

Resistance and Imperfection as Educational Work: Going Against the “Harmony” of Individualistic Ideology

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Abstract *This article highlights the ideological logic of the "negative model" and its pedagogical implications. According to the 'negative model' contradiction and resistance are existential elements which embody the possibility of freedom and self realization. The negative model does not aim, as other pedagogical methods, to solve and abolish the manifestations of contradiction but rather to channel them towards a struggle for a better society and humanity. The article first part criticizes individualistic ideology's ideals of "harmony" and "self-realization" and its various positive practices of "freedom". The article second part attempts to clarify negative pedagogy's special ontological concept of humanity and liberty. In conclusion, the article seeks to clarify what are the possible ramifications of adopting the logic of negation to educational praxis while focusing on the role of public schools in it.*

Keywords critical pedagogy, ideology and education, resistance, public schools

Introduction

The need to write this article emerged even before I started working regularly as a teacher and educator. At the time I was a young tutor with an informal organization that dealt with “clarifying private and public identity” and fostering “ethical and pluralistic dialogue” amongst groups of Israeli high school students. Educational work in this organization was characterized by personal instructional relations and an emphasis on informal experiential activities: breaking classroom time and space frameworks, open dialogue between pupils and instructors, collective experience, game-like activities, group study, and so on. At the time, I thought that this study environment was ideal, since, on the basis of my experience as a schoolboy, I remembered that most of the dissatisfaction expressed by pupils regarding their education was directed at the authoritarian and irrelevant nature of formal education.

After a time, however, I decided to cease my work with the organization. Something about the informal educational experience felt “wrong” to me and left me unsettled. Subsequently, I became a teacher and educator at a state-run high school in Jerusalem. This school was and remains a high school like any other: regular lessons, crowded classrooms, busy breaks, a clear hierarchy and students who tend to boredom in literature lessons. And here, in spite of the unmistakable, unpleasant presence of these formal features, I felt more at ease and frank in my educational work. I have no intention of claiming, of course, that my work at the school was free of difficulties and frustrations, far from it, but, in its clear and straightforward framework I succeeded in identifying and conceptualizing for myself the difficulties I encountered with a clarity that eluded me in the previous, informal educational framework.

This article is written in an effort to clarify my elusive feeling of discomfort towards individual and informal educational methods and their pretence of constituting a “harmonic” pedagogical space devoid of hierarchy and power relations. As an alternative, I will present the ideological logic of the “negative model” and its radical assumptions regarding human nature and liberty.

In the “negative model” negation and resistance are highlighted as an ontological human character formation necessity and the primary basis for emancipation and self-consciousness. This concept holds that liberty and true empowerment emerge only out of the negation of the one-dimensionality of harmony and a deviation from it. This negative viewpoint rejects any pedagogical paradigm that formulates its ideas and aims in positive terms of reconciliation and adaptations (subject and object, individual and society). Any harmony, I will argue, holds an oppressive potential in disguise. In the last part of the article I will examine the implications and ramifications of the negative model for the field of education and the forms of education derived from it. The present discussion reaches, I hope, an interesting pedagogical conclusion regarding the place of formal schooling and the potential role of teacher training programs.

The Ideological Division of Education: The “Intrinsic/Extrinsic” Relation

In considering the meaning of educational practice, thinkers in the field of education customarily divide it into streams and outlooks. As standard in such cases, the number of interpretations is as great as that of those making the divisions. In relation to this, Richard Pratte (1977) and Peter McLaren (1995) draw a distinction between “traditional,” “liberal,” and “critical” approaches, which can all be applied to educational thought. Zvi Adar (1975) distinguished between individualistic, social, humanistic, religious and other worldviews. At the root of the majority of the various divisions one can distinguish between two key logics: extrinsic logic, meaning that education is directed according to external needs and objectives (of

society or culture), and intrinsic, meaning that education is oriented toward the intrinsic and peculiar capabilities of the individual. On the basis of this distinction, Lamm (2002) enumerated three possible “super-ideologies” in education: socialization, acculturation and individuation.

According to the extrinsic logic of socialization, society is regarded as the “hard” element to which the individual, as “soft” element, is to be adapted. In this view, society trains the individual for roles he or she will fulfil as an adult, and it is society that oversees the actual performance of those roles (via establishment of behavioural norms). According to this approach: Lamm writes: “Everything education is obliged to perform is none other than a function of societal needs.” (2002, p. 92). The fundamental test of education, by this view, is embodied in the individual’s degree of positive adaptation and integration into the active life of the existing society: the degree of assimilation and identification with its values, arrangements and institutions.

The ideological logic of acculturation is also quintessentially extrinsic. The premise of acculturation is that the human essence of the person is embodied and given to them via culture; hence, education’s role is to instil that culture and to encourage the individual to identify with it. “Culture,” according to this approach, is perceived as an historical, objective process, in the course of which the person’s “humanity” is refined and their separation from nature (and from the “natural”) is stressed. A person who realizes her or himself in this way is then “civilized”—that is, they are an individual who has most thoroughly internalized human values in the realm of the intellect, aesthetics, ethics, etc.

It should be noted that both socialization and acculturation ultimately are engaged in the positive adaptation of the person to a general external model, whose importance and authority take precedence over the individual and constitute her or him in its image. “Self-realization,” for that matter, is characterized by a sense of harmony between the student’s desires and/or needs on the one hand, and society’s and/or culture’s norms and demands on the other. Educational success is set then in positive terms of functionality, happiness, and sense of belonging.

The ideological logic of individualization can be understood on the basis of the critique of the authoritarian nature of socialization and acculturation. This critique questions the validity and reliability of the external model according to which the person is measured and their education is determined. Representatives of the individuation approach claim this external model is invalid and the pretence of recognizing it is a false move. The aim of education based on an extrinsic model, which seeks to adapt the individual to a given society or culture, is viewed as an indoctrinatory and oppressive process.

In contrast to the extrinsic model, the super-ideology of individualism places the person, the concrete, empirical subject him or herself, at the centre of education. This radical move, which Dewey (1900, p 51) likened to a “Copernican revolution,”

“In this case the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he is the centre about which they are organized.” In its framework, the goals of education are not derived from the society or culture, but rather from the developmental needs of the individual being educated. This educational doctrine has tried to remain free of extrinsic dimensions and objectives. Its educational aim is embodied in the process by which the individual is meant to actualize himself as an autonomous, self-conscious entity. Accordingly, the image of the pupil is based on intrinsic dimensions such as creativity, criticality and curiosity. It lays the groundwork for a radical transformation of educational strategies based on notions of freedom, experimentation and experience.

Prima facie it appears that the intrinsic logic of the ideology of individuation negates the potentially oppressive aspects of extrinsic pedagogies. Except that the positioning of the individual at the centre of the paradigm Dewey evoked was far—and is far—from being a guarantee for empowerment and emancipation.

On the Oppressive Potential of Individualistic Pedagogical Models

Giving precedence to intrinsic elements over extrinsic ones in the individualistic paradigm pretends to abolish the oppressive potential of the system and to ensure the private emancipation of the student. This move finds expression in transformations in the whole spectrum of instructional relations: relations of authority between teacher and student, the status of the imparted knowledge, the status of the educating institution, etc. Only that a radical examination of educational individualism suggests that the pretence of placing the individual at the centre of the paradigm is essentially false. In most cases it turns out that the existence of a concrete human being is preceded by some abstract positive idea that dictates and conditions his or her essence. In these instances, it turns out that the rhetoric of freedom in the individualist paradigm is actually meant to obscure the power relations in a given space. By blurring the distinction between subject and object, private and public, the individualist paradigm acts to refine the aim embodied in the adaptation of the individual to a society or culture (no matter how worthy an aim it is imagined it to be).

The political logic of the individualist space is suspected then- by my argument here - to be an ideal field of operation for oppression, but cloaked in the language of freedom and liberty. In the confines of a “dialogic,” “neutral,” “authentic” and “free” space, as Lusmed (1986) points out, the agents of power cannot be identified, so thus, there is no possibility of resisting them. The pedagogical concepts of a positive individualism such as this support a learning environment that pretends to be “natural,” “rational,” and “free,” only that these measures *are defined exclusively by the educating authority.*

In this way the oppressive potential of the individualist pedagogical space becomes increasingly clear—a youth who grows up “free,” “happy” and according to her or his own “nature” in fact has nothing imposed upon her or him. Their natural and private desire is wholly satiated. Such a child has no need for resistance and in any event has nothing to resist. Only that precisely in such a space, in which all shields are brought down and where all resistance ends and all desires are satisfied, the person finds they are yet still exposed to the normalizing forces of regulation. A child who conducts themselves in this “free” and “natural” space, in which personal and collective desires merge, can no longer sense a discrete self—precisely then, in the core of freedom and the promise of self-realization, their consciousness is vulnerable to manipulation; manipulation that comes from nowhere identifiable and which cannot therefore be resisted and nor can it be resisted by a self formed of experience of resisting, for there was nothing to resist. The child is vulnerable, because it is so free.

In a “harmonious” pedagogical space, devoid of hierarchy or limits, the distinction between power’s various guises is, as Walkerdine (1992, p. 17) notes, nullified: good and bad, work and play, teacher and pupil merge into one in the framework of “active study.” Children choose their “own” schedules, the activities they “want.” This is a wonderful space for imaginary freedom, a pleasant greenhouse whose conditions are determined from without, and in which there are no classifying power relations or disciplining hierarchies. The teacher in such a space is always a “friend,” “partner” and “mentor,” and knowledge is forever “authentic,” “good” and “interesting.” In such a pedagogical space, in which the effects of pressure and hierarchies cannot be discerned, suffering, pain and the manifestations of injustice remain outside the classroom, which becomes a kind of utopian microcosm, increasingly irrelevant and distanced from the world outside. In such a classroom there is no cause for alienation, disturbance, disorder, disinterest, boredom...

Against this background I now move on to discuss the special and distinct ideological position of the negative model in education.

On the Ideological Logic of the Negative Model and the Contradiction of Elements

The negative model belongs to a long and rich tradition in which criticism and negation serve as a primary means of investigating human reality. This is not the place, of course, to discuss the philosophical and historical foundations and sources of critical theory. For this purpose, see: McCarthy (1991).

The basic assumption underlying critical theory rests on the view that reality, like the subject, is not an objective or fixed given, but rather an entity always *becoming* in an ongoing dialectical process. The negational nature of criticism

reflects and embodies, in this sense, the dynamic, political and ever-changing foundations of reality and the subject. Within this view, as argued by Gur-Zeev (1998, p. 470), the denial of the dynamic and reflexive nature of human experience is perceived as an act of oppression. It is the basis of the act of violence, both in a direct sense and in a symbolic one. Accordingly, critical theory seeks to expose the modes of operation of the mechanisms acting to constitute the human being as an object: “something” versus “someone.” The consciousness of the object is a passive, submissive and fixated consciousness submerged in the world; a consciousness superficialized, normalized, objectified and limited. Such a consciousness is non-reflexive and hence devoid of self-accountability.

By contrast, critical theory calls for us to act against the “normalizing” conditions of society and culture. It calls for the constitution of an autonomous, accountable, reflexive and oppositional subject. This struggle, Fromm stresses (1966, pp. 121-123), is no less than a struggle over existence according to one's divine essence or higher potential. Indeed, the uniquely emancipatory character of the struggle and its highlighting of the peculiar status of the human being in it attest to the fact that the roots of critical thinking are planted in a humanistic intentionality of the first degree. The foundation of criticism, by this logic, is in the world of the corporeal person and the concrete conditions of one's life. The foundation of criticism is *always* located in the corporeal person and concrete life conditions. As famously mentioned by Marx “Every emancipation is a restoration of the human world and of human relationships to a man himself [or woman herself]” (Marx, 1978, p. 46). So, as Gur Zeev argues (1998), it turns out that criticism—and the reflexive ideal as a basis for humanistic education at its best—is “anti-education” according to those educational models of acculturation and socialisation discussed above where “education” aims to fit the person to the world. Criticism fits the world to the person. As we shall see below however, criticism is also anti education where education stresses the person at the centre of the world, as in the individualisation ideology. The issue is one of resisting the world—whatever the ideology—to be free within it.

Resisting as perpetually educationally relevant

Over the last four decades, the ideological logic of the critical model in education has changed; the framework, its political sensitivities, pedagogical methods and visions have expanded and deepened with respect to the form education should desirably assume in a free society. Nevertheless, in all of its versions, modern and post-modern, the place of negation and resistance has been emphasized as an ontological human character formation necessity and a primary basis for emancipation and the formation of consciousness. This principle, as Nelson et al. (Nelson, Carlson & Linton, 1972, pp. 1-13) point out, underlies pedagogical radicalism and is regarded as a constitutive position allowing the individual to “self-

distance,” comprehend her or his situation, resist superficializing forces, and plan actions that will improve his or her status in the world.

This negative viewpoint valuing criticism rejects, at once, any ideological paradigm that views its aim as lying in the positive reconciliation of elements (subject and object, individual and society, private and public, partial and whole). Any harmony, from its perspective, is naïve unawareness (in the best case) or a sign of the deliberate castration of the subject by subjecting him or her to fragmented laws and interests (in the worst case). The synchronized conditions of harmony and the attempt to reconcile and balance the contradictory foundations of the human being as a sign of “virtue” or “perfect consciousness” are, in its view, fertile ground for devaluation of the person and a basis for their objectification in the world.

In contrast to the positive logic of the ideologies of socialization and acculturation, which seek to adapt the subject to some external ideal of a “functional society” and “ideal culture,” and biological and progressive individualism, which strive to fit the concrete individual to some metaphysical ideal of individuality, radical criticism stresses the necessarily paradoxical complexity of the condition of human freedom. According to this existential conception, the “human condition” is a paradox imposed on the person as part and parcel of their existence as an individual in society and as a subject in a world of objects. By this logic, precisely the contradiction of elements, the same paradoxical liminal state of oscillation between worlds and of foreignness, is what defines the peculiar, existential essence of the human condition.

The conception of a liberated and aware human consciousness, by this logic, does not presuppose an oversimplified situation of internal harmony reigning between different elements of identity. Rather, it suggests a situation of conscious contradictions, which assumes a (critical) tension between them. Accordingly, Berofsky (1986, p. 170) stresses that true liberty (“in the sense of autonomy”) is not a state of non-dissonance between levels of desire that make up identity, but rather a state that paradoxically allows for their maintenance. See also: Darom (1988, pp. 67-76). This conception holds that liberty and subjective consciousness emerge *only* out of the negation of the one-dimensionality of harmony and deviation from it.

Negation and deviation have been asserted as a basis for the constitution of humanity and history in the field of critical thought from its very inception. From this perspective, the movement of negation and separation from the “object” is a constitutive analogical foundation defining human superiority over beast. See, for an example of such argumentation, Fromm (1956, pp. 15-16). The human being’s discrete essence is embodied then in her *emancipatory potential*, and not, as various thinkers claimed throughout history, in intelligence (i.e., her capacity to take part in the “one truth”) or in his being a social creature (i.e., his capacity to merge with the social will). Human liberty is realized in the person’s ability to deviate from the constant and “objective” (from the “natural,” the “real” and the “perfect”), in a

capacity to not be “oneself” and to maintain a dialectical distance from the reality in which he exists. The existential and ethical ramifications of this position are discussed by Sartre in his famous lecture “Existentialism is Humanism” (2007, pp. 11-14).

This condition of “movement from a distance” is one of reflexive consciousness of *the limits* of the self and the world—a condition of human and historical existence in which the human being can act as a subject to alter reality; to move and change limitations imposed (see Freire, 2006, p. 88).

The unique virtue of the negative model is embodied in its assertion of the contradiction of elements as a basis for a state of emancipation, and in its rejection of the educational ideal that seeks to constitute human consciousness in a state of dissonance-free harmony. Operating in stark contrast to the positive logic of educational individualism with its emphasis on a dissonance-free, “synchronized” consciousness operating without friction, and characterized by a sense of comfort, the critical model highlights this comfort expresses a state of oppression and false existence. In his book *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse (1991, Chapter 1) claims that such a consciousness becomes passive. It has lost its ability to feel suffering and cannot resist and deviate from its taken-for-granted existence. Marcuse (ibid.) stresses that “one-dimensional,” ostensibly individualistic, existence is determined by external forces over which the individual has no control. Clarifying the importance of the embracement of contradiction and resistance sheds light on the epistemological logic of the critical model, which is that “all liberation depends on the consciousness of servitude.” (Marcuse, 1991, p. 16). Further, it emerges that a truly emancipatory educational project *involves* elucidating and calling attention to the “consciousness of servitude,”—the state of contradiction and resistance—and is not found in looking for, or achieving, comfort.

The question arises as to what the pedagogical ramifications of the embracement of contradiction might be, and how, if at all, they can be translated into educational praxis. In order to offer a possible answer to these questions, I will turn to a discussion of the pedagogical logic of “educational resistance.”

On the Pedagogical Implications of the Negative Model

A good speculum for understanding the pedagogical implications of the embracement of contradiction is finding a way of examining the logic of pupils’ resistance to their education. In his article “*Educational Stress and Resistance to Education*,” Lamm (2000/1969, p. 9) writes: “Educators want to educate more than their pupils want to be educated, such that those who want to educate must overcome the unwillingness of their pupils to be educated.” Further, Lamm notes, that much of educational doctrine throughout history is tantamount to a series of proposals for how to overcome this unwillingness (ibid). According to this argument, all educational ideologies, whether their logic is extrinsic (pedagogies

belonging to socialization/acclulturation) or intrinsic (individuation), are similar in their treatment of educational resistance. Notwithstanding the different ideological interpretations they offer regarding its nature and origin, all view the existence of unwillingness to learn as a problematic side effect that must be subdued as a condition for successful educational action. In this sense, these educational ideologies are not distinct from each other in terms of their pedagogical objectives, which are always aimed at the positive reconciliation of contradictory and opposing elements, but rather are distinct merely in terms of the strategies by which they purport to overcome resistance to education.

This last point reveals the special and distinct pedagogical manifestation of negative education: In contrast to pedagogies that regard the contradiction of elements as the root of all evil, negative education seeks to turn it, and the resistance emanating from it, into the cornerstone of an emancipatory pedagogy. An empowering pedagogy, by this logic, does not strive to reconcile the contradictions between humans and their world. It does not pretend to produce a perfect person free of contradictions: “harmonious,” “happy,” “complete,” or “fulfilled.” In contrast to the utopian attempts of positive pedagogies (whether they have an extrinsic or intrinsic logic) to resolve the contradiction of elements and overcome educational resistance, the emancipatory logic of the critical model offers a political notion that struggle and contradiction are inherent in any transformative educational experiences. This is manifested in Boler and Zembylas’ (2003) concept of “pedagogy of discomfort,” where there are attempts to expose the normalized and naturalized assumptions of hegemonic education paradigms through the emotional engagement and unease of both the teacher and student (p.111). This educational approach encourages educators and students to break out of their ideological and existential “comfort zone” and question norms, values and daily practices by investigating how those maintain the hegemony within their society and culture.

With regard to the question of how the paradoxical pedagogical logic of resistance can be translated into educational praxis, there are a number of moves to be made. On the level of content (the educational curriculum) conceptualizing the contradiction amongst students and teachers demands the development of a critical sensitivity toward the political nature of reality. To this purpose, an educational curriculum must be constructed that will help students and teachers to identify the manipulations that contribute to the process of superficialization and reduction of consciousness. A critical curriculum of this type will engage, inter alia, in exposing the narrative nature of history, and in analyzing the compartmentalizing, manipulative and oppressive aspects of the media world, educational system, culture and economy. The role of such a curriculum will be oriented, as Hull (2002, p. 71) writes, toward awakening consciousness by calling attention to contradiction, injustice and the resistance that results from them. Such an educational approach is meant to expose dissatisfaction and suffering, and to clarify and highlight the

unfulfilled yearnings in students' and teachers lives. It is a difficult curriculum. Such a curriculum will challenge student's consciousness, shatter their self-satisfaction and apathy, and overcome their tendency toward one-dimensionality, which assumes the form of boredom, indifference, addiction, cynicism and disinterest. I have addressed this notion elsewhere, see Tsabar (2013).

Such an educational curriculum will also help teachers to raise awareness toward the ramifications of neoliberalism, bureaucracy and the marketization of public education, and will hopefully motivate them to rethink the organization and democratization of their schools. In accordance with that, Giroux (1992) argues that although public schools will not be able to transform society altogether, it is possible for a pedagogue to act in the spirit of the critical model to empower and raise students' consciousness by creating "pockets of resistance" in which teachers and students can struggle for awareness and social justice.

On the level of form (educational strategy) an educational environment is required which can support the development of an oppositional consciousness. Such an environment cannot maintain the illusion of hierarchy-free liberty, since in a "harmonious" space of this kind, the conditions for the constitution of an oppositional consciousness are annulled by definition. An emancipatory space, on the other hand, must be characterized by more or less explicit relations of hierarchy and power and by the limits given to identity (source of authority, the system's representatives, values, demands, punishments, etc.). The emancipatory quality of the pedagogical environment is measured, by this logic, by its capacity to allow the students being educated within it to shape their identities in relation to the boundaries of the system and the possibility of opposing it. Such a system does not pretend to be "natural" or "free"—it educates transparently according to its hierarchies and authority. In such an environment the child experiences her or his selfhood by negotiating an imperfect pedagogical space, through dissonance and interactions with classmates and teachers, and sometimes by means of deliberate resistance, when needed, toward the representatives of institutional authority.

This resistance is an expression of independence and separateness. It may be enacted independently or collaboratively; it may assume the character of angry and active rebellion or thunderous silence and non-cooperation. It may appear in the form of a defiant sticking out of one's tongue, the mocking of a teacher or a furtive sneer. All this is educationally relevant. It may find expression in an exhibition of disinterest or refusal to take part in cretin pedagogical activities. In that spirit Giroux (1983) argues that student misbehaviours and tendencies to "act out," can be perceived as valid acts of rebellion and protests against the repressive and reproductive elements of public schools, deserving educational validation.

In such a pedagogical space, there is no utopian pretence of eliminating suffering and dissonance. The aim of education is not realized in some sort of positive ideal of "authentic" and joyful "identification" and "self-realization."

Teachers and students in this space do not have to be “friends,” the child does not have to “fit in,” “be accepted,” or “succeed,” and the knowledge imparted does not have to be “fascinating” or “relevant.” In such a space, the limits of institutional authority and its explicit and extrinsic values serve, *inter alia*, as a hotbed for the development of a separate and oppositional subjectivity. The shaping of the child’s unique self-perception as a lover of poetry in such a space, for example, can sprout from the tension between frustration and boredom that he or she experiences in literature classes in school and the genuine excitement they might experience upon listening to the lyrics of a favourite rock band. Moreover, it is likely that any subsequent love for the same literary works necessarily emerges out of their initial rejection.

In light of the above, the complexity involved in implementing the critical model in education as described becomes clearer. On the side of content, it proposes an oppositional and independent radical pedagogy, based on principles of criticism, freedom of thought and active experimentation. On the other hand, on the level of form, it requires an organized, authoritative and clear educational construction, which will serve as space in which the student can refine her or his sensitivity as a subject and try their hand at practices of resistance.

This complex demand suggests, surprisingly perhaps, the option that an appropriate pedagogical ground in which the negative model can be implemented is the formal institutional (state-run) school.

Formal Institutional Public Schools as Suitable for Negative Education?

Public schools are imperfect institutional spaces by definition. On the one hand their public status is unmistakable (especially among lower and middle class families), yet they are no longer perceived as an absolute authority among parents and children. Public schools still offer ideological perspectives and values, yet in most cases those tend to suffer from anachronism and irrelevance and are delivered in an inefficient and inconsistent manner. Working in schools one can find charismatic, high performing teachers along with worn out, cynical teachers whose teaching has little merit. Such an imperfect space can offer suitable conditions for the constitution of the subject’s consciousness as described above. In such an imperfect space, power relations are explicit and diversity of internal contradictions are relatively easy to identify and manipulate. Such a pedagogical concept of “imperfection” follows certain aspects of Charles Bingham idea of “good enough” pedagogy. In his book Bingham counters the positive logic of “super” teachers, by querying:

...haven’t many students had educational experience that while not being at all exemplary, were used by them in agentive ways? Students flourish in many unexpected circumstances. They often flourish precisely because

they know how to use a given teacher in ways that address their own needs. It may often be the case that teachers need only be good enough, rather than super. (Bingham 2008, pp. 93-95)

“Good enough” educational spheres, for that matter, are ones that provide the condition for the student to use the educational artefacts and relations as means of empowerment. This does not mean, of course, that teachers are exempt from the ongoing struggle to improve the educational sphere (and themselves as teachers)—to make it more democratic, moral and human—only that education should renounce its positive tendency to conceptualize itself in utopian terms and harmonic ambitions.

In addition, public schools are also anachronistic institutional spaces by definition. They maintain hierarchies, requirements and demands that often seem to be out of context with the children’s existing reality. I believe that such anachronistic character carries, undeliberately perhaps, significant emancipatory potential. In his book *The Disappearance of Childhood* Neil Postman (1982) argues that in the age of television and internet, where literacy doesn’t serve any longer as a borderline separating the social and intellectual world of the young from the world of the old, children are growing exposed to aspects of adult life from which they were formerly protected (Postman, 1982, p. 99). The demise of childhood and the premature rushing of children into adulthood carries an oppressive and manipulative potential because it supports the transformation of children into a one-dimensional obedient citizen and enthusiastic consumer. Therefore, keeping children “in their place” through institutional hierarchies offers children ways to negotiate and navigate this speedy entrance into adulthood because the children require and use resistance against confinements by hierarchies. Their resistance in the school due to a mismatch between their personal worldly development and how the school treats them gives them experience valuable to critically engage with adult expectations.

The preservation and protection of childhood, for that matter, needs to be perceived as an integral part of the emancipatory project. Hence, I would like to suggest that the public school’s anachronistic and extrinsic educational character supports the preservation of childhood. State-run public schools support the concept of childhood by maintaining explicit separation and social hierarchy between the world of childhood and adulthood. This kind of separation is achieved by maintaining a solid concept of institutional authority inside public schools: The children depend on the school authorities for their graduating diplomas, they are expected to behave and think in certain fixed ways and have no real freedom (and therefore no real responsibilities). Such separation and lack of responsibilities may hold many drawbacks and hazards, but nevertheless it sustains the notion of childhood as different, independent and separate from the world of the “Adult.”

A public school's anachronism, in that sense, has a potential to serve as a barricade against the logic of consumerism and commercialism. The public schools' daily routine does not support the capitalist ethos of "happiness" (as maximization of the individual's pleasure). In a culture that is based on flattery and supposedly endless possibilities and excitements, public schools are an anomaly. Their long hallways and strict power relations can often generate alienation, loneliness and frustration—they are not designed to please; their ecology trains the child's mind to bear boredom, to suspend satisfaction. Children at school are forced to spend significant time together under strict limitations and limited resources (there are only one or two worn-out basketballs available for playing in recess and you need to be in class on time). Such circumstances can drive the children to realize how important it is to take each other into consideration. Sometimes such "poverty" can help them realize the importance of mutual dependence and maybe even drive them, with a little help from a charismatic pupil friend or a critical teacher, to organize and practice small forms of rebellion against the "system."

Redefining the institutional school as an arena of the struggle for the realization of the negative paradigm necessitates the updating and design of a unique pedagogical program for teacher education programmes. The curricula at these institutions needs to consider the advantages of assimilating the emancipatory logic of the critical paradigm. In this framework, students will be presented with the advantages of the components of the critical model and its benefits in the process of the crystallization of their professional identity. This move will find expression both in introductory academic courses (psychology, sociology, educational thought) and in the framework of pedagogical and didactic training toward educational work in schools. On the academic front, the curriculum will deal not just with teaching disciplines but also with deconstructing them: exposing their basic assumptions, elucidating their narrative and contextual character, stressing their exclusionary and oppressive dimensions. On a more practical front, the format of "school-based training" should be updated in accordance with the reflexive and vital logic of the radical critical model. In this format, teachers-in-training will come to recognize the limitations of the institutional public school as well as the possibilities entailed in operating within it. Pedagogical training of this type will hopefully permeate the schools and foster an active, critical pedagogical consciousness amongst teachers and educators working in state-run schools.

Conclusion

I began this article with an account of the unease I felt in the informal educational framework, whose logic is "individualistic" and "free." Now, in conclusion, I would like to suggest that my spontaneous recoiling from such an educational system occurred in the face of my students' devotion to their education as well as the lack of "resistance" within it. Over the course of the present discussion I sought to

establish such resistance (and the negation accompanying it) as an imminent foundation of the emancipatory educational process itself. To this purpose, I subjected to critique the individuation ideology's pretence to freedom and harmony. My assumption was that the manipulative potential hidden in the approaches promulgating individuation and the construction of a harmonious pedagogical space is even more dangerous than in the extrinsic, traditional ideologies. Ultimately, not only does individuation engage in the positive adaptation of the individual to some extrinsic idea (of harmony), but this adaptation is cloaked in the apolitical robe of "naturalness," "freedom" and "dialogue."

I attempted to clarify the special ideological logic of the negative model. In contrast to the emancipatory logic of individuation, which is based on an effort to undo the intrinsic/extrinsic tension (by giving precedence to the intrinsic over the extrinsic), the emancipatory logic of the critical model is based on an active fostering of the positive/negative tension. In this model, human liberty is not defined in positive terms of harmony and reconciliation of elements (intrinsic/extrinsic, subjective/objective, private/public, formal/informal), but rather in terms of a (negative) capacity to maintain the element of contradiction and dissonance that typifies the human condition.

This existential position holds that the struggle for emancipation involves the subject's ability to resist the whole range of social, cultural and educational forces that seek to adapt, fixate and bridle him or her. In this sense, the pupil's potential emancipation (and with it the autonomous capacity to shape their private identity) is embodied in an ability to identify forces extrinsic to her or him of educational authority and resist their immanent normalizing action. The logic of the critical model, then, is distinct from the logic of other ideological-pedagogical models, intrinsic and extrinsic, in that does not seek to overcome and subdue the pupil's resistance (which is, from its perspective, the foundation of the subject's consciousness), but rather to conceptualize, channel and use it in educational ways.

I sought to clarify how the radical logic of the embracement of contradiction can be translated into educational praxis. The discussion showed that an educational model wishing to embrace the principles of contradiction and resistance must maintain within it a special and complex mix of form and content. On the one hand, on the level of content, it must educate for negative critical consciousness: for exposing narratives and injustices, for an active relationship with the word, and for defamiliarizing the taken-for-granted. On the other hand, on the level of form, such an educational model needs a space whose political logic is simple and transparent enough: in which, and against which, the student can shape and hone their independent identity. The possibility of creating this special mix, I argued, exists in the confines of the institutional-formal-state-run school, where, given its anachronistic and imperfect character, its structural strengths and weaknesses, a genuine and meaningful critical practice is realizable.

Resistance and imperfection

This final observation highlights the importance of assimilating the principles, methods and contents of criticism in teacher education institutions. The pedagogical implications of negative education for educational theory in teacher training, as well as its practical aspects across the board of educational endeavour, merit further discussion.

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Resistance and imperfection

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