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Bringing Freire back to the forefront

Christina Athineos¹

A Review of:

Pedagogy, oppression and transformation in a 'post-critical' climate: The return of Freirean thinking

Edited by Andrew O'Shea and Maeve O'Brien. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

Pedagogy, Oppression, and Transformation in a Post-Critical Climate ingeniously pairs the tenements of Freirean thinking with a new, powerful set of voices to produce a work that unabashedly calls for change in our current educational system. Although originally written to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, each chapter provides a fresh perspective on how much of Freire's philosophy is still relevant today.

For readers who are unfamiliar with Freire's work and the ideas of critical pedagogy, this text may be difficult to fully absorb. Aimed mainly at educators who already have a solid foundation of Freirean concepts, much of the terminology used throughout the book originates from Freire's previous writing. Therefore, trying to dive right into this text without a clear understanding of Freirean themes such as dialogic praxis, conscientization, and education as oppression may be less fruitful than reading Freire's works beforehand.

The first five chapters address issues of class, gender, and culture, underlining both how and why these areas create differences in power between the teacher and student. For readers who have previously been exposed to only traditional forms of schooling, these chapters will likely challenge their core beliefs. This timely discourse urges the readers to acknowledge our own complicity in an unjust world and calls for an attempt to unlearn what has been repeatedly impressed upon us so that we may open our minds to a deeper, truer discourse. In line with Freirean philosophy, this book requires the realization of one's consciousness in order for the reader to truly engage in an honest dialogue about oppression and the need to liberate education.

While the first half of the book is devoted to highlighting the vast types of power inequalities, the final chapters target the feasibility of actually creating changes to transform our modern-day curriculum. It is here that the authors reiterate the importance of the dialogic process in humanization, stressing the power of language in the efforts towards liberation. Special interest should be paid to Chapter 7, where author Jones Irwin reflects on the ways the Birmingham Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies has subverted existing academic boundaries to criticize the current relationships within our society.

By the end of this paradigm-shifting book, the reader is left with a better understanding of their own contributions to oppression and with a clearer vision as to how they can transform pedagogy to promote humanization within an era that clings to individualization, rationalization, and justification. While the authors make no implication that this will be an easy endeavor, we

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are reminded that only through respect for another will we be able to surpass the nature of our own beliefs, gaining the knowledge and power to take constructive action.

References

O'Shea, A., & O'Brien, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Pedagogy, oppression and transformation in a 'post-critical' climate: The return of Freirean thinking*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.