjusting to civilian life and instead joined the East Prussian Volunteer Corps for the Protection of the Frontier. He was part of a group of soldiers that ganged up on another that they beat with truncheons and then shot dead. For this crime Hoss spent 6 years in Brandenburg Penitentiary, a confinement that wasn't disagreeable with him.

Upon his release, Hoss joined the Bund der Artamanen. It was in the Bund that Heinrich Himmler invited him to join the SS. Joachim Fest reasons that "the

monotonous theme of his life, the cardinal, desperate question of his as of every dependent, empty life was: 'Where can I serve?' " (1999: 282). In Chapter 6 we will examine the authoritarian personality. Suffice it to say at this point Rudolph Hoss perfectly exemplifies this character structure.

Hoss' autobiography details the effects of the concentration camps on himself and the prisoners. As commandant at Auschwitz, "where I found my so-called colleagues constantly going behind my back," Hoss "became distrustful and highly suspicious, and saw only the worst in everyone" (1969: 123). Hoss recalls fellow Nazis approaching him secretly in the camp, asking if the genocide was truly necessary. "And I," he explains, "who in my innermost being had on countless occasions asked myself exactly this question, could only fob them off and attempt to console them by repeating that it was done on Hitler's order" (1969: 170). Despite suspicions that what they were doing was wrong, Hoss and those under him continued to play their part in the machinery of death.

Daily life for prisoners in Auschwitz was deplorable (Smolen, 1995). Electrified fences surrounded the grounds, the entrance to which bore a sign, "Work makes you free"—Auschwitz having started as a work camp to supply the Nazi war machine, only later switching over to an expressly extermination camp. Prisoners were used as slave labor to build first the camp and then contribute to the German war effort, producing guns, mining coals, developing chemicals. Starvation, overcrowding, disease, torture, and execution were everyday occurrences. Medical experiments were conducted on prisoners. Hundreds of prisoners died daily in these circumstances. These dehumanizing conditions brought out the worst in many.

"One would have thought that in a situation such as this they would inevitably help and protect one another," Hoss writes of the Jews and other prisoners at Auschwitz (1969: 167). But they did not. A form of prisoner self-government existed in the concentration camps (Smolen, 1995: 47). Hoss' experience in concentration camps taught him well "the struggles for supremacy waged between the different categories of prisoners and political groups, and with the intrigues that went on to secure the higher posts," posts that were usually filled by "the most unscrupulous men and women" (1969: 147–148). While SS guards could be cruel and carried out the executions, Hoss maintains, prisoners "were mainly persecuted by members of their own race, their foremen and room seniors" (1969: 143). Hoss describes prisoners who "did not hesitate to get rid of their fellow prisoners by making false accusations against them" (1969: 145).

The Special Detachment (Sonderkommando) were prisoners who aided in the execution and cremation of other prisoners. They were regularly executed themselves every few months. Hoss expressed surprise over "the eagerness with which they carried out their duties," as they were "all well aware that once the actions were completed they, too, would meet exactly the same fate as that suffered" by the prisoners they helped the Nazis murder. Prisoners of the Special Detachment rarely rebelled, did not tell prisoners on their way to the gas chambers the fate that awaited them, and "were also quite prepared to use violence on those who resisted" (Hoss, 1959: 168; Nyiszli, 1993). A Jewish doctor served as Dr. Josef Mengele's personal research pathologist (Nyiszli, 1993). Using a divide and conquer strategy,

the Nazis fanned tensions between prisoners, with Hoss noting that "these enmities were keenly encouraged and kept going by the authorities, in order to hinder any strong combination on the part of all the prisoners" (1969: 133).

Dehumanization was the order of the day in the Nazi concentration camps. All prisoners suffered but not all prisoners suffered equally. Women and children especially faced harsh treatment, with Hoss noting that "the worst conditions prevailed at the women's camp" (1969: 151). In the early days when Auschwitz was being built women and children were sent directly to the gas chambers (Smolen, 1995: 63). Women gave birth in Auschwitz; they and their infants often died, the mothers from infection, the children from malnourishment (Ibid.). Female prisoners—who included prostitutes and women who'd had abortions, acts deemed worthy of imprisonment under the Nazi regime—were placed in charge of other prisoners (Morrison, 2000: 40). Noting "they far surpassed their male equivalents in toughness, squalor, vindictiveness, and depravity," that they "were soulless and had no feelings whatsoever," Hoss explains that "these dreadful women gave full vent to their evil desires on the prisoners under them" (1969: 149).

In the face of daily brutality and depravity there were still those who struggled for humanization. The stories of women trying to protect their children are especially touching. Observing the activity around the gas chambers, Hoss "noticed that women who either guessed or knew what awaited them nevertheless found the courage to joke with the children to encourage them, despite the mortal terror visible in their own eyes" (1969: 165). When their mothers comforted them, children facing their deaths "became calm and entered the gas chambers, playing or joking with one another and carrying their toys" (Ibid.). Dr. Nyiszli (1993: 114–120) recalls how a 16-year-old girl survived cyclon gassing under the bodies of hundreds of other prisoners. Revived, the Nazis feared if she was returned to the general population of prisoners she would tell of her experiences, leading to an uprising. She was carried into a hallway and shot. "I remember," recalls Hoss, "a woman who tried to throw her children out of the gas chamber, just as the door was closing. Weeping, she called out: 'At least let my precious children live.' " (Hoss, 1959: 166). Noting that "such shattering scenes . . . affected all who witnessed them," Hoss nevertheless let the woman and her children perish (Ibid.).

1.12 Education and Race

Thus far I have picked some extreme examples of institutions and situations where dehumanization is at work: Nazi concentration camps and the Afghani state under the Taliban. I did so because I wanted to show clearly how institutionalized dehumanization operates. Extreme examples often offer the most lucid, uncontroversial illustrations. But now it's time to bring this chapter back to the practical, to what goes on in our classrooms. Much of the rest of this book will consider dehumanization in schools, as well as possible alternatives to this dehumanization. Here I would like to consider race in the context of education as a structure of dehumanization.

Race is a troubling thing because, like power, it isn't "real," yet the importance we have attributed to it have made it so. What is race? Although we as a species are a lot different than chimpanzees, there is still only a 1.23% difference between our genes and theirs (Wilford, 2007b). Genetically human beings are 99.9% alike, with more differences within than between ethnicities. It is impossible to tell if a person is white or black based on DNA alone. Yet so much emphasis is placed on the color of one's skin, the usual indicator of one's race.

This emphasis has real-world implications. For example, if you're a black man in America, your life expectancy is shorter than a white male born the same year; you're more likely to get and die of prostate cancer; and more likely to have cardiovascular disease in general and high blood pressure in particular (Payne, 2007). Low-income urban blacks are more likely to smoke cigarettes than other races and menthol ones at that (Eckholm, 2007). Male or female, if you're black or Hispanic in America you're more likely than whites to be in prison or to expect to be imprisoned during your lifetime (US Dept of Justice website). If you're non-white you're more likely to have your car searched by police, receive longer prison sentences, and face the death penalty (Glater, 2007a). If you're black or Hispanic in America you can expect to make less money over the course of your work-life than whites and Asians (US Department of Education, 2006c). This isn't an American thing. The standard of health for Aboriginals is "almost 100 years behind" other Australians, with Aboriginals still suffering from leprosy and tuberculosis (McMahon, 2007).

Schools are another scene where the consequences of race are lived out. College continues to be a very white experience for both students and faculty: 67% of American college degrees were conferred on non-Hispanic whites during the 2002–2003 school year. In 2003 about 15% of United States college faculty were non-white while 47% were white males and 36% white females (US Department of Education, 2006c). Non-whites in the United States are most likely to have an associates degree and less likely to have a bachelor's, master's, or doctor's degree (US Department of Education, 2005). In American primary schools, students designated "low performers" are twice as likely to be black or Hispanic than white. If you're Hispanic or black in America you're more likely to be retained a grade. You're also more likely to be labeled a special education student. Being held back is directly related to dropping out of high school. High school drop-out rates in the United States are higher for Hispanics and Blacks than whites, with 23.8% of 16–24-year olds of Hispanic origin, 11.8% of non-Hispanic blacks, and 6.8% of non-Hispanic whites dropping out of high school (US Department of Education, 2006c).

Despite platitudes that "we are all the same" and that people should be judged on the content of their character and not the color of their skin, race continues to weigh heavily on people's minds and the experiences of people in many countries. White American couples have sued fertility clinics that mix up their sperm samples, resulting in the birth of non-white children (Glaister, 2007). One movie I like to show in my global studies classes is Gurinder Chadha's 2002 film, *Bend it Like Beckham*. In the film Parminder Nagra plays Jesminder "Jazz" Kaur Bhamra, a British teen of Pakistani heritage who dreams of playing football (soccer) and the professional athlete she has a crush on, David Beckham. Jazz's parents have other ideas for

their daughter; proper behavior dictates that Jazz do well in school, learn to cook traditional foods—her mother wonders "What family would want a daughter-in-law who can run around kicking football all day but can't make round chapattis?"—and, if she is to further her education, go to an Ivy League college to pursue academics. There is no room for sports in their vision of Jazz's future, nor is there room for Jazz to date outside the Pakistani-British community. Jesminder is expected to grow up and marry a proper Pakistani boy, as her sister does.

I like to show this film because we always pause when Jazz expresses romantic interest in her white football coach but knows she can't bring him home to mom and dad. Is Jazz's parents' not wanting her to date non-Pakistanis an example of racism? Many students in my class will say that yes, this is racism. Others will argue that it is not. Interestingly enough, the people in the room I usually get the strongest reaction from are my teachers' aides. Once I had a nice Italian lady express that it isn't racism to want your child to stick within their particular ethnic group.

According to Pew Research Center data, attitudes toward interracial dating and marriage in America are changing: 77% of Americans feel it is alright for blacks and whites to date one another. The change in attitudes is most noticeable among the young: 91% of Americans born after 1976 are cool with interracial dating. Attitudes are what they are, and practice is what it is: more than a fifth of Americans say they have a relative who is married to someone of a different race.

American history continues to struggle with race. Exactly why is it that if you're not white you're less likely to enjoy academic success, a healthy life, or a prison-free existence? One argument, although not always worded honestly, is that non-whites are not as intelligent or capable as whites. There is something fundamentally amiss with non-whites, this thinking goes, whether it's a lack of intelligence, an over-charged sex drive, laziness, or a propensity for violence. Critical pedagogy argues that race is a social construction like gender and class, benefiting some, dehumanizing others. Activist-scholars working in the critical pedagogy tradition view scholars and "scientists" who attribute one's lack of achievement to the color of one's skin, class, gender, or sexual orientation as blaming the victims, a power evasion. While critical pedagogy recognizes the benefits that come with being white in America, it refuses to recognize some monolithic "whiteness," cognizant of the ways class, gender, and sexuality rend even those with white skins. Oppression is a phenomenon that transcends skin color.

The language we employ around race illustrates more of what I termed a "power evasion" above. "Colored" traditionally referred to non-whites, specifically blacks; since when did *white* stop being a color? The point is that white became the default, the standard against which non-white was "othered." I know a lot of white guys who, if you ask them, "What's your type, do you like a Pamela Anderson or a Jenny McCarthy?", they'll reply, "No, I prefer a more ethnic look." By ethnic they don't mean Irish or Polish, they mean non-white. White represents purity and goodness, from white wedding dresses to "white hat" hackers who oppose the abuse of computer systems (contrasted with "black hat" hackers). Back in the 1980s, MC Serch of the white rap duo Third Base observed on the Gas Face, "black cat is bad luck, bad guys wear black, must have been a white guy who started all that."

1.13 From Oppressed to Oppressor

America isn't the only country where race divides and makes some lives worse than others. Anti-Semitism is a form of racism and religious discrimination that has plagued Jews through the centuries and continues to do so. Iran hosted a 2-day conference of Holocaust deniers in late 2006. Attendees included David Duke, former imperial grand wizard for the Ku Klux Klan who opined that Israel "is the number one terrorist state in the world"; Robert Faurisson, who lost his tenure in France because of his denial of the Holocaust; and Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who opined that the Holocaust was a myth, the same guy who swears there are no homosexuals in Iran (AP, 2006; Tait, 2006). The Middle East isn't the only region where anti-Semitism and a denial of history flourishes. A 2005 poll found that 12% of Italians feel the Holocaust a Jewish invention; 31% of those polled felt Jews should stop playing the victim (Hooper, 2005). In 2007 the British government vowed to crackdown on rising anti-Semitism in the United Kingdom (Campbell & Taylor, 2007).

Horizontal violence pits the traditional victims of a long-lived, insidious racism against others. Almost a quarter of Israel's population is ethnically non-Jewish and mostly Arab (all of the following stats come from the *CIA World Fact Book*, available online at www.cia.gov). To be Arabic in the Jewish state and the territories Israel occupies is to be a second class citizen. Consider: the infant mortality rate in Israel is 7 deaths per 1,000 live births; in the Gaza Strip it's 22 deaths per 1,000 births and in the West Bank 19 deaths per 1,000 births. If you're born in Israel your life expectancy is 79 years; in the Gaza Strip it's 72 years and in the West Bank 73 years. Literacy rates in Israel are higher than in either the West Bank or Gaza. In Israel per capita growth domestic product is $26,200, the unemployment rate is 8.3%, and the percentage of the population living below the poverty line is 22%. Due largely to Israeli government closure policies, per capita GDP in the West Bank and Gaza is $1,500 with an unemployment rate of 20.3% in both areas. The percentage of the population living below the poverty line in the Gaza Strip is 63%, while in the West Bank it is 46%.

Palestinian life within Israel and the occupied territories is markedly different and inferior to Jewish life in Israel. Palestinian cars must have special license plates that identify the car as belonging to a Palestinian. West Bank roads are segregated with special roads for Jews and separate, military manned check-point and pothole-laden roads for Palestinians (Erlanger, 2007b). Palestinians *born* in East Jerusalem are considered permanent residents, *not* citizens. Palestinians who own land and homes inside Israel and Jerusalem but go live in areas the Israel government defines as "enemy territory" face confiscation of their property; Jews who move to "enemy territory" do not lose their property in Israel. Israeli settlers steal Palestinian land (Erlanger, 2007c; Medina, 2007c). Identity cards distinguish between Arabs and Jews. The *Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law* prohibits the spouses of Israeli citizens from the West Bank and Gaza from becoming automatic citizens of Israel (McGreal, 2006). Israel prides itself on being a democratic state with liberal institutions, yet it is first and foremost a Jewish state and sees no contradictions

between its identity, its institutions, and its treatment of non-Jewish citizens and residents.

The Israeli government maintains that its policies within Israel-proper and the occupied territories are necessary to ensure the security of its people. There is no denying that Israel is the scene of continued terrorist violence and this violence must be condemned. What is often denied is the terrorist violence perpetuated by the Israeli state. Once we face up to the reality of Israeli state terrorism supported by the US government, we can begin to seek out the connections between Israeli state violence and violence against Israelis. There is something (species) to claim you are protecting yourself when you are constantly attacking—militarily, economically— someone else. "If you're crushing and destroying someone," notes Chomsky in a context beyond the Israeli Arab situation but applicable to it, "you have to have a reason for it, and it can't be, I'm a murderous monster. It has to be self-defense. I'm protecting myself against them. Look what they're doing to me" (2005: 167). Chomsky shows how "oppression gets psychologically inverted: the oppressor is the victim who is defending himself" (Ibid.).

So it is that what the Israeli government does in the name of "safety" appears to much of the rest of the world as blatant racism. Desmond Tutu expressed that he was "deeply distressed" visiting Israel, noting "It reminded me so much of what happened to us blacks in South Africa." "What's so extraordinary," notes Palestinian Edward Said, "is that what the Israelis are now doing on the West Bank and Gaza is really repeating the experience of apartheid and what the United States did to the Native Americans" (2001: 430). Stopping short of calling Israel treatment of Palestinians racism, Jimmy Carter notes that measures such as Israel's separation wall on the West Bank represent something "more oppressive than what black people lived under in South Africa during apartheid" (Carter, 2006). At the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000, the *London Observer* noted "If Palestinians were black, Israel would be a pariah state subject to economic sanctions led by the United States."

Yet Israel continues to be the recipient of massive amounts of United States' foreign aide (Erlanger, 2007a). People in the Middle East understand that when an Israeli helicopter or tank kills Palestinian civilians it is an American tank or helicopter piloted by an Israeli soldier. I'd be remiss if I failed to note here that Israel—although the leading recipient of US aid—is not the sole recipient of US military largess. The Pentagon actually gives away billions of dollars in jets, tanks, armored personnel carriers, and naval destroyers to other countries like Taiwan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Jordan, Yemen, and Portugal (Wayne, 2006). It does so "to build good will," "international friendships," and to drum up future business for military contractors (Ibid.). The United States is also the leading arms supplier to the developing world (Shanker, 2007). "Aren't there more constructive ways for the United States to make friends?" wonders the executive director of the Project for Government Oversight (Wayne, 2006).

Criticism of Israeli policy toward the Palestinians comes from inside and outside Israel. *Refusniks* in the Israeli Defense Forces refuse to serve in the occupied territories (see for example, Z Magazine, 2006). A 23-year-old American Rachel Corrie

was crushed by a US-made Israeli bulldozer bought with US taxpayer dollars in Gaza as she protested the Israeli army's demolition of Palestinian homes (Klein, 2003). Rachel's family has been told they cannot sue Caterpillar Inc., maker of the bulldozer, because to do so would have questioned US foreign policy toward Israel (Pilkington, 2007). The American government's continued support of Israel, in spite of Israel's often repressive policies toward its ethnic and religious minorities, is one of the reasons many countries in the world *hate* the United States.

There are Americans who support Israel and really do believe it is a besieged country, not an oppressor. Yet there are other Americans who support Israel for more instrumental, nefarious reasons. American evangelicals believe that Israel must control the Middle East before Christ can return, at which point the Jews will have the chance to convert to Christianity or burn in hell. Talk about anti-Semitic, huh?

What effects do Israel government policies have on the children that attend its schools? Not surprisingly, things are bad for Arab children. Israel's public school system is segregated between schools for Israeli citizens who are Jewish and schools for Israeli citizens who are Palestinian. "Separate but equal" conditions are the de facto and dejure rule for non-Jews in Israel and the occupied territories, with schools serving non-Jewish children overcrowded, understaffed, dilapidated, and often unavailable. The Israeli government spends more money on educating Jewish students than on educating non-Jewish students. Official curriculum is a Hebrew curriculum, which is later adapted for Palestinian students. Palestinian Arab students are required to study Jewish texts in Hebrew which appear on the matriculation exams governing graduation from high school and acceptance into college.

Palestinian Arab students are more likely to drop-out of school; by age 17, 32% of Palestinian Arab students have dropped out of school, compared to 10% of Jewish students (the following statistics come from Human Rights Watch's 2001 report, *Second Class: Discrimination Against Palestinian Arab Children in Israel's Schools*). Palestinian Arab students fare worse on matriculation examinations that are necessary to receive a high school diploma and get into college: the pass rate for 17-year-old Palestinian Arabs is 28%, compared to 46% for Jewish students; 40% of students fail this exam because they are missing a mandatory subject; for example, more than half of Palestinian students who fail do so because they lack English, which is taught as a *third* language in their schools whereas it is taught as a second language in Jewish schools; 45% of non-Jewish students who apply to college are rejected, whereas only 17% of Jewish students applying are rejected. Only 9% of non-Jewish students attend college while 91% of Jews attend, and only 6% of non-Jews receive a degree versus 94% of Jewish students who do. The universities Jewish and non-Jewish students attend have staffs that are less than 1% Arab.

I'm a special education teacher, so this is an area that is always of special interest to me. As bad as non-Jewish students in Israel's school system have it, non-Jewish *special needs* students have it worse. Palestinian Arab children have a higher rate of severe disabilities than Jewish children. While there are over 60 Jewish kindergartens where integration of special needs children with general ed students is practiced, no such kindergartens exists for Palestinian Arab children: 45 special education kindergartens exist for Arab students; 484 for Jewish children.

It wasn't until 2000 that a specifically Arabic special education curriculum was developed.

This is a terrible situation, as institutionalized racism oppresses Palestinian Arab students and foments hatred against Israel's population, the Jewish Diaspora, the United States and her people. Criticizing Israeli government policy often results in the worst of knee-jerk reactions, with charges of anti-Semitism leveled against the critic. For example, Alan Dershowitz has fought tooth and nail to keep Norman Finkelstein from receiving tenure, even leveling charges against the later (Cohen, 2007c). Both men are American, both Jewish. Finkelstein eventually resigned. Palestinian–American Barnard College assistant professor Nadia El-Haj finds her tenure bid embattled because of her scholarship; El-Haj wrote a book claiming that Israeli archaeologists destroyed the remains of other cultures in their attempts to find an ancient Jewish presence and thereby justify Israel's right to exist (Arenson, 2007).

There are anti-Semites like Iran's president and David Duke who criticize the Israeli government. But not all critics of the Israel government are anti-Semites. To immediately cry anti-Semitism of anyone who has the temerity to challenge the Israeli government's policies toward its non-Jewish citizens is an example of a power evasion. Logic that holds that a Jewish state cannot be an oppressor because the Jewish people have historically been oppressed is faulty logic. If the Anti-Defamation League resists calling the genocide of the Armenians by the Turks what it is for fear of angering their allies in Istanbul the hypocrisy of this needs to be pointed out (Banerjee, 2007). Critical pedagogy works to uncover, understand, and overthrow oppression in all its forms, wherever it may be, from whatever quarters it may emerge. There are no sacred cows. A history of oppression does not garner one a pass, nor should it.

1.14 Toward Humanization

We've seen what dehumanization can look like, how it can work on individuals and through institutions. But what does *humanization* look like? Can we encourage it through the same institutions that seem to do so much to stifle it now? Answers to these questions in the forms of suggestions and illustrations are offered throughout the remainder of this book. The answers are for the people involved in a day-to-day basis to discuss, decide, implement, revisit, and revise. Here I'd just like to lay out a few general, broad ideas that I feel are a step in the proper direction.

What is the relationship between education—specifically schooling—and the future societies that encourage the humanization critical pedagogy wishes to bring to fruition? "Democracy has to be born anew every generation," Dewey posits, "and education is its mid-wife" (1993: 122). He hoped that instilling democratic character structures in schoolchildren through democratic schooling would foster to democratic societies peopled by democratic citizens (Westbrook, 1991). Freire notes that "it is possible to accomplish something important in the institutional space of a school or college in order to help the transformation of society" (1987: 130).

While Dewey, Freire, and others working in the tradition of critical pedagogy understand that education will play a part in the remaking of society, they recognize that this will be *only* a part, and possibly not the dominant part either. "I do not think," notes Dewey, "that the schools can in any literal sense be the builders of a new social order" (1993: 127). Paulo Freire is very clear that "only political action in society can make social transformation, not critical study in the classroom" alone (1987: 175). Freire warns well-intentioned teachers that "education is *not* the lever for the transformation of society," further "we are in danger of despair and cynicism if we limit our struggle to the classroom" (87: 129–130). Teaching alone cannot transform society (Shor and Freire, 1987: 37). Freire calls for political action *inside*—and just as importantly if not more so *outside*—our classrooms. "The structures of society, like the capitalist mode of production," he explains, "have to be changed for society to be transformed" (Shor & Freire, 1987: 175). Dewey agrees, noting that "the schools will surely . . . *share* in the building of the social order of the future according as they will ally themselves with this or that movement of existing social forces" (1993: 127).

Schools must be democratic spaces that encourage democracy through democratic practice. Defining democracy as "a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience," Dewey posits that "it is only education which can guarantee widespread community of interest and aim" (1993: 110 & 122). Amy Gutmann (1999) makes a compelling argument for a "democratic state of education," an education aimed at "cultivating the kind of character conducive to democratic sovereignty" (1941). A democratic education is a politically engaged education that recognizes itself as one seeking to "predispose children to particular ways of life" (1987: 43).

Schools must help students "to understand and to evaluate competing conceptions of the good life and the good society" (Gutmann, 1999: 44). Democracy must be *lived* and *practiced* in our schools. Gutmann introduces two principles of democratic schools, nonrepression and nondiscrimination. Nonrepression protects "the freedom to deliberate rationally among differing ways of life" (Ibid.). Nondiscrimination is understood in part as "a principle of nonexclusion," barring the state or any groups in the state "from denying anyone an educational good on grounds irrelevant to the legitimate social purpose of that good" (Gutmann, 1999: 45).

In America today the "unschooling" movement continues to grow. Falling under the umbrella of an estimated 1.1 million homeschooled students, today's unschoolers are motivated less by religious purposes than a sense that public education is not delivering the goods (Saulny, 2006a). In the 1970s Ivan Illyich argued for the disestablishment of schools. His arguments in favor of "deschooling" are still worthy of consideration, but need to be examined in light of Gutmann's two principles.

The "guru of the deschooling movement," Illyich worried about schooling's effect on individuals and the societies they live in (Barrow, 1978: 127). Because "school is recognized as the institution which specializes in education," other institutions are discouraged from assuming educational functions (Illyich, 1971: 8). Learning *outside* the institutional setting of school is viewed as suspect, with "learning on one's own [viewed] as unreliable" (Illyich, 1971: 2–3). I'm not so sure that learning

outside of school is discouraged because of schools' monopoly over education, but I'd agree with Illyich that the legitimacy of other institutions as educational centers is questioned because of the emphasis placed on schools.

Learning goes on inside and outside schools. It always has and always will. The problem is that the "book learning" of schools is usually valorized over learning, book-wise or other, acquired elsewhere. Illyich feels this leads to a division of social reality wherein "education becomes inworldy and the world becomes noneducational" (1971: 24). What are the real-world effects of this division? For one, the more years you spend in school, the more years you can statistically expect to live—one social factor that has been linked consistently to longer lives around the world is education (Kolata, 2007).

Schools, Illyich posits, benefit some more than others. Schools are set up in such a way that they reward the "cultural capital" (not a term Illyich himself uses) of the white middle class, "advantages [ranging] from conversation and books in the home to vacation travel and a different sense of oneself" (Illyich, 1971: 6). Illyich feels that schooling "inevitably polarizes a society" by, in part, valorizing and rewarding the values of certain groups in society over others while concomitantly devaluing and punishing the values of other groups (1971: 9). Paul Tough notes that "the manner in which [the poor] are raised puts them at a disadvantage in the measures that count in contemporary American society" in a *New York Times Magazine* article about teaching poor students to act more like middle class ones (Tough, 2006: 49).

Some schools have made moves to assimilate minority students to this middle class norm and the markers or middle class success. Black students, who comprise 14% of the American student population, only account for 7% of the participants in Advanced Placement Courses that offer high school students college credit (Dillon, 2007). In Ossining, New York, black boys receive extra homework help and attend cultural activities such as visits to baseball games and museums with black teachers (Hu, 2007b). We don't want to let black or any kids languish culturally and educationally. But we need to re-examine what constitutes "success," why what we consider being successful is important to us, and how some aspects of culture are legitimated more so than others.

The licenses and certificates conferred by schools increase economic inequality as "selection for a role or category in the job market increasingly depends on mere length of attendance" (Illyich, 1971: 11). The employment rate for black male high school drop-outs is 33%, whereas it is 86% for 4-year black male college graduates (Herbert, 2007). Further, black males graduating 4-year colleges can expect to earn a million dollars *more* over the course of their lifetimes than black male high school graduates (Ibid.). Teachers with doctorates, years and years of experience, and untold student success stories are driven from public education and not allowed to teach because they lack the requisite certificate or state license (Freedman, 2006b). Sarah Whittier, with a Ph.D. in English literature and an award for excellence in teaching, found herself traveling 90 min one-way after school to attend classes for her teacher-certification program. "To me, it's a badge of shame," Whittier notes of the credentialing requirement. "It's an embarrassment. It's infantilizing" (Ibid.).

The school system, argues Illyich, has "monopolized . . . [the] distribution of life chances because of certification and degrees" (1971: 12).

Licensure and certification are "a form of market manipulation," Illyich charges, "plausible only to a schooled mind" (1971: 15). While I think there is something wrong with keeping teachers with proven track records out of classrooms solely because they lack a piece of paper saying they are qualified to be in those classrooms, I don't agree with Illyich's contention that "[m]ost teachers of arts and trades are less skillful, less inventive, and less communicative than the best craftsmen and tradesmen" (1971: 15). Sometimes the best coaches *weren't* the best players. Pieces of paper and initials after one's name are so important in schooling that people will purposefully lie, appropriating for themselves titles and degrees they have not earned (Lewin, 2007). China in recent years has witnessed riots over university names on college diplomas (Kahn, 2006).

Instead of arguing for a more egalitarian distribution of school funding, Illyich attacks "equal schooling" (meaning equally funded schools) as "economically absurd" and "intellectually polarizing" (1971: 10). Illyich's main concern seems to be that equal schooling is economically impossible, that it would cost too much to level the playing field between schools in affluent and indigent neighborhoods. However, as noted earlier in this chapter, and as Illyich seems to realize when he himself points out how much the United States spends on defense and the military, the money is there, although politicians choose not to spend it on education.

Because public schooling is compulsory, Illyich feels it puts a damper on "the open-ended, exploratory use of acquired skills" (1971: 17). One alternative Illyich favors to "obligatory schooling" is the "educational matchmaking" of people around a specific problem using computers to make the matches (1971: 18–21). For instance, if you're interested in studying the history of the Mongol empire, you'd indicate so on a computerized questionnaire. The computer would find other people with the same interest and provide you their names and contact information, at the same time providing yours to them. This would allow you and they to facilitate informal meetings outside of an institutionalized setting where together you could study the topic.

While I like Illyich's "educational matchmaking" idea and feel the internet can facilitate it, I disagree with him on the issue of "obligatory schooling." Education *must* be compulsory. With 2.2% of students in grades K-12 homeschooled, 41% of Americans feel homeschooling is a viable choice for educating children. Christa Green and Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey (2007) found that parents who homeschool their children do so because they want to play a role in their children's educations, feel they can help their kids learn, and have the time and resources or are willing to make the time and invest in the resources to make homeschooling possible.

Homeschooling is a practice critical pedagogy must be wary of. Children belong to families but they also belong to the societies they grow up in. Gutmann criticizes "the state of families" for arrogating exclusive educational power to the family. What if a family is racist and wants to teach their kids to be racist? What if the family is intolerant of religions other than their own and wants to teach their children to be such? What if the family is dedicated to a democratic lifestyle and would

teach their children likewise? The family *cannot* have exclusive right to educate the child because the child, with her connections to others and her embeddedness from birth in society, is not exclusively the family's to do with as they please (Gutmann, 1999: 30).

"[M]en will not see across and through the walls which separate them," explains Dewey, "unless they have been trained to do so" (1993: 122). Schools allow for "education which can guarantee widespread community of interest and aim" (Ibid.). Our societies are so complex and our beliefs and ideas so many that the "ability to understand and sympathize with the operations and lot of others is a condition of common purpose which only education can procure" (Ibid.).

The answers to the questions and conundrums that vex us are answers we will *not* arrive at individually. Public education has its problems but the solution does not lie in pulling away from public education. Any solutions worth having are ones reached by addressing the problems and solving them together. While some have the means to insulate themselves and their children from the outside world, the flip side of that is they are increasingly isolated, walling themselves and their own off, whether their "own" includes their children, members of their religious or ethnic group, or their class.

There is a tradition in socialist thought that bares resurrection. "In a real community," Marx and Engels explain, "the individual obtains their freedom in and through their association" (1995: 83). Just as Freire explained that dehumanization is not possible by simply switching tacks and putting today's oppressors in tomorrow's oppressive conditions, the individual's attainment of her full humanity is possible only within and amongst the larger community of humanity. "Only in community [with others has each] individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; only in the community . . . is personal freedom possible" (Marx & Engels, 1995: 83). In a sense Defoe's Crusoe on his island, alone, was free, but what kind of freedom did he enjoy? And did he really enjoy it?

The anarchist Mikhail Bakunin disagreed with Marx and Engels vehemently on many an issue in their day but agreed with them on this point. "I am truly free only when all human beings around me, men and women alike, are equally free," he opined. All too often we view freedom as a scarce commodity, something only some can enjoy. The structures of our lives and the roles we play in these structures make it seem this way, whether you are master and I your slave, whether I am boss with plenty of leisure time and you worker with none at all. But in fact, "[f]ar from being a limitation or negation of my freedom, the freedom of my neighbor is instead its precondition and confirmation" (Bakunin in Guerin, 2005: 151). Hence "the necessary solidarity of the free development of all" of which Marx and Engels spoke, presaging a future society, "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (1948: 31; 1995: 113).

"To be human," Freire reminds us, "is to engage in relationships with others and with the world" (1974: 3). This tradition, of the individual realized *in* and *through* society, not outside and despite it, is a tradition critical pedagogists of all stripes—including those who self-identify as "socialists," "progressives," "democrats," "liberals," and "feminists," and those who do not—embrace.

Humanization needs power. Power truly isn't a four-letter word, even if its connotation is often negative. "[P]ower is the basis of all forms of behavior in which people resist, struggle, and fight for their image of a better world," remarks Giroux (in Freire, 1985: xix). bell hooks explains how she once thought of power in purely negative terms until she realized that "[i]t depended on what one did with it" (1994: 187). In our struggles toward humanization, inside and outside schools with critical pedagogy, we *cannot* abandon power. Power and the relationships it engenders can be a potent tool for being more, even if it has so often been wielded to make so many less.

With power we will weld and wield ideologies. When Freire (1998b: 267) notes that the formation of ideologies "is not a simple act of imposition" that ideologies are "produced by concrete actors and embodied in lived experiences that may resist, alter, or mediate these social messages," the important point to keep in mind is that we can create humanizing ideologies to counter dehumanizing ones. Of course, any ideologies we create must always be open to criticism, renewal, and replacement, just as we critically examine and hope to replace existing ideologies.

Schools are places where limit acts test limit situations, where the untested feasibility of "the constructible future" can be pursued (Freire, 1985: 106). "[T]here are always cracks, tensions, and contradictions in various social spheres such as schools where power is often exercised as a positive force in the name of resistance," remarks Giroux (in Freire, 1985: xix). Schools are places where we can attempt to bring our ideologies to life, to champion democracy, cooperation, and liberation over and against isolation, anomie, and damnation. "The fight," we must never forget, "is one of all human beings toward being more. It is a fight to overcome obstacles to the humanization of all" (Freire, 1996: 160). Ours is a struggle "for the creation of structural conditions that make a more democratic society possible" (Ibid.).

I have gone on at some length in this chapter about power, about hegemony and ideology, about structures of dehumanization. I have done so because I believe these are important concepts that shape and condition our lives. The remainder of this book will consider specific structures of dehumanization and offer alternatives to them where possible. Schools are contested spaces where greater or lesser humanization is possible. Schools, which at times are structures of dehumanization themselves, are like Russian dolls, nested in other structures of dehumanization. Chapter 1.14 turns to the structures of philosophy and ethics to explore their relationships to being more or being less human. Chapter 2.20 will critically apprise the mental health professions and explore more humanizing alternatives. In the pages that follow, I will be theoretical where I need to be, yet always strive to convey the ideas of myself and others clearly and concisely. Above all I will always return where and when I can to the everyday classroom.

Chapter 2
The Architecture of Power: Philosophy and Education

2.1 Structures of Dehumanization

In this chapter I want to look at the ways philosophy and ethics structure our experiences and the experiences of our students in the everyday classroom. We will see dehumanization at work and contrast arrangements where humanization is possible. Philosophy and ethics are fields that may at first seem far removed from our experiences in the everyday classroom. Sometimes the idea of philosophy comes up in teaching, as in *what is her teaching philosophy?* Both philosophy and ethics are usually presented as academic subjects *taught*, not lived through relationships. I hope to show how the things we teachers do in our classrooms every day—from the ways we set up our seating arrangements to the tests we administer, from our theories of learning and the ways they are translated into classroom lessons to our use of pre-packaged "teacher-proofed" curriculums—reflect and/or challenge philosophical and ethical arrangements. I wish to show that these are palpable relationships that impact our lives on a daily basis in the classroom.

I put a great deal of thought into the titles of these next two chapters. I wanted to convey a couple of ideas with whatever titles I chose. For starters, I need to communicate clearly that the disciplines examined in these sections are human disciplines, created by people, not preexisting, not "out there" somewhere. I also wanted to express that the way these disciplines are now structured often does a great disservice to the people—students, teachers, administrators, clinicians, community members—whose lives are conduits of and for the power that these disciplines perpetuate.

Some of the titles I mulled over included *the archaeology of oppression*, *the genealogy of dehumanization*, maybe *the archaeology* or *the genealogy of subjugation*. I liked and disliked these titles for various reasons. The terms *dehumanization*, *oppression,* and *subjugation* describe how humans are kept from being completely human, a recurring theme of this book. *Archaeology* and *genealogy* convey a sense of history, of an on-going project. However, these are both weighted terms both. Weighted not only because Foucault used them in specific ways that are both inclusive and beyond my scope here, but also because these words convey passivity. Archaeology connotes a science concerned with uncovering a static past; genealogy

connotes a descent, a lineage, a certain sense of inevitability, of just uncovering connections that have always been.

I chose the term *architecture* in the title of this chapter because it is a word I hope expresses the sense that the structures of schooling and the structures schools are nested within are human constructions. They were planned and erected. They are maintained. These structures reflect human agency, albeit the agency of some persons and not others. *Power* is another major theme running throughout this book. An architecture of power is meant to give a sense that, yes, here is an example of a discipline that exerts power over our lives, but this doesn't have to be power in the negative sense. If I show how I think a discipline dehumanizes us I will also attempt to show its obverse, suggesting ways it can be restructured to promote humanization. An "architecture of power" also straddles the dangerous position of sounding good but lacking substance, of being specious. It is my hope that I can show the substance at play behind the philosophy in general and ethics in particular of our classrooms.

2.2 Education and Myth

I choose to start this chapter with a discussion of morals and proceed from there for good reason. It's not that I think all other realms of life boil down to the ethical one. Such reductionism is one of the things I will argue against throughout this book. But I do believe that if I am able to uncover the flaws in our contemporary models of ethical thinking, you will begin to see that upholding institutions—be they schools or economic systems—built on these flaws is untenable. I believe that teachers are, whether they know it or not, primarily moral agents in their classrooms. Often the subject matter is just a cover for the ethical work we do within schools. I further believe that I can present an alternate ethical model that can and *should* form the basis for all of our human interactions and institutions. It's an alternate ethical model with roots in feminist thought of the last 25 years. Further, I believe that ours is a deeply moral species, that a sense of morality underlies our natures, and that the alternative ethical basis I will discuss here makes more sense to us as social animals and our evolution. By and large, human beings want to live good lives, and we look to ethics and morality for guidance in achieving such.

A quest for guidance, for suggestion upon which we can reflect and decide ourselves, all too often gives way to a desire for something more. A yearning for certainty and truth is extremely important to us human beings but such desire may lead us to places where, in retrospect, we'd wish we had not gone. (Chapter 6 will discuss the authoritarian personality in depth.) The perceived loss of certainty and truth is the main idea expressed in Nietzsche's parable of the madman who comes down into a village and asks where God is. The townsfolk, seemingly nonbelievers to a woman, laugh at him. "God is dead," the madman answers his own question, and God is dead, he recognizes, because "*We have killed him*—you and I" (Nietzsche, 1974: 181).

The madman ponders the significance of the death of God. It is more than the disappearance of a parent figure in the cosmos watching over us. It is a larger loss of

certainty in a world revealed to be uncertain. A god in heaven provided assurance, guidance, and organization to those scrambling around on the hard rock that is Earth below. Nietzsche charges that we have done away with this without having thought it through. "How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun?" his madman asks (Nietzsche, 1974: 182). The madman looks upon a populace that has uprooted and cast off a certainty and resolution that structured their lives, a people who have extirpated the ordering principle of their existence and have no alternate to put in its place. He shudders from the implications of this, but he shudders alone, for the villagers lack understanding of what they have done. "This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—*and yet they have done it themselves,*" he laments (Ibid.). The ramifications of their act elude them, although the consequences hover over their heads, ready to come crashing down.

Nietzsche rues the disappearance of myth in human societies. He saw religion as myth and myth as necessity. "The Greeks were keenly aware of the terrors and horrors of existence," he explains, "in order to be able to live at all they had to place before them the shining fantasy of the Olympians" (Nietzsche, 1956: 29–30). Myths provide human beings with ordering principles, with mores and norms, with reasons where none are forthcoming, with purpose. Myth, for Nietzsche is essential, and "every culture that has lost myth has lost, by the same token, its natural, healthy creativity" (1956: 136).

Less we think otherwise, education is rife with myths. For example, we are often told that education is necessary for future employment. American high schools prepare all students for college, the idea being that the more of the right kind of education one gets ensures one access to better jobs and a better life. Like most myths, this one is partially true. However, only 21% of American jobs projected through 2012 will require a Bachelor's degree or higher (Redovich, 2005: 1). Further, no more than 5% of all US jobs will require higher math or science skills (Ibid.). Despite this, despite the facts that only 35% of Americans aged 18–24 are enrolled in college; that 17 of 100 Americans in college actually *graduate* college; in short, despite the fact that college attendance and graduation are minority phenomenon in the United States, the idea of college and the desirability of attending and graduating such are hegemonic (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2006).

High scores on the SAT are bandied about as a way of predicting performance in one's freshman year of college. This is another myth of American education. In fact, one's grades in their junior and senior years of high school are better indicators of one's performance in their college freshman year. Standardized exams like the SAT (which is discussed at greater length in Chapter 5 below) are accurate measures of how well student do on standardized tests like the SAT. Once known as the Scholastic Aptitude Test, then as the Scholastic Achievement Test, today's SAT measures neither possible scholastic aptitude nor potential scholastic achievement (Sacks, 1999: 209). Further, the SAT is class- and culturally biased, with white students from affluent families faring better on it than non-white students and children from less affluent families (Owen & Doerr, 1999: 209–215).

In graduate school I learned about "6 hour retarded" students, children who appeared completely "normal" outside of school but who for 6 hours a day are incapable of functioning academically (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1997). In fact, schools value and reward certain forms of knowledge, certain cultural capitals over others. In schools that recognize Gardner's multiple intelligence theory but continue to only reward students' logical–mathematical and linguistic intelligences, students growing up in homes where books and magazines are available and students who enjoy mathematics and have an aptitude for it will outperform other students no matter how much spatial, bodily kinesthetic, or personal intelligences other students possess. Others may find themselves referred to as "retarded" for part of their day.

These "myths" surrounding education did not materialize out of thin air. They were crafted, created to justify and rationalize the benefits some accrued at the expense of others. Critical pedagogy looks to uncover the making of these myths and to institute new ones in their place. The myths critical pedagogy champions hold that education is capable of making human beings *more* human, that all students have the ability and human right to education, that schooling should help mold informed democratic citizens and not produce compliant workers and dogmatic nationalists.

I agree with Nietzsche that laying bare myths and not offering alternative myths, not working to create meaning in our lives, is the path of nihilism and damnation for both the individual and her culture. That is why, in the following chapters, as I lay bare philosophy and psychology, I offer alternatives to the way these are practiced and structured currently. Though we do well to wield Nietzsche's metaphorical hammer as we sound out educational idols, we err should we use that hammer only to destroy. Ruthless criticism is not enough. The hammer must also be used to build, erecting architectures of power that promote humanization. Destruction must be followed by construction.

2.3 The Truths We Hold Dear

Philosophy is a word and a field passed down to us from the ancient Greeks, although as an endeavor it existed before the Greeks. For as long as humans have had consciousness we have been capable of philosophizing, although we have not all borne the title of philosopher—neither, for that matter, do all thinking people today. Societies are selective on whom they bestow the title philosopher, and looking at who these people are is often a telling indictment of the society considered. For their part, the Greeks recorded their history in written form, which was preserved and passed down to us, hence the connections we can draw between the Greeks and philosophy.

The word *philosophy* derives from the Greek words for *friend* or *lover* and *wisdom*. A philosopher is a lover of wisdom. Wisdom is the state of being wise, of knowing what is true and right and acting justly. Some problems immediately arise. What is wisdom? What is considered wise? Was Einstein wise? Is a Native American shaman wise? Is one wiser than the other? What is true and right? What

does it mean to act justly? If you could go back in time and assassinate Hitler in 1938, would this be justified because of the millions of lives it would save? Or would Hitler's death be unjust because murder is wrong? Are justice, wisdom, and truth—human concepts—open to revision and reformulation or are they immutable, unchanging, eternal norms? Plato's theory of the forms held that concepts such as "truth" originated outside the three pounds of grey matter housed between our two human ears, though those three pounds—if properly educated—could apprehend the truth.

Never denying the underlying genetic component constituting certain parts of human morality (discussed below), critical pedagogy holds that knowledge—including truth—is a social construction. In other words, a good deal of what we "know" to be "true" was created *by* human beings *for* human beings. For example, many people claim to "know" that democracy is good, but how do they *know* this? Why is democracy any better than aristocracy, monarchy, or Fascism for that matter? (For further discussion see Chapter 6).

What is this thing called truth that we value so highly? Does it exist? Why do we place such importance in it? In ethics, the field of metaethics considers questions of what concepts like truth, goodness, and justice are in and of themselves. A social construction of knowledge holds that truth, goodness, and justice cannot be isolated, cannot be separated from the human interactions that give these ideas meaning. Divorced from their human contexts, these terms lose all meaning and risk meaning anything to anybody or nothing to no one. We ascribe meaning to these words when they are grounded in human relations. For example, although Michael constantly rubs Mrs. Lynch the wrong way, she grades him no more severely than the rest of her students, putting aside any personal disdain she may occasionally harbor for the brat. Most of us consider this fairness. When Mr. O'Gorman grades Caitlin more on her effort and less on her ability, resulting in a passing grade, many consider the teacher's actions a good.

Let us set aside metaethical considerations. Normative ethics is the concern of critical pedagogy in general and this book in particular. Normative ethics describes *what* is good and right and the way good and right are made. Although not always stated overtly—indeed, proponents of specific normative ethics often try to assume or prove universalizability for their ethics—implicit in normative ethics is the fact that these are people's *opinions* of what are good and right. We often take for granted certain normative ethical positions—for example, many think it's just wrong that the American economy lacks fairness, that not all hard-working people are rewarded for their hard work—because often these positions serve, have served, and continue to serve our communities and societies. But normative ethics can change and have; what is considered good and right, for example, isn't the same in every culture at all times. Slavery, the subjection of women, the prosecution of ethnic and religious minorities, these were all tolerated at one time or another and in some parts of the world still are. Not everyone in societies where these injustices flourished championed them, but these inequities usually served those with power (directly or indirectly) and therefore continued until their utility diminished or the downtrodden rose up and demanded recourse.

2.4 Magic That Works

To claim that knowledge is socially constructed opens a can of worms in some quarters. Richard Dawkins, for one, takes "cultural relativism" to task, inviting us to

> Show me a cultural relativist at 30,000 feet and I'll show you a hypocrite . . . . If you are flying to an international congress of anthropologists or literary critics, the reason you will probably get there—the reason you don't plummet into a ploughed field—is that a lot of Western scientifically trained engineers have got their sums right. (2003: 15)

Dawkins is criticizing the way some people—including, unfortunately, some progressives and some involved with critical pedagogy—challenge "scientific truth" with, as he lists them, "Trobriand truth, Kikuyu truth, Maori truth, Inuit truth, Navajo truth, Yanomamo truth, !Kung San truth, feminist truth, Islamic truth, Hindu truth" and other supposed "truths" (Ibid.). There is a sense in which Western science is a story, a work in progress, a construction that emerges at a very specific juncture in the history of humankind. "Science is magic that *works*," a character in Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* puts it. Science, in this sense, is a story that has been used not only for great good but also for great evil in our world. As a story, the only legitimacy science bears in relation to other stories from other cultures and other times is whether or not it works and to what uses it has been put.

But isn't science "true"? Dawkins states unequivocally, "It is simply true that the Sun is hotter than the Earth, true that the desk on which I am writing is made of wood. These are not hypotheses awaiting falsification; not temporary approximations to an ever-elusive truth; not local truths that might be denied in another culture" (2003: 17). Dawkins is certainly correct in the sense that, thanks to gravity, if I jump out of a 40th story window in China in 1960 I am just as assured of bouncing off the cement below as if I'd jumped out of a 40th story window in Venezuela in 2006. But perhaps there is a different sense in which what we take to be true in the natural sciences is *true* compared to what we hold true in the social sciences.

I suspect that facts in the natural sciences, once attained, are less open to interpretation than facts in the social sciences. There are regularities in our physical world we have evolved with, regularities that are seemingly unchanging and therefore predictable. In this way the proximity to truth in the natural sciences is more possible than in any social science which deals with the complexities and uncertainties of human minds and human behaviors. Our biological makeup, including our sensori-motor systems which put us "in touch" with the world outside our bodies, has developed one way while our capacity for imagination and innovation appears less constrained in certain aspects. But even in science our grasp of "the truth," of what *is,* isn't as far or as deep as we might expect. Although appearances—such as a 1000-page biology or chemistry book—may hint otherwise, our knowledge in the natural sciences lacks in scope what it achieves in depth. Chomsky (2002: 361) explains that with our "biological specialization," that is "our intellectual capacities," we build rich theories on limited data, that

> we are subject to biological limitations with respect to the theories we can devise and comprehend, and we are fortunate to have these limitations, for otherwise we could not construct

rich systems of knowledge and understanding at all. But these limitations may well exclude domains about which we would like very much to know something (1906: 122)

In other words, though we may be able to pick apart and have some understanding of atoms, though we may be able to understand and predict the parenting behavior of emperor penguins, our understanding of ourselves as a species may be limited. Science, notes Chomsky, "can only answer very simple questions—when things get complicated, you just guess" (2002: 215). Because human biology may be easier to understand than human psychology, we may never understand certain aspects of our psyches. The human mind, with its millions of interacting neurons and synapses, responding to genes and environments alike, is extremely complicated, and "when you start moving to complicated systems, scientific knowledge declines very fast" (Chomsky, 2002: 215). Hence "human behavior might be beyond our inquiry, that's possible . . . " (Chomsky, 2002: 220).

If apprehending "truth" in the natural sciences is more readily done than in the social sciences, does this make science any less a story, a human construction? Story connotes fiction, fantasy, a flight of fancy, a suspension of disbelief. But you can tell a story of factual events. Just because something is a story or a myth does not mean it is any less true. Stories and myths provide explanatory powers and they can be factual. Scientific theories and hypothesis can and do "work," and in this sense they are "true." At the same time, stories and myths—even in science—are not monolithic, not impervious to change over time.

Thomas Kuhn invites us to understand scientific paradigms that "provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research" (1996: 10). In learning a paradigm, the scientist "acquires theory, methods, and standards together, usually in an inextricable mixture," therefore Kuhn's contention that "paradigms provide scientists not only with a map but also with some of the directions essential for map-making" (1996: 109). Among others, Gazzaniga concurs, noting that "for the scientist, scientific rules and codes become part of the beliefs one must uphold upon joining the ranks of the particular science" (2006: 146). A commitment to the same rules and standards of scientific practice "are prerequisites for normal science" (Gazzaniga, 2006: 11). The concepts, laws, and theories scientists learn "are from the start encountered in a historically and pedagogically prior unit that displays them with and through their applications" (Kuhn, 1996: 46). Kuhn warns that all too often science becomes "puzzle-solving" as scientists try to "force nature into the preformed and relatively inflexible box that the paradigm supplies," which can have the adverse effect of insulating science from "socially important problems" that "cannot be stated in terms of the conceptual and instrumental tools the paradigm supplies" (1996: 24 & 37).

Paradigms are not eternal. They shift and change. Thus Ptolemaic astronomy gives way to Copernican astronomy and corpuscular optics to wave optics (Kuhn, 1996: 9). As in many other endeavors, change in scientific paradigms is met with resistance. Novelty in science, explains Kuhn, "emerges only with difficulty, manifested by resistance against a background provided by expectation" (1996: 64). Kuhn compares the scientist embracing a new paradigm, a new scientific viewpoint,

to the "man wearing inverting lenses" in that "[c]onfronting the same constellation of objects as before and knowing that he does so, he nevertheless finds them transformed through and through in many of their details" (1996: 122). He calls the shift from one paradigm to another a "conversion experience" (1996: 151).

The "hard" sciences, the "natural" sciences, are not immune to change. That, in part, is what lends science its legitimacy. A scientific theory is only as strong as the empirical evidence it provides for replication. The scientific method allows for scientific knowledge to be put to the test, repeatedly, potentially endlessly. Knowledge in the natural sciences is deemed true because it "works," because challenges to it have either failed or resulted in new scientific truths that have been accepted and adopted. At the same time, the natural sciences are concerned with very specific, very narrow categories of the physical and biological realms. The questions that keep us up at night staring at our ceilings, the questions pertaining to human psychology, morals, and morality, the questions whose answers will provide the guidance and reassurance Nietzsche's "death of god" rescinded, these are the very questions we may never be able to answer with the degree of certainty we can questions of phenomena in the natural sciences. The kicker, again of course, is that these are the questions "we would like *most* to understand" (Chomsky, 2002: 28). To borrow a line from Shakespeare, ay, there's the rub.

2.5 The Abuse of Data

Political scientists, historians, philosophers, anthropologists, economists, sociologists, educators, all, to a greater or lesser degree, look to the natural sciences for guidance. The scientific method, its reliance on reason and rationality, the apparent objectivity and neutrality of the researcher in the natural sciences, all hold out promise to those who study human beings, the ways we treat one another, the ways we *should* treat each other. But social science errs in fetishizing the methods of the natural sciences (sometimes termed "physics envy"), in attempting to apply them to a domain of study—human beings—where they may not readily fit.

An abuse of science occurs when some social scientists and social sciences rely on positivism. Positivism is an epistemology, a knowledge theory, holding that true knowledge, things we can really know (positively know), is scientific knowledge, based on natural phenomena, their properties, and relations, and is empirically verifiable (Kincheloe, 2005: 16). Positivism holds that the methods of studying the physical world can be used to study the social and educational worlds (Ibid.). Positivism in the social sciences has been called a form of scientific ideology. I hope to show that positivism's imprimatur on education is exactly that, dogma. Positivism's ugly stamp is all over the everyday classroom.

One example of positivism at work in our classrooms is the abuse of data. Here's an example of data's misuse that springs in part from the individuals' parts in the institutional structure. Certain higher ups in my school district make a big deal out of data, but the data they mean is quantitative data, numbers. The chief imperative of administrators in a district's central office is to save money, to show the local board

of education and community that the district's schools and programs are "fiscally responsible." In my district a renewed call for fiscal responsibility led to a cutback in special education programs mentioned earlier with a reappraisal of who the district was sending out of district to be educated.

That's where Harold comes in. Before we met Harold, my colleagues and I were told that he was schizophrenic and on the higher end of the autism spectrum, probably an Asperger's kid. Harold's family had moved into our district and central office was eager to get him into a district school instead of paying the tens of thousands of dollars it would have cost to continue his former placement. We were told Harold would start visiting our program to determine his eligibility for it and our high school. My fellow teachers and mental health workers knew this meant that central was set on sending us this kid, that determining eligibility really meant transitioning him into the life of our school. No problem, we take kids in all the time, and most fit in well.

But then we met Harold. A nice enough boy in his own way, this kid had issues. *Serious* issues. Harold viewed the world through perpetually half-lidded eyes. He had an intense fear of transitions and moving through hallways, coming from a program where all his classes were held in two rooms, and was now expected to move between nine different locations amongst hundreds of students in crowded hallways when the bells rang. Moving among those classrooms proved time consuming, as Harold shuffled slowly along, refusing to walk beside me, trailing two or three steps behind, and mumbling to himself the whole way. The administrator from central office facilitating his transition recommended we wait until *after* the bell to escort Harold to class. Of course this would mean Harold would be late for every class and would bring attention to him as he shuffled into class late every day, but . . . One teacher took me on the side later and asked me about the kid doing the "thorazine shuffle." Out of Harold's earshot and out of mine—or so they thought—kids wondered who "Frankenstein" was, meaning the monster, not the doctor, meaning Harold.

When Harold talked he mumbled so it was difficult to understand what he was saying. One time myself and a teacher's aide were in a classroom with Harold where another teacher was talking to the class about the universe and space. "I'm from space," said Harold. I looked at the aide and she looked at me. I had to contain myself from laughing, the comment was so funny, so out of place. Was Harold trying to amuse himself or us? "I'm sorry, Harold," the aide said, "*what* did you just say?" Harold mumbled something. "Come again?" I prodded. "I like space," is what we *think* he said the second time (but had we been wrong about what he said the first?).

It quickly became apparent that our school and our program with its emphasis on mainstreaming special education kids wasn't the right place for Harold. If this kid came to our school he would be in over his head. Academically he would sink, not swim, no matter how much teachers' individualized their lessons for him. Socially he was in danger of being torn apart by verbal abuse and mean-spiriting joking if staff members weren't with him at all times. A building level administrator confided to me, "I don't know who that kid you're walking around with is, but I can tell this isn't the place for him."

My colleagues and I—the people who worked closest with Harold as he visited us several days over those many weeks—kept detailed notes, observations of what we saw and heard when he was with us. This was data, qualitative data, and it spoke to Harold's experiences and actions in our school better than any numbers could. When we met with our supervisor—an administrator from central office—to discuss Harold we were told our data was inconclusive. "I don't know," he told us, "for me to go back and argue that this kid cannot be successful here the data really have to show . . . " Our supervisor was one of those central office types who, at meetings, could be counted on to throw in a "the data show" or "there's research on this that shows" when it supported some point he was trying to make.

Thing was, this time around our data wasn't showing him what he wanted to see. It wasn't that our supervisor is a bad person; he's a nice person who we got along well with. It's that he represented central office and their charge, the bottom line, the dollar. It's because he had to answer to administrators higher on the food chain than himself, administrators who would hold *his* feet to the fire. I still believe we teachers and mental health workers had the child's best interests at heart. Of course, a few times it was implied that our not wanting Harold was a ploy to save ourselves work. But we feared for this boy should he enter our school; why take him from a placement where he was enjoying some form of success and watch him crash? Further, if experience has taught me anything it is that certain kids I truthfully didn't look forward to working with, for whatever reasons, often turn out to be among my favorites.

An administrator reading this might claim that you can serve the child's best interests at the same time you keep an eye on the bottom line. From my experience, there are too many administrators who say they're doing what's best for the kids while they do what's best for the district's purse. There are too many higher ups who will embrace data when it serves their purposes and write it off when it doesn't. Too many who discount front line staff to a point that borders insult at times; discrediting the input from teachers, aides, mental health professionals, and other staff who interact with the kids on a daily basis when this input isn't what they want to hear. And, sadly, from my experience, the administrators I met who really do seem to care about the kids are outnumbered by those who took their position to get out of the classroom or to pursue power and higher salaries. And all too often these administrators who care are eaten alive by the piranhas.

2.6 Positivism and NCLB

In the United States a reductionistic positivism fuels *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). For years Americans have had it hammered into our heads that our public school system is failing our kids. Newspaper articles shame us by reporting that 63% of fourth graders asked cannot identify correctly—from amongst four multiple choice answers—the first permanent English settlement in North America (Dillon, 2007e). But where in the mainstream media does anyone stop and ask what the ability or inability to answer such trivial pursuit questions actually tells us about our children

and their educations? We're warned that our students don't measure up those in other industrial countries. What this exactly means, how it is measured, and whether it is even true are questions seldom given much attention in the public eye. Voices challenging such contentions don't get wide circulation (Bracey, 2004).

What we need more of, we are told, is accountability and evidence of progress. How do you argue against that? No sane person, no person who really cares about children and education, is going to argue against responsibility or champion regress. But the problem with saying, yes, what public education needs is answerability, is proof of progress, is in having your very reasonable concerns subsumed as fodder for a very pointed ideological agenda.

NCLB was sold as a means of addressing and rectifying the education gap between minorities and white students, between students from low-income families and students from affluent homes. The people behind NCLB never miss an opportunity to talk about standards, accountability, and the supposedly "scientifically proven." "Childrens do learns," President Bush noted upon hearing that New York City school children's math test scores had gone up, "When standards are high and results are measured" (2007b: A18). NCLB offered a panacea to all our education woes: testing. Where, 2000 years ago, high priests assured people that auguring was best accomplished through throwing bones or reading the entrails of small animals, today's mandarins promise divination via test scores.

Standardized tests in the field of education were introduced to uncover and address deficits but quickly became means of punishing some while privileging others. Standardized tests under NCLB promise to penalize, with NCLB ratcheting up an era of "high-stakes" testing. States, looking to comply with federal law, make more and more decisions based on test scores, from student grade promotion and graduation, to a teacher's or administrator's merit, to a public school's continued local autonomy and existence.

NCLB doesn't deign to speak softly and isn't shy about brazenly wielding a big stick. Schools will be judged in so far as they make "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) based on the results of test scores. If your school doesn't make AYP it gets labeled "In Need of Improvement." This carries with it various penalties, some more draconian than others. Schools deemed in need of improvement may have to fork over cash for vouchers to send students to more successful schools *within* that district. Schools in need of improvement may have to pay for remediation (tutoring) by outside agencies for their students. Building administrators and staff may be fired if their school continues to fail to make AYP. Schools can be taken over by the state, shut down, or handed over to educational management organizations. Public education takes a beating while the public is told its failing because of grades on test scores.

How achievable is AYP? If you listen to the business and political interests behind NCLB, if schools and "highly qualified" teachers would just do their jobs, relying on "scientifically proven" methods, it's easy as pie. Reality is much different. A more assured recipe for failure does not exist. Students are divided into subgroups with test scores for these groups disaggregated; 100% passing rates are expected for all student groups on state tests by 2014 (Meier & Wood, 2004). There are upwards

of 30 subgroups in some schools. A school can be judged as failing to make AYP if every subgroup in the school achieves proficiency levels *except* the special education or English language learners subgroups. Linda Darling-Hammond (2007) describes the Catch-22 facing schools that serve these students. Since disabled students and students lacking facility with the English language don't meet proficiency standards, they're assigned to special subgroups. Once they've met proficiency levels, they exit the particular subgroup, meaning these subgroups will *never* test 100% proficient. Afraid their test scores will decline, some school districts have kept immigrant children—even some born in America—from taking state exams (Berger, 2006a). Because the more subgroups a school serves the more likely it will fail to meet proficiency standards; Alfie Kohn charges NCLB with containing a "diversity penalty" (in Meier, 2004). What does it bode for democracy when diversity is punished? What does it augur for community when difference is scapegoated?

The testing process and the tests themselves take on a legitimacy they do not deserve. Schools wait with baited breath for the results of test scores that may make or break them (Bosman, 2007a). Students, parents, teachers, administrators, communities, all breathe sighs of relief when test scores improve. But what is improving here? Are students learning more? Are they becoming informed citizens? More moral people? Better human beings? Or are they just becoming better test takers?

The testing and the data itself are reified, divorced from reality but shaping reality. We scratch our heads when scores come back and we learn that, according to these standardized tests, "African-American and Hispanic students in high school can read and do arithmetic at only the average level of whites in junior high school" (Dillon, 2006c). A single-minded focus on test scores diverts attention from deeper structural issues that result in such disparities. Of course such an emphasis on tests and test scores is a convenient focus when no one really wants to address the underlying issues.

Schools spend more and more time teaching to the test, coaching kids to pass exams. There are classes in my high school that spend nearly the whole of the last 10-week marking period preparing kids to pass Regents exams. Schools jettison recess, electives, gym, music and art classes in order to prep students for tests (Dillon, 2006b). Clara Hemphill notes that "playtime in kindergarten is giving way to worksheets, math drills and fill-in-the-bubble standardized tests" (2006). School districts embrace longer school days, school years, and school on weekends (Schemo, 2007c).

State standards are aligned with tests and tests with standards. Curriculums are rewritten to reflect material that may appear on standardized exams (Dillon, 2006e). "There are superintendents who want to avoid teaching to the test," says Alfred Lodovico, superintendent of New York's Mount Pleasant School District. But, "I say, we're going to provide the kind of instruction that the state standards want us to provide. If that is teaching to the tests, so be it" (Fessenden, 2007). Schools are defining student academic progress by test scores, implementing "growth models" that track individual students and their test scores over the course of their academic careers (Hu, 2007a).

Many students in schools in affluent districts like the one I teach do well on standardized exams. When test scores come out there is rejoicing, congratulatory

emails from the higher ups, nice editorials in the local papers. Yet, again, what are we celebrating? Are we *wrong* to celebrate? Are we wrong to spend the last quarter of class helping kids pass an exam that may be the gatekeeper to their graduation and future life chances? No, we're not wrong, but we're all of us caught up in an institutional arrangement that seemingly forces us to do what we do.

What effects are these exams having on children? The exams come to be things students dread. They produce anxiety as they perpetually loom on our children's educational horizons. Students are coached in viewing the tests as foes, monsters to be vanquished (Herszenhorn, 2006e). Reactions of students to the news that they have failed high-stakes exams range from kids increasing the amount of time spent studying, decreasing extracurricular activities, feeling depressed, worried, and embarrassed, and even dropping out of school (Cornell, et al., 2006). Children are losing good teachers and principals as schools are labeled low-performing and staff head for the hills (Dillon, 2007a).

The emphasis on testing and raising test scores brings out the worst in kids and educators. New York City has adopted a program where students can earn money if they do well on these exams (Medina, 2007a). Schools in Dallas pay students for reading books while schools in Massachusetts pay kids for perfect attendance (Bosman, 2007b). Other schools offer iPods, rent money, and even cars to improve student attendance (Belluck, 2006). In case you're wondering, student attendance is factored into *NCLB*'s evaluations of individual schools.

When test scores fail to increase, instead of Nietzsche's madman visiting to tell us god is dead, we get chicken little running around bleating at the top of his lungs, blathering about the sky falling. Is the decline of Western civilization the next logical step? Or is it already as bad as some have it, that declining test scores are indicative of an on-going decline? Less we next fear barbarians at the gate, better we fear the barbarians in our midst. They come and go through the revolving door between big business and government, armed with a science they misuse and abuse. *NCLB* is best viewed as a tool, an instrument meant not to ensure equitable educational attainment, but the promotion of a particular ideological agenda, the privatization of American public education (see, for example, Kohn in Meier, et al., 2004).

Like the ocean, education is one of those things that has always been there for us. Like the ocean, its depths long unexplored, education has gone unmined for profit. Now the clarion call has been sounded. Education is seen as one of the last untapped bonanzas; there's money to be made in them thar' hills. Businesses grow rich from *NCLB* (Pepper, 2006). Demand for standardized exams outstrips supply, with the standardized testing industry enjoying a financial bonanza at the same time that repeated errors on the tests raise eyebrows and concerns (Arenson, 2006a; Herszenhorn, 2006d; Winerip, 2006b). Remediation becomes a cash cow.

Experts employed by the government say science proves the efficacy of phonics-based reading instruction over other methods, the same experts with demonstrable ties to phonics-based approaches (Allington, 2002; Coles, 2003; Smith, 2003). "[C]onflicts of interest, cronyism and bias" mar the $6 billion reading plan—Reading First—that the government touts as "scientifically proven," with "[a] half-dozen experts setting guidelines for which reading textbooks and tests could be

purchased by schools . . . also the authors of textbooks and tests that ended up being used" (Schemo, 2007b; Berger, 2006b).

Educational management organizations look to *NCLB* as their foot in the door to managing schools for profit. Meanwhile there is nothing but ideological faith that running schools like businesses will benefit students; if anything the opposite has been shown (Howard & Preisman, 2007). Accountability is part of the mantra that helps privatizers encroach upon public education, but charter schools and other private educational institutions themselves lack accountability as they're not regulated by the government (Freedman, 2006c).

In the meantime, nary a word that scores on these exams continue to reflect economic inequality (Herszenhorn, 2006b). Nary a word that "the education gospel," the misguided belief that education and more of it will solve America's economic problems, has it ass-backwards (Lazerson, 2005). Education isn't the answer to inequality, but inequality is a huge part of the reason education has the problems it does (Krugman, 2006). To claim that education makes all the difference makes a scapegoat of schools and the most vulnerable within them, students, teachers, and administrators (Schemo, 2006b).

Nary a word over the human cost of all this. More than 20 states have protested *NCLB*. Connecticut has sued the federal government because Washington will not fully fund that state's testing program. Interestingly enough, Connecticut employs a standardized test regime that involves multiple choice questions *and* essays and questions that require students to explain their answers and thought processes. Scoring tests such as these, as opposed to sticking multiple choice Scan Tron sheets through a computer, are time consuming and costly. That's why Connecticut is suing the government, to make Uncle Sam kick in the cash necessary to pay for such grading (Winerip, 2006b).

Upwards of 90% of America's public schools will fail to show NCLB's required adequate yearly progress as measured by tests scores within the next few years (Darling-Hammond, 2007: 14). Of California's 9,500 public schools, over 1,000 are considered chronic failures and by 2014 all 6,063 schools serving the poor will be labeled such (Schemo, 2007c). States are allowed to set their own standards and thus the substance of standards varies widely from state to state (Lewin, 2007). Not a word that nations deemed "higher-achieving" than the United States in education outcomes "focus their curriculums on critical thinking and problem solving, using exams that require students to conduct research and scientific investigations, solve complex-real world problems and defend their ideas orally and in writing," in short, exams similar to those used in Connecticut, while *NCLB* promotes the exact opposite of these (Darling-Hammond, 2007: 14).

2.7 Positivism and the Perfect Paragraph

The social studies department in my high school has devised a heuristic, "the perfect paragraph." "The perfect paragraph" is meant as a guide, an outline of what a "perfect paragraph" should be, should look like, and should contain. Thing is,

there is no such thing as a perfect paragraph. It doesn't exist. Maybe it's the name I object to, with its message to students that there is *one* and *only one* acceptable format constituting an acceptable paragraph. That's not how life or writing works. Writing is a process, a process always open to revision. Cormac McCarthy has been lauded as one of America and the world's greatest fiction writers, and I find his novels very entertaining, thought-provoking, and his use of the English language nothing short of beautiful. But what would happen if McCarthy was a high school student in my school or any other writing the way he does? Would his prose be recognized as the art it is or would returned essays chide him in red ink for run-on sentences, not using quotation marks, and not capitalizing the *s* in Spanish? Would any paragraph McCarthy has ever written in any one of his award-winning novels constitute a "perfect paragraph"?

Part of the problem is that the "perfect paragraph" heuristic addresses a very real need. Some students get to high school and they don't know how to write. They cannot express themselves with written language. A heuristic like the "perfect paragraph" provides a model for what constitutes the nuts and bolts of an acceptable paragraph. The problem isn't the student who can't write picking up the "perfect paragraph" rubric and saying, "Oh, this will help me!" The problem is when students are penalized for not following the rubric, even if the paragraph or essay they write adequately addresses the task at hand. The problem is seeing one and only one way of doing things and foisting that on others, on not acknowledging that this way is a *choice* people made no matter what lofty title is attached to it. It's like comparing the "arts" (i.e., movies, television) section of the *New York Times* to the "fine arts" (i.e., painting, drama) section of the same paper and really thinking there is something intrinsically finer about a leisurely stroll through a museum than an afternoon at the cinema beyond a human determination that one constitutes "fine" art and the other does not.

The abuse of science isn't only in education. In the American ante-bellum South medical doctors diagnosed slaves with maladies that made them more likely to try to run away and more likely to misbehave (Finkelman, 2003: 36). During World War II, Japan's Unit 731 experimented on prisoners of war, amputating limbs to study blood loss, performing vivisections without anesthesia, removing arms and legs and reattaching them to the opposite side of the body, testing grenades, gas, flame throwers and other weapons on human beings (see, for example, the gruesome Chinese-government-subsidized exploitation film, *Men Behind The Sun*, d. Tun Fei Mou, 1989; see also Barenblatt, 2004; Gold, 2004; Rees, 2002). Again, extreme examples, but nonetheless real, nonetheless abuses of science.

Unfortunately some people point to the abuse of science to validate their own whacked out ideas and desires. By equating its misuse and abuse *as* science, some critics do champion a form of relativism that does not warrant legitimacy. Their reasoning is this: science has been used in the mistreatment and oppression of countless human beings; "faith" in science in the West, dating from the Enlightenment, represents the imposition of an instrumental cultural imperialism on the rest of the world; because science has been used for these ill purposes, science is bad; therefore, "ways of knowing the world" that challenge this dominant Western conception are, ipso facto, good.

People with these ideas scare me because they often claim to be progressives, of the left. These are the types of people who claim to be fighting oppression while they are actively engaging in it, like Robespierre presiding over the Terror or when Lenin and Trotsky crushed the Kronstadt sailors, all to "save" their respective revolutions. The types guilty of D.H. Lawrence's criticism of Bertrand Russell. Lawrence accused the pacifist Russell of harboring "a perverted mental blood-lust," saying "it isn't in the least true that you, your basic self, want ultimate peace" but that Russell was "satisfying in an indirect, false way your lust to jab and strike." Lawrence challenged Russell to "satisfy it in a direct and honorable way, saying 'I hate you all, liars and swine, and am out to set upon you,' or stick to mathematics, where you can be true" (2002: 392).

The idea isn't to bash science, to ignore or marginalize its potential, or to fetishize non-Western forms of science or ways of knowing either. The idea is to hold science up to its promise, to wield science for humanistic endeavors. We need to use science to make our lives and futures more enjoyable and fulfilling, in our classrooms, in our societies. We can appreciate the intricacies of Incan engineering in their suspension bridges just as we can value the uncovering of the double helix (Wilford, 2007a). Where possible we should learn from the non-Western world, from the ancient world, and appreciate the contributions made toward human progress from whatever quarter.

2.8 Nothing but the Truth

What began as a differentiation between metaethics and normative ethics gave way to an apparent digression on the nature of truth in the natural versus the social sciences. Believe me when I say it was a purposeful departure from the subject. The social construction of knowledge has more meaning in the social sciences because the social sciences deal with subjects—human beings, our psychologies, and interactions—that are much more complicated than anything found in the natural sciences. Nietzsche shared a similar view on the difference between "truth" in the natural sciences versus the social. He chalks up the "great certainty of the natural sciences in comparison with psychology and the critique of the elements of consciousness—one might almost say, with the *unnatural* sciences" to the idea that the natural sciences "choose for their object what is *strange*, while it is almost contradictory and absurd to even *try* to choose for an object what is not strange" (1974: 301–302). Nietzsche posits that human psychology, the nature of human beings, is things familiar to us in the sense that we live with them, that, however incomplete our understandings of them, they touch on our lives daily. "What is familiar is what we are used to," he explains, "and what we are used to is most difficult to 'know'—that is, to see as a problem; that is, to see as strange, as distant, as 'outside us'" (Nietzsche, 1974: 301). Again, the idea that we may never have a satisfactory understanding of what we most want to know, because it is part and parcel of our lived experiences. If "truth," as certainty of fact, isn't floating around

out there somewhere and isn't immutable, then it becomes what we want it to be and what we can justify it as.

For we human beings, this is a great possibility but also a tremendous responsibility. Epistemic sovereignty, "the standpoint above disputes among competing truth claims," does not exist (Rouse, 1993: 103). Despite Archimedes' claim that he could lift the Earth from its foundation with a lever if only for a solid place to stand, no such Archimedean point exists, metaphorically or otherwise. If "truth" exists in the sense of a Platonic form, and my whole argument up to this point is that it does not, it may be inaccessible to the human intellect, one of those things Chomsky says "we would *most* like to understand" but can't (2006: 28).

So where does that leave us? One question worth pondering is why this human hankering after truth? "I think that, instead of trying to find out what truth, as opposed to error, is, it might be more interesting to [ask]... how is it that, in our societies, 'the truth' has been given this value, thus placing us absolutely under its thrall?" wonders Foucault (1988: 107). What does this longing after "truth" tell us about ourselves?

Nietzsche posited one answer that may have more *truth* to it than we are comfortable with. "Look, isn't our need for knowledge precisely the need for the familiar, the will to uncover under everything strange, unusual, and questionable something that no longer disturbs us?" he asks (Nietzsche, 1974: 300). Nietzsche sees the "*instinct of fear*" feeding the human hunger for knowledge, for truth. It is an insatiable hunger and if Nietzsche is correct then perhaps the fear compelling it is also never ending. Is not "the jubilation of those who attain knowledge not the jubilation over the restoration of a sense of security?" he challenges (Nietzsche, 1974: 301). Truth bespeaks certainty bespeaks meaning. Our existential well-being as a species seemingly demands purpose, and we forge purpose from our understanding of what life and our existence mean.

Nietzsche knew what he was talking about when he identified as "a basic trait of the human will, its fear of the void," when he noted that "man would sooner have the void for his purpose than be void of purpose..." (1956: 231 & 299).What does it say about human beings that we spend more time pining for some ethereal form than working *together* to *make* our truths? If we have some handle on the truth, we feel we can proceed, set a course. Thing is, we proceed anyway, in spite of our lack of knowledge and certainty, sometimes making it up as we go, laying down our path by walking. Truths are being constructed and maintained everyday, all around us. We're part of this process whether we recognize it or not; either we actively participate in truths' construction or we passively accept the truths given reality by others.

2.9 We Are the Stories We Tell

As teachers, one of the many hopes we hold for our students is that they emerge from their time with us as better people, as moral human beings. Where does morality come from? Some conflate morality with religious belief, but this is incorrect.

Sure, religions provide their followers with moral do's-and-don'ts, but atheists also have morals. Morality—in the form of ethics—suffuses everything we do in our classrooms, so it's important that we grasp from where it springs.

Today science and philosophy are showing us points of moral intersection, where people from different cultures and different time periods can agree on certain moral norms. One way we see how we agree is in how we detest individuals who violate unspoken but accepted moral norms. Consider Holden, known as "the judge," one of the scariest characters in literature, a terrifying nightmare brought to the page by Cormac McCarthy. *Blood Meridian*. *Blood Meridian* is the story of "the kid," a 14-year-old run away who joins up with the historic Glanton Gang, a posse of vicious Indian-killers doing their part to fulfill America's Manifest Destiny, wreaking havoc along the Texas–Mexican border in 1849–1850. The Glanton Gang contracts out to territorial governors and are paid for each scalp they bring back.

John Joel Glanton, the eponymous leader of the hired guns, is what most of us would consider crazy. But he pales in comparison to the judge Holden. A bald, hairless 7 foot tall, 336 pound serial child rapist-and-murderer, the judge, like James Bond, is good at everything he does: an expert dancer, fiddle-player, trail cutter, rifleman, horse rider, deer tracker, geologist, artist, and magician. He speaks numerous languages and is fond of quoting Latin. Immensely strong, he can toss a meteor 11 feet and pick a man up by his head, crushing the life out of his skull.

Most of us would consider the judge a sociopath, yet he has a code of morals he is intent on living up to and that he seeks to compel every other creature on earth to follow. Throughout the novel the judge holds court bare-chested around camp fires, smoking his cigars, members of the gang asking him questions, listening with a skeptical ear, but the judge is clear, explaining to the kid, "I spoke in the desert for you and for you only ..." (1985: 307).

During these talks the judge lays out his eschatology. "War is god," he explains, a patient deity that bided its time awaiting its greatest practitioners—human beings (1985: 248). Humans "are born for games" and "nothing else," the game measured by the worth of that wagered (Ibid.). Hence war, according to the judge, with the greatest wager — life or death, in a word, existence—is the ultimate game. As the Glanton crew massacres, scalps, and "lay coupled to the bludgeoned bodies of young women dead or dying ...," the judge approves, for in surviving this game they prove their superiority. "The secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment," opines Nietzsche, "is—to *live dangerously*! Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into unchartered seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves! Be robbers and conquerors as long as you cannot be rulers and possessors ... " (1974: 283). A similar lesson the judge would impart to the kid. But the kid—despite the fact that he harbors within himself "a taste for mindless violence" *before* he hooks up with the Judge and Glanton—is not made of the same stuff as Holden. When the opportunity arrives, he cannot kill the judge. Though the kid's inability to act decisively coupled with his refusal to accept the judge's morality may reaffirm his humanity for we readers, by the end of the novel his inaction costs him dearly.

Is morality something we just make up? If so, why do the judge's words and deeds repulse us? Why do we feel disgust when the judge sits with an orphaned Apache boy, "dandling it on one knee" and not 10 minutes later kills and scalps the child (1985: 164)? If the old man on the mount, Hassan-I Sabbah, is correct that "northing is true, everything is permitted," why do some acts foster revulsion in almost all human beings? The moral realm is one we need to be concerned with. It shadows all other human relationships. While shedding light on human psychology, economics, politics, and history, exploration of the moral may even be able to tell us more about ourselves, to illuminate deep-rooted facets of our human nature.

Friedrich Nietzsche offered one interpretation of morality's genesis. Although I find his tale entertaining and imaginative and will recount it in some detail in the following paragraphs, I don't put much credence in it as an accurate source of the origins of contemporary morality. Nor do I accept Nietzsche as a moral compass. A salient issue in Nietzsche's genealogy of morals is what it tells us *about Nietzsche* himself, the times he lived in, and people who are attracted to his view, a view I think McCarthy's judge Holden exemplifies. "The question concerning the origin of moral values is for me a question of the very first rank," explains Nietzsche, "because it is crucial for the future of humanity." I agree that human morality, its origins, and its possibilities are of the utmost importance for the future of the human race. But I take issue with the tale Nietzsche tells and its implications. For he proposes a future predicated on a revaluation of existing values. To do so he looks to a past where one such revaluation has already usurped humanity's previous moral position. In looking to this past Nietzsche dismisses today's "good" person as a sham. "What if the 'good' man represents not merely a retrogression but even a danger, a temptation, a narcotic drug enabling the present to live at the expense of the future?" he wonders. "What if morality should turn out to be the danger of dangers?" (Nietzsche, 1956: 155).

Imagine a time in human history past, Nietzsche invites, where a race of superior beings went about their business, doing what they wanted to do when they wished to do so without any second thoughts to their actions. The acts of these "noble" beings were "good," by dint of the nobles doing them. "[T]he noble type of men experience *itself* as determining values," opines Nietzsche, "it does not need approval; it judges, 'what is harmful to me is harmful in itself'; it knows itself to be that which first accords honor to things; it is *value-creating*" (1989: 205). "But that man who sets himself the task of singling out the thread of order from the tapestry," says McCarthy's judge, "will by the decision alone have taken charge of the world and it is only by such taking charge that he will effect a way to dictate the terms of his own fate" (1985: 199). Nietzsche posits that the noble's strength of will and resoluteness of action in fulfilling their urges constitutes a "master morality." The judge Holden is an example of Nietzsche's master morality.

Nietzsche's genealogy of morals, like his broader philosophy, takes a human pecking order for granted. Not everyone is or can be noble. Nietzsche discerns an "instinct for rank" in human beings, an instinct that doesn't trouble him, in fact it is one he wishes to encourage (1989: 212). A noble is noble because he *recognizes* this hierarchy of rank and *his* superior position within it. "There is an *instinct for*

rank which, more than anything else, is a sign of *high* rank," Nietzsche remarks. Judge Holden speaks of "culling" the human race, that children "should be put in a pit with wild dogs. They should be set to puzzle out from their proper clues the one of three doors that does not harbor wild lions. They should be made to run naked in the desert until . . . " (1985: 146).

For Nietzsche, the noble recognize *himself* as such, "it is the *faith* that is decisive here, that determines the order of rank"; further, these noble individuals share "some fundamental certainty" that they are noble, "*The noble soul has reverence for itself*" (1989: 228). The judge Holden never questions his "suzerainty" over the earth and its creatures. He carries around a leather-bound ledger into which he sketches his finds, from pot shards to bone tools to flowers. The judge is adjudicator of all things on earth, determining value, acting of his own accord. "This is my claim," says the judge, laying his palms on the ground. "Whatever in creation exists without my knowledge exists without my consent" (McCarthy, 1985: 199). He records in his book to stake his claim. "In order for it to be mine nothing must be permitted to occur upon it save by my dispensation," he remarks. Hence "the freedom of birds is an insult to me. I'd have them all in zoos" (McCarthy, 1985: 199). When asked why he chooses the term "suzerain" and not "keeper" or "overlord," the judge clarifies, "A suzerain rules even where there are other rulers. His authority countermands local judgments" (McCarthy, 1985: 198). "What's he a judge of?" the kid asks the ex-priest, Tobin, a question the other repeats as a statement but does not dare answer aloud (McCarthy, 1985: 135).

The nobility "regarded themselves as possessing the highest moral rank," Nietzsche explains (1956: 163). Indeed, "it was the 'good' themselves, that is to say the noble, mighty, highly placed, and high-minded who decreed themselves and their actions to be good, i.e., belonging to the highest rank, in contradistinction to all that was base, low-minded and plebeian" (Nietzsche, 1956: 160). The noble's sense of "good" depended on and demanded action. The noble "really felt that they were also the 'happy'" explains Nietzsche, "being fully active, energetic people they were incapable of divorcing happiness from action" (1956: 172). Action was "a necessary part of happiness" for this segment of humanity (Ibid.). Noble morality was enacted, lived, not theorized.

Of what did the nobles' urges and the actions that fulfilled them consist? Seemingly everything and anything that came to mind, including some pretty nasty activities. "We can imagine them returning from an orgy of murder, arson, rape, and torture," Nietzsche lists them as if they're all the fun things in life, "jubilant and at peace with themselves as though they had committed a fraternity prank" (1956: 174). When the kid first lays eyes on the Glanton Gang riding into town he sees men "bearded, barbarous, clad in the skins of animals stitched with thews and armed with weapons of every description," their horses adorned with coverings "fashioned out of human skin and their bridles woven up from human hair and decorated with human teeth," the men "wearing scapulars or necklaces of dried and blackened human ears" (McCarthy, 1985: 78).

Nietzsche likens the nobles to "wild animals," for "[d]eep within all these noble races there lurks the beast of prey, bent on spoil and conquest" (1956: 174). Their

"hidden urge has to be satisfied from time to time, the beast let loose in the wilderness" (Nietzsche, 1956: 174). Judge Holden's belief that "war is the truest form of divination" is right up Nietzsche's alley (McCarthy, 1985: 249). Nietzsche opened his arms to the prospect that "a more virile, warlike age is about to begin" (1974: 283). The noble races, Nietzsche offers, have always been "headstrong, absurd, incalculable, sudden, improbable," showing an "utter indifference to safety and comfort," taking "pleasure in destruction, their taste for cruelty" (1956: 175). Not the type of guys—and nowhere does Nietzsche mention women as part of this nobility—you'd want to date your daughter.

Nietzsche explains that, because of its seemingly uncivilized actions, the noble caste began as a barbarian caste (1989: 202). When asked what is best in life, *Conan the Barbarian* answers, "To crush your enemies, to see them driven before you, and to hear the lamentation of the women" (d. Milius, 1982). When the Glanton Gang rides into Tucson, the American lieutenant in charge of the garrison is faced with something the likes of which he has never before seen. "Save for their guns and buckles and a few pieces of metal in the harness of the animals there was nothing about these arrivals to suggest even the discovery of the wheel" (McCarthy, 1985: 232).

Nietzsche's valuation of humans and their morals place the nobles and their *deeds*, their lived morality, at the top. Yet the noble, outnumbered, has always found himself the object of the envy and opprobrium of the masses, the "herd" as Nietzsche calls us. "[A]s long as there have been human beings," he opines, "there have also been herds of men and always a great many people who obeyed . . ." (Nietzsche, 1989: 110). These herd men and women are the ones being killed, burned, raped, and tortured when the nobles go out on their barbarian-on-parade jaunts, and we're none of us too happy about it. Where the noble's life is marked by action, the life of the masses is marked by *inaction*. The noble *does*, the masses have things *done* to them, often quite nasty things. Because he is too busy acting, the noble doesn't spend his time *thinking* as the herd man and woman do. The masses busy themselves planning, plotting, and scheming.

Having to live in constant fear that the noble will attack, will visit violence upon the lives of the masses whenever he feels the urge, resentment breeds among the herd. Nietzsche imagines conversation between the downtrodden masses. "'I don't like him.'—Why?—'I am not equal to him.'" and asks, "Has any human being ever answered that way?" (Nietzsche, 1989: 94). Resentment is a feeling alien to the noble mentality. Wronged, the noble does not bare a grudge. He does not brood. He *acts*, absorbing the perceived wrongdoing in an "instantaneous reaction" (Nietzsche, 1956: 173). "You either shoot or you take that away," the judge tells the earless Toadvine. The later, shocked and disgusted by the judge's murder of a child, has pressed the muzzle of his pistol to Holden's head. "Do it now," the judge orders. Toadvine puts his pistol away. Yet the judge doesn't act against Toadvine, even later in the novel when he has the chance (McCarthy, 1985: 164). Nietzsche asks us to listen and the disdain in his voice is clear: "We can hear the oppressed, downtrodden, violated whispering among themselves with the wily vengefulness of the impotent, 'Let us be unlike these evil ones. Let us be good. And the good shall be he who does

not do violence, does not attack or retaliate, who leaves vengeance to God … " (1956: 179).

A "slave rebellion in morals" follows, carried out by the masses through their spokesmen, priests, and philosophers (Nietzsche, 1956: 266). Everything the noble does is now considered evil; everything the masses have been forced to suffer is good (Nietzsche, 1989: 207). "Moral law is an invention of mankind for the disenfranchisement of the powerful in favor of the weak," states the judge (McCarthy, 1985: 250). "[T]he herd man," Nietzsche's contempt is obvious, "gives himself the appearance of being the only permissible kind of man, and glorifies his attributes, which make him tame, easy to get along with, and useful to the herd, as if they were the truly human virtues: namely, public spirit, benevolence, consideration, industriousness, moderation, modesty, indulgence, and pity" (1989: 111). "But what good is the pity of those who suffer," it is not a question, "Or those who, worse, *preach* pity" (Nietzsche, 1989: 230). The slave rebellion in morals has succeeded to an extent that it masks that "[a]ll good things have at one time been considered evil; every original sin, has, at some point, turned into an original virtue" (Nietzsche, 1956: 249).

We might think Nietzsche would approve of the masses' *acting* to invert the values of the nobles. To a limited degree he does, but Nietzsche ultimately condemns "slave morality" because it emerges from *weakness*, not strength. "The slave revolt in morals begins by rancor turning creative and giving birth to values … " (Nietzsche, 1956: 170). It does not develop independently but in *reaction to* noble morality. Lacking creativity, slave morality is derivative, looking "outward instead of inward," with its action mere *reaction* against the nobles and their values (Nietzsche, 1956: 171). Slave morality is delusional, the product of "the rancor of beings who, deprived of the direct outlet of action, compensate by an imaginary vengeance" (Ibid.). Slave morality is compromised from its beginning. "Slave ethics … begins by saying *no* to an 'outside,' an 'other,' a non-self, and that *no* is its creative act" (Ibid.). Slave morality seeks to stifle and condemn noble morality and replace it with a morality of wimps, as "everything that elevates an individual above the herd and intimidates the neighbor is henceforth called *evil*; and the fair, modest, submissive, conforming mentality, the *mediocrity* of desires attains moral designations and honors" (Nietzsche, 1956: 114). It is what Nietzsche calls a "morality of decadence" (1956: 328).

Slave morality has triumphed, and this, Nietzsche feels, is a terrible thing for humanity. Fear is no longer bestowed on the noble from the masses, but pity and distrust. "[A]ny high and hard nobility and self-reliance is almost felt to be an insult and arouses mistrust; the 'lamb,' even more the 'sheep,' gains in respect" (Nietzsche, 1956: 114). The slave revolt in morals prevails. Indeed, "we have lost sight of [it] today simply because it has triumphed so completely" (Nietzsche, 1956: 168). As *Blood Meridian* unfolds the Glanton Gang finds itself an anachronism. Staring out at a city from their campsite one night, "they sat like beings from an older age watching the distant lamps dim out one by one … " (McCarthy, 1985: 176).

Nietzsche rails against Christianity, socialism, and democracy, which he sees as direct outgrowths of this slave morality and its leveling tendencies (1956: 168). Today's triumphant "[m]orality trains the individual to be a function of the herd

and to ascribe value to himself only as a function" (Nietzsche, 1974: 174). He laments, "everything is rapidly becoming Judaized, or Christianized, or mob-ized—the word makes no difference" (Nietzsche, 1956: 170). Organized religion, liberalism, democracy, these may allow for humans to live together peacefully, but Nietzsche bemoans that "the enduring advantage of society must be given precedence, unconditionally, over the advantage of the individual..." (1956: 174). Less we think otherwise, "it should be clearly understood that in the days when people were unashamed of their cruelty life was a great deal more enjoyable than it is now..." (Nietzsche, 1956: 199).

2.10 Nietzsche's Vision

Nietzsche arrived at his genealogy of morals through his studies of language, intrigued when he found out that "the etymology of 'good' is always *noble* in the hierarchical, class sense" (1956: 162). What are the implications for human society of Nietzsche's genealogy? Nietzsche wants a society that exists "*not* for society's sake but only as the foundation and scaffolding on which a choice type of being is able to raise itself to its higher task and to a higher state of *being*" (1989: 202). Society, for Nietzsche, should exit to allow this noble type to fully develop. The masses in such a society are mere stepping stones, disposable, with the noble type accepting "with a good conscience the sacrifice of untold human beings, who, *for its sake*, must be reduced and lowered to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments" (Ibid.). Indeed, a "human being who strives for something great considers everyone he meets on his way either as a means or as a delay and obstacle—or as a temporary resting place" (Ibid.). This sacrifice of the many to enhance the few is a product of the "egoism [that] belongs to the nature of a noble soul—I mean that unshakable faith that to a being such as 'we are' other beings must be subordinate by nature and have to sacrifice themselves," justifying its egoism as just that, justice (Nietzsche, 1989: 215). Nietzsche is clear, "To sacrifice humanity as mass to the welfare of a single stronger human species would indeed constitute progress" (1956: 210). Strong words. Scary, huh?

Nietzsche's vision is intensely individualistic and lacks solidarity. "For solitude is a virtue for [the noble type]," he explains, "All community makes men—somehow, somewhere, sometime 'common'" (Nietzsche, 1989: 226). Nietzsche dismisses "all lunatic asylums and nursing homes of culture" (1956: 261). Forget democracy or socialism or Christianity or Judaism, Nietzsche sneers at associated living in general. For the "single stronger human species" he pines after, "it is every bit as natural ... to disaggregate as for the weak to congregate" (Nietzsche, 1956: 273). The strong, the noble, the powerful are *asocial*. Still, they can come into contact with one another and coexist somewhat peacefully. When they're together, the noble "are so strictly constrained by custom, worship, ritual, gratitude, and by mutual surveillance and jealousy," they are "so resourceful in consideration, tenderness, loyalty, pride and friendship" (Nietzsche, 1956: 174). But always remember, "once they step outside their circle [they] become little better than uncaged beasts of prey" (Ibid.).

There is no rescuing the noble from Nietzsche's vision, of hoping he will work *with* the common man and woman to make life better for all. Nietzsche is clear that the healthy noble is not to be a physician to these others; if anything, he will isolate himself from them (1956: 261). "The higher must not be made an instrument of the lower," he enjoins (Ibid.). Marauding nobles, raping, pillaging, murdering are *not* what threatens humanity. "It is the diseased who imperil mankind, and not the 'beasts of prey'" (Nietzsche, 1956: 258).

To Nietzsche's favored ranking of values and human beings we must ask, by *whose* right? *Who* ranks? Nietzsche is ranking Judaism and Christianity "slave morals" against "master morality." Nietzsche is an individual. Does the individual assign rank? Do all individuals enjoy the possibility of assigning rank? Nietzsche certainly did not. His books did not sell well during his lifetime, one of several frustrations he faced while he lived. Only after he collapsed and spent the last decade of his life insane did his ideas start to catch on, and then often enough they were misinterpreted and used by groups to which Nietzsche would have vehemently denied them, such as the Nazis.

Nietzsche's genealogy of morals was his attempt at myth, of providing an understanding and a meaning to his life and the lives of others. Nietzsche the man was something quite different than the ideas he championed. Nietzsche was polite and affable, showing concern for family and friends. When he suffered the mental breakdown that preceded the confinement of his last 10 years of life, he collapsed coming to the aide of a horse that was being whipped by its owner, wrapping his arms around the animal. Nietzsche's tough guy philosophy came from a man who wasn't conventionally tough. Illness, vision problems, and personal frustrations stemming from unrequited love and disappointment over poor book sales plagued Nietzsche his whole life. Perhaps his philosophy has its genesis in his own perceived shortcomings. Whatever the case, except for its misappropriation in part by the Nazis, Nietzsche's philosophy in general and his genealogy of morals in particular didn't catch on.

2.11 Ethics and Education

The accepted moral positions that Nietzsche challenged in his own day continue to be felt in much of our own lives. I speak here specifically of the moral philosophies championed by Immanuel Kant in the 18th century and John Stuart Mill in the 19th century. Despite their differences, these moral philosophies, what Margaret Urban Walker (1997) classes as "theoretical-juridical models" and I will refer to throughout as the traditional Western ethical models, have much in common. Above all, their presence and influence is felt in our classrooms today.

Both the traditional Western ethical models both take as their starting points a conception of the individual as independent, autonomous, and rational (Held, 1993; Held, 2006). This is an individual who is interested, first and foremost, in herself and her life. The relationships this individual actor enters are secondary to her existence and self-interest. Individuals in the traditional Western ethical models work together

only when it will benefit them to do so or when conjoint action is perceived to be in accord with universal laws that their reason grants them access to.

In our classrooms, students usually work *alone*. They often sit isolated at individual desks in rows with space separating them from their neighbors. Even when they sit at tables or in small clusters, their attention is expected to be focused on the teacher, who may be in the front of the room or circulating around. Sometimes group work is assigned but when it is it is often one group in competition against another. Tests are administered and grades allotted to individuals.

The traditional Western ethical models have often denigrated women. Separating the public and private realms, these models historically looked to the private sphere as the sphere of the household (Held, 2006: 13). In these male-headed households, women (and, once, slaves) engaged in the reproduction and nurturing of children. In these models the public sphere is the realm of action, where men busy themselves in politics and economics, the supposed important things in life.

The traditional Western ethical models knock emotion in favor of reason, also often at the expense of women. Being *reasonable* is preferable to being *emotional*. Reason grants one access to universal moral principals, whether Kant's categorical imperative or Mill's principle of utility. These principals are disembodied, out there, capable of being tapped into by you and me using abstract reasoning. Emotion has to be kept in check. Think of what it means to be reasonable. Being reasonable conjures images of being rational, clear-headed, sensible. Reason and emotion are portrayed as polar opposites. Emotions are associated with the body in general and the female body in particular, the "female and dark forces of unreason, passion, emotion, and bodily need" (Held, 2006: 59). Emotion stands in contradistinction to reason, taking away from reason, sullying it. Men are reasonable, women emotional.

The field of education today continues to privilege the male over the female (Kelly & Nihor, in Apple, 2007). Although women swell the ranks of elementary school teachers, the higher up the education totem pole one goes the less female teachers you find. Throughout schooling, from kindergarten to college, more males are in positions of authority, more females in subordinate positions. In high schools, certain subjects (e.g., language arts, foreign languages) are more heavily female staffed than are other subjects (e.g., science and math). Higher paying jobs in education, the more cushy positions, the jobs in universities and administrative offices are disproportionately filled by males.

Emotions are given short shrift to reason in education too. Students are labeled "emotionally disabled" but there is no similar designation for one who is too reasonable. Too reasonable? Is such a thing even possible? Weren't Hoss, Eichmann, and Mengele perfectly reasonable when they carried out their atrocities in Nazi Germany? *Emotionally handicapped* or *emotionally disabled* sounds a lot worse than *learning disabled* or *other health impaired*. Reason is ultimately privileged, even when and where it shouldn't be. For example, if you ever want to win an argument with someone, just stay calm. When the other person "loses their head," keep yours. ("Losing one's head" is a funny phrase, because it connotes the loss of the ability to reason, a capacity of the mind.) Even if you have the

weaker argument, I guarantee you, in the estimation of outsiders you will be seen to prevail. That's the hold reason has on us.

Disembodied, reason and rationality find their home in the mind, not in the body; in thought, not in physical work. A similar rift privileges mind work over hand work in education. Since I've been a kid vocational education has been seen as something the "smart kids" *don't* do. Who would want to learn to be a mechanic or a carpenter or a chef or a cosmetologist when they "have the intelligence" to write essays, simplify radicals, or make heads or tails of the three formulations of Kant's moral philosophy? We lose sight that the privileging of "book learning" over manual labor or street smarts is a human convention. The work we do with our hands doesn't have to pay less or receive less respect. We lose sight of the fact that the industrial revolution did not have to proceed the way it did, that its consequences for workers, work, and work education could have been different (see, for example, Kincheloe, 1995).

2.12 The Historicity of Ethical Models

Positivism locates knowledge "out there," as something definite, as knowable, denying a human role in knowledge production. In much the same way the traditional Western ethical models assume certain irrefutable points, namely the suzerainty of reason, the universalizability of moral judgments, the notion of human beings as autonomous individuals. This is not a coincidence. Positivism and these ethical models sprang from the same historical circumstances.

In a nutshell: up until a certain point in European history, if you weren't royalty, clergy, or kith and kin to royalty and clergy, you were screwed. First the clergy, then the crown had a monopoly on political and economic power. Aspired to be ruling class? If you weren't born into it, tough luck. Economic avenues were similarly blocked to all but friends and relatives of the crown and church. This was not necessarily a worldwide phenomena, but keep in mind that Europe served as the development model for other civilizations, usually by imposition, less frequently through emulation.

For their monopoly over economic and political power, the nobility and clergy were a minority of the population. An emerging "middle class"—middle in the sense that they were positioned between the upper classes and the majority of landless peasants—sought economic and political power and found their routes to such blocked. Something had to give, and it did. Wars were fought in and off the battlefield as this rising middle class, the bourgeoisie, scrabbled to secure power.

It is in this sense that what Virginia Held (1993) refers to as the "bourgeois self" developed. The characteristics of this individual self (isolated, egoistic, guided by reason), which we have been looking at, are well known to us today because this self is the default model that largely informs our ontologies, our ideas of who and what we are and how we should be. It is a self predicated on the market model for all human interactions (Held, 1993: 70–71). A self forged at a time when the market impetus was a revolutionary, even democratizing force. Like so much we've

looked at and will look at in this book, there was nothing inevitable about this self's development. Joan Tronto (1993), for one, shows that countervailing tendencies in the Scottish Enlightenment, tendencies favoring the moral elements of sympathy, benevolence, and propriety, existed. These tendencies suffused the theories of David Hume, Adam Smith, and Francis Hutchenson but lost out. If they hadn't, how might we view ourselves today? What would our relationships and institutions look like?

Much was ignored in the creation of an individual suited for market conditions and the economic, political, and ethical ideology necessary to justify such. Much else was reshaped to fit in and justify these arrangements. Whatever it means to be what we are as a species, theorists and ideologues plumbed "human nature," a process that involved the downplaying of qualities that didn't serve their models while seizing and emphasizing those that did.

Proponents of what I persist (in echoing Held) in calling the "bourgeois self" here often argue that capitalism has been as successful as it has been because it appeals to deep-seated features of our natures. It has been hammered into our heads that we are competitive individuals and always have been. Perhaps we are, or *can be*, ultimately depending on the circumstances, situations, and institutional structures we find ourselves in. But there is at least equal chance that cooperation and solidarity are as much parts of our makeup as competition. Suspecting and hoping such, Alfie Kohn (1992) wonders why, if competition is something supposedly inhering within us, we humans need to be socialized into being competitive from childhood.

The "bourgeois self" and its emphasis on reason emerged at a specific time and place in human history. What are now viewed as the traditional Western ethical models made this sense of self possible, just as this sense of self made and continues to make these ethical models viable. The intersection of ethics, economics, and politics birthed this bourgeois self, as it reinforces these relationships to this day. Historically and ontologically, it did not have to be this way and need not continue in this direction. Conscious decisions were made by some while others followed obediently. Those who did question were ignored, marginalized. The human species has moved on, but our ethical underpinnings remain mired, reflecting the needs of a time hundreds of years old.

2.13 Different Voices

The past's outdated imprint on the present is all too real. Our most influential notions of moral development owe much to these models. Lawrence Kohlberg's "cognitive-developmental theory of moralization" is considered the authoritative model of how we make moral judgments. Kohlberg's influence on contemporary moral thinking is enormous, spanning ethics to political theory to education. There are those who want to see his theories adapted and taught as best as they can be in school settings (for example, Hersch, et al., 1979). Despite Kohlberg's enormous and undeniable influence on the field of moral reasoning, his reliance on deontological Kantian notions of morality, stemming in part from his indebtedness to Piaget, places his theory of moralization at odds with critical pedagogy.

It is worth considering Kohlberg's model in some detail to contextualize various criticisms of it. The cognitive-developmental theory of moralization is a cognitive, sequential, hierarchical model. Kohlberg lays out six stages that he holds correspond to a child's moral development and age. Kohlberg's methodology involves his "Moral Judgment Interview," a series of dilemmas one is read, followed by questions that ask what the solution to each dilemmas is and why that is the solution. One's position along the moral stages continuum is determined by the form one's reasoning takes when providing answers to moral dilemmas.

Perhaps the best known of Kohlberg's moral dilemmas is the third, involving the fictitious Heinz and his wife (1965). Imagine the life of Heinz's wife threatened by cancer. Imagine a drug exists that doctors think can save her. The druggist who created the medicine is charging ten times its worth, pricing it well out of Heinz's reach. Heinz goes to the druggist and pleads with him to no avail, at which point he considers breaking into the drug store at night and taking the drug for his sick wife. After presenting Heinz's dilemma to participants, Kohlberg would ask them a series of questions beginning with whether or not Heinz should steal the drug and why. Subsequent questions delved into the reasoning behind participants' answers, questions like: if Heinz does not love his wife should he steal the drug for her? or if it wasn't his wife but a stranger or even a pet animal he loves should he still steal the drug? or being as it is against the law to steal, if Heinz steals the drug is his action morally wrong?

The reasoning behind one's answer to this and other dilemmas allowed Kohlberg to locate a participant in one of his moral stages. For example, stage two (preconventional reasoning) tends to hold that if Heinz can get away with it, it's fair for him to steal the drug his wife needs. Kohlberg found that participants at this stage of reasoning think stealing the medication fair because Heinz is pursuing his own self-interest. The idea that Heinz's wife as a human being distinct from her husband needs the medication was not a part of their justification. Stage five reasoning (one of the two postconventional or principled stages) sees Heinz taking the drug as permissible because if Heinz universalized his action more good than harm would result.

As predominant as Kohlberg's moral reasoning model has been, challenges to it have arisen from feminist-inspired political theory and more recently neurobiology. Carol Gilligan's critique of Kohlberg is widely considered the genesis of what is called the ethic of care. Here we will look at Gilligan's critique of Kohlberg and the reaction of Kohlberg and his associates to her, which I think we will find instructive when we consider the hierarchical, all-encompassing nature of Kohlberg's six stage model.

An associate of Kohlberg's, Gilligan studied his work for gender bias and found it. The subjects in Kohlberg's original study, which formed the basis for his dissertation and the source of his longest longitudinal data sample, were all preschool males. Both Piaget and Kohlberg, Gilligan charged, dismissed females, with Piaget relegating girls to "an aside, a curiosity" and Kohlberg not even mentioning "boys" in his original index because he assumed the children he studied were male (Gilligan, 1982: 18). No need to worry, Kohlberg and his associates rejoined, girls are capable of justice reasoning and can reason *just as well* as boys (1983: 130).

But Gilligan's critique of Kohlberg was more than methodological. Substantively, Gilligan felt Kohlberg got it all wrong. She argued that boys and girls and males and females reason *differently*, that there are "two ways of speaking about moral problems" (Gilligan, 1982: 1). To males Gilligan attributes a reasoning predicated on a morality of justice and rights made possible through formal, abstract thought by disinterested, detached actors. In contrast she argued that the experiences of women are guided by "a different voice," a mode of thinking contextual and narrative, centered on responsibility and relationships (1982). Criticisms of Gilligan's methodology, such that much of her early work involved only girls and that her "different voice" morality are themselves gendered, ensued (Tronto, 1993: 82–85). Kohlberg and his associates, admitting that their early studies' centering on males deserved the criticism it got, claimed that girls were just as capable of justice reasoning as boys.

As for Gilligan's different voice, Kohlberg et al. (1983) revised the moral stages model, refusing to accept the existence of two dueling moral orientations, proposing instead "a dimension along which various moral dilemmas and orientations can be placed," from the "standard hypothetical justice dilemmas" and justice orientations to the personal moral dilemmas and care orientation. In fact, Kohlberg et al. reassure us, with not the least bit of chutzpah, that stage six justice reasoning is *inclusive* of a care ethic (1983: 137–138). Attempting to subsume Gilligan's perceived different voice only hammers home the hierarchical nature of Kohlberg's six-stage model.

Though he claims universalizability for his model, Kohlberg is clear that it be "understood as a hierarchy based upon successive structural integrations" (1983: 39). A normative element accompanies this hierarchical organization, hence a stage six moral thinker is a *better* moral thinker than one at stage two. A neo-colonialist mentality suffuses Kohlberg's model as non-urban; traditionally oriented peoples rarely reach the higher levels of moral reasoning in his design. Kohlberg never asks but his implication begs, if such moral reasoning is universal, then what's wrong with these non-white, backwards peasants that they can't reason the way their cosmopolitan progressive metrosexual cousins can? Kohlberg's theory is elitist in more ways than one because in fact *very few* people reach the higher stages. Tronto posits Kohlberg's cachet to the fact that he tells people in power what they want to hear, how wonderful and moral they are, as "being relatively well off and well schooled seems to be a necessary, if not sufficient condition, to achieve the highest forms of morality" (1993: 76). One wonders if, deliberately or not, this was Kohlberg's goal in making room for care thinking in his sixth stage, buying off the mostly highly educated feminist-academics with whom theorizing on care began, offering them inclusion in his moral cream of the crop.

"For Piaget and ourselves," Kohlberg and colleagues write, "justice is the structure of interpersonal interaction" (1983: 93). The ability to role-play is a central element of Kohlberg's model and thought, a facet that exemplifies what he means by interpersonal interactions. Kohlberg's role-taking ability is the ability "to react to the other as someone like the self and to react to the self's behavior in the role of the other" (in Hersch, et al., 1979: 49). In the argument that follows below, I will be favoring an ethic of care based, in part, on relationships, empathy, and attentiveness

over the Western ethical models and their reliance on abstract reason and atomistic individualism. So it might seem a bit disingenuous here to criticize Kohlberg's notion of role-playing, which would seem to lend itself to empathy and relating to other people. But bear with me.

Kohlberg stresses "reversibility as the ultimate criterion of justice," reversibility being the "property of a justice structure of moral operations which enables the structure to construct solutions to dilemmas in such a way that these solutions can be considered acceptable or just from the points of view of all relevant parties" (1983: 95). Kohlberg explains that at the highest stages of moral reasoning, "reversibility implies a conception of justice as moral musical chairs, a conception which requires each person to systematically take the position of everyone else in the situation" (Ibid.). Reversibility is exercised through role-playing.

The problem with Kohlberg's role-playing ability and any reversibility emanating from it is that such role-playing takes as its starting point an individual self that is interchangeable with any other individual self, one that "can assume the role of anyone in a given moral dilemma" (Tronto, 1993: 70). Hersch et al. (1979: 49) give as an example of the importance of role-playing the 3-year old who cannot put himself in the place of his headache-ridden mother, a 3-year old who then gets impatient and angry when his beleaguered mom can't amuse him; at a later age and moral reasoning stage, the kid can put himself in his mother's shoes and understand something of what she might feel returning home from a day's work with a headache, such understanding informing his subsequent behavior. Fine example up to a point, but role-playing from Kohlberg's stage four onwards involves group commitment and concomitant *exclusion* of others from the fold. Tronto (1993) explains that new role-taking opportunities may not be available to non-group members.

Further, non-group members may experience opportunities differently than group members. This is perfectly illustrated in Frederick Douglass' *What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July* speech. When Douglass' neighbors in Rochester, New York, asked him to say a few words on Monday, July 5th, 1852, to commemorate United States' independence from Great Britain, I wonder if they were shocked by his words. Instead of glorifying the American democratic experiment and freedom won from the British, Douglass, a former slave, spoke of "the mournful wail of millions! Whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, today, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them" (1997: 124). Escaped from his own bondage, Douglass did not cling to any illusions about the fourth of July's meaning for his person or millions of others still enslaved. He asked his audience,

> What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days of the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour. (Douglass, 1997: 127)

Objectified, the other as non-group member may not be able to see himself in the other person's position. She may only be able to see herself and her position as the other person sees her and it (Tronto, 1993: 73). Objectification is followed by assimilation, group members deigning to reintegrate the formerly excluded others, assuming those originally banned similar to themselves. Assuming such "presumes that all of the harms of racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism, etc., can simply be forgotten by morally mature persons" (Ibid.). If those previously excluded can't "get over their hang-ups," they are viewed as lesser morally, incapable of forgiving and forgetting harms done, harms that may have granted group members their membership to begin with. Hence Kohlberg's theory is hegemonic, telling "the story of moral development from the standpoint of those who have remained on top throughout the entire process" (Ibid.).

Kohlberg is quite clear regarding his indebtedness to the traditional Western ethical models, particularly Kant's notion of morality as deontological justice (1983: 73). From Piaget, Kohlberg accepted the centrality of justice and his Kantian heritage (1983: 18). Like Kant, Piaget and Kohlberg hold that conscious, deliberate reasoning leads to informed moral judgment. For Kohlberg, moral judgment "involves reasoning from and to principles" through role-playing and reversibility (1983: 79). Hence Marc Hauser's claim that "Kohlberg out-Kanted Kant in his view that our moral psychology is a rational and highly reasoned psychology based on clearly articulated principles" (2006: 16). Noting they "presuppose[d] a general factor of justice in defining" the moral dilemmas of their moral judgment interview methodology and the stage structures of their model, Kohlberg and his colleagues, as per Kant, err on the side of philosophical idealism.

And all of this would be fine and good if it served to humanize everyone involved, but we have seen the othering, the objectifying, and the thumbing of moral noses implicit and explicit in Kohlberg's moral theorizing. There's another major problem with Kohlberg's theory of how we reach the moral judgments we do: *most of the time, things just don't work that way*. The reasoned, intentional analyses and decision-making called for by the dominant ethical models sound good. Theorizing on these models, by those educated in the ethical jargon with time enough to do so, can be mentally stimulating or, at the very least, self-aggrandizing. It all looks good in paper, maybe even intimidating in journals. Tronto points out that Kohlberg's theory rewards those with "a quickness of mind, an ability to deal with and to speak abstractly," attributes the possessors of pleasantly find just so happens to indicate "progress toward higher moral thought" (1993: 75). Well, well, well . . .

2.14 Immediacy Precedes Deliberation

If you think about it you will realize we make most of our decisions in life, including our moral ones, on the spot, on the fly. Francisco Varela calls this ability "immediate coping" (1992: 18). Imagine a discussion in your classroom between students where you can see one student is potentially embarrassed by the turn the discussion is

taking. Perhaps the talk centers on something too personal or uncomfortable for him. You immediately steer the conversation in another direction, sparing the student any discomfort. How'd you *know* to do that? Did you sit there and reason it out, process the possibilities, tap into disembodied universal principals? Did you rely on a utilitarian calculus of the potential good versus the bad? No, as a caring teacher and a good human being, you just *knew* what to do. If asked to explain how you did it, you probably wouldn't be able to.

Hersch et al. contend that "[t]he exercise of moral judgment is a cognitive process that allows us to reflect on our values and order them in a logical hierarchy" (1979: 47). In fact, as Nietzsche recognized, the exercise of moral judgment is *activity*; it is immediate coping. Life doesn't often operate in such a way that disconcerting moral conundrums present themselves well ahead of time, allowing us to mull them over. Kohlberg presented moral dilemmas to study subjects and then allowed them time to answer and explain their answers. But that's not how most moral dilemmas usually work. Moral dilemmas pop up and we deal with them often without second thought and only reflect on them *after* the fact if then. Hauser opines that Kohlberg, Piaget, and others err in leaping from correlation to causation. Just because we can reason and deliberate about our moral decisions *after* the decisions have been made doesn't mean they were made after deliberation and reasoning. As Varela succinctly puts it, "immediacy precedes deliberation" (1992: 33).

Further, "[w]e *always* operate in some kind of immediacy in a given situation," explains Varela. "Our lived world is so ready-at-hand that we have no deliberateness about what it is and how we inhabit it" (1992: 9). Is it such a bizarre idea that much of the time we live our lives and live them well *without* contemplating them moment to moment? At first it may appear so, but consider all the things we do and do capably without thinking about what we're doing. Many times I have made the 40-minute commute to work and when I arrive I cannot recall the details of the drive there for the life of me. This doesn't mean I was spaced out on the ride over. I may have been listening to the radio, but my eyes were still on the road. There was a certain form of "emptiness" involved in my drive, a non-deliberation. Varela reminds us that "athletes, artists, and craftsmen have always insisted that self-consciousness interferes with optimal performance" (1992: 35). For instance, when a reporter asked embattled San Francisco Giants slugger Barry Bonds what he *hears* when he's in the batter's box, Bonds (then only nine homeruns away from Hank Aaron's career record) replied "Nothing" (Barry, 2007). New tasks usually require our awareness and attention to detail; old tasks, old hat, habit takes over. Why should making on-the-spot moral decisions be any different? "[W]e're finding that we have these unconscious behavioral guidance systems that are continually furnishing suggestions through the day about what to do next," says Yale psychology professor John Bargh, "and the brain is considering and often acting on those, all before conscious awareness" (Carey, 2007b: 6 & 7).

Varela contrasts immediate coping to the forms of moral reasoning common to-day. "Immediate coping," he explains, is "the real 'hard work,' since it took the longest evolutionary time to develop" whereas "[t]he ability to make intentional, rational analyses during breakdowns appeared only recently and very rapidly in

evolutionary terms" with the development in humans of language and consciousness (1992: 18). Immediate coping involves split-second, immediate decision-making, even when we're not conscious of making such decisions. Immediate coping could emanate from the subcortical areas of the brain, regions that evolved early on in human development and are responsible for our fight or flight response (Carey, 2007b). On what does our immediate coping ability rest? What do our immediate coping decisions reflect?

Science is showing us that one thing we human beings are is moral. Skeptical eyebrows should go up at this point. Is it outlandish that I claim human beings *moral* beings, if I proffer morality a part of our human natures? What of the substance of the claim—in what ways are we moral? As we've said before in this chapter, there are some things we know about human nature, other things we hope and hope to know, and still others we are learning. We know that humans are born with the capacity to learn a language, even more than one, when surrounded by adults speaking that language (Chomsky, 2002). "Our expressed languages differ," explains Hauser, "but we generate each one on the basis of a universal set of principles. Our artistic expressions vary wildly, but the biology that underpins our aesthetics generates universal preferences for symmetry in the visual arts and consonance in music" (2006: 419).

Philosophers and scientists are now starting to show us that a "universal moral grammar" that informs our moral lives is just as plausible as a universal generative grammar that informs language acquisition. "Social morality begins in the brain," claims Lawrence Tancredi (2005: ix). Morality itself may reside in the left hemisphere of the brain (Gazzaniga, 2005: 147). Marc Hauser argues that "we evolved a moral instinct, a capacity that naturally grows within each child, designed to generate rapid judgments about what is morally right or wrong based on an unconscious grammar of action" (2006: xvii). Ours are *moral minds*, and we should understand "our moral psychology as an instinct—an evolved capacity of all human minds that unconsciously and automatically generates judgments of right and wrong" (Hauser, 2006: 2).

Could a moral instinct exist? "[S]ome fixed properties of mind come with us from the baby factory," notes Gazzaniga (2005: 165), like language or an appreciation of symmetry, so why not morality? Chomsky points out that confronting unique moral situations, we are nonetheless able to make decisions. In fact,

> we're constantly making all kinds of judgments, including moral judgments . . . about new things and new situations. Well, either it's being done just randomly, sort of like pulling something out of a hat . . . or else we're doing it on the basis of some moral system that we have built into our minds somehow, which gives answers, or at least partial answers, to a whole range of new situations (2002: 359).

As Hauser stresses, despite finite and limited experiences, we make moral decisions in novel cases (2006: 66).

Furthermore, even when we do things we feel are wrong, things we know society views as bad, we tend to seek justifications for our actions. "We all do bad things in our lives," notes Chomsky, "and if you think back, it's very rare that you've said, 'I'm doing this just because I feel like it'—people reinterpret things in order to fit

them into a basic framework of moral values, which in fact we all share" (2002: 361). The husband cheating on his wife doesn't say, "I want to have sex with other women." If asked he'd probably answer that cheating on one's spouse *isn't* a good thing to do. Maybe he says, "Monogamy is too constraining. Just because I have sex with another woman doesn't mean I *don't* love my wife," and maybe there is truth to that, but here our husband is over-intellectualizing the fact that he made a promise to his wife and broke it. Maybe it was a promise he shouldn't have made to begin with, a promise he felt enormous societal pressure to make, but it doesn't change the fact that he gave another his word and then reneged on it. Usually the philanderer justifies his actions by painting himself as the victim. His wife "just doesn't understand" him, treats him wrong, maybe denies him sex, or "is a bitch." Individuals justify their societal transgressions this way, as do societies. Thus Athens goes to war with the Peloponnesian League to "defend" itself, much the same justification given by the United States thousands of years later when it attacked Iraq a second time. If morality was not, on some fundamentally human level, important to us, we would not seek to justify our actions, to show how even our societal transgressions conform to moral norms.

Primatologist Frans de Waal makes the case for an evolutionary origin to cooperation. Human beings, he holds, have always been social animals, because life in groups was and is a "survival strategy" (de Waal 2006: 4). Species relying on cooperation "show group loyalty and helping tendencies. These tendencies," de Waal posits, "evolved in the context of a close-knit social life in which they benefited relatives and companions able to repay the favor" (2006: 15). More often than not, the closer the relationship is, the more likely people are to lend a literal or metaphorical hand to one another. Thus parents tend to look out for children, families for family members, community members for their societies, and so on. De Waal posits that "[i]n the course of human evolution, out-group hostility enhanced in-group solidarity to the point that morality emerged," which perhaps lends some credence to Freud's contention that "[i]t is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness" (De Waal, 2006: 54; Freud, 1989: 751).

There are scientists who argue that the three basic principles of evolution are mutation, selection, and cooperation (Zimmer, 2007). Social living brings no advantages if selfishness is not kept in check (Wade, 2007b). The field of social neuroscience encourages us to look at how distinct human beings' physiologies interact, with research showing that people "with rich personal networks—who are married, have close family and friends, are active in social and religious groups—recover more quickly from disease and live longer" than people who don't (Goleman, 2006). Primatologists have found that for distant relatives of human beings like baboons those with the best social skills leave the most offspring (Wade, 2007b).

"The fact that morality in humans evolved from other primates and depends on the brain for its universality and stability," notes Laurence Tancredi, "does not negate the importance of social forces in its creation, or the role of 'free will' in its execution" (2005: 8). Different societies and different times have different moral norms. We should not view any moral instinct as deterministic. Instead, any such universal moral grammar is best viewed, as Hauser describes it, as "a toolkit for

building specific moral systems." He explains, "Once we have acquired our culture's specific moral norms—a process that is more like growing a limb than sitting in Sunday school and learning about vices and virtues—we judge whether actions are permissible, obligatory, or forbidden, without conscious reasoning and without explicit access to the underlying principles" (2006: xviii).

Still, there appear to be morals that bind humans—all humans—together. An example of a moral trait universal to human beings is caring for children. "Within and across cultures," Hauser explains, "torturing infants as amusement or sport is forbidden" (2006: 44). We would all *feel* disgust at an adult kicking an infant, Hauser says. Even Toadvine, the Glanton Gang's cold-blooded ear-less killer in *Blood Meridian* feels disgust when the judge slaughters the Indian child. Note the conjunction of feeling with moral disapprobation in such examples. I have already pointed out how the dominant ethical models impugn emotion, seeing it as impeding reason and rational moral judgments. In Hauser's example, as in so many others, "emotions are our compass" (de Waal, 2006: 56).

2.15 An Ethic of Care

In the realm of theory, nothing short of a complete ethical overhaul is long overdue. We must adopt a morality more consonant with our natures as social beings, not fabricated to support the necessities of market models. Fortunately such an ethic is already being developed, an ethic that informs our lives though it is devalued, marginalized by much of mainstream society and intellectual life, an ethic I think at the heart of all critical pedagogies, even when not explicitly stated so.

I am talking about an ethic of care. Originating in the works of Carol Gilligan and her criticism of Lawrence Kohlberg, care emerged as "feminist ethics," though care theorists recognize care as an ethic men and women can subscribe to. Care is defined differently by various theorists. The definition I have found most useful is that offered by Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher, that caring "*includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible*. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web" (1993: 103). Of course, not all care theorists agree with Tronto and Fisher. Bubeck, for example, sees care as "fundamentally other directed and beneficial to others" (1995: 9). So, for example, she doesn't feel we can care for inanimate objects or the environment (1995: 138). Bowden, on the other hand, is explicit that she will not even try to define care (1997: 17). But how important is agreeing on a definition of care? Care is something we do and have had done for us. A definition of care may help set parameters and boundaries but is primarily of theoretical importance. In the following discussion, as I draw upon the work of care theorists I feel relevant for our classrooms and critical pedagogy, some of their disagreements with each other and mine with them will be teased out.

Care resonates with me as a teacher and student, father and son, friend and neighbor. In a very elementary sense, because my mom and dad cared for me I am able to get up in the morning, go to work and teach, care for my family, and write this

to get up in the morning, go to work and tech, care for my family, and write this book. Without care, everything else is superfluous, even unattainable. And I am not the only person for whom care has meaning and in whose life care plays a continual part. Care is a "truly universal experience" (Held, 2006: 3). Contrasted to the dominant ethical models and the market imperatives they support, Bubeck views care as "more basic than production, exchange, or contracting, or engaging in one's life projects: in suitable conditions, humans can exist without any of these, but we cannot even survive the first days of our life without being cared for by others" (1995: 12). Hence Virginia Held's contention that care "is probably the most deeply fundamental value" (2006: 17).

Care teaches us that relationships between human beings are not optional; relationships are not forms of attachment rational actors *choose*. At the very beginning of our lives, we are born into relationships with people we depend upon, and these are relationships we depend on, relationships that matter. We are reared to be able to stand on our own two feet, literally and figuratively. Even when we are capable of walking through life by ourselves we seldom do so, surrounding ourselves with people we appreciate and people who appreciate us. Further, each of us faces what Eva Kittay calls *inevitable dependencies*, "times in our lives when we are utterly dependent" on other people (1998: 76). From birth to death, from illness to injury—and that's not counting the happy times—we need others. Particular relations between particular individuals may be options, but relationships in general are not.

A care ethic is "thoroughly relational" (Noddings, 2002: 14). Caring is "other-directed and heteronomous" (Bubeck, 1995: 144). Care views individuals as "relational and interdependent, morally and epistemologically" (Held, 2006: 11). Morality isn't *out there* somewhere. Moralities are "collective works" between human beings, by human beings, for human beings (Urban Walker, 1997: 203). Morality is interpersonal and collaborative, involving "moral understandings" between people (Ibid.: 26).

Care theorists are not the only ones making these arguments. de Waal, for one, gives the lie to traditional ethical models with their emphasis on an autonomous individual capable of existing outside social relationships, explaining that "we have been group-living forever. Free and equal people never existed. Humans started out . . . as interdependent, bonded, and unequal" (2006: 4). One look at our primate cousins helps us understand this.

"To be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world," says Freire (2005: 3). No individual is an island unto herself, and to propose such a model as something worth emulating is encouraging a morally and psychologically unhealthy, unsound model. After all, "a good illustration of the thoroughly social nature of our species" is that "solitary confinement is the most extreme punishment we can think of" outside the death penalty (de Waal, 2006: 5).

What Bubeck refers to as "heteronomy" Held calls "mutual autonomy" (2006: 55). Autonomy, ruling one's own life, making decisions for oneself, is important. We don't want to see the individual stifled by the group, but if the individual engages in behavior harmful to the group, he must not be allowed to do so. Further, there will be times when the individual engages in behaviors that are risky only to

herself but must not be allowed to do so. Held sees care as proffering an autonomy with the "capacity to reshape and cultivate new relations, not to ever more closely resemble the unencumbered abstract rational self of liberal political models and moral theories" (2006: 11). Autonomy as usually construed is a fantasy, fiction. A point made earlier: the individual realizes himself in community, in relations with others, a theme of this book and a fact of life, despite those who would deny such.

What started in European liberal political theory to justify greater economic and political opportunity was elevated to an art form in the American psyche. From the frontier settler to the transient gunfighter, from the mountain man to the private detective, the lone, rugged individual—usually a male—resonates in American mythology, literature, and film. An examination of the genres and the historical record unmasks this fabrication. American Manifest Destiny was born on the backs of the men who moved west with their families, their wives and children (see, for example, Bellah, et al. 2007). Grizzly Adams had his bear, Ben, as well as his human companions Nakoma, and Mad Jack the Mountain Man.

2.16 The Values of Care

Care as an ethical system values people, and this valuation is reflected in the values care theorists support. Among the values of care, theorists identify attentiveness, responsibility, obligation, nurturance, compassion, confirmation, meeting the needs of others, and engagement (Tronto, 1993: 3; Bubeck, 1995: 10; Noddings, 2002: 13 & 28; Held, 2006: 39). Not all care theorists hold all these values in common. However, the values that each theorist appeals to are relationship-dependent and realized in "a context-sensitive mode of deliberation that resists abstract formulations of moral problems" (Bowden, 1997: 6). I think care as an ethical system underlies critical pedagogies and is particularly suitable for our classrooms. Later I will discuss the ways society downplays and marginalizes care, but here I'd like to look at the values of care we already see in our classrooms.

Before we can address the needs of others, we have to be attentive to what it is they need (Tronto, 1993: 127). Every teacher worth his salt lives this daily. You're meeting a child for the first time in September, what are her strengths and needs? There are kids who come to us with IEPs and M.A.P. plans, and we should familiarize ourselves with these, but good teachers learn to "read" their kids academically and socially. Attentiveness encompasses subject matter—does Juanita lack basic computation skills, better to allow her the use of a calculator?—but it goes deeper than this. Who needs to be handled with kids' gloves versus who just needs the occasional deserved ego-stoke? If April answers a question incorrectly and you tell her she's wrong, she handles it fine, but how will Darius take being told he's wrong? Better with him perhaps if you say, "I like how you're thinking on this, but that isn't the answer we're looking for here." It's not coddling, it's keeping that kid from checking out, encouraging him to stay engaged, to take risks and learn from failure, not to fear it and seek its avoidance.

Attentiveness to another, whether to a sick person one is caring for or to a child one is teaching, requires putting aside *your* ego long enough to understand the other person, to empathize with them and feel their situation as best you can from their point of view. Noddings refers to attentiveness of this sort as *engrossment* (2002: 28). Tronto opines that we need a certain sense of passivity, an "absence of will," the ability "to suspend one's own goals, ambitions, plans of life, and concerns, in order to recognize and to be attentive to others" (1993: 128). Consider something so everyday, so human, as a conversation. We all know adults and children who engage in a perpetual game of one-upmanship. An 11th grader is excited about her performance at the basketball game last weekend and *you* use it as a point of departure to tell her and the class about *your* glory days in high school or college sports; a friend or colleague mentions that his infant son has just learned to roll over into a seated position and *you* launch into a revere about *your* own child and how they came to sitting up (probably at an earlier age than your co-worker's kid). This one-upmanship applies equally to fears and lamentations as to accomplishments. We're all guilty of it at one time or another. The important point is when someone trusts you enough to share something with you, you must *listen* to them, *not* try to outdo them. This doesn't mean you shouldn't feel free to share, to model your understanding of a situation someone is presenting to you with an episode from your own life, but there are people who constantly employ this me-me-me mentality, often in an attempt to impress upon the other how great *they* themselves are, an indication of their insecurity.

Responsibility is another core value of care readily (we hope!) seen in classrooms. The children we come into contact with in our schools are our wards; the law speaks of our relationship with them as teachers as *in loco parentis*, in the position of a parent. We have responsibilities to our students to do our best to help them access a district's curriculum or pass mandatory high-stakes tests, no matter what our personal views of such are. At the same time, we have the responsibility to help our students question the validity of such curriculums and exams and, if the interest is there, to explore the options available in the pursuit of change. This entire chapter is predicated on the notion that we have a responsibility to help our children become moral, to become *better* people. Remember, you're not just a math or English teacher. You're a moral agent.

Responsibility extends further than the kids in our classrooms and our school. We have a responsibility *to our profession*, to keep up as best we can on developments in our field. We are not the guardians of arcane dead arts, but participants in ever-expanding, constantly evolving fields. Teachers should not be middle men between students and academic "experts"; *teachers should be* these "experts" as much as possible, scholars active in and beyond their disciplines. We have a responsibility to better our schools, through actions inside and outside the building. Being a club advisor, a coach, circulating petitions, attending crucial board of education meetings, being politically active in our schools' community, in our neighborhoods, in our countries, these are all responsibilities that don't end at 3:30 and aren't confined to our classrooms.

A third value of care is confirmation. "To confirm others is to bring out the best in them," says Noddings (2002: 20). Noddings explains that we should respond to students who commit uncaring, unethical acts "by attributing the best possible motive consonant with reality. By starting this way, we draw the cared-for's attention to his or her better self" (Ibid.). Although I agree with Noddings in spirit here, I disagree with her in fact. Sometimes people, including students, do terrible things to each other and seem to get off on it. One student I worked with had a terrible relationship with his mother, who was mentally abusive to him. This played itself out in school as the kid exhibited serious issues with female staff members of similar age to his mom. On the one hand, I could understand where his behaviors came from, like remarking that he "hated" Mrs. so-and-so and talking back to his teachers, but I never excused his actions just because I understood his motivations. Nor did I "attribute the best possible motive consonant with reality" to this boy. As much as I liked him and saw the good in him, he was a jerk to particular female teachers and these were teachers I knew good at their jobs and decent human beings.

Noddings continues, "We confirm the other by showing that we believe the act in question is not a full reflection of the one who committed it" (2002: 20). With this I couldn't agree more wholeheartedly. One thing I always tried to do with my mommy-issues boy was couch my criticism of his actions by saying, "You know, I see a side of you that is warm and friendly and engaging, but then I see you show yourself to Mrs. so-and-so as rude, obnoxious, and mean." I'm not lying to this student when I tell him this, those better qualities are really there; if they weren't I wouldn't make them up. I let him know I disapprove of the way he behaves with this teacher, at the same time letting him know that *I* know he has the capacity to act differently. Furthermore, I impress as best I can on the kid that he can control his behavior, that he doesn't have to be impudent and unruly. In this way I confirm the behaviors I know the child is capable of, the behavior I'd like to see.

2.17 Emotions and Care

Where traditional ethical models champion reason, often viewing emotion as little more than a stumbling block, an ethic of care recognizes emotion's rightful place. Our classrooms and our lives would be bleak places indeed without sympathy and empathy, without sensitivity and responsiveness. Social animals, emotions such as empathy developed early in us with good reason. Empathy allows us to appraise the emotional states of others and respond to them (de Waal, 2006: 27). Just as you see someone yawn and you yawn, when those around you are in good moods chances are you'll be in a good mood. There is such a thing as emotional contagion, and its effects are actively sought out or avoided. For example, there are people who complain to let off steam, and then there are people who complain because that seems to be what they like doing. I have worked in academic departments and other places where the vibe is extremely negative, where some complain about anything

and everything, including things no one would think to complain about. Because I fear getting sucked into this funk, I'd take my lunch by myself at my desk and my colleagues probably thought I was being asocial but I just didn't want to surround myself with the negativity. I work with other people who, as soon as I see them coming, I know they're up to something mirthful, and they know I know, and we all break out into smiles and snickers. But unfortunately all too often, as de Waal remarks, things like "[t]ool use and numerical competence . . . are seen as hallmarks of intelligence, whereas appropriately dealing with others is not" (2006: 27).

Bubeck points out that carers often derive the emotion of joy from caring for others (1995: 149). As I write the words of this chapter another academic year is ending. I think of the students I've had the privilege to work with these last 187 school days, of the fun times we've had, as recently for example as last week when I walked into class, said "it smells like gas in here" and one of my kids thought I said it smelled "like ass," all of us breaking out into uncontrollable laughter. Critics often try and paint teachers as lazy people who go into teaching for the summers off, when in fact most teachers I know start off—and many manage to remain—people who genuinely enjoy interacting with the young, with others. Teaching can be emotionally rewarding, even in sub-prime conditions.

Reasoning and emotion are related as both are parts of our moral repertoires. Champions of disembodied reason warn of emotions clouding our judgments. The Scottish Enlightenment thinker David Hume saw things the other way around, opining that "[r]eason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions . . . to serve and obey them" (in Hauser, 2006: 24). Although they're usually juxtaposed as opposites, reasoning and emotion *inform* one another. With Nietzsche's rumination I agree, that "to eliminate the will, to suspend the emotions altogether, provided it could be done—surely this would be to castrate the intellect, would it not?" (1956: 256). If we stop and think about this we realize it, though dominant theories try to tell us otherwise.

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned Hauser's example of the general revulsion with which almost all human beings hold the torturing of infants. Hauser's point is that when we think of this type of harm being done on the smallest and most vulnerable, we *feel* our revulsion. Our first impulse isn't a reasoned calculus coherently explaining why torturing infants is wrong. It's a gut reaction and it's felt by almost all humans. "All members of the human species," notes Gazzaniga, "tend to fell and to react in predictable ways to situations that create the background for a moral choice" (2005: 152). Tancredi explains that "the brain becomes activated before one becomes conscious of what is happening" (2005: 27). Reasoning enters the picture to provide post hoc justifications for why and how we feel. The way in which reason follows emotion in this example, and in many other examples, doesn't belittle emotion *or* reason. Both are necessary and compliment one another, in our lives, in our relationships, in an ethic of care. We care about infants because they are vulnerable, because they are dependent on us. We despise those who would harm our wards and with good reason. Without the littlest ones, we could not continue as a species. Noddings holds that "[w]hen we care, we must employ reasoning to decide what to do and how to do it" (2002: 14).

As the example above makes clear, a care ethic isn't all about the feel-good emotions. Virginia Held posits that "anger may be a component of the moral indignation that should be felt when people are treated unjustly and inhumanely . . . " (2006: 10). Anger can be constructive and instructive. There are students in our classes, who, no matter what we do, no matter how humanely we treat them, these students are disruptive, they treat others inhumanely. We must be stern with them when they ignore the choices we provide, choices aimed at steering them toward decent behavior. Consequences must follow, be it verbal chastisement, punishment, or, if need be, removal from our classrooms. Everyone learns in these situations. The student at fault learns that certain behaviors will not be tolerated and what behaviors are expected. Other students in the class learn that their classrooms are safe places where disruptive, bullying, and violent behaviors have no place. We learn as we balance authority against authoritarianism, as we express our anger in an appropriate manner. Anger can be an act of confirmation for all involved. Noddings (2003: 247) notes that "decent, nonharmful behavior may have to be compelled in the interests of keeping all students safe and helping those who do harmful things to develop better moral selves," something Ira Shor refers to as protecting the process of pedagogy.

2.18 Relational Ontologies

Care recognizes that *who* we are, our ways of feeling about ourselves, our being and existence—in a word, our ontologies—depend on our relationships with others. Different relationships, different selves, different conceptions of self. For example, when I am at work I feel the competent, capable professional (and even when I don't I've found it best to act like I do). When I visit my mom and dad there is still a part of me that, despite anything I have accomplished in my life, despite my own wife and child, continues to feel me a boy to my parents. I don't mean I feel infantilized or my parents condescend to me, I just sit in a different relationship with my parents than I do with my wife or my friends and colleagues and peers, and I often even feel different in these various contexts.

Consider our senses of humor. The same joke told to us by a student, co-worker, or family member may elicit different responses. A student tells us the joke and we have to explain to the student that it's not an appropriate joke for her to be telling her teacher. A co-worker tells the joke and we don't think it an appropriate joke for a colleague to be telling in the workplace. But at a family gathering we may laugh at the very same joke when some relative tells it. Contexts, meaning our place in relation to another person or another place, carry with them specifics of what is allowable and what is not, of what is acceptable and what isn't. Our ontologies are temporally and historically grounded. Consider the different ways a Christian, an atheist, or a Jew looks at a cross, what they feel when they contemplate such. Or, as Kincheloe asks us, to "consider how a classroom is perceived by a class clown, a traditionally good student, a burnt-out teacher, a standardized test maker, an anti-standards activist, a bureaucratic supervisor, a

disgruntled parent, a nostalgic alumnus or a student with feelings" similar to the Columbine High School shooters (2005: 9).

Ours are relational ontologies. We are not just who we think we are, for *who* we think we are is itself conditioned by the relationships we're in. In the next chapter when we discuss the theories and methodology of Vygotsky, we will look at just how much we are creatures existentially constituted through our interactions with others of our species. Here we will focus on the ways in which power plays out in our relational ontologies.

Several years back when I was an untenured teacher in my district, I was observed by an administrator. He's a nice enough guy and we work well with one another to this day. When we had our post-observation he explained to me what he saw as the strengths and needs of my lesson. I sat there and listened, piping up when it was appropriate. At one point he said, "How do you feel about this, Tony? You're not nervous are you?" I told him I felt good about the lesson he'd observed, told him I felt comfortable *with him* but also explained that ours was a relationship marked by a power disparity, with he being an administrator and my being an untenured teacher. So, yeah, maybe I was a bit uncomfortable or on edge but nervous may not be the correct word to describe how I was feeling. I don't know if "power disparity" were my exact words to him but I do remember he looked like he was hearing this for the first time, though not in a negative way. I had a job in a really good school district and it was important for me to keep it.

In power relationships there are those who pretend (or are not aware) that the power relationship *isn't* there. This is a power evasion. The power relationship is very real. For example, a negative review from that administrator could have wrecked havoc with my tenure track. We hope those above us on whatever totem poles we find ourselves do not act arbitrarily, that they judge us by our mettle and the quality of our performances.

There's more to the story. At the time I felt a little unwarranted hostility toward administrators in general. Not toward this guy as a flesh and blood human being, but toward him as the embodiment of one in a power position over me. This was a man—a good man, a decent, fine man let me be clear, and he still is—who'd worked his way up to an administrative position from the guidance department. Although he'd spent years of valuable service in the district providing advice and direction to the district's children, he'd never stepped foot in a classroom as a teacher. That bugged me. I kind of had the attitude, who is this guy to be able to judge me? Part of that was my own immaturity and insecurity; after all, sometimes the best coaches in a sport never played the game professionally.

The evaluation forms our district used had a section for recommendations. There is nothing wrong with getting things written about you in this section. In fact, I suspect administrators are *encouraged* to write something here, to look like they are providing advisement drawn from their administrative wisdom. Thing was, I often felt through all those observations with all the various administrators that there were some who put things in that section because they felt they had to, not because there was anything legitimate to constructively criticize. I'm not bragging or trying to sound like an ego-maniac when I say I'm on point in a classroom, that teaching

is one thing I am lucky enough to do well. I'll admit when I've had an off-day or an off-lesson, when something could have-should have played out another way. Further, when I have a scheduled observation I put everything together before hand and run through it several times in my mind. There were times I felt things went as well as they could, and then there were these people observing me who I felt *they* felt they *had* to put something in that suggestions for future growth box so they looked like they were doing *their* jobs, and that bothered me. Of course, and this is where the power differential of this particular relational ontology comes in, I never said anything to these folks.

"Human identities," Kincheloe explains, "are shaped by entanglements in the webs that power weaves" (2005: 22). Perhaps if I had expressed these thoughts to the higher ups they would have mulled them over, agreed or disagreed. But I couldn't chance alienating or angering them, which could have disastrous consequences for my future. With other teachers I would discuss these dynamics occasionally, but that was because we were pretty much in the same boat, all in positions to be judged.

Relational ontologies are central to an ethic of care. Noddings posits "the fact that 'I' am defined in relation, that none of us could be considered an 'individual' or a 'person,' or an entity recognizably human if we were not in relation" (2002: 15). Consider those interesting cases of the wolf-girl or wolf-boy, the child who is discovered having been raised by a pack of feral four-legged animals. When these children are brought back into human society, they often have difficulty adjusting and never really fit in. To be human is to be *amongst* humans, which goes a long way toward explaining why even Robinson Crusoe stranded alone on his island went about his afternoon tea and the other ceremonies of a civilized Englishman.

Our relational ontologies, our relational selves are formed with and through other people. The types of relationships an ethic of care attempts to foster are human relationships, humane relationships. A useful way of understanding the relationships an ethic of care and critical pedagogy both seek to encourage is to contrast "mothering" relationships with the market relationships of the traditional ethical models. "Mothering" here is not meant in a gendered sense, just as "feminist" does not only pertain to females. Men and women can engage in "mothering," just as men can be feminists (Held, 1993: 80). Mothering is a form of parenting but a specific form of parenting, usually discernable in put-downs of mothering or of children accused of "too much" mothering (which usually means a child was spoiled or not allowed to take risks and grow from them).

2.19 Mothering

At a basic level mothering involves nurturing others. We usually associate mothering with parenting and hence with the nurturance of the young. But when we are aware of and responsive to the needs of those around us, adults as well as children, we are mothering. We all know adults of whom it is said we must "handle that one with kids gloves." This is almost always meant in a derogatory sense, that someone is overly sensitive or needy. Yet it also speaks to the fact that whenever we act to humanize

another we are engaged in mothering, just as when others act to humanize us they are mothering as well.

There is a form of mothering that occurs in any mentoring, whether it's the mentoring of a student by a teacher, a teacher by an administrator, a player by a coach, or Jedi Knight Obi Wan Kenobi by Qui-Gon Jinn. A good veteran teacher asked to mentor someone new to the field will act to draw out the strengths of the new teacher. Needs should not be ignored but they must be addressed in a constructive way. The veteran teacher does not want to come across as nagging, but as offering guidance and advice.

Sometimes new teachers do things they just should not do, and veteran teachers need to step up and explain to the newbie why what he is doing is impermissible. For example, some teachers assume a haughty attitude with their students. Because teachers often did well in school, because they were usually "good" students, and because they choose to teach a subject near and dear to their hearts, they often expect similar enthusiasm and performance from their students. When students don't perform as expected and hoped, these teachers can get frustrated, annoyed, maybe even disgusted. These may all be normal reactions. The thing a veteran teacher needs to impart to her mentee is that these feelings be expressed *appropriately* should they be expressed at all.

Remember, *you* asked to be an English teacher. You made a decision to go to school and study literature and grammar and you probably enjoyed a good deal of it. But some of the students in your English class may be there only because they have to be there, because the class is required. They may come to you hating English class, perhaps because of past failures in the subject, a lack of facility with the content, or just a lack of interest in the subject the way you may not be interested in the Olympic sport of curling.

Teachers are guides in their classrooms. Some of our students we will lead to a genuine interest and love for a topic or subject, and these students will continue to pursue these paths on their own. Other students come to us seeking a journey as short and pain-free as possible. While we strive to challenge these students as well, we should never do so at the expense of their humanity. A condescending attitude or disdainful comments on the part of a teacher has no place in a caring classroom. A mentor should act to dispel such an outlook and approach in a new teacher. What we're doing when we engage in mentoring is mothering, is nurturing, is grooming.

The problem facing an ethic of care and critical pedagogy is that the market model is hegemonic. No matter where we are, we are human beings, beings made human. We always have been, and so long as there are human beings, we always shall be. Sometimes we are buyer or seller, but we are not always either buyer or seller, nor have we always been. The individual called for by market models, by contractual economic, political, and moral theories, is an individual who may have a time and place, but it is a time and place limited in scope. Unfortunately much of contemporary ethics, economics, and politics has lost sight of the limitations inherent in the market model of the human being. In market models connections

between human beings are instrumental. Mothering, care, and critical pedagogy all recognize connections between humans as what makes us human.

The importance of mothering cannot be underestimated. Held explains that "mothering persons and children . . . turn biological entities into human social entities through their interactions" (1993: 70). Nurturing children, mothering *creates* persons who go on capable of transforming themselves and their environments. Unfortunately not all persons put in a position of "mothering" are up to the task, and it is the human beings who emerge from these relationships and us who suffer for it.

Our formative years can be formidable years. Here's something that's not popular to say but I really believe there is a lot of truth to it: kids with problems usually come from families with problems. I think back on the kids I've taught over the years I've been teaching. There was something I liked about every kid I worked with, even when they exhibited some behaviors that were detestable, self-destructive, or downright mean. Meeting the parents of these children usually goes pretty far in explaining why they are the way they are. The fruit doesn't fall far from the tree. I need to be clear that I'm not talking about students with legitimate learning issues, like some kid who struggles to read or increase processing speed. I'm talking about kids with bad attitudes and unsavory behaviors. They often come from families with bad attitudes where unsavory behaviors are lived daily. Understanding this and the part socio-historical conditions like poverty and ignorance can play in it does not excuse any of it.

When we recognize the centrality of relationships to an ethic of care, it should come as no surprise that this is an ethic encompassing more than the self, perhaps even more than the human animal. Care theorists themselves argue over *who* and *what* is encompassed in an ethic of care. For example, Bubeck (1995) views care as other-directed, not something encompassing the self, whereas Tronto (1993) sees care including care of and for the self. Care theorists differ in whether or not they feel a care ethic includes other animals, objects, the environment. The important point about an ethic of care that all care theorists uphold one way or another is that care recognizes what Kincheloe calls "the relational embeddedness of [the] self" (2005: 100).

A couple of years ago some kids in my school thought it would be funny to release some white mice they'd purchased from a pet store in the halls of the school. What they didn't realize is that these white mice are pretty docile, raised in cramped conditions as nothing more than snake food. Instead of scurrying around the halls between staff and students legs and provoking a hilarious bedlam, these mice huddled together in a corner of a hallway. Some girls came over shrieking. One started stomping on the mice. She didn't *accidentally* step on one of them. She *purposefully* went out of her way to come over and crush as many of them as she could under her foot with repeated blows before other students and staff stopped her. It was sick, and hearing about it I envisioned Robert DeNiro and Joe Pesci beating Frank Vincent's character to death in *Goodfellas*.

Almost all of the students who heard about this or were there *understood* that it is wrong to mash little mice into the hallway tile. Many also wondered what kind

of person could do such a thing. That's pretty disgusting behavior, and this kid is on her way to being a disgusting human being. Want to guess what her home life is like? What the people she lives with are like, how they treat her? Want to guess how she does in school? My hope is that it's not too late for her, that our malleability as human beings and our own agency will allow her to change her ways and work toward becoming a decent human being who respects life, even non-human life.

My condemnation of this girl and her actions may strike some as strong. My own disgust with this child's actions no doubt stands out. Bad behavior is bad behavior. To ignore it or downplay it is to risk excusing it. Such an example confirms the humanity of the children who witnessed what they did, were disgusted, and *stopped* the other. It confirms the idea that care extends *beyond* our own species, that savagery to non-human animals is wrong. That those who engage in such acts demean *themselves* as human beings at the same time that they physically damage or kill another creature.

2.20 Care Contained

Where the traditional Western ethical models relegate care to the private sphere and economics and politics to the public sphere, care recognizes the absurdity of such assignments. Plain and simple, without care none of us would be capable of partaking in economic and political life. The human animal doesn't emerge from the womb fully human, capable of staggering off on its own. Because of our comparatively large cranial capacity, we emerge from the womb at 9 months, incapable of fending for ourselves. We depend on others to meet *all* of our needs, to feed us, protect us from the elements, to clean and love us. We are in this position for quite some time and even when we are old enough to enjoy some relative semblance of autonomy we often are guilty of sitting back and letting someone else "mother" us on occasion because to do so is pleasurable.

With their conception of human beings as indifferent, independent, and autonomous individuals assumed equal, traditional Western ethical thinking found itself forced to separate the private and public spheres at the private realm's detriment. How, after all, do you go about imagining the individual in mothering and caring relations in the private realm in this manner? What kind of emotionally and psychically misshapen human beings would be produced by a private realm that relied solely on contractual models of human relationships?

Though an ethic of care might seem to make a lot of sense, much of our modern day lives is aimed at marginalizing care itself. We've discussed the "ideological agenda of individualism, autonomy and self-made men" which downplays care, wherein Clint Eastwood's "man with no name" character from the spaghetti Westerns is seen as "the ideal Western male way of being—the ontological norm" (Tronto, 1993: 112; Kincheloe, 05: 100). We've seen how theorists like Kohlberg relegate care to second class status in the field of morality and ethics (see also Bubeck, 1995: 7–8).

Care is more than a theory of ethics. Care is a praxis, theory and practice. Held opines that care is value and practice (Held, 2006: 9). Care "involves both thought and action," Tronto explains us, noting "that thought and action are interrelated, and that they are directed toward some end" (1993: 108). Care is dialectically reinforcing. We learn to care as we learn to be cared for (Noddings, 2002: 32). "To develop the capacity to care," explains Noddings, "one must engage in care giving activities" (2002: 19). Care "implicitly suggests that it will lead to some type of action," notes Tronto (1993: 102). In this vein, she points out that the word care itself "connotes some kind of engagement" (1993: 102).

Care isn't care if it isn't being practiced. To be a caring person, posits Held, "requires the ability to engage in the practice of care, and the *exercise* of this ability." Care "is *work* as well as an emotion or motive or intention" (Held, 2006: 51). Historically the work of care has been yoked to women's shoulders, but today we live in a world where 56% of the world's women labor outside the home and 930 million children under the age of 15 are raised in households where all the adults work (Heymann, 2003). So there are less adults at home to care for children and others who need it. To boot, care has been relegated a "service" whose providers get short shrift in remuneration and renown. If care is so central and important to our existence, how can this be?

"The dependence of dependent persons obligates dependency workers in ways that situate them unequally with respect to others who are not similarly obligated," explains Kittay (1998: 76). (*Whew*—try repeating that three times fast!). Bubeck thinks it *inevitable* that care workers will be exploited. Carers "will always give considerations of care more weight than considerations of justice if the two conflict, and this, in turn, implies that they will continue to care even in situations which are clearly exploitative" (Bubeck, 1995: 13). In a nod to Marx, Bubeck views non-carers as extracting surplus labor from carers (1995: 182).

Tronto doesn't mention surplus labor but notes that care is "privileged irresponsibility," meaning "those who are relatively privileged are granted by that privilege the opportunity simply to ignore certain forms of hardships that they do not face" (1993:120–121). If you're not in a position of needing care or needing to care for someone, you don't notice that your *not needing* care or *not needing to provide* care allows you more opportunities than someone caring or receiving care. Again, a power evasion, purposeful or not.

Although "dependency work forms the most fundamental of social relations," much care labor is unpaid or underpaid (Kittay, 1998: 109). Every teacher I know (including this one here) works a second job (see Moulthrop, et al., 2006). If you're a stay-at-home mom, you don't get paid for staying at home, raising the children, and caring for the family. However, if one considered the cost of paying for day-care, a chef, a housekeeper, a psychologist, a driver, and all the other roles a stay-at-home mom plays, she'd earn roughly $138,000 a year (Wulfhorst, 2007).

The fact that care has long been considered women's work and relegated to the private sphere has effects on the male and female psyche as well. "Women are more

likely to feel powerful when involved in caring for others," explains Bubeck, "while men tend to see giving to others or even co-operating with those who are supposed to care for and service them as opposed to their self-interest and their own life plans or even as a loss" (1995: 167–168). Bubeck's point is that, because we've had it shoved down our throats that care is something *women* do, caring tends to be more fulfilling for women but emasculating for men. Further, because care goes unsung, unrewarded, and at the expense of another, the care we receive may leave us with a sense of shame and guilt (Kittay, 1998: 103).

A common refrain throughout this book: things need not be the way they are. The fact that they are indicates that someone is benefiting. We can restructure our societies and institutions to recognize and reward care. As one example of how this could be possible, Eva Feder Kittay discusses the concept of *doulia*, "an arrangement by which service is passed on so that those who become needy by virtue of tending to those in need can be cared for as well" (1998: 107). If your parent takes ill and you need to be there to care for him for the remainder of his life, why should you have to worry about missing work or losing your job and being able to care for your own family? Societies and their governments should act to provide you with the resources necessary to allow you to care for your ill parent without economic and personal hardships accruing from such.

Welfare systems are supposed to exist to allow families to do just this. However, welfare recipients are often stigmatized, scapegoated for wider ills in their societies, and forced to labor when they could be caring for their families. Welfare isn't looked upon as *a right*, as something government, which is supposed to be responsive to the needs of the people who created it, *should* provide, but as a crutch, as something shameful to be avoided, a vehicle for lazy free-riding individuals to pull one over on the rest of us hard-working people. John F. Kennedy's injunction that we ask what we can do for our government sounded nice and was motivational, but truthfully governments are supposed to be formed by the people, *for* the people, responsive to *the needs* of the people. Not a word in all this, of course, about corporate welfare, whose financial expenditures leave the cost of social welfare in the dust with the mites.

Our main concern in this book is the everyday classroom, and it is a sad but undeniable indictment that care is marginalized there as well. The denial of care in schools occurs in various ways. The structure of schooling puts a damper on caring relationships. For one, much of schooling is based on a competition that fosters individualism above cooperation. The power relationship is nowhere more apparent than in the issuance of grades and report cards. No matter how well a teacher and student get along the grading process presents itself as an intrusion upon this caring relationship (Noddings, 1984: 191).

The problem isn't so much a teacher giving his or her impression of a student's abilities and performance. I refer to grading as a teacher's "impression" because no matter how much we might like to think otherwise, teachers have to realize that grading is a very subjective exercise. The problem is the emphasis we place on grading, an emphasis that goes so far as to essentialize and categorize human beings into abstract letters of the alphabet as in "she's an 'A' student" and if you don't

know what an "A" student is just compare her to Johnny, a "D" student, and I think you'll catch my drift. Grading and its import foster adversarial relationships between students and teachers and students and students.

I remember one teacher I had in graduate school, I worked as hard as I could in his class and handed in what I thought well-researched, original papers. I was disappointed with the B he gave me for the class. I took another course with him the next year. He remembered me and seemed to think well of me which was obvious in the way he addressed me in class. I remember thinking I'd get a better grade this time around no matter what I did. And sure enough, I received an A in this second class with him. Now, to this day I am convinced the work I did in that later class was not qualitatively better than any of the work I did in the first. The arbitrariness of grading was driven home for me. Because of grading, students come to see other students as adversaries. If grades are scarce commodities, and we all "know" not everyone can receive an A, then your success is potentially predicated on my failure and vice versa.

We could better foster caring relationships in schools but the structure of schooling inhibits our ability to do so. For example, at the middle and high school levels, students come to school and shuttle between four to nine different classrooms and teachers throughout the day. When our only exposure to a kid is a 40-minute time period five times a week, it's more difficult to foster a caring relationship with that child than if we spent an entire day with the student. Further, caring relationships might better be cultivated if subject matter specialists stuck with their students throughout the kids' 4-year high school career (Noddings, 2002: 27). As it is now, students have different teachers for different subjects across grades. Such structural arrangements make it nearly impossible for teachers to provide students with the level of attention caring relationships necessitate. Further, when there is that connection or potential for that connection between teacher and student, the structure of the day breaks it. Care providers, be they teachers, parents, or relatives, are not interchangeable. Because of the affective bonds that unite one who provides care to one who receives care, care providers are necessarily nonfungible (Kittay, 1998: 111).

Another way an ethic of care and caring relationships are denied in schools is the cookie-cutter conformity that is enforced for each student. In the name of high expectations, standards, and equity but flying in the face of reality, every student is to be prepared for college. Schools do not help students recognize and build upon their own talents, unless those talents are predominantly logico-mathematical or verbal-linguistic or can be confined to one period of art, music, or drama a day that does not interfere with the core academic courses. Then we impose the same expectations and high-stakes exams on all our students, forgetting that *differences* are what make individuals *unique*. This first became clear to me in my field of special education, where we talk the talk about individualized education but then expect all kids to pass the same end-of-year exams. Such a model is self-serving, all the talk of individualizing nothing more than lip service and a way for teachers, schools, boards of education, and communities to feel better about themselves while they ignore the true needs and abilities of large segments of their students and avoid lawsuits.

Noddings (2003) goes so far as to proffer that maybe tracking per se isn't the problem, but the hierarchical values placed on the various tracks. The English classes in my high school track students within a class into a scholars and academics groups. Scholars are expected to do more work. Academic tracks are more often viewed positively than vocational ones. The academic track is held up as the model de rigueur. But "if by equity we mean providing an appropriate education for every child, it is dead wrong to expect the same performance from each child," explains Noddings. "[W]e act as though all children are academically equal and can be held to the same standard" (2003: 90).

Care can be explicitly taught in schools but is not. Noddings favors the creation of caring apprenticeships in our schools (1984: 188). There are some who will protest that explicitly teaching care constitutes an imposition of values on a captive audience. There is some truth to this, but we kid ourselves if we think students in schools aren't being inundated with value-laden messages on a daily basis. Although the absence of care in schools may not be explicitly discussed, its absence is felt, lived, palpable. Schools teach a lot of things that aren't explicitly dictated in the curriculum. We have no problems teaching algebra or grammar for their own sakes, but some will balk when it comes to teaching secular values aimed at making better human beings of us all. Our students learn that care labor, be it teaching, nursing, babysitting, or other forms, is something bringing financial remuneration. Instead, as Noddings (1984) and others point out, we should make it a point to teach our students that much care labor is *unpaid* labor, that when it is paid it is usually *underpaid*, and that without this labor none of us would be where we are today.

There is a relationship between care and justice that the absence of care in schools and the absence of justice in care labor bespeaks. Despite Kohlberg and Gilligan's assessments, it is never a situation of one or the other, of justice versus care. The two, care and justice, stand one to another linked. Theirs is a reciprocal connection in that care informs justice and justice care the same way emotion informs reason and reason emotion. Theirs is a dialectical relationship in that care makes justice possible while without justice care is severely limited.

"Though justice is surely among the most important moral values," Held explains, "much life has gone on without it, and much of that life has had moderately good aspects" (1906: 71). In the absence of justice there will still be care, though the opposite is not true. Without care and caring relationships, the human species would cease. That said, care can only be fully realized in just societies, which are democratic societies.

Consider that much care labor is not adequately compensated or respected. A just society would take steps to make sure such work was financially rewarded and that care providers were held in high regard. Bubeck (1995: 13) opines that a just society would prevent the vulnerability of care providers "through suitable social institutions" (Ibid.), perhaps in a manner similar to that Kittay's *doulia* concept stresses. An ethic of care need "concern itself with the justice (or lack of it) of the ways the tasks of caring are distributed in society" (Held, 2006: 16).

Care has been conceived here as an ethical norm, but our ethical norms are realized in action. Tronto posits that we must understand care as a political idea,

as "[o]nly if we understand care as a political idea will we be able to change its status and the status of those who do caring work in our culture" (1993: 157). Held concurs, opining that the availability of care "to those who need it should be a central political concern, not one imagined to be a solely private responsibility of families and charities" (2006: 69).

Ethics and human nature are not irreconcilable. Just as institutions play a part in structuring our choices, making some easier than others, making some appear more feasible than others, our potential ethical options may be limited by our natures. That said, we need to recognize that biology is not destiny. de Waal speaks of the "Beethoven error," namely that "since natural selection is a cruel, pitiless process of elimination, it can only have produced cruel and pitiless creatures" (2006: 58). Natural selection isn't cruel, pitiless, or anything; such are human judgments affixed to an impersonal, ungoverned process. Although we all have the potential to stomp on infants and mice and commit other great evils, most of us choose not to. "Our evolved moral instincts do not make moral judgments inevitable," explains Hauser. "Rather, they color our perceptions, constrain our moral options, and leave us dumbfounded because the guiding principles are inaccessible, tucked away in the mind's library of unconscious knowledge" (2006: 2).

A universal moral grammar is a "signature of the species," not something irrevocably stamped into our DNA (Hauser, 2006: 53). The characteristics of the traditional Western ethical models were conceived at a distinct moment in human history and have to be taught. Although we are told that competition and egoism are parts of what we are to be human, there is much evidence contradicting these assertions. Further, even if these are parts of what we are, they are *only parts*, and parts we can choose to downplay or ignore. Noddings favors "an ethical ideal constituted from memories of caring and being cared for" (2002: 15). Schools can *teach* such an ideal, most powerfully through an institutional restructuring that brings caring relationships front and center in our lives. "It is not suggested that a three-year-old is fully ethical," explains Noddings, "but, rather, that he can become ethical only if the sympathy and tender awareness of which he is already capable are encouraged and enhanced, and, eventually, confirmed with reflection and commitment" (1984: 191). Once again the problem is systemic, institutional, and structural, as is the solution.

Chapter 3
The Architecture of Power (II): Mental Health and Education

3.1 Mental Health and Dehumanization

Psychology and the other mental health professions have shortcomings that are evident in our schools. The assumptions and principles at play in psychology are lived out in our classrooms. Although psychology, psychiatry, and counseling have been used to dominate and domesticate students and other citizens, inherent in the mental health professions are liberatory impulses. In this chapter, I hope to uncover some of the limitations and dehumanizing tendencies these disciplines wreak on our students and classrooms, while offering suggestions for more democratic directions. I will often be addressing psychology or psychiatry directly, but let me warn here that I level an analysis and critique meant to apply across the gamut of mental health "sciences."

Throughout the last chapter, we saw how an abstract individualism is reified and thumped for in Western moral, economic, and political theory. It should come as no surprise then that this same pervasive infatuation with individualism permeates the theory and practice of the mental health professions as well. For example, Seymour Sarason explains that American psychology has been marked by "a riveting on the individual organism" from the get go; that it has "from its inception ... been quintessentially a psychology of the individual organism, a characteristic that ... has severely and adversely affected psychology's contribution to human welfare" (1981: 827). Robyn Dawes finds psychology guilty of adopting a framework rooted in egoistic individualism, where "a person's interactions with the outside world— including the world of other people—are important only in the way in which they affect the internal structure of that individual" (2000: 277). The mental health professions posit that "problems and pathologies are located in the individual" (Kincheloe et al., 1999: 37). Children's cognitive development is usually considered a solitary endeavor (Rogoff, 1990: viii).

Part of this emphasis derives from the roots of the psychology profession in the United States. Before World War II, psychological evaluations and psychotherapy were considered medical specialties conducted by psychiatrists. The war delivered thousands of suffering soldiers back to American shores, and Veterans Hospitals didn't have enough trained psychiatrists to handle them. This, according to Dawes, was the impetus for the tremendous growth in the field of psychology in the

United States (2000: 14). Sarason depicts early American psychologists as "fiercely independent individuals" who were scrabbling to carve out legitimacy for their expanding field (1981: 831). Psychiatry accepted psychology because psychology did not challenge psychiatry directly, was deferential in that it sought to attach itself to psychiatry, and filled a burgeoning need at the time (Ibid.). Furthermore, because psychology found itself expanding amidst a hegemonic context marked by the sociohistorical imperative of abstract individualism, such an emphasis within the field could come as "natural."

3.2 Positivism, Psychology, and Psychiatry

Psychology and psychiatry are disciplines shaped by power, a power they, in turn, perpetuate. Yet they fail to recognize their place in the soup; they do not recognize themselves as participants in the social construction of knowledge, of the acceptable and the unacceptable. That judged normal and abnormal is held to be "pre-existing, universalized, natural conditions . . . that exist separately from psychological interpretation" (Kincheloe et al., 1999: 39). For example, most psychologists see unhappiness in their "clients" as self-created, not the result of the social circumstances surrounding their lives (Masson, 1994: 44). The mental health professions ignore the relational ontologies and ontogenies. Cognitive development is essentialized such that "the social features (race, class, gender, place) that influence patterns and definitions of development are ignored, allowing what are actually social constructions to be seen as natural processes" (Kincheloe et al., 1999: 59). Masson criticizes psychotherapy as lacking interest in social justice, of implicitly accepting the status quo (1994: 285). The authoritarian relationship of analyst/therapist/doctor to the patient/client dehumanizes the later as the former judges what is normal versus abnormal, real versus fantasy. Experts are "empowered with the right to discern meaning" as modernist psychology "operates as a form of arrogant perception—an epistemological stance that approaches culturally different situations and individuals from a position of power" (Kincheloe et al., 1999: 35 & 37). Hence the universalism of Kohlberg's or any other stage model. And at bottom these are relationships where, intrinsically, one profits from the suffering of another.

The worst facets of positivism are at play in the mental health disciplines. The veneer of science is trotted out to justify enormous conjectural leaps taken from what little science of the human mind we actually have. As Dawes (2000) explains, claims to objectivity in the mental health professions differ from claims to objectivity in the natural sciences and other fields of medicine like surgery. Where a man may be labeled "antisocial personality" by a psychiatrist, a female exhibiting similar symptoms is likely to be labeled "histrionic" (Dawes, 2000: 67). A "socially trained consensus concerning diagnosis" is the main empirical claim to objectivity in psychology, psychiatry, and the mental health field. What this means is we're supposed to accept the legitimacy of psychology and psychiatry as fields because their practitioners most often agree with their diagnoses. But wouldn't we be frightened of a surgeon who goes to open us up having diagnosed our malady based solely on

his reasoned opinion without recourse to x-rays, CAT scans and the like, even if his colleagues agreed with him? For the same reason, we should be wary of the way the *feelings* and *opinion* of the mental health professional constitute diagnosis.

In 1972, David Rosenhan decided to put the diagnostic abilities of American psychiatry to the test. Rosenhan went to a mental institution and claimed he heard a voice in his head saying, "Thud." That was the extent of his symptoms, and the only other lies he told concerned his name and occupation. Rosenhan purposefully chose the word "thud" because it seemed so cartoonish. Totally coherent, reasoned, and expressive, Rosenhan, a professor of law and psychology, was admitted to the hospital as a paranoid schizophrenic. Thing is, Rosenhan had eight friends throughout the United States carrying out a similar exercise at the same time. Seven of his friends were also admitted to mental hospitals as paranoid schizophrenics, while the eighth was admitted under the label "manic depressive psychosis."

Rosenhan and his friends enjoyed stays lasting 7–52 days. They found that once institutionalized, their past experiences were reconfigured by mental health professionals to meet the diagnosis. They found that other "legitimate" mental patients knew they were faking it. They were all released when their symptoms were declared to be in remission, not a one of them cured. Troubling enough by itself, where symptom remission is taken as an indicator of progress in medical science, psychotherapy and the other mind "sciences" do not accept it as such. In fact, individual therapists decide whether and where improvement has occurred (Dawes, 2000: 41). When Rosenhan published his paper *On Being Sane in Insane Places*, a firestorm ensued as the profession of psychiatry rounded the wagons in an attempt to discredit the man and his experiment. When one hospital promised their staff could never be deceived by such nonsense, Rosenhan agreed to infiltrate fake patients over the course of a 3-month period. When the 3 months were up, the hospital proudly reported that they had identified and turned away 41 such patients, whereupon Rosenhan admitted to sending none.

Lauren Slater recounts Rosenhan's experiment and reactions to it in her book, *Opening Skinner's Box: Great Psychological Experiments of the Twentieth Century* (2004). Slater herself followed up on Rosenhan's experiment by visiting nine hospital emergency rooms, also complaining of a voice in her head saying "Thud." Waiting on average two and a half hours in each emergency room before she was seen, none of the psychiatrists or other mental health professionals she spoke to—with no interview breaking the 13 min mark—admitted her to their hospital, but each wrote out prescriptions for her, and in the end, Slater went home with scripts for 25 antipsychotics and 60 antidepressants.

Rosenhan's and Slater's experiences give credence to Robyn Dawes' charge that psychiatry's

> positivistic attempt to "locate" people on various "axes" is justified not by showing that these locations result in categories that allow us to accurately predict how people will behave with or without different treatments, but by demonstrating that when diagnostic experts are sufficiently well "trained" in using the manuals, they unsurprisingly agree about how to label people (2000: 67).

As Slater notes, "In Rosenhan's day it was preexisting psychoanalytic schema that determined what was wrong" with the individual, whereas today "it's the preexisting pharmacological schema, the pill" (2004: 86).

3.3 Insight, Indigo Children, and Indoctrination

Slater's seems a growing charge against psychiatry and the mental health field. Today brain chemistry is invoked more and more to explain *who* we are and *what* is wrong with us. To chemical imbalances in the brain are attributed everything from schizophrenia to alcoholism, from obsessive-compulsive disorders to eating disorders, from anxiety and depression to violence and compulsive shopping (Valenstein, 1988: 2). If brain chemistry is the cause, biochemical explanations and drug treatments are the proffered solutions.

The intersection of the mental health professions, a biochemical culprit, the pharmaceutical industry, and the everyday classroom has its nexus in the bodies and brains of our students. Greater numbers of children are being prescribed greater numbers, quantities, and kinds of drugs. Antidepressants are increasingly being prescribed for our children, despite possible risks—including suicidal ideation (AP, 2007b: A16). Bipolar disorder is the fastest growing mood disorder diagnosed in kids, with diagnosis rates more than doubling for boys between ages 7 and 12 from 1995 to 2000 (Carey, 2007a: A11). This despite the fact that the mental health field struggles amongst its practitioners over the disorder's actual prevalence, possible overdiagnosis, and the fact that symptoms diagnosed as bipolar disorder in kids are often nothing like symptoms diagnosed in adults with bipolar disorder (Carey, 2007b).The proffered answer to bipolar disorder: antipsychotic medications, drugs with names like Risperdal, Seroquel, Zyprexa, Abilify, and Geodon. These medications cost three to five times more than medications for disorders like depression or anxiety (Carey, 2007a). And its not just bipolar disorder our kids are being diagnosed with. As Benedict Carey writing in *The New York Times* explains

> A child's problems are now routinely given two or more diagnosis at the same time, like attention deficit disorder and bipolar disorders. And parents of disruptive children in particular—those who once might have been called delinquents, or simply "problem children"—say they hear an alphabet soup of labels that seem to change as often as a child's shoe size (2006: A1).

The pharmaceutical industry spends billions of dollars a year developing and promoting their drugs, and the top recipients of their largess are psychiatrists. Psychiatrists in Vermont, for example, averaged $45,692 each from drug companies in 2006, up from $20,835 the year before (Harris, 2007b: A14). In Minnesota, payments to psychiatrists from the drug industry ranged from $1 to almost $700,000 (Ibid.).Unsurprisingly, it turns out that the more psychiatrists earn from drug makers, the more likely they are to prescribe medications including antipsychotics to children (Harris, 2007b: A14). Except it *can be* surprising because the ties between the drug industry and doctors, including psychiatrists, are not always openly advertised. Hence Isabella Baily's astonishment upon learning that the psychiatrist

who diagnosed and then prescribed antipsychotics for her daughter Anya's eating disorder received over $7,000 as reimbursement for lectures from the same drug company (Johnson & Johnson) that manufactures Anya's medication (Harris et al., 2007: A1).

Increasingly medicated, our children are often on two or more drugs at a time. So-called "drug cocktails," combinations of powerful psychiatric medications, were prescribed for 1.6 million American children in 2006 (Harris, 2006: A1). Over half a million received three or more psychiatric medications, and 160,000-plus four or more (Harris, 2006: A1)—all this despite the facts that psychiatrists and other doctors do not know the effects combinations of various drugs can have on a child.

A biochemical explanation of possible mental illness is embraced for a number of reasons. For one, biochemical explanations seem to allay for many people the stigma of mental illness. A parent might feel more comfortable thinking his child's problems are due to a chemical imbalance than, perhaps, the alternative offered by society and medicine, that something is inherently wrong with the child as a human being. Further, many doctors, psychiatrists and much of science tell us chemical imbalances are to blame, and we want to believe these authority figures. But psychologists like Valenstein warn us that "the claim that psychotherapeutic drugs correct a biochemical imbalance that is the root cause of most psychological problems . . . rest on a very shaky scientific foundation" (1988: 3).

From psychologists who don't keep up on the literature to psychiatrists who really can't tell us what quantitative effects two or three or four medications in conjunction will have on our children, a marked "scientist–practitioner gap" exists in the mental health field (Lilienfeld et al., 2003: 1). Because of our knowledge in medical science, Dawes explains, we have a pretty good idea what will happen if the HIV virus enters the body, but we lack such knowledge in psychology and psychiatry. Unlike medical science overall, in psychology "[w]e believe that if we talk to people and get to know them 'as individuals,' we can understand them better than by using broad general principles and seeing how they should be applied" (Dawes, 2000: 19). What knowledge and research evidence there is in psychology and psychiatry has often been ignored or side lined in favor of practitioner insight and interpretation (Lilienfeld et al., 2003: 1; Masson, 1994: 46). The existence of the doctorate of psychology degree (Psy.D.) *without research training* is indicative of the ways in which the profession sees training and research as unrelated to their method's efficacy (Dawes, 2000: 15). Examples of insight driving diagnosis include practitioners "determining" within 10 min of meeting and speaking to someone that the person is an incest survivor (Dawes, 2000: 8). Such "intuition" can result in a therapist asking leading questions that wind up imprinting suggestions and false memories (Dawes, 2000: 31; Lilienfeld et al., 2003: 4). Psychologists like Elizabeth Loftus showed that this is possible, that memories can be distorted and false memories implanted (Slater, 2004).

Assessment techniques themselves are often questionable. John Hunsley et al. (in Lilienfeld et al., 2003) explain that Exner's Comprehensive System of teaching and researching the Rorschach Inkblot Test is marked by problems with its norms, reliability, and validity. For one, the comprehensive system doesn't have norms for

minority groups even though minority groups score differently on the Hunsely, et al., in Lilienfeld (2003: 46). The Myers–Briggs Type Indicator is a self-report test based on Jung's personality theory. It assigns test takers to one of sixteen different personality type categories *inconsistent* with Jungian theory or the data gathered from the test itself (Hunsley et al., in Lilienfeld et al., 2003: 61).

Ignoring what mental health science we do have has opened the floodgates to all sorts of questionable therapeutic techniques (Lilienfeld et al., 2003). At a CSE meeting in my school district, a therapist told school staff they did not understand a child because the kid was an indigo child—a child with paranormal attributes including the ability to read minds and see others' auras. A de-emphasis on research allows for a proliferation of catchy fads in mental health (Dawes, 2000: 20). There is no reputable empirical evidence supporting primal scream therapy, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, Buddha psychotherapy, alien abduction therapy, rebirthing and a host of other pseudoscientific practices. The self-help techniques available and ever popular on books and tapes are not held up to empirical evidence. The validity of entire supposed psychiatric conditions like dissociative identity disorder (multiple personality disorder) is disputed (Lilienfeld et al., 2003: 3). Brushing what science is available aside gives rise to questionable diagnostic labels like road rage and sexual addiction (Lilienfeld et al., 2003: 3). Not to mention all the money that's coming out of your pocket—either directly for yourself or as taxes to subsidize this wackiness.

None of this is meant as an attempt to discredit the *entire* field of mental health medicine or what empirically verifiable and replicable science there is to support practice. Instead, as Dawes warns, because we know so little about the human mind, "the more scrupulous and careful we should be in applying and monitoring what we think we do know" (2000: 19). Psychotherapy is a case in point. We know psychotherapy works, but we do not know *why* it works. We also know that the credentials and experience of the individual psychotherapists are unrelated to patient outcomes, that professional psychologists and other mental health experts are no better psychotherapists than others of comparable intelligence with minimal training (Dawes, 2000: 13). In other words, despite credentialed-practitioners' assertions otherwise, these professionals don't possess any special abilities as far as diagnosing mental distress in others or predicting behavior. Unlike indigo children, they can't read minds.

Practitioners themselves often treat psychotherapy as a matter of personal judgment and supposition (Dawes, 2000: 9). At the same time, psychotherapists as a group are reluctant to admit that what they do is something others can do. Jeffrey Masson describes the "training myth" that tends to obscure what is in fact very modest training. A former psychoanalyst who grew disillusioned with the field and its foundations, Masson recalls "I spent eight years in my psychoanalytic training. In retrospect, I feel I could have learned the basic ideas in about eight hours of concentrated reading" (1994: 293). Education aside, Dawes posits that professional psychologists and other mental health experts fail to "learn anything from clinical experience with distressed people that cannot be learned by reading textbooks" (2000: 13).

So what are psychoanalysts and other mental health practitioners learning, and why do people accept their supposed expertise if their expertise amounts to little more than personal opinion? Masson likens the years of psychoanalytic training to "an elaborate indoctrination program" during which "one is learning to become a loyal member of a select group" (1994: 293–294). The therapist–client relationship is marked by paternalism and condescension, the qualities of individual therapists notwithstanding. Kincheloe suggests we view the model of the mind presented by psychology "in the same way we examine religious articles of faith", warning we be cognizant that "as religious dogmas, modernist psychological data often serves the interests of the priesthood, the bishops/scientists who guard the holy scriptures" (1999: 42). Dawes accuses the field of psychology of peddling a belief system, "a simplistic philosophy of life" that "maintains that the purpose of life is to maximize one's mental health, which is dependent wholly on self-esteem" (2000: 33). Modernist psychology "creates authority contexts where certified experts impose their interpretation of situations on their subordinates—clients, students, patients, or subjects" (Kincheloe et al., 1999: 37). The mental health professions ignore the sociohistorical realities of which they are a part and to which they contribute, conditions that give rise in part to our maladies and afflictions. At the same time, they ignore that to be human means to love, to delight, and to know joy, along with angst, suffering, and pain. Indeed, experience and weathering of the bad times allow for discernment and enjoyment of the good.

Human beings should enjoy the time here on earth. That's not to say we should expect each day to be rosy, but when people suffer it is understandable and desirable to want find a way to reduce this suffering. Wracked by emotional and mental issues, we turn to the psychologists, psychiatrists, and counselors that our societies tell us are the authorities on these subjects. We hope they can help us, and sometimes, indeed, they can. Whether it's the ear of a therapist who listens to us or the effects of a medication prescribed that eases our distress, we should always be aware that often the doctors and scientists themselves don't know why what they do works.

3.4 Behaviorism in the Everyday Classroom

There is a disconnect today between what goes on in much of psychology and what goes on in our classrooms. Cognitive approaches dominate the psychology field and have for decades. But by and large our classrooms still mirror the influence of behaviorism in psychology. There are times and places where behaviorism has proven successful. For example, individuals have been helped through desensitization to deal with and overcome debilitating fears.

But there are many times and situations when behavioral approaches do not work. One time a small program I was involved in at my high school was told to set up a behavior plan to monitor the progress of roughly 15–20 kids. These were students who traveled from class to class with different teachers. Some of them had very little contact with me or any of the other staff meant to track their behaviors. We were supposed to judge whether they attended class, attended it on time and participated

appropriately, often when we weren't actually physically present to observe the kids. The idea was if students attained a certain number of points per week, they could participate in things like bi-weekly pizza parties. Our supervisor told us to just check in with the classroom teachers every day or ask them to keep a checklist for us.

Checking in with the classroom teachers every day isn't as easy as it sounds when each kid might have seven or eight different teachers per day. Asking a colleague to keep a checklist leads to whole other issues, such as extra work on that already hardworking person and what to do if and when the teacher isn't doing as asked. In the end, we wound up feeling our hands were tied and we were doing a disservice to the kids as our decisions about whether their classroom conduct was appropriate became increasingly arbitrary. We scrapped the behavior plan.

There were other reasons this behavior plan didn't work. Every 2 weeks, it was the same kids getting or not getting pizza. Every day it was the same kids showing up for class on time and participating appropriately or not. The kids who were going to be good and do as they were supposed were the same kids week in and week out. The three or four who were not never were and the only time the idea of missing pizza bothered them was when it was pizza-day and they couldn't have any. Even then some of their peers who had earned pizza would try and give away their second slices to these pizza-less kids. What were we supposed to do? We tried not allowing the sharing of pizza. But what were we caught up in? Here were kids motivated by their better natures, attempting to be what they saw as fair and share their pizza, and we were putting the kibosh on it. What kind of message were we sending the students about cooperation and solidarity? On the other hand, if we let so-and-so act like an asshole every week and then still enjoy pizza when some kind soul gave him some, what kind of message were we sending to the kid who acted inappropriately every day?

One thing that stuck with me from the whole episode was how the supervisors over at Central Office were happy to know a behavior plan was in place even if it didn't work. It sounded good. It looked good on paper. But it was totally ineffective. Still we were encouraged to do it. In case you're wondering, nowadays we've scrapped that behavior plan and done away with any overarching behavior plan, focusing instead on functional-based assessments (FBAs) for individual students who address specific behaviors interfering with their ability to be successful in school. Time will tell how this one goes.

Early behaviorists sought to establish psychology as a hard science, arguing and attempting to realize in their methods that psychology had to be structured along the lines of physical sciences, with the examination of observable and measurable phenomena. Where philosophers like John Dewey saw psychology as the logical next step in understanding *who* we are as human beings, behaviorism was turning its back on philosophy and seeking to align itself with the "hard" sciences (Slater, 2004: 9), hence behaviorism's emphasis on the observation and measurement of behaviors.

Behavioral theories of learning, which explain learning in terms of environmental events, often dismiss mental phenomena when it comes to explaining how we learn (Schunk, 2004: 29). John Dewey argued that everything that exists for us

exists in our consciousness, thus psychology *must* study consciousness to help us understand our existence (Martin, 2002: 102). Yet other proponents of behaviorism, like John Watson, dismissed consciousness as unreliable and therefore not worth studying, noting that "Psychology, as the behaviorist views it, is a purely objective, experimental branch of natural science which needs introspection as little as do the sciences of chemistry and physics" (Watson in Schunk, 2004: 42).

Behavioral learning theory permeates our schools and the everyday classroom. B.F. Skinner had high hopes for his behaviorist theory, operant conditioning. Skinner saw no reason why behavioral principles couldn't be applied to the creation of a utopian society (see his *Walden Two*, 1984). Skinner viewed operant conditioning as applicable in schools. He was against learning that involved students working on assignments to avoid negative consequences such as bad grades and teacher criticism. Instead, Skinner favored teachers presenting materials in small steps; with students actively responding to the activities of the classroom and not just listening passively; that teachers provide immediate feedback to students and their responses; and that students follow their own pace in learning (Schunk, 2004: 70–71). Sad then that much of the behaviorism we see modeled in our schools ignores the high hopes of one of its leading proponents.

Yet, in other ways, ways Skinner may not have agreed with, our schools, and our everyday classrooms do mirror operant conditioning. *Positive reinforcement* involves adding something following a response that increases the likelihood of that response occurring again. Today through a behaviorist lens, we can view a community's approbation and a student's advancing a grade as positive reinforcement for passing scores on standardized exams. High-stakes testing can be seen to impinging on primary reinforcers: students learn that their choice of future classes and colleges, that the range of jobs and incomes available to them, that their ability to live a good life and provide one for their families, that, in short, nothing short of their *futures* may be judged on scores on standardized exams *today*.

The *Premack Principle* "says that the opportunity to engage in a more-valued activity reinforces engaging in a less-valued activity" (Schunk, 2004: 54). At one time in their lives, most students question what it is that goes on in school. They wonder why they choose to go along with it. Most of them, listening to the advice of the adults and society around them, often viewing as models of success men and women who made it through schooling, most of these students make a conscious decision to do as well in school as they can for what it will bring them in the immediate, near, and distant future.

The emphasis on standardized testing and the reality of their consequences can be seen as a form of shaping. Schunk defines shaping as "the basic operant conditioning method of behavioral change, defined as differential reinforcement of successive approximations to the desired form or rate of behavior" (2004: 59). Students, parents, schools, and communities all learn that these tests, which are imposed upon them in the guise of helping them, can actually hurt them. Thus students *learn* to want to do well on these exams, teachers teach their students how to succeed on them, schools devote more and more time to test prep, and parents and communities sanction it all.

It isn't only with high-stakes testing and the possibility/availability of future life opportunities where we see behaviorism at work in our schools. Indebted to positivism in its attempt to model itself after the physical sciences, behaviorism in schools views material to be taught as invariable and easily identified. Behaviorism views learning as the imposition of knowledge from outside a student lacking it. Behavioral approaches feel rewards, and punishments are necessary to guide human behavior. Behaviorism counsels learning content through small step increments in a linear fashion (Thomas in Steinberg and Kincheloe, 2006: 106).

Behaviorism is guilty of a form of instrumental rationality, reducing complex psychological, social, and educational issues to technical questions (Kincheloe et al., 1999: 9). Behaviorist learning theory will be in for direct critique in the next chapter when we discuss Freire's notion of the banking concept of education. But everywhere around us in schools—from programmed instruction such as scripted reading and math programs, from contingency contracts between students and staff, to behavioral objectives that shape curriculums and guide IEPs—behaviorism is alive and well in our everyday classrooms.

3.5 Intelligence and Sociocultural Context

Kincheloe claims modernist psychology ignores the "liberatory impulse" that spawned it; of joining religion and government "as another technology of hegemony"; of siding with the "needs and values of the existing social order" (1999: 40). Psychology isn't concerned with power relationships and sees itself as above such fray. The notion and uses of intelligence serve as an example of this accommodation to the dominant order and the disconnect psychology drives between the individual and the social. Alfred Binet developed intelligence testing as a way to help children in schools. Though Binet warned against attempting to capture intelligence with a single number, today we do just that when we discuss intelligence scores. Historically IQ has been an essentialist construction, with intelligence thought to be a measurable entity, the amount of g a person had in their head. Thing is, g *doesn't* exist. It was a fabrication when psychologists and scientists were pedaling it a 100 years ago. Intelligence itself is a social construction. Intelligence is culturally relative, meaning who and what is considered intelligent varies across cultures and times.

"Intelligence" serves to validate some over others. Nor surprisingly, the intelligent define what intelligence is. Kincheloe speaks of "the magical power of sociopolitical privilege to make one appear intelligent" with intelligence usually inhering in "the socio-economically well-to-do" (2005: 90 & 62). But intelligence is a social process and social construction. For example, some people use a language like English in a certain way which is labeled the "correct" or "proper" way by people who use it in the same manner. Others speak and write non-standard English and are dismissed as unintelligent and ignorant. White people refer to black people who speak standard English as "articulate" more so than they do other white people who speaks similarly. "When people say it, what they are really saying is that someone is articulate . . . for a black person," opines Anna Perez (in Clemetson, 2007: 4).

Developmental psychology has traditionally focused on the individual as the basic unit of analysis. But critical pedagogy steeped in a post-formal psychology takes the social as its starting point. Barbara Rogoff explains that "development involves individual effort or tendencies as well as the sociocultural context in which the individual is embedded and has been since before conception" (1990: 28). Cognitive development or anything else is not a solitary endeavor, nor is it a question of nature versus nurture. Instead, it's a matter of developmental systems where individual ontogeny interacts with varied developmental resources (see for example, Oyama, 2000; Lewontin, 2000). The sociocultural basis of human skills and activities—including *what* we define as intelligence—is ignored for political and ideological reasons.

Still, we all know people—students, friends, public intellectuals—who are better and smarter at things than others, who are "more intelligent" than others and ourselves. The point to keep in mind is that these individuals do not live in a vacuum. Their creativity builds on already available technologies (language, science, sport, etc.) within existing institutions (Rogoff, 1990: 197). The developmental process is fundamentally integrated with "individual effort and sociocultural activity . . . mutually embedded" (Rogoff, 1990: 25). This mutual embedment is so much so that Vygotsky argued "if one changes the tools of thinking available to a child, his mind will have a radically different structure" (1978: 121). We'll explore Vygotsky's contention in greater detail below, but for now consider again the differences between a child raised in a community of human beings communicating via spoken language or sign to that of a child raised by wolves.

So how does critical pedagogy approach intelligence? Teachers should come into the everyday classroom practicing a form of critical accommodation. We've been to college and most of us have master's degrees. We read newspapers and books. We're familiar with schools and the other institutions and culture of our civilizations. We have some idea of what comprises intelligence in our societies, and we see students who possess attributes that lead us to think them intelligent. We also see other students who lack these attributes but are no dummies. Something good is going on in there. Perhaps an unconventional re-examination would reveal that there is sophisticated thinking and acting at play with these students. At that point, it is up to us to "integrate this recognition of exception (accommodation) into a broader definition of intelligence" (Kincheloe et al., 1999: 15).

People in societies, cultures, decide what is important to them, *what* is worth knowing, and *how* it is worth knowing. In the West, schools serve to disseminate that which societies determine is knowledge and the best ways of knowing it. "Schooled people," writes Rogoff, "are skilled in deliberately remembering disconnected bits of information, and are more likely than nonschooled individuals to spontaneously engage in strategies that organize the unrelated items to be remembered" (1990: 46). We often take our ability to group and categorize things for granted, but even this skill is largely socially determined. Consider an example from Glick retold by Rogoff. A researcher laid out 20 objects and asked Kpelle farmers to sort them. The researcher expected the farmers to sort them into functional groups, meaning a knife would be paired with an orange, a hoe with a potato. But the Kpelle farmers sorted

them into categorical groups, the oranges and potatoes together in a food group, the knife and hoe together in the tool group. Rogoff notes, "When questioned, the subjects often volunteered that that was the way a wise man would do things. 'When an exasperated experimenter asked finally, 'How would a fool do it', he was given back sorts of the type that were initially expected—four neat piles with food in one, tools in another, and so on' " (1990: 53).

Even our methods of demonstrating intelligence are socially prescribed. Psychometricians claim IQ tests measure intelligence, and people accept their pronouncements as gospel truth. In America, schoolchildren are taught that the individual competing with other individuals raises her hand when she has the answer the teacher is looking for. There are other cultures in which someone when asked a question, knowing the asker *knows* the answer, will worry that providing the answer could be viewed as a sign of disrespect for the one asking or a path to embarrassment should you provide an obvious answer to what must be a trick question (Rogoff, 1990: 56). In a study of Mayan children, Rogoff (1990) found that when asked to retell a story to an adult, the children often hesitated, awaited prompts, and offered incoherent versions. It wasn't that *they* lacked an understanding of the tale they were asked to retell. Instead, after talking to the Mayan children she observed, Rogoff determined that the children considered such an act as constituting an affront, a challenge to the adult's knowledge, a disrespect the kids sought at all costs to avoid.

We continue to view "[i]ntelligence and creativity . . . as fixed and innate, while at the same time mysterious qualities found only in the privileged few" (Kincheloe 1999: 57). Intelligence is seen as an entity possessed by individuals in varying quantities. Some people have a great deal of it and others nary any. Intelligence as a concept has been extremely important to academics and scientists, the same people who have made careers and reputations from being identified—often with good reason—as intelligent people. It's not that Steven Pinker and Diane Ravitch *aren't* intelligent, they *are*. But they do not possess a quantifiable entity somewhere between their ears that constitutes their intelligence. As the example Rogoff cites above shows, dump either of them back in the 14th century and they'd likely not be viewed as intelligent. Interestingly enough, some rich people frown on "book learning" and the like, such as American President George Bush who proudly claims not to read newspapers. Money may trump intelligence in Western culture, though more often than not money is used to employ intelligence in the pursuit of more money. Psychology, with its emphasis on intelligence and intelligence testing, serves as an "excluding discipline" that distinguishes some over others (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1999: 33).

What effect does it have on the individual when her schooling has no relationship to the real world? What does it do to one's motivation and inspiration when the everyday classroom is foreign terrain disconnected from one's everyday life? All too often subject matter and the way it is taught is divorced from the realities of our students and our own lives. Kincheloe speaks of the condition of "cognitive illness," where "meaning is undermined, and purpose is lost" (1999: 9). We are encouraged to think as competitive individuals. We are taught that good school performance includes memorizing facts, discerning authority figures points of view

and then spitting these back at them. We accept as just another example of the way things are that school and work are mere means to ends, unrewarding in and of themselves.

3.6 Dialectical Constructivism and Embodied Cognition

Psychology and psychiatry have become in large parts structures of dehumanization, locating failure, and affliction in the individual while totally ignoring the social milieu, propagating a faith and obedience in an authority that is often unwarranted, with diagnosis and treatment increasingly driven by crass commercial interests. But neither needed to turn out this way, nor must either remain this way indefinitely. To help everyone involved realize their potential humanity, these fields need to be democratized. There should be no room for profit from other's misery. Jeffrey Masson (1994) offers alternatives to $125 an hour psychotherapy sessions. Masson sees self-help groups for people with a certain problem run *by people with that problem* as a step in the right direction. This would entail us reaching out to one another, human to human, maybe in coffee shops, maybe in halls, but not necessarily in a doctor's or therapist's office. If we'd just stop to listen to one another, to communicate and take a genuine interest in other people because, like us, they are people, we'd realize that most of us at one time or another in our lives experience symptoms that a psychologist or psychiatrist would diagnose with some fancy term from the DSM-IV and probably prescribe some pill for. Instead of placing the authority of professional practitioners or limited science on a pedestal, we'd do well to take what science we have and the insight of people experienced serving those with troubling issues or people who'd once experienced these troubling issues first hand and use that to our advantage. Communication and action, co-involvement as human beings *with* human beings and not as patient and doctor or as expert and sufferer, these are what are needed here.

Psychology and psychiatry do what they do in our classrooms today, from the proliferation of medicated youth we serve to the meta-narrative of behaviorism that shapes our students, our schools, and our lives. Again, more democratic alternatives can be theorized and have been. The remainder of this section will focus on the ideas of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygostky, how his ideas pertain to our humanity in general and our classrooms in particular.

Dialectical constructivism is a learning theory and a philosophical position, an epistemological position. We usually view learning as vicarious learning. Students learn what the teacher teaches them, usually with minimal performance on the students' part. Dialectical constructivism doesn't dismiss vicarious learning but it also embraces *enactive* learning, learning from one's actions and their consequences.

Dialectical constructivism holds that our knowledge comes from interactions *between* people like us and our environments. Our constructions do not only reflect an external world independent of our cognition of it, nor do our constructions come solely from the workings of our minds. Constructivism sees knowledge as a

working hypothesis. Sure we "know" things, but the things we know are always open to testing and questions (a hallmark of the scientific method by the way, in case anyone would accuse critical pedagogy or dialectical constructivism of relativism). Constructivism rejects the idea that scientific truths are out there awaiting our discovery and authentication. Scientific truths are lived, experienced, and just because we all experience a certain "truth" in a similar manner doesn't mean we are tapping into some objective reality about that truth. For example, humans see with a color spectrum where other animals see in black and white, shades of grey. It *isn't* that color resides in an object and that humans are just seeing more of the truth of that object's coloring than are other animals. It's that this is how *human animals* see an object versus how a dog or cat sees the same. Constructivism views people as active learners who must construct knowledge for themselves. Similar to other leaning theories like social cognitive theory, constructivism posits that people, behaviors, and environments interact to help us know what we know (Schunk, 2004: 287). Dialectical constructivism is a philosophical position and learning theory that holds profound democratic potential.

"All seeing is essentially perspective, and so is all knowing," wrote Nietzsche (1956: 255). Apart from sounding dangerously relativistic, what substance is there to this claim? When Joe Kincheloe (2005: 21) notes that "all knowledge is socially constructed in a dialogue between the world and human consciousness," what does he mean and what are the limits to the social construction of knowledge? Is the world as we know it independent of the knower? Not exactly. Human beings and other living systems effect their mediums, their environments, and these mediums in turn effect the living system (Maturana, in Thompson, 1987: 75). Our knowledge and cognition is embodied. We perceive and experience things the way we do because of interactions between our worlds, our bodies, and our brains, not because of some simple reflection of an external reality. Francisco Varela describes embodied cognition as the laying down of a world (in Thompson, 1987: 62).

How far does this go? It's one thing to refute "facts" or to interpret the same event in different ways. Thus the American atomic bombing (the only time nuclear weapons have been used against civilian populations by the way) of Japan is seen as either a necessary step in avoiding an island hopping mop-up operation that would have resulted in a million dead American lives or as a means of deterring the Soviets on the cusp of the Cold War (Alperovitz, 1995). But what about the stuff of the natural sciences, the "hard" sciences? Lakoff and Nunez note that "our ideas are shaped by our bodily experiences—not in any simpleminded one-to-one way but indirectly, through the grounding of our entire conceptual system in everyday life" (2000: xiv).

Color serves as a vivid example. We see colors as a part of things but colors do not exist in the external world. Our bodies and brains function in the world and have evolved to create color the way we see it (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999: 23). On a clear day, the sky appears blue. But the sky has no reflective surface for a color to inhere in. Our color vision is a "synchronic construction," neither completely "out there" beyond us in the physical world nor completely "in here" within our brains and bodies (Thompson, 1987: 22). Our color concept is interactional,

having arisen from the interactions of our bodies (with three kinds of color cones in our retinas), our brains (with neural circuitry connected to these cones), electromagnetic radiation, and the reflective properties of objects (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999: 24).

Similarly, knowledge in general is not out there, Platonic, disembodied. And it isn't completely subjective residing within us either. Varela, Thompson and Rosch posit, "knowledge depends on being in a world that is inseparable from our bodies, our language, and our social history" (1992: 149). Thus "color is a function of the world and our biology interacting" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999: 25). We see the way we do and dogs see the way they do. There are different perceived worlds of color for humans versus dogs versus fish because of our different histories of structural coupling with the world (Varela et al., 1992: 183). We humans see a blue sky because that is how we have evolved to see it. Dog, fish, or human, "perception is not simply embedded within and constrained by the surrounding world; it also contributes to the enactment of this surrounding world" (Varela et al., 1993: 174). This is what Varela and his colleagues means when they write that the knower and the known relate one to the other in "mutual specification" or "dependent coorigination" (1993: 150).

3.7 The Zone of Proximal Development

Starting with social activity as his unit of analysis, Lev Vygotsky saw all learning as mediated learning, and hence all development owing to social stimuli. When Vygotsky said that all learning is mediated learning, he meant that "*human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around* them" (1978: 88). The things we learn, whether a child at school learning her A, B, Cs or you at home picking up a how-to manual to help you hook up your TiVo, all this knowledge is mediated by others, and as Vygotsky recognized "[t]he path from object to child and from child to object passes through another person" denoting "a developmental process deeply rooted in the links between individual and social history" (1978: 30). This is a dialectical process in that even the person ostensibly doing the teaching *is learning*, as the elementary teacher sees in what ways her students best grasp the alphabet or the writer of the how-to manual learns from the experience of writing and revising her book. Even learning on your own (supposedly) is mediated learning because you're using the tools of your culture to learn, like language.

One of Vygotsky's most well-known ideas is that of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Unfortunately, it is an idea that is often taken out of context, isolated and construed in ways that undermine the remainder of his theory and practice. Vygotsky defines the zone of proximal development as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978: 86). The ZPD

measures "mental development prospectively," defining "those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow" (1978: 86–87). Tests are invoked today to give a snapshot of what a child supposedly knows at the moment. Tests are not used to measure ZPD but to "determine the mental development level with which education should reckon and whose limits it should not exceed" (Vygotsky, 1978: 89). Vygotsky understood the importance and uses of quantitative data, but he also appreciated and valued qualitative information. A ZPD framework would not abolish testing, but more organic and holistic assessments like student portfolios and teacher observations/anecdotes would be used to show progress. In an era of standardized test scores and number crunching, the enormity of the challenge facing proponents of dialectical constructivism in a Vygotskian frame should be apparent.

The ZPD is a challenge to the actual developmental level that is usually measured by grades and scores, be they Regents exams or intelligent quotients. The way we test and measure students now is geared toward ascertaining "the level of development of a child's mental functions that [have] been established as a result of certain already *completed* developmental cycles" (1978: 85). Psychometric and classroom testing tends to measure what it is a student, alone, can do at this moment. ZPD is concerned with what a student can do in the future with guidance and as a result of guidance.

Well, what can a child do and how is that determined? We learn and develop in sociocultural settings that are not static. Barbara Rogoff notes that children learn a "cultural curriculum," that "from their earliest days, they build on the skills and perspectives of their society with the aid of other people" (1990: 190). Children develop in a milieu replete with other human beings and social norms. One's culture makes available certain tools through which we learn and develop. Language and speech, for example, are cultural tools. Children learn to use language and speech to think. Vygotsky was clear that if the tools for thinking available for a child change, that child's mind would have a radically different configuration (John-Steiner & Souberman, in Vygotsky, 1978: 126).

Maybe you're wondering what the ZPD looks like in practice? Consider how we normally assess student learning. "[I]f we offer leading questions or show how the problem is to be solved and the child then solves it," explains Vygostky, "or if the teacher initiates the solution and the child completes it or solves it in collaboration with other children—in short, if the child barely misses an independent solution of the problem—the solution is not regarded as indicative of his mental development" (1978: 85). The point of the ZPD is that such a solution *should be* indicative of a student's development. Vygotsky with his ZPD recognized the importance of human interaction to learning and development and how intrinsic imitation is to being human at a time when psychology in general was ignoring imitation solely in favor of a child's independent activity as a gauge of mental development (1978: 88). Behaviorists rebuffed the idea that imitation is an instinct. Watson argued that imitative behaviors were trained behaviors, learned behaviors. A week ago my 10-month-old son started to feed his mother and me watermelon. We didn't teach him that. He

experiences our feeding him watermelon in his high chair and started offering us watermelon on his own, imitating what we do with him.

Perhaps an example with some detail will further elucidate the ZPD concept at work. How do children learn to speak? We already know from linguists like Noam Chomsky that children are genetically disposed to learn a language. A kid growing up in Japan will learn Japanese. Take that same child at birth and have her raised by a German-speaking family and she will learn German. But take that same child and deposit her by herself, or with as little human interaction and communication as possible, and the child will not learn to speak. She may yell and grunt and squeal like other non-human animals, but she won't be like Tarzan in the jungle hanging out with apes speaking fluent English or some other language. The context of human interactions, sociability, and communication provides the impetus for the development of speech in the child.

We talk to ourselves all the time and it's never a problem unless, as the joke goes, we find someone answering back. Where does inner speech come from? Vygotsky directly challenged the notion that inner speech preceded social speech, arguing in fact that inner speech is *a product* of social speech. Children grow up surrounded by adults who are talking (or signing in deaf families). They do not and cannot understand all the words and much is lost on them. But slowly, little by little, they come to understand the meaning of first one and then more words. Children do this in a sociocultural setting surrounded by the artifacts of their societies. For example, a child in his pack and play (they were called play pens when I was little) sees something he wants outside his reach but grasps for it anyway. His father sees the grasping and interprets it as an indication that the object is what the child wants, so he gives the object to the baby, probably identifying the object by name ("Here's your Elmo toy") or some nonsense signifier ("Here's your binkie"). Later the child begins to understand the significance of his gestures' communicative power. Before he can speak, he understands what "Elmo toy" or "binkie" signify. With time, when he wants an object he gestures to an adult first, not the object. The child is "the last person who consciously apprehends the meaning of his own gesture" (Kozulin, in Vygotsky, 1986: xxvii). In time, he will be able to say "binkie" or "Elmo toy" and then he will be able to think it silently in his own head. Adults and other children around him interpret the gesture and teach the child its meaning and what it can bring about.

Children grow up surrounded by others talking. Children start to imitate the speech of those around them. Right now my wife and I have some pretty interesting conversations with our toddler son. We talk to him, I in English, Myoungmee in Korean, and he screeches, coos, warbles, and nyah-nyah-nyahs back at us. It's not that he's *trying* to communicate with us, he *is* communicating with us. I could try and be cute and write that we don't understand a word that he is saying, but anyone who has cared for an infant or pre-verbal child can attest that they are very capable of expressing themselves, their feelings, and their emotions.

Children hear the adults around them speaking and start to imitate what they hear. Some of this imitation is meant to communicate wants, needs, and states. But

they also talk aloud to themselves, about themselves, about what they are doing, about how others relate to themselves, egocentric speech. Eventually, they start to internalize this egocentric speech, which marks the beginnings of inner speech. For Vygostky, social speech gives way to egocentric speech, and this gives way to inner speech (1978: 27).

When socialized speech is turned inward, a child's ability to solve problems improves. Language becomes a problem-solving tool. Vygotsky noted that "The most significant moment in the course of intellectual development, which gives birth to the purely human forms of practical and abstract intelligence, occurs when speech and practical activity, two previously completely independent lines of development, converge" (1978: 25). Less we underestimate the significance of this development, Vygotsky posits that "as soon as speech and the use of signs are incorporated into any action, the action becomes transformed and organized along entirely new lines" (Ibid.). At a certain point, children facing a task—say playing with a toy—speak aloud about what they're doing as they do it. Vygotsky sees "their speech and action [as] part of *one and the same complex psychological function*, directed toward the solution of the problem at hand" (1978: 26). Further, the more demanding and complex an action the child is engaged in, the greater the significance of the speech involved, with "*the relative amount of egocentric speech* [increasing] in relation to the difficulty of the child's task" (1978: 26–27). Vygotsky noted that "[s]ometimes speech becomes of such vital importance that, if not permitted to use it, young children cannot accomplish the given task" (Ibid.). Even as adults, we often talk ourselves through difficulties who's solution may not be apparent.

Early on speech accompanies a child's actions. Their speech may appear disjointed and rambling as they set about solving a perplexing task. But things don't stay this way, with Vygotsky noting "the relation between speech and action is a dynamic one in the course of children's development" (1978: 27). What happens and what Vygotsky is talking about is that speech begins to move until it eventually precedes action. A child can plan what he wants to do, figure out how he wants to go about a task, *before* he does it. Previously the execution of a task and his talking about its execution accompanied one another. Vygotsky provides as an example little children who name their drawings after they draw them and see what they have drawn, versus older children who are able to say, "I will draw a house" and then draw what is supposed to be a house (1978: 28).

Vygotsky remained adamant that learning precedes development because learning creates zones of proximal development (1978: 90). Language, for example, starts as a child's means for communicating with his environment, but with time language becomes internal speech and is used to organize the child's thoughts, becoming an internal mental function (1978: 89). In this way, language and speech can be seen as psychological tools that aid in the development of other mental functions. "[L]earning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers," explains Vygotsky. "Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement" (1978: 90). As the example of language acquisition and use illustrates, learning is

not development but "properly organized learning results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning" (Ibid.). In fact, Vygotsky states, "the only 'good learning' is that which is in advance of development" (1978: 89).

Because Vygostky saw learning as necessarily preceding development, he was against universal stages models like the ones offered by Piaget in his time or Kohlberg's supporters today. Learning and development are socially situated and the historical circumstances that condition human opportunities are always changing. Hence, as John-Sterner and Soubermen explain, for Vygotsky, "there can be no universal schema that adequately represents the dynamic relation between internal and external aspects of development" (in Vygotsky, 1978: 125). Learning doesn't set its sights on a new developmental stage; development is made possible only when learning has made possible hitherto nonexistent zones of proximal development.

Just as learning is socially mediated, so are attention and memory. When adults carry infants around, we point out and name toys, the cupboard, the refrigerator, "objects and places of adaptive significance," thereby helping the child ignore other features of the environment, like books and tools, that are not relevant to him at that point. In this manner, the infant and child's attention is socially mediated, and her socially mediated attention will develop into a more independent and voluntary attention over time, an attention the child will use to organize and catalog her environment (John-Steiner & Souberman, in Vygotsky, 1978: 128). Likewise memory is socially mediated because adults and their peers teach children means for remembering, things like (for example) mnemonic devices (Ibid.: 125).

In an era when test scores mean everything, much human development is ignored. Play is often written off as a frivolous waste of time in schools, at best an extracurricular activity or something appropriately engaged in at home. But play was a central concept for Vygotsky. He viewed play as something that gives children pleasure, but more than this he saw play as "a leading factor in development" (1978: 99). Children have needs and some of these needs can be realized while others go unrealizable. Vygotsky saw play developing in children at the same time they developed "unrealizable tendencies" (1978: 93). Unrealizable needs are addressed by play, in the process giving birth to imagination, which Vygotsky saw in young children as "play without action" (Ibid.).

Play's importance cannot be over stressed. At first young children's motives and perceptions are tied together. A child sees a door and opens it. But play transforms this connection. My brother and I threw blankets over the couch and in this way transformed them into forts. The child "sees one thing but acts differently in relation to what he sees" and "a condition is reached in which the child begins to act independently of what he sees" (1978: 96–97). Play separates thought from objects and gives rise to action from ideas and not things (1978: 97). So for some children, a piece of wood is a piece of wood, but with imagination that piece of wood becomes something else.

Self-mastery is made possible through play. Games have rules and young children can't play certain games because they often ignore rules so as to immediately satisfy their desires. But children learn that if they ignore the urge for immediate

gratification, they can enjoy a greater pleasure in playing a particular game then they otherwise would not have been able to (1978: 97). Through play, children develop self-control and willpower. Play encourages a child's imagination and the rise of abstract thought as play "teaches her to desire by relating her desires to a fictitious 'I,' to her role in the game and its rules" (1978: 98). Play creates a zone of proximal development. In play "a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself" (1978: 100). Instead of dismissing play off hand, play should be respected from a developmental standpoint as "creating an imaginary situation can be regarded as a means of developing abstract thought" (1978: 101).

What we are as individuals and as a species emerges through our interactions with others and our environments and the cultural tools available to us. We are not isolated individuals. Language, memory, attention, and abstract thinking are all mediated and situational. Who and what we are depends on our relationships. Enactive learning allows for our development. Mental health fields that locate failure and illness in the individual seek to domesticate the individual to the hegemonic ideology of our times. Through critical accommodation, we must value the contributions brought to the table by our embodied cognition and cast a critical eye to received wisdom. The ties that bind us and allow for our development are social ones, and to ignore them is to turn our backs on what makes us human and holds out the promise of our future greater humanization.

Chapter 4
Critical Pedagogy in the Everyday Classroom

4.1 Power Games

Imagine your favorite pastime is baseball. You *love* the sport, watch it on television religiously, attend an occasional stadium game when you can, and get out on the field Wednesdays and on weekends to play in an adult league for fun. Now imagine you meet a professional baseball player—someone you have heard about and know to be a *master* of the game. Though you might both play the same sport, there is a vast difference between what you do and what the pro does.

How would you feel if you looked to this pro for some tips and instruction on the finer points of hitting or fielding and he quickly lost patience with you or, worse, wouldn't deign to work with you in the first place because of your amateur status? Probably wouldn't feel very good right? How might such an attitude on the part of the professional ball player make you feel about the game of baseball itself? Could it conceivably dampen your enthusiasm for the sport?

Further imagine that you don't know much about baseball to begin with but have no choice and are being forced to play. On top of this you don't take to it at once and maybe the interest really isn't there. Again, the pro looks at you with disdain, makes derogatory comments, and showers his attention on the better players. Yet here you are forced to stick it out, showing up practice after practice, game after game. What effect might this have on your self-esteem? If a love for the sport wasn't there to begin with, what are the chances this situation will engender it?

What has baseball got to do with teaching and critical pedagogy? Okay, well now imagine you're a different type of pro, say, for instance, a math teacher. You enter your classroom in September and there are 30 somewhat bright-eyed and bushy-tailed kids waiting for you. Some of them have excelled at mathematics in previous grades while others have learned to rue the subject. How will you treat each type of kid? How will you treat the kid who just "gets it" and is able to solve complex equations after being shown how to do so but once? How will you treat the kid who practices it two-three-four times, but still doesn't get it? How will you react when that kid sees his peers succeed while she doesn't and she starts to get frustrated and upset? Part of the reason you became a math teacher is probably that you like math and are good at it. Will the message you strive to send your kids be that

mathematics is an esoteric field, one some will just understand and others won't? If so, what effect do you think this will have on the kid who has come to see math as an obstacle in his educational path? Or will the message you send be that although not everyone can be math whizzes everyone can improve their mathematical abilities? Will the examples used in your classroom to teach concepts be tied to the lives of your students? If students on the fence about mathematics don't see the value and applicability of tangents, cotangents, and cosines to their lives, what are the chances they'll remember anything about them after the exam?

The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire was visiting a Chilean farming community where he engaged in an impromptu dialogue with a group of peasant farmers. Freire remembers how at first the conversation was just that, a back and forth, a give and take between himself and the farmers. But Freire had been in situations just like this in other parts of the world and he knew what was coming up. A silence descended among the farmers, a silence Freire did not challenge. Finally one farmer spoke up. He asked for Freire's forgiveness, explaining that he and his neighbors were mere peasant farmers, that they should be the ones *listening* while Freire, a cosmopolitan university-trained Ph.D., did the talking. "You're the one who should have been talking, sir," they told him. "You know things sir, we don't" (Freire, 1992: 36).

Freire replied by asking the farmers to play a little game with him. They would ask each other questions, he of they and they of he, and each time one or the other could not answer, Freire or the farmers would get a point. They proceeded to alternate questions. Freire asked academic questions such as "What importance did Hegel play in Marx's thought?" and "What is an intransitive verb?" The farmers asked Freire questions about their work and things of importance to their daily lives like "What's green fertilizer?" and "What's a contour curve got to do with erosion?" The farmers couldn't answer Freire's questions and Freire couldn't answer theirs. The game ended in a tie, ten to ten.

What was the point of Freire's game? What did this game teach the farmers about Freire and Freire about the farmers? What did this game show about the nature of knowledge, about education and learning? How did this game reveal the machinations of power? What did his willingness to engage in this game say about Freire the man, his philosophical stance, and his view of education? As I hope to show, this beautiful anecdote encapsulates a good deal of what critical pedagogy in the everyday classroom should strive to be about.

4.2 Teacher Movies

Up to this point this has been a book about relationships. It has been my hope that each succeeding chapter and section bring us closer to the everyday classroom. Thus we started discussing concepts like dehumanization and power abstractly before situating them structurally. This chapter will look at the relationship of teachers to their students, of students to their teachers, of both to knowledge, as well as of

teachers to the art of teaching. It is my hope that this chapter and those following will provide greater and greater practical advice. As I warned earlier, this *cannot* be a how-to. Our discussion of the banking system of education versus critical pedagogy below will show why a "how-to" of critical pedagogy is something of a contradiction in terms. That said, suggestions and examples from my own experience and that of others are provided to stimulate your praxis.

One thing that is going to come up quite often in this chapter is film. This section will present and dissect "teacher movies." I'm going to be very critical of these films at times, so I should state up front that despite flaws—including the messages conveyed about teaching—there are several of these films I really enjoy. *Mr. Holland's Opus* and *To Be and To Have* come to mind as favorites, as well as *The 400 Blows*, though none is spared criticism if the criticism helps me make a point.

Take *Mr. Holland's Opus* (d. S. Herek, 1996). In the film Richard Dreyfuss plays Glenn Holland, a musician who aspires to compose a symphony. The real world intrudes, as it often does, and Holland, who's last employment was as an itinerant musician playing bars, clubs, and bar mitzvahs, has to find a job–job to pay the bills. Glad he got that teacher's certificate "to fall back upon," Holland lands a "gig" teaching music theory and orchestra at the fictional John F. Kennedy High School in 1965. Teaching isn't what he thought it would be—"I made thirty two kids sleep with their eyes open [today]" he tells his wife early on—nor is it the cushy job with lots of free time he'd expected.

Composing the great American symphony remains his avocation as events conspire to rob Holland of the time and energy necessary for creativity. From having to teach driver's ed over the summer for mortgage money to being volunteered to lead the high school marching band, from thousands of hours spent studying sign language in order to communicate with his hearing-impaired son to staying before and after school to help individual students with their music, Holland never gets to composing the way he'd hoped. The job takes a toll on his personal life. Early on Holland just isn't there for his family. He misses his son's science fair. When John Lennon is killed Holland derisively and dismissively tells his deaf son Cole that the teenager wouldn't understand why Lennon's death has upset him so. At one point Holland is tempted by an attractive and talented high school senior who wants to hear his music and invites him to move to New York with her where she is intent on pursuing her singing career, of following her dream where Holland feels he has forfeited his.

At the end of the movie, when the high school's music, art, and drama programs don't survive the latest round of budget cuts and Holland is forced to retire, he is surprised on his last day of work by an assembly celebration where thousands of his colleagues, students past and present, and his family celebrate his years of dedicated service. A former student who has gone on to become governor of their state announces "We are your symphony, Mr. Holland." Holland conducts the school's orchestra as they play his long-worked upon masterpiece.

Teachers who suffer personally for their students and their teaching is a recurring theme of teacher movies like *Mr. Holland's Opus*. In *Freedom Writers* (d. LaGravenese, 2007), Hilary Swank's Erin Gruwell teaches high school, sells

bras at a department store, and works as a hotel concierge to buy her students books and take them to the movies. Her personal life suffers and her marriage fails. The real life Gruwell spent less than 5 years in the high school classroom before leaving to teach college, write books, and start her own educational foundation. In *Dead Poets Society* (d. Weir, 1989) John Keating's unorthodox teaching methods are one of the reasons he is scapegoated for a student's suicide and sacked at the end of the film. We don't see it on-screen but in the movie *Lean on Me* (d. Avildson, 1989) principal Joe Clark's divorce is alluded to, possibly due to his commitment to his job or maybe just his intense-bordering-on-berserk personality. In *Stand and Deliver* (d. Menendez, 1988), Jamie Escalante's wife complains her teacher husband is not home to spend time with her and their children. Indeed, how could Escalante be when he's (according to the film) working 60 hours a week, teaching night school for free to immigrants, and visiting junior high schools in his free time. Escalante suffers a heart attack in the film 2 weeks before the statewide AP calculus exam. Michele Pfeifer's Louanne Johnson pays for her class' trip to an amusement park and takes class winners of her Thomas Dylan–Bob Dylan contest out to eat at a fancy restaurant in *Dangerous Minds*. On his deathbed after 58 years of teaching at the Brookfield School, Robert Donat's character in *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (d. Wood, 1939) overhears his colleagues discussing how sad his life must have been, the tragedy that befell it when his beloved wife died, and the pity that he never re-married or had any children. Mr. Chips musters up enough life to assure his fellow teachers that his has indeed been a very blessed life, that he has had thousands of children, "And all boys"—the thousands of young men who attended the school. Teachers in movies suffering for their students and their jobs . . . Believe me, I could go on.

There *are* teachers who regularly go above and beyond. Given their relatively low pay and lack of institutional support it is easy for teachers to want to do so or to just so do without even wanting to. But what does it say about Hollywood that so many films depict teachers suffering personally to deliver professionally? Is this the message *audiences* want to see? Crucifixion is not a part of the job description. You don't need a martyr complex to enter the teaching profession. In fact, if you do enter the field because you want to "save" people I'd suggest you re-examine your presumptions and read on about the teacher–student relationship. An ethic of care encompasses the self, and despite systemic factors that often make teaching more demanding than rewarding, you should never make it a situation where it's you or the job, teaching or your family. Teaching, like any work, should complement who you are, make you more of a human being, not less. You shouldn't expect to come to your golden years and find that your marriage and family have fallen by the wayside, that you never wrote that novel or symphony you always wanted to, or that the job itself has left you impecunious. If you don't care about yourself and making your life enjoyable and worth living, how can you expect to adequately care for other people, including your students? This is the gist of Emma Goldman's quip that "If I can't dance I don't want to be part of your revolution."

4.3 The Banking System of Education

Institutional, personal, financial, and other barriers facing teachers, schools, and students are very real and cannot be discounted. No amount of personal sacrifice will make them disappear. These barriers constitute "limit situations," conditions that stand in the way of greater humanization. Limit situations are the "concrete historical dimensions of a given reality" (Freire, 1997: 80). We live our lives in realities that appear to us predetermined, as given. Rarely are we aware of our own socio-historical role in making and remaking history. What *is* appears as what *always has been*. Part of the trouble is we often don't recognize that what *is* is someone's *ought*, that situations and circumstances limiting us *benefit* others. Oftentimes we inhabit limit situations without being aware of them. Limit situations confront us as static realities. Even when we recognize situations that negatively impact us we often feel there is no alternative, that this is just the way things are. This is a form of fatalistic thinking (Freire, 1997: 66).

The everyday classroom is the site of innumerable limit situations. One of the biggest limit situations confronting teachers and students on a daily basis in the everyday classroom is what Freire called "the banking system of education." The banking system is aptly named and well known to everyone involved in formal, institutionalized schooling. This model of education sees students as empty vessels waiting to be filled with information by knowledgeable teachers. Students are viewed as passive sponges waiting to soak up facts, and the more facts they soak up and the more passively they do so the better. Students are seen as deficits waiting to be filled (Shor, 1992: 32). Freire referred to teachers in this model as "bank-clerks" who make deposits into otherwise empty students. Students "thirst for knowledge" as if such were Kool-Aid concocted by teachers. The pitcher is tipped by teachers through narration, through lectures, sating student hunger. The banking system of education is a mechanistic conception of education (Freire, 1996: 111). It fits well with the assumptions of behaviorist learning theories.

Freire (1997: 54) provides a list of "attitudes and practices" indicative of the banking concept of education. For example, in the banking concept "the teacher knows everything and the student knows nothing" and "the teacher talks and the students listen—meekly." It was exactly these attitudes and practices that Freire's ten-question game with the Chilean farmers challenged. Freire wanted to show them that yes, he knows things, but *they* know things too. The things they know are no less important to their lives working the land as the things he knows are to his work in academia. Freire was encouraging the farmers to value their knowledge and to actively take part in their conversation.

There are a lot of good teachers who really care for their students, their subject matter, and the art of teaching but in their daily practice perpetuate the banking concept of education. Freire notes that "there are innumerable well-intentioned bank-clerk teachers who do not realize that they are serving only to dehumanize" (1997: 56). Glenn Holland chews his students out when they fail his music theory test. He's

as angry at himself as he is at them, knowing that his methods of teaching theory up to that point—usually one-sided discussions of textbook readings—just aren't working. In *The History Boys* (d. Hytner, 2007) the headmaster of the prestigious boys prep school assures the temporary contract teacher Irwin that he is "corseted by the curriculum."

Given everything it *doesn't* have going for it, given that we as teachers see it fail day in and day out in our classrooms, why is it that the banking system of education persists? Several reasons help explain its perseverance. First and foremost, the banking concept of education is usually the model we teachers were exposed to as students. We learn that it's the "right" way to teach and we teach the same way. Further, in the classroom the traditional lecture format rooted in the banking concept of education provides teachers "a safer, more reassuring way to teach" (Shor, 1992: 102). We all have had or have known teachers who hammer out a lesson plan and stick to it year after year with little revision.

Because enough students accommodate themselves to the banking concept this further legitimizes it. Curriculums and lesson plans are developed taking for granted that a transfer-of-facts banking concept of education will be the means of dissemination. Teachers, "corseted by the curriculum," often have their hands tied and find institutional mandates infringing on and limiting their creativity. "The curriculum here is set," the headmaster of Welton Academy tells Mr. Keating in *Dead Poets Society*, "It's proven. It works. If you question it, what's to prevent them [students] from doing the same?" "I always thought the idea of education was to lean to think for yourself," says Robin Williams' Keating, a teacher who encourages his students at one point to climb atop their desks for the sake of a new perspective. "At these boys' age, not on your life," is the headmaster's reply, telling Keating that "tradition" and "discipline" are the most important things for young men.

Students themselves are socialized from their earliest experiences in school to expect some manifestation of the banking concept of education in their classrooms. This is why Freire faced farmers and peasants and other people who told him things like, "You're the one who should have been talking, sir. You know things sir, we don't." Teachers that attempt to bring more democratic methods to the classroom may face not only institutional but *student* resistance. If education is *supposed* to look a certain way but doesn't, students can get antsy. I think this applies more to the upper grades including college and graduate school than to the lower. If you're a child in kindergarten or elementary school you're probably going to trust that the way the teacher is running the class is the way the teacher is supposed to run the class, whether that's in an authoritarian manner or an open, democratic style. When you've been in school for many years, say by the time you reach middle and high school, you've got an idea of how education should be done and if it isn't being done that way the teacher can be viewed as incompetent, or, hopefully, innovative and humane. By college and graduate school, when you're paying to go to school, any form of education that deviates from "the norm" is suspect as it is a possible waste of your own and your parent's money.

4.4 Teacher Against Student, Student Against Teacher

The banking system of education pits teacher against student and both against the joys that education can and should bring. It fosters antagonistic relationships between teachers and students. Teachers know stuff worth knowing and students don't. In this way "the teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence" (Freire, 1997: 53). Cognition is denied students in a banking concept of education. A teacher "cognizes a cognizable object while he prepares his lesson in his study or his laboratory" after which "he expounds to his students about that object" (Freire, 1997: 61). Students don't have to explore, investigate, and learn themselves. They need to show up and memorize whatever it is the teacher tells them is worth knowing and memorizing.

Students have to accept the epistemological certainty of the teacher, the subject matter, and the curriculum. It should come as no surprise when the subject matter of schooling is reduced to an "alienating intellectualism" for these students, what with the things they learn in school and the ways they learn them divorced from their everyday lives. Student resistance often manifests as disruptive behavior in class. Students may file in, heading for the areas of the room where they think the teacher is least likely to visit. Ira Shor (1997) calls these areas "Siberia" and makes it a point in his college classes to circulate his physical presence around the classroom, sometimes sitting in the back of the room, sometimes off to the sides. A "culture of silence" may descend upon a classroom as passive students who have had it drummed into their heads that teachers are the source of all knowledge in the classroom expect teachers to teach. Students may adopt a form of false consciousness, thinking this the only or best way to learn.

Having taught in America and other countries I have seen the different attitudes students in various cultures bring to school. A common lament of American teachers I know is how *bad* their kids are, they don't listen, they don't respect anyone, they misbehave. I've had rowdy students. Fortunately I have found with most if you set limits and boundaries and are consistent with those while you're according the student respect, almost all can be brought into line. I do wonder if students today are somehow different than students when I was a kid. My students use language and talk about things I never would have imagined using or talking about in front of adults, *especially* my teachers. I've seen students who walk around with perpetual bad attitudes from whatever is going on in their home lives, students who go at it verbally with teachers and a few who, when pushed, have gone after them physically. Maybe I was sheltered in a Catholic school in my elementary years but if a teacher raised her voice to me I remember getting all upset, on the verge of tears even. I don't see that with the kids I work with today. Where students once seemed to respect and defer to authority figures like their teachers or principals the attitude I see today is one of "show-me," as in show me you're worthy of my respect and deference and then *maybe* I'll respect and defer to you. This is an attitude I am ambivalent about. On the one hand, I've written in this book that we should always question authority and its legitimacy, that doing so is healthy and a democratic necessity. On the other,

I think this needs to be done in a respectful, non-belligerent way. Most of the kids I know who challenge authority today do so in a loud, abrasive, disrespectful manner.

Compare these kids to the students I taught in South Korea. There it's the exact opposite problem. I had Korean students who were so deferential to authority and so passive they bordered on catonic. They were in school to have education done to them. School and hogwan (after-school private institutes for English conversation, math, and computer study) were ways of preparing for competitive entrance to university. I had students who were "well behaved" to the *n*th degree. Even here in America I'll have students born of traditional Korean parents who sit quietly and sometimes meekly in class. I'm not complaining. I don't want a bunch of unruly, pugnacious punks who make education impossible in my classroom. But I don't want students who respect me solely because I am an adult. There are adults unworthy of respect. Respect me because I respect you, because I know my stuff and treat you as a fellow human being, not just because of my age or title or some degree.

The banking concept of education supports the structural status quo. It works to change the *consciousness* of the oppressed, not the concrete *situations* that oppress them (Freire, 1997: 55). For example, in *Dangerous Minds*, a well-intentioned teacher like Pfeifer's Louanne Johnson tells her class that "There are no victims in this classroom!" when in fact hers is a classroom *full* of students victimized by socio-economic and gender inequality. Johnson's message—she let's her high school students know she is a former Marine and teaches them to hip toss one another her second day of English class in order to get their attention—amounts to *toughen up*, *don't whine*, *stop making excuses*. A banking concept of education ignores the structural realities that give rise to inequalities in our lives, treating students as individual cases, as "marginal persons" when in fact what usually happens is we find ourselves on the outside looking in as no one *asks* to be marginalized (Freire, 1997: 55). The banking concept of education is not humanizing or liberatory. It is a dehumanizing and reactionary pedagogy that domesticates students.

There is an ontological position implicit in the banking concept of education well worth considering. The banking concept of education sees people *in* the world, not *with* the world (Freire, 1997: 56). Knowledge is out there, knowable, immutable, independent of the knower. Such knowledge manifests itself in canons and curriculums and is not contestable. Students are objects of the educational process, not subjects. They are objectified, *thingified*. When Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970 he criticized the banking concept of education in which "the teacher is the Subject of the learning process" because the teacher creates lessons and explores topics "while the pupils are mere objects" (1997: 54). With a proliferation of "teacher-proofed" materials including scripted lesson plans and lockstep official curriculums, teachers are increasingly objects in the learning process as well. Freire remained adamant that the banking concept of education, this "standard, transfer curriculum . . . implies above all a tremendous lack of confidence in the creativity of the students and in the ability of the teachers!" (Shor & Freire, 1987: 77).

Critical pedagogy's chief concern is the humanization of students and teachers. As Ira Shor always points out critical pedagogy is a liberatory pedagogy through

critical education and action. All forms of critical pedagogy respect the context in which knowledge creation and transmission occurs. Knowledge in critical pedagogy is situated and context specific. Thus Freire's culture circles with illiterate Brazilian peasants will look different than Shor's composition classes at a working class college on Staten Island, but both are examples of critical pedagogies that start with students' lived realities (Freire, 1997; Shor, 1997). When possible, critical pedagogy attempts to organize the program content of education *with* the people, not *for* them. I have been a student in Shor's graduate-level classes where he has come into class with a syllabus and by the end of the class a whole new syllabus had been negotiated between him and we students.

At the graduate and even college level critical teachers like Ira may have opportunities of negotiating syllabi and curriculums with their students that high school and primary teachers may lack. But don't get the wrong idea. The institutional setting, be it kindergarten or college, presents teachers with limit situations that threaten to dampen critical practices. So where an elementary teacher may find himself spending hours a week decorating bulletin boards as per principal orders when he could be planning, a college teacher may have a department- or university-approved reading list she *has* to work from.

4.5 Problem-Posing Education

One form critical pedagogy can take is problem-posing education (Shor, 1992: 31–54). In such an education "people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves" where "they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 1997: 64). A problem-posing education encourages critical learning. Such learning "aids people in knowing what holds them back" and imagining "a social order which supports their full humanity" (Shor, 1980: 48). One of the teachers' roles in a problem-posing education is to "problematize situations" by presenting to students situations with which they are familiar but in a manner that gets them thinking about those situations in new ways (Freire, 1985: 22). Ira Shor describes this as "extraordinarily re-experiencing the ordinary" where students "re-perceive" the reality they know (1980: 93).

Freire gives an example of this from his work with the same group of Chilean farmers mentioned earlier. One need not be religious to appreciate how the Christian Freire encourages the Christian farmers to "extraordinarily re-experience" and "re-perceive" their daily lives. Shortly after the farmer apologizes to him—"You're the one who should be talking, sir. You know things, sir. We don't"—and their ten-questions game, Freire, for the sake of argument says, okay, "I know. You don't. But *why* do I know and you don't?" "You know because you're a doctor, sir, and we're not" he is told. To which he replies:

> "Right, I'm a doctor and you're not. But *why* am I a doctor
> and you're not?"

"Because you've gone to school, you've read things, studied
things, and we haven't."
"And why have I been to school?"
"Because your dad could send you to school. Ours couldn't."
"And why couldn't your parents send you to school?"
"Because they were peasants like us."
"And what is being a peasant?"
"It's not having an education . . . not owning anything . . . working
from sun to sun . . . having no rights . . . having no hope."
"And why doesn't a peasant have any of this?"
"The will of God."
"And who is God?"
"The Father of us all."
"And who is a father here this evening?"
Almost all raised their hands, and said they were.
[Freire asks one of the farmers how many children he has and
the man answers three]. "Would you be willing to sacrifice two
of them, and make them suffer so that the other one could go to
school, and have a good life . . . ? Could you love your children that
way?"
"No!"
"Well, if you . . . a person of flesh and bones, could not commit an
injustice like that—how could God commit it? Could God really be
the cause of these things?"
A different kind of silence [ensued] . . . .A silence in which something
began to be shared. Then:
"No. God isn't the cause of all this. It's the boss!" (Freire, 1992: 38–39).

Freire's example is illuminating. In one conversation the farmers go from a fatalistic
acceptance of reality to questioning the necessity of that reality and who it benefits.
Freire engages in dialogue with the farmers, letting them draw their own conclu-
sions, believing what they will. He poses as problems worth considering the facts
that he is a university-trained professor while they toil on the land. What does this
example have to do with the everyday classroom? There are students and teachers
who don't like aspects of school but accept that this is the way school is. Throughout
this book I have hoped to illustrate that no, this isn't just the way it is. The ways our
schools work, what it means to be a *family* or a *man* or a *woman*, the structure
and function of economies and political systems, these all work the way they do
because some people benefit from them the way they are. None of their current man-
ifestations were inevitable. The only ones who say it is so and encourage fatalistic
thinking are those who benefit or those who have been clobbered into submission.
When and where possible in our classrooms we should problematize situations and
encourage our students to extraordinarily re-experience the ordinary. This is a skill,

an ability we want them to take out of the classroom and into their lives, much as we must in our own.

The Chilean farmers attributed their status in life to a supernatural deity. I hear a lot of this kind of talk in America as well, with people noting that everything from success or failure in school and life is "all part of God's plan," a "test" from "the Lord." Sometimes they wear their religion or denomination openly, other times recourse to an unnamed higher power or causal mechanism is invoked, as in "I believe everything happens for a reason." Still more often, however, I hear people ascribe success or failure to their individual selves or other individuals. They succeeded or they failed because of something *inside them*, to opportunities they did or did not pursue. Structural inequalities are taken as givens, beyond cognition or criticism. Things are the way they are and we are told we must learn to deal with them.

That's my biggest gripe with "teacher movies." Aside from the fact that many of them are interminably long, nearly all of them preach a gospel of self-help and rugged individualism. "If you do not succeed in life," *Lean on Me*'s principal Joe Clark (played by Morgan Freeman) tells his assembled high school students, "I do not want you to blame your parents. I do not want you to blame the white man. I want you to blame yourselves." This right after expelling from the assembly and the school 300 of the worst behaved students, young men and women smoking cigarettes and marijuana and free-style rapping on the stage in the middle of the school day. Individuals in classes and individual classes in schools usually succeed in these films, be they *The History Boys'* Oxford and Cambridge scholarship recipients or all 18 students in Jamie Escalante's AP calculus class. Again, the notion that success or failure is rooted in the individual is one of the messages driven home by these films. It's not that this *isn't* an accurate reflection of the reality facing us, but come on directors, let's dare to dream as you ask us to suspend disbelief anywhere from an hour and a half to two and a half hours or more.

I do not mean to discount the place of individual agency. But crack-smoking high school rejects like *Lean on Me*'s character Sams have the deck stacked against them from birth. All their lives kids like these are surrounded by circumstances and situations that work to bring out the worst in them and then they get to us for 6 hours a day and we expect they're going to make good decisions. Of course, understanding where these kids are coming from and how they get to us does is not making excuses for them or for bad behavior.

When possible our subject material should be rooted in the lives of the students. I know this sounds like a tough order, maybe not as easy in fifth grade as in graduate school, maybe not as easy in a state university as in a non-formal literacy circle. I know you're thinking this might be easier to do in English and social studies classes and harder to do in mathematics and physics classes. I know I did and I have thought so but I am realizing more and more from my reading that any limitations I perceive are mostly those of my imagination stemming from my lack of knowledge in the content area and my lack of creativity, both on my part (see for example any issue or publication of *Rethinking Schools* and Shor, 1987). Not that I'm blaming this individual, mind you.

4.6 Themes in the Academic Classroom

Critical pedagogy demands a lot of teachers. Once you get your credentials, land a spot in a good school and get tenure, it's easy to go along and get along. Critical pedagogy demands engaged and imaginative teachers who aren't afraid of leaving their "comfort zones" and taking risks in the classroom. Critical pedagogy demands teachers who are committed to their fields, teachers who will follow developments inside and outside their subject matter. Critical pedagogy demands teachers who will not knowingly fool themselves and their students, teachers who will face the relations of power in their classrooms, their schools, and their societies.

At the same time critical pedagogy provides teachers with many tools with which to work. I should rephrase that. It's not so much that critical pedagogy creates these tools and gives them to teachers to use. These things are there by dint of our being human. Theorists and practitioners of critical pedagogy merely suggest how these things can be used in favor of the humanization of student and teacher.

What kind of "things" am I talking about? Well, for one, the topics we discuss, explore, and study in our classrooms. Ira Shor differentiates between generative, topical, and academic themes (1992: 55). Their suitability in our classrooms will depend on the specific contexts of our classrooms, including grade level, subject matter, and other institutional constraints. Yet it is my belief that some or all of these can be used in the everyday classroom some of the time.

Generative themes are probably most often associated with Freirian literacy circles in Latin America. Generative themes are "provocative themes discovered as unresolved social problems in the community, good for generating discussion in class on the relation of personal life to larger issues" (Shor, 1992: 47). Freire called these *generative* themes because "they contain the possibility of unfolding into again as many themes, which in their turn call for new tasks to be fulfilled," new avenues of study, reflection, and action to be explored (1997: 83). Shor clarifies that generative themes are to be found "in the unsettled intersections of personal life and society" (1992: 55). Generative themes are contextual, drawn from the everyday lives of students. Such is one of their main strengths for a critical pedagogy, as generative themes serve as "student-centered foundations for problem-posing" (Shor, 1992: 55).

Generative themes are introduced as codifications to the class. Freire and his colleagues used sketches and photographs of everyday experiences familiar to the lives of their students (often illiterate farmers) as codifications. For example, a codification Freire may have started with might show a farmer with a book in one hand and a farming tool in another in a field. In the background a woman and child stand near a well before a house as birds fly overhead. In the "decoding" process that ensued between teacher and students, the differences between the natural world and culture, the concept of necessity and that of work, the relationships of human beings one to another as subjects emerge (for examples see Freire, 2005).

Freire was pretty clear that codifications be made visually (2005: 42). However, I think it's entirely plausible that codifications can be presented in other forms, from drama to rap. The idea of the codification is to present a lived situation to students,

a situation they inhabit but rarely question critically. The codification of generative themes should be pretty straightforward to students. There's a difference between a picture of a farmer under a tree with nature and the tools of culture about him versus a metaphorical poem or an abstract painting.

Topical themes are "social question[s] of key importance locally, nationally, or globally" (Shor, 1992: 55). Topical themes are not generated by student discussion in class. The teacher brings topical themes to the students. They then, all together, discuss the particular topical theme and how it impacts their lives and the subject matter of the class itself. The idiom in which it is introduced needs to be something the students can grasp. For example, once I was teaching a class of adults in the special education field in the West Indies. I brought in a reading I thought was interesting and pertinent from a weekly magazine (*The Nation*). I don't know if the students found the reading not interesting, not relevant, or—as I suspected at the time—too dense and wordy. Either way, this attempt at a topical theme flopped.

But I have had other experiences where topical themes have worked, as both student and teacher. In graduate classes I took with Shor for instance, Ira always comes in at the beginning of the class with stacks of photocopied articles from newspapers and journals. He'd pass the clippings around and we'd discuss their pertinence to what we'd been studying in class or what was coming up for study that day. I really can't say enough good things about Ira Shor and his classes, which is why his scholarship and my experience in his classes are cited so frequently throughout this book.

Unlike generative themes, topical themes often bring students to uncharted territory—uncharted by the students that is. (Actually a more apt metaphor is that of topical themes bringing the uncharted territory to the students.) Generative themes, on the other hand, add "*critical* discussion about things students already know and talk about *uncritically* every day" (Shor, 1992: 58). If I bring a graph comparing US government expenditures on the Iraq war, health care, and education to one of my classes there will be kids in that class who had no idea the amounts of money spent on these things. They know about the war, they know about Michael Moore's film *Sicko*, and they know of schools where programs have been cut, but they haven't put it all together.

Academic themes are also introduced in class by the teacher. Academic themes are what we as students are most used to being exposed to in schools. The academic theme is "a scholastic, professional, or technical body of knowledge which the teacher wants to introduce or has to introduce as a requirement" (Shor, 1992: 73). Academic themes are structured knowledge in specific academic disciplines. Their political import may not be apparent. And any possible political significance may not be the guiding reason teachers introduce academic themes in class. Nevertheless, a creative, critical teacher can tie together academic and topical themes. For example, Jessica Klonsky (2007) uses the Iraq War to prepare her high school students in Brooklyn for the NY State Regents exam.

The question arises, can a teacher committed to critical pedagogy, to the humanization of her students, herself, and her world, can this teacher ever use the methods *of* a banking concept of education *against* a banking concept of education?

Can the forms and techniques of banking education be used for liberation? At one point Freire is adamant that such methods cannot be so used (1997: 59). Elsewhere, however, he and others draw distinctions. Lecturing, for example, would appear to be the epitome of the banking concept of education. In the Charlie-Brown animated specials Charlie's teachers are always presented as droning indecipherable *blah-blah-blah* adults who's heads are never seen. Despite such stereotypes, Freire and Shor maintain that critical lecturing is possible. "The question is the content and dynamism of the lecture, the approach to the object to be known," specifies Freire. "Does it critically reorient students to society? Does it animate their critical thinking or not?" (1987: 40). A critical lecture should be eye-opening and thought-provoking for students where, Freire only half jokingly describes, "they listen to you as if you were singing to them!" (Shor and Freire, 1987: 40). I remember my freshman year at Queens College, John Gerassi pacing the classroom with one hand in his shirt lecturing on US foreign policy and his experiences at *Newsweek* and the *Times*. These class sessions were *never* boring. Almost all the time they were incredibly informative and even entertaining. Critical pedagogy can make use of the lecturing format *so long as* the teacher remains critical while lecturing.

Critical pedagogy is wary of existing canons in any field. Who decided which works belong in the canon? For example, what makes the so-called *great books* great books? Who's points of view are expressed in a canon? Who's interests are served? For example, are the characters in a literary canon all upper middle class heterosexual white males? Which works aren't represented in a canon and why? For instance, in economics departments why are neoclassical approaches favored over political economy? Why has quantification trumped theory? These are all concerns of critical pedagogy. Yet canons can—and sometimes, when dictated from above in institutional settings, *must*—be used as part of a critical education (Shor, 1992: 35). Students can approach the texts in a canon and the canon itself critically, seeking to ask and where possible answer the very questions raised above and to formulate others.

Contextual skill-development is a must for liberatory teaching. Contextual skill-development stresses that cognitive skills like reading and writing be developed through problematic study of real contexts (Shor, 1980: 104). Reading primers with stories of Dick and Jane and Spot aren't going to be as interesting and thought-provoking to students as selections that bear on their everyday lives. Things get done in a classroom where critical pedagogy is going on. It's *not* a gripe session with the teacher airing a laundry list of societal grievances to his students. That's an abuse of the authority of the teacher in the classroom. Critical pedagogy is an approach to education that doesn't take anything (including itself) as hallowed but examines even our everyday assumptions critically with an eye to the ways any subject matters to our lives.

4.7 Neocolonialism in Teachers' Movies

How can the relationship between teacher and student in critical pedagogy be described? Progressive education gets a rap for being permissive, as too warm and fuzzy, with teachers coddling students and wanting to be their friends. This often

seems like an easy way for critics to attack the field. In fact, critical pedagogy recognizes differences between students and teachers. Perhaps the largest difference is that the teacher is an authority figure in the classroom and must use that authority in her subject area and for classroom management. We will talk below of critical pedagogy's conception of teachers and students being partners, but this partnership doesn't mitigate the responsibility of teachers as power wielders and authority figures in classrooms. The idea, as Shor and Freire make clear, is not to allow very real differences between teachers and students to become antagonistic (1987: 93).

In a banking concept of education these differences are exactly that, antagonistic. The banking concept of education conceives of teachers who know and students who don't, of teachers who think while students are thought about, of teachers who act and students who comply (Freire, 1997: 54). Partnership is not possible in a banking concept of education. What is possible is a form of condescending charity, what Freire called "assistencialism." This is seen clearly in several of the "teacher's movies" brought up in this chapter.

These films often evoke neocolonial themes centering as they often do on white females teaching classes of non-white students. In *Dangerous Minds* Louanne Johnson walks into a class of students chattering loudly one to another and rapping. "White bread!" someone yells at her from the back of the classroom. Instead of showing anger when an Hispanic student, Emilio (who just so happens to be the lightest skinned of the Latinos in the class), menaces her sexually—"I'll eat you," he tells his teacher—Pfeifer's character makes light of the situation, laughing and drawling on in her bad southern accent. Erin Gruwell shows up for class in *Freedom Writers* with a lesson about the rapper Tupac Shakur and the kids call her on it, "White girl gonna teach us about rap?" Instead of situating their education in generative themes drawn from her student's lives, Gruwell introduces the class to the Jewish Holocaust, which no one in class knows anything about except the sole white kid who throughout the first third of the movie begs Gruwell at every turn to get him out of the class. "What are you doing in here that makes a goddamn difference in my life?" an Hispanic female student demands of Gruwell. The message of the film is that Gruwell is doing a heck of a lot, that it's the students who don't see it at first but eventually come around and appreciate the good intentioned, hard-working little Caucasian girl. Hilary Swank is an amazing actress, but personally I prefer her chewing her tongue off in *Million Dollar Baby* to the bright-eyed, bushy-tailed masochistic eager beaver of this film.

Even when it's not a white female teacher the neocolonial taint is often there. The director of *Lean of Me* makes sure we see that Joe Clark was a *real* radical complete with an afro in the 1960s, willing to go down for the teacher's union. In effect he does, transferred from the mostly white high school to an elementary school. During the films opening credits *Guns and Roses*' "Welcome to the Jungle" plays as the camera shows us how Eastside High School changes once Clark leaves. We cut between grafittied hallways; a fight breaking out in school; trash strewn throughout the corridors; a girl jumped in the bathroom, her shirt torn off; drug dealers in suits visiting the high school during school hours to deliver narcotics; a gun-sale in the building; a teacher getting brutally beaten; and a student stuffed and sealed inside

a locker as a security guard walks by ignoring his pleas. Of course almost all the students are non-white. Welcome to the jungle indeed.

Returning to Eastside, Clark refutes any radicalism he may have once harbored and is accused of being a race traitor by some parents at an emergency parent meeting following his expulsion of the 300 trouble makers and his demotion of the black football coach to assistant coach. "[I]f you want to help us fine," Clark tells the parents, "Sit down with your kids and make them study at night. Go get their fathers off welfare." When a student pulls a switchblade on him in the cafeteria, Principal Clarke kicks his ass and disarms him. Sometimes savages just have to be dealt with that way.

The Substitute ups the neocolonial violence as white substitute teacher Shale (Tom Berenger) beats, pummels, and blasts all the bad non-white students in his school. Shale is a mercenary filling in for his girlfriend, a teacher who has been kneecapped on the orders of Juan Lacas (singer/actor Marc Anthony), leader of the Kings of Destruction gang. "I'm in charge of this class," booms Shale. "I'm the warrior chief. I'm the merciless god of anything that stirs in my universe. Fuck with me and you will suffer my wrath." Fuck with him they do, and within the next minute of the film Shale has caught a soda can thrown at the back of his head in mid-air, pitching it back and nailing the kid who threw it in the face. He then bodily disarms another student of an ice pick. In its defense, *The Substitute* is first and foremost a B-action movie. It wasn't contending for Oscar glory as a feel-good teacher movie. The climatic nighttime battle in the school halls with bazookas and submachine guns erases any doubt as to what *The Substitute* was going for as a film.

Now, it's not that there aren't white female or white male teachers who teach classes of majority non-white students. There are plenty; teaching is still a very white profession. Are there non-white (and white for that matter) kids who act terribly in schools? Of course there are. My wife can tell you horror stories of her days teaching in the South Bronx straight from Korea. Myoungmee was a New York City teaching fellow and jumped at the first job opportunity available to her even though everyone (including me) told her not to go and teach in the South Bronx. Children are children wherever you go, she replied and despite the nobility of the sentiment Myoungmee soon found how badly behaved many of the children in her impoverished urban middle school were. Needless to say, these kids were unlike any she'd taught in South Korea. Unlike a Hollywood teacher movie, my wife didn't stick it out at that school and single-handedly turn its misbehaved children around. When one seventh grader attempted to expose himself to her the district transferred Myoungmee to a different school, a high school that was tough in its own ways but better than the middle school. Stories like my wife's and others aside, there are also studious and diligent non-white (and white) kids who put their noses to the books, who *want* to do well and *do* do well in school.

One fault of these films is that even when they show you the environmental factors influencing these "bad" kids, the message is still that the kid has a chance to make it out of this, to bootstrap herself to proper behavior and superior academic performance. Do such things happen? Certainly. But as the drop-out and other attrition statistics attest, we lose a lot of these kids in these environments. These films

are condescending and paternalistic. They often demean minorities and smack of racism, subtle of otherwise. They present problems and solutions in individualistic terms when in reality the problems we face are systemic in nature though they often manifest themselves individually. The solutions to such are collective but rarely presented as such.

4.8 Teacher–Student Mutuality

Whether it's fantasizing about blowing bad students away with automatic weapons or condescending put downs like the teacher grading papers in *Dangerous Minds* remarking as he goes, "What a fuckin' idiot. Another fuckin' idiot," none of this has a place in critical pedagogy or, for that matter, in any daily classroom. Critical pedagogy demands of teachers that we be confident practitioners and theorists of subject matter while at the same time remaining humble enough to know we don't know all things, that our students are going to know things that we do not, that the path of exploration and knowledge is laid and traveled alongside our students with them and with our own teachers (whether we're in graduate classes ourselves or keeping up with the literature on a topic). A banking concept of education cannot conceive of student–teacher mutuality, of a partnership between teacher and students (Shor, 1992: 87).

I always like to think of Socrates in this context and where he went wrong. The oracle at Delphi told Socrates he was the wisest man of his time and he couldn't believe it. Socrates was one of those guys who, the more he learned and knew, the more he realized he had more to learn and know. Now, on the one hand this is something of a humble attitude and one that any scholar would do well to adopt within reason. But Socrates grew irritated with people around him, especially the well-regarded scholars and statesmen of his time who were self-assured of an ultimate knowledge he knew they lacked. Instead of keeping quiet and taking satisfaction with the thought that the gods had him pegged as the brightest cat in Athens, Socrates used his knowledge and his second-to-none skills as an interlocutor to unmask the ignorance of these supposed intelligent men, humiliating them publicly along the way. Socrates made many enemies and was eventually put to death. Refusing to flee prison when he had the chance so as not to undermine the Athenian state is another bad idea on his part, but one beyond the scope of this discussion.

Here's one way to think about the bond critical pedagogy promotes between teacher and student. Contrasting the relationship of elites to the people versus revolutionary leaders to the people, Freire explains that the leaders of revolutions "give of themselves to the thinking of the people"; that the thinking of the elite "is the thinking of the master" whereas the thinking of the revolutionary to the people is "the thinking of the comrade" (1997: 113). This "thinking of the comrade" is the attitude teachers in the critical pedagogy tradition should have of our students. The thinking that recognizes we're all in this thing together, whether by "this thing" we mean life in general or life under structures of dehumanization like schools and

economic systems and positivist science that condition and limit us. The thinking that understands we all get in our pants one leg at a time. The thinking that recognizes where you *are* I once *was* and where I am you may one day be. It's not a self-flagellating or self-deprecating mindset. It's a recognition and respect for the accomplishments that have gotten us where we are (jobs teaching, mastery of subject content, advanced degrees, etc.) and the potential of our students and ourselves to grow together as human beings and reshape the structures we all inhabit.

In this vein Freire speaks of the transcendence of the "teacher-of-the-students" and the "students-of-the-teacher" to "teacher-students" and "student-teachers." Through dialogue with his students, "the teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (1997: 61). There are several meanings to this. For one, teachers often come from different neighborhoods or socio-economic conditions than their students. Exploring subject matter together allows the teacher to see how it effects her students' lives, the ways it is relevant to their experiences. Maybe you're a middle class teacher in a school with mostly middle class students. Or you could be in my position, a middle class teacher in a school with many students from upper middle class and wealthy homes. When you grow up one way you quickly learn others live differently than you do. If you're middle class you realize the lifestyles of the rich and the poor both differ from yours. I remember one student in a class I was in wearing an Antigua baseball cap. "Antigua, nice island," I remarked to the kid, having spent time there as a Peace Corps volunteer. "Yeah, my family has a house there," replied the student matter of factly. He wasn't showing off or rubbing it in. Second homes on tropical islands are just a part of his life. Where I grew up only a few people had "second homes," usually time share condos in the sometimes tropical clime of South Carolina's Hilton Head or Myrtle Beach.

More likely you're a middle class teacher in a school where children come from impoverished neighborhoods and poor families. If you didn't grow up this way you might not understand things like the monthly renting of furniture and appliances, lay-away plans, and spending your tax refund check *before* you get it back. My point is our students have lives outside of the school building and these lives may be radically different than anything we can imagine.

Students can become aware of their teachers as journeymen in school and life, as ones who walked the path they are walking now *with* them *before* them. Further, certain subject matter is more often made and remade in the classroom than others. For example, the same poem or piece of literature may mean different things to the teacher and students in a class, just as the same poem or literature may mean different things at different times to the same individual at different points of his or her life. Understandably, the goal of a high school science class may not be to "rethink" evolution in the sense of proving it or disproving it, but in a critical classroom the religious, political, and existential stakes around evolution can be studied across cultures and historical periods. The everyday classroom is the site of "mutual effort" between teacher and student (Shor, 1980: 113).

Dialogue is key to the implementation of critical pedagogy in the everyday classroom. Dialogue implies an I–Thou relationship, mutuality between teachers and students (Freire, 2005: 45). Dialogical education reflects an epistemological

position, "the sealing together of the teacher and the students in the joint act of knowing and re-knowing the object of study" (Shor & Freire, 1987: 100). The traditional lecture format represents a transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the students. Dialogue represents a give and take, a creation and re-creation, a process of risk and reward. Further, dialogue is an existential necessity between beings who are first and foremost social. Dialogue and the willingness of the teacher to engage in dialogue with the students bespeaks a horizontal relationship between teacher and students grounded in empathy whereas lectures and uncritical teacher-talk are mere authoritarian communiqués (Freire, 2005: 40–41).

Because we are "corseted by the curriculum" much of what we introduce to students in the everyday classroom are academic themes reflecting existing knowledge and opinion on a subject. One might think the lecture format lends itself better to such an education than dialogue. To boot, dialogue is risky. It's easier to develop a lecture on a certain subject, deliver it semester after semester, year after year, all the while honing your delivery. The amount of "stuff" teachers need to teach during a course or year is overwhelming and dialogue may seem an unaffordable extravagance. Nevertheless, dialogue is *always* possible, though it may call upon the creative powers of the teacher to determine where and how it can be used in class. That said, dialogue is not some catchy technique or tactic. Recall from our discussion of Vygotsky the ways in which language and communication contribute to our development as humans beings. Dialogue is an ontological and ontogenic *necessity*.

Dialogue reflects a democratic commitment to our fellow human beings as it occurs *between* people. It bespeaks a love of our world and the people in it. Dialogue reveals the love "of responsible Subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination" (Freire, 1997: 70). Dialogue bespeaks humility on the part of its participants as no one attempts to dictate for all. Dialogue allows for the free exchange of opinions, the airing of differences, the reaching of consensus, and reflection upon action. An ethic of care stresses the need for teachers to be attentive. In part this means teachers must be active listeners who take what their students say seriously, are able to read between the lines, and hear what is not said (Shor, 1980: 101).

In oppressive classrooms dominated by a banking concept of education a "culture of silence" prevails. In these classrooms students feel what they have to say isn't or won't be considered important. These are classrooms where voicing an opinion or answer that is not parroting the teacher can carry dire consequences. This may lead to the "mutism" Freire refers to where students in classrooms "denied dialogue in favor of decrees become predominantly 'silent'" (2005: 21). Mutism and a culture of silence signify oppression and dehumanization in classrooms.

4.9 Authority Versus Authoritarianism

In the 1974 musical *Mame* (d. Saks), Lucille Ball stars as that "peculiar duck," the eccentric Mame Dennis. When her estranged brother dies, Manhattanite Mame becomes guardian of her orphaned nephew Patrick. Mame enrolls Patrick in headmaster Ralph DeVine's "School of Life." The school of life is everything progressive

education was accused and vilified of being if it seldom actually ever was. Visiting the school for the first time, Patrick (though not his aunt) is nonplussed by the going-ons: students in various states of undress as Indians chase one another around; paint each other and depant and battle one another with toy swords; a mannequin has dress and breasts painted on; students drop water-filled bags out the window onto passersby on the street below; headmaster DeVine himself, naked, sits amongst the ruckus oblivious to the cacophony, reading a broadsheet newspaper which he uses to cover his genitals as he stands to greet Mame and his new student.

A commitment to democratic forms in our classrooms, to problem-posing education and dialogue, to teacher–student mutuality and co-exploration of themes, none of this lessens the authority of the teacher in the classroom. Let me be clear: the teacher *is* and *has to be* the authority figure in the classroom. To abrogate her authority in favor of permissiveness is a dereliction of duty. Why is this necessarily so? For one, the teacher has spent more years in school than her students and has a specialized working knowledge of one or more academic subjects. Further, the teacher must be a master of classroom management able to "lay the smack down" when necessary to create a climate where all students feel safe and where pedagogy is possible. A teacher must enforce discipline when it is required, but always in a humane way that doesn't seek to embarrass or demean an offending student. The teacher must constantly walk the line between authority and authoritarianism and always strive to stay on the side of the former even when the temptations of the later beckon.

Where and what is the difference between authority and authoritarianism? Consider the depiction of Principal Joe Clark in *Lean on Me*. Noting that "discipline is not the enemy of enthusiasm," Clark is clear when he scolds teachers and students that they should "forget about the way it used to be. This is not a damned democracy." Clark refers to himself as the H-N-I-C (the head nigger in charge) at staff meetings where he chews out staff over "the task which you have failed to do—to educate our damned children" and introduces the new head of security as "my avenging angel." When crack-smoking student Sams begs Clark to be allowed back into school after being expelled with the 300, the principal takes him up on the roof of the building and tells him, "Now I say if you want to kill yourself don't fuck around, go ahead and do it expeditiously. Now go and jump." Sams promises to do his best should Clark give him a second chance and Clark reluctantly does, promising Sams he'll be looking for him to mess up, noting "you still a baby and you don't know shit." Nice way to talk to students, huh?

It gets better (worse). Clark takes to parading around the school halls with a bullhorn and then a baseball bat. He pulls hats from heads, publicly humiliates students including Sams (as an "example of how not to dress") and forces students to sing the school song on the spot, telling them, "You will sing the school song upon demand or you will suffer dire consequences." Clark berates staff in front of students, suspending the former football coach (who he'd already demoted) for picking up trash in the cafeteria after ordering that no one move, and fires the choir teacher when she stands up to him over his decision to cancel the choir's New York City concert. The Clark portrayed in the film is an out-of-control nut, an effective

but authoritarian autocrat. The film depicts formerly unruly students warming to Clark's methods—"Mr. Clark don't play" they say admiringly—and even the former football coach comes around to view Clark as more a force for good than bad. But just because we acquiesce to our abuse doesn't legitimize it.

In the film Joe Clark crosses the line between authority and authoritarianism. Authority *needs* to make itself respected in our classrooms and schools (Freire, 1996: 150). Respected does not mean *feared*, although the very Machiavellian Clark seems to think it does. Freire felt that authority is an invention of freedom that makes pedagogy possible (1996: 150). There wasn't much learning going on in Paterson, New Jersey's Eastside High School before Joe Clark took control. But were Clark and his authoritarian methods the only means of winning respect for authority and ensuring education could follow? If it seems so this is because sometimes limit situations within dehumanizing structures *make it appear* there are no alternatives. Clark's rebuking the teachers when he first arrives in the building was way out of line. These people were part of a dysfunctional setting seemingly impervious to change on their parts. Their hands were tied by higher ups and the institutional structure. Clark came in with his fire and brimstone and bullhorn and took steps that could have (should have?) seen him dismissed. That these steps proved effective may be beside the point when one considers that once a semblance of order had been restored to Eastside Clark's authoritarian ways continued, albeit with a slightly sweeter edge.

Authoritarianism is immoral because it denies freedom (Freire, 1996: 150). Because of his bullheadedness over the choir teacher's daring to question him, Clark loses one of the best staff members in the school. This means that *all the kids* in Eastside lost one of the best teachers, and all the kids who come to that school lost the opportunity to study with that teacher.

Although a healthy questioning of authority is one of the skills critical pedagogy hopes students develop, such questioning that undermines legitimate authority cannot be put up with. For example, there will be times when a teacher has to say in effect, "That's enough of that," and doesn't have the time or the inclination to embark on a drawn-out discussion over the *whys* of such a decision. There are times in class where I have to tell students who pepper their speech with "nigger," "bitch," and "fag" that those are words I do not want in our classroom or school. I can't get into a debate with a student each and every time about why those words are inappropriate for our classrooms and school and how they work against everyone's feeling safe and valued. Students who want to push the issue will and should face consequences, from being asked to stay after class to talk to me to being written up to being removed from the class, all depending on the situation and how it plays out. There have been times I have had to say to a kid, "Listen, I need you to understand that I am willing to talk to you about this, but not here right now" and the student has persisted and punishment of one sort or another has followed.

Seating charts might not sound like such a big deal but they're an effective way for teachers to assert their authority. Unfortunately, my experience teaching in high school has shown me they're an effective means that is often overlooked. Seating charts are a great way of structuring your class. There are students who should not

be allowed to sit near one another. They make pedagogy impossible, which means they interfere with the education of all the students in that class. These students *need* to be separated. I usually implement a seating chart after I've gotten to know the students a bit. This could be after a day or week of class, but there have also been situations where I have had to introduce a seating arrangement to a class half way through or several times throughout the year. Students will arrive to class and as they come in the door I try to be in the hall greeting all, asking each one to find his or her seat which I have labeled with a sticky pad or index card. As a precaution, I always keep an extra copy of the seating arrangement for myself in my Squibbs ledger, because some kids will try and switch sticky pads or index cards to sit closer to someone I inevitably didn't want them next to. Maybe I've just been lucky, but having the desks labeled this way when students come into class has worked well. Aside from the student who purposefully sits where he isn't supposed to and has to be asked to move, the most student resistance I've faced on this matter is a whining "Why do we have to sit like this?" to which I reply "Do me a favor and give it a try. If I see everyone's doing what they're supposed to be doing we can adjust the seating arrangement later on. Okay?"

An easy way for teachers to assert their authority in a classroom is the manner in which they dress. My first or second semester in college when I met Tito Gerassi the guy came waltzing into class with jeans and a plaid shirt looking like the maintenance man or a dislocated lumber jack. As he started to talk some of us looked at one another, *was this our professor*? He was. Gerassi taught us (through his example) that authority and command of a subject don't have to come packaged in a Brooks Brothers suit. At the same time, that was college. I teach in a high school where it's a different story. Professional dress, whether it's a shirt and tie or a suit, marks the teacher as distinct and different from the students. Many students have been taught to respect and defer to suits and ties, so dressing accordingly for at least the first few weeks of school is a must. Then, after students have come to respect me as a person and as an authority on our subject matter, that's when the tie comes off and the short sleeves and tattoos are seen.

Another example of the difference between authority and authoritarianism manifests itself in how we address our students when some form of punishment need be meted out. If we're gloating and rubbing our hands in sadistic glee as we inform the student of the consequences of her action we're going about it the wrong way. Don't laugh—I've seen teachers write students up, assign detentions, call in security, and sometimes they've appeared to *savor* the experience. It's not necessarily that these are sadistic people—although there have been a few. What's usually happened is the situation has escalated out of control. What started out as a student disagreeing with the teacher has exploded into a rancorous back and forth that ends when the teacher flexes those authority muscles for everyone to see. By this point the teacher is usually frustrated and fed up and feeling vindictive and maybe even spiteful. Some teachers feel bad afterwards for harboring such emotions. Other teachers will try and blame the whole thing on the student, re-creating the situation when describing what happened, conveniently blind to what actually transpired.

I've let myself be sucked into these situations a few times in the past and they're *never* pretty. Again, we're there to be *with* the students, to help them help themselves and help ourselves along the way. Bitter arguments and vindictive punishment kills the spirit of mutuality. Try not to get into arguments with your students. You never win. Even when you have the last word, or the kid shuts up/gets detention/gets suspended, how do you feel? The times it has happened to me I've felt bad. Am I a big man because I can win an argument against a middle or high school kid?

That said, there will be times when you will have to tell students to stop doing something. The extreme examples are when they're posing a threat to themselves or other students or when their disruptions are such that they are making pedagogy impossible. Almost always, however, these situations don't just present themselves full-blown. They start out small and escalate. A good teacher, like a good parent or spouse or friend, will see what's coming and work to head it off.

One way I try to do this is by offering students choices. Let's face it, when you *tell* someone not to do something they're going to think about doing it to spite you. If you're ordering a kid not to do something in a classroom setting where he's surrounded by his classmates, he isn't going to want to lose face. Standing up to the teacher and taking his lumps may even increase his cachet in that class. So, instead of ordering and demanding students do something I want, I usually try and dress it up as a couple of different choices, steering the kid to do what I want while allowing her to save face and look like it was her decision. Instead of ordering a student to change her seat *or else*, try saying to her, "Okay, look, you've got a couple of things you can do here. You can change your seat because you can't sit there, you're being too disruptive, or I'm going to have to make a phone call home today that I really don't want to have to make." This example will not work in every situation obviously. You may get a kid who refuses, no matter how you present it, to move her seat. But I'm 100% certain you'll be more successful in getting what you want done if you present it as a choice to the student instead of commanding it.

Another strategy I've used that has proven effective is to throw it back at the student in the context of their peers and make them want to do what I'm asking rather than look bad to their fellow students. So, for example, I might ask Johnny to turn down or turn off his iPod (if they're working individually personal stereos and the like don't bother me) so that others aren't distracted. Johnny sees it as a choice then. Do what I'm politely asking him to do, which will make it look like he's doing the right thing, or continue to blast his iPod, impinging on the education of his fellow students, which makes him look like a jerk. I've also phrased my requests so they look like personal favors, like the kid is being noble in granting *me* something. This puts them in the position of looking bad if they *don't* follow suit. I don't think I am being manipulative. I think I am being creative in avoiding conflict and getting something done that is best for the student and the class. I'm going to draw a paycheck every 2 weeks either way it goes.

4.10 Conscientization and Consciousness

Part of the goal of the teacher–student relationship is to model democracy. Participatory in form, democracy acknowledges the place for expertise while respecting everyone's right to a voice. Dialogue between teachers and students is part of the democratic form we wish to model for our students. Only through dialogue and critical thought will our students and ourselves arrive at conscientization. Conscientization "represents the *development* of the awakening of critical awareness" (Freire, 2005: 15). Conscientization differs from consciousness. Human beings are conscious but only critical reflection and action allow for conscientization.

Freire distinguishes between three levels of consciousness. The intransitive consciousness lacks structural perception and is not able to objectify the conditions of its existence. Many of the fatalistic perceptions of reality (e.g., "that's just the way it is," "God wants it to be this way") stem from an intransitive consciousness. The intransitive consciousness attributes phenomena outside of objective reality to a supernatural cause or something that inheres within the self. "I'm just not good at school" or "I'm not very smart" are refrains of the intransitive consciousness. This is a consciousness of inaction, a "static condition of fatalism which rejects human agency" as the person of this consciousness reflects on his own perceived shortcomings or placating the supernatural entities he feels responsible for his lot in life (Shor, 1992: 126). A culture of silence tends to mark classrooms and societies where the intransitive consciousness holds sway. The intransitive consciousness gets up and goes to work or school every morning, throwing up her hands in the face of seemingly inexplicable adversity, hoping for the best or at least for as little suffering as possible.

A second level of consciousness discussed by Freire is the naïve transitive or semi-intransitive consciousness. This is also a dominated consciousness but one that has some recognition of the external forces behind its domination. This is the kid who goes to school in a poor neighborhood and knows because his school is in a poor neighborhood he's receiving an education markedly different from his more affluent peers elsewhere. However, divorced from action that seeks to change objective structures of dehumanization, the naïve transitive consciousness can be an extremely frustrating position to be in. When Louanne Johnson's students in *Dangerous Minds* ask her who's footing the bill for their amusement park trip and she lies to them, knowing *she* will pay but telling them the board of education is, one student asks, "Since when has the board of education done anything for us?" The naïve transitive consciousness may be cynical, but it is not critical. Naïve transitive consciousness views causality as a static fact, not recognizing that the cause of something today may not be its cause tomorrow. If causality is an unchanging fact of life, action to transform reality is ultimately futile. As Shor describes it, such consciousness "is one-dimensional, short-term thinking that leads to acting on an isolated problem, ignoring root causes and long-term solutions, and often creating other problems because the social system underlying a problem is not addressed" (1992: 127).

Freire hoped that through a critical pedagogy based on dialogue and a problem-posing education, students would achieve conscientization. Critical consciousness allows students to "better able ... see any subject as a thing in itself whose parts influence each other, as something related to and conditioned by other dimensions in the curriculum and society, as something with a historical context, and as something related to the students' personal context" (Shor, 1992: 127). Such "critical consciousness" is aware of the structural inequalities that condition our lives, implying "the critical insertion of the conscientized person into a demythologized reality" (Freire, 1985: 85). Such a consciousness refuses to fatalistically accept the finality of these structures, recognizing that these structures, *made*, can be *remade*. Critical consciousness represents the fruition of individual agency, although the individual knows her actions alone cannot reconstitute reality, that her actions must be in accord with those of others.

I know if you're preparing to walk into a math or social studies class this sounds kind of "heavy." It may, on the surface, appear to have little to do with what goes on in our classrooms. But truthfully it has everything to do with what we do in our classrooms. To return briefly to a discussion of philosophy, the ontology of critical pedagogy sees the self and society as creating and re-creating each other (Shor, 1992: 15). We are in and with the world (Freire, 1985: 68). Unlike other animals, we are capable of objectifying our world and our place in it, of critically examining it in the service of transformation. Our aspirations, our motives, and our objectives are embodied. As such, they're as historical as we are. In other words, the hopes and objects we have differ from individual to individual from time to time. We are because we are born into situations (Freire, 1997: 90). But we are always unfinished beings capable of socialization to more (Freire, 1996: 146).

The implications of this for our classroom are such: unfinished, capable of greater humanization, we and our students need to understand reality and our places in it. We need to critically comprehend the systemic and structural relationships that infringe on this humanization and collectively dream and pursue alternative humanizing relationships. In our classrooms this means we accord dignity and respect to our students and we expect it of them for each other and for ourselves. Through our actions and discipline we model democratic forms, making it clear that our classrooms—no matter what the subject matter taught therein—are safe places of growth and transformation. Critical teachers must every day strive to balance authority with humaneness and professional competence with humility.

Chapter 5
Critical Pedagogy Across the Curriculum

5.1 Caveat

This may be the most ambitious chapter I have written in this entire book. As I wrote it and revised it I had to make sure I wasn't getting in over my head. Throughout the preceding chapters I explained how this is not meant as a "how-to" book, that such prescriptive dictates are against the grain of critical pedagogy. At the same time I thought back to my first year in the classroom, when I had discovered Freire and sought ways to implement critical pedagogy in the classroom. I think of my struggles with that task today. I know there are people reading this book who, based on the title alone, will look to it for such suggestions. And that is all I can provide. In the end the specific context of your classroom, your students, your subject, and your personality—what you're comfortable and not comfortable with—will help shape any critical pedagogy in your everyday classroom.

Here I'd like to look at a few of the major subject areas in American elementary and secondary schools as well as practices such as assigning homework and grades. I'll discuss where and how they get it wrong and I will offer examples of what a critical pedagogy might look like in these classrooms. Some of the examples are my own, but most are from others and I attribute them as such. Any failures or shortcomings in this chapter (or this book for that matter) are indicative of my lack of imagination, my lack of familiarity with the extant literature, my practice and resources. That said, my hope will be that you go from this chapter with more resources to explore, thinking of your own ways to implement a critical pedagogy in your classroom with your students.

5.2 Critical Pedagogy and Math

In my experience as both student and teacher there seems no other subject that perplexes those in schools the way math does. Those who *get* it *get it* while those who don't often view math as worse than any foreign language with none of the allure. I'd like to discuss a few ways where mathematics education goes wrong and then look at how teachers working in the critical pedagogy tradition can and have taught the subject.

A major problem with math education in the everyday classroom is the manner in which math is approached. Instead of exploring the underlying ideas and patterns of mathematics, the subject is taught as a form of mere puzzle-solving. A student approaches a problem, figures out what kind of problem it is, decides what skill in her repertoire of math facts and formulas is applicable, applies such, and gets an answer. For example, a student reads a problem on a test about a light pole placed 10 feet from a wall on a street and if they recognize the puzzle they go "Ah, the Pythagorean Theorem" and plug in the numbers they have. Some students don't get past step one. They don't know what the problem is asking them to do. That was my problem with math in school. Day by day I'd do well in math class, but when I sat down for a test by myself and had to figure how to solve a problem, had to discern what it involved, I'd get stuck. My mind would draw a blank. It isn't that math *doesn't* involve solving problems and puzzles, it does, but there is much more to mathematics than this capacity which schools seem to dwell on.

Bob Peterson blames mathematics education in the United States for "number-numbness in students." Number-numbness is marked by "rote calculations, drill and practice ad nauseum, endless reams of worksheets, and a fetish for the 'right answer' " (Gutstein & Peterson, 2006: 10). The back-to-basics movement promotes a form of mathematics instruction that results in this number-numbness, with advocates decrying students' inability to memorize multiplication tables. Back-to-basics supporters often deride as "fuzzy mathematics" approaches that do not emphasize rote memorization of facts and skills. They paint a biased picture of "the new math," *any* new math, as one in which "children learn what they want to learn when they're ready to learn it" (Lewin, 2006a: A20). This criticism of mathematics instruction resembles criticisms of "whole language" instruction in reading as it is often the same people and organizations leveling these arguments.

The back-to-basics folks often look to Asia for inspiration, deriding American schoolchildren, teachers, and mathematics education in favor of the Japanese way or the "Singapore style" (*NY Times*, 2006). Their criticisms usually mask a conservative agenda, a regressive, domesticating ideology. Knowing your multiplication tables is a great thing, but that's what they make calculators for. While we should encourage students to have a grasp of things like the multiplication tables, we shouldn't penalize them for not. Calculators and similar tools are there so we can get beyond the basics and into the deeper stuff. Sometimes students don't master their basic math facts because they did not study and were not encouraged to do so at home. Other times organic reasons interfere with the rote memorization of facts. Whatever the cause, by the time a student reaches high school, shouldn't we stop beating him up and provide him with the tools so he can continue to pursue higher mathematics? Though I can add and subtract with facility I use a calculator to balance my checkbook so I can spend more time doing other things in life. I also regularly use my fingers when I count aloud or in my head and I am not ashamed to admit it.

Mathematics is a subject that is usually segregated in schools today. Students learn math in math classes. (Gutstein & Peterson, 2006:19-28) describes several of the undesirable messages this conveys. Students learn that math does not matter

unless you're concerned with success in math classes or becoming a mathematician or someone else who needs math for their work. Segregating math in math class results in math being divorced in student's minds from their social realities. Math becomes an abstract endeavor. It appears we don't use math in our everyday lives, that math isn't at play all around us at all times. And if students see math this way and can't use math in their daily lives that's one less cultural tool that can help them participate fully in their societies, one less tool that can help humanize them.

5.3 Mathematics Unbound

Math must be taught across the curriculum and connected to students' lives. For example, when I was teaching economics at the high school level I would introduce the topical theme of the minimum wage. I'd ask students if anyone knew what the federal minimum wage was. Usually nobody knew and we'd get guesses that were much higher than the real thing. The federal minimum wage at the time was $5.15 an hour, whereas the NY State minimum wage was $7.15 an hour. Students were surprised to learn that the federal minimum wage was lower than their state minimum and this led to discussions as to why this was so, discussions that branched off into the feasibility of the minimum wage itself, with me playing devil's advocate and presenting the libertarian and conservative views on why a minimum wage works to undermine the labor force and productivity.

With the knowledge that $5.15 an hour was the federal minimum wage, I asked students to figure out what they would make working a 40-hour week and a 52-week year at that amount. I asked for volunteers to think it out loud and show us their work on the board. When students objected that 52 weeks a year didn't account for vacation, this led to another informative tangential conversation about vacation practices in the American private and public sector versus the amount of time workers in other countries get off. Students were more surprised to learn that the United States is the only industrialized country that does not guarantee its workers any vacation time whereas workers in any European country can look forward to 20 annual paid vacation days and those in France get 30. I introduced statistics on vacation time, such as that 68% of low-wage workers in America get paid vacation time versus 88% of higher wage workers versus the 13% of workers nationally who get five or more weeks off (see, for example, Ravn, 2007). This, in turn, led to students talking about teachers who get summers off plus all the other holidays and whose work day officially ends at 3 or 3:30 in the afternoon and I encouraged the students to talk to other teachers and find out what their work day was actually like and what they did with their summers. Most teachers work in July and August, viewing summer not so much as cushy time off but as unemployment season. At times these facts led right into the idea that Americans are workaholics and I urged students to think about their own family members and their jobs and to decide if this was by choice.

Back to the federal minimum wage. After figuring out weekly and annual earnings I'd ask students to bring in a local newspaper the next day or go online if there were any computers in the classroom and search for apartments where they

hoped to live. Some students chose local New York neighborhoods, others perused apartments and homes in other locales. Sometimes individually, other times in small groups, I asked students to find a place to live that interested them and to note the monthly rent. They then calculated the money they'd be shelling out annually for their rent and subtracted that from their calculated income. Some students were left with negative numbers.

A variety of objections immediately rose. Someone inevitably pointed out that there were other bills to pay, electric and gas and oil, cable and cell phone, car insurance and groceries, every imaginable necessity and frivolity. Someone also invariably said they'd have a roommate or a spouse working or they expected to make more than the minimum wage. The class came to a halt once when one girl stated she expected to live on welfare like her mother. She was not kidding around. That led to an interesting reaction from the white males in the class (the girl was black) and a whole other discussion. Someone also always pointed out that they'd be working in New York State, where the minimum wage was $2 higher than the federal one, so I encouraged them to go back and do the math, to figure out weekly and yearly salaries based on the higher wage and to subtract their rent and necessary living expenses from that. Again, many students wound up with negative numbers.

I explained to the class that when I grew up it was considered common among the working middle class to spend 30% of one's income on housing or rent. I'd bring in articles that appeared explaining how people were paying more and more for rent and housing (Fernandez, 2007). I then asked my students to figure out what percentage of their paychecks would be going toward the rent of the houses and apartments they'd chosen. The students were usually much more comfortable with the addition and multiplication computing weekly or annual pay involved and these ratios and percentages often threw many for a loop. I'd ask for volunteers to come up and show the class how to find the numbers. Once we had done so students were able to compute for themselves their percentages using their numbers, sometimes with a little help from me or another student. What students learned was that—$5.15 or $7.15 an hour—most would be paying much more than 30% of their salaries for housing. A challenge using more math that spun off that was to figure out exactly how much money they'd need to earn so that the number they'd derived as 30% would indeed be 30% of their annual salaries. I asked students how we could determine this which led to discussions of setting up proportions.

Once students ascertained how much they'd have to make to live where they wished with rent comprising 30% of their income, I asked them what jobs they knew that paid that type of money. Some students knew what family members and friends made and volunteered that information. Others lived in fantasy lands where they quoted inflated salaries for jobs that actually didn't pay that much, so I encouraged them to go online to the US Labor Bureau and find the median annual incomes for various professions. Other times I brought the numbers in myself. This gave way to a whole other discussion of how much education if any was necessary for some of those jobs. Then there were those dreamers in class—and I do so hope their realities live up to their expectations but experience has taught me to be wary—who announced that they'd be rap stars or highly paid athletes. I always encouraged an

aspiring Jay Z or A-Rod to pick a career they could fall back on and find out what that career paid in real life.

Does it appear that I have gone off task and rambled these past several paragraphs? I haven't. Recall this was an economics class where little or no mathematics was expected to be taught (interestingly enough it's a whole other ball game in college and grad school). Nevertheless, we were able to apply multiplication, percentages, ratios, and proportions to real life situations that students were or would be facing. In case you're wondering, lessons like the one above usually took on a life of their own and wound up spanning days or even a week or more as one thread gave way to another and we pursued leads and topics of interest, always tying them back to the original concern. Because I wasn't tied down by an official economics curriculum at the time I could afford to spend several class periods on the subject and follow where it took us.

5.4 The Romance of Mathematics

But back to Bob Peterson's original point: mathematics in the everyday classroom is beset by "number-numbness" and segregation. Where and why did math education go wrong? Aside from the fact that education in the everyday classroom *isn't* aimed at humanizing students, there are other reasons math education continues to look the way it does. George Lakoff and Rafael Nunez (2000) speak of a "romance of mathematics" which they liken to a mythology. Attributes of this romance/mythology hold that math is abstract and disembodied but at the same time somehow real, existing objectively with human mathematics reflective of this transcendent mathematics (xv); because mathematical proofs allow us to discover mathematical truths, mathematicians are the ultimate scientists (340); math's effectiveness as a scientific tool proves that math inheres in the physical universe and that math at heart is the language of nature (3). A further philosophical position relevant to what we discussed earlier in Chapter 2 is that because mathematics is disembodied and reason is a form of mathematical knowledge, reason itself is disembodied (xv).

There are several problems with this conception of mathematics. In Chapter 2 we looked at the relationship between reason and emotion, between reason and the body. In Chapter 3 we discussed embodied cognition, how "knowing implies a knower." This romance of mathematics intimidates people at the same time that it serves the purposes of the mathematics community (Lakoff & Nunez, 2000: 341). The romance of mathematics is indeed romantic for the initiated. But for all too many of the rest of us math seems beyond our capacities. Math really does appear like something out there in the universe and not in here in human brains and bodies. Goodness knows I thought so at one time. Once I had no truck with issues of the social construction of knowledge for everything *but* math. My thinking these days is quite different, in large part due to the persuasive work of people like Lakoff, Nunez, Varela, Maturana, and others. For those who hold to the romance of mathematics, whether teachers or students, math becomes an item of faith and not of empirical verification (Lakoff & Nunez, 2000: 2).

If math isn't out there, then *where* exactly *is* it? And here we return to the theme of embodied cognition. Math arises from "the nature of our brains and our embodied experience" (Lakoff & Nunez, 2000: xvi). As a species we appear to be born with certain rudimentary math skills. Human beings, notes Hauser, "are born with two quantificational systems, innate machinery that enables infants to compute small numbers precisely and large numbers approximately" (2006: 256). Three- to four-day-old babies are capable of subitizing, of telling at a glance whether there are one, two, or three objects in front of them. At about four and a half months of age it has been shown that babies know that one plus one is two and two minus one is one (Lakoff & Nunez, 2000: 15–16). Animals other than humans also show apparently inborn rudimentary mathematical skills (for example, see Dehaene, 1997). Basic skills such as these are what the human species builds upon to develop the often amazing and awe-inspiring mathematical abilities we have come to collectively possess. Our mathematics capacity is much like our species' facility with language, in which a few innate basic rules of grammar allow for vast and complex expressions of language. Human beings use existing cognitive mechanisms such as conceptual metaphors for mathematical purposes (Lakoff & Nunez, 2000: 33). These are features of our distinctly human brains that allow us to do mathematics (Devlin, 2000). To boot, much of our everyday math is part of our cognitive unconscious, the stuff we know without realizing we know it.

This line of theorizing was difficult for me to swallow as I imagine it must be for more than a few readers out there. After all, even with my limited knowledge of mathematics, math just *seems* to work and to work *so well* with such great effect. How is this possible if mathematics is embodied in human beings and our brains? Lakoff and Nunez (2000: 345–346) posit that there are regularities in the universe existing independently of us. We've created reliable forms of mathematics that are sometimes successfully fitted to the ways we conceive these universal regularities. Characteristics of mathematics like universality, precision, and consistency make it look like math is "out there" somewhere when in fact math looks the way it does because of the way we are and our culture's ability to pass information down to future generations who build on preexisting knowledge.

Such talk of embodiment risks smacking of relativism. Though we create math it is not arbitrary. Our brains have evolved in the world around us and it is within these brains that math has developed. Again, human beings see the clear sky as blue whereas other species do not. Joey doesn't see it as green while Greg sees it as red. We share certain mathematical abilities because of who and what we are as a species. Embodied cognition is marked by basic conceptual mechanisms that are shared by members of our species and it is with and through these mechanisms that mathematics has and continues to develop.

If math is embodied there are consequences that follow. For starters, rote learning and drill, hallmarks of behaviorist learning theories, do not take into account actual understanding (Lakoff & Nunez, 2000: 49). Further, if math is embodied then mathematics is potentially a human universal, which means we are all probably capable of greater knowledge of and facility with mathematics than we now possess (Lakoff & Nunez, 2000: 351). We may not all be potential Einsteins, but we can all

probably understand more about math than we do. Of course there are those with guarded interests who may not appreciate the democratic implications of embodied cognition in general and embodied mathematics in particular.

5.5 Four Goals of Critical-Mathematical Literacy

Marilyn Frankenstein, a professor at the University of Boston's College of Public and Community Service, provides four goals of critical-mathematical literacy. Confronting a problem or issue, Frankenstein expects students to understand the mathematics itself, the mathematics of political knowledge, the politics of mathematical knowledge, and the politics of knowledge (in Guttstein & Peterson, 2006: 19–28). The social construction of knowledge and the politics attending have been explored throughout this book. Here I'd like to present Frankenstein's first three goals and explore each with examples.

Understanding the mathematics means that students comprehend what is asked of them when they are presented with math in their classrooms and lives. Frankenstein explains that she enters her math class with what she intends to teach that day (a "skill of the day") in mind and will begin by having the class peruse a chart or graph or reading excerpts where a main idea is supported by mathematical details. The class will discuss what the article is about and how the numbers in it support or contradict the main idea. Questions about math skills arise during the discussion at which point Frankenstein stops and teaches the skill, giving her students an edge when that skill later comes up in the course.

Frankenstein says that understanding the mathematics of political knowledge means "students need to learn how mathematics skills and concepts can be used to understand the institutional structures of our society" (in Guttstein, 2006: 24). For example, a teacher can provide students with a map of the United States that shows education spending per state like the one printed in the *New York Times* on May 30, 2007. Students can figure out the difference between the highest paying state (New York with $14,119) and the lowest (Utah with $5,257). In my experience students are usually very surprised to learn that education spending varies as much as it does and some have no idea education spending *isn't* uniform across the country. The class can discuss the implications of state education spending being apportioned district by district. Using the map, students can locate the highest spending states (in the Northeast) and discuss reasons why the greatest education spending may be in this area. Conversely, students can locate the lowest paying states (in the west and south) and reason why these states spend as little as they do.

Students can consult the website of the United States Census Bureau (from which the *NY Times* map was derived) to ascertain the median and mean incomes of individual states in the nation. The usefulness of the median income versus the mean can come up (because high incomes can skew the mean, the median is a more accurate indicator of state income taking as it does the middle of all incomes). Students can even look at how much individual districts in their areas spend on education and contrast that with the income of these districts. They can be encouraged to take the

data and create mathematical problems, tables, and graphs with it and their work should be shared and discussed with the rest of the class.

Here's an example of how students might begin to understand the politics of mathematical knowledge. Present students with an excerpt from a newspaper article detailing the correlation between scores on state math tests and district income (for example, David Herszenhorn's October 12, 2006 *NY Times* article). What do students learn studying these numbers? They learn that the greater a district's income is the better students living there do on standardized exams. What does it mean when the scores on ostensibly normed and valid state and federal assessments fluctuate according to income? What does this say about these tests? Students can be asked why they think higher scores accompany higher incomes. Are there factors at play aside from income that students think may be responsible for the discrepancies? What steps could be taken to raise test scores in the lower scoring areas? And why are test scores so important anyway? Are test scores an accurate indication of a good education? Do other countries rely on standardized exams the way the United States does?

Mathematics can also be used to expressly teach ethics. While I was writing this book I had the pleasure of attending a *Conference on Math Education and Social Justice* (see www.radicalmath.org) where Kate Belin of Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School in the Bronx and Kelly Gadis of Bard College presented a lesson on "fair games" that they've used in the high school. We're used to playing games with distinct winners and losers. As teachers we can introduce a moral vision into our classrooms by having students construct "fair games" where the object is comprehending the mathematics without winning or losing. Belin showed us how she uses the three-diced gambling game cee-lo to teach students probability using math skills. For example, how much would a triple (the same number on three different dice, like 2-2-2) have to be worth point-wise to balance out the winning combination of 4-5-6?

5.6 Social Studies and Language Arts

They're called different things in different schools: world history or global studies, language arts or communication skills, social studies or global history. They include courses covering literature and American history, government and economics, diction and grammar. They're your traditional elementary through high school core academic subjects in American schools. In high school you can usually get away with 3 out of 4 years of math and science, but these are subjects you're expected to take all 4 years. They are the subjects I am most familiar with as a teacher, having taught the one explicitly and the other implicitly going on 10 years now.

Whatever we call them, critical pedagogy sees much in common between language arts and social studies courses. One can be taught through the other and critical literacy can be taught in each. For instance, a US history class should be much more than facts and names. It should include (when possible) writing and reading and art and science and math. Discussions and debates and role-plays are

readily implemented. Academic themes will be a large part of a US history class but a critical teacher will find ways to introduce relevant topical themes from the world she and her students live in that bears on the course material. A US history class is also a study in character creation. It's where we learn who we are as a people or who we and our teachers and administrations and boards of education and curriculum and textbooks designers want to believe we are as a people.

Social studies and language arts were classes I always enjoyed for numerous reasons. A boy, I'd been raised with toy soldiers and guns and G.I. Joe comic books and action figures complete with kung-fu grips, and reading about George Washington and the Revolutionary War and the mythology of the Alamo (I cried when John Wayne's character died in the late-night TV movie) easily grabbed my interest. I remember thinking John Paul Jones with his "I have not yet begun to fight" and Nathan Hale's bravely facing his own death regretting only that he had but one life to give for his country, I remember thinking *these were men*, that these were what my students today would call real-G's (gangsters). Because I liked to read and write I engaged in both inside and outside of school and got better at each and fit right in with the way material in my social studies and language arts classes was presented via textbooks, lectures, selected readings, and writing. Interestingly enough, the books I enjoyed reading as a middle school student were "men's adventure" series with titles like *The Executioner*, *The Survivalist*, and *S.O.B.s* (*Soldiers of Barrabas)*. These were high-octane formulaic shoot-'em-ups where the good guys were good guys and the bad guys, well they were usually Russian or Russian stooges (this was the Cold War era mind you). I see the world differently now than I did back then and it's good I do, for if I didn't I'd probably write off critical pedagogy as anti-American communist drivel which it assuredly is not.

Social studies and language arts like any other subjects need to be made relevant to students' lives as much as possible. Because one of the titles I wear is that of social studies teacher and another is freelance writer this is a subject I am comfortable with. Further, from my reading of the literature it seems these are areas where a lot of articles and books in the critical pedagogy tradition have been written. In their excellent resource *The Power in Our Hands: A Curriculum on the History of Work and Workers in the United States* (1988), Bill Bigelow and Norman Diamond present a "Who Makes History" lesson that I often use. Students are encouraged to list on a piece of paper the names of the ten most famous people in US history. They're asked to share some of the names on their lists and why they chose to include those they did. In small groups or as a class students are asked to make generalizations about the names on their lists. Are these the names of political and military figures? White men and dead people? Explorers and celebrities? A class discussion about what makes the individual people on the lists famous leads into the discussion of fame in American history. Are those listed famous for their accomplishments at war or for their parenting at home? Are they famous because they led other men and women and if so how effective would they have been if these others hadn't followed and supported them? Students are asked if there are other categories of people in American history who have done important things but gone unrecognized.

Bigelow and Diamond (and myself following their lead) at this point give students a copy of the Bertolt Brecht poem *A Worker Reads History*. I have also used Paul Fleischman's poem *Honeybees*. The poem is read aloud with the class. With the Brecht poem I have found I often need to prep students before we read it, to make sure they know what Thebes, Byzantium, Babylon, the Caesars, and the Seven Years War were. We then, as per Bigelow and Diamond's suggestion, discuss the poem, with me asking them who Brecht thinks gets most of the credit in history versus who else is important in history and why are they considered important. We discuss the way history usually avoids studying workers and "commoners" and sum it all up by my asking them how many working people were on their list and if they know what any of the jobs the people on their list had were. If we're using the *Honeybees* poem we discuss the lives of the worker bees who awake at dawn, make wax, hunt nectar, and feed the grubs compared to that of the queen bee who is fed, bathed, groomed, and spends her time laying eggs.

Because I have traditionally used this lesson with students who are usually averse to writing any more than they have to, I rarely implemented Bigelow and Diamond's final suggestion for this lesson. Bigelow and Diamond (1988: 32) suggest teachers ask their students

> To list a number of things in their daily lives in which the people who do or did the work are 'hidden.' For example, a baseball, a television program, a piece of fruit or a record album each represents a great deal of human labor, which we don't usually see. Or they might think of jobs with which they are familiar—bakeries, janitorial or secretarial work, food preparation—that are isolated from the ultimate consumers.

Bigelow and Diamond then have their students use the lists they've compiled to write their own poems.

The Bigelow and Diamond lesson is one I've used as an introductory activity on the first day of US and world history classes but it can be used any time throughout the year. Another potential opening day activity that is also suitable for any time of the year is Margo Okazawa-Ray's "Personal Cultural History Exercise" found in *Beyond Heroes and Holidays* (1998). This is a very interesting lesson that asks teachers and students to think about their racial identities and the history of their ethnicities through art work and discussion. Okazawa-Ray's lesson encourages students to think about themselves as "cultural beings whose lives have been influenced by various historical, social, political, economic and geographical circumstances" and "make connections between their own experiences and those of people different from themselves" (1998: 66).

I've also paired students up or asked them to pair up and have them interview one another with the goal of creating a personal historical time-line about the other. Another spin on this is having students go home and interview family members or family friends and report back to the class what they've learned from parents and grandparents and friends of the family. We've also gone over the significance of famous dates in US and world history like the day Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated (April 4, 1968) or the 2 days in August 1945 when nuclear weapons were dropped on Japan's civilian populations or September 11, 2001, and then students have gone home and asked friends and family members where they were on these

days and what they remember about them and how they felt when they heard the news. The next day in class we discuss the responses students have garnered. The point of all these exercises is to allow students to see that history as largely written and traditionally studied is not objective, it is biased, it eclipses the contributions and masks the importance of the billions and billions of everyday folks like ourselves who fight and die in the armies and march in the civil rights movements and get up in the morning and go to our jobs.

History tends to focus on famous individuals, imparting the message that it is the individual person capable of action and change in history. So students remember Bismarck united the nascent German nation state through "blood and iron" *realpolitic* while little or nothing said of the millions who followed him and perished. Students study the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and don't always grasp that there was a movement before there was a Martin Luther King Jr. and a movement behind the man. We are individuals and we form collectives of individuals and it is this collective action that makes and propels what is later studied as history though these simple facts usually go unnoticed, unappreciated, or ignored.

One idea I have used in class is an "unsung heroes" meet and greet I've borrowed from Bill Bigelow's "Racial and Gender Justice Hunt" activity (2001: 37–41). I type up descriptions of characters from history that most of my students are unfamiliar with. Bigelow, for example, has typed up descriptions of Caesar Chavez, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Harvey Milk. The descriptions provide a paragraph's explanation in the first person of who the person was and what they struggled for. The descriptions are printed, cut out, and glued to index cards which can then be laminated for future use. Each student in class receives a card and is encouraged to read the description provided and get to know his historical character. I also distribute to each student a "Meet-n-Greet" chart, usually a page of five-by-five squares with descriptions such as "I fought against racism," "I was born a slave," and "I was a professional athlete/singer/entertainer." The students spend the next 15–20 minutes circulating around the room introducing themselves to other historical characters and using the information they find to fill in the boxes on their sheets with the names of these historical actors.

When I see that everyone is done or the time I've allotted is running down I ask students to finish up and then they return to their seats and we discuss their findings. After we run through some random categories (e.g., "So who did you guys find that took part in a revolution?") I start a discussion with the class where I ask them if there were any people on this list they hadn't heard of and if there were any people they might like to learn more about throughout the year. And the key to this exercise, so far as I implement it, is that the character descriptions each student has is of a person or a person involved in a movement that we are going to study later that year.

This meet-and-greet exercise allows teachers to introduce historical characters to students that they are probably unfamiliar with. It's useful to contrast these "unsung heroes" with the ten names students listed in the Bigelow and Diamond activity described above. I'll ask the class a question like "Why did I include labor activists" like Bill Haywood or the Wobblies in the unsung heroes meet and greet but none of you came up with any figures from labor history on your lists? Students respond

that they're unfamiliar with labor activists whereas they know about people like Rockefeller and Carnegie. I ask students why they're unfamiliar with individuals like Haywood and groups like the IWW and they respond that they've never been taught about these folks, that these were not people they read about in their text-books. I follow up by asking them why they think *I* think labor figures are important people to study in history and a discussion will ensue about work and how all of us are going to have jobs and how it's important that our jobs are meaningful and allow us to enjoy life with things like a fair wage, health insurance, and adequate vacation time. So why doesn't the history profession as it is traditionally practiced and writ-ten spend time studying these "unsung heroes," I ask, to which some student will inevitably answer "they're not important." Another student usually asks before I do, "Not important to who?" We've had very deep and at times very heated discussions in some of these classes.

My point with exercises like the "meet and greet" is to show students that history is more than the famous dead people they read about in their textbooks. Issues from students' daily lives, from a lack of adequate health and dental care for all citi-zens to the disparity in female versus male pay to world hunger and global warm-ing, these are historical issues people struggle over day in and day out. Teaching history critically also means looking at what students know and re-examining it with a critical eye. When we get to the Constitutional Convention in American History I distribute to students a list compiled by Bigelow (available online from http://www.rethinkingschools.org) of the 55 people who attended the constitutional convention in Philadelphia. In small groups students skim their lists and brainstorm what the attendees had in common. We get back together and discuss our findings. Students usually aren't surprised that the "founders" were all men, that many of these men owned slaves, and that most were well off. But details like George Wash-ington being the richest man in the colonies and the actual number of human beings each founder owned and the number of lawyers, merchants, and plantation owners versus those with "job–jobs" in attendance casts the convention and its participants in a whole new light. Hence we critically re-examine an event of mythological pro-portion in American history, uncovering the class interests that united the founders of our nation.

I focus on American History here for the sake of clarity and because of my familiarity with the subject. American history since the late 1800s has been written and taught as "consensus history," with the consensus being that we Americans are one people and one nation with one history. Traditionally if your story didn't fit into the grand narrative of American consensus history you were excluded which is why women, blacks, Indians, and the entire working class were usually ignored. Ameri-can consensus history was "winner's history read by the winners" and often written by them too (Hoffer, 2004: 30). Even self-described "progressive" historians like Charles Beard (one of the sources for Bigelow's list of the founder's economic in-terests above) worked within the consensus history tradition (Hoffer, 2004: 42). The 1960s brought a "new history" which challenged the orthodoxy of consensus history by bringing new figures and classes into focus, figures previously shunted aside and ignored. However, much of this new history was written *by* professional historians

for professional historians, not for a general audience, and borrowed obtuse social science methodologies. Fortunately we live in an era where historians like Howard Zinn, Ray Raphael, Peter Irons, Clifford Conner, and Vijya Prashad among others focus on the historical roles of the everyday men and women who propel history in accessible prose.

The problem with consensus history is it gets much of American history *wrong* and downplays its less savory aspects. One of the purposes the history profession serves is helping us understand who we are as a people. The consensus history tradition should be studied not only for what it tells us about who we are but also for what it tells us about what we want to believe of ourselves. There is much good in America and the promise of America. But what purpose does ignoring the bad— from the enslavement of blacks to the genocide of the native population, from the inordinate power wealth and capital bring in our society to the nuclear bombing of the Japanese—serve? I always think of it in the following way. When my grandfather was alive he was loved but not always liked by our family. When he died I watched family members' attitudes about him change. Suddenly his less savory aspects, the things people complained about and even fought with him over when he was alive, were forgotten or glossed over. In death the man took on a saintly cast he never bore in life. I loved my grandfather and am not knocking him, but he was human like we all are and had his faults as we all do. What purpose does overlooking or erasing the negative characteristics of a person or a nation serve for those who do so?

5.7 Propaganda in the Everyday Classroom

Is consensus history propaganda? There are Americans and historians among us who truly believe America is a force for good in the world and any evidence otherwise is anomalous, mere deviations from our country's overarching righteousness. Whether they choose to downplay the ugly episodes in American history or are unaware of them they do Americans a disservice. The attitude should not be Commodore Stephen Decatur's "My country right or wrong" but General Carl Schurz's "My country right or wrong. When right, to be kept right; when wrong, to be put right." Howard Zinn points out that truly patriotic Americans understand the Declaration of Independence and its right of revolution against tyrannical government as a living principle and not an historical curiosity. All too often, however, critics of American government policy are dismissed as unpatriotic and anti-American.

Our students are exposed to propaganda on a daily basis. To understand how propaganda works in American society, see Herman and Chomsky (1988). As I wrote this book a retired three-star general was publicly chastised for the events surrounding the death of Pat Tillman. By all accounts Pat Tillman was a man of honor and integrity. As a professional football player with the Arizona Cardinals Tillman turned down a 5-year, $9 million contract from a rival team out of loyalty to the Cardinals. Following the September 11th attacks Tillman turned his back on a 3-year $3.6 million contract with his beloved Cardinals to enlist in the United States

Army as a Ranger. Tillman died in Afghanistan in April 2004, a victim of friendly fire. Hours after his death the Army shut down communications on the incident and posted guards with one of Tillman's wounded fellow soldiers. Tilman's family had no idea that their son died by friendly fire until 5 weeks after the fact. The US government spun his death to their advantage, painting him as a patriotic G.I. (which he was) who died battling an enemy to keep his fellow soldiers and America safe. The Tillman family was disturbed and disgusted by the way their son's image was used following his death (Dewan, 2006). The government played up an image of Tillman's end that suited their pro-war purposes while ignoring family members of dead soldiers like Cindy Sheehan and Tillman's brother Kevin who wrote an essay criticizing the government and noting that "Somehow American leadership, whose only credit is lying to its people and illegally invading a nation, has been allowed to steal the courage, virtue and honor of its soldiers on the ground" (Archibold, 2006).

I have to wonder how many teachers taught their students about Pat Tillman and his sacrifice shortly after his death and got the story *wrong* because the government *lied* to us about it. I also have to wonder how many teachers went back and taught those same students and other classes *about* the lies and deceit that were constructed and perpetuated around Tillman's death. Did teachers ignore the whole thing, blaming a retired three-star general or giving the government a pass for getting it wrong this time? I have to wonder how many parents who were on the fence were swayed that the *No Child Left Behind* legislation was a good thing for their kids by Armstrong Williams, a conservative black commentator who accepted $240,000 from the Education Department to tout NCLB (NY Times, 2005).

The US government understands the power of propaganda, how it can be used in its service and against it. In an Independence Day speech President George W. Bush completely misread history by likening the Iraq War to the American Revolutionary War, "a bloody and difficult struggle that would not end for six more years before America finally secured her freedom" (Rutenberg, 2007). As Howard Zinn points out, a better comparison would have been US aggression in Vietnam and Southeast Asia (McKissack, 2007). With hundreds of thousands of Iraqis dead the US government tries to deny culpability and blame civilian deaths on roadside bombs, fearing "a potential public relations problem that could fuel insurgent propaganda against the American military" (Zielbauer, 2007). The problem from the government's perspective *isn't* that huge numbers of civilians are dying in Iraq and that some American troops are behaving themselves like barbarians on parade; the problem is that people in the Middle East and around the globe might see these civilians dying by American hands and sour on the happy horseshit the American government sells its people and the rest of the world.

The US military conducts inquiries finding—surprise, surprise—that an American public relations firm paying Iraqi news outlets to print articles written by Americans in Iraqi newspapers (while hiding the sources of course) did nothing wrong (Shanker, 2006). The Defense Department warned "that paying Iraqi journalists to produce positive stories could damage American credibility" (Cloud, 2006). In other words, spreading propaganda itself isn't wrong but avoid at all costs the repercussions of

getting caught doing so. In early 2007 the number of US casualties in Iraq plunged from over 50,000 to 21,649 because of the way the Pentagon chose to redefine "wounded" (Grady, 2007). Though it has the audacity to disavow regime change after going into Iraq and hanging Saddam Hussein, the US government is actively trying to discredit and overturn governments around the world, from Latin America to Africa. When Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez was briefly overthrown the US government immediately welcomed the new government with open arms. The United States' Office of Cuba Broadcasting has paid ten Miami journalists to speak out against the Castro regime (Goodnough, 2006). The United States is actively working to undermine the Mugabe Regime in Zimbabwe (MacAskill, 2007). These are but a few examples from a storied history (see, for example, Blum, 2003).

Propaganda manifests itself in the hobbling of American scientific research and science education in schools (see, for instance, Mooney, 2005; Shulman, 2007). Evolutionary biology has disappeared from the list of acceptable fields of study for low-income college students seeking federal education grants (Dean, 2006). As of this writing President Bush has vetoed four pieces of legislation, two of them promoting embryonic stem cell research (Stolberg, 2007c). In US classrooms teachers skip over evolutionary biology to avoid conflict or attempt to give equal time to "intelligent design" or other forms of creationism while biology textbooks bear disclaimer labels (Dean, 2005). Despite evidence that it is not effective, abstinence-only sex education is approved by the American government while it goes out of its way to stifle any other form of sex education (Associated Press, 2007c; Freedman, 2007). Former U.S Surgeon Generals C. Everett Koop, Richard H. Carmona, and David Satcher all testified in front of Congress that they felt politics was outweighing sound science. Carmona explained that the Bush Administration muzzled him on stem cells, sex education, emergency contraception, and other issues and watered down reports like one on second hand smoke (Harris, 2007a). A former oil industry lobbyist, appointed White House Council on Environmental Quality, edited climate reports to downplay and cast in doubt the human role in climate change while the American Enterprise Institute, an oil industry-financed think tank, offered cash payments to international scientists to dispute a UN report on climate change (Goldenberg, 2007; Revkin & Wald, 2007; Sample, 2007).

Governments do good things and bad things. Don't kid yourself though. What good they do they do because people *demand* their governments be responsive to *their* needs. They do the bad things they do to protect the interests of the most powerful in the state, interests that are foisted off on the rest of the population as the "national interest." It's important to realize there is a difference between the government of a country and its people. Unfortunately many citizens overlook this simple fact and take criticism of their governments personally. Governments look to sugarcoat the bad things they do and make these palatable to the people who wind up suffering when such schemes backfire. So the United States of America arms and supports a group of murderous religious fanatics in Afghanistan in the 1980s and then when some of these same thugs attack us on September 11th we're told

they hate us because of our freedom. Check out *Rambo III* (d. MacDonald, 1988) to see how Hollywood was depicting Mujahideen like Osama bin Laden during the Cold War.

5.8 Critical Multiculturalism in the Everyday Classroom

Governments *should* be responsive to the needs of their people. To some extent democratic governments *have* to be. But to the extent that it is responsive to the needs of its people the US government reflects the interests of some citizens more than others. Institutions like schools mirror this responsiveness in the fact of "white privilege," Ruth Anne Olson differentiates privilege from prejudice and defines privilege as a "passive advantage that *accrues to* an individual or group" (in Lee et al., 1998: 83). Olson provides numerous ways white privilege benefits white students in schools even when they are not aware of it. For example, when white students pick a topic of study they're going to find resources that link white people to accomplishments in that field; white students can expect to open textbooks and look upon classroom posters and decorations and movies that feature white faces; white kids know that "flesh"-colored crayons, paints, and bandages are the color of *their* skin; white kids never have to listen to school critics complain that problems of a school are due to the large number of white students in it (in Lee et al., 1998: 83).

   Racism and sexism are in the English language we encounter in the everyday classroom. Enid Lee (in Lee et al., 1998: 167) describes how universal concepts are affixed positive and negative connotations corresponding to race and gender. Thus shepherd in the Scottish hills live in "cottages" whereas African villagers live in "huts," when cottages and huts are pretty much both the same things, small dwellings. Europeans and Americans have "religion" but Africans and Asians and others have "superstitions." Male executives who are forceful are "assertive" and confident whereas forceful female executives are "aggressive" and bitchy. We refer to the United States as a *developed* nation, an adjective that "paints pictures of a social or economic process that is somehow complete," whereas *developing* and *underdeveloped* "implies only a deficit status" (Bigelow & Peterson, 2002: 6). Teachers and students use these words and make these distinctions without realizing it. It just seems "natural" to refer to a peasant Irish dwelling as a cottage in a developed first-world town and a Zimbabwean dwelling as a hut in a village in an underdeveloped third-world country. But this kind of language use reinforces racism and stereotypes, validating some at the expense of others.

   Power plays itself out in the everyday classroom in the forms of the language allowable there. "Standard" English is privileged as "proper" or "correct English" over "black English" and other non-standard forms of the tongue. College-tracked foreign language education classes enjoy a status and respect bilingual education classes do not. Earlier in this book we discussed hate speech in the classroom and how much of it goes unchallenged and is simply not recognized as such.

Critical pedagogy in social studies and language arts classes should work to deconstruct texts and textbooks, with a text understood as "any entity open to analysis and interpretation" (Kincheloe et al., 1999: 24). For instance, language is a text, films and TV shows and commercials are texts, accepted canons in English and other classes are texts, and the layout and seating arrangement of a classroom is a text. Students can be encouraged to think about the words they use and the meanings behind those words. Ask students which word they would use to describe the simple clothing of an American woman, *clothing* or *costume*. Then ask them which word would be used to describe the simple clothing of an Indian woman. Any guess what they'll say? Discuss with them why they think the words used are attributed to the ethnicities they are. What does this say about the power of language to name and portray? Why is it so unnatural for us to describe an American woman's dress as a "costume"? When American women wear "costumes" they do so for dramas and pageants, to represent someone they are not or some time long ago. When Indian or African or Asian women wear "costumes" they're wearing the clothes of their contemporary lives, clothes that define who they are now. Language is never neutral (Lee et al., 1998).

We mentioned earlier how canons in a field can be critically examined with an eye to who and what is included, who is excluded and why. Critical pedagogy also examines the texts of students' lives and the everyday classroom to uncover privilege. What does it mean that heroic characters in Japanese anime have very Euro-American features including round eyes and light skin? What message does it send when the good guys in Disney movies sound like white people even when characters like *Aladdin* are not white or Simba *The Lion King* is not human and the bad guys in these films speak with heavily accented English? What do little boys and girls learn when their parents lie to them about Santa Claus and the tooth fairy and they read fairy tales and watch cartoons where women wait around looking pretty for royalty (usually a prince) to arrive? How do school mascots with names like the Redskins, Braves, and Red Storm effect students' thinking about Indians (see, for example, Miner in Lee et al., 1998)? How would they and their communities feel if their school team was the "fighting whities"? Why is the idea of the "fighting whities" so absurd to us but the Washington Redskins and Atlanta Braves don't strike us so? When cartoons and movies like *Pocahontas* and *The Patriot* take history and historical figures and re-write and revise them for entertainment purposes how might this effect children's historical literacy (see Roderick in Lee et al., 1998)? What effect does it have on a non-white child's self-esteem and self-image when all her dolls are white?

A critical multiculturalism needs to be part of social studies and language arts classes. Unlike other forms of multiculturalism, critical multiculturalism goes beyond paying lip service to non-dominant cultures and ethnicities in throwing these cultures a sop. Black history isn't relegated to February in a critical multiculturalism, nor women's history to March. Critical multiculturalism "is concerned with the contextualization of what gives rise to race, class and gender inequalities" and champions "equality and democracy in the economic sphere of society" as in all others (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997: 25). Critical multiculturalism asks students

to study the ways power in the classroom and society shapes their consciousness. When other forms of multiculturalism study black contributions to American history or literature, it often seems for white students that blacks are being separated out for special consideration and treatment, much the same way—not incidentally— that these white students and their families often view affirmative action programs. A critical multiculturalism helps these students see that such a separation is only cognizable against the totality of an all-encompassing white privilege. This broad backdrop is examined as the power evasion it is. Critically studying it helps these students understand that white privilege even serves white people differently. Working class white folks like my grandmother who grew up in Queens saying "ter-let" for "toilet" speak a different dialect and live different lives than the Astors.

Multiculturalism as it is practiced in the everyday classroom today is largely a self-serving failure. It's self-serving in that it allows staff and community members who consider themselves "liberal" to feel good about themselves by not excluding blacks, Hispanics, women, and other minority groups in American society. It looks inclusive in fact. But it's a failure for two reasons. For one it marks minority groups out for distinctions and honors that often backfire and feed into racist resentment. Secondly, such multiculturalism fails to bridge the gap between minorities and the dominant culture, leaving students unaware of the systemic nature of oppression and the ways we all suffer in different kind and measure. In short, multiculturalism as it is usually implemented often makes it look like white people have it made and everyone else doesn't. Try asking a working class or poor white kid to swallow this. Are we asking him to assume white guilt?

A critical multiculturalism exposes power at work. It not only shines a light on any privilege accompanying race and gender but also critically examines class relationships. A critical multiculturalism teaches Mumia Abu Jamal alongside Leonard Peltier and Sacco and Venzetti and makes explicit that these are all examples of oppression and domination.

Just as critical multiculturalism seeks to expose the ways dominant culture shapes the discourse of our everyday lives, it does not hesitate to expose and condemn features of other cultures that are dehumanizing. For example, female genital mutilation (sometimes discussed under the euphemism female circumcision) is denounced for what it is, a barbaric practice, a crime against women and humanity. Arranged marriages and the forced veiling of women and girls among immigrant groups are exposed as limitations on personal autonomy. Critical multiculturalism looks to other cultures for inspiration where it is deserved but does not unquestioningly reify other cultures. A critical multiculturalism recognizes there is much in the American social tradition to be lauded and looks to expand these positives while addressing and correcting the negatives.

5.9 Pledging Allegiance

At the end of roughly every second period in my high school, at about 9:10 AM, there is a planned interruption of class by announcements over the P.A. system. The announcements always begin with a student volunteer asking students and staff to

"please rise" and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. I am always torn by a sense of ambivalence when the pledge is recited. As an atheist I take offense to the oath's line about "under god" and see it as a clear violation of the line separating church and state and therefore unconstitutional. As a progressive I realize the extent to which the words "with liberty and justice for all" ring hollow and have yet to be realized. As a critical educator I see the propaganda purpose behind the pledge. As a champion of democracy and critical thought I think actions speak louder than words and loyalty oaths that are compelled aren't worth the words they're composed of. As the teacher in the classroom and an adult in the school I want to set a good example of what it means to be patriotic and critical at the same time.

I stand for the pledge. I don't recite it and I don't bust the chops of any students that don't want to participate in it. The only time I do say something is if students are being disruptive during the pledge because it is something that some people take very seriously so out of respect to them I don't want anyone making a mockery of the proceedings. I'm not religious but that doesn't mean I would enter a church or mosque or temple and disrupt the proceedings or cheer on people who did. I'm an atheist but I say "bless you" (not *God bless you*) to someone who sneezes because I think it is the right thing to do. Though I do face the flag I do not put my hand over my heart. And according to a 2003 US District Court Judge's ruling I don't have to.

The Pledge of Allegiance was written in September 1892 by Christian socialist Francis Bellamy for a children's magazine. Bellamy's original pledge went *I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all*. The pledge has changed over time. In 1923 *my flag* was changed to *the Flag of the United States*. In 1924 *of America* was added. Congress recognized the pledge as official in 1945, though interestingly enough to this day public school children in other democratic societies are not expected to pledge allegiance to a symbol of their nation state. *Under God* was added in 1954. The manner in which it is recited has also evolved. Up until World War II the pledge was recited by students who extended their right arms out in front of them palm-upwards, a gesture abandoned when it came to be seen as a little too reminiscent of the Nazi salute. Custom today holds that one faces the flag with right hand over the heart.

The Supreme Court has flip-flopped on the issue of the Pledge's constitutionality. In 1940 it ruled that school students could be compelled to recite the Pledge but reversed is decision 3 years after. In 2003 District Judge Lewis Babcock ruled that students, teachers, and other staff members cannot be compelled to participate in the Pledge. A year before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco decided that the phrase *under God* was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court, responding to appeals filed by all 50 states, weaseled out of deciding the constitutionality of the pledge in 2004 by dismissing the case on procedural grounds.

As a progressive educator you have to do whatever you're comfortable with when it comes to the Pledge. Maybe you're religious and you view the Pledge's *with liberty and justice for all* as a promise of what America is striving for, in which case you may have no problem reciting the Pledge. Maybe you agree with me on one or two points and don't want to participate in the Pledge's recital. Whatever your decision and whatever your reasons, I'd only hope you're respectful of the students

and other staff members in your school while your actions provide a reasoned, thoughtful, and critical example. Otherwise you stand to isolate and alienate yourself and any ideas—including your critical pedagogy—you champion.

5.10 All the World's a Stage

Speaking from experience there is plenty of room in social studies and language arts classes to get students involved and actively participating. Improvs and role-plays are big favorites. Some students just love to get up in front of the class and act. Others don't but enjoy watching their classmates do their thing. Bob Peterson presents a constitutional convention role-play (in Bigelow et al., 2001: 63–69) that he uses in his fifth grade classroom. I have adopted it for use with my high school students and it proved very successful—the kids enjoyed it and learned from it. After studying the class, race and gender of the actual delegates to the American constitutional convention (for example with the economic interests of the founders handout discussed above; Peterson also has his kids critically examine a Howard Chandler Christy painting of the gathering) students are assigned to various groups that will "attend" a new constitutional convention. Unlike the original convention, these groups include enslaved blacks, white workers, and indentured servants, Indians from the Iroquois Nation, and white women. There are also male southern plantation owners and northern merchants and bankers. Peterson presents mini-lectures on each of the small groups. I've found with my high schoolers that distributing the group description handouts that Peterson provides and having each group of students discuss theirs works well enough allow us to get into the role-play quickly.

Students are told that they will be attending the constitutional convention and this time around they would be considering two questions of importance for the new nation: should slavery and the slave trade be abolished and escaped slaves returned to their owners? And, who should be allowed to vote and what role if any should race, property ownership, and gender play in determining suffrage? I've implemented this role-play twice with an entire alternative high school of 40 kids plus staff (I always assigned staff members as facilitators to each small group which proved very helpful). The groups discuss among themselves their answers to these questions and once they've hammered out something they can all agree on each group sends delegates out to visit the other groups seeking to forge alliances. Some of the alliances—like that between the northern merchants and bankers and male southern plantation owners—were predictable but the students never cease to surprise with the alliances they form and the reasons behind them.

After alliances have been built and positions firmed up we all meet together in one central location where each group presents itself and delivers a speech (sometimes written, sometimes extemporaneous with students who are confident speaking in public) outlining its positions on the two questions under consideration. Once each group has presented its position the debate begins, with members of different groups questioning other group members. When I sense the time is right (when the debate is ebbing down or getting too rancorous) I bring the groups to order. We lay

out the positions possible for each question and by a show of hands vote on them. When we're done we know how our new constitutional convention resolved the two issues at hand. We debrief by discussing the role-play, what students liked about it versus where they thought it could use improvement, and how history would have been different if the actual constitutional convention represented all of the groups in the role-play. I always point out to everyone involved that what we'd been doing was participating actively in a democratic experiment and I ask them how they felt as group members making decisions and struggling to bring those decisions to life.

A couple of words about the context specificity of this role-play for my students. A day or two beforehand I'd always explain to students what we'd be doing, list the groups they'd be representing, and ask students to number 1-2-3 on a piece of paper for me their group preferences. I did this because I wanted every student to be comfortable, and I wanted to avoid situations where a male student would be embarrassed being in the white women group or a black student felt uncomfortable being a slave. That said, there were boys who played women and there were black students who played slaves (as did white and Hispanic students). I also figured out the students who could potentially sabotage this role-play. These are often the loud and obstreperous kids in a class and they usually have a following. I'd always approach these students, explain what we'd be doing and ask them if they'd mind being "leader" of whatever group it was I assigned them. I don't recall any one of them turning me down and each rose to the occasion.

This role-play worked best with my students when we spread the actual role-play out over 2 days and spent a morning on each day at it. Other teachers might find they can get it done in one whole day or several periods over many days depending on their students and their schools. Bear in mind the times I did it the role-play was a school-wide activity involving all the staff (who were pretty happy about not having to plan as I did all the planning ahead of time and briefed them a day or two before). If I ever implement this role-play again I'd like to involve other teachers as more than just facilitators. Peterson, for example, describes how art classes can help prepare costumes and decorations for the role-play and that the individual speeches to be presented can be worked on in language arts classes.

5.11 Critical Pedagogy and School Science

Speaking of Jesus, a youth pastor from a Baptist Church, David Paszkiewicz said, "If you reject his gift of salvation, then you know where you belong. He did everything in his power to make sure that you could go to heaven, so much so that he took your sins on his own body, suffered your pains for you, and he's saying, 'Please, accept me, believe.' If you reject that, you belong in hell" (Kelly, 2006). Problem is Paszkiewicz wasn't addressing a group of like-minded believers in Sunday School. Paskiewicz is also a public high school history teacher and he told this and other things—such as dinosaurs were on Noah's ark and that the Big Bang is not scientific (Kelly, 2006) —to his 11th grade history class in New Jersey. We know Paszkiewicz said these things because a student in his class recorded him doing so. Interestingly

enough, the student drew the most condemnation, everything from death threats, calls for his suspension from school, and a letter to the editor of the local newspaper accusing the kid of ignoring the First Amendment (Kelly, 2006). Go figure. Only in America.

There is a strand of "progressive" writing on science that goes something like this: Western science is a totalizing discourse that seeks to impose itself at the expense of other cultures' ways of knowing. The explicit or usually implicit message behind this reasoning is that Western science is no more legitimate than other forms of science, that Western science is somehow bad. In Chapter 2 we looked at scientific paradigms and revolutions in scientific thought. While critical pedagogy does not dismiss the contributions of non-dominant cultures and peoples to science and celebrates them when appropriate, it cannot turn its back on the Western scientific canon and its positive contributions and developments over the last several hundred years. Western science rooted in the scientific method of constant verification and refutation teaches us much about our lives and the world we live in.

As critical multiculturalists, on the one hand we need to appreciate the beliefs and contributions of other peoples and all cultures. That said, there is no room for beliefs like Pazkiewicz's in American science or history classrooms. In a very real sense our students are captive audiences, and ours is a great responsibility what we will teach them. Proselytizing of all forms should be avoided as abuses of our authority. Religious proselytizing necessarily excludes because religions are like clubs and you don't get the benefits unless you are a member. Imagine being an atheist or Muslim or Jewish or non-fundamentalist Christian in a classroom like Pazkiewicz's and hearing his message. Children are impressionable and want to believe adults they respect, which is why so many of them grow up believing some guy housed at the North Pole actually climbs into a sleigh once a year and makes the transatlantic flight to deliver presents under their Christmas trees. Imagine telling children of any age that they will burn in hell if they don't accept Jesus Christ as their lord and savior.

While we strive to respect cultural differences, we recognize certain cultural beliefs and practices as dehumanizing. Others we see as allowable in their proper place. Religious ideology has no place in public school classrooms. That said, American fundamentalists organize to have their version of human genesis—whether they call it creationism or disguise it as intelligent design—adopted in public schools and taught alongside evolution. Creationism and intelligent design are belief systems. They're not falsifiable, which means they're not science. Evolution is supported by a rich fossil record and is falsifiable, making it scientific.

None of this means that science is not without its problems. Science has been misused and abused to justify all sorts of dehumanizing practices. Science once "told" us that menstruation rendered women less capable and efficient workers and students than men (Houppert, 2007). Critical pedagogy recognizes that science is not neutral and wants to use science to further humanization. One way this can be accomplished in the everyday classroom is by adopting an issue approach to chemistry. The book *Anti-Racist Science Teaching* links chemistry concepts to social issues. For example, entry issues on the topic of food and fertilizers could

investigate the world food problem through questions like "Is there a world food shortage?" and "Are there side effects to fertilizers?" while incorporating chemistry concepts like N cycles, the Haber process, and pH (see Lee et al., 1998: 321). In this way the study of nitric acid and the chemistry of ammonia takes place in the larger context of a concern with the environment and the well-being of the world's population.

Students can learn to appreciate the ways science can work for or against different groups of people. Lynette Selkurt (in Lee et al., 1998) provides a middle school science lesson that seeks to help students understand the effects of environmental racism. Selkurt's students use maps of Wisconsin's soil, growing season, and Indian reservations to comprehend the relationship between the location of reservations and the arability of farm land—Wisconsin's Indian reservations are located on land with poor soil and short growing seasons.

All too often school science confronts our students as something divorced from their everyday lives. Students see science as a fixed body of knowledge looming over them (Tobin et al., 2005). Science in schools has served as a "pipeline" to funnel the "best and brightest" students into higher science education programs and jobs (Aikenhead, 2006: 4). School science in the context of critical pedagogy seeks to help students understand science as something useful to their daily lives and to identify as people who can "do" science (Tobin et al., 2005: 29). This can be worked toward in a couple of different ways. For one, Okhee Lee recommends science instruction that follows a "teacher-explicit to student-exploratory continuum," where "teachers move progressively from more explicit to more student-centered instruction" (2006: 77).

Where possible teachers can start from students' lived experience of science and tie that experience into the larger intellectual discipline. Kenneth Shaw and Mia Lena Etchberger (in Tobin, 1993) discuss a way fifth grade teacher Jessica brought school science to her students. In preparing a lesson on ants, Jessica had her students go outside the school building in small groups and find some ants to watch. Jessica told her kids to write down and draw pictures of anything and everything about the ants, from how they looked to how they moved. Back in the classroom the student groups were eager to share their information about the ants. Their observations were recorded on the class' chalkboards—they filled three of them! Jessica supplemented the students' observations and discussion about the ants with information from their textbooks and her own knowledge of ants. Her students' on the spot enthusiasm and attention to task pleased the teacher, and the information the kids garnered about ants stayed with them.

5.12 Critical Pedagogy Beyond the Core

This section is a miscellany, a hodge-podge of *do's* and *don'ts*, suggestions a teacher may find helpful. Some of it might seem like common sense, but don't assume common sense is common. Speaking from experience, I was oblivious to these "obvious" things and learned them the hard way.

Let's start with talking. Dialogue is essential to critical pedagogy and the everyday classroom. *Talk* to the parents and guardians of your students. When and where possible, get to know the people your kids live with. If it's the beginning of the year, if you're a new teacher or if you have new kids in your class, get on the horn and make phone calls home. Don't wait until you have something negative to report. Sometimes it seems parents and guardians expect negative news when the phone rings from school. And truthfully you're probably so busy as a teacher that though you'd like to call home and let parents know what a great student Julio is, chances are you won't be dialing those seven digits until its something pressing and probably negative impelling you to do so.

When you do have to call home with negative news—and you will—always preface reporting why a student is in hot water with something good about the kid. Further, encourage parents and guardians to come up and visit you on parent–teacher nights and by appointment. When my wife was teaching in the South Bronx she got to know some of her parents very well and would actually invite them up to observe classes (after clearing it with the proper administrator of course). This worked very well with certain students who were disruptive in class. Having their moms in the classroom put them on their best behavior. It also helped keep a lid on other students who may have been disruptive.

Students in our schools spend a lot of time in our classrooms and buildings, 6 or 7 hours a day, 5 days a week. But the majority of their time is spent outside of school, at home, with their families, and friends in their communities. Too often there is a massive disconnect between home life and school life for our kids. An open line of communication between school and home, between teacher and parents, is a must.

Talk to your colleagues. Whether you've been working in your school 10 years or 10 days, don't hesitate to seek the opinions and suggestions of your colleagues, including other teachers and administrators. You're sure to be working with some talented people in your school. People like to be looked to as authority figures. They like to share their take on situations. As much as possible, try and visit different classrooms in your school to see how other teachers teach. At best, you might learn how better to engage certain students or present subject matter in a way you hadn't considered. At worst, you will see teachers doing things in some ways you don't like and walk away promising yourself never to do things in that manner.

And while we're on the subject, get to know the maintenance staff and teaching assistants in your school. They're your colleagues too. Treat them the way you'd want to be treated, with dignity and respect. You may be surprised how someone working in the same building as you that isn't a teacher or principal has a whole different perspective on things (e.g., students, other staff members, administrators, district and community politics), often encouraging you to think about something or someone in a way you'd never have thought of before. Working people in general and teachers in particular don't get paid what they're worth. That said, if you're a teacher griping about your paycheck keep in mind who is around. I guarantee you the teachers' aides and instructional assistants and security guards working in your school make much less than you do. Imagine how it sounds to them if *you're* complaining about how underpaid you are.

It goes without saying but it has to be said, don't ever talk crap about other staff members or students in front of your students. It's just not professional or humane. Granted, there will be staff members and students with whom you have issues, legitimate issues. But what are you accomplishing by complaining about Mr. Cupolo or Ms. Taylor to your tenth grade world history class about? Are you so insecure that you have to tear others down to make yourself look good? What are you accomplishing by encouraging students to talk trash about fellow students or teachers? Students will come to your class with complaints about other teachers and students. The way to address these students is the way you'd want them addressed if they were going to another class complaining about *you*. Even when you know the complaints are warranted, you should ask the student if they've tried talking to the other person about their gripe. You might have to explain to students how this is best done, along the lines of, "If I were you Tommy I'd try and catch Ms. Silverman either right before or right after class. Ask her if she has a minute to talk to you about something or when a better time would be. Don't be confrontational or rude. Let her know something you really like about her class, how she teaches, or how she makes you feel. Then let her know what it is that concerns you."

There have been times when I have had to cut off students and tell them the staff member they're ranting about is a friend and/or colleague of mine, that I would be happy to discuss their concern with them after class or even go with them to talk to the other person, but that they'd have to stop their complaining about that teacher or administrator in my class at that moment. There have also been times when I've had to stop students from talking junk about other students in the school, explaining to them that if someone isn't in the room to defend themselves it isn't appropriate to attack them, or that their concerns were noted and we could continue discussing them privately later.

At least until you're tenured, when administrators see you, you want them thinking, "Ah, there's someone who makes my job easier. She never gives me any trouble." You don't want them to see you coming down the hall and start thinking, "Oh man, here comes the rabble rouser." You will see things in *any* school and *any* school district—even the best ones—that will vex you. Try seeing if it's something you have some control over and can change. Remember, critical pedagogy is a praxis: it's not good enough to just criticize; we aim to change and transform. If you can't, try talking to a fellow teacher about it. If it really irks you, go to your union rep. If it is truly egregious, there will be people other than yourself who will be equally bothered. These individuals will probably be in a better position than you are to bring it to the attention of an administrator. Unless it's something really dire that threatens the well-being of students or staff in your school, it might be best that *you* not be the one approaching the higher ups. Remember, part of your ability to serve as a change agent in your classroom and school is to *be* in your classroom and school. Without tenure, you can be sent packing at any minute for any reason, and then you won't be facilitating any change.

Your classroom is going to have rules about what is acceptable and unacceptable. Some of these rules will be dictated by the school you teach in, others are of your own personal preference. If time and the maturity level of your students permit,

some rules can be negotiated in the classroom at the beginning of the year. In general you want to keep the rules as few and as simple as possible. Rules can be learned and made up on the spot. For instance, inevitably every year I mean to tell my students about my classroom bathroom policy beforehand but I get so busy and caught up I never do. Then some kid asks to go to the bathroom and I use that as an on-the-spot opportunity to explain my bathroom rules. In case you're interested they go something like this. Students don't need to raise their hands. They can get up unobtrusively, sign out, and take the pass (my school has a bathroom sign-out rule). If we're right at the beginning of learning some new material I prefer students wait unless it's an absolute emergency and I will ask them to wait if I feel it's necessary, otherwise they're going to miss something important.

Also inevitably every year I have to help model what an appropriate classroom conversation *looks* and *sounds* like. This means when Ishik is addressing a point brought up by Tricia the rest of the class should be paying attention to Ishik. Depending on the size of the class, students will either raise their hands to address Ishik's point and add their own perspective or I will see one of them that looks like they want to say something and I'll prompt them by saying something like, "What do you think about this, Jamille?" If a student pipes up and tries to cut off another I have to intervene with something along the lines of "Christian, we'll get a chance to hear what you think but let's allow Fantasia to say what she was going to say." I think it is very important to model appropriate classroom conversations for students early on and often. Otherwise you'll be dealing all year with students shouting each other down and over one another.

While we're on the subject, be careful you're not constantly picking on the same five or six kids who have their hands raised or on only the boys. Everyone in your class has something to say though they sometimes lack the confidence or interest to say it. Encourage without pressuring them. "What do you think about this?" "What's on your mind?" "How do you feel about what so-and-so said?" "Why do you think this is important or not important?" Ask open-ended questions that encourage a student to open up and share her thoughts and opinions. At the same time make sure the noise level in the classroom is such that the rest of the class can hear her.

We're social animals. That means we enjoy talking to each other. Students like talking to one another. But what noise level are you comfortable with in the classroom? Here's what works for me. I always explain to students that when someone in class is addressing us I expect we will all be giving that person our undivided attention. Side conversations will not be tolerated as they are disrespectful. Other times, such as when students are coming into class or working together in groups, conversations are fine as long as the volume is kept in check.

What do you do about the kid who just isn't paying attention? It happens. The disruptive ones get most of our attention, but more often than not they keep quiet and fly under our radar. What do you do when you have a student who is physically in class but is checked out, not listening to a word anyone is saying? You want to bring this student back into the classroom humanely, without embarrassment. Instead of "So Mike would you please tell me what Nicole just said?" and having Mike look like a dolt in front of the whole class, try "Hey, Mike, I want you to listen very

carefully to what Maria is *about* to read because I am going to ask you to explain it afterwards in your own words, okay?"

As time allows, get involved in your school. For 3 years now I have been working exclusively with a dozen kids in a high school of 1300. A lot of students wouldn't know who I was if it wasn't for my involvement in the school outside of my program. After-school clubs, sports teams, drama programs, and tutoring are all excellent ways to branch out, to make yourself known, and to get to know students you otherwise wouldn't have. Further, become familiar with the communities your students live in. Many teachers don't live in the neighborhoods their kids do. I teach in the Bedford Central School District, a district serving affluent neighborhoods like Pound Ridge and West Patent where Martha Stewart, Chevy Chase, and Susan Sarandon have homes. In other words these are neighborhoods most of the teachers I work with cannot afford to live in. But this is also the district of Maple Avenue and subsidized housing on Amuso Drive, both of which are literally on the other side of the (Metro North Railroad) tracks. Mt. Kisco has a population that is one-fourth Hispanic, mostly immigrants. I teach students with second homes in the Hamptons and others who "chill on Maple." I teach kids who have been to Europe and Africa and others who leave school to go to work in the afternoons to help their families with the bills. Having some knowledge of these things and places helps me understand where the kids are coming from and allows me to be more in touch.

If you can, have some idea of youth culture. We teachers are often significantly older than our students, and tastes seem to change with age. I remember my first year teaching back in 1998. The rapper DMX had just exploded on the scene. One day in class I quoted him, "Yo, you think I'm funny? Then you don't know me money." The kids in the class who recognized the song (Ruff Ryders Anthem) thought this was the greatest thing they'd ever heard. Oddly enough the school district I work in today is where DMX lives, but I don't keep up on Hip Hop now like I did then. Still, if I need to know who the newest members of G-Unit are or what the beef between Fifty Cent and The Game or Kayne West is, there is always Wikipedia. Of course youth culture is going to vary with time and location, but hip hop today is what rock and roll was in the 1950s and 1960s. That said, youth culture is much larger than music. When you're old enough that your frame of reference includes Walkman, ten cent pay phone calls and pagers, having some idea of what iPods and iPhone are and who Tila Tequila is only helps.

It isn't always possible but I'd suggest eating lunch with your kids if and when you can. I worked in a middle school where teachers took their students to the cafeteria for lunch halfway through an 80-minute block. There was a table for teachers in the middle of the lunchroom and each class had its own table or area. After watching fights break out among the student tables (and inevitably having my lunch interrupted breaking them up or keeping my class out of them) I started sitting with my sixth graders and eating with them. It worked out very well for all of us. Breaking bread with my students, we got a chance to know each other on a more personal level, outside of the order and business of the classroom. Further, being with the students gave me a better feel for what was going on around us and allowed me to de-escalate situations long before they got out of hand. On the other hand, there

were teachers at that center table who probably thought I was snubbing them. If that was the case, too bad. You can't make everyone happy all the time, and as a teacher your main responsibility in the school is to your students, not to gossip and socializing with staff (though there is room for that as well).

And by the way, if there is no separate line for teachers, think before you cut all the students to get to the register just because you're a teacher. Think what students learn when they see you waiting patiently in line with everyone else versus what they learn when you barrel your way to the front of the line and cut in. Personally I think that's a dick-move, an abuse of your authority as a teacher.

Taking a sick day when you're not sick is defrauding your school district. But ask any teacher and they'll tell you there are those times when you just *need* a day off. It happens. So when the pressures and stress of the job are getting to you, consider calling in sick. You're better serving your students and school if you're fresh and eager, not frazzled and thinking only of Friday. On the other hand, don't abuse absences. Students (like people in general) get used to routines and enjoy order, structure, and a certain sense of predictability. You're *being there* goes a long way to ensure these things.

5.13 Critically Using and Examining Texts

In Section 5.8 we discussed how a text in critical pedagogy is more than a textbook. Though there are things we wish we could shield our students from, there are times that to do so is negligent on our part. This section looks at four commons texts— textbooks, homework, tests, and grades—and how they can be used and examined critically.

The textbook industry in the United States is a $4 billion a year business at the elementary and high school levels. College level textbooks often sell for up to $180 or more each. The prices of used books aren't much better; because used texts quickly swamp the market publishers look to make their profit on the first sale (hence the extravagant price) (Granof, 2007). Authors names are seen as marketing tools and it's not uncommon for texts to be written by people whose names are not on them (Schemo, 2006d). A Florida law passed in 2006 stated that "American history shall be viewed as factual, not as constructed" and "shall be viewed as knowable, teachable, and testable" (Norton, 2006). I'd like to examine a common US history textbook in light of patriotism and the notion that history as a discipline must be knowable, teachable and testable (what, pray tell, is the alternative?).

McGraw Hill publishes *The American Vision* under its Glencoe imprimatur, a textbook used in United States history classes in my school. Five Ph.D.s are listed as its authors. Students in my district use the New York State edition of the textbook. As soon as students open up the book they face an "Honoring America" section on the front page which details flag etiquette, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the "American's Creed." I consider myself patriotic in my own right but somehow I'd made it through 13 years of kindergarten through high school without ever having encountered the American's Creed. A note from the authors (do any students actually read

these?) explains that they want students "to succeed on the New York State Regents Exam" and there is an entire section "Keys to succeeding on the Regents exam" that follows, containing the New York State core curriculum in History.

McGraw Hill's ties to the Bush Administration run deep (Metcalf, 2002). Prescott Bush and James McGraw Jr. were friends in the 1930s. Today Prescott's grandson is President of the United States and James' grand-nephew Harold III runs the show over at McGraw Hill which enjoyed record revenues of $6.3 billion in 2006 (http://investor.mcgraw-hill.com). NCLB has proven a boon to the publishing giant. McGraw Hill has the most contracts of any test developer with more than half the states of the Union to develop their standardized assessments. McGraw Hill's CTB is the leading publisher of standardized tests, scoring more than 20 million such exams annually (www.ctb.com). As I write this, McGraw Hill reports 2007 third-quarter earnings of $452 million with earnings from their education segment up 9.9% to $2.2 billion (Reuters, 2007). NCLB backs phonics-based reading instruction and McGraw Hill markets products such as Breakthrough to Literacy and SRA's Open Court series, which bills itself as "the only reading program based on a generation of intense, empirical research. . ." (www.mcgrawhill.ca).

I had a history professor in college named Jay Kinsbruner who'd occasionally lament that students in university weren't reading anymore, that he could assign x-amount of pages each week and they'd complain. At the time I felt great sympathy for his position and plight. I was in my second or third year as an undergrad, coming from a working class background where I was the first one in my family to go to college, and here I was applying myself and doing well at CUNY's Queens College when I'd spent the last couple years of high school and my first year or so in college wondering if I was "college material." I quickly discovered I was indeed, college material, whatever that is. I like school and reading and writing and gladly did what I was told to do. I'd been taught to respect education and the educated when I was a kid (and I still do, though in a more nuanced way) so I held guys like Kinsbruner who had published books and had Ph.D.s in high esteem. There was a mystique about men and women like him from my perspective, and part of that mystique was the massive amount of work they'd done to get where they were. My attitude was what else should students in classes like Kinsbruner's expect, especially those who wanted to go on to be historians and teachers themselves? As an aside, just to show how people develop and their views change, I recall a student in Kinsbruner's class telling me that based on my comments and observations in class he thought I'd really like what this guy LaPen over in France was saying. Yikes!

Fast forward 10 years. I'm still in school, CUNY's Graduate Center this time, and I'm taking a class where the professor is assigning 200–400 pages of reading a week. And this isn't fun stuff. I'm teaching full time and have a family, so needless to say I'm not reading most of this dreck or even half of it every week. I'm prioritizing, reading what I think the professor is going to discuss (she's not going to be able to cover 300 or more pages in a 2-hour weekly class except in some sort of superficial way), raising my hand at the beginning of class to comment on a reading to get it out of the way (so she won't pick on me again because I look like I read what I was supposed to and know what I'm talking about), do what I have to do to get by, write

a good paper at the end of the semester, and get a good grade for the course. Now why do I tell you all this?

Homework is out of control in American public schools (see, for example, Bennett & Kalish, 2006; Buell & Kralovec, 2001; Kohn, 2006). I work with kids who are overwhelmed with homework assignments on a nightly basis and on weekends. Students and their parents have to fight with administrators to lessen the homework load and be able to enjoy their time off from school (Berger, 2007c). I work with kids whose IEPs specify modified and abridged homework. Teachers at my high school generally work with 120 students in each day. There is no way you're going to collect, take home, grade, and make any kind of meaningful comments on 120 different assignments, whether it's a draft essay or the answer to five or more questions. Yet students have five to eight different teachers assigning varying amounts of homework every night.

Homework is a text students and teacher can critically study. Before a teacher assigns homework, he should ask himself why he's assigning it. The best answer and the most justifiable one is that the assignment either reviews and reinforces what was discussed in class or sets the stage for what will be introduced the next day. Unfortunately much of homework is given for the wrong reasons. Teachers often feel enormous pressure to assign it. Homework is something students, their parents, and many administrators *expect*. When teachers were students we had homework and often a lot of it, so doesn't it just make sense that we'll assign homework and a lot of it to our students? Some school districts have policies that mandate homework. But homework is often assigned as busy work, which is a misuse of homework.

I think there's something wrong with a middle school or high school student having to go home and work on assignments for 2–3 hours a night every night. The kids quickly get overwhelmed and either don't do the work or, like I do in graduate school today, prioritize what they feel they can't get away with *not* doing. I'm not against homework. There are times it can and should be assigned, and I have little tolerance for excuses about why it wasn't done, especially when the homework was assigned well in advance and the due date was no secret. That said, I always accept late homework assignments up to a certain point (e.g. the end of the week, end of the unit), but make sure I impress upon the students that I'm assigning homework for a reason and if they don't do it they really are doing themselves a disservice.

The best kind of teaching and assignments are often ones that are self-guided. Some students are so interested in a topic that they take it upon themselves to further their study of it through reading books, visiting the library, researching online, and watching documentaries and films about the subject. Unfortunately because so much of what we introduce students to are academic themes divorced from their daily lives, it's often difficult to help spark that native interest that will motivate a kid to further study on her own. Also, students need guidance in furthering their study of a subject, and homework often models this guidance. So it's a tricky balance we strive for. On the one hand we don't want to overwhelm kids and turn them off any more than they already are from schooling; on the other, we need to help them acquire the intellectual tools and habits that make for success in education, tools and habits that extend beyond the everyday classroom.

Like homework, tests and the idea of tests are such a part of the way we think of schooling and life that their absence would seem to leave an enormous void. We talk about events and trying periods of our lives as "tests" that have the potential to prove our mettle and enhance our sense of self-worth. I'll mention here that these are situations and circumstances I think we as teachers, parents, and human beings need to prepare the children and students and other adults in our lives for. In the next chapter I'll be critiquing some extremely solipsistic tests championed by Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky's characters. In case I didn't make this clear in the second chapter, I am not against tests. I am against an overreliance on tests that should serve as assessment tools and not the final arbiters of student's grades and futures. Tests have a place and can be used constructively. Tests should be used to guide students toward further growth, to assess where they are and where they need to be. Tests shouldn't be used to punish students but they are, all in the name of "helping" them.

That said I'd like to examine one of the biggest, nastiest tests hovering over my high school students' heads—the SAT. What is the SAT and how important is it? These are questions that can be considered with your students as they prepare to sit for the exam itself. SAT once stood for scholastic *aptitude* test but when the organization that administers the test (the College Board) were forced to admit this standardized exam revealed nothing about academic capacity in college the acronym was re-worked to stand for the scholastic *assessment* test. Questions of what the SAT supposedly assessed led to the jettisoning of that acronym and today the initials SAT stand for nothing. "That the SAT does not actually stand for anything today is somehow revealing," notes parent Kate Stone Lombardi (2006: Section 14:1).

Its lack of meaning has not diminished the SAT's importance or ubiquity: 2.2 million SATs are taken annually by students forking over the $41.50 registration fee. The SAT serves as a gatekeeper to America's higher education system, with colleges rating the SAT scores as the second most important factor in the admission decision after transcripts (Bick, 2006). Like other tests, the SAT serves as a socializing device, with millions of high school juniors and seniors sweating out its nearly 4-hour administration. Students compare and contrast scores and retake the test attempting to get a higher score. I know adults who to this day brag about their SAT scores.

There are some serious problems with the SAT. Like other standardized tests that are supposed to be objective and unbiased, cultural capital and economic well-being impact this exam. Race correlates with higher and lower SAT scores. The average scores for critical reading, math, and writing are 537, 536, and 519 for whites; 454, 465, and 452 for Americans of Mexican descent; and 434, 429, and 428 for blacks. There is also a direct correlation between average SAT scores and a test-takers' family income level. The more money your family makes the better you are likely to do on the SAT. For example, the mean scores for the critical reading, mathematics, and writing subtests for students from families earning less than $10,000 a year are 429, 457, and 427, respectively; average scores for students from families with incomes of more than $100,000 are 549, 564, and 543. Of course this doesn't stop 21st century Social Darwinists like Charles Murray—who has come out against the SAT as a "corrosive symbol of privilege"—from explaining that "the children of the

well educated and affluent get most of the top scores because they constitute most of the smartest kids. They are smart because their parents are smart" (cited in Cohen, 2007b: B6).

What does it say about a standardized test that you can prep for it and do better on it? SAT prep yields a 35-point average improvement in scores (Berger, 2007b); 12–17% of students taking the SAT spend from $400 into the thousands of dollars on prep classes, tutors, and books (Bick, 2006). The two biggest SAT test prep companies are Kaplan and Princeton Review. The 6-month Princeton Review test prep program will set you back $1,700. Special accommodations on the SAT like extended time have doubled in the last 15 years (Franek, 2006) and there are middle and upper class people who pay for the psychological and educational evaluations that lead to special educational labels for their children (learning disabled is preferred), all to ensure their kids get time and a half to double time for the exam. The number of rich people taking the SAT is increasing, with 24% of test takers coming from homes with incomes greater than $100,000 a year, while the number of students from homes with lower incomes taking the exam is declining (overall, 19% of test takers are from homes with incomes of up to $30,000 a year) (Jaschik, 2006). All that aside, overall SAT scores are actually falling.

Maybe it's due to a problem that was revealed in 2006. The company that scores the exam, Pearson Educational Measurement, was screwing up. The October 2005 administration of the exam resulted in 27,000 of the 495,000 exams taken having to be rechecked for errors. Mistakes became apparent when students who had forked over the additional $50 to have their SATs hand-scored noticed a discrepancy between the two scorings. Turns out 4,400 students were scored too low and 613 lucky ones too high, with a maximum error of 450 points (Lombardi, 2006). When the initial exams were checked for errors 1,600 were overlooked; when these were examined they yielded a greater error rate than the tests already re-checked (Arenson, 2006b). What might look like a comedy of errors and ineptitude to observers—with an administrator at a college in California noting that "It looks like they [Pearson] hired the people who used to do the books for Enron"—had real-world effects on the thousands of students who sat for the October administration, with SAT problems impacting college admissions and scholarships for students in the class of 2006 (Arenson, 2006c).

The SAT is a monster and is increasingly recognized as such. That said, we have to encourage our students who want to go to college and must take it to study for it and do their best on it. At the same time we have to educate ourselves and our kids to its limitations and organize to fight against it. An anti-SAT movement is growing in America, bridging differences between progressives and conservatives like the aforementioned Murray. The predominance of SAT scores in college admissions has waned in recent years as admissions officers look at scores on other exams (like the ACT) and place an increasing emphasis on recommendations, grade point averages, community service, and extracurricular activities (Jaschik, 2006; Lewin, 2006c).

Grading can also be viewed as a text and studied critically with our students. Grades are used to sort and rank students and place them in hierarchies. When adults start to think of students and students start to think of themselves as "A students" or

"D students" the essentializing function of grades becomes apparent. When students "need an A" the commodification of grades is clear. Much of grading is an arbitrary endeavor, varying from teacher to teacher. Recognizing this, a movement is afoot to standardize grades across schools and school districts (Finder, 2006). Teachers and students can discuss the benefits and drawbacks to alternative grading options such as credit/no credit, pass/fail, written evaluations, and portfolio assessments.

We are enmeshed in the everyday classroom. To be able to take a step back and see it for what it is, to see it as nested in hierarchies of domination and power, requires a critical perspective. At the same time we need to survive in the everyday classroom and help our students succeed when success may today be measured in ways we oppose. By treating the everyday classroom and the subject matter and relationships therein as a text open for study, teachers and students take steps toward critical consciousness. By proposing alternatives and exploring their viability where and when possible, we announce our visions of the future in attempts to give life to our utopias.

Chapter 6
Stepping Across: Aristocratic Elitism Versus Democratic Faith

6.1 To be Utopian

"[F]or to be utopian," explains Paulo Freire, "is not to be merely idealistic or impractical but rather to engage in denunciation and annunciation" (1985: 57). The majority of this book has been spent denouncing and announcing, criticizing existing educational praxis, and where possible offering alternatives. "Utopian" has not meant idealistic or impractical, though the word is often construed in just such a way. The world is the way it is because of the dialectic between individual agency and structural arrangements. We denounce where and when we see this world, its structures, and individuals within it dehumanizing people. We announce with correctives and alternatives, with possible dreams. Unlike Don Quixote, we do not dream the impossible dream. If our dreams had no chance of being attained, we could not dream them, we would not be able to hope for and work toward them.

Critical pedagogy is idealistic in the best sense of the word. We envision a world we want to live in, and we take steps toward the attainment of that world. Our path takes us through the everyday classroom and into the wider world beyond. It is a path we cannot walk alone. Unfortunately, the dominant ideology encourages solo journeys. At every turn, we are encouraged to care only about ourselves and those closest to us, to dismiss bad behavior as inevitable and part of the human condition. Critical pedagogy is idealistic but this does not mean we delude ourselves. "The future is a problem, a possibility, and not inexorable," Freire reminds us (1996: 137). Ours is a world that can be made better if not perfected. Conflict and dehumanization can be lessened if not eradicated. A better tomorrow is possible but never probable unless we constantly work toward its attainment with others.

The misplaced stress on individual victory and failure works against the notions of solidarity and cooperation. Such emphasis conditions our worldviews and our visions of the future. We live in a world and teach in classrooms that are often messed up. Every good deed seems outweighed by bad ones. Random acts of kindness pale in comparison to the wanton destruction and dehumanization about us. There really is a lot to complain about and unfortunately our cultural emphasis on individuality offers us remedies of these grievances that only exacerbate the problem.

It is in this context that Nietzsche and his appeal arise yet again. Nietzsche champions an extremely individualistic aristocratic elitism that speaks to the dehumanizing conditions surrounding us. Given the times in which we live, his is an intoxicating vision delivered in seductive prose. I want to state at the outset that for me reading Nietzsche has always been much fun, a kind of guilty pleasure, and his words never cease to be thought provoking and haunting. When you pick up a newspaper and read about some atrocity—an infant that gets his head bashed in at pre-school, college students lined up against a schoolyard wall and shot, the Virginia Tech massacre, American soldiers raping and killing Iraqis and Afghanis and being maimed and killed in turn—it's easy to shake your head and say, "Look at these assholes." It's easy to say to yourself, "There are good people in the world and bad," "Some people are just better than others and some are worse." Nietzsche's order of rank and the quest for self-perfection in the form of an ubermensch (superman) become ever more appealing.

Nietzsche's ideas are attractive to those burdened with the negative freedom Erich Fromm identified. But Nietzsche needs to be viewed as a product of his sociohistorical existence, just like the rest of us. I see the cures he proffers as bad as the ills he attempts to redress. But I also see and understand his continuing draw. In this chapter, I'd like to ask you to explore Nietzsche's pull with me. We'll consider the character structures possible in our present reality and how works of Dostoyevsky set in the modernizing St. Petersburg of the 19th century presaged these character structures. We will denounce and then announce in the quest to make our everyday classrooms and lives more humane and humanizing.

Nietzsche was a flawed human being. In the words of the Prince of Denmark, words that could apply to all of us to one degree or another, "he was a man, take him for all in all." His love for women—namely Lou Salome—went unrequited and proved a source of much frustration and despair in his personal life. Nietzsche longed for recognition and approval, and what renown he did cultivate in his lifetime was never enough and only fed his desire for more. He condemned organized religion, democracy, socialism, and communism. Yet Nietzsche came to be embraced by some of the very groups he despised and wrote against in his lifetime with everyone from Nazis to postmodern feminist scholars embracing him.

6.2 Salvaging Nietzsche

Nietzsche means different things to different people. Steven E. Ascheim writes that in the century following his derangement and death, "feminists feminized him, Jews Judaized him, and volkisch circles nationalized him" (Ascheims, 1994: 172). How can we account for Nietzsche's appeal to these and others, groups he vehemently opposed during his existence? Lesley Chamberlain posits "the core attraction of Nietzsche at the end of a century [the 20th] ravaged by ideology is that he provides no positive doctrines nor answers, and even made a fetish out of doing so, or not doing" (1996: 5). "Nietzscheanism, like its masters, was never monochromic," explains Aschheim, positing that the "Nietzschean impulse" lacked "a clearly demarcated

ideology backed by a central political apparatus," "required no formal commitment and possessed no authorized dogma," and as such enjoyed a "capacity to selectively influence and be reconstructed by various ideological and political constructs [that] facilitated [its] entry into an astonishing range of institutions" (Ascheim, 1994: 7 & 14).

An exploration of Nietzsche's misogyny and feminist theorists attempts to salvage him illustrates Ascheim and Chamberlain's points. In Nietzsche's writings, women possess the natural attributes of "cunning, seductiveness, naiveté of egoism, and ineducability and inner wildness. . ." (1989: s239). Nietzsche warns against "the sick females, who have unrivaled resources for dominating, oppressing, tyrannizing" (1956: 260). Women are of lesser rank than males in Nietzsche's thinking. "Comparing men and women on the whole," he surmises, "one may say: woman would not have the genius for finery if she did not have an instinct for a *secondary* role" (1989: s145). "Is it not better," Nietzsche asks, "to end up in the hands of a murderer then in the dreams of a woman in heat?" (1954: 166). Nietzsche opines that men be educated for war and women "for the recreation of the warrior; all else is folly" (1954: 178). The warrior dislikes sweet fruit and therefore likes women because "even the sweetest woman is bitter" (1954: 178). Nietzsche feels all a girl wants is "to be taken and accepted as a possession. . .to be absorbed into the concept of possession" (1974: s363). In a letter to a friend shortly after Lou Salome rebuffed his advances Nietzsche refers to her as a "sterile, dirty, evil-smelling she-ape with false breasts—a calamity!" (cited in Cate, 2005: 413). "You are going to women?" Nietzsche has an elderly female character ask in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, then "do not forget the whip!" (1954: 179).

Though Nietzsche often railed against women in his writings, he was a gentleman and a gentle man in real life. Still, we cannot ignore what he wrote. Despite lines and passages like the ones quoted above, many contemporary feminist and other writers seem on a mission to rescue Nietzsche from his own words. Chamberlain refers to a "Nietzsche reinterpretation industry" (1996: 5). The rescue mission works by interpreting his works in such a way that straightforward textual interpretation is contradicted.

Many scholars invoke a variety of the worst sorts of postmodern intellectual tools to ferret out the Nietzsche they seek. Luce Irigaray attempts to mirror Nietzsche's styles back to him through a "simulacrum" in her try to "romanticize the philosophers" and prove that Nietzsche's writings support women and feminist writings (in Oliver & Pearsall, 1998: 87 & 98). Jacques Derrida employs a "graphics of the hymen"—give me a break!—to bolster his contention that women are the "nontruth of truth," whatever that means, that we can never really say with certainty what Nietzsche meant about women (in Oliver & Pearsall, 1998: 7 & 53). Tasmin Lorraine utilizes "identity positions" to sort through the "dreadful fragments and accidents" of Nietzsche's texts to find "the flowers and aromas I need to conjure up the image dearest to me. . .[to] create a strong image of woman in keeping with my own taste for the future" (in Oliver & Pearsall, 1998: 120 & 127).

Sarah Kofman employs Nietzsche's own "camera obscura" to argue that his metaphors of higher and lower are perspectival, not hierarchical. Kofman argues (in

Oliver & Pearsall, 1998: 36 & 40) that Nietzsche's aristocratic elitism can be applied to women as well as men, though even if possible I don't see how it makes such any more desirable. Sounding much like a battered spouse who makes excuses for her abuser husband, Kofman wonders if "[t]he maxims and arrows Nietzsche directs toward women: Is not their very severity. . .symptomatic of a deep love for women, all of whom had abandoned him. . .?" (in Oliver & Pearsall, 1998: 47). By this logic O.J. really was enamored with Nicole. Walter Kaufman admits that "Nietzsche's writings contain many all-too-human judgments—especially about women—but these are philosophically irrelevant" (1968: 89). I have to disagree.

As one who believes we can learn something from everyone, even if that is only how *not* to behave toward others, I am not ready to dismiss Nietzsche as a straight-out misogynist or card-carrying member of the Little Rascals' He-Man Woman's Haters Club. Nor am I convinced, and I must admit, nor do I fully understand or want to take the time to understand, the arguments cited above "proving" Nietzsche is liberating for women. That said, I agree that Nietzsche has provided ideas that have proved useful to feminism, critical pedagogy, and postmodernism. For example, as we saw earlier, Nietzsche criticized objectivity and truth, claiming all truth perspectival with objectivity in the sense of perspectiveless truth impossible. Further, Nietzsche illuminated the ways in which truths and values are formulated in particular situations to benefit particular groups of people (Oliver & Pearsall, 1998: 3). Nietzsche's private life is so at odds with much of what he wrote that one might question the truck he put in his own philosophy. Unfortunately, for Nietzsche and others, people judge us and what we say and do. One of my favorite Kurt Vonnegut quotes holds that "we are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful what we pretend to be." Nietzsche said a lot in his lifetime and a good deal of it is available to us in written form today. Though his words at times belie the man, it is the words that have lived and been passed down to us.

6.3 The Jester as Ubermensch

Nietzsche is long dead but his ideas are still alive and sometimes dangerous. Let me be clear that I do not mean his doctrines as taken and perverted by others like the Nazis or culled from notes he never intended published. I mean the straightforward ideas available to us from his extant publications. In Chapter 1.14, we looked at Nietzsche's genealogy of morals and the slave revolt in morals, of the master morality and slave mentality. As entertaining as these may be as stories, Nietzsche was a product of his times—though ahead of them in many ways both important and alarming—and his genesis of morals speaks to a pervasive aristocratic elitism that suffuses his works. Like the Sirens attempting to lure Ulysses and his crew to their demise on the rocks, Nietzsche's doctrines beckon the disillusioned and disenchanted, those among us harboring a vague or full-blown sense of unease about our lives and these times in which we live, and offers a path of (ostensible) individual fulfillment.

Nietzsche detested democracy, perhaps in part because the democracy of his day—as ours—was relegated to the political sphere. He equated democracy with weakness, with leveling tendencies that ran counter to his aristocratic elitism and understood that his ideal could not survive in a democratic clime. But at the same time Nietzsche disliked socialism and communism with their explicit democratization of the economic sphere, so his disdain of democracy did not stem from equating it with the democracy of his times. I warn here specifically of Nietzsche's ubermensch or overman or superman.

In his prologue to the first part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the eponymous prophet emerges from his cave following a 10-year hermitage to descend his mountain. Arriving in a town named the Motley Cow, he finds the inhabitants gathered in the marketplace to view a tightrope walker's display. Zarathustra starts to lecture them, pontificating on the "ubermensch" and the shortcomings of the "last man." The crowd jeers him, much to Zarathustra's chagrin, and focus their attention on the unfolding spectacle above. The tightrope walker has started across his line. When he reaches the middle of his route, a jester appears on the rope behind him, taunting him and then leaping over him. The tightrope walker, "seeing his rival win, lost his head and the rope, tossed away his pole, and plunged into the depth even faster, a whirlpool of arms and legs" (Nietzsche, 1954: 131).

Landing next to Zarathustra, the mortally wounded tightrope walker has no choice but to speak with the prophet before he dies. Zarathustra is heartened by the example of the tightrope walker, whom he views as having embodied the ideals necessary for the attainment of his higher type of human being. He gathers up the dead body and is confronted by the jester. The jester warns Zarathustra that prophets are "hated by the good and the just. … You are hated by the believers of the true faith, and they call you the danger of the multitude" (Nietzsche, 1954: 133). Just as quickly as he appears, the jester disappears, leaving Zarathustra to cart off the remains of the tightrope walker.

Nietzsche's ubermensch is "the meaning of the earth" (1954: 125). He is the transcendence of humanity as currently constituted. Peter Berkowitz explains that for Nietzsche, the ubermensch "is the end or goal of man, the species' specific perfection" (1995: 137). Zarathustra likens humanity to "a polluted stream." Opining that it would take "a sea to be able to receive a polluted stream without becoming unclean," Zarathustra offers the ubermensch as this ocean. Zarathustra likens modern man in relation to the future ubermensch as an "ape to man" and a "laughingstock or a painful embarrassment." (Nietzsche, 1954: 124). Zarathustra promises that "[m]an is something that shall be overcome" (Ibid.).

The prophet likens man to "a rope tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss" (Nietzsche, 1954: 126). Traversing the rope and attaining overman or ubermensch status is not guaranteed for every individual. Many who try will fail, perishing along the way. The journey promises only a "dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping" (Ibid.). Traversing the rope requires courting peril and possible loss of life, leading Zarathustra to praise the risk-taker, he who is both "an *overture* and a *going under*" (Nietzsche, 1954: 127).

Bearing witness to his death, Zarathustra believes the tightrope walker represents an attempted step in the direction of the ubermensch. After breaking the news to the dying man that "there is no devil and no hell. Your soul will be dead even before your body," the prophet then praises him for having "made danger your vocation. . .. Now you perish of your vocation: for that I will bury you with my own hands" (Nietzsche, 1954: 132). Zarathustra finds the tightrope walker's life praiseworthy, Berkowitz posits, because he "dared to leave his tower and, heedless of the consequences, attempted to cross over," because "the tightrope walker evokes the death-defying adventures. . .that Zarathustra sees as necessary to the discipline of the superman" (1995: 144).

But Zarathustra is incorrect in his appraisal of the tightrope walker. Despite his effort, the acrobat Zarathustra lauds never gets beyond being a *last man* who stands in the way of the ubermensch's realization. The last man is, in Nietzsche's and Zarathustra's estimation, "the most despicable man," and part of the reason he is despicable is because he "is no longer able to despise himself" (Nietzsche, 1954: 129). Nietzsche biographer Curtis Cate describes "the last or latest man [as] a Nietzschean euphemism for the contemporary human being" (2005: 405). The last man mirrors a triumphant nihilism. The last man reflects the leveling tendencies Nietzsche felt were poisoning humanity, leading to a state where there is "no shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same" (1954: 130).

The marketplace crowd, jeering Zarathustra, demand of him, "Give us this last man, O Zarathustra. . .turn us into these last men! Then we shall make you a gift of the overman!" (Ibid.). The irony that Nietzsche sought to convey through Zarathustra is that the crowd in the marketplace already themselves represent these last men. Furthermore, it is not within the power of anyone, much less last men, to "make a gift" of the overman to anyone. In Berkowitz's estimation, "The last men form a society of sad sacks who believe that they exemplify the supreme achievements of the human spirit. Perfectly pleased with themselves, the last men regard themselves as second to none" (1995: 143).

Why is Zarathustra incorrect in his estimation of the tightrope walker? Because *the jester* represents the overman. The jester "jumps out" onto the rope behind the tightrope walker, following him "with quick steps." The jester yells at the tightrope walker, "Forward lamefoot!. . .. You block the way for one better than yourself" (Nietzsche, 1954: 131). The jester's path on the rope—"a rope tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss" (1954: 126)—is *blocked* by the tightrope walker. The jester does not push the tightrope walker out of his way or off the rope. Instead, he "uttered a devilish cry and jumped over the man who stood in his way" (Nietzsche, 1954: 131). The tightrope walker, "seeing his rival win," loses "his head and his rope" and plunges to his death (Nietzsche, 1954: 131). When the jester confronts Zarathustra as the prophet carries the tightrope walker's body off, he warns Zarathustra that the townsfolk hate him [Zarathustra] and that he should "go away from this town, or tomorrow I shall leap over you, one living over one dead" (Nietzsche, 1954: 133).

Zarathustra is frustrated in his attempt to teach the masses of the marketplace the overman. "There they stand," he laments, ". . .there they laugh" (Nietzsche,

1954: 128). Through Zarathustra Nietzsche makes clear that the masses are not capable of recognizing the ubermensch or the possibility of his existence. They can no longer differentiate between "mediocrity and excellence" (Berkowitz, 1995: 139). Thus the jester appears to them not as ubermensch, but as "a fellow in motley clothes, looking like a jester" (Nietzsche, 1954: 125). Under the rule of these last men, "whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse" (Nietzsche, 1954: 130). The jester alone stands out to the masses, conspicuous in his apparent frivolity. " 'Formerly, all the world was mad,' say the most refined [of the last men], and they blink" (Nietzsche, 1954: 130). (These last men blink a lot). Now only the jester appears mad to the crowd because he is the ubermensch standing apart from all others and the crowd is unable to perceive this. The townsfolk do not watch the jester complete his traversal of the tightrope. Instead they focus on the tightrope walker as he plunges to his demise. Nietzsche is clear that the masses are incapable of viewing, much less comprehending, the machinations of an ubermensch.

Nietzsche's Zarathustra does not recognize the jester as ubermensch. Nor, for that matter, did any of the secondary sources I consulted. Yet Zarathustra does recognize his mission of enlightening the masses as misguided, feeling he must attempt to "speak not to the people but to companions," to "lure many away from the herd," to edify the select few (Nietzsche, 1954: 135). And neither does Zarathustra embody the ubermensch. As he laments of himself, "A seer, a willer, a creator, a future himself and a bridge to the future—and alas, also, as it were, a cripple at this bridge: all this is Zarathustra" (Nietzsche, 1954: 251). Zarathustra heralds the ubermensch, but the prophet himself is not one.

Berkowitz argues that Zarathustra comes to recognize himself not as ubermensch but as "higher man," "the victim of overreaching, whose ambition exceeds his grasp and whose critical faculties surpass his creative powers" capable only of "discerning vulgarity, hypocrisy, and wretched contentment in the contemporary manifestations of culture, politics, and religion" (1995: 211). Zarathustra is guilty of overreaching. He descends from his mountain on a self-appointed quest to teach the ubermensch. Zarathustra is disappointed with the reception he finds and condescending: "They do not understand me; I am not the mouth for these ears" (Nietzsche, 1954: 128). Nietzsche's prophet is unable to create ubermensch or convince the masses of the need for such, but he is able to scorn and pour vituperation on the last men, proving that his "critical faculties surpass his creative powers" (Berkowitz, 1995: 211). Zarathustra sees the "vulgarity, hypocrisy, and wretched contentment" of the masses and he lectures them against their own complacence, " 'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink" (Nietzsche, 1954: 130). As a "higher man," Zarathustra may be able to recognize the deficiencies of the last men, but he himself cannot attain ubermensch status. "You may indeed all be higher men," Zarathustra tells the coterie he has gathered back at his cave for the donkey festival in Part IV of the book, "but for me you are not high and strong enough" (Nietzsche, 1954: 394).

Nietzsche's Zarathustra is a would-be teacher but he is no teacher we would want in any of our classrooms. Zarathustra's is the antithesis of a critical pedagogy. He despises the masses for what he sees as their ignorance, their weakness and inability to recognize his wisdom and accept his counsel. Though he holds himself above the

people, Zarathustra is also filled with self-loathing because he feels he can never be the ubermensch he speaks of. He recognizes that his critical faculties surpass his creative abilities.

Kids I work with ask me if retarded people know they're retarded. My kids think this would be terrible, to know you're majorly different and to know people know you're majorly different. Zarathustra occupies such a position because though he holds himself above the people, he disdains the loathes himself as well because he knows he can never be ubermensch. In his own mind, he recognizes the necessity and desirability of this new human being, but it is a model he will never approximate. Zarathustra comes down from his mountain on a self-proclaimed mission to deliver the people his truth, which he sees as *the* truth. His relations with would-be students is antagonistic and condescending. Zarathustra's utopia is a vision not of a better world for people tomorrow, but of a world much like his own for a select few.

6.4 Nietzsche's Will to Power

Zarathustra delivers a speech (*The Three Metamorphosis)* in which he introduces a dialectic, a transformation and transcendence from camel to lion to child (1954: 138–139). The camel represents "the spirit that would bear much," that dares to ask, "What is difficult?" and "burdened, speeds into the desert." Within this "loneliest desert," the "spirit becomes a lion who would conquer his freedom and be master in his own desert." The lion seeks out and battles "his last master…and his last god…the great dragon" which is named "Thou shalt" and is adorned with many shiny scales representing the values of society. Through battle and perseverance, through the exertion of the will, through challenging the "thou shalt" dragon with his own "I will," the lion may prevail. The lion is capable of "creation of freedom for oneself of new creation," though not of any creation of new values in itself. The final metamorphosis, from lion to child, is necessary for the self-creation of new values. "The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred 'Yes'." Zarathustra sees himself stuck in the camel stage, yearning for transformation to lion and then child but incapable of such metamorphosis. "As yet I have not been strong enough for the final overbearing, prankish bearing of the lion…but one day I shall yet find the strength and the lion's voice" he hopes (Nietzsche, 1954: 274).

In the *Three Metamorphosis*, Nietzsche delivers a parable outlining his dialectic of self-transcendence. Themes that accompanied the jester again become apparent. Self-transcendence is viewed as an arduous, even dangerous, solitary task. Berkowitz opines that "Zarathustra's parable seems to rest on the presupposition that the knowledge most worth possessing is intrinsically odious and nauseating" (1995: 153). The spirit as camel is "not merely prepared for the worst but actively seeking it" (Ibid.). The camel goes off into its desert alone, where in its incarnation as lion, it finds "its ability to exist is consumed in an urgent need to rebel" (Safranski, 2002: 277).

Not everyone will attempt the transformation to ubermensch. Most will remain spectators in the town of Motley Cow's marketplace with their eyes glued on the tightrope walker, oblivious to the jester and his passage. Of those who attempt the transformation, many will fail, for Nietzsche promises that "the sake of power risks life. . .it is hazard and danger and casting dice for death" (1954: 227). Those who are successful won't find great happiness but that "the will to knowledge can be a pleasure that bears and endures even the unbearable nature of what is known" (Safranski, 2002: 278). Emerging as child, as ubermensch, the individual will live his own life by his own rules and values, much like the long-lost nobles of Nietzsche's genealogy or McCarthy's judge Holden.

"One hardly dares speak any more of the will to power: it was different in Athens," Nietzsche writes in notes never intended for publication (1954: 75). Walter Kaufmann remarks "it occurred to Nietzsche that the basic drive that prompted the development of Greek culture might well have been the will to power" (1974: 192). Nietzsche gazed back fondly on the Greeks and their will to power and considered Greek culture "the acme of humanity" (Ibid.). Cate notes that Nietzsche's concept of the will to power is "the most radically upsetting, 'subversive' and controversial of all his contributions to contemporary thinking" (2005: 420). What does Nietzsche mean by a will to power? Why does he feel it has disappeared? How might it be recaptured? Furthermore, how does an individual's will to power mesh with a society of other individuals?

"The will to power is conceived of as the will to overcome oneself," explains Walter Kaufmann (1974: 200). Rudiger Safranski concurs, "The will to power is first and foremost the will to power over oneself" (2002: 281). "You still want to create the world before which you can kneel: that is your ultimate hope and intoxication," says Zarathustra (Nietzsche, 1954: 225). The will to power is found "in the inorganic and organic world," in nature; It is "the unexhausted procreative will of life" (Safranski, 2002: 225; Nietzsche, 1954: 226). Berkowitz posits that the child represents the culmination of the three metamorphosis because "the child rises to divinity insofar as he possesses a purified, uncorrupted will that makes its own activities the object of its exertions and insofar as by commanding himself he commands the whole of which he is a part" (1995: 159). The "crux" of Nietzsche's conception of the will to power, argues Safranski, is "the principle of self-transcendence" (2002: 281).

As we have seen in the discussion of his genealogy and again here, there is a rank ordering in Nietzsche's thought of higher and lower types (Berkowitz, 1995: 119). For Nietzsche the ubermensch represents the apogee of human development. Those who strive for ubermensch status but die trying to achieve it (like the tightrope walker) are still better for their efforts than those who never make the attempt. Then there are those like Zarathustra presaging the coming of this higher type, prophets, and teachers who stand above "the herd." Yet Nietzsche reminds us that even in the masses can be seen a once active will to power. Remember, according to Nietzsche, Judeo-Christian morality originally represented an active exertion of the will to power (albeit a slave revolt in morals). Nietzsche condemns it because he feels it dampens the modern individual's ability to overcome himself and achieve ubermensch status, "simply because it has triumphed so completely" (1956: 168).

Nietzsche in his notes labels "the herd instinct" as "a power that has now become sovereign" (1968: 33).

Many Nietzsche scholars would have us believe that the will to power as practiced by the ubermensch is not power exerted over others but over one's self alone. "The powerful, as Nietzsche points out expressly, have no need to prove their might either to themselves or to others by oppressing or hurting others," notes Kaufmann (1974: 194). Recall that the jester in Zarathustra's prologue does not push the tightrope walker from the heights. Instead, the jester, seeing the tightrope walker as an impediment to his own progress, places *himself* in extraordinary danger by "jump[ing] over the man who stood in his way" (Nietzsche, 1954: 131). If the powerful "do hurt others," posits Kaufmann, "they do so incidentally in the process of using their power creatively; they hurt others 'without thinking of it' " (1974: 194). Recall further that the jester's re-alighting the rope after his vault does not jar the tightrope walker from his footing. Instead, the tightrope walker, "seeing his rival win, lost his head" and plunges to his demise (Nietzsche, 1954: 131). Nietzsche's point is that the tightrope walker's own failure as a human being leads to his end, not any action against him by the jester.

For Nietzsche, the will to power is the "will to life." In modern societies like Nietzsche's and our own it is suppressed. Nevertheless, a few individuals—like the jester—possess it and dare to live it out. Teachers and prophets like Zarathustra do not have it in them but recognize its existence in a select few and seek to set the stage for the rise of these ubermensch. "*I teach you the overman*," says Zarathustra. "Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?" (Nietzsche, 1954: 124). The Nietzschean striving for the ubermensch is a solitary endeavor that doesn't promise to make your life any better. In fact, despite what Kaufmann and other scholars argue, it is bound to make life for those around you miserable.

The Nietzschian dialectic—camel to lion to child culminating in the realization of the ubermensch—is driven by individual agency, by self-overcoming, by the will to power. How does the ubermensch stand in relation to the rest of society? In the case of the jester, the tightrope walker was a mere obstacle in his path, an obstacle the jester leapt over and left behind, heedless of whatever fate befell the other. Safranski notes correctly that "Nietzsche was incapable of reconciling the ideas of self-enhancement and solidarity, or at least allowing them to coexist" (2002: 297). Indeed, for Nietzsche, "the meaning of the world was not the happiness and prosperity of the greatest possible number but individual manifestations of success in life" (Ibid.).

Ofelia Schutte opines that "Nietzsche was a strongly anti-democratic thinker" (1995: 287). Chamberlain agrees that "Nietzsche's instincts were profoundly undemocratic in almost every respect" (1996: 41). Karl Lowith explains that Nietzsche was critical of both "bourgeois democracy" and "radical socialism" because in his estimation "both movements together reduced man to a member of a herd" (1964: 266). "According to Nietzsche's genealogy," opines Berkowitz, "the rule of law, liberal protections for the individual, and democratic justice and equality are tools of oppression. . . . Vicious weapons in an all-too-successful war waged

by the weak many against the strong few" (1995: 79). Thus Nietzsche opposed German Nationalism, socialism, anti-Semitism and even a nascent feminist movement (Ansell-Pearson in Patton, 1993: 29). Nietzsche feels the last man "makes everything small," carrying out a leveling process, reducing humanity to a herd, and then "hops" around on this earth, "ineradicable as the flea beetle" (1954: 129). It would appear that democratic liberalism and feminism were goals farthest from Nietzsche's mind and theory.

Still, Nietzsche's thought and ideas have had a continuing appeal for many proponents of democracy and feminism, people who supposedly care about solidarity and cooperation. How can this be? What is it these scholars and teachers have found in Nietzsche? Steven Aschheim puzzles, "What possible meaning could the expression *Nietzschean socialism* possess?" (1994: 165). Clearly and I'd say correctly, as Safranski assesses Nietzsche: "Above all, he sought to preserve the difference between himself and the many others" (2002: 298).

Walter Kaufmann, on the other hand, does not find Nietzsche and progressives irreconcilable. Granting that Nietzsche "evidently disapproves of contemporary democracies," Kaufmann proffers that "he seems more sympathetic toward that truer democracy of the future" (1974: 187). Kaufmann bolsters his assertion with quotes from *The Wanderer and His Shadow* wherein Nietzsche writes of "a victory of democracy" that wishes to "create and guarantee independence for as many as possible, independence of opinions, way of life, and business" (cited in Kaufmann, 1974: 187). A.K. Rogers (1912: 50) also sees Nietzsche's aristocratic elitist tendencies as amenable to democracy. Cooperation can lead to greater self-achievement, to fruition and realization of the ubermensch. Kaufmann chastises those who try to paint Nietzsche as "a liberal and a democrat, or a socialist," positing that Nietzsche's thought is "antipolitical" (1974: 412). Kaufmann describes "the theme of the antipolitical individual who seeks self-perfection far from the modern world" as "the leitmotif of Nietzsche's life and thought" (1974: 418). But to be "antipolitical" or "apolitical" *is* political. If you're not actively challenging the status quo, you're tacitly supporting it.

Other authors argue that Nietzsche is in fact not "antipolitical," that his ethics and politics cannot be separated as the former inform the later. Schutte notes that "The aim of Nietzsche's politics is to make the world correspond to an ethical view in which the control of all values is placed in the hands of a 'superior type' of human being" (1995: 288). Berkowitz offers a reading of Nietzsche where the ethical and political lives are segmented, where "one might confine boldness and originality to the realm of thought and private affairs while functioning in society as a law-abiding citizen" (1995: 146). In other words, one could be both ubermensch and decent citizen of a particular society in the world. "This, however," Berkowitz admits, "is not Zarathustra's way" (Ibid.). Schutte notes that "[e]litism is an *a priori* assumption of Nietzsche's political vision as well as of his moral theory" (1995: 288).

The Nietzschean realization of the ubermensch divorces itself from democratic politics. For Nietzsche, people are not equal and we shouldn't fool ourselves otherwise. Zarathustra makes it very clear that he does not want to be confused with "tarantulas"—"preachers of equality." "For, to me justice speaks thus: 'Men are not

equal.' Nor shall they become equal!" (Nietzsche, 1954: 211 & 213). In a letter to his sister, Nietzsche explained that "Above all, I distinguish between *strong* and *weak* human beings—those whose vocation is to rule from those who are called upon to serve, to obey..." (cited in Cate, 2005: 432).

In Zarathustra's words, the last men are "superfluous" (Nietzsche, 1954: 183). Zarathustra "counsel[s] the superfluous," "Would that he had never been born!" (Ibid.). "All-too-many live, and all-too-long they hang on their branches," fumes the prophet. "Would that a storm came to shake all this worm-eaten rot to the earth" (1954: 185). Zarathustra longs for "preachers of quick death" who would encourage the last men to get out of the way and die in order to make room for the ubermensch of the future (Ibid.). In his notes, Nietzsche wrote of shaping "the man of the future through breeding and, on the other hand, the annihilation of millions of failures..." (1968: 506). In his *Genealogy*, Nietzsche says that "[t]o sacrifice humanity as a mass to the welfare of a single stronger human species would indeed constitute progress" (1956: 210). Make no mistake about it: the road to ubermensch status will be littered with those "last men," "failures" who stood in the way.

The appeal of the ubermensch remains strong, and apologies are still made for it. Justifications seek to water down Nietzsche's vision. Berkowitz presents one view holding that the ubermensch would and could remain apolitical. "From Zarathustra's perspective, the dreams of universal brotherhood and...community alike entrap the rare individual in stultifying prisons produced and maintained by forces external to his will" (Berkowitz, 1995: 148). Kaufman feels that the "question of salvation" (i.e., of attaining ubermensch status) is a "question for the single one" involved (1974: 166). Safranski advances the position that an ubermensch could be created by design—eugenics, as Nietzsche advocated—or as a personal project, involving only the individual, "for anyone who is creative and knows the whole spectrum of the human capacity for thought, fantasy, and imagination" (2002: 271).

There is no room in critical pedagogy for a Nietzschean ubermensch. This longed-for overman or superman is everything democracy and care are not. The would-be ubermensch is involved in an extremely individual, personal quest, where the values of care, the values of "attentiveness, responsibility, nurturance, compassion, [and] meeting others' needs" (Tronto, 1993) are irreconcilable. Because human beings are social animals, the ubermensch is an unrealizable dream that can only lead to the nihilism Nietzsche hated. Berkowitz notes that "the metamorphosis from man to superman dictates the overcoming of human beings' existence as social and political animals and thereby renders the care for and the organization of political society trivial pursuits" (1995: 151). An ethics and politics of care would never relegate the care and organization of society as "trivial pursuits." We cannot "overcome" our existence as social and political animals, not should we want to. The ubermensch "stands opposed to all forms of social and political life"; Self-overcoming and self-perfection requires that Nietzsche's overman completely dissolve "the bonds that tie him not only to the larger political community but to family and friends" (Berkowitz, 1995: 150 & 151).

The ubermensch is hostile to and destructive of other human beings. Nietzsche explains that the "last men" must and necessarily *will* exist for the ubermensch

to climb over, much as the jester bounded over the tightrope walker (1954: 331). Nietzsche posits in his notes that "A high culture can only stand upon a broad base, upon a strong and healthy consolidated mediocrity" (1968: 462). The ubermensch is cold, cruel, and sadistic. "To behold suffering gives pleasure," offers Nietzsche, "But to cause suffering affords an even greater pleasure" (1956: 198). A politically active ubermensch will be in a position to visit great suffering and pain on those beneath her.

Nietzsche recognized slavery as a necessity in ancient Greece and his own modern world. "Nietzsche defends slavery in ancient Greece as necessary for the self-creation of the powerful few," explains Schutte. Nietzsche "praised the Greeks for their dependence on slavery, arguing that slavery is required for the flourishing of art and culture" (Schutte, 1995: 287). Nietzsche was clear that ubermensch could not flourish in the Western world because of the "democratic bias against anything that dominates or wishes to dominate" (1956: 211). Attempting to rationalize Nietzsche's contention that a form of slavery was necessary for the future ubermensch to flourish, Mark Warren explains that "Nietzsche considered the economic needs of modern societies to be the same as ancient ones, and this implied that modern society could do without slaves only at the price of cultural mediocrity" (1985: 206). Nietzsche "thought it fortunate that Western culture had provided the material for a slave class necessary to the development of a higher culture" (Warren, 1985: 207). The ubermensch are concerned solely with self-improvement. This self-improvement depends on the maintenance of a lesser class from which the ubermensch can be distinguished and upon which they can raise themselves to the lofty heights.

If you're a teacher, you work with students and staff everyday of whom you can say, "This one is *better* than that one." You may mean a better teacher or a harder working student or even a better human being. Earlier in this book I expressed my disgust with a child who purposefully stepped on mice. Obviously, I think less of this child than others, than the ones who stopped her from crushing further any more mice. The trap lies in overlooking the structural and institutional (including familial) relationships that produced a child who'd gleefully squash mice. I'm not a gambling man, but I'm willing to bet there's a big difference in the ways this mouse-killer was raised versus the students who stopped her.

The allure and trap of Nietzsche's ubermensch lies in writing off people as inherently better or worse than others because of something intrinsic to them or their will power or their "will to power." There are good people in bad situations and bad people in good situations and before I'm willing to ascribe "goodness" or "badness" to one's nature, I'd need to see institutions restructured that encouraged greater goodness by making it more desirable and easier for individuals to pursue such. Bringing out the best in ourselves and others is a social endeavor. Preparing the way for the ubermensch, exerting the will to power, and transcending from camel to lion to child, these are tasks for the individual. In Nietzsche's utopian vision, other people only get in the way and hold us back from being more. For Nietzsche, others are a sign of the weakness and moral turpitude of the age.

6.5 Dostoyevsky and Extraordinary Man Theory

Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment* first appeared in monthly installments in a Russian literary journal in 1866. Seventeen years later the world was introduced to Nietzsche's ubermensch in 1883's four-part publication of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. It's hard to believe that Nietzsche did not read Dostoyevsky until *after* he wrote *Zarathustra*, but he didn't (Kaufmann, 1974). The similarities between Nietzsche's ubermensch and Dostoyevsky's extraordinary man theory are uncanny. I believe the similarities are there because both address a fundamental problem starting to be recognized, a problem rooted in the nascent freedom of the respective author's modernizing worlds. Hence both Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche speak of "stepping across" to something more. I write of these similarities and this problem of freedom because I feel they are more pronounced in our own day and worth our consideration.

In *Crime and Punishment* the twenty-three year old student Raskolnikov murders two women and later attempts to justify his crime as a test of his Extraordinary Man Theory. The theory holds that humanity is split into two groups, a majority of ordinary people and a few extraordinary ones. In Raskolnikov's words, "by the law of their nature, human beings i*n general* may be divided into two categories: a lower one (that of the ordinary), that is to say raw material which serves exclusively to bring into being more like itself, and another group of people who possess a gift or talent for saying *something* new" (1991: 313). The noble Svidrigailov describes Raskolnikov's theory to the student's sister, Dunya. Explaining that "people are divided...into raw material and extraordinary individuals, that's to say, the sort of individuals for whom, because of their exalted position, there is no law..." (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 566). Ordinary people, lords of the present, obey laws and authority, serving a conservative function in society. Extraordinary people, lords of the future, have the right to say new things, think new thoughts and break laws that constrain their originality. The Extraordinary Man, Raskolnikov explains to police detective Porfiry Petrovich, has a right "to allow his conscience to step across certain...obstacles, and then only if the execution of his idea (which may occasionally be the salvation of all mankind) requires it" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 312). Sound familiar?

When he murders a pawnbroker and her niece, Raskolnikov has not completely formulated his theory. Later he will contemplate and dismiss a number of justifications for his act, including that the murders were for the betterment of mankind. But what is clear is that extraordinary man as he does because—like Nietzsche's nobles and ubermensch—he so chooses, not necessarily because higher aspirations or lofty aims guide him. Extraordinary man's actions, like the noble's or ubermensch's, are an assertion of his will, of his individuality, of what separates him from the rest of the human herd.

Before murdering the women, Raskolnikov wonders if he has what it takes to be an extraordinary man. "[W]hat I needed to know," he confides to love-interest Sonya, "was whether I was a louse, like everyone else, or a man. Whether I could take the step across...whether I could dare..." (Dostoyevsky, 2002: 485).

Raskolnikov tells Sonya that "power is given only to those who dare to lower themselves and pick it up. Only one thing matters, one thing: to be able to dare!" (1991: 486). Murder is only another "obstacle" for the extraordinary man to dare to step across (1991: 312). Raskolnikov expresses admiration for Sonya, noting that, as a prostitute, "You've done the same thing, after all, haven't you? You've stepped across. . .found it in yourself to step across" (1991: 389). Raskolnikov believes that power exists for the extraordinary man with the courage to take it. "I wanted to make the dare, and so I killed someone," he explains (2002: 487). Dostoyevsky's protagonist dares, steps over with his crime, and is immediately overwhelmed by his guilt, his punishment.

According to his theory, if Raskolnikov were an extraordinary man, he'd be able to commit the murder and not dwell on it. But Raskolnikov suffers greatly throughout the novel, at times coming close to giving himself away. Through the course of the book, he is forced to confront the fact that he is not an extraordinary man, much like Zarathustra recognizes he is no ubermensch. Instead of discrediting his entire theory, Raskolnikov persists in believing that the failure was strictly personal on his part. Raskolnikov remains convinced that extraordinary men exist, though he is not one.

Nevertheless the police detective, Porfiry, throughout *Crime and Punishment*, recognizes a potential extraordinariness to Raskolnikov, albeit not the same qualities championed by the ex-student. "I, at any rate, consider you as a man of the most noble character, sir, with even the beginnings of true greatness of soul," the cop tells Raskolnikov, "though I don't agree with you in all your convictions. . ." (1991: 522).

Porfiry is a lover of his Russia and her people. He sees great changes coming to his country and embraces them. His studies of psychology and his adherence to the new laws signal a very "Western" outlook. Porfiry feels great men must come forward to lead his country. Meeting Raskolnikov for the first time, Porfiry feels an immediate liking for the young man: "When I made your acquaintance, I felt an attachment to you" (1991: 522). Porfiry suspects Raskolnikov has committed the murders, his instincts as a police lieutenant tell him it is so, but he utilizes Russia's new law reforms to allow Raskolnikov to come to terms with his act. Instead of arresting him right away, Porfiry leaves Raskolnikov free to contemplate his deed and wrestle with his own personal torment. Porfiry's hope is that Raskolnikov will accept responsibility for his crime and begin his ascent to extraordinariness.

Raskolnikov's Extraordinary Man Theory is intensely individualistic. Though Porfiry recognizes the need for leaders and extraordinary men and women, he doesn't view these few as antagonistic to the many. In fact he sees them as necessary to strengthen and modernize the country and its people. Porfiry views Raskolnikov's Extraordinary Man theory as a youthful extravagance. Indeed, he feels that if Raskolnikov could get over such ideas he could possibly go on to be one of the great men of Russia. "I think you're one of the kind," he confides to Raskolnikov, "who even if his intestine were being cut out would stand looking at his torturers with a smile—as long as he'd found a God, or a faith" (1991: 532). Porfiry's faith is in a great future for his country and he believes the student Raskolnikov capable of embracing that faith.

Raskolnikov does find the faith of Porfiry and he finds it through and with others, not over their dead bodies or despite them. Raskolnikov's redemption and faith are found in his embracing Sonya and through her humanity as a whole. Even the doomed Svidrigailov sees Raskolnikov's potential, mentioning to Dunya that her brother will "accomplish a lot of good works yet, and all this will be wiped from the slate... He may yet be a great man" (1991: 567). Porfiry's alluding to his latent greatness prompts Raskolnikov at one point to accuse the police lieutenant of playing prophet.

Representing modernity and new ideas in Russia, Porfiry sees punishment as a chance for rehabilitation. Therefore he gives Raskolnikov time to come to grips with his crime, to recognize that he is not above other men and women, and to commit himself to humanity by first accepting responsibility for his actions. Porfiry never wavers in his determination concerning Raskolnikov's potential. "I say, don't turn your nose up at life!" the police inspector admonishes a young man with years of prison time ahead of him. "You've still a great deal ahead of you" (1991: 531).

"Pain and suffering are inevitable for persons of broad awareness and depth of heart," Raskolnikov explains to a friend. "The truly great are, in my view, always bound to feel a great sense of sadness during their time upon earth" (1991: 317). Throughout *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov is torn by a great sense of sadness, of remorse and indecision. Pain and suffering are his. By the end of the novel, Raskolnikov has shown himself to be one of great awareness and depth of heart. He may not be the Extraordinary Man of his theory, but as Porfiry intuited, Raskolnikov is an extraordinary man.

What factors lead Raskolnikov to want to be an extraordinary man in the first place? He hasn't spent 10 years in a cave like Nietzsche's prophet. Raskolnikov is a poor ex-student with troubles. He fears he is letting his family down. His girlfriend has recently died. His money woes include nonpayment of rent to his landlady. Raskolnikov is unhappy with who he is and wants to be something else. He looks to historical figures like Napoleon and Lycurgus as heroes, "the law-makers and guiding spirits of mankind," but heroes whose societies did not recognize as such (1991: 312). Raskolnikov feels extraordinary men "are destroyers, or have a tendency that way, depending on their abilities"; they seek "the destruction of the present reality in the name of one that is better" though "the masses are almost never prepared to acknowledge them this right, they flog them and hound them (more or less)..." (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 313). Raskolnikov is convinced extraordinary men are so ahead of their times that they can only be misjudged, with their societies usually regarding them as criminals. Extraordinary man marches to his own drums and "for the sake of his idea," and when necessary, "to step over a dead body, over a pool of blood, then he is able within his own conscience..." to do so (1991: 313). Raskolnikov's embrace of the Extraordinary Man Theory is an attempt to rise above suffering humanity, of which he is all too well aware he is a part. "*You can't get along without us*," Porfiry reminds him, although the young murderer certainly tries (2002: 533). And it is humanity, in the form of his prostitute girlfriend Sonya, that will finally save Raskolnikov.

6.6 Svidrigailov as Extraordinary Man

In Section 6.3, I argued that the jester is an ubermensch. As far as I know, this is not a reading Nietzsche encouraged or would have agreed with. In much the same way I will argue here that a character from *Crime and Punishment* is the embodiment of Extraordinary Man Theory, although again Dostoyevsky never makes this explicit nor would I expect him to necessarily agree.

Arkady Ivanovich Svidrigailov is the epitome of Raskolnikov's Extraordinary Man Theory though Raskolnikov never seems to make the connection. Indeed, by the end of the novel, Raskolnikov views his sister's would-be suitor as "the most empty and worthless villain in all the world" (1991: 545). Still, the signs are undeniable. Raskolnikov, theorist of the Extraordinary Man, is drawn to Svidrigailov in whom "was concealed some hidden power that held sway over him" (1991: 535). Svidrigailov is too busy *being* an extraordinary man to ever consider himself one or conceive of such.

As an extraordinary man, Svidrigailov can commit heinous acts without compunction. "I'm a lecherous and idle man," he matter-of-factly tells Raskolnikov with no hint of irony (1991: 347). When Raskolnikov confronts him about the rape of a mute 13-year old who later hangs herself, Svidrigailov dismisses the issue as another of so many "banal little stories" (1991: 547). There are reasons to believe Svidrigailov responsible for the deaths of his manservant and wife, not least of which are the visits the departed pay him in his dreams. Further complicating the character, Svidrigailov is capable of decent acts, providing for Sonya's family once her stepmother dies.

Svidrigailov acts to satisfy his sensual desires. If a moment's impulse compels him to an act others will judge good he does so, but he doesn't act from some deontic justification. He acts because it pleases him at that time to do so. Svidrigailov views himself as above humanity and does not accept the sanction or validity of laws which are meant for everyone but himself. Raskolnikov, torn with doubt, confesses to Sonya at one point, "the very fact that I'd started to search my conscience and ask myself whether I had any right to assume power over someone else like that meant that I didn't. . ." (1991: 487). Svidrigailov doesn't stop to consider such matters because he is too busy fulfilling *his* needs as extraordinary man. He is without scruples and does not see why they matter to a man such as he. "Oh, I'm not really interested in what anyone thinks of me," he says to Raskolnikov (1991: 340).

Svidrigailov's fate illustrates the bankruptcy of Raskolnikov's theory. Svidrigailov has lived his life apart from humanity as an extraordinary man but another—a woman—brings about his downfall. Where Sonya accepts Raskolnikov, warts and all, Dunya completely rejects Svidrigailov. This forces the extraordinary man to realize that he is not above the fray. At one point in the novel Dostoyevsky has Svidrigailov admit to Raskolnikov, "I sometimes wish I were something . . . but I'm nothing, I have no specialty! Sometimes I get very bored" (1991: 542). Though Svidrigailov is ostensibly alluding to a calling, his sense of emptiness arises from more than the lack of a job.

Following Dunya's final rejection, Svidrigailov realizes how bereft he is. Bereft because he has effectively estranged himself from humanity in the mistaken belief that he was somehow above humanity. Svidrigailov has ignored the clues—namely his dreams—that he is a part of the human race. Dostoyevsky's message appears to be that no man can set himself apart from the species. Svidrigailov is not as self-sufficient as he thought himself to be.

Confronted with the realization that he needs humanity but humanity, in the form of Dunya, rejects him, Svidrigailov is broken. Indeed, he "*can't get along without us*," but he has painted himself into a hole. His only choice as extraordinary man is to commit suicide. Raskolnikov hears of Svidrigailov's death but doesn't see it as discrediting or even related to his theory.

6.7 The Burden of Freedom

Nietzsche's ubermensch, Raskolnikov's Extraordinary Man Theory, Vanguardism of the Left or Right, talented tenths, wanting to stand out and above, to lead, to know yourself different and unique and thereby greater than others, in short, aristocratic elitism, why does this tendency have such appeal and resonate as it does? With the advance of industrialization and capitalist theory and economic relations has come the triumph of bourgeois freedom. Bourgeois freedom is a freedom of abstract individuals where we stand alone, apart from others who face us as potential foes. We are "more independent, self-reliant, and critical," yet "more isolated, alone and afraid" at the same time (Fromm, 1994: 104). We find ourselves "threatened by powerful suprapersonal forces, capital and the market," powers rooted in human beings and our relationships but confronting us as otherworldly things over which we have little or no control (Fromm, 1994: 63). Our freedom is a burden, one many of us would readily jettison or surrender to another who promises us security, stability, and certainty.

What's wrong with the freedom we experience today in modern civilizations? People in contemporary Western societies are indeed free, but that freedom is tricky. Discussing the differences between political emancipation and the emancipation of humanity, Karl Marx noted that political emancipation, "the reduction of man...to a member of civil society, to an egoistic, independent individual, and...to a citizen, a juridical person" is a step in the right direction, but not a step far enough (1983: 100). Human emancipation eludes humanity at the same time that men and women are free.

Erich Fromm differentiates between positive and negative freedom. Negative freedom is freedom *from*, synonymous with bourgeois freedom. Freedom from is epitomized in the Western conception of democratic–capitalist freedom, an onerous freedom we suffer that can lead people to, in the words of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, "find some one quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom of which the ill-fated creature is born" (1929: 312). We are overwhelmed with a negative freedom that leaves us politically equal but individually alone and separate.

Negative freedom is seen in Dostoyevsky's Underground Man character, who remembers his life as "gloomy, untidy, and barbarously solitary. I had no friends, and even avoided speaking to people, retreating further and further into my corner" (1972: 47).

In Western societies and others forced to accept the Western developmental model, people are free individuals and we think ourselves such. No one tells us what to do, what to think, or who to vote for. However "modern political democracy, if it restricts itself to the purely political sphere, cannot sufficiently counteract the results of the...insignificance of the individual" (Fromm, 2000: 272). Ours is an abridged freedom and it carries a price. "The process of individualism is one of growing strength and integration of [a person's] individual personality," explains Fromm, "but it is at the same time a process in which the original identity with others is lost and in which the [person] becomes more separate from them" (1941: 30). The individualism that comes with our freedom brings with it a sense of loneliness, of isolation and purposelessness.

Consider the protagonist of Jean-Paul Sartre's short story, *The Childhood of a Leader*. On his journey from youth to adulthood, Lucien Fleurier wrestles with an existential angst centering on his existence and the absurdity of such. As he grows up, Lucien looks for answers and relief in a variety of sources including family, suicidal ideation, sexual experimentation, Freudian psychoanalysis, mentors, and friends. These all prove transitory and fail to relieve his anxiety. Lucien is left feeling alone and empty. "'To be alone,' he cried, wringing his hands, 'to have no one to advise me, to tell me if I'm on the right path'" (Sartre, 1948: 110).

Lucien finds relief in anti-Semitism and fascism. Hating Jews gives him a sense of identity. "I am Lucien! Somebody who can't stand Jews," he tells himself (Sartre, 1948: 142). Lucien wins respect and admiration from his peers for his anti-Semitism in interwar France. He insults guests at a party held at his friend Guigard's home. Instead of angering Guigard and making Lucien look like an idiot, Guigard remarks to him at school the following day that "my parents say you were right and you couldn't have done otherwise because of your convictions" (Sartre, 1948: 140).

In Lucien's mind, his anti-Semitism is bigger than he is. He tells Guigard "it's stronger than I am" and he tells himself that it is "sacred" (Sartre, 1948: 140 & 142). For an authoritarian personality such as Lucien's, hatred of Jews is a symptom of the burden of freedom. His virulent racism serves as a catalyst for Lucien's burgeoning megalomania. At the end of the story, he prepares to assume a role of leadership in life. "He had believed that he existed by chance for a long time...[but] His place in the sun was marked...long before his father's marriage: if he had come into the world it was to occupy that place..." (Sartre, 1948: 143). Assured of his place and meaning in life, Lucien decides to command men and women and grow a mustache—a nod to Hitler methinks?

The free person, alone and knowing she's alone, scared, feels he has no choice but "to fall back, to give up his freedom...to try to overcome his aloneness by eliminating the gap that has arisen between his individual self and the world" (Fromm, 1994: 139). Erich Fromm posits that the individual has at her disposal "mechanisms of escape" from the burden of freedom. Chief of these mechanisms is the

authoritarianism Lucien embraced. Authoritarianism is "the tendency to give up the independence of one's own individual self and to fuse with somebody or something outside of oneself in order to acquire the strength which the individual self is lacking" (Fromm, 1994: 140). In *Notes from Underground*, Underground Man tries to fuse himself with Liza the prostitute as Sartre's Lucien fused himself with fascism.

Authoritarianism can be exercised by becoming an authority over others or surrendering oneself to an authority. In the Grand Inquisitor chapter of *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan recounts a tale to his brother about Christ's return to earth and subsequent arrest by the Church. "[T]oday," the Grand Inquisitor tells Christ, "people are more persuaded than ever that they have perfect freedom yet they have brought their freedom to us and laid it humbly at our feet" (1929: 308). Echoing Nietzsche, the Grand Inquisitor lists "miracle, mystery and authority" as the powers capable of pacifying humanity's "fearful burden of free choice" (Dostoyevsky, 1929: 313). For Dostoyevsky's Inquisitor, freedom is a curse for the masses. What the people really want is "to find someone to worship" (1929: 311). People seek an authority figure that can "endure the freedom which they have found so dreadful and to rule over them" (1929: 311). Authoritarianism is an effort on the part of the individual to bridge a "gap that has arisen between his individual self and the world" (Fromm, 1994: 139).

The individual drawn to authoritarianism exhibits "the tendency to give up the independence of one's own self with somebody or something outside of oneself in order to acquire the strength which the individual self is lacking" (Fromm, 2000: 140). Comfort for the authoritarian personality—be she Lucien, Underground Man, the Grand Inquisitor or the people of whom the Grand Inquisitor speaks—comes in the form of masochistic and sadistic strivings.

Masochism manifests itself in feelings of inferiority, powerlessness, and individual insignificance (Fromm, 1994: 141). The Underground Man exemplifies impotence: "Not only couldn't I make myself anything: neither good nor bad, neither a scoundrel nor an honest man, neither a hero nor an insect" (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 16). His inferiority and insignificance shine through in admissions such as "nobody else was like me and I wasn't like anybody else. 'I am one person and they are everybody'" (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 48–49). His insignificance is rammed down his throat when a military officer manhandles him, physically moving Underground Man from out of his path on the St. Petersburg streets. "I could have forgiven him for striking me," Underground Man remembers, "But I couldn't forgive that moving me from place to place without even seeing me" (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 52). Raskolnikov is another Dostoyevsky character tormented by his powerlessness, with his "teasing monologues about his own impotence and lack of decision" (1991: 36).

The masochistic person blames fate for his problems. "The feature common to all authoritarian thinking," explains Fromm, "is the conviction that life is determined by forces outside of one man's self, his interest, his wishes" (1994: 169). Underground Man's travails with a tooth ache provide a case in point. He feels that his teeth will continue to hurt until "if something wills it, they will stop aching, and if it doesn't, they will go on aching for another three months" (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 24). Underground Man categorizes toothaches as another "practical joke of

an unidentified jester," in a word, fate (Ibid.). To the circumstances surrounding his crime, Raskolnikov imputes "a certain strangeness and mystery, as if it involved the working of certain peculiar influences and coincidences" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 99). After overhearing a conversation between a student and an officer in which the student lays out a plot to murder the very same pawnbroker Raskolnikov intends to, the protagonist of *Crime and Punishment* cannot shake a feeling "as though here some form of predestination, of augury had been at work" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 102). Masochistic strivings are a variant of the fatalism Freire described earlier on. As such masochistic strivings are a form of domestication, fitting the individual to the way the world is and not the way the world could be.

The masochistic personality type will submit to another in order to feel a part of something. "If the individual finds cultural patterns that satisfy these masochistic strivings (like the submission under the 'leader' in Fascist ideology)," notes Fromm, "he gains some security by finding himself united with millions of others. . ." (1941: 152). The masochistic personality is the epitome of Nietzsche's contemptuous herd and last men. This personality seeks "the values of complete submission" and a "craving for community of worship" that the Grand Inquisitor bespeaks (Dostoyevsky, 1929: 312 & 317). Sartre's Lucien finds a sense of self through belonging when he embraces racism and amuses his new friends with racist jokes: "Everybody began to laugh and a sort of exaltation came over Lucien" (1948: 134). Fromm's work on negative freedom and authoritarianism concerned the German people who believed themselves free and voted an Adolph Hitler into office. These are extreme examples. The masochistic personality can find relief in a religious movement, political party, or in a relationship with another person. We are social animals, so not every Baptist or Barak Obama supporter or woman who loves a man is evidence of the masochistic personality type, but we all know religious and political fanatics and individuals who are stuck in unhealthy relationships that exhibit this tendency.

The goal of masochistic strivings is "to get rid of the individual self, to lose oneself; in other words, to get rid of the burden of freedom" (Fromm, 1994: 151). Those who embrace masochism as a mechanism of escape are doomed to a "tormenting conflict," with the masochist seeking "to get rid of the individual self with all its shortcomings, conflicts, and unbearable aloneness, but they only succeed in removing the most noticeable pain or they even lead to greater suffering" (Fromm, 1994: 151 & 153).

Masochistic strivings often exist alongside sadistic strivings within the same person. Underground Man, Svidrigailov, and Raskolnikov all exemplify this blending. Fromm posits that the sadistic tendency manifests itself in many ways, including "the wish to make others suffer or to see them suffer. This suffering can be physical, but more often it is mental suffering" (1994: 143). Underground Man recounts his days as a civil servant, "I was a bad civil servant. I was rude, and I enjoyed being rude. . . When people used to come to the desk where I sat, asking for information, I snarled at them, and was hugely delighted when I succeeded in hurting somebody's feelings" (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 15). No, he didn't work at the DMV. The Underground Man's sadistic tendencies are further exemplified by his withholding of wages from his servant (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 109). *Crime and Punishment*'s

Svidrigailov desires Dunya, but as her mother explains in a letter to Raskolnikov, Svidrigailov's early "madcap had long had a hankering after Dunya, but had been concealing it beneath a façade of rudeness and contempt towards her" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 64).

The aim of the sadist "is to hurt actively, to humiliate, embarrass others, or to see them in embarrassing and humiliating situations" (Fromm, 1994: 143). Raskolnikov torments the prostitute Sonya, asking her, "You don't earn every day I hope?" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 380). Nice guy that he is, Raskolnikov suggests to Sonya that the future holds a life of prostitution for her little step-sister as well (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 380). Why does Raskolnikov devil the woman he loves? "[I]t was her tears I wanted, I wanted to see her fright, to watch her heart ache and torment itself!" he confesses (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 601).

Underground Man says equally nasty things to the prostitute Liza. On the morning following their first night together, he tells her, "...even though you are young and attractive and pretty now, with feelings and sensitivity; well, do you know, as soon as I woke just now, I was revolted to find myself here with you!" (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 96). Just the words a girl wants to hear, right? Consider his musings on his sadistic pillow talk: "For some time I had been feeling that I must have harrowed her soul and crushed her heart, and the more convinced I grew of it, the more I wanted to attain my end as quickly and as powerfully as possible" (1972: 100). "Do you know that you can deliberately torture somebody out of love?" Underground Man asks his readers (1972: 93). "The sadist needs the person over whom he rules," Fromm reminds us, "he needs him very badly, since his own feeling of strength is rooted in the fact that he is the master over someone" (1994: 144). "Without power and tyranny over somebody I can't live," confesses Underground Man (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 118).

The sadist, explains Fromm, bribes the object of his sadism "with material things, with praise, assurances of love, the display of wit and brilliance, or by showing concern" (1994: 145). Svidrigailov offers Dunya material goods, "holding out various rewards to her and telling her...that he would give up everything and move with her to another estate or possibly even abroad" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 65). He voices his concern to Raskolnikov that Dunya is marrying another for the sake of her family (1991: 347). Svidrigailov shows up in the novel offering to give Dunya 10,000 rubles (1991: 348). He suggests he can save Dunya's brother if she consents to be with him: "Yes...one word from you, and he is saved! I...I will save him" (1991: 568).

Likewise, Underground Man seeks to assert his power over Liza. "I have reached the stage," he confides, "when I sometimes think how that the whole of love consists in the right...to tyrannize over the beloved" (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 119). A desire for power and tyranny over the loved one is a not uncommon feature of love in modern society. This "lust for power is not rooted in strength but in weakness," says Fromm. "It is the expression of the inability of the individual self to stand alone and live. It is the desperate attempt to gain secondary strength where genuine strength is lacking" (1994: 160). "In the end one loves one's desire and not what is desired," opines Nietzsche (1989: 93). Do Svidrigailov and Underground Man truly love Sonya and Liza or do they love the idea of being loved and being in love?

6.8 Dostoyevsky's Portents

Henry Giroux explains that "domination is subjectively experienced through its internalization and sedimentation in the very needs of the personality" (in Freire, 1985: xix). In several of Dostoyevsky's characters, we see authoritarian character structure at work, both the sadistic and masochistic variants. Dostoyevsky lived and set his novels in a Russia that had only recently started along the path to modernization and westernization. Underground Man and characters from *Crime and Punishment*—notably Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov—are portents, the human reflections of a new mode of life and production just beginning to take hold in Dostoyevsky's St. Petersburg.

The authoritarian character "admires authority and tends to submit to it, but at the same time he wants to be an authority himself and have others submit to him" (Fromm, 1994: 162). The Authoritarian Character also combines "a tendency to defy authority and to resent any kind of influence from 'above' " (Fromm, 1994: 167). This explains another seemingly contradictory attitude at work in a character like Underground Man: on the one hand he holds certain segments of his society in high esteem; on the other he detests these very segments. For example, he expresses a "great respect for medicine and for doctors," yet at the same time scorns "all those venerable elders, those silver-haired, fragrant old men," the "extremely wise and experienced advisers and head-shakers" (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 15–17).

"For the authoritarian character there exist, so to speak, two sexes: the powerful ones and the powerless ones" writes Fromm (1994: 166). This dichotomy is seen in both *Notes From Underground* and *Crime and Punishment*. Underground Man identifies "men like that, men of action, doers" and men like "us. . .men who think and therefore don't do anything" (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 20). He is "green with envy" of these spontaneous men, yet he also has contempt for them. "They are stupid" these "people with strong nerves, who don't understand certain refinements of pleasure." (1972: 21–22). For the Authoritarian Character, "the world is composed of people with power and those without it, of superior ones and inferior ones" (Fromm, 1994: 171).

Authoritarian philosophy "is rooted in extreme desperation, in the complete lack of faith, and it leads to nihilism, to the denial of life" (Fromm, 1994: 171). Ilya Petrovitch, another police official (but no relation to Porfiry the detective), asks Raskolnikov if he is a nihilist, explaining that "you know, there's an awful lot of nihilists around these days; well, I mean, it's understandable; what kind of times are these, I ask you?" (1991: 606). Though not a form of nihilism, Raskolnikov's Extraordinary Man theory is rooted in desperation. As Svidrigailov explains, Raskolnikov's fraught existence is marked by "hunger, cramped living quarters, ragged clothing, a vivid awareness of the splendor of his social position, and of the situation of his mother and sister" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 566).

The Authoritarian Character disdains those he perceives as weak. "[P]owerless people or institutions automatically arouse his contempt," Fromm notes. "The very sight of a powerless person makes him want to attack, dominate, humiliate. . ." (1994: 167). When first meeting Liza in the brothel, Underground Man recalls,

"Something foul seemed to sting me; I went straight to her. . ." (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 85). Her "naïve expectation" drives him into a rage (1972: 112). Toward the end of the novella, when Liza comes to visit him in his squalor and finds him berating his servant, Underground Man is "vaguely aware that I should make her pay dearly for all this." (1972: 112). For the Authoritarian Character, "lack of power is always an unmistakable sign of guilt and inferiority" (Fromm, 1994: 170). "He suffered greatly," Svidrigailov says of Raskolnikov, "and is still suffering, from the notion that while he was able to construct a theory, he wasn't able to do the stepping across without reflection, and so consequently is not a man of genius" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 566).

The sadistic personality type requires another person to rule over "since his own feeling of strength is rooted in the fact that he is the master over someone" (Fromm, 1994: 144). Sadism also represents an escape attempt from "the isolation and weakness of one's own self" (Fromm, 2000: 156). Sartre's Lucien becomes a sadistic figure preparing to further dominate others. The sadistic personality also shares a fatalistic life view, seeing life ruled by fate and destiny. Thus Lucien's conviction at the end of Sartre's story that fate has delivered him to his position of dominance. Or Raskolnikov's certainty that extraordinary men are the result of "a process that so far remains a mystery to us," "a law of some kind" as "all this cannot be the result of chance" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 315–316).

Sadism is alive and well in the everyday classroom. Students are sadistic to other students, and there are teachers who can be sadistic to students as well. My experience has been that some adults, frustrated with their professional or personal lives, take out there disappointment and aggression on others. Unfortunately, the children in their classrooms make convenient victims. Such sadism teaches students by its existence that it is acceptable, that the power differential between teacher and student justifies it.

6.9 Love and Dostoyevsky's Characters

For Fromm, the full answer to the problem of freedom "lies in the achievement of interpersonal union, of fusion with another person, in *love*" (2000: 17). "The deepest need of man," he writes, ". . . is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness" (2000: 9). Mechanisms of escape like the masochistic and sadistic strivings are attempts to transcend the isolation and lonesomeness inherent in modern freedom. "Man can only go forward. . .by finding a new harmony, a human one" (Fromm, 2000: 7). Love is the answer to the problem of freedom.

Underground Man and Svidrigailov do not find love and hence never progress to positive freedom. They fail to transcend the vicious cycle of separation and forced solitude. "Being separate means being cut off. . . ." Fromm reminds us, "Separateness is the source of intense anxiety" (2000: 8). Borrowing from Fromm's parlance, these two characters are only able to achieve *symbiotic union*. Symbiotic union is an "immature form of love"; immature in that it is not a fully developed human capacity. The active form of symbiotic union is domination, sadism; the

passive form is submission, masochism (2000: 17). "Isolation, separation, loneliness reduces relations among men to a struggle for superiority or inferiority," notes George Lukacs (1962: 151). Unable to achieve union with others, Underground Man and Svidrigailov cannot realize their full human potential.

Fromm sees a dissolution of love in Western society. For most individuals, love does not represent a complete realization of the self with another, but an attempt to assuage the "terrors and horrors of existence." Fromm decries the "socially patterned pathology of love," a "herd mentality" he espies in Western society's concept of love. In Western capitalist society, relations between human beings "are essentially those of alienated automatons," where everyone tries to conform to a point such that nonconformity *is* conformity, with the result that "everybody remains utterly alone, pervaded by the deep sense of insecurity, anxiety and guilt which always results when human separateness cannot be overcome" (2000: 84).

This socially patterned pathology of love is seen clearly in both Underground Man and Svidrigailov. "Their aim is to be loved, not to love," Fromm could have been writing of either Dostoyevsky character. "There is usually a good deal of vanity in this type of man, more or less hidden grandiose ideas" (2000: 88). One of Underground Man's "hidden grandiose ideas" is a fantasy involving Liza seeking her salvation in him. In his fantasy,

> I save Liza by the mere fact that she comes to me and I talk to her. . .I develop her, educate her. . . Finally I notice that she loves me, loves me passionately. . . . Finally, covered with confusion, beautiful, trembling and sobbing, she throws herself at my feet and declares that I am her savior and she loves me better than anything else in the world (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 106–107).

Underground Man's fantasy reveals his vanity, his sadistic strivings, and his fundamental need to be loved and mesh with another. It is a need that will go unmet because he can only view love in terms of domination and submission. "Even in my underground dreams," he confesses, "I did not picture love otherwise than as a struggle, always beginning with hatred and ending with moral subjugation" (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 119). Underground Man has an inkling of what love can do. He recognizes that love, for a woman "comprises all resurrection, all salvation from whatever sort of ruin, and all regeneration. . ." (Ibid.). But Underground Man cannot—will not—love Liza: ". . .I could no longer fall in love, because, I repeat, with me to love meant to tyrannize and hold the upper hand morally" (Ibid.). His inability to love is not a recent development; it is a part of his character structure as a resident of the burgeoning metropolis of St. Petersburg where "we are all in a greater or lesser degree crippled" by authoritarian character structures (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 122).

Underground Man arouses both our pity and our contempt. In him we see the "tormenting conflict" of Fromm's mechanisms of escape at work. When Liza visits, he breaks down, chastising her, himself, his poverty, and the way he treats his servant. Liza pities him, understanding, as Underground Man himself does, "that part of it that a woman always understands first, if she sincerely loves, and that was that I myself was unhappy" (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 117). Liza comforts Underground Man, embracing him as he cries. "How I hated her and how strongly I was attracted to

her at that moment!" (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 118). But Underground Man has to screw things up: he insults Liza, drives her from him, adds insult to injury by pressing money into her hand on her departure. When he finds she has tossed his "crumpled blue five-ruble note" on the table, he rushes out into the street to find her, kiss her feet, and beg her forgiveness (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 121). But Liza is gone and it is too late for the Underground Man.

Fromm wrote of individuals "who say things which antagonize those whom they love or on whom they are dependent. . . . With such people, it almost seems as if they were following advice given them by an enemy to behave in such a way as to be most detrimental to themselves" (1994: 142). "Knavery so easily goes with sentiment," concurs Underground Man (Dostoyevsky, 1972: 93). His knavery costs him his love and his possibility of realizing positive freedom. His sadistic and masochistic behaviors are symptoms of his authoritarian character structure. Underground Man could be the poster boy for Fromm's authoritarian character. "Just try giving us, for example, as much independence as possible," invites Underground Man, recalling the words of the Grand Inquisitor, "untie the hands of any one of us, loosen our bonds, and we. . . . I assure you we should all immediately beg to go back under discipline" (1972: 122).

Svidrigailov is another example of a Dostoyevsky character that is only capable of a socially patterned pathology of love. In Fromm's concept of *idolatrous love*, the idolater idolizes the loved person because he is "alienated from his own powers as he projects them onto the loved one" (1991: 92). Svidrigailov idolizes Dunya, telling Raskolnikov "your sister possesses so many virtues," whereas he is a lazy lecher (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 347). Idolatrous love is characterized by "the intensity and suddenness of the love experience" at the beginning of the relationship (Fromm, 2000: 92). Svidrigailov never admits it, but there are indications that he poisoned his wife in order to get her out of the way that he might have Dunya. He follows the girl and her mother to St. Petersburg. His love for Dunya is both sudden and intense.

Idolatrous love is often considered the "great love" but actually "demonstrates the hunger and despair of the idolater" (Fromm, 2000: 92). Svidrigailov's attempts at securing Dunya's love would fail to rescue him even if he succeeded in possessing her. In his overtures to Dunya, Svidrigailov seeks the comfort of symbiotic union. He seeks to lose himself in Dunya, to merge with her person. "Whatever you tell me to do, I will do it!" he implores her. "I will do anything. I will do the impossible. Whatever you believe in, I will believe in it too. I'll do anything, anything!" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 568).

Svidrigailov has stood alone most of his life, setting himself apart from the rest of humanity. He arrives in St. Petersburg and has no human contact. "This is the third day I've been at large," he tells Raskolnikov when they first meet, "and I haven't declared myself to anyone" (1991: 341). The embodiment of Raskolnikov's Extraordinary Man theory, by the end of the novel Svidrigailov is revealed to be less self-sufficient than he presumes himself to be. No man can set himself apart from humanity; recall the words of police inspector Porfiry: "You can't get along without us." Of modern man Fromm writes, "He would become insane could he not liberate himself from this prison [of isolation and separateness] and reach out, unite

himself in some form or other with men, with the world outside" (2000: 8). Rejected by Dunya, Svidrigailov is unable to connect with the "world outside," he cannot "overcome his separateness" or "leave the prison of his aloneness" (Fromm, 2000: 8–9). He spends his last night of Earth plagued by nightmares and the thought that "perhaps she [Dunya] would have made a new man of me somehow" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 581). The following morning he blows his brains out.

In contrast to the symbiotic union of masochistic and sadistic relationships, love "is union under the condition of preserving one's integrity, one's individuality" (Fromm, 2000: 19). Svidrigailov and Underground Man seek a love whose attainment would mean the loss of the self in another. Fromm writes that love is "an active power" in human beings, a power that "unites" people and helps them overcome their isolation while at the same time allowing them to retain their "integrity." Unlike symbiotic union, "[i]n love the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two" (Fromm, 2000: 19).

Love is the answer to the problem of freedom. Love lets one "fuse with another person so as to transcend the prison of one's separateness" (2000: 27). Sonya is Raskolnikov's link to humanity: "he had felt that in her lay his only hope and salvation" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 490). He expresses this when he bows to her, kissing her feet, and explaining, "It wasn't you I was bowing to, but the whole of human suffering" (1991: 380). "We live as one, in harmony," Sonya explains (1991: 377). Petrovich expresses a bond with Raskolnikov, "a sense of humaneness" that goes beyond the individual and makes one "forever obliged to be aware of the citizen and the human being in myself" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 606). Fromm sees love as "the force which keeps the human race together, the clan, the family, society" (2000: 17). Once Raskolnikov finds love in Sonya, he is able to accept his punishment. He can bond with his fellow human beings. Where his fellow prisoners first treat him with disdain, Raskolnikov finds "he had actually begun to talk to them, and they had replied to him in kindly tones" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 629).

Love is act of revolutionary human consciousness. "In the act of loving, of giving myself," writes Fromm, ". . .I find myself, I discover myself, I discover us both, I discover man" (2000: 29). Fusing with another in love, "I know you, I know myself, I know everybody. . ." (2000: 28). Fusing with Sonya in a healthy love relationship, Raskolnikov is saved. Love leads him to a "gradual renewal, his gradual rebirth, his gradual transition from one world to another" (Dostoyevsky, 1991: 630). Sonya and Raskolnikov face a "renewed future, and complete recovery to a new life" (1991: 629). Dostoyevsky tells us that "What had revived them was love, the heart of the one containing an infinite source of life for the heart of the other" (ibid.).

6.10 Democracy on the Offensive

"The serious threat to our democracy," John Dewey points out, "is not the existence of foreign totalitarian states. It is the existence within our own personal attitudes and within our own institutions of conditions which have given a victory to external authority, discipline, uniformity and dependence upon The Leader in foreign

countries" (cited in Fromm, 2000: 3). In a similar vein, Erich Fromm counsels "it is our task to recognizer that the black miracle of Nazism was only the German version...of a universal contemporary potential" (1994: 327). We are born and socialized to roles our society's institutions and relationships make available to us. In the end, as Dewey notes, "the best test of any form of society is the ideal which it proposes for the forms of its life, and the degree in which it realizes this ideal" (1993: 65). Throughout this book, I have railed against "black miracles" and dehumanization in favor of greater democracy and positive freedom. But greater democracy and humanization won't evolve on their own; it is up to us to work together incessantly for their realization. What were burgeoning character traits seen in the fictional characters of Dostoyevsky and promoted in the philosophy of Nietzsche are today full-blown realities we can grow into or fight against. "A good democracy," says Freire, "warns, clarifies, teaches, and educates. It also defends itself from the actions of those who, by offending their human nature, deny and demean democracy" (1996: 156). The victory of freedom and humanization is a possibility, but for its realization "democracy must take the offensive" (Fromm, 1994: 274).

In the United States of America and her classrooms, we talk about democracy a lot. Noam Chomsky says that "the more there is a need to talk about the ideals of democracy, the less democratic the system usually is" (2000: 17). Not surprisingly our schools are rarely democratic spaces. And the democracy discussed in them almost always refers to a truncated form, the political form. Dewey notes that political democracy "is not the most inspiring of the different meanings of democracy," while Freire holds that "the democracy that is solely political denies itself" (1997: 173; 1996: 146). Democracy "is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicative experience" (Dewey, 1993: 110). Democracy is a way of life. As such it should inform every facet of our existence, from our personal relationships to our economic and social systems. "A social democracy," explains Dewey,

> signifies, most obviously, a state of social life where there is a wide and varied distribution of opportunities; where there is social mobility or scope for change of position and station; where there is free circulation of experiences and ideas, making for a wide recognition of common interests and purposes, and where utility of social and political organization to its members is so obvious as to enlist their warm and constant support in its behalf (1993: 122).

"To be realized," Dewey says of democracy, "it must affect all modes of human association, the family, the school, industry, religion" (1928: 143). A truly political democracy is not possible except where "democracy is social—where, if you please, it is moral" (Dewey, 1993: 121). Paulo Freire warns that we shouldn't dismiss democracy because it turns out so often to be a sham. Instead, "the fundamental point" is to perfect it (Freire, 1996: 137).

Dewey describes democracy as "a way of life controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature" (1993: 242). The democratic faith "has always professed belief in the potentialities of every human being, and all the need for providing conditions that will enable these potentialities to come to realization" (Dewey, 1993: 208). But this faith needs to be enacted for it "becomes sentimental when it is not put systematically into practice everyday in all the relationships of

living" (Ibid.). Critical pedagogy is an attempt to realize democracy in the everyday classroom in our relationships with our students, other staff members, and subject matter.

Education is an indispensable ingredient in the realization of democracy. Democracy must be created and recreated, tweaked and enhanced. Education, as Dewey noted, is democracy's "mid-wife," helping it to develop (1993: 122). "Dehumanization," notes Freire, "is a concrete expression of alienation and domination; humanistic education is a utopian project of the dominated and oppressed" (1985: 113). Democracy is never a finished product. It cannot be static. Democracy is interested "in deliberate and systematic education" because democracy is "a form of social life in which interests are mutually interpenetrating, and where progress, or readjustment, is an important consideration" (Dewey, 1993: 110). Democracy survives, thrives, and spreads by constantly being recreated and renegotiated, adapting to the times and places where it is cultivated. Democracy depends on "social and emotional traits" that "do not grow spontaneously on bushes" but "have to be planted and nurtured" and "are dependent upon education" (Dewey, 1993: 122). Whether in schools or elsewhere, education must teach democracy by first and foremost modeling it. The social and emotional traits that make democracy realizable are militated against by many of the institutions and relationships our societies engender. Democracy "repudiates the principle of external authority" and "must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest" which "can be created only by education" (Dewey, 1993: 110).

John Dewey lived and worked in a time of unprecedented worldwide industrial expansion. Industrialization did not have to go down the way it did. It could have been reigned in and kept in check to make it more humane and capable of humanizing. Noting that "human acts have consequences on others," some perceived, planned for and desirable, others not, Dewey posits that "the machine age" led to the exponential growth of consequences and the number of people affected by them. These consequences continue to be largely felt but not foreseen. The public—people brought together by "the lasting, extensive and serious consequences of associated activity"—is "eclipsed" by modern life in this machine age, "diffused and scattered and too intricate in composition" (Dewey, 1954: 67 & 137). Dewey recognized what was truly on the line in all this. "For it is humanity and the human spirit that are at stake," he wrote, "and not just what is sometimes called 'the individual,' since the latter is a value in potential humanity and not as something separate and atomic" (1993: 209).

Industrial democratic societies need education because "a society which is mobile, which is full of channels for the distribution of change occurring anywhere, must see to it that its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability" (Dewey, 1993: 111). In a vast metropolitan country like the United States of America differences between people may be more recognizable than similarities. Dewey noted that "only education. . .can guarantee widespread community of interest and aim" (1993: 122). Instead of looking at one another as fellow human beings who want to be more, we too often view each other warily through lenses clouded by class, gender, race, and other perceived and real differences. Such differences

"are so very great in our complicated industrial civilization, that men will not see across and through the walls which separate them, unless they have been trained to do so" (Dewey, 1993: 122). Humanistic education through critical pedagogy is the training Dewey alludes to. Unfortunately, today in schools "the social spirit is not cultivated" and in fact "gradually atrophies for lack of use" (Dewey, 1993: 98). Education appeals to emotions today (e.g., fear, emulation, rivalry) that work against humanization and the realization of what Dewey referred to as the "great community" (Dewey, 1993: 99; 28: 166).

Schools and the everyday classroom should "*share* in the building of the social order of the future" (Dewey, 1993: 127). The dehumanization and limit situations we face today "cannot be corrected by merely negative means; they can be eliminated only by substitution of just and humane conditions" (Dewey, 1993: 128). The discussion of what "just and humane conditions" look like is a discussion that will take place throughout our societies, including within our schools. Our everyday classrooms must contribute to this dialogue by modeling these conditions. Students "could be helped to learn democracy through the *exercise* of democracy," writes Freire, "for that knowledge above all others, can only be assimilated experientially" (2005: 32). Further, "the best way to struggle for this ethic is to live it in our educative practice, in our relations with our students, in the way we deal with the contents of what we teach. . ." (Freire, 1998a: 24). Dewey says we must always work toward "extending the application of democratic methods, methods of consultation, persuasion, negotiation, cooperative intelligence in the task of making our own politics, industry, education—our culture generally—a servant and an evolving manifestation of democratic ideas" (1993: 205). Our critical pedagogies must enact our democratic methods while mirroring our democratic ideals.

As human beings we are aware that we are conditioned and not determined and that "to educate is essentially to form" (Freire, 1998a: 39). We are agents in our sociohistorical realities. "I like being human, being a person," says Freire, because ". . .My destiny is not a given but something that needs to be constructed and for which I must assume responsibility" (1998a: 54). We act because we know change is possible and hope to bring it about. We must constantly step across toward the greater democratization and humanization of our lives, relationships, and institutions. Hope refuses to die because "though I know things can get worse, I also know that I am able to intervene to improve them" (Freire, 1998a: 53). This understanding is why Freire considered hope an "ontological dimension of our human condition" (1998a: 58). We're not finished as individuals and as a species. "When you're finished you're dead," says Myles Horton (1990: 234).

But hope is more than an ontological component of individual human existence. Hope is also equally a phylogenic human necessity because we are social animals. In the everyday classroom steeped in critical pedagogy, hope is shared between teacher and student. This shared hope is an on-going construction project. Our mutual hope is the "hope that we can learn together, teach together, be curiously impatient together, produce something together, and resist together the obstacles that prevent the flowering of joy" (Freire, 1998a: 69).

Freire explains that as a species we face a reality that "happens to be this just as it could well be something else. And if we so-called progressive thinkers want it to be something else, we have to struggle" (1998a: 71). Dewey noted that "the battlefield is. . .accordingly here—within ourselves and our institutions" (in Fromm, 2000: 4). This has been a book about critical pedagogy and the everyday classroom, so it has focused on schools and formal education. Yet our struggle encompasses more than the traditional one-room country school house or the multistoried urban brick factory school. "The ideal is to fight against the system taking the two fronts," explains Freire, "the one internal to the schooling system and the one external to the schooling system" (Shor & Freire, 1990: 203). Freedom isn't free: it must be constantly fought for while the forces encroaching on it are staved off and eradicated.

When Fromm says that democracy must take the offensive he means that wherever and whenever possible our democratic faith must be enacted in democratic ways of life. Critical pedagogy is a form of democratic schooling. Our democratic faith fuels our hope for a better tomorrow for our students, our children, and ourselves. This hope makes possible and is itself the product of our utopian thinking, the critical denouncing, and prophetic announcing that together guides our democracy as it takes the offensive in the realizable quest for humanization.

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Index