

IMAGINING A DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGY FOR CHILDREN: A CRITICAL SOCIAL-PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

A description of the challenges faced by teachers in contemporary times, when war, displacement, and other reactionary forces render childhood precarious and result in subjectivity severed from history and characterized by melancholy, is used as a basis for probing the profound implications of these contexts in pedagogical work. The author intersects the fields of pedagogy, psychoanalysis, and decolonial theory to explore the potential of a pedagogy that enhances possibilities for children, particularly those from subaltern groups, for ethical relationality and agentic possibility. Psychoanalysis is proposed as a tool to rescue narratives and restore metaphorical possibility in children whose subjectivities are often obstructed by external ideological forces such as neoliberalism and racial capitalism. The article also suggests some core principles that critical educators might use to construct a decolonizing pedagogy for children through a critical social-psychoanalytic perspective, underscoring that, for this, critical and introspective teacher preparation is needed.

Keywords: Children subjectivity; Decolonial theory; Pedagogy; Psychoanalysis; Teachers.

Imaginando uma Pedagogia Descolonizadora para Crianças: Uma Perspectiva Social-Psicanalítica Crítica

Resumo

Uma descrição dos desafios enfrentados pelos professores nos tempos contemporâneos, quando a guerra, o deslocamento e outras forças reacionárias tornam a infância precária e resultam em uma subjetividade separada da história e caracterizada pela melancolia, é usada como base para investigar as profundas implicações desses contextos no trabalho pedagógico. O autor intersecciona os campos da pedagogia, psicanálise e teoria decolonial para explorar o potencial de uma pedagogia que amplie as possibilidades de crianças, particularmente aquelas de grupos subalternizados, para relações éticas e agência. A psicanálise é proposta como uma ferramenta para resgatar narrativas e restaurar a possibilidade metafórica em crianças cujas subjetividades são frequentemente obstruídas por forças ideológicas externas, como o neoliberalismo e o capitalismo racial. O artigo também sugere alguns princípios centrais que educadores críticos podem usar para construir uma pedagogia decolonial para crianças por meio de uma perspectiva social-psicanalítica crítica, destacando que, para isso, é necessária uma formação crítica e introspectiva para os professores.

Palavras-chave: Pedagogia; Psicanálise; Professores; Subjetividade infantil; Teoria decolonial.

Imaginando una Pedagogía Descolonizadora para Niños: Una Perspectiva Social-Psicoanalítica Crítica

Resumen

Una descripción de los desafíos enfrentados por los maestros en tiempos contemporáneos, cuando la guerra, el desplazamiento y otras fuerzas reaccionarias hacen que la infancia sea precaria y resultan en una subjetividad desgajada de la historia y caracterizada por la melancolía, se utiliza como base para investigar las profundas implicaciones de estos contextos en el trabajo pedagógico. El autor intersecciona los campos de la pedagogía, el psicoanálisis y la teoría decolonial para explorar el potencial de una pedagogía que amplíe las posibilidades de los niños, particularmente aquellos de grupos subalternizados, para una relacionalidad ética y posibilidad agente. Se propone el psicoanálisis como una herramienta para rescatar narrativas y

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restaurar la posibilidad metafórica en los niños cuyas subjetividades a menudo son obstruidas por fuerzas ideológicas externas, como el neoliberalismo y el capitalismo racial. El artículo también sugiere algunos principios clave que los educadores críticos podrían usar para construir una pedagogía decolonial para los niños a través de una perspectiva social-psicoanalítica crítica, subrayando que, para esto, es necesaria una formación crítica e introspectiva para los maestros.

Palabras clave: Pedagogía; Psicoanálisis; Maestros; Subjetividad infantil; Teoría decolonial.

Imagining a Decolonizing Pedagogy for Children: A Critical Social-Psychoanalytic Perspective²

Teachers must hold hope in difficult times, when war, displacement, and other reactionary forces render childhood precarious. Sovereign authority too often sets out to rupture genealogical filiations and erase ancestral and historical memory for subaltern groups, inducing precarity. The result is a subjectivity severed from history and characterized by melancholy. Discrimination based on racial origins is often at the core of the unequal treatment we see in educational systems worldwide, and the recent demonization and incited fear of migrants and displaced persons – part of a staggering estimated 120 million persons currently displaced globally – is contributing to a shift rightwards in many Western political systems, and to a reaction in currently white-dominant societies against the potential “browning” of their societies, a phenomenon Hook (2025) refers to as motivated by *white anxiety*.³ In the U.S. this has had profound implications for educators. There is a national movement seeking to purge school libraries of curricular materials and books that seek to trouble the master narrative of U.S. history as the heroic achievements of great White men. This movement also seeks to cancel books that recognize the struggles around oppression and hegemony which are part of the story of the United States. The accusation is that anyone who seeks to advance interrogation of inequality (incorrectly caricatured as advancing *critical race theory*) is unpatriotic and is undermining the foundations of U.S. society. A parallel movement has emerged arguing for an exclusively binary heterosexual view of gender formation. This movement is seeking

to purge school libraries and classroom curricula of any acknowledgement of or critical interrogation of gender variance. Demands for restrictions on student access to critical discourses and the demonization of educators who interrogate the putative capitalist, Christian, and White Western origins of U.S. contemporary culture as unpatriotic are also penetrating university discourses and risk stifling robust intellectual inquiry.⁴ My work at the intersection of pedagogy, psychoanalysis, and decolonizing theory seeks to explore the potential of moving children, particularly those from subaltern groups, from mere existence or subservience to ethical relationality and agentic possibility in an often unjust world which inhibits their potential to be creative and agentic.

We live in difficult times and the suffering we witness when children are murdered and families are torn apart is almost unbearable. Today it is the conflict between Israel and Gaza, a conflict in which in excess of 44,000 people have been killed, of whom the majority are Palestinian women and children residing in Gaza. In Khartoum State, just one region of Sudan, an estimated 61,000 have been killed in the current civil war. UNICEF estimated in 2022 that 11,000 children have died in the conflict in Yemen. More than 6 million refugees have fled Venezuela due to domestic repression and millions more have fled the war in Ukraine. Of the 120 million displaced and refugee persons in the world today, UNHCR estimates that in excess of 40 million are children. Mbembe (2019) suggests in *Necropolitics* that presiding over mass death and racial oppression is a feature of contemporary sovereign states, even those that claim allegiance to liberal democratic values. Authoritarian and carceral responses to refugees and displaced people are a limit case for the capacity of sovereigns to legislate who lives and who dies, who deserves statehood and who shall be deemed stateless.

2 Este artigo faz parte dos esforços analíticos do projeto de pesquisa Escola, Comunicação e Sobrevivência, financiado pela FAPESP sob o número de concessão 2021/11651-9, no qual o autor e outros pesquisadores estão envolvidos.

3 For a discussion of the complexity of racial identity in childhood in a Brazilian context see Archangelo & O'Loughlin (2021), and for a general discussion of the privileging of whiteness as mechanism of racial supremacy see O'Loughlin (2020b).

4 For a discussion of academic impingements on academic freedom in universities, see O'Loughlin (2025), and for an illustration of these impingements in Brazilian society see Rolnik (2023).

For socially committed teachers, charged with the emotional containment of child, familial, and societal suffering and seeking to cultivate empathy, optimism, and creativity in children, these are heavy times. Confronting structural inequalities and living in societies that seek to devalue entire groups of people as subhuman, reduced to what Agamben (1998) calls *bare life*—mere existence without hope, aspiration or agency — is it possible for educators to hold hope and enact the ideal that Freire (1976) termed *education as the practice of freedom*?

The formation of subjectivity in the child⁵

Entry into subjectivity is laden with complexity for the child. On encountering the parental Other — and thereby the symbol systems embedded in language and culture — the child is subject to the vagaries of occlusions, misrecognitions and even foreclosure that may usurp the process of subject formation and the “going on being” that Winnicott (1960) noted as an indicator that a baby or child is experiencing a sense of ease in the world. As Green has noted, tangible limits on the co-construction of intersubjectivity, occasioned, for example, by the presence of a depressed or distracted mother, may leave a child “forbidden to be” (Green, 1972, p. 52). Occlusions and misrecognitions can also occur at the hands of sovereign authorities. Employing Agamben’s (2005) terminology, a child may be placed in a “state of exception” by virtue of their perceived status as indigenous or racially marginal, due to their status as a refugee or asylum seeker, by having been trafficked or being subjected to Othering due to their perceived ethnic, sexual, religious, ability, or class characteristics, or by any marker that connotes a child as Other. Children may also be the bearers of intergenerationally transmitted occlusions due to historical rupture of genealogical inheritances and family lineages. Speaking of marginalization of those perceived as Other, Arfuch noted that the “radical disparity of the gaze” ensures that “the other does not attain the status of the human” (2020, p. 112). Sovereign authorities have a significant interest in familial child-rearing practices because of their desire for a body politic that will advance the interests of the state through, for example, unquestioning

acceptance of government authority, development of an industrious disposition, subscription to a particular religious orthodoxy, fealty to capitalism, acceptance of a neoliberal social order etc. The sovereign’s interest is revealed most starkly through the regulation of schooling. Schooling is the sovereign’s other primary vehicle for acculturation, and hence for the potential molding of subjectivity to predetermined norms. Child psychoanalysts recognize that the sequelae of intrusive socialization and excessive interpellation will manifest as symptoms should a child present for therapy (cf., Mannoni, 1970; Mathelin, 1999). Plastow (2015) suggests, for example, that this unassimilable material will inevitably leak from the child in the form of symptoms: “[t]he symptom is the means by which the child is able to accede to his or her own truth, through an experience that exceeds the place reserved for the child by the mother and father” (2015, p. 101).

Laplanche (1999) has noted the primacy of alterity in subject formation. The infant, interacting with the adult unconscious cannot avoid taking in material that is beyond its capacity to process. Speaking of this excess, Wyatt noted that “the internalized trace of the parental other is never fully assimilated” (2006, p. 191). Laplanche states that the enigmatic nature of the signifiers that are beyond the child’s capacity to metabolize form the basis of an unconscious, a residue that resists symbolization. Thus, subject formation necessarily transcends the didactic efforts of parents, however benevolent, yielding unpredictable effects as the child encounters enigmatic signifiers that influence subject formation. Literature on the motherhood constellation (Stern, 1998), on primary maternal preoccupation (Winnicott, 1956/2016), as well as writing on the effects of intergenerationally transmitted trauma (e.g., Auerhahn & Prelinger, 1983; Coles, 2018; Fraiberg et al., 1975; Emery, 2002; Garon, 2004; Kaplan, 1996; O’Loughlin 2015, 2020a; O’Loughlin & Charles, 2015) point to the manner in which occlusions and misrecognitions complicate the putatively linear developmental path of any child. Absorption of enigmatic signifiers that may portend nameless dreads, foreclosure, and ungovernable inhibitions and desires do not lend themselves to easy symbolization. They may inhibit a child’s capacity to be free and can lead to the long-term relational difficulties described by Michael Eigen as *toxic nourishment* (Eigen, 1999; O’Loughlin & Kulsa, 2024).

5 For further detail on subject formation see O’Loughlin (2023), from which some of the material in this paper is drawn.

Green's work on the dead mother phenomenon (Green, 1972; Kohon, 1999) is illustrative. For a child in the presence of a psychically dead mother, Green suggests, that mother is transformed from a potential source of vitality into "a distant figure, toneless, practically inanimate" (1972, p. 142). Absorption of parental deadness leads to severe impairment in the child's capacity for the kind of symbiosis that is so vital to the development of subjectivity. Such a child will inevitably develop a blankness at the core of its being. Failing to engage the mother, Green notes, the child will decathect the maternal object and suffer severe impairments in the ability to engage in future reciprocal loving relationships, because their love is mortgaged to a psychically dead mother. I worked clinically for several years with a boy who was enmeshed with a mother who had been severely traumatized as a child. This mother was recovering from a recent hospitalization for psychosis. She attempted to keep this ten-year-old boy in a baby-like state in the hope that he would not endure a painful childhood like the one she herself had experienced. In his first session with me, he drew a self-portrait with the word "SOS" emblazoned on the corner of the page, portending urgent knowledge of his precarity. Later, he drew a stick figure in a womb and captioned it "The boy who could not grow up." This boy's love was mortgaged to his psychically dead mother and his capacity for finding his own way was suspended if not foreclosed. He did not dare grow up lest he precipitate another breakdown in his mother.

The kind of childhood precarity outlined here will be quite familiar to mental health professionals trained to understand the psychodynamics of childhood emotions. In my current experience in the U.S., as well as in Ireland, where I worked as a classroom teacher, no such psychological insights are offered as part of the teacher preparation curriculum. Absent an exceptionally attuned teacher, the best we might hope for in schools, it seems, is that a well-informed psychologist or social worker might understand these dynamics and offer some relief to a child exhibiting symptoms of emotional occlusion. A more typical reaction to this kind of symptomatology in schools is likely to be bemusement, diagnostic classification, or punitive reactivity.

In *The Violence of Interpretation*, Aulagnier (2001) suggests that long before language or symbolic capacity develops, the infant absorbs the emotional tone of the parent's words pictographically. By her speech the

mother "indicates to him the limits of the possible and the allowable" (2001, p. 11). If the child can receive the mother's speech pleasurably, Aulagnier suggests, these representations will form the core of subjectivity. However, if the mother's speech is violent and produces unpleasure, these inhospitable utterances will work against the consolidation of an I and the child will experience a blank space where intersubjectivity ought to reside. Aulagnier's work is distinctive for her acknowledgement of parents not only as bearers and transmitters of their own unconscious communications, but also for her recognition that the words of the parents also carry societal ideologies and imperatives that risk causing further occlusion in the child's subject formation. Reminiscent of the suggestion from Fraiberg and colleagues (1975), that ghosts in the nursery cause the child to live life from a tattered script, Aulagnier suggests that potential space for growth can be eroded even before the child's arrival if the child's genealogical destiny is foreclosed by those who "demand that the child conform to an image of the child that occupied the cradle long before the body was placed in it" (Aulagnier, 2001, p. 52). The crux, Aulagnier notes, is whether the assimilation of cultural imperatives can be accomplished in a way that leaves the child with a sense of agency; whether the child will accumulate unmetabolized material that will reappear later *après coup* through deferred action; or whether, in the most extreme case, occlusion is so totalizing and negating that the seeds of psychosis are set in place. As Aulagnier notes, when signification collapses "insanity is the extreme form of the only refusal acceptable to the I" (2001, p. 91).

Butler (1997) characterized this dilemma of subject formation as the tension embodied in the striving for emancipatory *subjectivity* in the context of societal constraints that delimit subjective possibilities and demand conformity and ultimately *subjection*. This dilemma is particularly tangible in classrooms in which sovereign mandates delimit curricular topics, impose disciplining regimes, and sometimes even mandate how classroom time is rationed. Sadly, as Martin Haberman (1991) noted in discussing U.S. schooling, the most extreme form of this sterile *pedagogy of poverty* is reserved for children in poor urban communities from whom, apparently, we should expect little engagement and less aspiration. Aulagnier is very clear on the explicit intentions of those who seek to

induce conformity and impose a mental straitjacket on children whose futures are foreclosed through intentional occlusion:

[...] every society privileges what encourages the status quo and its models, a status quo that is defended at first by those who are privileged by those models. But it must be understood that no society would succeed in doing so if it could not use the force of violence that it exerts [...] in order to preserve the illusion that what, in fact, is in the service of conservative intentions conforms to the needs of the psychical structure. (2001, p. 107)

Sequelae of colonization: The consequences of dispossession on child subjectivity

Addressing the issue of de-subjectification, Butler and Athanasiou suggest that states of non-being are produced in persons by means of “processes and ideologies by which persons are disowned and abjected by normative and normalizing powers” (2013, p. 1). The necropolitical power of the sovereign resides in its capacity to decide “who can be wasted and who cannot; it distinguishes those who are disposable from those who are not... by rendering certain communities or populations unintelligible, by eviscerating them of the conditions of possibility for life and the ‘human’ itself” (p. 20). Dispossession of subjectivity is induced not only by explicit political action of the extreme kind that occurs on the bodies of refugees and asylum seekers, for example, but it is also a core feature of the everyday neoliberal capitalist order which exploits workers bodies “rendering them usable, employable, but then eventually into waste matter” (p. 27). For participants in out-groups, seeking recognition as fully human, the price of recognition is high: “Conferred recognition as humans according to the established norms of recognizability” is only granted, they note, “on the condition of and at the cost of conforming to these norms” (p. 36), and such recognition actually may continue to be withheld for those considered racial or migrant Others for whom emancipation may be foreclosed.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, sovereign authority sets out to rupture genealogical filiations and erase ancestral and historical memory to produce paralyzing self-abasement and ideological interpellation. The result is a subjectivity severed from history

and characterized by melancholy. In focusing on the *melancholic* remainders of colonialism, Khanna’s (2003) work holds promise. Khanna offers a provocative road map for an inquiry that looks at the transgenerational sequelae of the terrible wounds of colonial Othering. From Octave Mannoni she draws the idea of exploring spectrality, and from Abraham and Torok (1994) she draws the notion of demetaphorization of affect. Demetaphorization is a symptom of melancholia – an incapacity to mourn – which results from what Abraham and Torok refer to as incorporation, namely swallowing something that cannot be assimilated. Consistent with Abraham and Torok’s theory, Khanna speaks of the need for an examination “of the manner in which past inassimilable experiences constitute phantoms or specters that manifest themselves as melancholic affect and a form of critical agency for the future to come” (p. 204).

In the introduction to Abraham & Torok’s *The Shell and the Kernel* (1994) Rand notes that trauma, including phantomic trauma, blocks the person’s capacity for introjection, and thus leads to the entombment of trauma in crypts where it is inaccessible to processing, and where it will be passed on through intergenerational transmission. Meaning is therefore blocked as cryptonomy “inhibits the emergence of meaning by concealing the significant link within a chain of words” (Rand, 1994, p. 12). Psychoanalysis, therefore, has potential as the rescuer of constricted signification and the restorer of metaphoric possibility. Moving beyond the intrapsychic to the social, Abraham and Torok underline the inherently social nature of psychoanalysis, “suggesting the existence within an individual of a collective psychology comprised of several generations.” (Rand, 1994, p. 166)

Rand later remarks that Abraham calls for “a psychoanalytic cult of ancestors” (p. 167), and “the psychoanalysis *in absentia* of several generations” (p. 168). We need to understand the embeddedness of familial and educational socialization within the kind of occlusive racial-capitalist and neoliberal frameworks so ably critiqued by Mbembe (2021) and Rolnik (2023).

The question of interest then is what happens when genealogical continuity is ruptured by alien ideological forces and the meaning-making capacity of a child is silenced or erased. With respect to sovereign authority, a danger is that a child’s own desires will be annulled as the child learns that “an Other decides

in all sovereignty the order of the world and the laws according to which its own psyche ought to function” (Aulagnier, 2001, p. 182).

In *Colonial Trauma*, Lazali (2021) explores the effects of a brutal colonial history as well as continuing suffering under a fundamentalist Islamic regime on the subjectivity of contemporary Algerians. Lazali illustrates the catastrophic effects of such occlusions, describing the emotional constriction and foreclosed imagination manifested by her indigenous Algerian patients. The core of the wound to subjectivity, Lazali notes, is a lack of a sense of belonging that is rooted in a severance from genealogical histories. Subjected to totalizing ideology, language erasure, religious fundamentalism, and political authoritarianism, Algerians have internalized amnesia and a sense of absoluteness that chokes their capacity for meaning. They endured physical massacres and forced displacements designed to rupture social links and to shatter genealogical continuity in storytelling, religious practices, childrearing etc. As Lazali observes, “the *‘indigènes’* were treated like beasts” (p. 37). More pernicious still, the colonial regime set out to erase its own origins, interpellating its colonial subjects with an ideology of racial inferiority and a demand that they assume the role of supplicants in a colonial capitalist economy. Torture, starvation, internment, and deportation reduced humans to “nameless bodies...held in constant suspicion on religious and racial grounds” (p. 41). By dismantling the symbolic system of shared cultural values and by forcing Algerians to adopt Francophone names, the colonizers created genealogical wreckage that yielded a collective dispossession of subjective identity. The outcome was that Algerians had no alternative but to identify with a narrative of dispossession.

In *Out of the Dark Night*, Mbembe (2021) offers a view consistent with the foregoing, speaking of decolonization as a “refusal of all forms of servitude” (p. 43). He offers the following vision of the reclaiming of subjectification: “It is a question of abolishing the moment in which the self is constituted as object of the other; only ever seeing itself in and through someone else, only ever inhabiting the name, the voice, the face, and the residence of an other, and the other’s work, life, and language” (p. 49). Reminiscent of Freire’s (1969) call to education for critical consciousness, Mbembe argues for an awakening to self-consciousness and a capacity to speak agentially. Most crucially, Mbembe notes, drawing on Fanon, this requires that oppressed

people “*emerge from the enclosure of race* – an entrapment in which the gaze and power of the Other seeks to enclose the subject” (p. 62). Mbembe is well aware of the political and pedagogical challenges of undoing a totalizing epistemic coloniality and, echoing Rolnik (2021), he argues for the development of a sense of collective identity, a process he describes as cultivation of the possibility of a *politics of fellowship* (p. 73). A precondition of this fellowship, he notes, is “recognition of the Other in his or her difference.” (p. 73).

The call of decolonization, therefore, is formidable, demanding no less than a reversal of the Othering and racism constitutive of colonialism, and instead allowing all persons to constitute themselves as agentic human subjects. Butler and Athanasiou suggest that this kind of agentic social engagement calls for an impulse toward mutuality, toward “becoming-with-one-another” and “beside ourselves,” allowing us to absorb new alterities and expand our subjective possibilities. Speaking of “the vexed thematics of agency” (p. 14) they pose the therapeutic and pedagogical question thus: Can the apparatus of recognition and normalization ever be disorganized so that individuals might experience a “performative proclamation of a self that has been undone and redone”? (p. 65).

On the possibility of a decolonizing pedagogy⁶

There are many theoretical frameworks available for articulating a critical decolonizing pedagogy. Psychoanalysis is one candidate for this critical task because, as Rose notes in *The Last Resistance*, psychoanalysis has the power to unsettle “all idealized, official rhetorics, whether of nationhood, race, religion or state – its powers of resistance, one might say” (2007, p. 12). If the superego represents an internalization of sovereign authority, how can psychoanalytic work not be considered political, and likewise, how can any non-reproductive pedagogy with emancipatory pretensions not also be considered political? Rose is unequivocal about the importance of psychoanalysis in undoing the certainties and reassurances that are peddled by the sovereign:

6 For an elaboration of my understanding of a critical pedagogy at college level see O’Loughlin (2025) and O’Loughlin and McLeod (2015), from which some of this material is drawn. For applications to children in school see O’Loughlin (2009, 2016, 2017, 2019); O’Loughlin & Johnson (2010).

Psychoanalysis remains for me the most powerful reading of the role of human subjects in the formation of states and nations, subjects as driven by their unconscious, subjects in thrall to identities that will not save them and will readily destroy the world. I also believe that it offers a counter-vision of identity as precarious, troubled, uneasy, which needs to be invoked time and time again against the false certainties of our times. (2007, p. 35)

This capacity is readily evident in Felman's (1989, 1992) critical reading of pedagogy through a Lacanian psychoanalytic lens. In her essay, "Psychoanalysis and education," for example, Felman (1989) explores the core notion of truth seeking at the heart of psychoanalysis. It is not in the formalization of therapy or pedagogy that possibility lies, but, rather, in the capacity to critique the process and to resist the omniscience of authority and interpretation. As she observes, "every true pedagogue is in effect an anti-pedagogue" (p. 72) because of the need to persistently resist formalization and mastery and to interrogate received truths. Felman argues that because teaching is fundamentally about grappling with the unthought knowns that produce resistance to new inquiry, pedagogy is inherently psychoanalytic. The new knowledge to which pedagogy gives access is not external knowledge, but rather "knowledge previously denied to consciousness" (p. 76). Pedagogy, therefore, privileges ignorance as the starting point, and addresses the resistances that block truth seeking. The isomorphism between pedagogy and analysis is quite explicit in her discussion of Lacan's pedagogy:

The pedagogical question crucial to Lacan's own teaching will thus be: Where does it resist? Where does a text (or a signifier in a patient's conduct) precisely make no sense, that is, resist interpretation? Where does what I see and what I read resist my understanding? ...How can I interpret *out of* the dynamic ignorance I analytically encounter, both in others and myself? How can I turn ignorance into an instrument of teaching? (p. 80)

Dialogue is crucial to this process, Felman notes, because it is through speech that the resistances emerge and can be subjected to scrutiny. Reminiscent of Freire's (1970) notion of teachers-as-students and students-as-teachers, Felman refers to the importance of student knowledge in the learning process, and the

importance of dialogue as "the radical condition of learning and knowledge" (p. 83). In speaking of the development of fugitive knowledges and the use of the "the undercommons" as a subversive space that undercuts the neoliberal logics of university instruction, Harney and Moten (2013) advance a similar thesis. My own pedagogical approach, which borrows from Felman's (1992) pedagogy for Holocaust trauma, incorporates autobiographical work, and deployment of evocative poetry, literature and films that pose a critical address to the unconscious. This approach embodies a form of dialogue that decenters authority and promotes the kind of introspection that leads to the creation of new forms of knowing through interrogation of the kinds of resistances recognized by Felman and by Rose. These are forms of knowing that do not privilege cognitive process, but that embrace the emotional and erotic components of internal work and that allow students to reach inward to engage in the kind of *working through* so familiar to psychoanalysts. Felman describes such work as poetic pedagogy, and she captures the analytic pedagogical process with the following questions: "What is the specificity of my incomprehension? What is the riddle I pose her under the guise of my knowledge?" (p. 96).

In assessing Lacan's contribution, Roudinesco (2014) presciently remarked on the regressive effects of the rise of wild capitalism, a surge in populism and an increasing permission to publicly advocate for racism, xenophobia, and nationalism unashamedly. She also remarks on an increasing retreat from science and toward identity politics. Lacan's strength, as well as the undoubted source of his unpopularity, was his ability to turn psychoanalysis on its head, to constantly interrogate resistance, to provoke transgression.

And as to a pedagogy for children...

Emancipatory and decolonizing work with teachers of children is considerably more challenging to conceptualize than college instruction, in part because of the extraordinary pressure the sovereign exerts over the conduct of schooling. A second factor is the likely conservative and reproductive inclinations of beginning teachers, seeking to reproduce their own nostalgic memories of schooling (Britzman, 1991). If a revolutionary pedagogy is called for, it would require considerably more critical and introspective teacher preparation than what is typically offered.

Abstracting from the foregoing, however, here are some core principles that critical educators might use to begin exploring the possibility of co-constructing critical curriculum with their students:

- A pedagogy that is founded in autobiography and narrative privileges the voices and experiences of students...it invites each child to continuously experience giving an account of themselves;
- Principles of classroom engagement ought to maximize the cultivation of agency in children. Rather than individualize or divide and conquer, schools ought to cultivate fellowship, community, and collectivity;
- Rather than mastery or acquisition, emphasis should be placed on exploring modes of knowing and unknowing leading to possibilities of creativity and self-transformation;
- Recognizing the catastrophic damage caused by severance of social linkages, an emphasis should be placed on individual and collective reclamation of critical links to genealogy, memory, and collective history;
- Recognizing the core function of racial othering, and of the rendering of certain children as non-persons, priority is placed on creating places of acceptance and receptivity where each child can reclaim their own stories, and their places in the collective stories from which they have descended;
- In order to expand the identificatory possibilities that might allow children to imagine themselves otherwise (O'Loughlin & Johnson, 2010), teachers need the courage and collective power to seek out transgressive and revolutionary narratives that infuse children with hope, possibility, and even an imaging of collective action to protect and improve our planet and its inhabitants for future generations.

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Recebido em 08 de dez. 2024

Aceito em 11 de dez. 2024



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