"Thinking better, whatever one thinks": Dialogue, monologue and critical literacy in education

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In this article, I offer an analysis of Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry (OSDE) as one important approach for the creation of spaces for the promotion of critical literacy in systems dominated by monological 'banking' education. I define critical literacy as the ability to put one's beliefs in perspective and to explore and account for their origins, which are to be found in social and discursive constructions and the quilting and assembling of multiple, complex, diverse relations into specific ways of seeing and being. From this perspective, critical literacy is thus intrinsically connected to the arrival at autonomous subjectivity. I argue that autonomous subjectivity can only be arrived at by obtaining the capacity to think critically, to be critically literate, including understanding the origins of perspectives, their context-relativity, and the means by which they can be used strategically by oneself and others.

This article is divided into four parts. I start by connecting critical literacy with an ethics of autonomous thought. In the second part, I present the argument against epistemological privilege that, like OSDE, proposes that all perspectives are context-dependent, partial and provisional. In the third and fourth parts, I outline arborescence and rhizomes (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) as tools for analysis of conceptions of knowledge as absolute truth and the possibility of the emergence of dialogue and critical literacy in pedagogical work. In the last part of the paper, I address some of the common critiques of OSDE. I draw on the work of Postman and Weingartner (1969), Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Derrida (1976), Foucault (2001) and Spivak (1994), amongst others, to argue that the kind of dialogue promoted by OSDE has the potential to shift the ways people think about knowledge, self and other and that this shift is crucial in developing autonomous learners who can 'speak their word' and not be spoken for.

Autonomous Thought

One might refer to autonomy as a starting-point for theorising the ethics of critical literacy, though there are also a number of other places one could start. Autonomous subjectivity requires a capacity to think critically, and this capacity can only be obtained through a dialogical openness to other perspectives; it also requires awareness of the underlying assumptions and biases of one's own perspective—hence requiring the intellectual skill of critical literacy. The pursuit of autonomy, in the sense of speaking one's own word and hence living/creating one's own world, is ethically crucial. Contrary to a common prejudice, it is not solely a product of the western Enlightenment; indeed, it is often radically denied in the universalism of Enlightenment reason. Societies which have a strong sense of the relationality of being/becoming are already in many regards more realising of autonomy than those which have to struggle against a heritage of false universalism, banking education and reactive character-structures. The ability to speak one's own word is inseparable from a relational openness both in and to others, an awareness of one's relationality, an awareness of the constructedness of one's beliefs and an ability to construct/reconstruct out of otherness rather than just mechanically repeat whatever residues one has inherited from one's context. Hence, the choice is not between forming one's own perspective and not forming one's own perspective. The choice is

between reflexively forming a perspective, and forming one inadvertently, unconsciously and with the risk of being manipulated by others.

Postman and Weingartner (1969) propose that in order to have democracy, people have to have both a will to exercise freedom and "the intellectual power and perspective to do so effectively" (p.15). This is threatened by people who identify with present ideas and institutions "which they wish to keep free from either criticism or change", and who see change in these institutions as inconvenient or even intolerable (p.15). All teaching involves teaching a language, "a way of talking and therefore of seeing the world" (p. 103). New teaching is therefore a new language and leads to new possibilities of perception (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p.103). Similarly, Reimer (1971) thinks that people who are deprived of a voice have forgotten how to speak or even think about some issues except through the dominant culture's rationalizing mythologies. Regarding the content of education, Reimer thinks that, since people understand the world through language, it is important that everyone be given the opportunity to learn to use it critically and reflexively rather than to obscure and distort. This does not necessarily mean speaking several languages; the important point is to "learn not to be naïve" (Reimer, 1971, p. 100) about language.

In order to clarify this point, a distinction can and should be drawn between *what* one thinks (the specific perspective one holds) and *how* one thinks (with or without critical literacy and autonomy). The point of autonomy is not, therefore, to develop a specific perspective, but to provide access to skills of thinking and dialogue which enable enriched thinking: in the words of Gramsci, "thinking well, whatever one thinks, and therefore acting well, whatever one does" (1985, p. 25). Monological closure restricts the formulation of one's own voice, whereas dialogue provides multiple perspectives which can trigger lines of flight. The construction of an autonomous, ethical position from a complex situation of intertextual flows requires an activity of *bricolage*, assembling a perspective from aspects of different voices and materials. Someone without the means to carry out bricolage may be unable to express experiences which haven't been encoded in the existing dominant language. Alternatively, their actual experience might be impoverished, with everything refracted through a few fixed categories. Awareness of other perspectives is crucial to expanding awareness of and interaction with the complexity of actual social and ecological relations.

Perspective-Relativity

Critical literacy would have to emerge in a field where there is no single perspective, and not under the remit of one such perspective. To understand its importance, it is necessary to have some sense of the multiplicity of the perspectival field. According to Korzybski (1995), the complexity of reality is refracted into conceptual language on multiple levels—only a few of the many aspects of reality are perceived through each person's sensory organs; of these only a few are registered consciously; and of these, only a few aspects are given linguistic specificity in particular concepts. A perspective may therefore be 'true', in a partial, limited sense, and connected to aspects of reality; but it is not the whole of the truth, as there are other aspects which are elided or passed over in its formation. Each label for an object, phenomenon, action or being for example expresses only a few of its many attributes or aspects through a concept used to describe it (a 'table' for instance is defined by function and a 'dog' by species, but each may be of many different shapes, sizes and colours). What's more, there are likely to be many more attributes which are not covered by the entire spectrum of a language, which cannot even be added adjectivally. Some will not even be accessible to perception by

normal means. Different perspectives and frameworks will perceive and theorise different aspects of reality; two incompatible perspectives, using very different frameworks, may thus arrive at different partial truths which, while incommensurable, are also partially true.

Paraphrasing Korzybski, the radical educators Postman and Weingartner (1969) propose a stained-glass window model of reality: Everyone looks through their own window, which makes the outside seem different to what it is; everyone has a different window; and nobody has direct access to the outside without the mediation of a window. They are concerned that people are unaware of this construction of their perspective.

> An insensitivity to the unconscious effects of our 'natural' metaphors condemns us to highly constricted perceptions of how things are and, therefore to highly limited alternative modes of behaviour (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p.18).

Postman and Weingartner (1969) argue that people who are unaware that their language operates in such a way are particularly prone to adopt closed systems of language which generate prejudice. They suggest that people also need to learn to use an 'anthropological perspective' on their own society, i.e. to observe present society's rituals, fears, conceits and ethnocentric biases as if from the outside. Postman and Weingartner argue that overgeneralisation leads to immediate action on the basis of unverified evidence and that "the more ways of talking one is capable of, the more choices one can make and solutions one can invent" (p. 120), and the more meanings one's experience has, the more it can generate. We can't avoid making judgements, they claim, but we should be conscious of them and try to suspend judgement. In contrast, today many people make stereotypical and hasty judgements which make them poor learners. Judgements are always subjective and "relative to the data upon which they are based and to the emotional state of the judge", and they can be harmful (p.187). They argue that judgements turn people and things from processes into fixed states, and are often self-fulfilling, producing what they assert (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p.187-8).

Similar perspectives could be multiplied, from the relational aspect of Harvey's mapping of geography (2001) and Nemeth's (1980) account of Gramsci's phenomenological Marxism, to the so-called 'Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis' of cultural relativity which has been influential in anthropology, through to the rise of poststructuralist theory, from Kuhn's (1970) account of scientific paradigms to Foucault's (2001, 2002) reconstruction of discursive emergences and Derrida's (1976) critique of fixity in literary studies. The common observation that each particular area of language is enriched by the details of engagement with its referent is also by extension true of every particular vocabulary, from indigenous languages to specialised vocabularies of scientists and scholars, to types of slang and dialect.

From the premise of perspective relativity, it follows that epistemological privilege—the assertion as correct or specially advanced of one particular perspective—is very dangerous, potentially suppressing other partial truths. There is a danger that people imagine whatever aspects are covered by a particular word (particularly those designating human beings, in general or as particular groups) are taken to be the only characteristics, or the most essential characteristics of the phenomenon in question. This leads to an imperialistic dismissal of other perspectives which emphasise other aspects of the phenomenon as mystifications. And where the phenomenon is a human being or group, or another living being, it risks imposing an identity which is separate from the being's own voice, from the perspective and discourse through which it views the world. It hence reduces the other to the

categories embedded in the gaze of the self. One sees this for instance in the ideas of essential 'Arab-ness' which form the core of Orientalist racism as discussed by Said (1995), and similarly in other kinds of colonialism, racism and exclusionary discourse. In "The Other America", Said (2003) stresses the internal diversity of America and the Arab world as extensional series, their interpenetration and their being traversed by lines and flows exceeding their boundaries; in particular, he stresses an extensional America which is not part of the imagined America of the dominant discourse and which escapes its repressive operations.

The multiplicity of truths does not, however, exhaust the problem. Perspectives are non-transparent as well as culturally relative. Many of them believe that they have the whole truth, and deny the importance of other perspectives. Some, as we shall see below, depend on the constitutive exclusion of other voices as part of their self-constitution. Many people have difficulties locating the origins and construction of their own perspective; in fact, if it is in the background of their life, or if they view it as obvious or natural or just common sense, they may not even ask about its origins and construction. As a result, it may involve gestures—exclusions, elisions, silencings, foreclosures, and so on—which are not a conscious part of the discourse, but which nevertheless operate as part of its regular functioning.

A common critique of this position on language and perspectives is that it is relativist, with the connotations that this means it denies all ethical value, denies the existence of the world, and is sucked into a black hole of meaninglessness. In a sense, perspective-relativity and a relational view of the world is relativist—in the sense that it rejects the claim to a total, universal truth which is held by the theorist or researcher. However, this is not relativism in the negative sense, that 'there is no truth'; it does not lead to scepticism, nihilism or solipsism. Rather, it is a relativism and perspectivism which recognises that reality is context dependent, complex, multi-layered, multi-voiced, relational, and irreducible to simple schemas and models. Each perspective, therefore, is a partial engagement with aspects of reality, a truth which is partial, relative and situated; every perspective similarly is missing certain truths which are seen from other perspectives, and is haunted by an excess which escapes it. There are thus many different truths, which are not necessarily coherent with each other, and do not add up into a large overarching Truth. The more of these truths one hears the more of the complexity of reality one comprehends. Hence, the one Truth is denied, not for the void of universal falsity, but for a relational field of multiple partial truths.

Does this contradict scientific investigation? On the one hand, a dialogical approach does something very different from, for instance, the natural sciences; it is pursuing a different kind of approach. In this, it is quite compatible with a position critical of science, for instance with a critique of the complicity of western science and technology in the decimation of other cultures. It is not, however, *inherently* un- or anti-scientific. It can also be conceived as filling a gap in science as currently constituted. Science is on the whole, as Stavrakakis (2007) argues, an exercise in study of the 'banal' or unproblematic a deepening of understanding of what is already well incorporated into an existing perspective; dialogics (a dialogical approach), in contrast, works on the frontiers of perspectives, the boundaries where one meets another or where a perspective meets its blind-spots, elisions and incompleteness.

In other words, science in the usual sense, "royal science" to use Deleuze's and Guattari's (1987, p. 361-73) term, is not enough; we also need a 'nomad science' to draw on the insights of those who are excluded. More than this, one could argue that a scientific stance requires that one adopt an inclusive openness towards otherness. If scientific claims to objectivity are based on replicability and

universality, on the possibility of anyone reaching the same conclusion from the data, then dialogics is not anti-scientific but crucial to the construction of any possibility of such a universal stance. Otherwise, the claim is simply to universality within a particular perspective which is itself partial and particular, based on the exclusion and repression of other voices which would not reach the same conclusion. It may well emerge that such a so-called universal stance is in any case either impossible or would have to be multi-voiced and inconsistent. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss whether this is the case. The crucial point, however, is that the pursuit of knowledge requires opening to other perspectives, not the arrogant assertion of a particular perspective as the whole truth. However, in order to incorporate this thinking in learning design, one needs to have a better understanding of how people come to think of a particular perspective as the whole truth.

The Single-Truth-Trunk and Its Other

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of arborescence (1987) can help explain the arrogance of the single-truth perspective. According to Deleuze and Guattari, arborescent (tree-like) assemblages have a structure integrated by a primary 'trunk': a master- or despotic-signifier, central identity or set of values around which other aspects of the personality or discourse are arranged. Since the trunk is a concept, it is also necessarily exclusionary—the concept is constructed in relation to an Other, which because of the centrality of the trunk, is excluded from discourse. In many cases, this Other may even be primary in constructing the trunk itself, with exclusion operating as constitutive. Where a trunk exists, there is usually an excluded Other defined as the radical negation of the trunk, and identified with the various flows which exceed or escape the trunk and its branches. Because the trunk is a despotic signifier, taken to constitute meaning, what is outside it is taken as meaningless, and what is meaningless necessarily has no voice. Obviously a constitutive exclusion of this kind operates to impede dialogue and mutual comprehension, as the voice of the Other is excluded in principle, and deemed threatening to the identity and perspective of the self. The trunk usually functions as part of the *habitus* in Bourdieu's (1977) sense, a kind of naturalised, unquestioned background to discursive practice which is both a security-blanket and a frame. Beneath the *habitus* there are other layers of discursive construction which in turn are embedded in socio-economic structures of everyday life and in libidinal attachments and structures of desire.

The trunk therefore performs a silencing role in relation to its other/s. At its most basic, this involves a hardening of the conceptual selections discussed by Korzybski (1995) into assumptions that a particular perspective is all that exists. To complicate matters further, such silencings are not necessarily inadvert; they can also involve sanctioned ignorances, structural elisions and other gestures which are structurally crucial in constructing an oppressive and exclusionary system, and silencing particular other voices. In some cases, this silencing may even be constitutive of a particular perspective. Also, what is excluded or ignored often returns to haunt the dominant perspective, for instance as a source of failure. The point of excess and haunting is made especially by Derrida (1976), and in Spivak's (e.g. 1994) interpretation of Derrida's ethics. Because any particular conceptualisation implicitly silences other possible conceptualisations, seeing one aspect of a phenomenon instead of others, it constantly runs the risk of doing violence to other perspectives or to aspects of the phenomenon which it does not speak. There is thus a need to be ethically open to the claims and voices of others who may have been excluded from the dominant voice or perspective.

The trunk leads to a way of constructing knowledge which is exclusionary and repressive towards others, referred to by Deleuze and Guattari as royal science (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 373). Royal science often poses as extra-perspectival or universal. In fact it is a particular local perspective, elevated into what Shiva terms a "globalised local" (1993, p. 2). Its function is often to strengthen the concentrated sanctions of the state, viewing other forces as entities to be manipulated or controlled. In contrast, nomad science feeds into the diffuse and diverse creative practices of everyday life (which can include diffuse sanctioning—one reason the state often feels threatened by nomad science—but more often means mutual power). Because it is fluid in its relationship to perspectives and recognises its own situatedness, nomad science has a dialogical function, against the monologue of monolithicity. The importance of such perspective relativism has been stressed by many different scholars, from philosophers such as Bakhtin (1986) to anthropologists like Sapir (1983) and Whorf (1956). The elimination or reduction of meanings and desires to brute facts or observable statistics is central to the repressive representational function of royal science. It reduces people as objects in a social as well as an analytical sense, and thus contributes to the establishment of social control. Hence, royal science is connected deeply with the process discussed by Foucault (2003) in which humanity is split into the observed object (e.g. the patient or cadaver) and the observing subject. This in turn is connected to techniques of power (such as panopticism) and a 'science of police' which are disempowering in practice. Said (1995) and others have related these sciences of control to colonialism and reductive impositions of voicelessness on cultural others, suggesting that royal science is predatory and imperial.

Much of the current education system contributes to building a trunk and reinforcing the tendencies this creates. According to Henry (1971), fear of failure is built into western culture from the earliest learning experiences onwards. It is intensified throughout the education system. On a social scale, such fear of failure is used to "enlarge the image" of those who threaten and protect us (p.11): It is used to create exaggerated images of enemies and allies. Western society is built on the foundation of these inflated images derived from a feeling of vulnerability and related to a sense that what matters is norms, not people (Henry, 1971). This is used to protect the social system from its own vulnerability: "behind every inflated authority lies society's fear that it is vulnerable" (Henry 1971, p. 11), and its resultant "determination to cancel independence" (p.11). The social system is threatened if people are too invulnerable, so it agrees to protect people only if they are meek and mild (including soldiers, who are meek and mild in order to be violent and terrible), and it creates in people a "vulnerable character structure" or "vulnerability system" (1971 p. 9). Similarly, Postman and Weingartner (1969) argue that educational success in the current system often depends on trying to get learners to "ventriloquise"; to speak as if the official authority is speaking through them, rather than speaking themselves. Through often ruthless penalties for not ventriloquising, this method prevents thinking and questioning (1969, p. 82). These tendencies not only fail to develop critical literacy but create pressures away from its formation.

Rhizomes

The Deleuzian alternative is a rhizome, a type of structure (of social relations, desires, objects, etc) in which any node can be connected to any other, none of the nodes have primacy over the others, and social assemblages are constructed through connections between nodes (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3-25). Thus, in a rhizomatic social field, the hierarchic system's coherence is not the final word. In the system's own construction, all the various instances of desire, identity, belief, etc. are constructed

as if they were elements within a single totality, arborescent in Deleuze's terms, like the branches coming from the main trunk of a tree. However, such an apparatus is necessarily haunted by the possible emergence of 'lines of flight' which take its elements outside the framework it constitutes. The elements which escape the structure have a different structure; less hierarchical than rhizomatic, emerging through underground networks connected horizontally and lacking a hierarchic centre. The system's resort to violence is an attempt to crush various rhizomatic and quasi-rhizomatic elements, which tend to escape it.

Underlying the arborescent and rhizomatic approaches are different kinds of psychological structure, one of which tends to open to the possibility of dialogue and critical literacy, the other to foreclose it. One needs to differentiate active and reactive subjectivities, and fixed and relational conceptions of identity. An active subjectivity projects itself into the world based on its own creative and affirmative power. In contrast, a reactive subjectivity is defined by closure, and hence by the pursuit of power over others, or negative power: the suppression of desires, other people, nature, and so on. Reactive subjectivities are constructed through strict self-other boundaries in which the exclusion of the other is constitutive of the self. This has the effect of causing a fear of otherness and of openness (social, emotional, discursive) as openness to the other or the enemy. In this context, the other is viewed as necessarily threatening. Identity is constructed in terms of a strong trunk, with otherness (both radical otherness and hybridity) identified as a threat to this trunk. Reich (1980) argues that such reactive formations are built through psychological repressions which are built into emotional and bodily rigidities: 'character-armour' and 'affect-blocks' which provide stereotyped responses to emotions by closing down aspects of the bioenergetic structure. Such formations arise as a response to social repression, and involve turning desire against itself. On a certain level, active desire seeks to be free in everyone, but some people build up secondary structures which split it and turn it against itself.

Reactive structures tend to produce monologues in which pleasure is derived from repetition and exclusion. Monologue can have its own pleasures, a 'euphoria' as Barthes calls it (1985), based on a kind of immortality of the discourse, its constant repetition and predictability. It can also entrench epistemological and material privileges, insulating an in-group from the claims of outsiders. It also reinforces oppressive forms of discourse based on putting others in their place. Salecl explains the appeal of racism as a pleasure derived from the other being in its place, so the self can feel in its place (1998, p. 122).

It can be embedded in psychological structures as character-armour and affect-blocking, as an internal inability to express certain feelings or thoughts, a block between the self and the world, and as neuroses which express themselves in projection, resentment and a will to dominate others. The voice of the dominant other becomes internalised as superego, exercising a despotic domination over the personality. Goodman argues that such structures are encouraged by the dominant western education system. Hostility, grief and sexuality become 'dammed up', which makes matters worse: Any release of them could be spectacular and dangerous, so that properly educational schooling runs the risk of explosive events leading to moral panics and repression (Goodman, 1970, p.38). Students often respond to schools, possibly in a life-preserving way, with a "reactive stupidity very different to their attitude elsewhere" (1970, p. 24-5). According to Goodman, "almost all stupidity is a 'defence'" (1970, p. 38), and it can only be relaxed once pent-up emotions are released. In the meantime, repressed needs return in more-or-less pathological ways (1970, p. 99). In the meantime, reactive stupidity

becomes a barrier to the creation of an environment where learning is possible (Goodman, 1970, p. 38).

Where a reactive monologue dominates the social space, this constructs the other as a subject of the gaze, but not as a voice. The repetitive booming voice of the dominant perspective does not allow space for the listener to reply, necessitating that any autonomous voice take the form of an interruption. The old saying "children should be seen and not heard" is actually applicable to all kinds of subalternity: The subaltern (colonised, indigenous, peasant, worker, social deviant, psychiatric patient, etc) is seen by—that is, subject to—the disciplinary and colonising mechanism of the gaze, but is not heard. This is, it does not have a specific perspective or voice within the dominant discourse. In this sense, Chrissus and Odotheus (2004) write of the 'New Barbarians', those who do not speak the language of the dominant Empire (or trunk), who do not "conjugate the imperial verb" (p. 76), and who hence have no means to speak in the terms of the system. Their autonomous voice thus expresses itself in radical antagonism with the system, as a negation of the trunk (Chrissus & Odotheus, 2004). The subaltern may be reconstructed as a social fact; a being which "behaves" (see Marcuse, 1991, 84-120); an administrative or cultural "problem" (Gramsci, 1975, p. 149); or may even be given a set of motives and beliefs from the outside by the observer (Barthes on Dominici, 1957/2000, p. 43-6). However, the subaltern does not have a distinct voice within the dominant discourse or a voice that can be heard by the dominant discourse. Voicelessness is closely linked to oppression. Oppression and voicelessness are constructed through the prevalence of an unquestioned dominant discourse. The experience of being voiceless can also lead to "moods of fatalism" in which one no longer feels oneself to be an agent; the resultant attempt to seize agency and voice can take the form of deviance or violence, as discussed by Fanon (1990) and Matza (1964). Worse, a subaltern person may be "submerged" in a Freirean sense, not entirely internal to the dominant discourse but also not able to think outside its terms, taking for granted the status quo because nothing else is thinkable.

For the excluded, the division operates as a direct oppression, an epistemic violence and imposition of voicelessness, and as the frame through which other violences can persist. One is included in the discourse of the other without having a voice in this discourse. For the included, unaware of their perspective and its origins and consequences, it takes the form of an intractability of reality; the other as incomprehensible becomes also intractable, and the available range of responses—administrative, cultural, military—are both oppressive and ineffective. The included are also rendered manipulable, prone to be dragged into others' projects through appeals to attachments they do not even realise they have; and their imaginative and practical options are sharply curtailed. This does not prevent the subaltern from constructing other forms of voice which are exterior to the dominant discourse or which subvert, challenge or interrupt it. Scott's (1990) research for example shows how subaltern groups do in fact construct autonomous discourses in spite of public voicelessness. It does, however, render it harder to do so, and constructs an asymmetry between the dominant monologue and other voices.

The world is divided along a whole range of criteria which differentiate an unmarked term—treated as identical with universality, as a global-local—from one or more others defined by being marked with a particular difference (for example, male-female, white-black, straight-gay/lesbian/etc, sane-mad, metropolitan-indigenous). This marking leads to a drastic discursive asymmetry in that, whereas the excluded (the marked terms) are constantly under pressure to understand the included other and to translate their own perspectives into terms comprehensible to insiders, on pain of being labelled as

nonsensical, mad, extreme or criminal, the included (the unmarked term) are unaccustomed to having to make themselves understood or to the mental flexibility required to understand others. The result is that the included often develop a coded form of communication where connoted meanings are implicitly transmitted, and are "received rather than read" (Barthes, 1985, 231), without even being considered as specific views or perspectives. Some of the implications of this have been explored in works on race, gender and colonialism—for instance in Fanon's writings.

According to Guattari (2000) in *The Three Ecologies*, this kind of reactive closure also produces the power of oppressive systems. The apparatus he terms Integrated World Capitalism seeks to gain power over us by controlling and neutralising the greatest number of existential refrains: Personalities, intensions, relations are dulled by passivity. Hence the need to re-attain consistency through heterogeneity; via social and psychological ecology; and to "activate isolated and repressed singularities that are turning around on themselves" (Guattari, 2000, p. 51). This can potentially trigger diversification, since "individual and collective subjective assemblages are capable, potentially, of developing and proliferating well beyond their ordinary equilibrium" (Guattari, 2000, p. 39). The role is therefore to produce not a new order in the singular, but a plurality of others, 'one no, many yeses' in Kingsnorth's (2004) phrase. It therefore involves producing dissensus, not consensus. Similarly, Postman and Weingartner (1969) argue that teaching people who have been through school often involves "unlearning": helping people to realise that what they think they know is based on misinformation rather than information. One way of helping people unlearn is presenting beliefs in direct contradiction to their own. This has one of two effects: either the student dismisses the new ideas as irrelevant or as fitting some kind of anathema, or they are disturbed by them and change their beliefs (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 140-1).

Why a Dialogical Approach?

The conclusion that dialogical education encourages a particular ethical stance raises another issue. If the purpose of the educational activity is ethical, if the goal is to produce different kinds of subjectivity and perception, why not just teach these new forms didactically? The objection can be raised that, because OSDE is a non-didactic methodology which does not teach specific values or privilege a particular perspective, it therefore cannot have a transformative impact on students or participants. This could not be further from the truth.

Critical literacy cannot be taught by 'banking' means. Its function is in favour of the operation of rhizomes and dialogism, and against the repressive functioning of monologism and arborescence *in general* (in their formal manifestations, without regard for content). This educative effect can only occur when didactic methods that reproduce monologism are rejected. In other words, if the teacher poses as the bearer of correct values or knowledge, monologism as a form is necessarily reproduced. By teaching dialogism as medium rather than message it avoids a performative contradiction.

In this context, dialogical approaches are important in providing a relatively non-threatening context for an encounter with otherness: At worst one loses nothing, and at least one gets to put across one's own perspective; at best one gains new insights and ways of seeing. One may, of course, unlearn one's privilege as a result, and loosen the reactive ties; this could appear dramatically threatening, but it is hardly a substantive loss. Each perspective takes on this risk by entering into dialogue, but the risk is not evenly distributed. A perspective which is already active will probably enrich itself; one which is

reactive may be reformulated in more active terms. The type of perspective most at risk is a perspective which depends on the elision of other voices as the basis for its own existence (as is the case, for instance, with the stronger kinds of racism). Such a perspective would ultimately either have to collapse under the pressure of dialogue or reject the dialogical setting.

What one will learn from the other depends both on one's own and the other's openness. A closed-minded person will have to be open to the possibility of other perspectives and of seeing in other ways in order to gain from a dialogical exchange. This is why revealing the situatedness, partiality, relationality and construction of existing assumptions and frames is crucial. Similarly, an open-minded person may learn little from the perspective of a closed-minded person, as the person's conception may be constructed stereotypically, in line with a predictable model, and may contain 'holes' and elisions which are very easy for the outsider to see. This can doubtless be frustrating for the former, pushing them towards a response of reciprocal closure. In this case, the task for the open-minded person is to explore how the fixed perspective came into being and what psychological function it serves, to excavate beneath it to the epistemology and attachments underneath; in this way, one can uncover the difference buried beneath the sameness, and with luck and skill, maybe set it free. Where the partners in dialogue are open-minded, the process becomes far more immediately enriching, as the perspectives can directly intersect and learn from one another. This scenario of creative interweaving and mutual enrichment—'power-with' in the Foucauldian/Deleuzian sense—is in many ways the ideal, though the task of breaking down fixities is just as important, maybe even more so.

One of the purposes of dialogical approaches is to construct a relational awareness of one's own perspective. According to Bakhtin (1986), each of us is already multi-voiced within ourselves, from the way in which multiple intertextual discourses construct our own discourse. In Bakhtin's view, the integrating self is a myth: the self's discourse is already multi-voiced, since it incorporates and draws on discourses and logics which are incorporated from the language of others. Similarly, in Deleuzian theory, the model of the rhizome allows engagement with difference without the construction of exclusive oppositions, and in radical activism, the concept of affinity allows for degrees of connection. Instead of an us-and-them binary, affinity allows the construction of differential relations to others modulated by degree and type, providing the potential for openness to the other and an embracing of difference. Indigenous conceptions of identity are already highly relational, and relational thinking has also emerged in Marxist approaches such as Harvey's (2001) radical geography.

OSDE can in many ways be viewed as a way of relationalising fixed conceptions and of unpacking the repressive construction of reactive identities so as to reformulate them in more active ways. It is a rhizomatic communicative model, distinct from the arborescent model of the traditional classroom or other didactic setting; it is inherently multi-voiced and relational. Indeed, the role of the facilitator, far from being a role of arborescence, is to encourage an increase in multi-voicedness through the presentation of absent perspectives, critical interrogation of perspectives and encouragement of safe space. It can also be viewed as a rhizomatic space which, when successful produces effects of dialogism and heteroglossia through the exchange of a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. The Other is not rival or enemy; rather, one contributes one's perspective almost as a gift. The limits of a perspective do not end at the boundary with the Other, but rather, the self is enriched through multi-voiced exchange. The primary role of facilitators is to ensure the emergence of a rhizomatic space both among participants and in relation to broader perspectives; hence, to ward off the danger of the discussion coalescing around a consensus on a certain monological discourse.

Of course, there is also a certain tension here, notably between the open space and safe space aspects of OSDE. If the excavation of underlying views is to be successful, it is necessary that these views first be brought to the surface. The danger, however, is that such views may lead to the assertion of discourses which are existentially threatening to others. This may make the space feel unsafe to those who are threatened; it is harder to recognise the partial truth of a perspective which seems to negate one's own truth or being. There are no easy answers to this problem. It can be mediated to a degree, however, by stressing the interrogative/interruptive function of critical literacy; that is, the importance of concentrating on the origins and construction of perspectives, rather than their brute facticity.

The construction of smooth space requires subverting striated spaces, refusing or redefining or syncretising their roles and forms, breaking down or crossing or transgressing the boundaries separating the different boxes, creating nodes and lines which flow across space without being contained by borders. The right of the listener to reply is central to Pateman's (1975) reformulation of the theory of repressive tolerance. The refusal to listen, combined with the relegation of the other's perspective to the status of a possessed opinion of no relevance to others, serves as a polite way of silencing the other. The success of an OSDE session can often be determined by the extent to which the monologue of the participants has been interrupted. The various structural elements of the methodology—multi-voicedness, dialogue, avoidance of direct value-promotion, presentation of alternative perspectives, active facilitation in cases where the participants tend towards homogeneity, questioning the origins and construction of perspectives, asking how things could be viewed otherwise—all serve potentially as mechanisms of interruption. Because the relativising of perspectives has impacts on the perspectives themselves, it is subversive of dogmatic and fundamentalist attachments and prone to break down the mental functioning of trunks and encourage heteroglossia and dialogism.

Once a monologue has been broken down, it may not necessarily cease to operate as it did before in terms of its existence as a voice. However, in ceasing to operate as a monological voice, it may instead become a dialogical voice: a voice among others in a multi-voiced world, engaging with otherness as difference perceived as potentially enriching or at least as worthy of existence rather than as absurdity or silence or something to be feared, repressed, brought into conformity, or normalised. This does not necessarily imply the destruction or overcoming of the original perspective a person holds when coming into OSDE. In some cases, the original perspective will actually be strengthened in its absorption of aspects of other perspectives, as for instance Amazonian worldviews view the absorption of otherness as strengthening and enrichment (de Souza, 2005, p. 89).

This is not to say that *nobody* has anything to fear within dialogical education. Those who are sensitive to cultural biases appear as "subversive" to those who are not, which is why Postman and Weingartner advocate for education as a 'subversive activity'. Critics are subversive because they undermine prejudices and language as "limited, misleading or one-sided", and they are "dangerous" because they are not easily recruitable to ideologies (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 18). For this reason, they are likely to make authorities nervous. Good learners "recognise, especially as they get older, that an incredible number of people do not know what they are talking about most of the time" (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 41), and they tend to distrust authorities, especially ones which encourage people to trust the authority over their own judgement (Postman & Weingartner, 1969). It is possible that there are some perspectives—those with a very strong attachment to a trunk,

especially if the trunk is grounded on a constitutive exclusion—which cannot be adhered to in a context of reflexivity and critical literacy. This would probably apply, for instance, to racist and fascist perspectives: The global-local of whiteness could not be sustained as a global-local in a context of dialogue (though aspects of it could be reconceived as locality); a person holding such a perspective would either have to radically revise the perspective or reject the dialogical methodology. In other cases (such as liberalism, Marxism, monotheistic religions, and poststructuralism), the "de-trunking" or de-naturalising of the perspective could take the form of an internal reformation, a re-evaluation which retains most of the original perspective but in a less dogmatic and impositional form. (This has already happened to some degree with the evolution of Marxism from its classical and orthodox varieties into more dialogical versions such as those of Gramsci, Sartre and Freire).

Someone who is confident that their own viewpoint is at least partially right, and/or that their viewpoint isn't oppressive, should not have anything to fear from the opening-up promoted by OSDE. Hostility to OSDE could only be justified if someone felt so insecure in the appeal of their own perspective as to believe it necessary to rely on propaganda and closure to promote it, or if their own perspective is so exclusionary as to preclude examining its own presuppositions. Theories such as liberalism, Marxism and poststructuralism should thus have nothing to fear regarding OSDE: If adherents of these perspectives are in fact sceptical of it, it reveals a lack of courage in their own convictions. (It is interesting that one of the major protagonists of dialogical pedagogy, Freire, went through all three of these perspectives one after the other).

Liberals for instance should be quite prepared to take the lessons of Habermas in the importance of constructing a dialogical space in order to arrive at public reason (Gross, 1990). OSDE would here function as an approximation of an ideal speech situation, a way of ensuring the basic condition of free choice in order to make more informed decisions. Gross specifies the concept as follows: "1) The ideal speech situation permits each interlocutor an equal opportunity to initiate speech. 2) There is mutual understanding between interlocutors. 3) There is space for clarification. 4) All interlocutors are equally free to use of any speech act. 5) There is equal power over the exchange." (Gross, 1990, p. 137). The main objection to Habermas's conception, that it could perpetuate silencings which are not recognised, is partly negated by the dialogical aspect of the process. If liberalism is correct, then this process of dialogue should lead to a greater appreciation of liberal-democratic principles and institutions and a more democratic relation to others. Marxists might view OSDE as a consciousness raising activity: If people are exposed to the range of different perspectives and the means by which they are constructed, then if Marxism is correct, they will come to see how dominant views are shaped by dominant social groups, and to question these views and reframe them in their own terms. This is similar to the process of 'intellectual reformation' advocated by Gramsci (1975). If poststructuralists are correct, then the multiplicity of perspectives is irreducible; the dialogical process will be without outcome. Nevertheless, it has a purpose, in constructing agonistic instead of antagonistic relationships between different subjective positions (as advocated, for example, by Honig, 1993). Better yet, it can help to develop the responsibility toward others (as advocated for by Derrida and Spivak), to denaturalise and disembed the discourses through which we are constructed, and to operate as a kind of collective deconstruction. OSDE can incorporate all of these glosses, without committing itself specifically to any of them. The process of dialogue itself, once extended to the whole of social life, would itself be the measure of truth in these theories.

In contrast, the insistence on teaching a doctrine directly as true tends to destroy all three perspectives. In liberalism, it appears as the bureaucratisation and disempowerment by experts which was a target of critique in the work of, for example, Arendt (1958) and Mill (1863/1999). In Marxism, it becomes a substitutionist logic of ideological control which in fact amounts to the rule, not of the working-class, but of a professional elite acting in its name. In poststructuralism it becomes the methodological corruption of deconstruction denounced by Derrida (1983) in his *Letter to a Japanese Friend*. The pressures of the habitus of school and university discourse certainly pressure all these perspectives towards such distortions: The "banking" role reproduces itself and pulls whatever perspective is deployed through it into its own orbit.

The adoption of a form which does not directly teach values does not preclude the emergence of values. No sooner did Freire's students in Brazil learn how to read and write than they started bargaining with employers (1972, p. 91). Another Freirean educator reveals that educational activity is often followed by social activism (Moreira Alves, n.d.). The values promoted by OSDE include an awareness of the social constructedness, and hence by implication the multivoicedness and the diffuse rhizomatic origins, of one's own discourse, and a preparedness to connect with others in rhizomatic ways, based on affinity and horizontality, rather than to refract the world through one's own hegemonic perspective treated as a monologue.

In conclusion, OSDE is a small step in an education system dominated by monological, banking methods. Its benefits are variant and conditional; it works in different ways in different settings, and its effectiveness will similarly vary. It is, however, absolutely crucial to develop such approaches, so as to address the pervasive critical illiteracy which banking education builds. It is necessary both to build the autonomy of each student's own perspective and ability to'speak their own word', and to adopt a responsible ethical relation to the other which avoids or minimizes silencings and monologism.

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