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## Educating the emotions: the new biopolitics of critical pedagogy

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### Introduction

I have been asked to speak today about some new developments in ‘critical pedagogy’, particularly around the education of hope and its relationship to social justice. Before doing so, however, I would like to situate this paper in the framework set out by Cummings in the summary paper of the first seminar in this series. The paper highlights four types of ‘interventions’ now being taken, by the state and a whole range of non-state organisations, to promote emotional well-being in education: (1) urgent interventions for those with special needs of care, (2) the general promotion of positive attitudes and attributes in schools and universities, (3) extra support for emotional damage and stress, and (4) the systematic teaching of subjects that will be useful in developing emotional competence and management, especially to ‘prepare them for the rapid change and uncertainty of modern life’ (Cummings 2009: 3-4). This typology clearly covers a wide range of formal educational practices, from ‘nurture groups’ and ‘buddy schemes’ to positive psychology, ‘stress workshops’, and the writing of new university curricula for ‘lifelong learning’. It also includes other sorts of educational interventions that I have seen or been engaged with more internationally, such as liberal humanities education in the United States and (what I consider to be) a very well-financed and very ideologically-driven movement to institutionalise ‘civic education’ and ‘critical thinking’ in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia.<sup>i</sup>

However, there is little space within it for alternative kinds of educational interventions, including projects in critical pedagogy, which tend to be non-state (although often engaged within state institutions such as schools and universities) or informal. The term is of course a loose one and, because it encapsulates a broad ‘set of heterogeneous ideas’, stemming from a range of traditions in critical theory, pedagogical philosophy and political struggle, it can mean very contradictory things (Darder *et al.* 2002: 2).<sup>ii</sup> It has been used to refer equally to a broad ‘commitment to the ideals and practices of social justice within schools’, the ‘transformation of those structures and conditions within society which function to thwart the democratic participation of all people’, and education aimed at empowering—politically, economically and emotionally—popular movements associated

with the rights of workers, women and children, people from oppressed and marginalized ethnic groups, the homeless and landless and stateless, and the very poor (where the concept of ‘emotional well-being’ shows up less often than basic ideals of human dignity). It also signifies a particular range of democratically organised, process-oriented, inquiry-based and problem-focused pedagogies. The idea of critical pedagogy is perhaps most commonly associated with the work of Brazilian popular educator Paulo Freire and the contemporary educators working internationally in his broad tradition.<sup>iii</sup>

For the purposes of this seminar, I am particularly interested in some of the newest developments in each of these fields, which, as one set of authors put it, are developing ‘educational spaces, pedagogical strategies, and intellectual subjectivities...[that] can be considered *radically* utopian in that they strive to transcend what is conceivable within the current socio-economic order around the globe’, and which, ‘despite [their] diversity...are working towards a common goal of understanding, combating and creating alternatives to what we are now repeatedly told is a glorious—and inevitable—“new world order”’ (Coté *et al.* 2007: 4). I would like to clarify that this is not intended as a *totalizing* argument; in other words, it will not necessarily apply to everyone or all kinds of work, it applies most directly to higher and informal education, and I am certainly not promoting a single model of education. I would merely like to fill in some gaps that I have seen in the debate, and raise questions about some things that seem to be taken too much for granted in public discourses on education.

It might be argued that it is irrelevant to include critical pedagogy in this broad mix of educational ‘interventions’ into changing the human subject, as these projects share in common with the more ‘mainstream’ ones an underlying assumption that the formation, *reformation* and *transformation* of the human subject—of our attitudes, values and beliefs; of what Pierre Bourdieu once called our *habitus* or deep, materially-rooted subconscious dispositions; and of our emotional sensitivities and capabilities—is a necessary, and in some cases even a sufficient, condition for bringing about major and sometimes even revolutionary kinds of social change. Indeed, some of the tenets of ‘emotional well-being’ such as respect for human worth and dignity and esteem for self and others, are the same. However, I would argue that engaging the particular philosophies and practices of critical pedagogy *is* important for the debates developing here because they often operate with different conceptions of both the human subject and ‘emotional well-being’, and the relationship of these to economic and political forces. First, most of the political and pedagogical interventions mentioned above share a basic constellation of assumptions which links liberal capitalism to liberal democracy, liberal democracy to liberal education, liberal education to individual freedom and social tolerance, and individual freedom and social tolerance to well-being.

The constellation of assumptions grounding most critical pedagogy articulates different relationships between the state, the market and the educational system, and between the individual human being and social experience. Second, from a critical perspective, 'emotional well-being' is not seen as a subjective state to be accomplished by individuals *in spite* of or within their social circumstances, but an inter-subjective one that emerges as a result of becoming a person, amongst others, in conditions that enable human fulfilment, as well as through the process of creating these conditions themselves. In contrast to values of stoicism, optimism and being 'in-the-moment', in other words, there is an emphasis on resistance, critical hope and transcendence. And finally, although projects in critical pedagogy are still marginal within formal education in Britain, they are becoming increasingly mainstreamed, increasingly globalised, and they are advancing a new politics of 'well-being' that is *in direct opposition to the kinds of education and definitions of well-being* mentioned above, and as part of a broader opposition to the neoliberal and Third-Way theories of state and market in which they are embedded. They therefore not only present alternatives, but raise questions about some of the underlying assumptions of these taken-for-granted practices.

There is also another reason for discussing new projects in critical pedagogy here, which is that they re-open debates about the biopolitical nature of transformative education itself. I use the word 'biopolitical' deliberately, although not without caution and some reservation. Most people engaged in critical pedagogy understand themselves to be *anti*-biopolitical, for in social theory the term really signifies one thing: the institutions, bodies of knowledge and administrative techniques that are used for 'measuring, regulating and controlling people and behaviour in order to ensure that states get the most out of their human resources' (Danaher 2000: 80). Michel Foucault used it to describe the kinds of power that manage human subjectivities through 'universities, schools, barracks, and workshops', through policies on natality, public health, housing and migration, and more recently through 'health and safety', insurance, etc. (Foucault 1976, 2003).<sup>iv</sup> Indeed, many critical educators regard most of the formal and state-led interventions mentioned above as being, in some way, connected to this general disciplining of society; to the neutralisation of or accommodation to the psychological, emotional and even physical dissonance that its injustices can create. There is no question in my mind as to what Foucault might have said about the new forms of 'therapeutic education' or 'technologies of the self' in schooling that this seminar has highlighted as a matter for debate. Critical pedagogy is hence understood as an *antidote* to the biopolitical; a form and practice of education which resists the state's determination of and intervention into the body, the emotions and the 'movements of life', even if these are almost always presented as progressive acts of reform (Foucault 1976: 142). Its self-understanding of liberation, of transforming consciousness as part of transforming the world, of being aesthetically and politically motivating, of

educating empathy and of engendering hope is all situated in direct opposition to the governing, regulating, subjugating and pacifying effects of modern bio-power itself.

However, there is another important sense in which critical pedagogy can and should be considered a biopolitical practice, and I think that denying this simply to avoid the term's fixed connotations is to miss important opportunities for the development of reflexive educational practices, and for the expansion of our understandings of the politics of emotion and morality in education, and its relationship to political economy and cultural politics. First, critical pedagogy does aspire to 'change the subject', to educate both emotions (love, hope, empathy, etc.) and instincts (needs and desires) for purposes of personal and social improvement.<sup>v</sup> This is not Foucault's 'governmentality', or the production of internally motivated citizens who are useful, docile, productive and—it must be said—"happy" (Foucault 1988a); indeed, it aspires to produce, if not the opposite, then at least the possibility for people to resist these processes. But it does also require people to perform 'operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and ways of being' in order to reach a particular state of 'happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality' (Foucault 1988b), and as a result is not beyond relations of power. On the other hand, however, from Foucault's perspective, we may also think of the 'transformation of one's self *by one's own knowledge*' (cited in Kompridis 2006: 175) as a practice of freedom, a care of the self, in which 'attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain a certain mode of being' enable people to define their own 'admissible and acceptable forms of existence or political society' (Foucault 1997: 283). It is also, according to Stanley Cavell, 'the description of something we might call education' (cited in Kompridis 2006: 176).

In other words, rather than understanding critical pedagogy as anti-biopolitical, I argue that it is perhaps more enabling to regard it as offering alternative ways of conceptualising the politics of the self within the neoliberal order. I would thus like to talk now about how and why critical pedagogy in Britain and more globally is turning towards the biopolitical; how it is re-imagining the relationship between subjective change and a particular kind of social transformation; and how it understands the possible roles and limitations of formal education in making this link. I will focus on one particular element of this complex discussion—the problem of educating 'hope'—and I will try to relate it to some of the questions raised about 'emotional well-being' in the previous seminar.

### **Postmodern capitalism—the 'end of social dreams'?**

Why hope, and what does this have to do with subjectivity and 'emotional well-being'? Beyond the perhaps obvious revival of hope in mainstream party politics (e.g., Barack Obama's 'audacity of hope' and David Cameron's critique of the new 'politics of fear'), it has become relatively

commonplace within critical social theory to speak about the ‘crisis of hope’ as a social condition to be observed, described and acted upon (Bauman 2004; Habermas 1989; Jameson 2004; Zournazi 2002). Frederic Jameson recently argued that the ‘waning of the utopian idea is a fundamental historical and political symptom, which deserves diagnosis in its own right’ (Jameson 2004: 41, 36),<sup>vi</sup> and in a recently published collection of interviews about hope with intellectuals and cultural workers, Mary Zournazi concludes that ‘we live in a world where our belief, faith and trust in political or individual actions are increasingly being threatened, leading to despair and uncertainty’ (2002: 14). These are not anxieties about individualised emotional states, but about the privatization of public life, the disarticulation of ‘the social’ and collective social responsibility, the censorship of democratic cultures and enclosure of relatively autonomous public spheres, the decline of sustained social movements, the empowerment of new, aggressive forms of military and cultural imperialism, the commercialization of culture and identity, and the drift in democratic societies towards more authoritarian forms of political and ideological control.<sup>vii</sup> This constellation of related phenomena is generally associated with ‘neoliberalism’.

Significantly, these conditions are also said to contribute to what Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Freire once described as the ‘inflexible negation of the right to dream differently, to dream of utopia’ (2001: 22). Freire’s use of the term ‘right’ is telling, for his judgment is based on a belief that human beings possess a natural ‘utopian impulse’; a longing *to be* that is unjustly, albeit often unconsciously, suppressed or unlearned within this social order. As he concluded more bluntly, ‘the absence of hope is not the “normal” way to be human. It is a distortion.’ Others share the view; for example, Zygmunt Bauman (2004) has argued that ‘to hope is to be human’, and Darren Webb recently claimed that hope is a ‘human universal that can be experienced in different modes’ (2007: 65). However, it is also argued that this normality of hope and the deviant nature of its suppression are existentialist insofar as affective experiences of ‘revolt, need, hope, rejection and desire’ are socially constituted, and that they are made possible—or not—from particular kinds of social experiences within particular historical conditions (de Beauvoir 1948). Hence, the boundary between the ‘emotional’ and the ‘social’ is fluid in this narrative of social decline, as its root<sup>viii</sup> is said to be the loss of the human capacity or the will to desire hope itself, either because individuals have lost the ability or desire to imagine alternative ways of being (i.e., through the erosion of both critical and anticipatory forms of consciousness), or because they are deprived of the structural possibilities of agency that might have otherwise made this hope possible.<sup>ix</sup>

These arguments are theoretically significant because they go beyond tactical critiques of particular social problems and suggest pathological changes in the *quality and total way of being* in contemporary societies. In other words, the question is no longer whether certain social

arrangements are possible or desirable, but rather whether the entire organization of the social environment disables people from developing the psychological and emotional desire for personal transcendence or social change, and prevents them from developing the inter-subjective empathy and compassion that would allow them to identify with the suffering of others. The contemporary crisis of hope is not simply a shift in ways of knowing or behaving in society, but as C. Wright Mills once wrote, a concern about 'pervasive transformations of the very "nature" of man [sic] and the conditions and aims of his life' (1959: 13).

### **Critical pedagogy and the 'crisis of hope'**

New interventions in critical pedagogy are a direct response to this, and are conceptualized both as an 'educational dimension of the struggles within and against neo-liberalism' (Coté *et al.* 2007: 3), and as forms of democratic political pedagogy (Jameson 1984; Giroux 2004a). Significantly, however, they are being framed not in terms of 'emotional well-being', but by a concern that 'the forces that were to bring about the transformation [of capitalist society] are suppressed and appear to be defeated' (Marcuse 1989: 63). This focus on the ideational and on deep subjectivity marks a shift away from more traditional understandings of critical pedagogy, which are often grounded pragmatically in specific political struggles, and which emphasise the importance of '*conscientization*' (Freire 1992, 2001, 2005). In this perspective, it has been assumed that by 're-cognizing' their existing perceptions of the world more critically and identifying both their 'limit situations' and the concrete actions that can be taken to overcome them, people can become conscious of their existing desire for freedom and transcendence. It is argued that this, in turn, motivates them to engage in transformative action for changing their social conditions both individually and with others.

However, many critical educators are now asking what relevance this approach to pedagogy might have in situations where the *desire* for individual transcendence and social change appears to be absent, devalued or denied. What are the possible consequences of *conscientization* when exposing complex power relations emboldens fatalistic emotions rather than transforming them into hope; where, to paraphrase a well-worn theory, we see through ideologies and yet still buy into them? What become of efforts to democratize knowledge when publics democratically demand authoritarian teaching, or when self-realization is defined as the skilful adaptation to the existing order of things? In response to such questions, American educator Henry Giroux has argued that critical pedagogy is no longer simply a matter of 'raising consciousness' about the possibilities for realistic personal and social change, but of educating people *to believe* that these possibilities are worthwhile in the first place (1997: 28). This is neither an education to re-cognize the social world,

nor one to create conditions of emancipatory communication in educational contexts. Instead, it aims to produce the value orientations that make both of these activities meaningful in the first place, or to produce the conditions for their possibility (which, I would argue, are two qualitatively different things). Institutionalized critical education has become a project less in the service of particular political struggles and more of an attempt to work against the atomisation, apathy, and emotional ‘coldness’ that are presumed to abort struggles for social justice at their immediate roots of subjective experience. This type of educational practice moves beyond intervening in behaviour or cognitive rationality, and takes on the task of transforming psychological, emotional, and ethical experiences—the ‘more-than-rational’ and ‘less-than-rational’ dimensions of human action (Ahmed 2004; Anderson 2006; Anderson and Harrison 2006) *as well as* transforming the economic and political organisation of education to make this possible. In this context, the definition of ‘critical hope’ shifts: criticality is not simply an ability to recognize injustice, but also to be ‘moved to change it’ (Burbules and Berk 1999: 50). This shift represents a migration from traditional ‘pedagogies of hope’ towards alternative traditions in the ‘education of desire’.

### **Classical roots of critical–utopian education**

From a critical perspective, these are things that can and should be accomplished through education, but they are not necessarily compatible with either state-led reforms or conceptions of ‘emotional well-being’. To formulate alternatives, therefore, many critical educators have begun to rework classical theories of critical–utopian education. Four thinkers in particular—Ernst Bloch, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno—now appear regularly to inform questions of how need and desire are constituted within particular social systems, and how they might be radically reconstituted within the same.

Ernst Bloch’s work, for example, has recently been invoked by educators aiming to inspire ‘critical hope’, defined as the ‘desire for a better way of living expressed in the description of a different kind of society that makes possible that alternative way of life’ (Levitas 1993: 257). Like Freire, Bloch defined hope as an ontological fact: ‘not only a basic feature of human consciousness, but, concretely and correctly grasped, a basic determination within objective reality as a whole’ (Bloch 1985: 7); hopelessness being ‘downright intolerable to human needs’ (Bloch 2005: 5). However, he argued, if hope remains ‘uneducated’, without guidance about how to formulate ‘informed discontent’, it can become a dangerously abstract form of fantasy which Bloch called ‘fraudulent hope’ (i.e., ideology). The role of education, therefore, is to help people develop a ‘critical hermeneutics of everyday life’; to learn ways of ‘educated hope’ (*docta spes*), rather than

engaging in 'wishful thinking' or developing an 'optimistic' disposition (for contemporary applications, see Giroux 2007: 33).

Although Bloch's theory of 'educated hope' seems widely shared, his commitment to a particular vision of socialism as the natural culmination of all human dreams and desires was not assumed critical theorists or educators. In *To Have or To Be?* (1976), for instance, Erich Fromm argued that as practiced, both capitalism and socialism were modernist distortions of human hope. Like Bloch, he believed that under 'normal' conditions 'human beings have an inherent and deeply rooted desire to be: to express our faculties, to be active, to be related to others, to escape the prison cell of selfishness' (1976: 103; 2001: 247).<sup>x</sup> But Fromm also believed that the human character has the potential to be shaped otherwise by any socio-economic system that requires it (Rickert 1986: 360). To restore the normality of human desire to realize unlimited potentials, he argued, it was necessary to produce a 'radical change of the human heart' *as well as* effecting 'drastic economic and social changes...that give the human heart the chance for change and the courage and vision to achieve it' (1976: 19).<sup>xi</sup> This, he argued, would be an essentially 'educational process' of change (ibid. 173).

Herbert Marcuse also prioritized this relationship between subjective and objective change; between emotional experience and material realities. Marcuse believed that political injustices were internalized into the deep psychological structures of individuals, and that the potential for social change was thus instinctually rooted (Rickert 1986: 368). He thus placed deep subjectivity at the heart of social change, requiring a 'radical transvaluation of values' and needs (Marcuse 1971: 15). Marcuse differentiated, controversially, between 'true' and 'false' needs in any society, the latter referring to any needs that 'perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery and injustice'—not only for oneself, but also for others upon whom our personal 'happiness' may depend (1964: 5). Hence, for Marcuse, education was to play a central role in a cultural revolution that prioritized the transformation of instinctual needs themselves. He advocated not only 'liberating the consciousness of...realizable possibilities', but also argued that cultural revolutionaries should 'work on the development of consciousness' (Marcuse 1970: 74), on creating a 'new sensibility' at the level of 'second nature' or 'socialized instinct' (Marcuse 1969: 21), and on 'transforming the will itself so that people no longer want what they want now' (Marcuse 1970: 77).

Finally, while Theodor Adorno also addressed the cultural formation of needs, desires and values and envisioned a strong role for education in this process, he remained extremely critical of the limits of formal education, and mindful of the role that it has played in shaping anti-democratic attitudes and relationships. In his 1967 essay 'Education after Auschwitz', for example, he asserted that the deliberate formation of subjective human psychology was the only legitimate defence



against an insurgent 'barbarism [which] is inscribed within the principle of civilization' (1967: 1). Here he parts company with Bloch, Fromm and Marcuse, whose theories assumed that education was ultimately a corrective practice which aimed to restore some state of normality against the pathological emotional pedagogies of late-modern capitalism. For Adorno (1967), the problem was darker: Auschwitz, the Armenian genocide, the dropping of atomic bombs—and unfortunately we can of course cite much more recent examples of calculated mass murder—these were not anomalous events but rather 'expressions of an extremely powerful societal tendency' towards dehumanization that is an ever-present potentiality within human beings, emboldened under some conditions and repressed in others. He argued that many educational practices—in schools, but also in the more public pedagogies of mass culture—produced individuals who were psychologically 'cold': unable to love others empathetically or to relate to their suffering and desires.<sup>xii</sup> Adorno agreed with Fromm and Marcuse that it would be an authoritarian irony to 'force' people to love, and that there was no purpose to 'appeal to eternal values, at which the very people who are prone to commit such atrocities would merely shrug their shoulders'. He argued that critical education must instead attempt to *elicit the need* for love within individuals who do not experience it through a process of critical self-reflection, and the capability for what he called civic 'maturity' (Adorno and Becker 1991). 'If anything can help against coldness as the condition for disaster', he wrote, 'then it is the insight into the conditions that determine it and the attempt to combat those conditions, initially in the domain of the individual' (1967: 9).

These classical examples, which are being rehabilitated in some contemporary critical pedagogy, illustrate that the concepts of need, desire and hope were central concerns of educational practice long before the rise of neoliberal 'therapeutic education', and outside of or in opposition to statist projects of social welfare. However, one thing in particular differentiates them from educational projects which emphasise 'emotional well-being'. They require an explanation of why a social system which proliferates relations of disrespect for human life and self-actualisation frequently does *not* result in cognitive or emotional dissonance, but rather 'appeals to our intuitions and instincts, to our values and desires' to the extent that it becomes 'so embedded in common sense as to be taken for granted and not open for question' (Harvey 2007: 5). In other words, they raise the question of why we are lacking, in the words of Frederic Jameson, the 'desire called utopia' (2005) which might justify critical interpretations of our social reality as presently imagined.

### **The problems of 'educating desire'**

The project of producing this desire is therefore now being interpreted as a primary task of critical pedagogy. E. P. Thompson (1976) borrowed the term 'education of desire' from Miguel Abensour

(1973), to defend the value of utopianism in critical thought.<sup>xiii</sup> Long before the rise of ‘sociology of emotions’ or ‘emotional well-being’, Abensour argued that we must recognise the *material* force of subjective factors such as emotion, need, desire and hope in radical social change and social justice. The ‘education of desire’ hence departs from the rationalist philosophy of ‘consciousness-raising’ by recognizing the *affective* and *imaginative* conditions of social action—asserting, in other words, the merits of utopianism as a means of cultural transformation and resistance. This practice is now being asserted as one of the most appropriate responses to the forces of ‘disutopia’, and to emotional ill-being and pathology, in post-modern capitalist society.

Contemporary critical theorists and educators rarely use the term ‘education of desire’. For reasons I already mentioned, most wouldn’t dare to own up to this sort of biopolitical intent. But they do speak frequently about things such as ‘raising ambitions, desires and real hope for those who wish to take seriously the issue of educational struggle and social justice’ (Burbules and Berk 1999: 51).<sup>xiv</sup> This places them in a complicated situation: they are often—though certainly not always—challenged, resisted and resented by the people and institutions they claim to want to ‘emancipate’. One response to this has been to interpret apathy towards or resistance to critical pedagogy as a consequence of an existential colonization by the prevailing logics of power.<sup>xv</sup> In other words, critical educators sometimes interpret the absence of, denial of or indifference towards the ‘crisis of hope’ as symptomatic of the crisis itself. It is here that I think there is an uncomfortable similarity between the new biopolitics of critical pedagogy and the governmentality of some of the more state-driven and/or mainstream interventions. We must then raise the same question asked about the four types of intervention mentioned in Cummings’s paper: to what extent are these practices benign and progressive, or authoritarian? Who determines appropriate or desirable ways of thinking, feeling and being, and at what point in an educational process or relationship are such decisions made? In other words, if we cannot justify normative standards of justice and well-being outside of what is presently known and accepted, and if we cannot arrogate value for any vision that is not universally and democratically shared by others, must the entire critical project be abandoned in order so that we can embrace and ‘manage’ our present ‘reality’? (Honneth 2007: 50)

## Conclusion

Critical pedagogy has something important to offer here precisely because it asserts that this very question must be placed at the heart of educational practice, and that it must be an open problematic for dialogue and debate *in practice*. From a critical perspective, while there can be many ideas of ‘emotional well-being’ and ‘social justice’, there can be no authoritative definitions of these ideas which are not constituted in practice by the people for whom the categories might matter in

the first place. The fundamental task is therefore not to teach people to feel about themselves or others in a particular, much less in a determined way, and it is not necessarily connected to immediate feelings of 'well-being'. Rather, the aim is to enable people to understand why they have certain feelings, desires and needs; why, perhaps, they do not have or are not 'supposed' to have others; and to critically imagine conditions in which radical alternatives may be possible.

One of the most significant elements of this approach is that the psychological and emotional well-being of individuals is neither explained by nor isolated from the economic, political and cultural forces that they navigate in their everyday lives, or from the material conditions of their existence. I will finish by illustrating this through one example from Chandra Talpade Mohanty, a feminist academic and activist. In a recent book called *Feminism without Borders*, she reflected on a series of 'prejudice reduction' workshops offered by her university during the 1980s in response to a series of racist and homophobic attacks on campus. Analogies may be drawn here to current projects promoting 'multicultural values' in the face of rising Islamophobia and xenophobia. The workshops, conducted by counsellors, psychologists and educators, aimed at 'unlearning racism', 'sensitizing' students to issues of racial difference and conflict, and promoting values of pluralism. Of this, Mohanty says:

prejudice reduction workshops draw on a psychologically based "race relations" analysis and focus on "prejudice" rather than on institutional or historical domination [and] often aim for emotional release rather than political action. The name of this approach is itself somewhat problematic, since it suggests that "prejudice" (rather than domination, exploitation, or structural inequality) is the core problem and that we have to "reduce" it. [...] In focusing on the "healing of past wounds" this approach also equates the positions of dominant and subordinate groups, erasing all power inequalities and hierarchies. And finally, the location of the source of "oppression" and "change" in individuals suggests an elision between ideological and structural understandings of power and domination and individual, psychological understandings of power (2003: 209).

In other words, the emotion-work in critical pedagogy, its biopolitical concern with subjective transformation, is not intended as a therapeutic intervention or a method for the management of emotions, social pacification, or social cohesion. This is not to argue that therapeutic interventions are without value; as Mohanty points out, they can 'set a positive tone for social change' and can certainly be effective at the level of individual contentment. But from the perspective of critical pedagogy, in most—or perhaps even in all—of the interventions into 'emotional well-being' mentioned in Cummings's paper, the 'baseline is still maintaining the status quo', the aim being to educate emotionally 'balanced' people to live productive lives in a structurally unequal society. For, as Mohanty argues, 'if complex structural experiences of domination and resistance can be ideologically reformulated as individual behaviours and attitudes, they can be managed while carrying on business as usual' (2003: 210). And, to quote Kathryn Ecclestone, 'building confidence

and paying some attention to the affective aspects of learning while educating people, as some teachers did in the context of the social struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, is not at all the same as building “self-esteem” now in a context of no political struggle and, arguably, no politics at all’ (2008).

This brings us directly back to Foucault’s notion of biopolitics as a form of power exercised through institutions, bodies of knowledge and administrative techniques that are used for ‘measuring, regulating and controlling people and behaviour in order to ensure that states get the most out of their human resources’ (Danaher 2000: 80). How then might these interventions be re-imagined through the lens of a critical pedagogy? I do not have plans or proposals, but as I have been asked to go beyond negative critique, I can offer some suggestions. These may sound like generalised platitudes here, but they are in fact practices now being undertaken in Britain, and more-so elsewhere, in the marginal and marginalized locations where critical pedagogy thrives. The ‘general promotion of positive attitudes and attributes in schools and universities’ may be accompanied by, or transformed into, the general democratisation of relationships in education, the expansion of anti-oppressive pedagogies throughout the curriculum, and the education of ‘informed discontent’ and political agency. Against individualised systems of assessment and evaluation which reward competition far more than self-actualisation and which sustain myths of meritocracy where none exists, we might make possible the development of actual learning publics. Teachers and students can dedicate time not only to understanding what economic and social conditions might ‘give the human heart the chance for change and the courage and vision to achieve it’ (Marcuse 1976: 19), but also work to create ‘cultures of dissent’ which make the underlying power relations of students’ everyday lives into problems of personal and public pedagogy (Mohanty 2003: 216).<sup>xvi</sup> Rather than preparing subjects which prepare students to emotionally manage the ‘rapid change and uncertainty of modern life’ (Cummings 2009: 3), we might help them in their ‘attempts to develop and transform’ themselves, and to attain a certain mode of being’ that may enable the independent definition of ‘admissible and acceptable forms of existence or political society’ (Foucault 1997: 283)—ones that do not necessarily conform to the horizons imagined in the existing neoliberal model. We can, in other words, find new ways of educating the desire to be fully human and the hope that this is possible through better understanding the complex relationships between subjective and social transformation; between hope and social justice. I thus suggest that it is possible to develop a critical, alternative conception of the biopolitics of pedagogy—one which regards encounters between the biographical and the political, and experiences of emotional dissonance and discontent, as necessary conditions for critical education rather than as its ‘targets’ for amelioration.

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## NOTES

<sup>i</sup> Such education was assumed to be an engine behind great transformations from authoritarian communism to liberal capitalism, which was itself interpreted as the probable engine behind a new kind of global 'well-being' (or so went the narrative in post-soviet Central Asia in the 1990s).

<sup>ii</sup> For good summaries and ranges of readings in the field, see Darder *et al.* (2003), Coté, M. (2007) and Fischman *et al.* (2005).

<sup>iii</sup> See, for example, the Paulo Freire Institute at the University of California Los Angeles (<http://www.paulofreireinstitute.org/>), the Instituto Paulo Freire in Brazil (<http://www.paulofreire.org/Capa/WebHome>), the Paulo and Nita Freire International Project for Critical Pedagogy at McGill University (<http://freire.mcgill.ca/>).

<sup>iv</sup> More recently, writers like Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have expanded Foucault's notion of biopolitics into a new theory of postmodern imperial power at the global level (2001).

<sup>v</sup> Indeed, critics have argued that in recent years there has been increasing interest in 'producing morally tolerable students (right thinking individuals)' rather than analytically competent ones (Wittan 2006), and that it is sometimes assumed that 'social change takes place through a "change of heart": an altering of the affective consciousness of the individual who can help...to create a compassionate culture' (Zavarzadeh 2003, cited in Wittan 2006).

<sup>vi</sup> Jameson (2004: 41, fn. 4) defines anti-utopia as 'the expression of the fiercely anti-utopian and anti-revolutionary ideology for which utopias inevitably lead to repression and dictatorship, to conformity and boredom'.

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<sup>vii</sup> See, for example (Bauman 2004; Coté *et al.* 2007; Giddens 2006; Giroux 2004, 2007; Habermas 1999; Harvey 2005; Jameson 2005; McLaren 2002; Sennett 1998).

<sup>viii</sup> Both Frederic Jameson and Gustavo Gutierrez use the phrase 'root of all evil'.

<sup>ix</sup> However, we must here recall the situated nature of utopian diagnoses, for as Jameson points out, 'their root-of-all-evil diagnosis...will also reflect a specific class-historical standpoint or perspective' (2004: 47). Similarly, Honneth reminds us that 'what constitutes the standard according to which social pathologies are evaluated is an ethical conception of social normality tailored to conditions that enable human self-realization' (2007: 36).

<sup>x</sup> For more about Fromm's psycho-social theory of human need and desire, see John Rickert's (1986) excellent discussion of *Escape from Freedom* (1941/1994), *Man for Himself* (1947/2003) and *The Sane Society* (1955/2001), as well as numerous of Fromm's essays.

<sup>xi</sup> As an example of the mutually dependent relationship between ideational and material change might work, he offered the example of consumption. 'Sane consumption', or patterns of consumption that did not destroy either human beings or their environments, could not be forced upon people. 'To force citizens to consume what the state decides is best – even if it *is* the best – is out of the question. Bureaucratic control that would forcibly block consumption would only make people all the more consumption hungry. Sane consumption can only take place if an ever-increasing number of people *want* to change their consumption patterns and their lifestyles. And this is possible only if people are offered a type of consumption that is more attractive than the one they are used to. This cannot happen overnight or by decree, but will require a slow educational process, and in this the government must play an important role.' (Fromm 1976: 173)

<sup>xii</sup> 'The inability to identify with others was unquestionably the most important psycho-logical condition for the fact that something like Auschwitz could have occurred in the midst of more or less civilized and innocent people.' (Adorno 1967: 8)

<sup>xiii</sup> Ruth Levitas elaborates a useful discussion of this in her essay on 'the imaginary reconstitution of society' (2005). Abensour's goal was to defend William Morris, an English writer and socialist activist whose utopian fiction and political lectures on hope were maligned by champions of 'scientific socialism' in the early twentieth century as overly 'romantic'.

<sup>xiv</sup> There are several excellent discussions of the difference between 'moral education', 'critical pedagogy', 'educated hope' and the 'education of desire', and I hence do not want to reiterate them here. I would rather like to explain how new movements in critical education are embedded in longer critical traditions that address issues of need, desire, will and hope, and in the history of the 'education of desire'.

<sup>xv</sup> Joyce Canaan, for example, found that her 'students were considering the active subject position that engaging in critical hope entails, yet found reasons for rejecting it, hardly surprising in the TINA [There Is No Alternative] logic era' (2005: 89).

<sup>xvi</sup> As an example of the mutually dependent relationship between ideational and material change might work, he offered the example of consumption. 'Sane consumption', or patterns of consumption that did not destroy either human beings or their environments, could not be forced upon people. 'To force citizens to consume what the state decides is best – even if it *is* the best – is out of the question. Bureaucratic control that would forcibly block consumption would only make people all the more consumption hungry. Sane consumption can only take place if an ever-increasing number of people *want* to change their consumption patterns and their lifestyles. And this is possible only if people are offered a type of consumption that is more attractive than the one they are used to. This cannot happen overnight or by decree, but will require a slow educational process, and in this the government must play an important role.' (Fromm 1976: 173)