FORUM

The Tension Between Justice and Freedom in Paulo Freire's Epistemology

CLARENCE W. JOLDERSMA
Calvin College

ABSTRACT: Paulo Freire's pedagogy is rooted in his belief in social justice through liberation of the oppressed. His problem-posing pedagogy is the primary vehicle to raise critical consciousness whereby the ethical project of social justice can be realized. Central to that pedagogy is a view of human beings as change agents and a constructivist view of knowledge development. By reading Freire through a framework inspired by Emmanuel Levinas, the article uncovers a central tension between Freire's ethical project of justice and the language of freedom that is supposed to bring it about. Specifically the article explores how the concept of freedom in Freire's constructivist epistemology – constituted as agentive, spontaneity-based action – is in tension with his ethical project of a pedagogy for justice, one based in responsibility and non-indifference. Resolution of this tension means situating the subject as an active epistemological agent in the context of an ethical construal of the subject. This means reconceptualizing the grounding notion of the subject beyond a modernist one of spontaneity to the more Levinasian one of responsibility. It also means situating Freire's still modernist notion of knowledge as grasping within the Levinasian-inspired idea of an ethically situated epistemological relationship with reality as other. Levinas's notion of alterity is the key to this re-envisioned grounding of epistemology and human subjectivity.

RÉSUMÉ: La pédagogie de Paulo Freire s'appuie sur sa confiance en justice sociale à travers la libération de

l'oppressé. Sa pédagogie où l'on part du problème est un moyen primordial pour soulever la conscience critique à l'aide de laquelle le projet éthique de la justice sociale peut être réalisé. La notion des êtres humains vus comme des agents qui changent, de même que la perception des connaissances en tant que développement constructif, constituent l'essentiel de cette pédagogie. En lisant Freire à travers la structure crée par Emmanuel Levinas, l'article découvre la tension centrale entre le projet éthique de la justice de Freire et le langage de la liberté qui devrait le réaliser. Plus précisément, l'article s'efforce d'explorer la tension entre la notion de la liberté incluse dans l'épistémologie constructive de Freire-constituée en tant qu'action d'agent basée sur la spontanéité - et son projet éthique de la pédagogie pour la justice s'appuyant sur la responsabilité et non-indifférence. La résolution de cette tension consiste à situer le sujet comme un agent épistémologique actif dans le contexte de la construction éthique de ce sujet. C'est une reconceptualisation de la notion fondamentale du sujet en dehors de la spontanéité modernisée en s'approchant vers la responsabilité de Levinas. C'est aussi considérer la notion - toujours moderne- des connaissances de Freire en tant que compréhension à l'intérieur de l'idée de Levinas où elle est présentée par rapport à la réalité. C'est la notion de la transformation de Levinas qui constitue une clé importante pour revoir la base de l'épistémologie et de la subjectivité humaine.

Part I: Freire's Epistemology

The Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, may well have been the most well known educational activist and theorist in the world at the time of his death in May 1997 (Elias, 1994; Weiler, 1996). Although not as well known (or regarded) in North America, even here many educational theorists have been influenced by his work. This is especially true in the critical pedagogy approach of theorists such as Donaldo Macedo, 1994; Ira Shor, 1992, 1996; Henry Giroux, 1997; Pepi Leistyna, 1999, and Peter McLaren, 1999.[1] However, perhaps because of these authors' admiration for Freire, if not their "reverence of disciples" (Weiler, 1996, p. 354), their works do not make a concerted assessment of Freire's philosophical framework.[2] Yet it would seem that examining Freire's philosophical assumptions about reality, humans, and

knowledge would help evaluate better Freire's critique of school and society as well as his vision for overcoming his social and educational concerns. In this paper I wish to take a critical look at Freire's epistemology as it grounds both his critique of pedagogy and his vision for a more normative alternative.

My criticism of Freire's pedagogy will be that it is grounded in a tension. On the one hand its epistemological assumptions include the modernist conception of the subject as an active constructor of knowledge.[3] Central here is the notion of active agency, one that relies heavily on the idea of freedom. On the other hand Freire's epistemology is at bottom meant to constitute an ethical project, centered on the role of knowledge in bringing social justice. By reading these two epistemological strands through the perspective of Emmanuel Levinas,[4] it will be my contention that they constitute a tension. A notion of knowledge promoting justice is in conflict with an epistemology rooted primarily in agency and freedom. I will suggest that an epistemology oriented to justice requires an outlook on the nature of knowledge that includes Levinas's conception of *alterity*, that is, irreducible otherness or strangeness (Davis, 1996). This Levinasian-inspired critique, I believe, will recover a deeper notion of knowledge, one that aligns more closely to bringing about social justice, the central feature of Freire's particular ethical stance. Thus a Levinasian reading will make more explicit what I believe to be the ultimate faith-based root of Freire's pedagogy.[5]

Pedagogy as an ethical enterprise is central in Freire.[6] For him, pedagogy ought always to bring on structural change in an oppressive society (Gadotti 1994). As such, at its core, pedagogy ought to be ethical in character; good pedagogy ought to be aimed at political transformation for the purpose of justice, righting the evils of oppression (Freire, 1998b). And although Freire doesn't rule out political armed revolution to achieve these aims, his writings overwhelmingly suggest his desire to develop political change towards social justice by means of *pedagogy*.[7] In any event, for Freire, "Education must be an instrument of transforming action, a political praxis at the service of permanent human liberation" (1985, p. 140). Throughout his varied discussions on pedagogy and teaching his ultimate concern is the *ethical* one of ending political and social oppression.

Freire recognizes that education is not automatically or intrinsically a vehicle for bringing on social justice. Instead, he realizes that much of education is dehumanizing, taking the form of what he calls "banking education" (Freire, 1970, p. 58). In that sort of education, the teacher knows everything, the students, nothing; the teacher is active, the student passive; the teacher thinks, the students do not (but are instead thought about); the teacher chooses the content, the students comply with it; the teacher is authority, the student is obedient to authority (1970). On this model, excellence in pedagogy would mean being efficient in loading up the students with knowledge and saturating them with information. Being a good student would mean being receptive to the depositing process, retaining it, and being able to give it back quickly and perfectly. On the banking model, pedagogy is the process of depositing pre-selected and ready-made knowledge into the empty mental vault and withdrawing it at the appropriate times.

Central to his criticism of banking education is a critique of its model of knowledge. Here knowledge is too neatly packaged, complete and objective, portrayed as clear and distinct items that are easily transferable and able to be deposited into passive students. This view of knowledge misleadingly portrays the world as static and finished, unchanging and unchangeable. Through this model of knowledge the students are thus implicitly indoctrinated to believe that all the activity, power, authority, and expertise to develop knowledge is held by the teacher and the expert and none of it by the students. Through this model of knowledge students are co-opted into a system that treats them as passive objects rather than as active humans. Thus structurally, the model of knowledge in banking education is dehumanizing because it creates oppressive epistemological passivity in students.

This, he says, mirrors the dominating structure of an oppressive society as a whole, where there is a deep division between a class of oppressors and one of oppressed. The oppressed segment of society is kept passive by believing that the oppressors rightly hold all the power and authority. The oppressed accept without question the domination of the oppressors because they believe that their oppressed status is just part of reality's structure. Consequently, they also believe

that reality cannot change, that it is static and finished in its development. Structurally, the model of knowledge in banking pedagogy mirrors this with its fixation and reification of reality. Thus the banking model of knowledge is a vehicle, deliberate or not, for continuing the political oppression at large, working against the ethical project of liberation from that oppression.

The banking model of knowledge violates the humanity of students because it does not acknowledge their creational subjective agency. Centrally, for Freire, humans were created as active developers of knowledge, rather than passive recipients. And our human vocation is developing and using that knowledge to transform a changing and changeable world. To project an absolute ignorance onto students, as the banking model of knowledge surely does, is inhuman because it does not acknowledge that being human is already being active, both in knowledge development and in social transformation by means of that knowledge.[8] The teacher who suffocates the natural active curiosity of the student is disrespectful of an essential characteristic of the student's humanness.

By contrast, an ethically oriented pedagogy creates possibilities for active inquiry. Good teaching, which Freire labels problem-posing pedagogy, leads to the development of knowledge by the students themselves, deepening inherent spontaneous curiosity into a deliberate tool of inquiry. On this model, students are more closely equal to their teachers with regard to problems under investigation and knowledge being developed. In this, students exercise freedom, helping control the knowledge development process along with the teacher (Elias, 1976). Both teacher and students are subjects in this, together unveiling reality and engaging in the task of creating knowledge of that world (Freire, 1970). As Freire says, problem-posing pedagogy "is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge" (1998a, p. 30). Instead of a 'passive spectator' model of knowledge acquisition, Freire believes that knowledge always is actively manufactured, in dialogue, among students and teacher (Roberts, 1998).[9] Central to Freire's problem-posing pedagogy is a constructivist epistemology.

Freire's constructivist epistemology requires critical consciousness (1973). The dynamic relations between knower and

known is not merely an unreflective being-in-the-world, but an active consciousness involving the deliberate use of the imagination, the emotions, and the ability to conjecture and compare (1998a). Furthermore, this conscious relation is a deliberate interrogation involving the student's capacity to integrate, synthesize, and construct new categories about the world.[10] Freire advocates a dynamic unity between students and world in which knowledge is actively produced by that person.[11]

That unity, however, originates in the student as conscious subject.[12] Knowledge is constructed by a conscious relation to the world. This is a Husserlian "consciousness of" in which the notion of consciousness is linked to an object of consciousness.[13] Central to this "consciousness of" in the knowing relation is the notion of thematizing intentionality. In Freire, knowledge is developed by the active, conscious agent's thematization, a process that constitutes reality's unveiling through categorization. In Freire's words, "thematic investigation thus becomes a common striving towards awareness of reality" (1970, p. 98). Knowledge for Freire has an arrow of thematizing intentionality moving from subject to object, involving a conscious subject pointing out objective features of reality, thus unveiling it.

The intentional relation of thematizing is a central requirement for Freire's idea of humans as active, transformative agents, where the world is viewed as an object of transforming action. In the process of thematically unveiling reality, humans "come to see the world not as a static reality, but as reality in process, in transformation" (1970, p. 71). Knowing that reality changes can lead to helping it do so in new directions, transforming it. The set of beliefs formulated in the thematizing process is the means to carrying out that human vocation.

A central condition for conscious thematizing is freedom. The possibility of thematizing requires the conscious freedom to make decisions about which themes to emphasize, which concepts to utilize, and which categories to ignore. Freedom is that part of our human epistemological equipment which gives us the capacity to go beyond present knowledge to change the current perceptions of reality. Since transforming reality is central to our human vocation, changing our conceptions of reality rather than merely adapting to present understandings is central to our human calling. But to do that we must have freedom and control over

knowledge development, already as students. This means then that, for Freire, freedom is central for human creatureliness, epistemologically as well.[14]

Knowledge development and social transformation are not two distinct phases, but are inextricably intertwined. At times Freire refers to this as praxis: "There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world" (1970, p. 75). By praxis Freire means the dynamic of reflection and action, where word and work are closely intertwined. He calls this *naming* the world. Naming is intentionality-laden and thematizing, for it is the codification of a recognized theme for the world during the transforming process. Naming is a deliberate objectification of the world by consciously taking distance from it and identifying its structure. This is important for naming to be effective in gaining a perspective on the structural forces that lead to oppression (Vasquez, 1997). Thus naming can be thought of as an epistemological intervention. The capacity to intervene in the world is interwoven with language, for language makes humans "able to give a name to things that resulted from its intervention, 'grasping' intellectually and being able to communicate what had been 'grasped'" (Freire, 1998a, p. 53). To be human is to construct knowledge, which is to name, which is to transform, which is to be an active agent, which is to be a subject.[15] But naming can only be possible ontologically in freedom.

Part II: A Levinasian-Inspired Reading and Critique of Freire

Does Freire's notion of freedom associated with the student as an active, epistemological subject and transformative agent provide adequate support for the ethical project he wishes to accomplish with his pedagogy? Does the emphasis on freedom required for his constructivist epistemology deliver the quest for justice that Freire seeks? A Levinasian-inspired reading of this will help see a tension between these two.

That reading might go like this. The world on which the active epistemological subject acts, according to Levinas, is "a site where I can" (Levinas, 1969, p. 37). From this perspective, the world is the arena where the active subject is free to act by

grasping, taking, calculating, conceptualizing, and thematizing. A Levinasian-inspired reading of the agent's action on the world is that it is a process of trying to possess the world by conceptually grasping it. This epistemological action involves forging the world into what Levinas would call a totality or an economy of sameness, thematizing the world into categories. This is the epistemological process of making the strange familiar.[16] As a result, the world becomes part of the student's field of identity by being an instantiation of his or her conceptual structure. This gives the student as active agent power over the world in order to transform it. Freire's constructivist epistemology, based in freedom, is at its root an attempt to relate to the world by a totalizing relation, grasping it by means of naming.

What is largely absent from Freire's conceptualization is the Levinasian idea of alterity, a foreignness that permanently eludes capture in concepts (Peperzak, 1993). A Levinasian-inspired move would suggest that, in the epistemological relationship, reality also actually resists possession, contests conceptualization, confronts thematization, remains (stubbornly) other.[17] Because Freire views grasping and thematizing the world as *unveiling* reality, he is not in a good position to acknowledge this other side. Freire does recognize that it takes hard work to develop knowledge. But he never comes to the Levinasian-inspired point of realizing that this is because reality never quite fits into the totality thematized by the active agent. A Levinasian perspective would suggest that to the extent the world is other, it *cannot* be possessed, conceptualized, thematized. Therefore the Freirean subject's reduction of the world to his or her themes or concepts always is an attempt to make the otherness of the world vanish. The 'positive' character of the world's alterity is largely missing in Freire.

As a result, Freire's constructivism actually involves the active subject securing itself and not allowing itself to be alienated by the world's alterity. In constructivism, knowledge development is an act of freedom. However, Levinas recognizes this as freedom for the self: "Freedom denotes the mode of remaining the same in the midst of the other" (Levinas, 1969, p. 45). That is, the freedom associated with constructing knowledge is the process of continually deploying my identity in grasping and thematizing the world, thereby maintaining the permanence

of my identity in the face of difference. Within the context of Freirean pedagogy, then, the construction of knowledge can be viewed as an identity statement by students qua students with respect to the otherness of the world. Freedom is neutralizing the world qua other and encompassing it with the subject's identity. Knowing is an act of centering.

What a Levinasian-inspired reading makes clear is that constructing knowledge is not just unveiling the world. The naming process is not neutral with respect to reality; instead, it is a prejudice against its alterity. This bias can be understood as a process of *objectification*, a way of making the world as other into the familiar world of the same by reducing difference to identity. In this sense, objects qua objects are projects of a conscious subject. Objectification is a form of domesticating the world as other by getting it to surrender, forcing it, in Levinas's terms, to "lay itself open to grasp." Objects are not other, but part of the subject's same, a reduction to identity. To the extent that they are objects they have no mystery but are something known, grasped, conceptualized. Objects are thus *thematized* entities, with the alterity removed in the naming process. Objects are entities *domesticated* for possession and control by removing their alterity. Objects are still in the circle of sameness, even if they are thought to be outside the subject physically. Subject and object form a totality, with the subject at the center of an ever-widening circle of sameness. The mediating names thus bring the world as other into domination by the active subject. Knowledge turns out to be power because of its domesticating process, thereby making knowledge, in Levinas's words, "the ultimate sense of freedom" (1969, p. 45) and control.

As a result, I believe that Freire's constructivist epistemology remains too close to the overall position he wishes to avoid, namely, knowledge used for dominating control by the oppressor. Certainly a constructivist epistemology develops knowledge for power and control to transform the world. As such it is nevertheless structurally similar to the epistemology of the oppressors in banking education. Theirs is also knowledge for control and power, a process in which the world is objectified. To use the words of Horkheimer and Adorno, objectification of the world occurs "in order to determine how it is to be dominated" (1972, p. 39). The main difference between Freire and the

oppressors is not in epistemological models, but concerns how large to draw the circle of agency. Freire wants all humans to be in that circle, students included, whereas the oppressors systematically exclude a large group of people from sharing in this power, namely, the oppressed, including students. Democratization and universalization of power in this manner is not to be minimized by any means; it certainly is a step in the right direction. But all that has changed is enlarging the site of production to include all humans in the process. It still remains the case that structurally Freire's epistemology at bottom is similar to that of the oppressors, one for power and domination, possession and control. The freedom required for a constructivist epistemology still leads to a kind of oppression. This seems to be in fundamental tension with his ethical project of social justice, ridding the world of oppression. David Harvey suggests that this sort of Enlightenment project is bound to turn against itself, transforming "the quest for human emancipation into a system of universal oppression in the name of human liberation" (cited in Vasquez, 1997, p. 191). There is a polarity between the means to transformation – that is, naming – and the goal of transformation, that is, social justice in term of ridding the world of oppression.[18]

To resolve this tension, Freire needs to ground epistemology in something that goes beyond constructivism. There might well be grounding for knowledge that is deeper than the conceptual and thematic, a dimension of knowing that is not structurally oppressive towards reality. This would not be an alternative epistemology, rivaling a constructivist one, but a level of knowing that might situate constructivism. In this deeper relation, Levinas says, "the knowing being lets the known being manifest itself while respecting its alterity and without marking it in any way whatever by this cognitive relation" (Levinas, 1969, p. 42). This deeper dimension of knowing has respect for alterity (otherness): to quote Levinas again, it "does not reduce the other to the same as does ontology, but calls into question the exercise of the same" (p. 43). Knowing at this level is a way of undermining the confidence of naming, subverting the certitude of thematization for control, or questioning the neutrality of representation. This level of knowing calls into question the movement of enveloping the world by the spontaneity and

freedom of the constructing subject. This questioning would be a way of acknowledging the continuing presence of alterity in reality. And it is precisely the phenomenon of the world qua other that would allow us to relativize the controlling thematization of a constructivist epistemology, thereby softening its oppressive temptation.

This dimension of the knowing process would be beneficial for Freire's overall ethical project of social justice. Levinas calls this level "ethics." For Levinas, ethics is the calling into question of my own freedom, the spontaneity involved in grasping and possessing. In an ethical relation, reality as other is precisely *not* reduced to sameness, *not* thematized, *not* objectified. Ethics is resisting my constructivist actions by calling into question my freedom as a subject. Ethics is ultimately the recognition that the comprehension of the world qua other is never quite possible. And yet it is the relationship to the other as other that is foundational, even to the grasping agent. In Levinasian terms, ethics is first philosophy, not epistemology.

In that sense ethics holds freedom in check. The spontaneity of freedom is conditioned by the responsibility of ethics.[19] For Levinas, central to ethics is justice, since it "involves obligations with regard to an existent that refuses to give itself, the Other" (1969, p. 45). Justice then could be thought of as the relation where the subject has consideration for the other. Although for Levinas "the Other" is primarily human rather than non-human, I wish to extend this to reality in general and thus to epistemology in general as well. Whereas, epistemologically, *freedom* involves grasping, possessing, reducing difference to themes, epistemologically *justice* involves respecting alterity, letting the other be other. Although this is certainly true for humans, I would suggest this to be true also for reality in general.

Here we see a way to understand what is problematic in Freire's emphasis on constructivism when what he wants is justice. The freedom of constructivism is at odds with the justice of recognizing the otherness of reality, its alterity. Freire is pulled in two directions at once. On the one hand, his ethical stance orients him to develop a pedagogy that is first of all oriented towards justice. The pedagogy of the oppressed is meant to allow justice to prevail so that humans can do their God-given vocation. Freire's ethical bearing motivates him to develop a

pedagogy in which the duality of domination and dominated will be broken once and for all, where justice will be established. That is his dream. Yet, his epistemological language of choice is the modernist language of freedom, power through thematizing knowledge, control of reality by naming. Freire's vehicle for justice is freedom. He has not realized the Levinasian point that the two are pulling in different directions. His own first language blunts his choice for justice.

But how might Freire ensure that justice in fact will occur in his ethical pedagogy? How can he keep priority of justice over freedom more permanent? A Levinasian-inspired way would be to situate freedom in the context of justice, to suggest that epistemology be grounded in ethics. It would be to situate the conceptual knowing process in a more primordial epistemological relationship with reality. This level suggests that the subject as conscious, active agent is not the most basic, but dependent on something deeper, more primary or *originary*.

If constructivist epistemology is conditioned by ethics then the constructing subject would not be the originary subject; instead, the ethical subject would be, also for knowing. Or, more subtly, we must recognize that the subject as active agent has at its core a more primordial subject, one that could be called the ethical subject. On this model, we might want to say that it is the call of the other that elicits my knowing response most primordially. Certainly that would hold for other humans, as Levinas suggests. However, I would suggest that this hold for reality in general as well. We might want to say that the other remains a site of obligation even as it gives rise to the intentionality of thematizing consciousness. Then knowing, at the ethical level, involves a form of obligation that comes from somewhere in the world, from the world as other, from the otherness of the world. In this Levinasian-inspired reading, the face of the world as other gives rise to obligations on my part as a knower, to my process of knowing. In the knowing process our primary epistemological responsibility is precisely to reality as other. If knowing is indeed a response on our side, it is a response to the world: more particularly and primordially, to the *otherness* of the world, to the world qua *other*, not boxed in by our naming.

That is, my Levinasian-inspired hope here is that ethics as first philosophy is not merely for ethics (morality, the ethical

traditionally understood)[20] but for epistemology as well. The Freirean conscious subject constructing knowledge through naming is not bedrock for epistemology; instead, the ethical relation contextualizes that level of knowing, situating thematizing knowledge in reality's mystery and awesomeness, its creatureliness.

The Levinasian ethical level has particular implications for a Freirean pedagogy that is oriented exclusively towards raising consciousness, to conscientization. Situating pedagogy of freedom in the ethical would call into question the originary, basic character of the ontological vocation of active transformation. At bottom, pedagogy for justice cannot just be a pedagogy of freedom.

Freire needs to realize the conditioning character of justice for his pedagogy. To situate pedagogy of freedom, we need pedagogy of responsibility. Pedagogy of responsibility would orient students, qua epistemological subjects, to listen before naming, to have a 'passivity beyond the passivity' of the student as container, as object. Certainly I do not mean for this as a call to return to banking pedagogy. Instead, it would be a move forward, past freedom, past the activity of the possessing agent, toward responsibility.

I believe that as pedagogy, Freire's project would not have to abandon a pedagogy of freedom or liberation. Surely, for the oppressed, freedom is an important, central part of the move towards justice. However, that cannot be the resting-place of pedagogy, at least of a pedagogy for justice. Activating freedom cannot be the original, for then it is still too much like the Enlightenment project of mastery over our own destiny (Vasquez, 1997). Justice is originary, not freedom. Freedom must be situated in ethics to have direction. Freedom must heed a call, endure a limit, be conditioned in one way rather than another. This would bring out more clearly, pedagogically, Freire's suggestion that "fighting against discrimination is an ethical imperative," an "obligation" (Freire, 1997, p. 87). If obligation forms the core, then we have the ethical subject who has "the strength and courage to fight with dedication to overcome injustice" (p. 65). Of course, this strength doesn't come from the self, but from the Other.

NOTES

1. Peter McLaren suggests that "Freire's work has unarguably been the driving force behind North American efforts at developing critical pedagogy" (McLaren, 1999, p. 51).

2. Weiler (1996) suggests that much of this literature constitutes a "canonization of Freire," and thus a betrayal of the ideals Freire himself was calling for. Of course, there have also been criticisms of Freire, ranging from mild to severe. See for example, Vasquez, 1997; hooks, 1993; Weiler, 1996, 1991; Stull, 1994; Gee, 1988, and Bowers 1983, 1993a, 1993b. However, in general, these critiques do not address specifically Freire's philosophical framework. My own critique of Freire here, though at a philosophical level, is given within the context of appreciating and sympathizing with Freire's overall intent of liberation and his concern for "the oppressed." Although I do not mean to canonize Freire, my intent is ultimately to further, not undermine, his project.

3. There is a long-standing theme of constructionism in modernity, stretching from Locke's notion of the mind's active analysis and synthesis of simple ideas and Kant's idea that the mind's concepts give unity to the incoming manifold of sensory intuitions, to Carnap's idea of the logical construction of the world and Russell's notion of how we gain our knowledge of the external world. I'm not suggesting that Freire is directly influenced by these particular philosophers; instead, my point is only to illustrate that constructionism is part of modernism. See also Ameriks and Sturma, 1995.

4. Using Levinas to push forward a discussion of liberation has been done elsewhere as well. See Barber, 1998 and Min, 1998.

5. Although I do not argue this point, I would think it would be difficult to understand Freire without acknowledging his Christian faith, as some of his commentators have indeed noted. See Collins, 1977 and 1998; Johns, 1993; Elias, 1976 and 1994; Betz, 1992, and Cooper, 1995.

6. Freire's preoccupation with the notion of pedagogy can be seen from the titles of his books. These include *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), *Pedagogy in Progress* (1978), *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (1987; with Ira Shor), *Pedagogy in the City* (1993), *Pedagogy of Hope* (1996), *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1997), and *Pedagogy of the Heart* (1998). The ethical concern is central throughout these writings.

7. According to Elias, Freire is primarily interested in change not through armed struggle but through education: "Although Freire's emphasis is on political revolution, he sees a liberating education as a necessary condition for bringing about the revolution" (Elias, 1976, p. 72).

8. Freire says, "Curiosity as restless questioning, as movement towards revelation of something hidden, as a question verbalized or

not, as search for clarity, as a moment of attention, suggestion, and vigilance, constitutes an integral part of the phenomenon of being alive" (Freire, 1998a, p. 38).

9. In this Freire sounds a Deweyan theme of learning by doing. However, as Gadotti (1994) points out, Freire's ideas are not merely echoes of Dewey, for in Freire education is to be linked to structural changes in an oppressive society. For a detailed comparison of Dewey and Freire, see Betz, 1992.

10. This is obviously not the enlightenment model of an epistemological spectator viewing an intelligible spectacle, passive recipients of mental representation of that reality. For Freire an enlightenment epistemology is inadequate because it does not sufficiently stress a dialectical interaction with reality (Elias, 1994, p. 63).

11. I do not think we need to accept Schipani's (1988) interpretation of Freire, namely, that only the oppressed have true knowledge. Reading Freire as privileging of a particular class in knowledge production at the total exclusion of everyone else is less than supported by the text. I would suggest that ideally, for Freire, all humans would be involved in producing knowledge, not excluding anyone.

12. Carlos Torres (1994) presents a very plausible link between Freire and Hegel with respect to the "dialectical unity" (p. 437) that gives rise to the construction of knowledge by the subject. That link strengthens my suggestion that Freire's notion of the epistemological subject is a modernist one.

13. Although Freire seems to borrow some of his language from the phenomenologists, it would be fair to suggest that for him, the first motivation was political. Freire's notion of conscientization, consciousness raising, is a political act in which oppressed people are raised from their oppressed stupor to recognize that oppression and to move from being passive pawns in the system to active transformers of that oppressive system. Although conscientization is primarily a political act, Freire generalizes from that political context to knowledge development in general (Elias, 1994; Torres, 1994). For Freire, the manner in which oppressed people emerge from their submersion in the oppressor/oppressed relationship through conscientization is structurally similar to how students get to know reality generally, namely, being conscious of their conscious relation to objective reality. Consciousness is a condition for knowledge.

14. To be free in this way is to be unfinished as humans, an important ingredient in Freire's idea of problem-posing pedagogy and knowledge development. Freire says

If we reflect on the fact that our human condition is one of essential unfinishedness, that, as a consequence, we are

> incomplete in our being and in our knowing, then it becomes
> obvious that we are "programmed" to learn, destined by our
> very incompleteness to seek completeness, to have a
> "tomorrow" that adds to our "today." In other words,
> wherever there are men and women, there is always and
> inevitably something to be done, to be completed, to be
> taught, to be learned. (Freire, 1998a, p. 79)

Central to our ontological structure, to our creaturely vocation as
humans, is learning. To be human is to develop knowledge, a central
part of moving towards completion. Knowledge development is
possible only to the extent that a student is aware of being
unfinished, a project in process. This awareness changes the
student's spontaneous curiosity to a critically-based active
epistemology, trying to construct new knowledge that will form the
basis for transcending knowledge limits currently faced. To
successfully thematize reality anew requires recognizing that present
thematizing is unfinished and can be developed further. To be an
agent of change requires being a student, one who learns and knows
that he or she needs to do so.

15. I disagree with Stull's analysis that Freire really is proposing a
model of humans that rivals God, and therefore blurs the distinction
between humans and God. Just because Freire has a praxis-oriented
anthropological model, one that suggests a power of naming beyond
convention does not yet mean that Freire's "program in literacy
ultimately allows his oppressed to rival God by becoming creators"
(Stull, 1994, p. 96). It would seem more plausible to argue that Freire
is suggesting a way of humans becoming what God originally
intended them to be, active agents in the world rather than passive
recipients of oppression. However, as I noted earlier, I do agree with
Stull that "Freire is best understood as a religious liberation
rhetorical theorist" (p. 98).

16. David Cooper suggests that the way the strange is made familiar
is usually through the use of metaphor: "metaphorical talk effects a
familiarity or 'intimacy' between speakers, and between them and
their world" (1986, p. 140). For the role of metaphor in scientific
knowledge development see Hesse, 1980 and Joldersma, 1994; see
Lakoff and Johnson 1999 for a metaphor-based general philosophical
orientation.

17. I use the awkward phrase "Levinasian-inspired" to signal I am
departing here from the general interpretation or application of
Levinas's idea of alterity. For example, Peperzak (1993, 1997)
suggests that for Levinas the notion of the Other is reserved for
humans, implying that it ought not be applied to reality generally.
However, Colin Davis (1996) suggests that a broader reading of
alterity is possible and permissible. Nevertheless, to honor this

difference of interpretation and to recognize my departure from the more accepted stance, I will use "Levinasian-inspired" rather than "Levinasian."

18. In all fairness to Freire, however, perhaps this just is the nature of knowledge qua knowledge. Perhaps it just is that when we comprehend something, we inevitably approach "the known being such that its alterity with regard to the knowing being vanishes" (Levinas, 1969, p. 42). This may well not be just an accidental defect that we could clear up with a better grasp of how to come to know something, but might well be part of the very essence of knowing. To know clearly is to dispel mystery. However, I believe that this sort of knowing is actually situated in something more originary. See Joldersma, 2001.

19. This is not to deny of course, that responsibility does entail a kind of freedom as well, also for Levinas (Peperzak, 1997).

20. I mean here to go beyond the level of, say, developing a theory of morality and a pedagogy for teaching ethical ideals, something that Roberts (1999) emphasizes when he states that a Freirean approach is one "in which educators disclose, discuss and debate their moral views with their students" (p. 29). See also Joldersma, 1999.

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Clarence W. Joldersma received his Ph.D. from the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto. His research interests in philosophy of education include deconstruction, epistemology, subjectivity, pedagogy, public theology, and social justice. At present he teaches philosophy of education at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI.