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Freire (with Bakhtin) and the Dialogic Classroom Seminar

This article on pedagogy in the classroom seminar combines the basic principles of dialogue and liberation as expressed especially by 20th-century thinkers Bakhtin and Freire. It argues for a pedagogy of educational growth and facilitation of ideas. Through learner-centered knowledge, dialogic interaction, open exploration, mutual respect, and problem-based learning—as opposed to a pedagogy of conflict, including scenarios of confrontation, monologic assertions of instruction, and expert communiqués—the classroom seminar undergoes authentic liberation and discovery. At all points the classroom must be free from coercion and open to alternative perspectives in order to weigh evidence and arguments as objectively as possible, to break patterns of vertical authority, and to involve all participants in their own education. Not usually compared, these Bakhtinian and Freirean procedures provide sustainable, compassionate, and empowering possibilities for the university classroom seminar in North America and elsewhere.

Cet article sur la pédagogie des séminaires en salle de classe combine les principes fondamentaux du dialogue et de la libération tels qu'exprimés par deux penseurs du 20^e siècle, Bakhtin et Freire. L'auteur milite en faveur d'une pédagogie pour l'épanouissement éducatif et la facilitation des idées. Le séminaire en salle de classe se voit transformé en lieu de libération et de découverte par l'emploi de connaissances centrées sur l'apprenant, d'interaction dialogique, d'exploration franche et communicative, de respect mutuel et d'apprentissage par résolution de problèmes, plutôt que d'une pédagogie du conflit dont des confrontations, des assertions monologiques et des communiqués par des experts. À tous les égards, la salle de classe doit éviter la coercition pour laisser la place aux perspectives alternatives qui permettront d'évaluer les témoignages et les arguments aussi objectivement que possible, de rompre les cycles d'autorité verticale et de faire en sorte que tous les participants s'impliquent dans leur éducation. Alors qu'on n'a pas l'habitude de comparer ces procédures de Bakhtin et Freire, elles offrent des alternatives renouvelables et humaines qui peuvent renforcer l'autonomie dans les séminaires offerts dans les universités en Amérique du Nord et ailleurs.

The ideas of two significant 20th-century academics, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) and Paulo Freire (1921-1997), intersect in compelling ways with regard to personhood, democracy, and education in the university classroom seminar. Not much has been done to bring these two thinkers together. And yet both Bakhtin and Freire are praxis-oriented, oppositional ethical theorists, political exiles, Christian thinkers: teachers who never met, but whose ideas come together in suggestive—even fundamental—ways for teaching as ethical action, for asserting the freedom to think critically, and for exchanging ideas in a nonthreatening classroom seminar. For Freire dialogic pedagogy forms the basis of social change and liberation. For Bakhtin dialogic interaction forms the basis of an ethical philosophy in itself. This article compares their core values of dialogue and liberation, values that go beyond metaphors for facilitative

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growth, adversarial ferment, or conflict resolution, to assert their ideas as relevant for a nonthreatening discursive philosophy of dialogic learning in the North American university classroom.

Bakhtin (1981, 1984a, 1984b) is the literary critic of dialogical interaction, of heteroglossia of voices and carnivalesque subversion of authority. He attended Odessa and Petrograd Universities where he studied classics, philology, and neo-Kantian philosophy. Arrested in a general sweep of intellectuals in 1929, he was exiled to Kazakhstan on vague charges of anticommunism and underground participation in the Russian Orthodox Church. After World War II, he taught at the university at Saransk. Ignored and suppressed by the Soviet state, Bakhtin was virtually rediscovered by Russian academics in the 1960s, who saw to his publication and rehabilitation in intellectual circles before his death in 1975. The best biographical study of Bakhtin remains Clark and Holquist (1984).

Freire (1993, 1998) and Freire and Macedo (1995) by contrast is the activist, cultural worker, and a teacher who rejects impositional “banking” methods of information—depositing “facts” in students’ heads—in favor of honest questioning, conscientization, and of liberating students from oppression. Forced out of his native Brazil in 1964, Freire served as a UNESCO consultant in Chile for five years before moving on to a post with the Office of Education at the World Council of Churches in Geneva. In 1980 he returned to Brazil where he taught at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. Connected to Harvard University’s Center of Educational and Developmental Studies, Freire worked in literacy and educational projects around the world. On Freire’s biography, see Gadotti (1994) and Weiler (1996).

Both Bakhtin and Freire recognize the fundamental necessity of discussion. For Bakhtin, discussion creates an ethical state of being; for Freire discussion forms ethical procedures. To be fundamental about procedures in the seminar classroom is to recognize that the Latin root meaning of *seminar* has to do with seeding, which suggests inaugural planting and growth. An effective seminar leader promotes intellectual growth through rooted guidance and facilitation of dialogue. This form of dialogue, however, does not present itself as coercive or paternalistic. The seminar leader’s basic responsibility is not one of behavioral authority, but of provisional structure: providing a space for mutually informative discussion where ideas can be voiced, considered, and debated. To Bakhtin, education is all about dialogical communication; to Freire, it is all about liberated pedagogical consciousness. And the fundamental tenet for teaching that draws both thinkers together is expressed early by Freire (1993), in his classic text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where he declares that the most effective method of a humanizing pedagogy “expresses the consciousness of the students themselves” (p. 51).

This profound observation distills a basic truth of human life: curiosity. Human minds begin developmentally by learning; such learning represents agency that cannot be reduced to determinism. Our minds are inherently wired for learning, and we learn together in an external world of interaction. This reciprocal procedure suggests a theory of pedagogy that counters unproductive oppositions of teaching as an art or a science, as a practice or a theory, as a frivolous conversation or an interminable lecture. Instead, truly transformative

learning, learning capable of making a difference within consciousness and externally in the world, occurs in the reciprocal *middle* between polar oppositions. Herein our mutual social interactions are as fundamental as our need for lifelong educational development. Indeed the UN Charter on Human Rights, Article 26, specifies education as a basic human right in the development of a whole personality. Education liberates people, and the development of a critical consciousness through education enables an ability to choose otherwise in the world, to question authority, to experiment with options, and to reach out for different limbs, paths, and channels of experience.

Learner-Centered Classrooms

Authentic dialogical teaching, however, goes beyond organic metaphors of facilitative growth and idealist philosophical frameworks. Similarly, it avoids rigid modeling, unchallengeable keywords, and asserted commandments. Rather, a dialogic classroom introduces variety of perspectives, facilitating critical thought through people involved in mutual respect and shared discussion. Such discussion, mutually informative and informing, continually accommodates differences of context and subject position. The criterion of feminist pedagogical theorists to create a safe place in the classroom is extremely helpful in its sensitivity to subject awareness and multiplicity of experience. As preconditions for open discourse, safety, personal construction, and voiced variety combine in pedagogical terms to enable growth and exploration. In this regard, feminist pedagogues Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), Gilligan (1982), and Maher and Thompson Tetreault (1994) are especially informative in delineating discourses of power, regulation, and social formation. Learning, of course, *can* and inevitably *will* be dangerous and unsettling, even adversarial and deeply disturbing. There is no point in shielding students from such inevitable cut and thrust in their learning experiences. But as a pedagogical principle—and one to which I return—there is also no honest point in instigating such conflict.

In the learner-centered classroom seminar everyone is a student and intellectual growth is mutual. However, such mutuality does not necessarily suggest or ensure consensus. Consensus is not the objective. Authentic discussion is. And authentic discussion takes place only when intimidation is abolished and mutual exploration is encouraged. Such exploration credits students from the outset as people with knowledge to share, thereby challenging certainties of power, privilege, and institutional academic investment. Yet students may well wish to defer their own authority to the seminar convener, thereby mitigating sincere attempts at authentic dialogue. Such mitigations occur within, around, and at the edges of dialogue. The convener should work with objections and challenges in a positive spirit of regard and reflection, always with the students in mind and always in the moment of discourse. Such involvement in the moment helps to suggest open-ended tentative solutions in a spirit of mutuality that resists closure for the sake of expansion, growth, further engagement, and renegotiation. Such timing in the classroom is always messy and provisional, but accents seminar learning as itself discursively messy and provisional where meanings are always meanings on-the-move, provisional meanings, in relation always to other meanings and negotiated in terms of complexity and wider contexts of association. Power and knowledge

come together at unpredictable points of contact that are discerned in communication itself and not broadcast from the convener as authority. Instead, the process itself reinforces the dynamic of seminar learning.

Mutual interaction in the seminar is not necessarily personal, but interpersonal with regard to an external object of knowledge. Such external consideration does not take the form of self-directed feel-good chat, nor is it a way loosely to keep the conversation going. Rather, pedagogical dialogue suggests an epistemological relationship between and among ideas and students: an external object of knowledge about which students communicate. In dialogue with fellow theorist Macedo, Freire (1995) clearly affirms that authentic teaching takes place only in such communication:

The educator who is really dialogical has a tiring task to the extent that he or she has to 1) remain epistemologically curious, and 2) practice in a way that involves epistemological curiosity that facilitates his or her process of learning and knowing. (p. 383)

As always, Freire asserts pedagogy as a process of conscientization: a consciousness capable of transforming reality, a self-aware and liberating process that is discovered in communicative relation to others and that is as impossible to predict as it is to prescribe.

Taylor (1993) links Bakhtin and Freire at just this point of pedagogical consciousness and liberation, arguing as follows.

The force-field of Conscientization, or in Bakhtin's term "the speech zone" of Dialogue, clearly centres over the learner/oppressed person. The process of Conscientization has become a process of changing the conceptual horizon of the victim. Dialogue has become the polyphony, or cacophony, of the authoritative discourse of the educator which is competing with the internally persuasive discourse of the learner. (p. 65)

Educators and learners work together in a multiplicity of voices that are, in Bakhtin's sense, inevitable in terms of consciousness. In fact, from Bakhtin's perspective, multiplicity and variety represent ethical reality, a reality wherein dialogue is not identical to spoken conversation. Rather, dialogue represents deeply ontological interaction, a liberating "internally persuasive" process at the heart of every mode of human thought and existence. Such dialogue does not represent antagonistic conflict any more than it does the single-voiced monologue of the oppressive lecturer or the political officer. Instead, as Freire well knew, dialogue is more sharing, suggesting self-other experience, mutuality, interchange, assimilation, co-creation, and simultaneity. Such discourse theoretically articulates personhood as a dynamic process of becoming. Such becoming also suggests powerful pedagogical possibilities, as articulated in Bakhtin's key text *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981): "Another's discourse performs here no longer as information, directions, rules, models and so forth—but strives rather to determine the very basis of our behavior; it performs here as *authoritative discourse*, and an *internally persuasive discourse*" (p. 342, emphasis in original). Such "internally persuasive discourse" suggests a discourse that is learner-centered and informatively mediated by external information. Nothing in human consciousness occurs in isolation. One learns from another in mutual regard, thereby abolishing all sense of oppressor and

oppressed. Instead of a traditional moral struggle of good versus evil, recent communicative technologies and imperatives emphasize multiple informational subjectivities, wide spectrums of experiences and observations making contact in ever-expanding networks of possibility. Mutual information and mutual becoming replace imbalances of power in the classroom. Bakhtin's statement about mutual discourse communicates the cognitive basics of the dialogic seminar classroom.

Dialogue versus Conflict

Yet more recently, in his *Harvard Educational Review* dialogue with Macedo, Freire (1995) felt moved to counter claims by critics such as Jay and Graff (1975), who questioned his right to identify oppressor and oppressed. Those for whom oppression is merely a theoretical concern can easily confuse hypothetical possibilities on the topic and revert to reductivist literalism. Characteristically generous, Freire responded directly as follows: "I am surprised that someone like Gerald Graff, who I think considers himself an honest intellectual, would have difficulty identifying oppressive conditions and fall prey to a form of misguided relativism" (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 384). Jay and Graff uncritically ascribed to Freire the following exclusive assumption: "deep down, in our most authentic selves, we are all Christian or existential Marxists" (p. 203). But such sarcastic political labeling misrepresents Freire's approach. Instead, to Freire as to Bakhtin, communication is dialogical and dialogical teaching is inherently generous: radically generous and profoundly tolerant, achieving liberation through profound nonpaternalist mutuality. As Bakhtin (1984a) affirms: "I cannot manage without another, I cannot become myself without another: I must find myself in another by finding another in myself (in mutual reflection and mutual acceptance)" (p. 287). Freire (1993) similarly posits a deeply, mutually generous process of engagement:

I cannot think for others or without others, nor can others think for me. Even if the people's thinking is superstitious or naïve, it is only as they rethink their assumptions in action that they can change. Producing and acting upon their own ideas—not consuming those of others—must constitute that process. (p. 89)

As always, open-ended and ever-extended interaction represents the processes of dialogical thinking and learning.

North American students, however, unconscious of their privilege inside the classroom and out, often thrive uncritically on their own forms of exclusivist oppression. Engrossed by a selfish anti-intellectual society that venerates individual assertion, popular personae in entertainment, fashion and sports, cutthroat competitiveness, and material possessions, they credit relentless self-affirmation as authentically meaningful and empowering. But not in apocalyptic terms of "the decline and deceit of Western Democracy" as perceived by Freirean educator McLaren (2001) in the following overstatement.

Ethically and politically Freire remains haunted by the ghosts of history's victims and possessed by the spirits that populate the broken dreams of utopian thinkers and millenarian dreamers—an individual whose capacities for nurturing affinities among disparate social, cultural, and political groups

and for forging a trajectory to moral, social, and political liberation exceeds the disasters that currently befall this world. (p. 112)

Worse, McLaren reductively alleges that postmodern complexities in the classroom (complexities that can work well in Freire's praxis of dialogue) have only served to abandon labor politics for identity politics and discover the frivolities of information technology: "Surfing hybrid identities within spaces opened up by furious clashes in the fight clubs of culture, has been a primary pursuit of postmodern educationalists" (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2002, p. 42). Educators who trumpet such fears and sarcasm usually face active resistance in the classroom, a resistance that is not always salutary for personal interaction or growth of contemporary awareness. They lecture from a position "in the know," failing to engage students' involvement with new technologies and procedures, and thereby overlooking possibilities for cross-cultural and international linkages opened by Web-based technologies that have expanded ethical and cognitive contexts through multiplicities of information.

North American students and educationalists—middle-class and otherwise—deserve practical alternatives, offered, discussed, and negotiated through dialogue and tolerance. As a politely liberal virtue, tolerance itself comes in for much suspicion in postmodern ethical thought. However, Freire (1998) emphasizes that tolerance "does not mean acquiescing to the intolerable; it does not mean covering up disrespect; it does not mean coddling the aggressor or disguising aggression" (p. 43). Darder (2002) expands informatively on the topic.

Freire adamantly stressed that neither is tolerance about playing the game, nor is it a civilized gesture of hypocrisy, nor a coexistence with the unbearable. Instead, the critical expression of tolerance is founded on the basic human principles of respect, discipline, dignity, and ethical responsibility. (p. 49)

Freire's dialogic pedagogy travels effectively through time with great relevance for interpersonal sharing and complex information technologies.

Freirean-sensitive education liberates contemporary North American students to cognitive alternatives in politics, meanings, positions, technologies, and interpretations. Dialogical interaction informs them in terms of curiosity, questioning, facilitation, opposition, and response. The praxis of education is implicit in its own dialogue, dialogue that is informed by and linked to ethical cooperation and mutual respect. Arnett (2002) isolates the gestalt metaphor of "face-saving" as central to Freire's praxis.

Freire's notion of "saving face" protects the psychological self-esteem of the Other, the learner, only as a by-product. Freire's goal is literacy, not self-esteem. He is sensitive to the task at hand—education. He is deeply caring, but caring in a philosophically sophisticated fashion that understands the limits of humanism focused on the individual. (p. 493)

Far from preaching to the converted or presupposing oppositional outcomes, as Jay and Graff (1995) allege and McLaren and Farahmandpur (2002) counter-allege, such process facilitates dialogic civility, mutual tolerance, unprejudiced exploration, and participatory interaction. Such face-saving does not represent particular politeness, special privilege, or allowance for competitive inability, but is rather a basic marker of interpersonal respect in the dialogic classroom.

Here authority is always located in exchange, process, question, and negotiation. A pedagogical approach of mutual interaction and discussion achieves much more than pedagogical conflict and competition. Students in dialogue are students involved in tolerant exploration and cognitive expansion where understanding does not necessarily equal agreement. Jay, Graff, McLaren, and Farahmandpur are all honest provocative intellectuals who could benefit from a little more dialogical interaction and a little less dialectical opposition.

Speaking generally of Freire's humanist praxis, Padilla and Montiel (1998) make the following observation.

He saw that people who are in a state of oppression or stagnation lack subjectivity. Instead of engaging projects in the world as subjects, their consciousness folds inwardly. With that enfolded consciousness their posture in the world is one of complaining or they will take refuge in hopelessness believing that action is useless. They learn to be helpless and silent. (pp. 102-103)

These observations describe more than just the dispossessed people of Latin America. They speak clearly to the alienation and cynical frustration of North American college students who no longer care about education or their place in its perceived system. Sitting silently and helpless in our classrooms, such students consider university credit as conferred by their right or by instructor fiat. They may be technologically equipped, well fed, and even comfortably middle-class, but—disengaged and apathetic—they lack the ability or the will to enter fully into dialogue and take responsibility for their own learning. They are easily recognizable. Often, having internalized monological authority, they reflect back an uncaring authority that makes them feel secure. In so doing they disengage from dialogue not only with education, but also from each other and any possible cross-pollination of ideas that could improve processes in the classroom. Resistance to dialogical process deserves negotiation as a part of the process itself, indeed is often part of early process. But this resistance should be voiced from initial curiosity and caring as opposed to outright rejection prior to any possibility. Often students who refuse to care simply refuse to participate. Padilla's discussant Montiel (Padilla & Montiel, 1998) accounts for them in his key observation: "One can have material comforts and still operate in a somnambulant way, without acting critically in one's world. I think that Freire was talking about all of us, not just the peasants in some distant Third World country" (p. 103).

Jay and Graff's (1995) notion of "teaching the conflicts" suggests an exciting give-and-take experience for North American students, but conflict is still only and ever a theoretical state. Hence their relativism about oppressor and oppressed. Freire, politically engaged and as a consequence exiled from oppressive Brazil, always knew that those who actually experience oppression have little difficulty identifying their oppressors. For example, students know that teachers who open conflicts in the classroom never suffer as a result of such conflicts. They also know that the teacher will inevitably judge the conflict and apportion rewards to perceived victors. Consequently, Jay and Graff are disingenuous at best when they declare that their pedagogy of political conflict "does not prescribe the proper outcome of the conflict in advance" (p. 213), thereby privileging information free-for-all as opposed to what they consider

to be Freirean predetermination. Instead, in line with Bakhtin's dialogism, Freire's method emphasizes communication over conflict and mutual problem-solving over provocative oppositional scenarios. In education, trust and humility work together in a process that recognizes rather than accents differences. In his classic text on pedagogy, Freire (1993) concludes a series of impassioned but meaningfully rhetorical questions as follows.

How can I dialogue if I am closed to—and even offended by—the contribution of others? How can I dialogue if I am afraid of being displaced, the mere possibility causing me torment and weakness? Self-sufficiency is incompatible with dialogue. Men and women who lack humility (or have lost it) cannot come to the people, cannot be their partners in naming the world.... At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramus nor perfect sages; there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn. (p. 71)

Here *together* represents an especially facilitative, rather than provocative, state of cognition. It is a point of encounter that credits the *in-betweenness* of diversity and flexibility, an ever-negotiated place of meeting that resists temporary satisfactions of closure in favor of the ongoing facilitations of dialogue, engagement, and intellectual growth.

Dialogue and Facilitation

Facilitation, however, does not suggest abdication of responsibility. Teachers who announce their abolition of authority in the classroom and declare themselves merely to be kindly facilitators of ideas involve themselves in a distortion of reality, a kind of pedagogical bad faith. Freire (Freire & Macedo, 1995) analyzes the situation clearly.

In de-emphasizing the teacher's power by claiming to be a facilitator, one is being less than truthful to the extent that the teacher turned facilitator maintains the power institutionally created in the position. That is, although facilitators may veil their power, at any moment they can exercise power as they wish. The facilitator still grades, still has certain control over the curriculum, and to deny these facts is to be disingenuous. I think what creates this need to be a facilitator is the confusion between authoritarianism and authority. What one cannot do in trying to divest of authoritarianism is relinquish one's authority as a teacher.... The teacher who claims to be a facilitator and not a teacher is renouncing, for reasons unbeknownst to us, the task of teaching and, hence, the task of dialogue. (pp. 377-378)

Freire and Bakhtin would both agree that a teacher should be dialogically authoritative as opposed to monologically authoritarian.

Like Bakhtin, who independently under Stalinist oppression theorized dialogue in ethical and cultural terms, Freire envisions *dialogue* as something different from directionless give-and-take conversation. For Bakhtin, dialogue suggests self and other always, already in the action of interaction. Nothing exists alone. Monologue suggests oppressive authority. Bakhtin's dialogism by contrast represents a radical generosity of conception in ethical terms that parallels Freire's sense of dialogue in terms of pedagogical responsibility and authority. To Freire *teaching* precedes but is also, in Bakhtin's sense, clearly in dialogue with facilitation. Freire (Freire & Macedo, 1995), in dialogue with Macedo, makes his principles clear.

As a teacher, I have the responsibility to teach, and in order to teach, I always try to facilitate. In the first place, I am convinced that when we speak of dialogue and education, we are speaking, above all, about practices that enable us to approach the object of knowledge. In order to begin to understand the meaning of a dialogical practice, we have to put aside the simplistic understanding of dialogue as a mere technique. Dialogue does not represent a somewhat false path that I attempt to elaborate on and realize in the sense of involving the ingenuity of the other. On the contrary, dialogue characterizes an epistemological relationship. Thus in this sense, dialogue is a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task.... Dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing. (p. 379)

Freire and Bakhtin both see the movement of dialogue as a movement from technique to epistemological relationship. Teaching conveys ideas, but always with a view to an external object of knowledge, whether this object be Shakespearean literature, historical science, statistical interpretation, class politics, or medical theory. Process is key, and only through dialogue can ideas be conveyed, tested, rejected, accepted, revised, and made possible.

The dialogic classroom seminar provides structure for mutual exploration of external objects of knowledge. Exploration begins with the students themselves, their perceptions and expectations, even their surprise when as Freirean facilitator I often begin the first meeting with the question, "What would you like to learn in this class?" This honest Freirean question conveys participatory interest with regard to the students and for the materials. The classroom immediately—but also often with some rephrasing, long silences, and gentle, even humorous, prompting—becomes a procedure for participatory problem-solving through communication. Credited as people with ideas, opinions, and choices, students open up to transformational learning through active communication. Freire (1993) even considers such revolutionary pedagogy as a form of "*communion*" (p. 43), with all its associations of sacred trust. In Bakhtinian terms such interaction partakes of dialogue, reflection, discussion, and communication (dialogic) as opposed to slogan, instruction, rant, and communiqué (monologic). Freire rejects *narration* just as Bakhtin rejects *monologism*. Neither is particularly effective in the classroom seminar because narration, like monologue, speaks only of itself. Instead, seminar discourse allows for presentation of others' ideas as well as discussion of alternatives through examination, interpretation, and shared perspectives. Alternative perspectives are also voiced, examined, and interpreted. Differences are stated, weighed, and considered, with consensus reconfiguring or possible reconcilements posited. Herein open honesty is paramount and enthusiasm helps a great deal: teaching can never be faked.

Procedurally the teacher convenes and above all allows for equal opportunity of participation. On the objective level the convener is prepared with accurate researched information from a variety of sources to elicit and ask questions about facts and interpretations related to the external object of knowledge. Reflection of assumptions and presuppositions follows, including requests for impressionistic reaction, immediate, felt impressions, images and associations, in which the convener too should be involved. At all points one should be free from coercion and open to alternative perspectives. The con-

vener participates with students to weigh evidence and arguments as objectively as possible, to break patterns of vertical authority in the classroom, and to involve all participants in what Freire (1993) identified as “problem-posing education” (p. 61). Characteristically compelling on the topic, Freire declares: “Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming” (p. 65). Such is the nature of the dialogic classroom seminar, where mutual involvement credits differing interpretations to draw out meanings, values, significances, and implications about contexts, possibilities, patterns, and relations. Decisional possibilities can then be entertained, including further questions to elicit resolutions or ask *so-what?* questions and explore their implications. The seminar thrives on open questions beginning with *How? Which? What?* or *Why do you suppose?:* questions that do not presuppose answers or suggest placements of right or wrong. Informed consensus itself should be considered as a test of validity that reduces as much as possible the degree of power differences in the classroom between convener and students. Herein the dialogical teacher as seminar convener honestly facilitates growth of intellectual directions and possibilities. At all points the seminar convener should be as in love with communication as with the particular object of knowledge under discussion.

Conclusion

Teaching and learning are both passionate and participatory callings that continually reinvent themselves both within and outside the classroom. The liberatory and dialogical procedures that I describe in this article are founded on personal experience wherein I have tried always to be a learner and therefore a teacher, communicating ideas and therefore critical consciousness. Freire (1993) clearly affirmed, “without communication there can be no true education” (p. 74). The teacherly wisdom and humility suggested in Freire’s work affects me directly as a teacher, and I am sensitive to the critique of leading Freirean educator McLaren, who in an afterword to Darder (2002) castigates “domestication” of Freire’s work as follows. “Liberal progressives are drawn to Freire’s humanism; Marxists and neo-Marxists, to his revolutionary praxis and his history of working with revolutionary political regimes; left liberals, to his critical utopianism; and even conservatives begrudgingly respect his stress on ethics” (pp. 250-251). But as a progressive liberal Canadian university educator, I also attempt sensitively and with respect to re-create Freire’s pedagogy in terms of my own cultural context. In conversation with Macedo in the foreword to *Teachers as Cultural Workers* (1998), Freire insisted that people do so: “It is impossible to export pedagogical practices without reinventing them. Please tell your fellow American educators not to import me. Ask them to re-create and rewrite my ideas” (p. xi).

In this article I reconsider praxis in the university classroom along the lines of dialogic pedagogy, as located in the shared but separate fundamental ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin and Paulo Freire. I do so from the perspective of dialogue in the North American classroom seminar. I would not presume to “import” or “domesticate” Freire. But I do attempt flexibly, sensitively, and with open-ended engagement to re-create his procedures and ideas with the consciousnesses of my students involved. Like McLaren, Darder, Gadotti, and Padilla—even presumably Jay and Graff—I also attempt always to re-create

my consciousness and passion for teaching. Like Bakhtin (1984a), I believe that “*To be means to communicate*” (p. 279): with all the crucial emphasis conveyed by Bakhtin’s italics. Moreover, like all the people listed in the references at the end of this article—and in the crucially empowering words of Paulo Freire—I dare to teach.

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