

ARTICLES

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE IDEAS OF GRAMSCI AND FREIRE FROM AN ADULT EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article deals with ideas expressed by Antonio Gramsci (1891 - 1937) and Paulo Freire (b. 1927), which are of relevance to adult education. Both are widely regarded as key figures who can provide some of the underpinnings for a theory of radical adult education. The article therefore consists of a comparative analysis of these ideas to suggest a framework for a possible future synthesis of their work.

Résumé

Cet article rend compte des idées exprimées par Antonio Gramsci (1891 - 1937) et Paulo Freire (1927 -) lesquelles sont particulièrement pertinentes en éducation des adultes. Ces deux auteurs sont largement considérés dans la mesure où ils proposent quelques éléments fondamentaux pour une théorie radicale en éducation des adultes. En conséquence, cet article offre une analyse comparative de ces idées pouvant conduire à un grille d'analyse propre à une synthèse ultérieure de leurs travaux.

Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire are widely regarded as two key figures who can provide some of the underpinnings for a theory of radical adult education. It is often argued that there exist affinities between the two (cf., Allman 1988, 1994; Connelly 1992; Leonard 1993; Ransome 1992). In this article,¹ I attempt a "side by side" comparative analysis of their ideas relevant to adult education, to suggest a framework for a synthesis of their work. The article will limit itself to a contextualization of the two writers' works and to a critical exposition of their ideas, bringing out the convergences and contrasts.

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CONTEXTUAL COMPARISONS

BIOGRAPHICAL

Prior to engaging in a comparative analysis of the two writers' ideas relevant to adult education, one would do well to locate them biographically and contextually. Over twenty years separate the work of Gramsci from that of Freire. Gramsci delivered his first public addresses in 1916 and was still at work on the *Prison Notebooks (Quaderni del Carcere)* in 1936, the penultimate year of his life (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971; Festa 1976). Freire, for his part, is believed to have first expressed his thoughts on the philosophy of education in 1959 (Shaull 1970). Despite the gap in time, there seem to be biographical similarities. Both are not of humble origin. Fiori, quoting Gramsci's brother, Gennaro, indicates that their father's family "was typical of the better-off southern class that supplies the state bureaucracy with

its middle-rank officials" (1970, 10). As for his mother's family, they are described as having been "middling folk, quite nicely off by the standards of our villages" (*ibid.*). Freire, the son of a French immigrant, claims to have come from a bourgeois family (Shaul 1970). Both, however, fell on hard times during their childhood, Gramsci's father having been arrested on charges of petty embezzlement and the Freire family having suffered from the effects of The Great Depression. This had an adverse effect on their initial schooling and exposed them, at an early stage in their life, to the concrete, material realities of poverty and, in Gramsci's case, work (Shaul 1970; Fiori 1970). Furthermore, the formative experiences to which both writers were exposed occurred in areas characterized by a general impoverishment and industrial underdevelopment, namely Sardinia and Recife. Both eventually became socially and politically active in industrial metropolitan centers (Turin and Sao Paulo), although at different stages in their lives. Gramsci left Sardinia for Turin during his youth while Freire became engaged as Education Secretary in Sao Paulo well into his sixties (regarding this experience, see Freire 1991, 1993; Torres 1993, 1994; Torres and Freire, 1994).

These biographical parallels having been underlined (for good biographical accounts, see Taylor 1993; Gerhardt 1994), it would be interesting to explore whether Gramsci's ideas contributed to Freire's formation as political pedagogue and theorist. Does Gramsci figure in Freire's intellectual biography? Freire is on record as having acknowledged Gramsci as a writer who influenced him profoundly "with his keen insights into other cultures" (Freire 1985, 182). The ideas of Antonio Gramsci figure prominently in his conversational books (*cf.*, Freire and Faundez 1989; Horton and Freire 1990). Furthermore, when discussing his formative years, Freire (Horton and Freire 1990) mentions Gramsci, together with Fanon, Memmi, and Vygotsky as an important source of influence on him. Freire was introduced to Gramsci's writings by Marcela Gajardo in 1968. He was in Chile at the time.

Having mentioned this important piece of biographical data, communicated to Carlos Torres by Freire himself,² one ought to underline that Freire's work is very much part of the tradition of popular education in Latin America which, according to LaBelle, "draws primarily from alternative Humanist Marxist interpretations offered by individuals like Antonio Gramsci" (1986, 47). One should also bear in mind the great reception which Gramsci's work had in Latin America and its influence on the New Left there, a point stressed by Faundez (Freire and Faundez 1989). The foregoing provides ample evidence of a direct influence by Gramsci on Freire.

HISTORICAL

Both Gramsci and Freire were politically and/or pedagogically active in situations characterized by an intense class struggle and the mobilization of popular forces. Turin, the city where Gramsci was active, was "the Italian Petrograd" (Adamson 1980, 50). Its highly militant proletariat was involved in a series of insurrections. Galvanized by the news of the October Revolution in Russia, many working class leaders believed that a similar event was about to take place in Turin.

The same applies to the situation in Latin America, where the staging of a successful revolution in the region (the Cuban Revolution) must have generated enthusiasm which served as a catalyst for the advancement of popular forces (Torres 1993). This is true of Brazil in the late fifties and early sixties. Trade unions, peasant leagues and worker organizations, besides radical religious movements (DeKadt 1970; Jarvis 1987; Elias 1994), asserted their presence when the country was governed by the populist administration of Joao Goulart who partly sought to create his power base among the peasants. Goulart sought to empower the latter by sponsoring a literacy program in the impoverished *Nord-este*, coordinated by Freire, which would have enabled them to vote (Ireland 1987; Torres 1990).

In both instances, however, the entire process of mass popular mobilization was brought to an abrupt end by right wing takeovers. In Italy's case, it was Mussolini's "march" on Rome in 1922 which led to the fascist seizure of power and Gramsci's eventual arrest. In the case of Brazil, it was the military coup which toppled the Goulart government and eventually led to Freire's banishment from his homeland.

CONTEXTUAL FOCUS

These biographical experiences may serve to explain some of the respective choices of focus in Gramsci's and Freire's writings. Gramsci focused his attention, for the most part, on Western capitalist society which he regarded as being characterized by the presence of an advanced proletariat and a well developed *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (civil society).³ This is the situation he encountered in Turin, where he became active as both journalist and political activist, after having been attracted to the city by means of a university scholarship. Perhaps one reason why he focused, for revolutionary purposes, primarily on the urban industrial proletariat is that, "the Turin proletariat, by a whole series of actions, had shown that they had reached a high level of maturity and capacity" (Gramsci 1957, 40). It was very militant and enjoyed a tradition of organization. It made its presence strongly felt in a situation which led many to believe that a revolution was imminent. In contrast, Gramsci regarded southern Italy as "an area of extreme social disintegration" (1957, 42). He must have seen less revolutionary potential in the peasants since he argues that they had "no cohesion among themselves" (*ibid.*).

Freire devoted his attention, at least in his better known works, to areas inhabited by peasants who were either landless or were experiencing the first stages of their country's post-revolutionary or post-independence period, and marginal urban dwellers, with a recent peasant past, living on the periphery of the cities (Torres 1993). Once again, this focus is no doubt influenced by the particular context in which he worked. Freire worked in northeastern Brazil and, following his banishment and a short stay in Bolivia, he went to Chile where he worked with peasants in the context of the Agrarian Reform. This presents an interesting contextual contrast with Gramsci's work, although, in his later "talking books" (*cf.*, Shor and Freire 1987; Horton and Freire 1990), Freire, perhaps drawing on his later experiences in the U.S. and Europe, focuses on a much larger context, including industrially developed areas. This renders the comparison with Gramsci more direct.

What seems to be common to the context in which Gramsci worked and, at least, one of the contexts for Freire's literacy activities, namely the Chilean context, is that the initiatives were being carried out in situations characterized by economic and social transformation. Piedmont was going through a process of rapid industrialization. A change in the mode of production was taking place. In Chile, under the Christian Democrat government of Eduardo Frei, an attempt was being made to change the social relations of Agrarian production. Luria (1976) proposed, through his research in Central Asia, that consciousness changes when there is a transformation in the basic forms of social life (cf., Youngman 1986). The consideration which emerges and seems to be pertinent also to Gramsci's context is that, perhaps, radical adult education initiatives intended to alter the level of consciousness and aimed towards social transformation are most likely to prove effective in a situation characterized by a change in the mode of production. It would also be relevant to point out that, in Freire's case, we are dealing with the context of an adult literacy program and Luria considers literacy acquisition, apart from a change in the mode of production, as capable of effecting changes in the people's consciousness (*ibid.*).

It would be amiss to distinguish between the respective contexts in terms of such "neat" and problematic categories as "First" and "Third" world or "Developed" and "Underdeveloped" countries. With the exception of the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, the contexts of Gramsci's and Freire's writings are much more complex than any of these divisions would suggest. The biographical parallels, drawn earlier, indicate the coexistence of industrially developed regions alongside industrially underdeveloped ones, a situation which is, after all, pervasive in the Capitalist mode of production.

Gramsci's Italy and Freire's Brazil are characterized by a state of internal dependency or, to use Gramsci's term, "internal colonialism." In Brazil, a national indigenous bourgeoisie, located in the southeast area, is engaged in an alliance with the rural landowning oligarchy in the northeast. As a result of the alliance, the bourgeoisie established its control over the rest of the country and "the expansion of industry in the southeast of Brazil was premised both politically and economically, upon the stagnation of the northeast" (Ireland 1987, 12). As Ireland (1987) explains, the pact which constituted the basis of the alliance guaranteed the perpetuation of preestablished forms of landownership. Land, therefore, remained in the possession of the rural oligarchies, thus reinforcing the semifeudal relations which peasants had to accept in order to gain access to it. Southern Brazil had no interest in the industrial development of the northeast and sought to stave off any competition from that region. "It was interested, however, in securing a domestic 'colonial' consumer market for its manufactured goods" (*ibid.*, 13). Likewise, by virtue of an alliance with the landowners in the rural Italian south, a situation for which Gramsci held the southern intelligentsia to be partly responsible (Nairn 1982), the industrial bourgeoisie in the north exercised economic and political control over the rest of the Italian peninsula (Ireland 1987). In Gramsci's words, "the north concretely was an 'octopus' which enriched itself at the expense of the south, and that its economic-industrial increment was in direct proportion to the impoverishment of the economy and agriculture of the south" (Gramsci in Ireland 1987, 11).

PARALLELS

THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION

Having contextualized Gramsci's and Freire's work, I now set about comparing their ideas, starting with an exposition of what I regard as parallel views. Both stress the political nature of adult education. For Gramsci, every relationship of hegemony is essentially an educational relationship (Torres 1985). Hegemony is the key concept in Gramsci's social theory, a concept he employed with a view to describing how the domination of one class over another is achieved by a combination of political and ideological means (Abercrombie et al. 1984). For Freire, educating is an eminently political act: "it is impossible to deny, except intentionally or by innocence the political aspect of education" (Freire 1976, 70).

Because of his political involvement and leadership, Gramsci's writings reflect a concern with tactics and strategies intended to enable the proletariat to gain access to power. They are supported by a revolutionary theory which is, for the most part, explicit, though at times cryptic (e.g., *Quaderni del Carcere*). Despite the fact that a lot of his writings are scattered and some are fragmentary, a Gramscian theory of revolutionary strategy can be put together.

It has often been argued (e.g., Youngman 1986), that Freire's ideas are not supported by an explicit revolutionary theory. I would argue, however, that Freire's writings are underpinned by the coexistence of Christian and Marxist ideals (cf., Elias 1994), very much the kind of coexistence that informs Liberation Theology which constitutes the basis of a very important politico-religious social movement. This movement played a very important role in the Nicaraguan revolution and can spread itself not only across but also beyond the Latin American context. Its vision is a revolutionary one which emphasizes an ongoing struggle against all forms of oppression and social injustice with a view to realizing the Kingdom of God on earth (Giroux 1988). The respective ideas of the two writers are therefore informed by an overarching vision of social transformation—a transformation of society into one devoid of all forms of structural and symbolic violence.

CIVIL SOCIETY

The institutions which, for Gramsci, play an important part in exercising this educational, hegemonic relationship are those that constitute "civil society." It is these institutions which, for Gramsci, provide the terrain wherein the contest for power takes place. They are conceived of as an outer ditch that helps prop up the State which, in Gramsci's view, cannot be conquered by a frontal attack, what he calls a "war of manoeuvre." On the contrary, one has to engage, according to Gramsci, in a "war of position," an ideological war waged in and across the entire complex of "civil society" (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971, 238). Adult education constitutes an important sphere of "civil society" and is therefore a site of struggle. It can serve to consolidate as well as challenge the existing hegemony, in the latter case serving as a site of counter-hegemonic struggle. It can serve as one of the means whereby, in Gramsci's view, a revolutionary group aspiring to power must convince, both directly and indirectly, other groups and social sectors that it possesses a "weltanschauung"

which provides a viable and better proposition when compared with the prevailing one. It has to forge an alliance with these other groups and social sectors in the form of an *historic bloc*:

Every revolution has been preceded by an intense labor of criticism, by the diffusion of culture and the spread of ideas among masses of men [*sic*] who are at first resistant and think only of solving their own immediate economic and political problems for themselves who have no ties of solidarity with others in the same condition (Hoare and Matthews 1977, 12).

Using a theoretically less expansive mode of analysis, but one which focuses directly on pedagogy, Freire also sees action within the complex of "civil society" as serving either to consolidate existing power relations or to transform them. In his view, traditional pedagogical methods, characterized by a "top to bottom" communicative approach, a case of what he calls "banking education," constitute an example of those "prescriptive" social practices. He regards these practices as a hallmark of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed (Mayo 1991):

One of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed is prescription (Freire 1970a, 31).

Banking education, therefore, fosters undemocratic social relations and the inculcation of what one may regard as hegemonic ideas that support prevailing structures of power and processes of domination. For Freire, however, the transformative "cultural action" of non-formal adult education agencies, notably popular education groups/cultural circles, constitute some of the means whereby the climate for social transformation is created.

In sum, both Gramsci and Freire see educational activity, in the area of "civil society," as essential to transforming existing power relations. In Gramsci's terms, it serves to undermine the existing hegemony.

AGENCY

The foregoing indicates that both Gramsci and Freire accord an important role to agency in the context of revolutionary activity for social transformation. The two explicitly repudiate evolutionary economic determinist theories of social change. Freire sees them as being conducive to a "liberating fatalism" (Freire 1985, 179), while Gramsci regards them as theories of "grace and predestination" (Gramsci 1957, 75). In an early article, entitled "*La Rivoluzione Contro il Capitale*" ("The Revolution against *Das Kapital*"), Gramsci had argued that the Bolshevik Revolution proved Karl Marx wrong (cf., Lojacono 1977; Clark 1977; Adamson 1980).⁴ He called into question what he then had seen as the rigid canons of historical materialism. Angelo Broccoli (1972) argues that one of the reasons why the young Gramsci was attracted to the works of Benedetto Croce was simply because the Neapolitan philosopher affirmed human values in the face of the sense of acquiescence and passivity conveyed by positivism. Gramsci associated this positivism with the mechanistic and deterministic theories of the Second International and of such people as Plekhanov.

For Croce, man [*sic*] was the unique protagonist of history. His [*sic*] thought stimulates action—concrete “ethical-political” action—which is the creation of new history” (Fiori 1970a, 239).

The emphasis on voluntarism and on the cultural and spiritual basis of revolutionary activity is very strong in the writings of the young Gramsci (Morrow 1987). This emphasis is also to be found in Freire’s early writings (Youngman 1986). This particular aspect of the two writers’ work is generally regarded to have been the product of Hegelian influences. In Gramsci’s case, however, it would be more appropriate to speak in terms of “neo-Hegelianism,” the kind of idealist philosophy derived from Croce (Broccoli 1972; Morrow 1987). In Freire’s case, the Hegelianism may have partly been derived via the writings of such Christian authors as Chardin, Mounier and Neibuhr (Youngman 1986). In later writings, however, this idealist position becomes somewhat modified as both Gramsci and Freire begin to place greater emphasis on the role of economic conditions in processes of social change. In the former’s case, this may be evidenced by the development of the Factory Council Theory and Gramsci’s advocacy of the councils’ role in the education of workers (Morrow 1987). In Freire’s case, this can be seen from the 1978 book, *Pedagogy in Process*, in which popular education is analyzed against the background of the social relations of production (Youngman 1986).⁵

INTELLECTUALS

The importance of the role of human agency, within the context of social transformation, is rendered more pronounced in Gramsci’s theory concerning intellectuals. Gramsci’s “organic” intellectuals are the thinking and organizing functionaries of either a dominant class attempting to maintain its hegemony. Alternatively, they could be the thinking and organizing functionaries of a “subaltern” class striving to create an alternative hegemony. For Gramsci believes that intellectuals are not “free floating,” or “socially unattached,” in the Mannheimian sense of the terms, but are very much tied to a social group:

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function, not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971, 5).

Gramsci’s study on intellectuals was, of course, motivated by his concern for the proletariat, the class to which he was committed as activist and ideologue, and its ability to develop its own organizing and thinking functionaries. Adult educators, who help empower members of this class, would fit the category of “organic” intellectuals in the Gramscian sense.⁶ After all, Gramsci considered the task of these intellectuals, with respect to the masses, to be an “educative” one (Merrington 1977). Gramsci believed that, in so far as the working class is concerned, it would be possible to assimilate traditional intellectuals but it would be more desirable for this class to produce its own organic intellectuals. Regarding adult education, one has to refer to the popular universities, regarded by Hoare and Nowell Smith (1971) to be similar

to institutes of the Workers' Educational Association. One of the reasons why Gramsci considered the Italian popular universities as not operating in the interest of the working class was that the intellectuals involved were not organic to it and were not therefore in a position to elaborate on and render concrete the problems and principles associated with the masses in the course of their everyday life (Broccoli 1972). Gramsci, therefore, must have pinned great hopes on those proletarian workers who functioned as adult educators in the factories. These were, for Gramsci, the true organic intellectuals. They included both educators in the area of technical education and educators in the area of sociopolitical subjects (cf., Entwistle 1979). Moreover, he constantly emphasized, in his journalistic and other early writings (cf., *Scritti Giovanili*), the need for the proletariat to establish adult education centers very much on the lines of the group surrounding the journal *Clarté*, associated with such people as Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse, and the *Proletkult* movement in Russia (Broccoli 1972). They were regarded as groups or movements which enable working class people to come into contact with intellectuals whose economic interests were not different from theirs (Broccoli 1972).

There are indirect connections between Gramsci and Freire also in so far as the issue of the intellectuals is concerned. First, a lot of facilitators operating in Christian Base Communities in Brazil, where the pedagogical influence of Freire is so strong, refer to themselves as "organic intellectuals." This should not be surprising since, according to Thomas LaBelle, Gramsci is "probably the most frequently cited Marxist associated with popular education" (1986, 185), the kind of non-formal education, one may hasten to add, of which Freire is the foremost representative.

Second, Freire appears to draw on Gramsci's theory concerning intellectuals when offering advice to the revolutionary leaders of Guinea Bissau regarding adult basic education for the masses.⁷ Drawing also on Amilcar Cabral, Freire writes about the need to create a "new type of intellectual" and ponders the possibility of some of these intellectuals experiencing "their easter" and of committing "class suicide" to integrate themselves with the peasant masses (Freire 1978, 104). Despite the change in terminology, the views expressed by Freire, with respect to the development of a "new type of intellectual" in Guinea Bissau, appear to be a direct borrowing from Gramsci (ibid., 143). I would submit that Freire's advice is in line with the idea of forming intellectuals in such a way that they become organic to the class they serve. He suggests that students from the Lyceé, and therefore the country's potential intellectuals, be encouraged to participate fully in programs of popular education designed for the rural masses. He advocates a process whereby these students would teach and work with the peasants, in a manner which was reminiscent of the *Brigadistas* in the Cuban Literacy Campaign (Bhola 1984; Leiner 1986) and which anticipated the literacy workers, also called *Brigadistas*, of the Nicaraguan "Cruzada" (Arrove 1986).

One may argue that Freire regarded all facilitators engaged in his kind of pedagogy as organic intellectuals. He stressed, throughout his writings, the bond that should exist between them and the Oppressed on whose behalf they carry out their activities and with whom they teach and learn. Freire underlines the organic nature of the

relationship between facilitators and the class of people they deal with when using such words as "commitment" to (1970a, 78), and "growing" with, the group (1971, 61).

Gramsci no doubt emphasized the strong relationship which had to exist between the "organic intellectuals" of the working/peasant classes and the masses. He regarded it as incumbent on these intellectuals to *direct* the masses, tutoring that which is "positive" about their "*common sense*" with a view to transforming it into "*good sense*." Common sense is, according to Gramsci, "a conception which, even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential" (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971, 419). As Hoare and Nowell Smith put it, it constitutes "the incoherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs common to any given society" (ibid., 323). Good sense is "practical empirical common sense" (ibid., 323); that is to say, common sense devoid of its contradictory, wayward elements and rendered into a systematic and coherent view.

Gramsci acknowledges a certain superiority, on the part of the intellectuals, in their educational role with respect to the masses. This could easily have led to accusations of *vanguardism*. In my view, however, the Italian theorist attempts to provide a theoretical solution to the problem by advocating a reciprocal relationship between intellectual and masses:

The process of development is tied to a dialectic between the intellectuals and the masses. The intellectual stratum develops both quantitatively and qualitatively, but every leap forward towards a new breadth and complexity of the intellectual stratum is tied to an analogous movement on the part of the mass of the "simple," who raise themselves to higher levels of culture and at the same time extend their circle of influence toward the stratum of the specialized intellectuals, producing outstanding individuals and groups of greater or lesser importance. (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971, 334-335)

This relationship had to be "active and reciprocal," through which "every teacher is always a pupil and every pupil a teacher" (Gramsci in Merrington 1977, 169). I take this to mean that Gramsci favored a relationship between intellectuals and masses wherein the former act in a *directive* capacity with the latter, on the basis of their superior theory. At the same time, they engage with them in a reciprocal communicative manner, learning from them in the process. The issue of reciprocity is also to be found in Freire's work in which the emphasis is, for the most part, on the creation of horizontal social relations between educator and educatees. These relations are characterized by dialogue through which mutual learning between educator and educatees takes place (Freire 1970a). In his early work, the directive relationship between facilitators and learners is not stressed. The emphasis on directiveness is, however, evident in a later work, precisely the conversational book with Ira Shor, in which Freire states unequivocally that, when the educator begins the dialogue, "he or she knows a great deal, first in terms of knowledge and second in terms of the horizon that she or he wants to get to" (Shor and Freire 1987, 103). Admittedly, the concept of what the teacher knows is much more diffuse in Freire than in Gramsci, the latter writing from a Marxist perspective. As in Gramsci, Freire argues that the adult educator and learners are not on equal terms, as far as knowledge is concerned.

What is common is that there exists a recognition that it is possible, if not indispensable, for intellectuals/educators to possess a theoretical understanding which is "superior" to that of the learners.⁸ Freire argues that this directiveness should not be brought about at the expense of a reciprocal, dialogical relationship between facilitator and learners. This point calls to mind Gramsci's insistence on the existence of a reciprocal relationship between intellectual and masses.

FROM OBJECT TO SUBJECT

The insistence by both authors on the development of such a relationship is in keeping with the image of human beings that they project. It is the image of *subject*. This role is to be fulfilled in several spheres of life including the cultural circle and the workplace. One area in which Gramsci projects the image of human beings as subject is undoubtedly that of workers' education. Gramsci's Factory Council Theory should, in my view, be recognized as constituting a very significant contribution to the ongoing debate on adult education for industrial democracy. In these writings, which relate to the "Red years" in the history of Turin, Gramsci argued vehemently that the trade union, traditionally an important agent of adult education, could not organize the proletariat. He argued that it is a form of capitalist society and not a potential successor to it. It appeared to Gramsci to be a reformist institution whose leaders believe "in the perpetuity and fundamental perfections of the institutions of the democratic state [which could be modified here and there] but in fundamentals must be respected" (Hoare and Matthews 1977, 76).

Such reformist institutions could not, in Gramsci's view, promote the image of human beings as *subject*. In his view, the working class needed a vehicle which would enable workers to transcend their interests as wage earners since these interests are determined by the Capitalist wage relation. This vehicle was to be a social movement intended to engender worker control. It was the Factory Council Movement which was to provide the means whereby the proletariat could "educate itself, gather experience and acquire a responsible awareness of the duties incumbent upon classes that hold the power of the state" (Gramsci in Merrington 1977, 158). This movement was therefore intended to transform the workplace, an important site of social practice, into a site of adult learning.

The councils were to serve as the agency whereby workers experience "the unity of the industrial process [which entails] collaboration of manual workers, skilled workers, administrative employees, engineers and technical directors" (Hoare and Matthews 1977, 110). In a process inspired by Marx's notion of a "polytechnical education," knowledge of the entire production process was imparted. This knowledge was to be combined with other knowledge, provided by organic intellectuals, acting as adult educators, in the areas of economics, administration and social skills. Such an all-encompassing knowledge was meant to give workers the kind of mental control necessary to "replace management's power in the factory" (Gramsci in Mancini 1973, 5). In a later piece, written and published in *L'Ordine Nuovo*, in 1921, Gramsci argued for the transformation of trade unions through a fusion with the factory councils: "...fusion must take place naturally, spontaneously, and the unions must base themselves firmly upon the councils, becoming the means for their

centralization" (Hoare 1978, 21). A new trade organization would thus come into being which would strengthen the means whereby, from *object*, selling the commodity labor, the worker would become *subject*, controlling the entire workplace in a radically democratic manner. The issue of *control* is a crucial one in Gramsci as in Freire.

The transformation of human beings from *object* to *subject* is of central concern to Paulo Freire. In his proposed process of cultural action, the learners participate in the unveiling of their own reality, in the creation of their own knowledge. The horizontal social relations of education, which are encouraged, are intended to project the image of the learners as both educatees and educators. They "teach" the facilitators who relearn their knowledge through dialogical interaction with the learners and their fellow circle members. Ideally, both educators and educatees modify their views through the constant group interactions taking place. When taped, their conversations often become the subject of their reading texts (Freire 1973), a situation which renders them *subject* in that it confirms them as authors of their own knowledge. Furthermore, instead of being passive recipients of knowledge, they are allowed to reclaim a voice which an entire prescriptive social system appears to have denied them. Furthermore, the pedagogy of which they partake is one based on *the question* (Freire in Bruss and Macedo 1985), a pedagogical process which Freire considers indispensable for the kind of problem posing education that he advocates.

This approach would, ideally, enable the learner to acquire the decision making skills necessary for her or him to become an active participant, a "critically conscious" agent (Allman 1988), in the life of the community. The sense of participation, on which any theory of the subject is contingent, is emphasized by Freire in those sections of his publications, in the English language, in which he writes about the application of his methods in the context of agricultural production:

"When all this land belonged to one latifundio," said another man in the same conversation, "there was no reason to read and write. We weren't responsible for anything. The boss gave the orders and we obeyed. Why read and write? Now it's a different story." (Freire 1970b, 22-23)

The passage relates to Freire's experience in the literacy program which was carried out in the context of the Chilean Agrarian Reform, a case of carrying out transformative adult education activities in the context of a change in the mode of production—the sort of situation which Luria studied empirically. With the latifundium system having been done away with, it did become "a different story" for the peasants. These words were spoken during the "Asentamiento," the period of settlement intended to precede the one in which lands were to be assigned to peasants. Freire's process of a participatory adult literacy education was being used as a vehicle so that the peasants could acquire the skills to eventually run their own lands. In Gramsci, we discover a theory of the *subject* in a proposed process of adult education for a participatory industrial democracy. In Freire, one discovers a similar theory of the *subject* in a proposed process of adult education for a participatory agrarian democracy. The concern in both contexts is with the struggle for popular power and therefore a radical democracy in the field of work.

PRAXIS

Central to the process of learning advocated by the two authors, in both contexts, is the concept of *praxis*. I would submit that it is the key concept in their writings which are of relevance to adult education. The concept is central to Gramsci's thought. The term "philosophy of praxis" appears in the *Quaderni* both as a euphemism for Marxism, to circumvent the prison censor, and as a term which refers to what he regards as the central tenet of Marxism. This is the forging of a strong relationship between theory and practice, consciousness and action (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971).

Praxis lies at the heart of Freire's "Method," which entails a process of codification and decodification whereby elements related to the social reality of the adult learner are objectified in such a way that they can be perceived in a partly detached and more critical manner. For Freire, *praxis* entails transformative action and reflection:

But men's [*sic*] activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis, it is transformation of the world. (Freire 1970a, 119)

The concept is a recurring one in Freire's writings. The discussion on exile in Freire's 1989 conversational book with Antonio Faundez deals with this issue. Having been forcibly and temporarily detached from the world of their daily practical activity, the two writers claim to have reflected more critically upon it. They claim to have developed insights which, they felt, made them view their respective country and culture in a different light (cf., Freire and Faundez 1989).

With Freire, however, the concept of *praxis* is used differently in different works. In his early works, it is used in a manner reminiscent of the early Marx. The area of practical activity, on which the learner reflects, is her or his cultural and social surroundings. In *Pedagogy in Process*, however, the concept is used in a manner which recalls *Capital* (Youngman 1986). The area of reflection is the area of one's labor activity, the area of production. It is a process of *praxis* characterized by an absolute fusion between education and production (cf., Letter 11 in Freire 1978). It is this version of adult education through *praxis* which is similar to that provided by Gramsci in some of his journalistic writings and, most notably, in his Factory Council theory. The search for a strong relationship between education and production is an ongoing one in Gramsci. We can see this in his fascination with forms of art that stress the relationship between human beings and industry (he engages in a correspondence with Trotsky on Futurism). The sense of *praxis*, entailing a strong link between theory and practice, learning and productive work, is conveyed, somewhat idealistically, in the following piece:

The worker studies and works; his [*sic*] labor is study and his [*sic*] study is labor. In order to be a specialist in his [*sic*] work, the worker on average puts in the same number of years that it takes to get a specialized degree. The worker, however, carries out his [*sic*] studies in the very act of doing immediately productive work.... Having become dominant, the working class

wants manual labor and intellectual labor to be joined in the schools and thus creates a new educational tradition (Forgacs and Nowell Smith 1985, 43).

It is often argued that *praxis*, on its own, does not bring about social change. It has been a standard critique of Freire that the kind of *praxis* he advocates, at least in his earlier and most popular work, is "intellectual praxis." This is a kind of *praxis* which is capable of transforming the learners' consciousness but would not, however, lead them to engage in social action to transform their situation of oppression (LaBelle 1986). If linked with social action, however, the educational process would involve "revolutionary praxis" which is akin to what Marx calls, in the third of his *Theses on Feuerbach*, "revolutionizing practice" (Marx in Tucker 1978, 144). It is the kind of *praxis* which not only changes the people's consciousness but, being carried out in relation to a strong social movement, contributes to social and political action (LaBelle 1986). This was very much the case with the consciousness raising activities, inspired by Freire's educational thought (Arnove 1986), which took place in Nicaragua prior to Somoza's overthrow.

ADULT EDUCATION AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Gramsci's bitter final experiences with the Factory Council Movement must have led him to appreciate the importance of carrying out counter hegemonic activities not in isolation but in relation to a strong movement or alliance of movements. Reflecting, in his prison years, on the demise of the Movement, Gramsci formulated the concept of the *historic bloc* which implies a concerted counter hegemonic effort engaged in on all fronts. It is an effort which entails the support of numerous other social groups or movements fighting for similar social justice. He advocated efforts, and I would add here, adult education initiatives, which had to be carried out in the context of an alliance between the industrial proletariat and the peasants.⁹ This alliance was to be created in a spirit of "national popular" unity. *L'Unità*, the name of the PCI's (now PDS) newspaper, which he himself chose, was meant to reflect this view—a unity of all popular forces in a new *historic bloc* (Amendola 1978).

Freire too argues in favor of carrying out transformative action not in isolation but in relation to strong social movements or an alliance of movements. In his later writings, Freire has been maintaining that adult education cannot "transform society by itself" (Shor and Freire 1987, 37). He argues for a process of counter-hegemonic education carried out with the support of social movements. It is for this reason that he urges educators to "expose themselves to the greater dynamism, the greater mobility [found] inside social movements" (ibid., 39).

His ideas and work are often seen against the background of radical religious movements in Latin America (e.g., Acao Popular), most particularly the Liberation Theology Movement which, in the case of Nicaragua, played an important role, as part of a convergence of forces, in the process of political change (cf., Mayo 1993). As Education Secretary in Sao Paulo, he has recently administered educational programs, including popular education ones, in concert with mass organizations/movements.¹⁰ Furthermore, the party to which he belongs, the *Partido*

dos Trabalhadores (PT) has a history of links with grassroots movements and trade unions (Ireland 1987). It is possibly in this respect that one of Freire's greatest contributions to adult education, not only in industrially developing but also in industrially developed countries, could be found. While we do come across centers and groups who engage in progressive adult education (e.g., Highlander, the Jesuit Centre in Toronto) we must not overlook the fact that a number of progressive educators operate within settings and organizations in which the prevailing ideology is diametrically opposed to theirs (Mayo 1994b). A case in point would be that of an adult educator employed by a training agency. Social movements would, in the circumstances, provide support for people working for change in different sites of social practice, including sites of adult education practice. A lot of adult education in Europe, for instance, is of the vocational type. And it would not be amiss to state that a lot of adult learning in the US constitutes a type of technical training (ibid.).¹¹ Educators inspired by Gramsci, Freire, Horton and so forth, who engage in a "war of position," being, in Freire's own terms, tactically inside and strategically outside the system, need a movement which would sustain them in their work—a movement which would provide them with space wherein they can share ideas and engage in solidarity. Isolation could otherwise result in burn out, cynicism and, ultimately, loss of hope.

These movements would also have to sustain groups and organizations which have to modify their agendas because of their dependence for funding on different sorts of agencies. It is imperative, from the social movement's point of view, that, in their quest for funding, these organizations do not lose sight of their original goals.

Furthermore, if movements, and the organizations related to them, are to prove effective as a force for social change in the Western world, they need to explore openings in all sectors of society. This entails the creation of autonomous learning programs on the lines of the many experiences which constitute the repressed tradition of independent working class education in Britain, the US, Germany and Australia, to name but a few countries (Sharp et al. 1989). To these, I would add Italy. In fact, the *Vita Morale* clubs (working class cultural centers) of Gramsci's period in Turin, are part of this tradition. Of course, in this day and age, when it is increasingly being recognized that social class is not the only source of oppression, the foci of these independent adult learning programs will be various. In such programs, it would be useful to draw on Gramsci's concept of conjunctural analysis, involving the distinction between movements and situations which are "organic" and therefore relatively permanent and others which are "conjunctural" and therefore occasional, immediate and almost accidental (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971, 177-178). Equally useful would be Freire's consciousness raising learning processes. Such programs for change would, of course, focus on an exploration of the contradictions that are concealed by dominant ideologies (Mayo 1993) such as those of meritocracy, the free market, competitiveness, patriarchy, eurocentrism and so forth. The advocacy by Gramsci and Freire of the need to carry out transformative initiatives, within the context of a movement or alliance of movements, also marks a point of similarity between their ideas, relevant to adult education. Another point of similarity concerns the issue of language. It is to a discussion of this issue that I now turn.

LANGUAGE

There is a belief, in Freire, in the virtues of dialects, their "unwritten grammar" and their "unrecognized beauty" (Shor and Freire 1987, 72). This notwithstanding, he stresses the importance of a language which serves as a source of unity and organization for the oppressed. He advocates the use of "national popular" languages, or media of expression, in literacy campaigns. Writing about Guinea Bissau, he states that the use of the colonizer's language, Portuguese, instead of the more popular Creole, was the main reason for the disastrous outcome of the literacy program in the former Portuguese colony. Nevertheless, he underlines the importance of the Oppressed learning the standard language, as a means of survival in the struggle for power:

Finally, teachers have to say to students. Look, in spite of being beautiful, this way you speak also includes the question of power. Because of the political problem of power, you need to learn how to command the dominant language, in order for you to survive in the struggle to transform society. (ibid., 73)

So, Freire argues that teachers committed to the working class should teach this language, however with one proviso, namely that the language's political ingredients be discussed in the process. In short, the language ought to be problematized by the radical adult educator—certainly no mean task.

Like Freire, Gramsci stressed the use of language for "national popular" unity in Italy where several different dialects are spoken. He expressed such views at a time when 80 percent of Italians still spoke dialect for most purposes (Forgacs and Nowell Smith 1985). Unlike Freire, he suggests little in the way of problematization. Like Freire, however, he feels that mastery of the common standard version of the national language was necessary for the working class not to remain at the periphery of political life. Furthermore, also like Freire, he does this without underplaying the need for teachers to understand peasant speech (Entwistle 1979).

Having outlined what I consider to be points of similarity between Gramsci and Freire with respect to adult education, I shall now move on to a consideration of what I regard as crucial differences between the two.

DIFFERENCES

POLITICAL AFFILIATION

Political affiliation is probably one of the major features that renders Gramsci's biographical context different from that of Freire. This must have had some effect on the nature of their respective writings. Freire's active engagement with party politics occurred at a late stage in his life, precisely soon after his return from exile, when he joined the Workers' Party (PT). This was one of the three parties constituting Brazil's political left (daSilva and McLaren 1993, 38). His pedagogical ideas, therefore, cannot be seen against a backdrop of years of intense activity on behalf of a party or organization embracing a specific ideology. In contrast, Gramsci's involvement in party politics started during his university years in Turin. Gramsci was involved with the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) between the years 1913-1921 and the Italian

Communist Party (PCI), of which he was General Secretary from the year when it was launched 1921, till 1926, the year of his arrest.

RANGE OF ANALYSIS

Gramsci's analysis is all embracing and covers a very wide variety of areas including history, economics, education, industrial relations, art, and social and political theory. This list is by no means exhaustive. In his most popular work, Freire does not reveal a similar breadth of analysis, though this changes somewhat in his later conversational books. On the other hand, a sustained analysis of the pedagogical dynamics involved in educational situations is one of the major features of Freire's work. One finds, however, very little of it in Gramsci. There is nothing in Gramsci's writings which approximates the elaborate process, devised by Freire, whereby the central concept of *praxis* is translated into a pedagogical, consciousness raising method. Such differences are indicative of the fact that Gramsci writes from the vantage point of political analyst cum strategist while Freire writes, for the most part, from the perspectives of pedagogue and educationist.

LITERACY

In Freire's case, the processes involved relate mainly to adult basic education. One may argue, however, that there emerges from his writing around this subject a theory of knowledge and of a transformative educational practice which may be applicable to a variety of educational contexts. The focus on adult literacy, in his better known work, however, reflects, once again, Freire's involvement with the oppressed masses of Latin America. Nevertheless, it ought to be stressed that, for Freire, literacy education was merely a vehicle for a process of political conscientization and therefore not an end in itself (Mayo 1991, 1993). Freire mainly focuses on literacy education in his English language publications, prior to 1985, while Gramsci almost completely neglects this aspect of adult education in his writings. There seem to be few if any references to literacy in his scattered writings, except for those pieces in which he talks about standard languages and dialect. This is understandable, considering that his focus was on Piedmont where, according to Forgacs (1988), the illiteracy rate, in 1911, stood at eleven percent. Gramsci, however, regarded the *Southern Question* of "primordial" importance in the struggle for the creation of a workers' state characterized by "*National-Popular*" unity. Furthermore, he himself was a southerner. Given such considerations, it is quite surprising that he should overlook the issue of illiteracy, in view of the fact that the rate of illiteracy in the southern Italian regions was very high.

One explanation may be that Gramsci intended to address the issue in *The Southern Question* (cf., Ferrara and Gallo 1964) which was left incomplete because of his arrest. Another may well be that Gramsci viewed the issue of the emancipation of the southern peasants within the framework of an alliance of classes, an *historic bloc*, under the leadership of the industrial proletariat:

We favored a very realistic and not at all "magic" formula of the land for the peasants; but we wanted it to be realized inside the framework of the general revolutionary action of the two allied classes, under the leadership of the

industrial proletariat (Gramsci 1957, 30; cf., Gramsci in Ferrara and Gallo 1964, 799).

Given the primary role which he assigned to the proletariat, Gramsci must have regarded of immediate importance an adult education process capable of instilling in its members the essential qualities of sound organization, good leadership and cultural awareness. This could explain why he focused almost exclusively on a process of adult education for the northern industrial proletariat, rather than on one related to the peasants' needs. In Gramsci's view, the onus of preparation for leadership fell on this class.

In contrast, Freire's focus, in his better known English language works, is on the peasant class. Walker (1981) states that, like Mao, Freire finds greater potential for social transformation in the peasantry than in the urban proletariat. He does this, one must add, without idealizing the former as some kind of "universal class" with an historic mission to accomplish. He quotes Freire as having said:

Large sections of the oppressed form an urban proletariat, especially in the more industrialized centers of the country. Although these sectors are occasionally restive they lack revolutionary consciousness and consider themselves privileged. Manipulation with its series of deceits and fertile promises, usually finds fertile soil here. (Freire in Walker, 1981, 137-138)

"UNIVERSAL CLASS" OR POLYPHONY OF VOICES?

Gramsci's theory of social transformation gravitates around the conception of a "universal class," the proletariat. His is an essentialist view which was considered problematic by a number of writers, notably Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Though centering their theory of radical democracy on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, these two advocators of a "post-Marxist" position stress the open, unsutured nature of the social. In their view, social conflict is decentred and there is not a single group that is predestined to subsume the varying struggles, the "polyphony of voices," under a unified discourse (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 192). This explains their rejection of the idea that the working class is predestined to exercise a role of leadership. As Mouffe argues:

What is specific to the present situation is the proliferation of democratic struggles. The struggle for equality is no longer limited to the political and economic arenas. Many new rights are being defined and demanded: those of women, of homosexuals, of various regional and ethnic minorities" (1988, 100)

There are authors, however, who affirm the primacy of class in the struggle for social transformation. Norman Geras is one of them. There are many points, in Laclau and Mouffe's work, which Geras refutes. These include the notion of the decentred nature of the social, and the related sense of social indeterminacy which, according to Geras, can "support any kind of politics" (1987, 77). He also takes up issue with them for their denial of "the abolition of capitalist relations of production" (*ibid.*, 44) as the most important target for the purposes of bringing about an emancipatory social transformation. Ellen Meiksins Wood (1986)

scathingly critiques their tendency, as well as that of other adherents to "New True Socialism," not to accord priority, in the quest for socialism, to the economic sphere and therefore to the working class. One of the points that she makes in her critique of their position is that it is precisely in the economic sphere, and against the working class, that the New Right, one of the dominant hegemonic forces in Western society, is staging its offensive.¹² A similar critique of the kind of position taken by writers like Laclau and Mouffe is forthcoming from Michael Apple who argues: "we can multiply forms of domination to such an extent that there are no meaningful organizations to combat oppression left." He adds that in moving beyond class reductionism, to demonstrate how racial/gender/sexual and other forms of domination operate, we tend to forget "the massive structuring forces that do exist" (1991, 28-29).

In my view, Freire's frequent passing references to diverse social movements, in his "talking books," can be taken as a recognition, on his part, of the diversity of the struggles occurring in various parts of the world. There seems to be no universal class in Freire's theory. The term "oppressed," as used by Freire, is not group specific and critics like Frank Youngman (1986) have criticized his work on these grounds, arguing that the term is used vaguely and loosely. In so doing, they fail to recognize the diversity of the groups of persons struggling under oppressive conditions, each one of whom would be termed "oppressed." In effect, Freire's "oppressed" vary from context to context. They range from the campesinos or African peasant class to the many underprivileged groups in industrialized Western societies, including women, gays/lesbians, blacks and ethnic minorities referred to in the "talking books." I would submit, therefore, that, in contrast to Gramsci, Freire provides a notion of oppression that recognizes the existence of a "polyphony of voices," to repeat Laclau and Mouffe's term.

Unlike Gramsci, therefore, Freire provides us with a theory of social change that is non-essentialist. This is a view which he reaffirmed at the 1991 AERA Conference, stating words to the effect that one cannot relegate everything to the class struggle. This is not to say that he does not acknowledge the importance of class when dealing with social differentiation. In fact, he is on record as having asserted that perestroika did not have the power to suppress the issue of class.¹³ Economic restructuring in what is fashionably being regarded as the "post-Fordist" era has led to an ever burgeoning peripheral labor market sector, consisting primarily of women (doing part-time work in the home), ethnic minorities and blacks, all of these suffering from unstable conditions of work. We are witnessing a situation in which the labor market continues to be segmented on an international scale by an increasingly mobile capital, a process which exacerbates racism and renders it the means of weakening working class solidarity. This scenario should be one out of several other reasons why class politics should not, in my view, be regarded as passé. It still remains an important arena of struggle. For all their shortcomings and often myopic visions, working class organizations, like trade unions, still have a role to play, provided they undergo a process of rethinking and the kind of reinvigoration which Gramsci called for when he argued that these organizations must be transformed by the Factory Council Movement.

Part of this rethinking consists of an analysis of the way class constantly intersects with the issues of race, gender and ethnicity, as well as other forms of oppression. These organizations also have to undergo a process of transformation so that they could "reconnect with the general interest," to reproduce John McIlroy's words written in relation to Raymond Williams (McIlroy 1993, 277). In recognizing multiple forms of oppression, they will have to open themselves up to the pressures and ideas emanating from the various social movements fighting for different forms of social justice. This will involve the broadening of their agendas to confront issues relating to racism, eurocentrism, patriarchy, ageism, and homophobia which continue to fragment a potentially strong popular force. It would also entail major organizational restructuring to ensure greater social representation in these organizations' upper echelons and throughout their rank and file. And adult education programs carried out within and across such organizations should reflect this. These programs would ensure greater social representation in terms of project planners, teaching personnel, and adult learners. Furthermore, the curriculum devised, preferably through a process of negotiation, should incorporate as broad a range of social agendas as is possible. Moreover, the analyses of issues encouraged should be an integrated one, which reflects the intersections of class, race, age, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. These programs would, in my view, play their part in forging links between different struggles and render these reinvigorated class organizations important key players in a process of coalition building—effective members of a new *historic bloc*.

CULTURE

There is also a difference between Gramsci and Freire in so far as cultural analysis is concerned. One notices an almost exclusive concentration, in Freire's better known works, in English, on elements of "popular culture." He regarded these elements as the basis for a transformative process of adult education. Like Gramsci, however, he is wary of not over-romanticizing such culture and acknowledges the presence, within it, of such disempowering elements as superstition, magic and traditional religious beliefs. Nonetheless, there seems to be no attempt, in Freire, to extend his range of analysis beyond that of "popular culture" to develop a systematic critique of "highbrow culture." Perhaps, being essentially a pedagogue rather than a committed and influential political ideologue, he was primarily concerned, in his writings, with that specific area of which he had direct vocational experience.

The situation with Gramsci was different. Unlike Freire, he operated in a city which had all the makings of a typically Western European metropolis, including a well developed "civil society" and a tradition of industrial organization. Besides, his working life was also different from that of Freire. Gramsci worked as a journalist dealing, among other things, with cultural affairs. A lot of his writings on theater, literature, and the figurative arts are, in fact, reviews for newspapers. This particular occupation placed him in an ideal position from which to observe, at close quarters, the many cultural productions which characterized the Italian artistic scene. Gramsci focuses on both aspects of the "high" and "low" divide. He

does this as part of a constant search for a synthesis between the potentially emancipatory aspects of both with a view to establishing the basis for a proletarian culture. It is this search which led him to express an interest in, for instance, works like Dostoevski's novels which draw on serial fiction and, in so doing, reveal the interplay between the "popular" and the "artistic."

For Gramsci, a critical appropriation of the dominant, established culture is central to the emergence of a new "subaltern" and, in his case, proletarian culture. When writing on "Problems of Marxism," Gramsci argues that:

The philosophy of praxis presupposes all this cultural past: Renaissance and Reformation, German philosophy and the French Revolution, Calvinism and English classical economics, secular liberalism and this historicism which is the root of the whole modern conception of life. The philosophy of praxis is the crowning point of this entire movement of intellectual and moral reformation, made dialectical in the contrast between popular culture and high culture. (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971, 395)

This quote is central to Entwistle's (1979) representation of Gramsci's view of the development of proletarian culture. As Broccoli (1972) and Entwistle (1979) indicate, this view was shared by Lenin. In a polemic with Lunacarskij and the *Proletkult* movement, which movement he criticized for its negation of existing cultural ties with the past, Lenin argued:

Proletarian culture is not something that has sprung from nowhere, it is not an invention of those who call themselves experts in proletarian culture. That is all nonsense. Proletarian culture must be the result of the natural development of the stores of knowledge which mankind has accumulated under the yoke of capitalist society, landlord society and bureaucratic society (Lenin in Entwistle 1979, 44; cf., Lenin in Broccoli 1972, 65-66).

Gramsci's position, in this respect, is quite interesting in view of the "Canon wars" which dominate a lot of debate in the US concerning educational curricula, with the works of Bloom and Hirsch being given prominence and the subject of critiques by various critical pedagogues, notably such important exponents of *critical pedagogy* as Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, and Peter McLaren. All three *critical pedagogy* exponents, but most notably the first mentioned, draw on Gramsci in their works. They also draw heavily on Freire. The "great books," Gramsci seems to be saying, need to be learned but through a process of critical appropriation, which might also involve reading them against the grain. Furthermore, central to Gramsci's conception of culture and education, is the notion that the popular also matters and contains emancipatory potential which constitutes that part of its "common sense" which is worth developing. It is partly for this reason that he enjoys a wide influence in the areas of cultural studies, *critical pedagogy*, and more generally, in post-modern writings on culture in which local narratives, a feature of the popular, are given prominence. And yet, as I argue elsewhere (Mayo 1994a, 1994b), Gramsci, for all his interest in popular

culture, fails to provide sustained analysis of the different forms of such culture other than those of the written word.

A SENSE OF HISTORY

The idea of appropriating that which emerges from the past is reinforced when one considers the importance Gramsci attached to the conveyance, among the proletariat, of a sense of history. Gramsci considered history to be of crucial importance for the education of the working class, since it enabled members of this class to "be themselves and know themselves consciously" (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971, 37). He is on record as having written (cf., *Scritti Giovanili*):

If it is true that universal history is a chain made up of the efforts man [*sic*] has exerted to free himself [*sic*] from privilege, prejudice and idolatry, then it is hard to understand why the proletariat, which seeks to add another link to that chain, should not know how and why and by whom it was preceded or what advantage it might derive from this knowledge (Gramsci in Entwistle 1979, 41; cf., Gramsci in Broccoli 1972, 32).

It is a linear and evolutionary conception of history which is in keeping with the Marxist tradition that recognizes progress throughout the ages. This view is at odds with certain current post-modern positions in which the emphasis is placed on discontinuity and it is argued that, rather than bringing about progress, the enlightenment tradition has led to the perpetration of the Holocaust and the setting up of the Gulag.

A similar stress on the importance of History, with respect to the education of the oppressed, is nowhere to be found in Freire's English language publications. Gramsci must have felt that the information to be derived from such a subject would render the discourses and opinions of adult learners informed ones. Such information also includes "facts":

Previously, the pupils at least acquired a certain "baggage" or equipment (according to taste) of concrete facts. Now that the teacher must be specifically a philosopher and aesthete, the pupil does not bother with concrete facts and fills his [*sic*] head with formulae and words which mean nothing to him which are forgotten at once (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971, 36).

BANKING EDUCATION

The foregoing quote deals with the education of children. However, what Gramsci says there appears relevant also to adult education. The idea of acquiring a "baggage" is relevant not only to the area of workers' cultural preparation but also to that of technical education. For Gramsci, this constituted an essential component of workers' education which the trade union and factory council, together, had to provide (Entwistle 1979). Freire would regard the transfer of such facts as an essential feature of the process of "banking education." It is a process whereby the pupil is regarded, in Goulet's words, "as a passive recipient of knowledge" (1973, 11), or, in a metaphor used by Freire, "as an empty receptacle to be filled" (1970a, 58). In a much cited piece from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire delineates, somewhat

mechanistically, the roles of teacher and student under conditions of "banking education" (ibid., 59).

Gramsci, for his part, provides a less mechanistic account, though not a developed one, of learning under such conditions. In a position which strikes me as being opposed to that conventionally associated with Freire, Gramsci argues that there cannot be a passive learner, a "mechanical" recipient of abstract knowledge. Gramsci argues that knowledge is assimilated according to the learner's consciousness which "reflects the sector of civil society in which the child participates" and the social and cultural relations to which the learner is exposed (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971, 35). At issue here is the manner in which meaning is circulated, mediated and assimilated. I would argue that this can be taken to apply not only to children but also to adults who can perform the task of assimilation even better, given that, because of their greater life experience, their consciousness reflects a much broader set of cultural and social relations.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A SYNTHESIS

The foregoing exposition of what I regard as some of the differences between Gramsci's and Freire's ideas relevant to adult education leads me to argue that each of the two theorists stresses some aspects which the other either overlooks or underplays. One can therefore write in terms of their providing complementary views. Earlier in the article, I have indicated that there are indeed similarities between the two authors on a number of issues relevant to adult education. Among these similarities, one discovers an emphasis on the political nature of educational activity and on the role which institutions of Civil Society play in processes of social transformation.

I have also emphasized the sense of agency to be found in their works, coupled with their advocacy of the need to project educational programs in which human beings are transformed from "object" to "subject." This is a binary opposition, strongly emphasized in Freire, which is being refuted by certain post-modernist writers and often overlooked by others who are quick to give the Brazilian's work a post-modernist coating. There is also a focus on committed adult educators who themselves have to undergo a transformation to work with subaltern social groups, becoming organic intellectuals in the Gramscian sense or "experiencing their easter" in the sense advocated by Freire. There is also the stress on *praxis* as the heart of liberating education and on the need to carry out such pedagogical work in the context of a larger movement or alliance of movements striving for social change. I have shown that there are also differences. I have indicated that Gramsci's focus is on the requirements of a particular social group which plays a leadership role in the process of social transformation, as opposed to Freire's non-reductionist view of the struggle for democracy and the creation of a socially just society. In this respect, it is Freire, and understandably the later Freire, rather than Gramsci, who comes closer to certain post-modernist and post-marxist positions regarding oppression.

There are also differences in the range of social analysis provided, with Gramsci presenting us with a much wider spectrum, given that his project was all

encompassing. The dynamics involved in teacher-learner encounters are accorded much wider treatment in Freire's work, than in Gramsci's, and this is understandable given that the Brazilian's main focus is, after all, on teaching. Gramsci provides a complex, though undeveloped, view of how ideas are taken up in settings where learning takes place. This view is almost in line with certain post-structuralist theories regarding the multiplicity of readings of texts (cf., Apple 1992). Gramsci's view stands in contrast to Freire's originally somewhat mechanistic description of what goes on in a situation of "banking education." And yet though the distinction between oppressor and oppressed is clear cut in this situation—another binary opposition—one must not forget Freire's early exposition of the concept of "oppressor consciousness" (Freire 1970a) which indicates that people can easily be perpetrators as well as victims of oppression. Weiler (1991) raises this point as a critique of Freire's ideas in general, arguing that the dichotomy between oppressor and oppressed is a false one. The notion of oppressor consciousness and the light that it sheds on the way an apparently subordinated group is implicated in oppression relates to the process of contradictory consciousness that characterize relations of hegemony/counterhegemony, in the Gramscian sense. It is a situation which invites parallels with Foucault's dictum that, in resisting power, one is not external to it. We are all implicated in relations of power. In fact, one of the major contributions of Gramsci's Hegemony theory is that it places emphasis on the way power is ubiquitous and manifests itself even in the most intimate social relations (Holub 1992). It is a position which underlines the diffuse nature of power, a notion which, once again, brings to mind Foucault. Existing hegemonic arrangements are said to be supported by a number of beliefs and practices in a variety of settings, ranging from the home to adult education settings. All individuals are thus conceived of as "sites of power" but not all individuals possess the same amount of power (Holub 1992).

Furthermore, in Gramsci as well as in the early Freire (the Freire of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*), in which social class is given prominence, one obtains the sense that, though members of the industrial or peasant/campesino classes do exert power in terms of, say, patriarchy, race, etc., this power stands in the way of their overcoming that larger powerlessness of which they are victim. This powerlessness is, of course, related to economic conditions. I would be wary of making a similar statement in relation to Freire's later work, in which he is possibly influenced by earlier feminist critiques of his own work. Yet, for all its limitations, including the race and gender oppressions overlooked (hooks 1993), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* still remains an important, if not the most cited, source of reference regarding Freire's work. Even at this late stage in the article, therefore, I would tentatively posit possible elements of convergence in Freire, albeit the early Freire, and Gramsci. It would be interesting to see to what extent his position regarding power differs in his "revisiting" of his most celebrated work in a book entitled *Pedagogy of Hope. Reliving "Pedagogy of the Oppressed,"* the English version of which was not in print at the time of my submission of the manuscript. It would also be interesting to see to what extent he incorporates, in this work, insights from his later conversations.

I feel, however, that for the most part, the relationship between the two strikes me as being more one of complementarity rather than one of convergence. There are

similarities, as I have shown, but we also come across instances in which one provides insightful material which the other overlooks. Both the similarities and complementary aspects could provide the foundation for a possible synthesis of their ideas which are relevant to adult education. This synthesis would, however, constitute the subject of a separate study.

Gramsci and Freire are two of the most cited writers in the literature on radical adult education. Their connections with the theory and practice of radical adult education in North America are great, given that their ideas have influenced such educators as Myles Horton and feature prominently in that corpus of radical literature that falls under the rubric of *critical pedagogy*. *Critical pedagogy*, as developed in North American circles (there are several educators throughout the world whose documented work would easily fall under this rubric, the Italians Don Lorenzo Milani and Danilo Dolci being two of them) is partly inspired by the work of Freire and some of its major exponents, including Giroux, McLaren, and Shor, engage Freire's ideas. With its emphasis on a commitment to subaltern groups and on the conception of a radically democratic approach to adult education, both rooted in a vision of society as it "should and can be," *critical pedagogy* provides a useful theoretical basis for cultural workers, including school teachers and adult educators, committed to social change. In this particular approach to teaching, educational activity is conceived of as being intimately tied to the power structures in society. Gramsci and Freire provide useful theoretical frameworks in this regard, the former for the purpose of situating radical adult education initiatives in a broader politics of social transformation and the latter for providing insights regarding the power dynamics involved in the teaching-learning process itself.

NOTES

- ¹ I am indebted to Professor David W. Livingstone for his comments on earlier drafts of this article from which I benefitted enormously. I should also like to thank the three anonymous reviewers for their suggestions to improve the article. The basis for this article is provided by the final chapter of my Master's degree thesis which I wrote in 1987/1988 when on a Commonwealth Scholarship at the University of Alberta. For this reason, I should like to thank the four members of my M.Ed. thesis committee for their input. These are: Professors Kazim Bacchus, Carlos Alberto Torres, Raymond A. Morrow, and Derek Sayer. Any remaining shortcomings in the article are entirely my responsibility. Earlier versions of the article were presented at the February 1988 Annual Meeting of the Western Association of Sociology and Anthropology (Edmonton, Alberta) and at the 16th Annual Convention of the Association for Humanist Sociology (Ottawa, Ontario, October 1991).
- ² This information was given to me by Professor Carlos Alberto Torres himself. I reproduce it with his kind permission. For interesting parallels between Gramsci and Freire on education, see Morrow and Torres 1995.
- ³ The term "Civil Society" is not being used here in the sense intended by Marx; i.e., the realm of economic relations (Bobbio 1987), but in Gramsci's sense of the entire complex of ideological institutions.
- ⁴ The reference to Karl Marx in the relevant passage, wherein Gramsci hits out apparently at what he must have regarded as the rigid economism of the canons of historical materialism, is somewhat disconcerting. Was the young Gramsci really attributing such rigidity to Marx himself? Adamson argues that, for Gramsci, the real enemy in this respect, "was not Karl Marx, not even the Karl Marx of *Das Capital*. His real enemy was the vulgarized Marxism which had become prominent in the Second International" (1980, 45). In her discussion of the same piece, Anne

Showstack Sassoon (1980, 1987) regards the Second International's interpretation of Marx as the target of his attack. One ought to bear in mind, however, that Marx's early manuscripts, wherein he appears less rigid, attaching great importance to the interplay between agency and structure, were not accessible to Gramsci.

⁵ Gramsci progressed from this particular phase to elaborate a theory of revolution within the context of party strategy. His involvement as Secretary General of the PCI must have been a determining factor in this regard. As for Freire, one wonders whether his recent involvement with the Workers' Party (PT), which led to his becoming Education Secretary in the Municipal Government of Sao Paulo (cf., Freire 1993; Torres 1993, 1994), will have a similar effect on his writings and on the development of his future pedagogical and social theory. In recent years, his political party and administrative involvement appears to have caused his early sense of voluntarism to have mellowed further than may have been the case earlier. One may gather this from his various emphases, made at the 1991 AERA Conference, on the difficulties involved in bringing about social change (cf., Freire, Paulo. *Educational Policy and Social Change in Brazil: The Work of Paulo Freire as Secretary of Education in Sao Paulo*, April 4, 1991. Chicago: Teach 'em Inc. Cassette).

⁶ For a sustained analysis of the relevance of Gramsci's concept of organic intellectualism to adult education, see Hommen's (1986) thesis. One comes across a burgeoning literature regarding Gramsci's theory of intellectuals which he conceived as an important component of the study embarked on in prison. For a recently published discussion wherein Gramsci's ideas are taken up within the context of a larger debate concerning the role of intellectuals in contemporary society, see Barney (1994).

⁷ This point confirms Gramsci's influence on Freire.

⁸ I am here referring to Frank Youngman's critique of Freire's pedagogy. Youngman's critique appeared a year in advance of the Shor, Freire (1987) conversational book and until then, Freire did not emphasize the directiveness referred to in the text. As such, I consider justified Youngman's critique that Freire is "ambivalent about saying outright that educators can have a theoretical understanding superior to that of the learners..." (Youngman 1986, 179).

⁹ Gramsci favored an encounter (incontro) between the workers' movement and the Catholic masses (Amendola 1978), arguing that some kind of *modus vivendi* with the Catholic Church has to be found (Lojacono 1977). The Communist faction at the Livorno (Leghorn) Congress accused the Socialists for failing to reach an agreement with the Catholic inspired Partito Popolare of Don Luigi Sturzo which would have stemmed the tide of Fascism (Lojacono 1977).

¹⁰ Cf., Torres, Carlos Alberto. Presentation at the AERA Conference, Session on *Educational Policy and Social Change in Brazil: The Work of Paulo Freire as Secretary of Education in Sao Paulo*, April 4, 1991. Chicago: Teach 'em, Inc. Cassette.

¹¹ I am indebted to Dion Dennis, Visiting Professor at Texas A & M University, for this point, made in a review of another article of mine (Mayo 1994), in which I make the same point.

¹² This section on Norman Geras and Ellen Wood has been reproduced from a footnote in Mayo (1994a).

¹³ Freire, Paulo. *Educational Policy and Social Change in Brazil: The Work of Paulo Freire as Secretary of Education in Sao Paulo*, April 4, 1991. Chicago: Teach 'em Inc. Cassette.

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