Critical Pedagogy and Sufi Tradition: A Comparative Study of Freire's and Rumi's Pedagogical Approaches

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ABSTRACT: Critical pedagogy thinkers (e.g. Paulo Freire) critique the dominant education systems for what is known as reproducing inequality and oppression in society. They propose a kind of educational system aiming to help learners critically understand their socio-historical condition to gain confidence and be active agents in history. Undoubtedly, realizing the pitfalls of formal education is not unique to Paulo Freire. Similarly, Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi, a thirteenth-century Sufi poet, repudiated the formal madrasa education and called for emancipatory knowledge to help people liberate themselves. Considering the differences both thinkers might have on the subject, this paper attempts to bring them into a dialogue on the subject of 'emancipatory knowledge'. It concludes that Freire's idea of critical pedagogy acknowledges the wider social structure perpetuating oppression, while Rumi's focus is on personalized internal barriers preventing liberation while overlooking the role of social structure outside.

Résumé: Les penseurs de la pédagogie critique (par exemple Paulo Freire) critiquent les systèmes éducatifs dominants qui reproduisent les inégalités et les oppressions dans la société. Ces penseurs proposent un système éducatif visant à aider les apprenants à comprendre de manière critique leur condition sociohistorique et, ainsi, devenir des acteurs actifs de l'histoire. Il ne fait aucun doute que la prise de conscience des pièges de l'éducation formelle n'est pas unique à Paulo Freire. De même, Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi, un poète soufi du XIIIe siècle, a répudié l'éducation formelle de la madrasa et a appelé à la

connaissance émancipatrice pour aider les gens à se libérer. Compte tenu des différences que les deux penseurs peuvent avoir sur le sujet, cet article tente de les amener à un dialogue sur le thème des « savoirs émancipateurs ». Cet article conclut que l'idée de Freire de la pédagogie critique reconnaît la structure sociale plus large qui perpétue l'oppression, tandis que Rumi se concentre sur les barrières internes personnelles empêchant la libération tout en négligeant le rôle de la structure sociale.

Introduction

The notion of 'critical pedagogy' is known from the writings of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian social activist, and educationalist. His well-known book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' is translated into many languages and has widely been read by those critically engaged in educational activities. The principle idea in Freire's writings is 'emancipatory education' by which he means that education is supposed to help learners realize their historical situation in a dialogical manner (Freire, 2000). In the meantime, Freire does not articulate a prefabricated, abstract, and objective meaning to the notion of 'emancipation'. Throughout the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the emphasis is placed on a constructivist approach for the conceptualization of liberation. Nonetheless, the idea of 'emancipatory education' is not idiosyncratic to Paulo Freire. There are many other schools of thought stipulating the same mission to education. For instance, the eminent medieval mystic and Sufi, Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi (1207- 1273), known as Rumi in the Occident, developed a tradition of 'liberating knowledge system'. However, the 'emancipation', 'knowledge', 'education', and 'humanization' can potentially be distinctively, and perhaps antithetically, imagined. As Freire and Rumi belong to two different schools of thought, civilizations, historical eras, and geography, it is conceivable that their comprehension of 'emancipatory education' could be influenced by those specificities. A comparative reading of Rumi and Freire provides the opening to investigate the possibility of different imaginations of emancipation and the contribution of education towards this goal in the contemporary world.

Fortunately, both Rumi and Freire are widely read across the continents in various languages. Their works have received wide attention in academic institutions, civil society, and by social activists all over the world. Rumi's mysticism and poems are extensively referred to in academic and public intellectuals in the Muslim world and beyond; his books are introduced to the English world by R. Coleman Barks (1995), A. J. Arberry (1961), Syed

Hossein Nasr, William Chittick (2005), Reza Arasteh (1974), and others. Likewise, Paulo Freire's notion of critical pedagogy is expanded by critical thinkers such as Michael Apple (2018), Henry Giroux (2011), Peter McLaren (1999), etc. Amongst all this immense literature, a lack of dialogue between the two worldviews is palpable. Considering seven centuries of the time between the two figures, it would be provocative to envisage how Freire would converse with Rumi over the idea of 'emancipatory education'. This paper attempts to make this dialogue happen. For this, firstly, the idea of 'emancipation' and 'emancipatory knowledge' in Freire and Rumi is deconstructed and at the end will move on to comparatively analyze them.

Materials and Methods

The method used in this study is descriptive, which is a study of the relevant texts namely, Paulo Freire's and Rumi's writings on pedagogy; however, the primary texts used in this study are Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, which is the building block of Freire's educational thoughts, and Rumi's Masnavi and Discourses (Fihi Ma fihi). Besides these primary texts, Freire's A Pedagogy of Liberation, Literacy- Reading the Word and the World and Education as Critical Consciousness have also been covered to help to interpret the main text. The study was initially begun from the Pedagogy of the Oppressed which was then followed by scrutinizing other writings of Freire and other critical pedagogy thinkers i.e. Henry A. Giroux (2010 & 2011 a/b), Peter McLaren (1999), Michael Apple (2018), etc. Throughout the study, the focus had been put on the idea of 'emancipatory education' in the targeted texts. In studying Rumi's writings, previous knowledge and a relative acquaintance with Rumi's perception of knowledge and human nature availed figuring out the relevant poems and interpretation. For this study, the Masnavi and the English version of Discourses of Rumi, translated by A. J. Arberry, have been carefully read. For a thorough understanding of Rumi, reading Abdul Hussain Zarrinkoob's (1990 & 1999) and Reza Arasteh's (1974) interpretation and explanation of Rumi's thoughts have been insightfully valuable.

For analytical purposes, the paper is divided into three main parts: it begins with elaborating on Freire's educational thought, and then it delves into Rumi's view on the same subjects. To deconstruct the idea of emancipatory knowledge in both the thinkers, the first and second parts follow unseen and unexclusive themes, namely, the ontological arguments, the shortcoming of

institutionalized education, the concept of emancipation, and how knowledge could contribute to this end, in each thinker. A separate elaboration on both thinkers' educational thoughts provides the readers with imagination to contrast the two worldviews. In the end, the paper comparatively discusses Freire's and Rumi's thoughts based on the mentioned themes.

Critical Knowledge in Freire

Paulo Freire's lived experience in a family entrenched in poverty seems to have deeply influenced his cognitive development. Born in 1921 in Brazil, he lived his early life in poverty and extreme hunger (Shaull, 2000, p. 30). In Richard Shaull's words, this experience helped Freire realize the reality of poverty, structural oppression, and 'the wretched of the earth' (Saull, 2000, p. 30). Meanwhile, Freire worked in several organizations and literacy campaigns as an educator and consultant. This is indicative of his practical collaboration in teaching and learning activities. Certainly, before the coinage of the term 'critical pedagogy,' there had been many other institutions and activists practically working on educational services for liberation agenda (Apple et al., 2000, p. 5). Yet, what distinguishes Freire is his conceptual explanation of oppression and its link to the social system outside schools. He, then, proposed an alternative model of pedagogy for eliminating the oppression system.

The philosophical basis upon which Freire builds his dialogical approach of pedagogy is objective idealism. Rich Gibson (2012) recognizes Freire as a Hegelian objective idealist, rather than a mechanical materialist. Gibson describes it further, unlike the subjective idealism which reduces the entire existence to the apparition of mind, objective idealism acknowledges the existentiality of the external world which manifests itself in the mind (Gibson, 2012, p. 137). Meanwhile, being a Roman Catholic, Freire believed in the subordination of material to mind but it did not take him to subjective idealism either because, as he put it, 'the denial of objectivity denies the action itself' (Freire, 2000, p. 51). Thus, the acknowledgment of subjectivity and objectivity shapes the philosophical basis of Freire's standpoint on human nature, freedom, and liberation.

The ontological aspect of Freire's idea foregrounds that knowledge is situated in a social setting. It presupposes to seek the roots of educational shortcomings 'beyond the walls of schools' (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 35). The fact of 'situated-ness of knowledge' is well elaborated by Michael Apple in his discussion of ideology and hegemony (2018, p. 13). What Michael Apple and other critical pedagogy theorists hold is that education needs to be analyzed in

relation to the larger institutions and class arrangement in society, *not in isolation* [emphasis is mine]. In his discussion of hegemony and reproduction, borrowing from Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams, he expounds on the interrelationship between the three aspects of education, namely, knowledge, institutions, and educators as instrument of social control. The dialectical relationship, according to him, between institutions of economy and culture affects all three aspects of education in a deterministic way (Apple M., 2018, pp. 26-40). Deriving from Gramsci's theory of hegemony, he contended that the hegemonic situation indoctrinated on individuals materializes the commonsensical knowledge as the only reality in their world. At the same time, in Apple's account, the hegemonic ideology prevailing in society through educational institutions, curriculum, and intellectuals, pass the existing knowledge as neutral and apolitical. They create a common-sense idea that the educational system is a common good for the development and well-being of the entire society, and that, it is equally accessible to each person.

What's more, Paulo Freire explains the 'situationality of knowledge' by referring to the association between social reality and language. He maintains that 'word' constitutes a reflection of situationality by which people understand each other in a situation to dialogue (Freire, 2000, p. 109). 'Word', to Freire, is the representative and a unit of knowledge by which he means that knowledge is temporal and is embedded in a social milieu. In this relation, Freire points to the discursive embeddedness of mind and matter, word and world in the production of knowledge. He contends that one cannot name the world on behalf of others but it has to be discovered in the language-thought processes of people, therefore, 'to exist humanly, is to name the world and to change it' (2000, p. 88). Hence, considering the interconnectedness of 'word' and 'world', education is supposed to help learners reading their reality (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 42).

The Politics of Institutionalized Education

John Dewey, in his book Education and Democracy, analyses the social function of education in the course of the evolution of human society. He holds that as the formal institutions of education grow, there is an increasing possibility of widening the split between the lived experience and the knowledge gained in schools (Dewey, 2001, p. 14). As a result of this disjuncture, the concern for democratic education arises which dates back to the Ancient Greek philosopher, Plato, who argued that each individual should be positioned in

society according to their natural aptitude which could be revealed through education (Dewey, 2001, p. 94). In his concern, Plato fails to realize that in practice educational services are always carried out by institutional agencies that manipulate them for their political agendas. Even Kant, an Enlightenment philosopher, in his treatise on pedagogy leaves this question unanswered. The two other German philosophers who came after Kant, namely Hegel and Fichte, supported the idea that education should be in the interest of the state (Dewey, 2001, p. 101). The glorification of states, as agents of civilization, is at odds with the reality. In actuality, the national states instrumentally appropriate educational institutions to proliferate their nationalist propaganda and to produce 'obedient citizens'.

Freire's critical pedagogy opposes the Hegelian understanding of the essence of the modern state. Following Marx's critique on the 'bourgeois state' and the occurrence of state-supported genocides and wars in the twentieth century, it was evident to Freire that state-supported education would not leave hope for democratic purposes of education. Critical pedagogy thinkers reveal the function of 'ideological state apparatuses' claiming that schools are not only concerned with the distribution of skills but also the distribution of certain norms and dispositions (Apple M., 2018), or as Bourdieu's sociological perspective would explain it as a reproduction of the habitus of middle-class people. As the neoliberal states have hegemony in the current world, the main target of critique of critical pedagogy thinkers goes towards what they call 'market fundamentalism', 'economic Darwinism', 'commercialization, commodification and privatization and militarization of higher education' (Giroux, 2011, p. 15).

In analyzing the oppression system in the social arena, Freire borrows the idea of 'class conflict' from Marxism to his conceptualization of oppressed-oppressor relations. Following Fromm and other psychoanalysts, he formulates the idea that oppression is both externally and internally imposed (Aronwitz, 1993, p. 15). Accordingly, in a dialogue with Ira Shor, Freire maintains that 'the dominant ideology lives inside us and also controls society outside' (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 13), this is how the structure of oppression perpetuates itself through which the oppressed adhere to the morality of oppressors and then become oppressors and sub-oppressors because the oppressor acts as role model for the oppressed (Freire, 2000, p. 45). Based on this premise, Freire advances a pedagogy to promote, as Stanley Aronowitz puts it, 'the formation of subjectivities' (Aronwitz, 1993, p. 17). That is to say, Freire's project of critical pedagogy is to restore the humanity

of the oppressed – the re-humanization of not only the oppressed but also that of oppressors.

Freire's Dialogical Pedagogy

The historical task of humanity, which Hegel had given to the state, Freire bestows it upon the oppressed. Humanity, in Freire's account, would not be restored by the national or supranational institutions, but through a dialogue with the oppressed, the one whose 'humanity was stolen' (Freire, 2000, p. 44). Freire would agree with Ivan Illich (1972) maintaining that the public education system provides the possibility for bureaucracies to have control in the process of socialization and imagination of students. In that sense, formal education in actuality works as a mechanism of social control through which not only the schools but the entire society is schooled (Illich, 1972). As an education system has a view of the future, the social groups who have control over education institutions shape the future life of the entire society if they are not critically analyzed. Because of this reason, critical pedagogy suggests dialogue with the oppressed and helps them in their task to struggle for liberty because only they can bring back the lost humanity. Freire calls it 'the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed' (Freire, 2000, p. 44).

As previously described, objective idealism is a frame of reference to Freire suggesting that knowledge is produced through communication between mind and matter in praxis. Therefore, Freire's dialogical pedagogy takes the two constitutive elements of knowledge into consideration: word and world (Freire, 2000, p. 87) (Glass, 2001). An overemphasis on any of them will lead to either activism or verbalism. Thus, the learners need to cooperate in curriculum development for it to be a re-presentation of their social reality. This requires the critical pedagogue to 'investigate people's thinking about reality, and people's action upon reality' (Freire, 2000, p. 106). Therefore, for knowledge to be emancipatory, the object of realization has to be the language-thought processes of people, not people per se. Only in this way, can education help people get historical awareness.

Knowledge, to Freire, has to be more than acquiring skills but it should help people realize their condition as historical beings and to actively participate in it; and only when the objects and condition of knowledge is familiar to the people, can it play its role of liberation. All in all, Freire believes that education can create a possibility for the oppressed to realize their limit-action and struggle for freedom. If education is critically perceived, it gives a space for the oppressed

to act beyond their limit-situation, and it creates a sense of hope to emancipate themselves from a system of oppression (Freire, 2000, p. 103).

Although the dialogical pedagogy in Freire is not merely a teaching method or a technique for enhancing the efficiency of schools (Giroux, 2010, p. 719) (Giroux, 2011, p. 71), he offers a technique which he called 'problem-posing education' through which the problems are raised by the students and then would be analyzed in a dialogical form with the students (Freire, 2000, p. 105). Wayne Au terms this method as coding and decoding processes (Au, 2000, p. 222). In this method, the intellectual hierarchy between teacher and student collapses because a teacher is not considered knowledgeable to transfer his knowledge to the students, but he is also learning during the process. Freire refers to his experience as the coordinator of the Adult Education Project of the Movement of Popular Culture in Recife, Brazil saying, 'instead of a teacher, we had a coordinator; instead of lectures, dialogues; instead of pupils, group participants; etc…' (Freire, 1974, p. 38).

Conclusively, based on Freire's objective idealism, the word 'democracy' or 'liberation' does not bear an a priori and universal connotation. It can be inferred that the theory of democratization has to be extracted from the language and thought of people themselves, rather than imposing it in a top-down approach. In Freire's words, revolution and democracy for/on behalf of people would be merely the action of the word without considering its reflection. According to him, a critical pedagogue needs to give an image of democracy and liberation according to the people's action and reflection of the word 'democracy' in their language. Considering this point, the following section delves into the idea of 'emancipation' in Rumi's teachings to investigate how it can be imagined differently.

Pedagogical Approach in Rumi

Prior to the modern education system, Sufi chains had a firm foothold in intellectual space in Muslim societies. In a retrospective view of the early history of Islam, there is a controversy over the origin of Sufism. Unlike the Orientalists who connect the Sufi practices and contemplative thinking to non-Islamic traditions (Burckhardt, 2006), Muhammad Iqbal attributed its origin to the early Islamic manuscripts (Siddiqi, 1966, p. 411). The proponents of the second view argue that a political shift in early Muslim society was responsible for the emergence of Islamic mysticism as a discrete attitude in Islam. It is argued that the political condition under which Sufis emerged can be traced to early political unrest and legitimacy crisis in Islam, e.g. in the Khawarij's failed attempt to

topple down the 'impious political regimes' (Siddiqi, 1966, p. 412). This failure could encourage orthodox Muslims to withdraw from the affairs of politics and shift to self-renunciation and self-denial. Because the Prophet Mohammad was acting as both a source of religious interpretation and political leader, it turned into a matter of dispute to safeguard the integrity of both institutions in his absence. In addition to this political transformation, the evolution of disciplines of jurisprudence, theology, and philosophy made the contemplative thinkers differentiate their knowledge from what they called 'worldly sciences' (Shah-Kazemi, 2002, p. 159). Whatever could be the origin of this other-worldly and contemplative tradition, the socio-political condition after the Prophet and the translation of Greek philosophy into Arabic had an influential impact on the classification of knowledge system in Islamic civilization.

The Sufi tradition was to a large extent institutionalized around *silsila* (chain) connecting a Sufi disciple to a *pir* and finally to the Prophet. A very well-known of this chain was the Naqshbandia Sufi order that emerged in Central Asia and developed in Timurid of Herat and spread even to India (Ziad, 2017). The very practice of *pir-mureed* (Sufi-disciple) relationship requiring *mureeds* to follow the *silsila* contributed to the institutionalization of this tradition. In addition, the Sufi gatherings in a *khanqa* made them an equitable parallel to Mosque gatherings. All these indicate that Sufis had powerful institutions alongside the *Mulla* (clergies), *hakim* (philosophers), and *a'alim* (scientists). Broadly speaking, the three groups of clergies, philosophers, and Sufis had their distinct perspectives and methodologies in seeking knowledge. Sufi poets widely critiqued the clergies for 'grabbing the shell of religion' and philosophers for their 'desperate reasoning' and 'limitation' of rational thinking. Since it is a broad discussion, this section attempts to study the Sufi's teachings, pedagogical approaches, and knowledge system in Rumi's poems. Jalal al-Din Rumi, a Sufi master, provides a clear step-by-step approach to teaching and learning which makes it appropriate for understanding the pedagogical approach in Sufi tradition. This section elaborates on what knowledge means to Rumi, its categories and purposes, and its liberating potential.

Rumi's Life and Work

Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi was born in 1207 in Balkh (Arasteh, 1974, p. 10), a northern city in present-day Afghanistan. His social privilege of growing up in a family of scholars and Sufis gave him

opportunities to get acquaintance with great scholars, poets, and Sufis of his time. For instance, on the route to migration towards Qunia (in present-day Turkey), he had a chance to meet 'Attar Nishaburi (Zarrinkoob, 1999, p. 50); these meetings had a considerable impression on his intellectual progress. Jalal al-Din Mohammad was no more than thirteen when his family migrated from Balk to Qunia (Zarrinkoob, 1999, p. 50), where he gained fame and a large number of followers. It was in Qunia where he met Shams Tabrizi who had a life-long impression upon him and directed him towards practical mysticism and Sufism.

Shams' impression on Rumi was to the extent that he named his anthology of *ghazal* (Diwan-e- Shams Tabrizi) after Shams' name, which meant that he was its actual source of inspiration. The most well-known book of Rumi is his Masnavi-e-Manavi comprising above 25,000 verses. This book contains short stories and anecdotes, advice, and stories of love all written in poetic language. Unlike some other great masterpieces such as Odessa or Divine Comedy which have a chronological monolithic story, Masnavi apparently does not follow a certain path, however, a serious reader finds an underlying path in all of the diverse stories. In this matter, Abdul Hussein Zarrinkoob, in his invaluable book 'The Secret of the Reed: Explaining and Interpreting Masnavi', maintains that Masnavi's beginning prologue is its infrastructure and the rest of the book is the explanation and extension of this part (Zarrinkoob, 1990, p. 122).

The Ontological Bases of Rumi's Mysticism

Hear from the reed as it complains,
Lamenting its separation [from its origin]; (Masnavi I, 1)

Unlike the usual Sufi poet's anthologies beginning by praising God and Prophet Mohammad, Masnavi begins with the above verse asking its readers to listen to the music of the reed lamenting the pain of separation. The Reed is, metaphorically, the Sufi himself who narrates the story of his destiny in musical and poetic language. The metaphor of 'reed' has a centrality in Rumi's epistemology. The very structure of the reed shows it being emptied of itself (its selfishness), and the musical sound coming out is not of itself, but emanating from the Truth. This analogy is perceivable in the context of Rumi's ethical philosophy according to which *manniat* (selfishness) is the source of evil, and *fana* (getting rid of self) is the ultimate virtue. In that respect, Rumi (and many other Sufis) is getting close to the pantheism worldview.

Considering the fact that monotheism Islam acknowledges the origination and return of humans to God, however, some Sufis had gone beyond this duality between God and men. For instance, Ibn Arabi and Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrwardi rejected the differentiation between the necessary being (the existence of God) and contingent being (the creatures) (Siddiqi, 1966, p. 417). Anyway, Rumi views the human condition as being detached from its origin (the God) and, therefore, by means of self-renunciation men can reunite to their cosmic self.

This analogy illustrates a separation and a longing for reunification. With this in mind, Rumi distinguishes between universal/cosmic self and phenomenal/social self. The cosmic self is the original and real self that connects one to God (Truth), however, the social self is a product of acculturation and socialization which blocks one from their origin (Arasteh, 1974, p. 10). In sociological terms, the modern education institutions offer the social forces the instrumental means for assimilation and standardization and leave less space for exercising agency. In the same way, the psychoanalyst, Erik Fromm maintains that people can become stuck in conventional life and the immediate needs block their way to self-discovery (Arasteh, 1974, p. 26). According to Rumi, the cosmic self is the one that transcends the boundaries of ethnicity, blood, and any other dividing lines creating disparities between humans. The social self is a separation, and the struggle for cosmic self (one's true self) is a longing for reunification with the origin.

Towards this end, Sufism is a path to reconnect one to their universal self. This reunification cannot be achieved by employing formal education, rational thinking, and reasoning which are, according to Rumi, conforming to self-interest. But the Sufi's method is to purify the heart for the reflection of truth. Unlike the conventional way of seeking knowledge through reading books and learning certain terminologies, which Rumi calls '*qil-u-qal*' (empty talks), Sufis take the path of getting rid of worldly belongings to reach the 'ultimate source of truth' or God and becoming a reed for His voice. In the metaphor of 'reed', the emphasis is put on emptying [from selfishness] rather than filling oneself with conventional knowledge [*qil-u-qal*].

> The Sufi book is not comprised of letters and words
> It nothing but a heart as white as snow (Masnavi II, 159)

> Philosophers deny by their doubt and reasoning,
> Tell them: 'crash your head against the wall'! (Masnavi I, 3278)

The Steps to Emancipation

Anyone who remained away from his/her origin
Again will search for the day of reunification (Masnavi I,
4)

In Rumi's mysticism there is a meaningful resemblance and interconnection between the universe, which he calls *a'alam akbar* (macrocosm) – and the human being, a'alam asghar (microcosm) (Chittick, 2005, p. 49) (Zarrinkoob, 1990, pp. 543-547). Thus, both possess the same constituents and essence. Rumi says in Discourse: 'whatever you see in this world corresponds exactly with what is in the world beyond. All these realities are samples of the other Reality. Whatever exists in this world has come from there' (Discourse 14, p. 15). This correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm means that the one who knows himself better perceives the world beyond. That is to say, the process of knowing and liberation starts from within. In this regard, there is a common ground between Freire and Rumi, both admitting that knowledge has to be relevant to people's actual life conditions.

The knowledge gained in this way is *called 'ilm ladunni* (truthful knowledge) in Sufism terminology (Abdul-Hakim, 1959, p. 99). Because of the unity of subject and object here, Rumi proposes intuition as a method of seeking this knowledge. In several parts of Masnavi, Rumi reminds the 'incompetence' of reason and sense experience. The reason, according to him, does not serve this purpose because reason by its nature splits the reality to analyze it in parts, not perceiving the unitary essence of existence in its totality. On the other hand, reason follows self-interest and, therefore, is incompetent to acquire *'ilm ladunni* - which requires getting rid of materiality and self.

How could reason go the way of its self-sacrifice?
It is love which runs on its head in that direction [voluntarily];

Love is careless, not reason.
Reason seeks a way to get a benefit. (Masnavi VI, 1966-1367)

The language of water, soil, and clay,
Only the sense of heart can perceive them by heart

> The philosopher who denies the miracle,
> Because he is a stranger to the sense of the saints;
> (Masnavi I, 3278-9)

> Anyone having doubts in heart
> A philosopher is hidden underneath his world; (Masnavi I, 3285)

> I have tested the far-sighted (and sharp) reason
> Henceforth, [better] to make myself crazy (Masnavi II, 2332)

In the path to salvation, a Sufi has to travel through the steps of *shariat*, *tariqat*, and *haqiqat* (truth). In Rumi, *shariat* is the exterior part of religion which consists of rituals, laws, and prayers (Zarrinkoob, 1363, p. 633). The seeker of truth needs the light of *shariat* because of certain barriers and idols [of mind] blocking his way to truth; the most dangerous of which is *nafs* (selfishness) which has to be sacrificed in the face of Truth (Zarrinkoob, 1363, p. 651). Interestingly, it is somehow similar to Francis Bacon's metaphor of idols (five presuppositions or bad habits of mind) which bars one from gaining objective knowledge (Russel, 1946, P. 544). *Shariat*, to Rumi, is the knowledge of transforming something into a sublimated form (Zarrinkoob, 1990, p. 659). This knowledge for its own sake is absurd, but the Sufi has to acquire the knowledge of *shariat* to transform himself and go beyond his current state of being. Rumi calls this attempt '*tariqat*' which is a way for taking the Sufi to the destination of '*haqiqat*' (truth/cosmic self).

Tariqat is the task of emptying oneself of selfishness and worldly dependencies. However, this practice is troublesome to an amateur because of the 'idols of mind' [grown through socialization] preventing him to successfully pass this step. Therefore, Rumi suggests that the *salik* of *tariqat* (seeker of truth) needs to follow a *pir* (saint) and 'they must surrender in such a fashion that no matter what the saint does, they accept it without the argument of their own mind' (Discourse 12, p. 102). In the story of Prince and the Handmaid, the handmaid is cured by a saint, where the doctors failed, in a psychotherapist manner. She would not be relieved from her *nafs* (love of the goldsmith) without the help of a saint who is familiar with the diseases of the soul (Masnavi I, 55-78).

The ultimate purpose of practicing *tariqat* is to reach the destination of *haqiqat* and to reunite with God, or to transcend from social self to cosmic self. Rumi calls this state '*fana*' which is the

ultimate stage of liberation in Sufism (Zarrinkoob, 1990, p. 726). It is a complete unification in God so that no desire and selfishness remained in Sufi. In this struggle to self-renunciation, Rumi defines three major steps: *tabattul*, *fana*, and *baqa* (Arasteh, 1974, p. 130) (Zarrinkoob, 1999, pp. 269-304). The first step is to detach from material belongings which create dependencies. Though Rumi does not suggest an aesthetic life, he means that a *salik-e-tariqat* (seeker of truth) should not be attached to materiality because it would prevent him from his journey to the truth. The next step is *fana* through which the Sufi tries to sacrifice his ego, also called it 'death before death' (Masnavi VI, 722-724). However, it is not about abandoning the world literally but the feeling of attachment to it. This path takes the Sufi to liberation; and the knowledge that a Sufi gain is a transformative knowledge.

In the journey to *fana*, Sufi has to take direct experience and exercise his imagination. Formal education, which creates hegemony in the language of critical pedagogy, makes a barrier on the way to truth. So Rumi asks the *salik* of mysticism not to impure his heart with words of the madrasa. Important to mention that Rumi does not expect a Sufi to learn knowledge through experience and produce it for others, but a Sufi need to practice the way himself towards liberation.

On the path to self-discovery, the knowledge unrelated to one's real situation ends to subjugation. Such skills reduce men to specific roles or labor in society and impede their individuality. In the story of Parrot, when the master of a caged parrot is departing for India, the parrot requests him to pass her message to other parrots in there and tell them about her life condition inside the cage. Once the master arrives in India and passes the message to a parrot, she suddenly falls and dies. The man is shocked and once he returns home tells what he had seen to his parrot, then she dies also. But when he throws the parrot out of the cage, surprisingly she flies upon a branch of a tree (Masnavi I, 1547-1662). The art of singing to which parrots are recognized impedes the parrots in one specific role which motivates humans to keep them inside a cage for their entertainment. Following this story, Rumi warns his readers to avoid the kind of knowledge which causes imprisonment.

In contrast, *'ilm ladunni* (truthful knowledge) is related to the real situation of the seeker and is directly experienced. It is that which brought liberation to the parrot and Rumi calls it 'death before death'. In the famous story of a grammarian and a boatman in Masnavi, the grammarian asks his fellow traveler whether he knows Arabic grammar, but receives a negative response. The grammarian tells him that half of his life was wasted. When the storm threatens the boat, the boatman asks the grammarian

whether he can swim. He gives a negative response. Then the boatman tells him that his entire life was wasted (Masnavi I, 2835-2852). In this story, Rumi points out that if knowledge is not helpful in the storming condition of life, it would be absurd. According to Rumi, the knowledge of swimming is truthful knowledge, but grammar is an imitative one. In 'truthful knowledge', the subject and object of knowledge are the same. The seeker of knowledge is supposed to learn about his/her life.

> He knows hundreds of thousands of chapters of science
> But he knows nothing of his own reality [soul]
>
> He knows the properties of all elements
> But he is ignorant of his own reality [as an ass]
>
> He says: 'I know what is *halal*, what is *haram'*.
> Do you know whether you are *halal* or *haram*?
>
> You know what is legal, what is illegal.
> Look careful! Are you legal or illegal?
>
> You know the price of all goods
> Do you know the price of your-self? (Masnavi III, 2648-2657)

Discussion and Conclusion

In the previous sections, Freire's and Rumi's perceptions of emancipatory knowledge are separately dissected. It appears that they share a common denominator which is 'emancipatory knowledge'. Both introduce the kind of knowledge and methods to help learners understand their condition and to grant them freedom from external and internal chains. Freire suggests that dialogical education has to facilitate people to critically realize their *Conscientizacao* (Freire, 2000, p. 35). Likewise, Rumi values the kind of knowledge to be effective in one's liberation. It needs to possess transformative power to change one's state of being.

Evidently, the 'objective' and formal systems of education are refuted by both thinkers. They would get John Dewey's concern about the dilemma of disjuncture between the politics of educational institutions and peoples' lived experiences. However, their critique of institutional education does not go to the extent to adhere to Ivan Illich's 'deschooling society', because, in their practical life, both Freire and Rumi worked for institutions. Likewise, while reading

Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' once can infer that he is addressing a teacher, not a learner. He trains a 'critical pedagogue', not a 'critical learner'. Similarly, despite Rumi's emphasis on liberating education, he earnestly warns its audience of the dangers of a solo trip. This is why Rumi makes it compulsory for the disciples to faithfully follow the Sufi in the path to salvation. In sum, both Freire and Rumi maintain the institution, but they seem to disagree with institutional liberation because that would ignore the subjectivity of the learners.

Further, taking into consideration of subjectivity of the learners leads to the dialogical development of knowledge with the learners. In this way, the learners commence from nowhere but from their own lived experiences and affairs, and only then can they critically get to know the world outside. Rumi's idea of resemblance between *'a'alam asghar'* (humans) and the *'a'alam akbar'* (the universe) has a pedagogical significance indicating that if one understands their own self/nature, they will then understand the entire creation. Moreover, the state of *fana* can also be interpreted with this as a unity of *a'alam asghar* with *a'alam akbar*. That is to say, emancipation begins by self-realization, by understanding the essence of Self, and that is the starting point for liberation. It can be argued that gaining knowledge (the knowledge which liberates oneself) and self-realization have centrality in Rumi's mysticism and Freire's objective idealism.

Undoubtedly, it would be a great loss to ignore the pedagogical significance of 'love' in Rumi, as well as in Freire. In Rumi's worldview, it is 'love' which connects *a'alam asghar* to *a'alam akbar*, and human's thirst in searching their origin through stages of *tabattol* and *fana* can be facilitated through 'love' with humankind (Zarrinkoob, 1990, p. 493). By the same token, Love, which requires the annihilation of the lover, helps a person to go beyond self-interest and selfishness to the extent to be ready to sacrifice his/her Self in the face of the Truth. That is to say, Love has a pedagogical significance to Rumi because only through love can one feel their connection with all humanity. At the same time, Rumi downplays the role of rational reasoning because it seeks self-interest and ends in biased knowledge; on the opposite, real love leads a person to *m'arefat* (wisdom) and *ailm haqiqi* (real knowledge). Similarly, the dialogical method that Freire suggests is based on love without which trust and dialogue would not initiate because 'domination is the pathology of love … [in contrast], love is a commitment to others (Freire, 2000, p. 89) (McLaren, 1999, p. 52) (Shor, 1993, p. 25). Elsewhere, Freire emphasizes the power of love for establishing solidarity because the oppressed have to liberate

not only him/herself but also the oppressor (ibid). Only then can humanity be restored.

Until this point, both Rumi and Freire expect that one should be able to liberate oneself through gaining knowledge. However, they might have distinct imaginations of 'emancipation'. In Freire's account, oppression and emancipation are conceptualized in sociological imagination which connects the oppressor and the oppressed in one system in which both the oppressor and the oppressed lose their humanity. That is to say, Freire argues that the oppressed need to liberate themselves, and their liberation will rescue the oppressors of their distorted agencies. In this regard, it can be inferred that Freire thinks of emancipation in terms of sociality and structuration of it, that is, one's emancipation bounded to all others. In 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', he draws on the unequal relationship between human beings which chains both the oppressor and the oppressed. In other words, Freire thinks of a social system through which oppression perpetuates itself, that the oppressed also possesses the potentiality of becoming an oppressor. That is why, in Freire's view, the oppressed needs to liberate all of humanity.

In contrast to Freire, Rumi psychologizes the idea of 'emancipation'. He regards '*nafs*', rather than social constraints, to be preventing one's liberation. It is safe to say that Rumi's conceptualization of 'freedom' is more psychological than sociological. This might be a reason that the discipline of sociology has less welcomed Rumi's thoughts. Unlike Freire who analyses the misery of the oppressed in relation to the outer world – in the social system connecting oppressor and oppressed, Rumi seeks to eradicate the enemy inside.

> O kings, we've killed the enemy outside,
> A more threatening enemy still remains inside;
>
> Killing this enemy is not the capacity of intelligence and reason,
> A hare is defenseless before this lion! (Masnavi I, 1372-1374)

It goes without mentioning that Rumi's poems project humans in abstract form, irrespective of their position in the social arena. In one word, he takes society for granted. In his view, the possibility of liberation is available for people in any social strata. Thus, he does not see an interconnection between an individual's being to the social-political condition. In contrast to Freire's project of

'restoration of humanity', Rumi's individualized project creates the steps of liberation within the individual human beings. It has widely been proclaimed that Rumi (and much of other Sufi poems) motivates passivity towards the structural oppression and inequality in society. In one of his Masnavi poems, he likens the world to a bathroom in which the Sufis purify themselves and the rulers clean out the dirt (Masnavi IV, 240-244). Nevertheless, it cannot be conclusively argued that Sufis preaches passivity because there are cases of their active engagement in movement and protests in history. However, what is at stake here is Rumi's de-historicizing of the human condition.

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