

ASIAN CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES? ALTERNATIVE UNDERSTANDINGS OF CRITIQUE-EMANCIPATION FROM OTHER-ED CIVILIZATIONAL SOURCES¹

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This paper proposes the unlikely project, Asian critical pedagogies. Unlikely, because traditional Asian wisdom has been perceived to inspire quietism, nonresistance and passivity, which are deemed incongruent with critical pedagogy's problem-posing, conscientizing and radical-emancipatory goals. This perception is misguided as I intend to show later. However both knowledge projects indeed exhibit fundamental differences that are ontological and epistemological in nature, such that where Asian liberationist wisdom advocates what I call *naturalistic nonhumanist freedom* (to be elaborated in the paper), critical pedagogy advocates *cultural action for freedom* (Freire's coinage, 1970a; 1970b). And, I argue, it is this difference that makes the former more promising for certain educational projects where the latter has been perceived weak, such as: anti-educational neocolonialism, sustainable development, and environmental and consumption ethics. I indicate in the paper how engaging Asian sources in critical education might offer alternative ways of knowing, valuing, and living beyond, and other than, the humanist-progressivist one that undergirds critical pedagogy's conscientization and dialogical methods. I then propose critical pedagogy can open up to Asian liberatory resources and forge a formidable alliance with it in creating truly radical, utopian and critical-emancipatory pedagogies.

The paper has two Parts. Part 1, articulates recent aporias confronted by critical pedagogy as a humanist-progressivist project, and its culturally specific construals of critique-emancipation lurking behind its universalist aims and claims. I then call attention to the much-written about influence of Hegel's notion of master/servant, and the recognition principle, upon Freire's notion of conscientization-emancipation. But apparently my discussion of the Hegelian influence is less than hospitable, and instead of relying on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as other works have done, I call attention to the cultural-geographical ramifications of freedom in *Philosophy of history* (1991/1900). In Hegel's philosophical interpretation of history, universal history is the gradual development of "idea" or "reason" - 'the *true*, the *eternal*, the absolutely *powerful* essence' that 'reveals itself in the world' (p. 163). Historical progress is effected as individual subjects/cultures become conscious that they are free. Hegel proposed that lacking yet in history, the East inhabited the realm of matter the essence of which is

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gravity. The “philosophies” of China and India (if they deserve the name at all) were apologies or panaceas to existing despotism and social inequalities, as opposed to freedom a uniquely European achievement. Oriental despotism was thus the *Other* to be negated, assimilated, and surpassed by the progressive consciousness of freedom, a consciousness and sensibility that officially started in Greece and Rome, culminating in German history:

The history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom . . . a progress whose development according to the necessity of its nature . . . the Eastern nations knew only that *one* is free; the Greek and Roman world only that *some* are free; while we know that all men absolutely (man *as man*) are free’ (168, italics. In original).

But the “oriental despot” is at best a myth perpetuated by the Orientalism of the time, now exposed in critiques of Orientalism to have deeply racist assumptions. In Part two of the paper, core ontological and ethico-epistemological assumptions of Asian philosophies are elucidated upon with the end in view of indicating why they merit appellations expressing a contrary direction. ‘Eastern ways of liberation’ or ‘Asian liberatory wisdom’ were terms coined by Western writers in the 1970s (Watts 1957, 1961; Capra 1976), who saw their great emancipatory promise. It is not too wayward to suggest, eastern liberationist wisdom can also inspire critical pedagogies that are adequate to the *self-clarifications of the problems and wishes of the age* (Marx in Fraser 1991/1989), particularly in the wake of neo/postcolonial, neo-liberal, and globalized education. Furthermore, critiques of cultural imperialism inspired by Asian wisdom will not rest only with problem-posing and self-reflection captured in *conscientização*. They stand to offer as well, not just methods for critique, but alternative visions found in ‘counter-hegemonic sensibilities, possibilities, and probabilities’ (Kanpol in Usher and Edwards 1994: 219) stemming from other-ed civilizational sources of education. I conclude the paper with some notes on how Asian liberatory wisdom can fill-in one more gap in critical pedagogy traceable to Freire’s adamant refusal to address the education or conscientization of the elite or power wielders. I try to counter here again the myth of the Oriental despot by situating the Asian liberatory texts in their original contexts - as discourses from below meant to conscientize leaders.

Introduction: Asian Critical Pedagogies as an Ignored, Open and Contestable Terrain

In this paper I raise the questions, what are the potentials of traditional Asian wisdom for critical pedagogy, and what are the conditions of the possibility of their recognition as important resources for educational reform today? My goal is to argue for tapping into the immense potentials of Asian liberatory wisdom for critical pedagogy. This advocacy is premised on three insights borne out by almost four decades of teaching and research on Asian and indigenous epistemologies. First, Asian liberationist knowledge(s) can

engender truly critical and radically utopian pedagogies that help create new forms of ethical and political communities. Second, they can offer fresh solutions to current aporias faced by critical pedagogy, namely, how to bridge the gap between knowledge and emancipation (theory and praxis), and how to effectively engage/direct difference whether marked as racial, ethnic, gender/sexual, political, and cultural under the goal of radical democracy. Third, Asian and Western critical pedagogies substantively differing in their conceptions of freedom can share resources to engender truly transformative and emancipatory pedagogies.

But before proceeding further, several disclaimers are in order: First, this work does not succumb to, and in fact takes to task, a certain postmodern cynicism that has infected some Asian scholars, about any attempt to engage non-Western traditional wisdom as a resource for understanding and coping with today's ills. Such attempts, they claim, are already and invariably imbricated by constructions and manageability of the East effected by imperialist-racist scholarship. But Said himself (1978) never meant to deny there was a real Orient beyond Western orientalist imagination when he wrote: 'There were – and are – cultures and nations whose locations is in the East, and their lives, histories, and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West.' However, about this fact or reality, Said further wrote, his study of Orientalism had 'very little to contribute, except to acknowledge it tacitly' (Said 1978: 5). Second, and subsequent to Said's disclaimer, these troves of wisdom and the lifeways inspired by them are not rendered invalid by their countries of origin now running astray as tigers or newly awakening giants, or now de-legitimizing these ancient wisdom forcing the latter to go underground (e.g., China outlawing Taoism and Buddhism). And while it has been claimed, traditional wisdom may have inspired uniquely Asian brands of capitalism (*bushido* capitalism, *wu-wei* capitalism, spiritual capitalism, perhaps?), this present study is simultaneously a critical engagement acknowledging at once the power-knowledge that may have been, or might be at work, both in the conditions relating to the texts' production (e.g., Hinduism superseding/assimilating Dravidian indigenous knowledge), and in conditions where they may be coopted to serve contemporary oppressive and fascist discourses and practices of neo-capitalist cultural political economy. For this challenging task, critical discourse analysis would be helpful. Third, I do not subscribe to, but rather I intend to problematize the observation that critical pedagogy as the term pedagogy indicates, is a methodology that radicalizes educational experience and thus will work with any multicultural content. Critical pedagogy, even granting it is a methodology, is as I will show, deeply entrenched in culturally biased epistemological and ontological assumptions that must be exposed and critiqued trenchantly if it is to engage other civilizational sources of liberating wisdom, productively.

By *Asian critical pedagogies* I refer to transformative and emancipatory pedagogical precepts and practices based on Asian wisdom, perspectives, historical experiences, and ways of life. In this paper, I focus on the traditional "liberationist lifeways" of Hinduism (Vedanta and Yoga),

Buddhism (the Mahayana school, to include Zen), and Taoism after the writings on the topic by Watts (1957, 1961) and Capra (1975).

This choice is not meant to signal anything totalizing or exclusionary. There are four strategic considerations for this focus. First, the three Asian ways of life hold in common with critical pedagogy that true knowledge is practical-emancipatory, although as I will show later, they differ as to what is, and what constitutes emancipation or freedom. Second, the three ways of life are monistic rather than monotheistic belief systems, a common feature that makes for *naturalistic-nonhumanism* a type of ontology crucial to ecological consciousness as opposed to the humanist, anthro/androcentric, and egological mindset. The latter has been directly linked by ecofeminists, peace and ecological scholars to current global woes of exploitation, wars, social inequalities, racism, sexism, and environmental degradation. Unfortunately however ecological as opposed to egological advocacies seldom turn to Asia for radical alternatives. In this light, the recent environmental turn in critical pedagogy leading to the creation of new critically defined educational programs such as *ecoliteracy* or *ecopedagogy* or *eco-justice pedagogy* (Bowers 2001, Kahn 2011), again re-echo a persistent snobbery of Asian liberatory wisdom, while counting UN accords on the environment, Freire, Illich, Dewey, feminism, and other Western sources and movements among their guiding resources.

The third strategic importance of the study's choice of which Asian systems to include, has to do with how these liberationist philosophies ironically were the very knowledges negated and surpassed in Hegel's account of universal history, as was mentioned previously. In *Philosophy of History*. Hegel attributed to traditional Indian and Chinese philosophies the fact that the Orientals 'have not attained the knowledge that spirit—man *as such*—is free; and because they do not know this, they are not free' (p. 167).

Surprisingly the exclusionary effects of the Hegelian interpretation of history where the Orient lacking in history is reduced to stage the physical rising of the sun, has not been much discussed in relation to the cultural biases of thought systems that inherited Hegel's views. A recent case in point is Amy Allen in *The end of progress: Decolonizing the normative foundations of critical theory* (2016) who tries to evade Hegel's concept of progress contained in *Philosophy of History* as much as she could, based on certain grounds exempting this work from critical scrutiny. But still I take it up due to its centrality to the differing construals of critique-emancipation between critical pedagogy and Asian wisdom, and consequently it might shed light upon the continued bias or skepticism against the critical-emancipatory potentials of Asian philosophies.

As to the term *critical pedagogy*, Giroux (1994) cautioned against any generic definition, but *critical pedagogy*, is here understood broadly as 'the engagement of critical social theory with issues of educational reform and transformation' (McLaren, 1999:1). This Freirean literacy program was launched in Latin America in the late 1960s and exported to North America, some parts of Europe, Africa and Australia (Giroux, 1987: 7). In the Philippines, critical pedagogy and liberation theology imported from Latin America, contributed much to the awakening of critical consciousness among students, peasants and workers in the late 1960s to early 1980s,

before the people power revolution toppled the Marcos regime in 1986. The manifold sources from which critical pedagogy has drawn inspiration were tracked down by Usher and Edwards (1994), and Wink (1997), as the Frankfurt School, feminism, Freirean pedagogy, postcolonial discourse, and postmodern-poststructuralist critical social theories (Wink 1997: 216). It is worth reiterating, for the purposes of this paper, it is the Hegelian influence upon Freirean liberatory pedagogy openly acknowledged not only by Freire himself but also by recent literature dealing with this topic (Au, Blunden 2013, Lei 2016) that is given primary importance.

The plural form, *pedagogies*, is meant to ward off any suspicion of essentializing or totalizing. Because as Steadman (1969) and Said (1979) would contend, there is no Asian monolith so constructed by a Western knowledge in order to justify subjugation of the Orient; rather, Asia is a vast continent, *the most populous continent on earth*, and home to various races/ethnicities, and cultures. Cultures, that are not necessarily limited to the Indian and Chinese, but the particularities and differences of which are now also a growing research concern among local scholars. This decentralization is particularly urgent in the wake of the widening gaps and inequalities within and in between nations in the region brought about by a global capitalism which counts the capitalized *Asian tigers* and the *two newly awakened giants* among its members. Thus, just as Western critical pedagogy has come to mean a variety of approaches, there are and can be as many and varied Asian critical pedagogies depending on the proponents' particular histories (of colonization, for instance), inspirations, local contexts and goals.

1.0 Critical Pedagogy: A Humanist-Progressivist Educational Project

Some basic concepts, principles and strategies of critical pedagogy can be articulated, and recent problems faced by it can be identified. Critical pedagogy as a humanist-progressivist educational project which is its major strength, I contend, is also the linchpin of its shortcomings.

Education as cultural action for freedom

Critical pedagogy has been consistently conceived as a form of cultural politics from its early stages as 'cultural action for freedom' (Freire 1970a; 1970b), up to its recent partnership with cultural studies (Giroux 1987; 1991; 1999), postmodernism, feminism and environmental education (Usher and Edwards 1994, Lockhart 1997, Kahn 2010). Critical pedagogists view literacy as *a form of cultural politics* (Freire & Macedo 1987: viii), and educators as *cultural workers* (Freire 1970a; 1970b). Culture is understood as the *desire to be more* than what humans are at any given time or situation (da Veiga Coutinho, in Freire 1970a: 7). *Humanization*, is the goal of emancipatory education, where distinctively human qualities and values particularly *rationality* and *autonomy* are regained by the oppressed (Freire 1970b). This way, the oppressed develop or reclaim their own *cultural capital* which they were deprived of in the state of *alienation* – their domination by masters, oppressive structures, or material constraints (Freire 1970a). Freire

was insistent that human beings should not be negated as *beings of praxis*, and as always *purposeful* (as opposed to being governed by chance) and *self-directed* (as opposed to being determined). Dialogical knowledge makes literacy meaningful to the ‘the degree that it is viewed as a set of practices that functions to either empower or disempower people,’ and according to whether or not it reproduces the existing social formation, or becomes ‘a set of cultural practices that promotes democratic and participatory change’ (Freire & Macedo 1987: viii).

In 1994, Freire recapitulated his vision of humanism as a basic goal of critical pedagogy considered as social practice, in a brief article entitled “Education and community involvement” (in Castells et al., 1999/1994). This little piece is significant because it was written three years prior to his death, and the ideas expressed were what Freire fundamentally held on, namely, critical pedagogy as a humanist-progressivist project, even as his ideas became more sensitive to criticisms. Here Freire wrote: ‘As a social practice, education, in all its richness and complexity, is a phenomenon typical of our existence and thus is exclusively human’ (p. 83). In the succeeding pages, the qualities of a human being distinct from animals or a programmed being are delineated: language, thought (which ‘did not appear until the animal turned human’), ‘loose, freed hands’ enabling the ‘activity specific to human beings’ which is the ‘cooperative use of tools in the production of food and other goods’. Humans are historical and cultural beings and thus cannot be explained solely by biology, or genetics. But neither are human beings explainable by history or culture, or conscience alone. They are more than all these, because they are ‘beings who live, within themselves, the dialectic of the social, without which they could not be, and the individual, without which they would become dissolved into the social, without a mark, without a profile’ (p. 84). Freedom is the hallmark of being human: freedom means the capability of choosing, deciding, breaking away, and projecting.’ It is the capability of human beings to ‘remake themselves as they remake the world’ (p. 85).

As cultural action for freedom, education cannot be neutral, it is always political: ‘The exercise of freedom leads us to the need to make choices, and the need leads us to the impossibility of being neutral’ (p. 86). It is then impossible for critical educators to be neutral, and as such, Freire used the term ‘coherent progressive educator’ (p. 86, p. 87, p. 88). The ‘coherent’ educator has ‘the right and the duty’ to live their educational practice in a ‘coherent fashion’ with their political options. Their practice does not contradict their discourse, so to speak (p. 86). The progressive pedagogist on the other hand, is described by indicating what they are not in terms of what those who claim to be progressivists really end up doing: not taking the learners’ experience and knowledge, treating the learner as an object rather than an active subject, not respecting differences, bias for classroom learning and refusal to take up topics from the real world, hyper-inflating one’s authority, constantly taking intolerant positions, and packaging educational content in rigid manuals or guides (pp. 86-87). In positive terms, the progressive educator opts for continuous development, is curious, creative, biophilic, critical, and reflective, open to questioning and

resistance, and believes everyone, including the school staff and service workers have knowledge to share (pp. 88-89).

So what is critical about critical pedagogy? It is a pedagogy that leads to the creation of new forms of ethical and political community. Thus, literacy should develop critical consciousness, or *conscientizacao* which is 'learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality' (Freire: 1970b:19). Education is not mere memorization of ideas, or an objective and mechanical relationship with words (Freire 1970b; 1987). This is the traditional *banking system of pedagogy* where educators dish out to students a pre-determined content – something that suits very well an education meant to reproduce the status quo. Instead what is advocated are *problem-posing* and *dialogical* methods of learning whereby the learners relate to the world, 'mediated by the transforming practice of this world taking place in the very general milieu in which learners travel (Freire & Macedo 1987: viii). Thus *hope* is an essential component. Freire and Giroux (1987: xv), insist that pedagogy 'must keep alive a redemptive and radically utopian spirit as the basis for establishing a major connection between thought and action' (1987: xi-xv).

Troubling critical pedagogy's grand claims

Attempts by the late Freire, and other proponents to revitalize critical pedagogy in the face of critiques and the realization of diversified needs for critical-emancipatory education, have failed to respond to fundamental issues related to its humanist, progressivist and universalist stance. In a word, it is a typical project of modernity that has to tone down its grand claims. Thus in the wake of the postmodern suspicion of grand narratives of emancipation, critical pedagogy as a humanist-progressivist project of emancipation through education, has been seriously implicated. Usher and Edwards assessed the impact of the postmodern moment upon education considered a modernist project in, *Postmodernism and education* (1994). In the concluding chapter they wrote:

education can no longer be understood or understand itself as an enterprise standing above history and particular cultural contexts. It can no longer be dedicated - in its various forms – to the achievement of universally applicable goals – truth, emancipation, democracy, enlightenment, empowerment – predefined by grand narratives (p. 210).

Usher and Edwards do not take critical pedagogy as an exception or as beyond their general critique of education as a modernist project. That they reserve the discussion of critical pedagogy's shortfalls in their concluding chapter, I believe, is an indication that even critical pedagogy is still a modern narrative. This, despite critical pedagogy's significant attempts to accommodate postmodern concerns in the border pedagogy of Giroux, for instance, and in McLaren's adoption and development of postcolonial pedagogy in order to respond more effectively to globalization and multiculturalism. The latter is welcomed by both authors, seeing the project

as an attempt by pedagogists to decenter ‘the Eurocentric, imperialistic and racist discourse of modernity’ (p. 216) that has bogged down the project from achieving its critical-emancipatory aims. Nonetheless, while they see Critical pedagogy as ‘the most systematic commentary and reformulation of the contemporary educational situation,’ Usher and Edwards also sympathize with critics who have pointed out, among others that: 1) the project always and already musters and redirects diversity and plurality under a masterful, pre-defined universalized concept of radical democracy, indicated for instance in practices such as privileging rationality, logic, and the ability to articulate (what counts as the voice of the oppressed); 2) the empowerment advocated is ‘co-implicated with liberal individualism’ favoring an ontology of ‘the individual as an agent of all social phenomena, signification and knowledge production’ (pp. 218-219).

For Usher and Edwards, two of critical pedagogy’s grand claims are specifically troublesome. First, pedagogists tend to assume unreflexively that theory or arguments translate into educational practice and emancipatory goals without due regard to unequal power, and differing, even contradictory subject positions among both learners and teachers. Related to this inattention, pedagogists have also failed to consider the societal and state contexts where emancipatory education that might undermine these institutions, is supposed to take place. Second, there is a ‘paradoxical rejection of the ludic dimension of the postmodern moment’ described as that dimension ‘which foregrounds pleasure and desire’ (p. 220). Here, I take them to be referring to the way critical pedagogies claim to engage, but in reality discourage, differences, multifarious imagination and creative play by containing all these under an always and already pre-determined goal.

There have been attempts to accommodate important postmodern insights by Freire himself, but more pronounced in Giroux’s later involvements in cultural studies, so that mediation studies or studies on how media construct subjects, became an important segment of critical pedagogy. But McLaren (1999) is not completely convinced about accommodating postmodernism in critical pedagogy. He has advocated the discarding of ‘identity politics that celebrates linguistically defined positionality in language’ and which avoids ‘defining positionality in terms of state, social structures, and larger configurations of power and privilege’ (p. 32). He proposes instead a *contraband* or *renegade* pedagogy which ‘builds upon class solidarity without ignoring differences by conceiving alliances across race and gender as a set of affiliations.’ McLaren ultimately envisions a critical pedagogy that ‘overcomes its entrapment in the modernist voice but which must continue in the promotion of social justice and hope for a transformed future’ (1999:32-33).

As to whether or not critical pedagogy has attempted to recognize other cultural epistemologies that can ground critique-emancipation, Freire (1970a, 1970b) and Giroux (1994) have taken issue with the Western university’s long history of exclusion of culturally and politically subordinated groups in its commitment to transmit traditional Western culture. Giroux in particular has denounced the insidious ways by which universities have deployed multicultural and multiracial education, to

license cultural differences but only ‘to regulate and define subjects and how they might narrate themselves’ (1994: n.p.). Regarding the charge that critical pedagogy is not radical enough, Giroux would respond that if critical pedagogy is being charged as not radical enough, partly to blame are certain Western educators who have depleted Freire’s ideas to suit their colonial advocacies.

Nonetheless, critical pedagogy continues to earn criticisms even within its own ranks, instantiated by the volume *Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the environmental crisis*, coedited by Bowers and Apffel-Marglin (2005). The book features articles by the editors as well as by third world scholars and former adherents and advocates of critical pedagogy, testifying how as pedagogists in their own cultural milieu they felt as if they were strangers motivating their communities to denounce tradition. The book essentially cites two concerns overlooked by Freire and critical pedagogists: the impact of globalization on societies in the global south and the environmental crisis. The articles provide testimony to the colonialism inherent in critical pedagogy through its persistent failure to address other cultural sources of critique-emancipation. Two articles in particular express dismay about the ethnocentrism in critical pedagogy’s confinement to western sources such that the project fails to resonate with Indian and Buddhist cultural traditions, for instance. For Bowers, the humanist, individualist and progressivist discourses of critical pedagogy are no different from the same discourses that ushered in the age of industrialization, and later the age of information: the need to continually transform one’s situation, anti-traditionalism, and the veneration of unilineal progress – that every age is always better than the ones that preceded it. I tend to agree with Bower on this point, particularly because it coincides with my taking issue with the Hegelian influences upon Freire’s vision of a critical and emancipated subject.

Hegel’s concept of critique-emancipation: cultural exclusions at the root?

In this section I propose the thesis that endemic to critical pedagogy are certain ontological and epistemological presuppositions that do not only exclude Asian knowledges. These presuppositions were initially conceived with Asian knowledges as the Other to be negated and surpassed. And the current aporias faced by critical pedagogy are traceable to these exclusionary presuppositions. Literature is not wanting that have traced critical pedagogy to Hegel’s influence, more recent of which are by Blunden (2013), and Lei (2016). Freire himself has acknowledged his indebtedness to the Hegelian master-slave dialectic in describing the oppressor-oppressed complex relation of dependency and mutual production. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970b) he wrote that it would be far more comfortable for a subject to be complacent.

Doubt regarding the possible effects of *conscientização* implies a premise which the doubter does not always make explicit: It is better for the victims of injustice not to recognize themselves as such. In fact,

however, *conscientização* does not lead men to “destructive fanaticism.” On the contrary, by making it possible for men to enter the historical process as responsible Subjects, *conscientização* enrolls them in the search for self-affirmation and thus avoids fanaticism (Freire 1974:20).

Fanaticism is when an individual prefers the comforts of security from the fear of freedom which he prefers to the risks of liberty. Freire then proceeds to quote from the Hegel:

It is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; . . . the individual who has not staked his life may, no doubt, be recognized as a Person; but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, 1967: 233, in Freire 1974: 20).

It is clear from this passage that for Freire freedom or emancipation does not flow automatically from self-realization that one must be free. It must be worked towards, and laboriously, due to the obfuscations of a false consciousness wherein the oppressed has already internalized the image of the oppressor. Freire continued:

The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility. Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion (Freire, 1974: 31).

In Hegel, the master and slave are tendencies both located in the individual subject. But while recognition of the necessity of mastery, through subsuming oneself to morality or the state, results in freedom, for Freire, emancipation as stated in the above passage, is to be acquired by conquest. To reiterate this further, Freire wrote:

This solution cannot be achieved in idealistic terms. In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. This perception is necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberation; it must become the motivating force for liberating action. Nor does the discovery by the oppressed that they exist in dialectical relationship to the oppressor, as his antithesis – that without them the oppressor could not exist – in itself constitute liberation, The oppressed can overcome the contradiction in which they are caught only when this perception enlists them in the struggle to free themselves (1974: 34).

The Freirean concept of freedom which I have taken so far to be identical with emancipation, clearly re-echoes Hegel's notion of freedom in *Philosophy of History*. Here, freedom is the only condition by which spirit will thrive. Just as spirit can only have 'self-contained existence', so also can freedom:

For if I am dependent, my being is referred to something else which I am not; I cannot exist independently of something external. I am free, on the contrary, when my existence depends upon myself.' 'Self-contained existence . . . now this is freedom exactly' (p. 167). It means *self-consciousness* or *consciousness of one's own being*. Freedom, furthermore can be understood in terms of what it is not. This is the freedom of the Oriental despot—caprice, ferocity, brutal recklessness of passion or a mildness and tameness of the desires (p. 167).

It is apparent that Hegel reduced the East into a prop – as the site of the rising sun, which was only necessary as preparatory, but now surpassed, to the full flowering of the West: 'The History of the World travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History, Asia the beginning (1991: 213). In his *Philosophy of History*, (1900, rep. 1991), Hegel conceived of world history in terms of the Enlightenment notion of progress. History is the gradual evolution of spirit, whereby initially it is trapped or immersed in nature. The spirit's transcendence of its immersion in nature and its full flowering is brought about by human beings who in their rationality, individual subjectivity and most of all, freedom, effect the development of spirit. Hegel believed that the development of spirit followed a geographical path, from Asia, to Greece, to Rome, and finally to Germany, corresponding to childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age respectively. With this unilinear path of progress, Asia, particularly China and India were seen by Hegel as the arena of the Beginning. The Orient inhabits the realm of matter, gravity is its operating principle. This explains why they are stagnant and are lacking in history –an indication of brute existence lacking in any reflection/philosophy whatsoever. The West is the arena of the gradual unfolding of the Spirit, and its operating principle is freedom. It is here where individuals by choosing to subsume themselves under morality and the state, aided by speculative philosophy, transcend matter and create the true illuminating light. The great religions and lifeways of China (Confucianism, Taoism) and India (Hinduism and Buddhism), do not encourage individuality enveloping the individual either under an overarching power of the despot, or in an illusory dreamlike state.

More cautious scholars have recommended taking these declarations of Hegel within contexts such as the search for order and unity in a political institution such as the state which was a preoccupation of scholars in Hegel's era (Blunden 2013). Halbfass (2003), and Kim (1978), for their part attributed Hegel's biases both to ignorance and the scarcity of Asian texts that were clearly not available during his time. Nonetheless both Halbfass and Kim considered Hegel's critiques as quite harsh. Kim claimed Hegel had a well-developed philosophy at the time he delivered these lectures and tended to judge Asian thought systems based on his own. Halbfass is more direct. He described Hegel as 'one of the most deliberately European

thinkers' (p. 155), and was the 'prototype of a Westerner, who saw Western thought as the measure of all things' (p. 141). Halbfass further noted Hegel's history was primarily designed to deal with the history of European thought, spurred by a singular world historical process by which the World Spirit gradually unfolds then reaches culmination. This system, for Halbfass, leaves 'no room for the assumption of other, parallel streams of historical development' (2003:145).

My view on this matter is similar to that expressed by feminist scholars back when they were boldly unearthing deep androcentric biases in the great works of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant males (WASPM). My humble contribution to this direction was my dissertation in 1994, "Knowledges of women: Feminist epistemologies from liberal to postmodern feminism." Just as misogynist pronouncements are not only incidental but rather central to a philosopher's overall thought system, racist pronouncements too, severely limit the truth and efficacy of a text. Unfortunately this fatal combination of orientalism and eurocentrism may have infected other forms of Hegelian-inspired critique and the urgent task is for current scholarship to recognize and overcome it.

2.0 Jamming the Reproduction of Desire

Core ontological and ethico-epistemological assumptions with focus on why Asian wisdom have been described traditionally as Asian ways of liberation can now be identified. Unless cited otherwise the sources I will be using in this part are Wing-tsit Chan's *Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy* (1963) abbreviated as SCP, Radhakrishnan & Moore's *Sourcebook of Indian Philosophy* (1957) abbreviated as SIP, and Le Guin's gender-sensitive translation of *Tao Te Ching* abbreviated as TTC. The spiritual and intellectual crises in the West in the 1970s and 1980s spawned an exciting array of literature on Eastern ways of liberation as alternatives. I engage some of these texts again as I did in 1979 in my Master's thesis: "The Taoist Concept of Freedom," because their insights are perennial.

Ignorance/*maya* not sin, is the human condition

In Asian liberationist wisdom, ignorance, not sin is the human condition. Pojman (2006: 88-90; 94) noted this for Hinduism, which is unlike Christianity and Judaism where sin is the human condition. In Vedanta Hinduism ignorance or *maya* keeps human beings caught in the cycle of *karma* – the law of birth and death and rebirth, and it is wisdom alone that keeps human beings from being caught in this cycle (*Bhagavadgita* in SIP p. 119; *Katha Upanisad* in SIP, p. 46). In Buddhism, ignorance is the false belief that we are wholes having parts rather than just those parts. Thus in the conversation between Nagasena and King Milinda, the former urges the latter that in truth there are only names such as *chariot, house, elephants, horses, trees, and I, or myself*, but there are no entities designated by them, and 'the insight of him who perceives this is called knowledge of the truth' (SIP pp. 280-286). In Taoism it is the imposition of the human way over the self-so-ness of things, as in for example, amputating what is by nature long

and lengthening what is by nature short: People follow earth/earth follows heaven/ heaven follows the Way, the Way follows what is (TTC p. 35).

Generally what should be known is differently named in the three knowledge systems, but we can adopt the term 'eternal'. The eternal cannot be known by conventional means of knowing or learning, whether through speech, mind, sight, or the sense organs (Katha SIP p. 49). In its wholeness, it has no parts, thus it can only be known by meditation, austerity of work, and a purified nature (*Mundaka* SIP p. 54).

What are the implications of this view? First, is the urgency of knowledge. Knowledge of the One truth is urgent, because ignorance of it causes suffering. The need to know the eternal is not out of just the desire to know, or that intellectual excellence is a good in itself, but out of urgency. From *Tao Te Ching*: 'Not to know the eternal is to act blindly to result in disaster' (SCP p. 147). The motivation of knowledge is thus not aesthetic, that is knowledge is sought not for knowledge's sake, but for a practical purpose which is to serve as guide in life.

Second, this knowledge is general and holistic, not this or that specialized knowledge. It is one knowledge that once you know it, all else emanate from it, thus one needs to trim down too much unnecessary learning: 'The farther you go, the less you know. So the wise soul doesn't go, but knows; doesn't look but sees; doesn't do but gets it done (TTC p. 62). But this derivation of everything from just one principle does not proceed in algorithmic fashion, such that metaphors employed are not syllogisms or scales but those that connote soft rationality: 'hardness and stiffness go with death; tenderness, softness, go with life (TTC p. 11). In contrast to specular, alimentary and even rape metaphors of knowledge in Western epistemology, such as elucidation, reflection, comprehension, assimilation, digestion, or intellectual indigestion, examination, investigation (see Paredes-Canilao 2006), we find more wholesome metaphors in Asian liberatory texts such as water: 'true goodness is like water. . .It doesn't compete' (TTC p. 11), the feminine: 'The valley spirit never dies. Call it the mystery, the woman. The mystery, the Door of the Woman, is the root of earth and heaven' (TTC p. 8), the infant: 'Being full of power is like being a baby (TTC p. 70).

Third, it is experiential wisdom. It is knowledge, not of the word, but of the way. Put in another way, this wisdom is not something that one *has*, but something that one *does*, (Danto speaking of philosophy in *What philosophy is*, 1968); it is a *knowing-how*, rather than a *knowing-that* (Ryle's counterdiscourse to Cartesian intellectualist knowledge in *The Concept of Mind* 1949).

Fourth, it is an epistemology based on a realist ontology. The truth known is out there, and not a product of one's fantasy or imagination. It is, so to speak, a non-human reality: 'Heaven and earth aren't humane. To them the ten thousand things are straw dogs. (Le Guin interprets not humane as not human, p. 8). Thus Asian liberatory texts can engender critical pedagogies that challenge the mystifications of truth in Western idealistic philosophies in the latter's disregard of a nonhuman or non-mental reality.

The singularity of knowledge and emancipation as one, not two events

Knowing and transformation constitute one, not two separate events. One who knows is immediately emancipated. The realization that one has so far been living in *maya* or illusion is in itself the emancipation from the illusion, just as the fear of what is deemed a snake is immediately banished by the realization that it is only a rope (Danto 1972: 28-29). Here the will which is supposed to be an intermediary between consciousness and action is collapsed. The best illustration of the fusion of knowledge and action into one is that Zen anecdote about two Zen monks walking down a muddy road on a rainy day. They came upon a distraught lady in immaculate kimono who couldn't cross the road. Immediately, one of the monks carried the lady in his arms to the other side of the road. The other monk was disturbed by this gesture, but did not speak until sometime. Finally he asked why the other monk carried the lady when it is stated in the rules that monks ought to avoid women, to which the helpful monk answered: "I left the lady there, but you are still carrying her" (Reps 1957:28).

Taoist works are full of actual examples of whole persons executing perfectly their art or their craft, because there is no intermediary, the will, which derails smooth action. Note also the absence of hypocrisy or the phenomenon of thinking one thing and doing another in these models. In the *Chuang Tzu* we marvel at stories of artists, lute players, smelters, drunken persons who are not sober and so are all the more safe from danger, wheelwrights, butchers, cooks, swimmers, archers, boaters, fisher folk, who effortlessly act unhampered by a transcendental self. The closest description from Western philosophy is Ryle's injunction, disproving the validity of Cartesian mind-body dualism wherein executing an action intelligently does not entail two actions, thinking on one hand, and acting on the other, but simply just one action (Ryle).

What we have here is an integration of consciousness with action. Epistemology and ethics are rolled into one: 'Can you keep your soul in its body, hold fast to the one, and so learn to be whole?' (TTC p. 13). Knowledge is thus not compartmentalized from the spiritual and moral. And this is a solution to the dilemma faced by critical pedagogy on 1) how to bridge the gap between knowledge and emancipation 2) how to bridge the gap between fact and value, known also as the is-ought distinction, so much so that knowledge does not contain in itself a norm. The latter problem was noted by Fraser too, (2002) in relation to the politics of recognition, that the mere recognition of other cultures does not guarantee the moral imperative of social justice. As well, this is a demonstration of the loopholes of Hegelian transcendental will in hampering rather than facilitating action. Rather than mediation, meditation is important. It is the act of keeping still, 'sitting quietly doing nothing,' or in the words of Krishnamurti it is paying attention: 'Do you know what it means to attend, to pay attention? When you pay attention, you see things much more clearly. You hear the bird singing much more distinctly. You differentiate between various sounds' (2002: 11). Asian liberatory knowledges are tolerant of other views and are best for ecumenism. Unlike monotheistic systems, they are very compatible with the scientific worldview, such as quantum physics (Capra 1975), environmental

science, (see Hutchinson 1996; Savitsky 2003), and psychotherapy (Barrett 1956; Watts 1975). Talking about the *I Ching*, an antiquated text that heavily influenced Chinese and Japanese liberatory ways, Jung (reprinted 2003), noted:

The ancient Chinese mind contemplates the cosmos in a way comparable to that of a modern physicist, who cannot deny that his model of the world is a decidedly psychophysical structure. The microphysical event includes the observer just as much as the reality underlying the *I Ching* comprises subjective, i.e., psychic conditions in the actuality of the momentary situation (p. 7).

Rather than consciousness of a distinct separate self, the liberatory ways of the East commonly suggest freedom constitutes knowledge of one's embeddedness in a whole, be it Brahman, or the Tao.

Knowledge is emancipation not from the world but from the grasping self

The notion of the free, rationally-choosing and autonomous subject that is idealized in the Hegelian system and mainstream education is diametrically opposed to the decentered self, found in the Asian ways of wisdom. But this decentered self is not Derrida's deconstructed self, reduced to a free-floating signifier either, centered in the *tao* or the *Brahman*: 'When are liberated all/ The desires that lodge in one's heart/ Then a mortal becomes immortal/ Therein he reaches *Brahman!* (*Katha* SIP p. 50). 'As the flowing rivers in the ocean/ Disappear, quitting name and form/ So the knower, being liberated from name and form/ Goes unto the Heavenly Person, higher than the high (*Mundaka* SIP p. 55). I like to note that the desire for a decentered self is not out of sadomasochistic desire of the abyss, but out of urgency: 'Not to know the eternal is to act blindly to result in disaster' (SCP p. 147).

This decentering is effected by the blowing out (*nibbana*) of the self which is seen as the root cause of desire. The self in union with the bigger reality performs 'selfless' (meaning, 'desire-less') action: 'To bear and not to own; to act and not to lay claim; to do the work and let it go: for just letting it go is what makes it stay' (TTC p. 5); 'Knowing other people is intelligence, knowing yourself is wisdom; Overcoming others takes strength, overcoming your self takes greatness' (TTC p. 33). In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krsna thus instructs Arjuna to just act without any regard for consequences: 'The self in union with the Divine attain to peace well-founded, by abandoning attachment to the fruits of works, but he whose self is not in union with the divine is impelled by desire, and is attached to the fruit of action, and is therefore bound' (SIP p. 121). 'The man who is not troubled by these. . . who remains the same in pain and pleasure, who is wise, makes himself fit for eternal life' (SIP p. 107). One who has given up desires is described as a man of stable intelligence: 'When a man puts away all the desires of his mind. . . and when his spirit is content in itself, then is he called stable in intelligence' (SIP p. 110). The (wo)man who draws the senses away from

objects of sense is compared to a tortoise who has drawn their limbs into their shell, and thus their 'intelligence is firmly set' in wisdom (SIP p. 111).

Do Asian liberatory texts inspire quietism, nonresistance and passivity?

It's time to dispel the notions that Asian liberatory knowledge advocate quietism, and passivity. In Taoism the ideal is *wu-wei*, or non-action. But it does not mean the cessation of any action whatsoever, but simply the not doing of any action contrary to the nature of things. Neither is *wu-wei* or desireless action to be interpreted as a renunciation of the world, or total passivity. The English translation as 'taking no action,' or 'doing nothing' is 'highly misleading.' What *wu-wei* amounts to in Chinese philosophy is, action that emulates the no-action way of nature. The Confucian *wei-wu-wei* would be more apt which means active inaction: 'Clearly then, *wu-wei* does not translate into a lack of drive and determination. On the contrary, it entails the utmost determination to embrace the *tao*, and requires the constant drive to improve oneself by following the way of nature' (A.T. Nuyen 1999: 77).

Not just capitalism, but mainstream economics, is premised on an ontology that conceives of human beings as relentlessly unsatisfied individuals having infinite needs. Asian wisdom would declare this ontology unnatural and artificial. But it has become reified, assuming a life of its own, mutating into unrecognizable forms. The most effective way to combat a threat that is ubiquitous and irresistible is to work inwards by banishing or renouncing the desiring self. It is a wisdom that was true a few thousand years ago and is still true today. *Wu-wei* connotes the idea of action harmonizing with and not against nature, thus non-violence is integral to the concept.

In this connection, neither is commerce for material well-being to be necessarily renounced. Thus A.T. Nuyen (1999: 74) noted that capitalism is not new to China, in the sense that Quesnay, founder of physiocratic economics, may have been influenced by the concept of the *tao* of Confucius which is akin to the concept in Taoism. Literally physiocracy means rule of nature. For Quesnay economical laws reflected the laws of nature, and they should be left alone, and should not be meddled with. In economics, we should just let nature be. Thus the Chinese notion of *wu-wei* (literally, no-action), which is close to the notion of *laissez faire*. However analyses like Nuyen's have to consider certain complications. First, *laissez faire* captured in the Tao, is to let nature, not the market alone. The market with its connotations of greed and grasping egos may not have been what Confucius, Lao Tzu or Chuang Tzu had in mind when they talked of the Tao. Second there is a big difference between the ancient Chinese concept of natural law which includes chance, and coincidences from Newtonian natural law as conceived in Physiocracy.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita* it is made clear: 'Not by abstention from work does a man attain freedom from action; nor by mere renunciation does he attain to is perfection.' Reading further: 'Do thou thine allotted work, for action is better than inaction; even the maintenance of thy physical life

cannot be effected without action.’ The idea is to become free from all attachment – he should have no interest whatever to gain by the actions that he has done: ‘Therefore without attachment, perform always the work that has to be done, for man attains to the highest by doing work without attachment’ (SIP pp. 112-114). The Asian liberatory ways all agree on the proper definition of this commonly controversial concept. Oftentimes, *wu-wei* simply means doing the daily activities essential to life, if only to emphasize that Taoists do not call for a renunciation of life. Likewise, the Buddha’s enlightenment came at that moment that he felt satisfaction after partaking of a meal, which broke his long fast. Thus the most popular Zen technique of enlightenment is: ‘When hungry, eat; when weary, sleep’ (Suzuki in Barrett 1956: 207).

Relatedly, Gandhi’s *satyagraha*, literally, ‘holding on to truth’, is known today as the ‘world’s first successful nonviolent movement for independence from colonial rule.’ Tharoor et al., (2006: 32) noted that Gandhi did not approve of the English translation of *satyagraha* into ‘passive resistance,’ because nonviolent resistance precisely requires activism not passivity. One has to be ‘prepared actively to suffer for truth.’ Instead, Gandhi preferred to use the terms ‘truth force,’ ‘love force,’ or ‘soul force.’

The notion of freedom is simply *wu-wei* – freedom with nature, not freedom from nature. Western freedom is anchored on autonomy of the will, whereas freedom based on Asian lifeways requires the collapse of the will (See Paredes-Canilao, 1985). Again it is worth reiterating, this is how the gap in critical pedagogy between conscientization and emancipation is not a problem in Asian liberationist texts. For as long as the self is preserved, or is needed to execute and relish its freedom, the grasping continues. Gandhi once remarked, ‘there is enough for everyone’s need but not for everyone’s greed’ (in Hutchinson 1998:17). Asian liberationist wisdom are envisioned to be foundational to pedagogies of the future (See Dian 2003; Hutchinson 1998; Inayatullah 2003; Savitsky 2003). A critical recovery of Asian liberatory wisdom for critical pedagogy effectively challenges schools as sites of the reproduction of desire. It is a return to the roots so as to achieve peace. Poem 16: ‘Be completely empty. Be perfectly serene’. The return to the root is peace: ‘to accept what must be, to know what endures. In that knowledge, is wisdom. Without it, ruin, disorder’ (TTC p. 22).

Asian liberatory wisdom and postcolonial counterdiscourses to educational imperialism

To denounce educational cultural imperialism in education, the favored interrogating line has been “Whose knowledge, whose culture?” Not only has this been asked about fields prone to cultural relativism, such as literature or politics, but even about sacrosanct knowledges avowed to be universal, culturally neutral and objective such as science and mathematics. Here is how I augment Bishop’s analysis of mathematics as a secret weapon of cultural imperialism with Asian wisdom at the backdrop.

A good model of cultural critique of Western cultural imperialism in education can be drawn from Alan Bishop’s research, *Western mathematics*

as a secret weapon of cultural imperialism (1989/2003). Here Bishop asked the ticklish question, 'what values do we teach when we teach mathematics? We can use Bishop's study as a blueprint for cultural critique in knowledge, but the critique becomes more efficacious against the backdrop of indigenous value systems embedded in indigenous knowledge. The steps would be: First, a knowledge claiming universality and value-neutrality is scrutinized. Second, this knowledge is exposed as having only the pretensions of universality and value-neutrality by bringing into view the culturally specific values and biases it has. In the case of mathematics claiming to be objective and universal the Western cultural values presupposed by it are objectism - the value of treating things as knowable and manipulable by a separate subject knower, atomism - the value of treating things as individuated, separable, and reducible to basic components that when mechanically added would constitute wholes, rationality - the value given to human reason as the sole agent of human progress and perfection, and prediction and control - the value of pursuing knowledge for the purpose of coming up with laws and regularities that will make human dominance over nature more efficient and effective. I want to add, it is not rationality per se that is associated with Western culture, but hard or algorithmic rationality. There is today a vast literature (known generically as ethnomathematics), noting how nonwestern numeracy concepts and skills are really different from Western mathematics due to basic differences in ontological, epistemological and ethical assumptions. For instances, consider: cultures where everything is interconnected thus things cannot be counted as separable from each other; cultures where subject is not separable from object or where all knowledge is observer-related, or where subjective or emotive knowledge is more valued than objective or strictly rational knowledge; cultures where the value is for human beings to adapt themselves to the world, rather than to adapt the world to themselves; cultures which view reality as too complex and too dynamic to be reducible to algorithms and exact knowledge.

Lastly, the third step of cultural critique of knowledge is to point out that there are or were equally valid knowledges marginalized by the rise into dominance of this allegedly universal knowledge. In the case of mathematics, Bishop notes how anthropologists are saying mathematical systems are as many as languages but the rise into dominance of only one is a result of power-knowledge manipulations. Colonial rule propagated Western ways of counting wherever it went, as the one, true, and valid mathematics through a colonial-ordained administration, commerce, and education. One can point out as well how the dominant knowledge has appropriated, but failed to acknowledge nonwestern contributions.

Disputing the Oriental despot? Asian liberatory wisdom and conscientization of leaders from below

All these ontological, epistemological and ethical precepts embodied in Asian liberatory wisdom were in fact instructions for leaders from butchers, archers, wheelwrights, charioteers, or the common (wo)man. They constituted, if you like, a pedagogy for the (potential) oppressor. One of the

orientalist images concocted by the Western mind is the “Oriental despot” (Steadman, 1969; Said, 1978), an image that has resulted from the typical Westerner looking through an ethnocentric-eurocentric lens. Aside from Steadman and Said, other scholars have argued for a more contextualized understanding of ancient Asian governments, for instance, Munro (1969) for China, and Pojman (2006) for India. There were built-in checks that would discourage despotism. One of these mechanisms according to Steadman (1969), was a class of scholars or priests who advised the King or ruler.

Indeed, basic texts of the Asian liberatory knowledges have been addressed to elites. The *Tao te Ching* is addressed to the Sage King. Out of its 81 poems, 54 specifically are directed to the Sage-King, and some to barons, princes, generals, dukes. The normal structure of the poems is a note about the state of things, ‘the Tao is such and such,’ or the ‘the world is such and such’ followed by ‘therefore, the sage . . .’ A metaphysical observation is the base of epistemological, ethical or political and social advice. The injunction is: ‘know the eternal and live by it.’ The Sage is advised to know when to stop, to rule with the least force. Thus Poem 60 states: ‘Rule a big country the way you cook a small fish’ (TTC p. 78). Leaders ought to be compassionate and loving to the ruled, to be generous, to keep to the soft, to small things, and to emptiness. Other injunctions for rulers are: to act only in such a way as it accords with the Eternal; to act by starting from the opposite of what is aimed at. Excerpts from *Tao Te Ching* were rendered by Ursula Le Guin, as: Poem 2: ‘the soul (Sage) does without doing, teaches without taking’ (p. 5); Poem 10: ‘Can you love people and run things, and do so by not doing?’ (p. 13); Poem 19: ‘Need little, want less.’ (p. 26); Poem 28: ‘knowing glory and staying modest, be the valley of the world’ (p. 38); Poem 29: ‘the wise soul keeps away from the extremes, excess, extravagance’ (p. 40); Poem 32: ‘If you know when to stop you’re in no danger’ (p. 41); Poem 33: ‘Contentment is wealth’ (p. 44); Poem 37: ‘The Way never does anything, and everything gets done,/ If those in power could hold to the Way, the ten thousand things would look after themselves’, (p. 48); Poem 40: ‘Great power, not clinging to power, has true power’ (p. 52); Poem 44: ‘All you grasp will be thrown away. All you hoard will be utterly lost’ (p. 59); Poem 49: ‘Power is goodness. . . . Power is trust’ (p. 49); Poem 51: ‘To have without possessing, do without claiming, lead without controlling; thus is mysterious power’ (p. 66); Poem 57: ‘Run the country by doing what’s expected./ Win the war by doing the unexpected./ Control the world by doing nothing’ (p. 74); Poem 67: ‘I have three treasures. . . . The first, mercy, the second, moderation, the third, modesty’ (p. 86).

The *Bhagavad-Gita* was addressed to a Prince – Arjuna, by Krsna incarnated in Arjuna’s charioteer, and it is a piece by piece advice on how the leader can execute their duty called for by the moment without regard for results: ‘To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruit; let not the fruits of action be thy motive’ (SIP, p. 110). The prince is exhorted to think of the body as clothing that must be changed when worn out, but that the eternal soul does not change. He is advised to be unattached to his action just as the seabed does not hold back the running waters above it.

The *Dhammapada* are teachings of a prince (Siddhartha) turned pauper, by avocation. His first mentor on the ways of the real world was his

manservant Channa. Consequently Siddhartha gave up his wealth and comforts in the palace to seek for the most important thing of all, which did not constitute in self-mortification, but in just doing the necessary simple things of the everyday. Simple expressions of enlightenment run throughout Zen Buddhism. Asian liberatory ways were pursued in retirement from active life. Even in Hinduism, a person is directed in the last stage to give up wealth and pursue a life of poverty. Taoism was meant to be pursued by those retiring from active social and economic involvement.

At the root of critical pedagogy, on the other hand, is the assumption held by Marx and Engels that the knowledge of an epoch is the knowledge held by the elite. Marxism is meant to be a body of knowledge addressed to the oppressed, to the workers of the world who are the vanguards of the revolution. This project is of course necessary. But it is one-sided. It has to be supplemented by an education or pedagogy of the power wielders. This one-sidedness of critical pedagogy replicates the one-sided appeal of Marx too in calling upon the proletariat or the working class as the harbingers of hope. This was a dominant critique against Marx – his overestimation of the power of the oppressed. Maybe during his time, when capitalism was not as complex and sophisticated as it is today. There has to be an active education too addressed to the power-wielders. This is a lesson learned from feminism, in the recent realization to raise consciousness and educate men to be gender sensitive and responsive.

Wei-wu-wei cannot be one-sided. It has to be practiced by all, but especially on the part of rulers, or those in power. Another significance of designing a pedagogy for leaders lies in its being an education that is duty-based, in contrast to pedagogy of the oppressed which is rights-based. The Sage-King, the warrior, for instance Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, are enjoined not to falter in their duty: ‘there exists no greater good than doing one’s duty’ (SIP p.108).

Understandably, Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed assumed that with the emancipation of the oppressed, the oppressor too will be necessarily emancipated, and this action of the oppressed is seen as ‘restorer of the humanity of both’ (1970:28). Freire also believed that the oppressed, to be truly the author of their destiny should be self-reliant in breaking their shackles and should not depend on mercies from the oppressor. Such is false generosity or false charity (1970b), which is anathema to the humanizing project of critical pedagogy. Freire wrote:

Any attempt to ‘soften’ the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this. In order to have the continued opportunity to express their ‘generosity,’ the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent front of this ‘generosity,’ which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty. That is why the dispensers of false generosity become desperate at the slightest threat to its source (p.29).

But a pedagogy for leaders, is not assuming false generosity. Admittedly it is a wager in the same sense that educating indeterminate subject positions

that they might take action to emancipate themselves, is a wager. Conscientizing the elite whether economic, social or cultural, to practice sageliness within and kingliness without, is hoped to gain mileage not only in equalizing opportunities now, but for intergenerational equity as well.

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