

## Listening

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The leaders realize, not without a certain astonishment, the wealth of spirit, the capacity for reasoning and clear statement of ideas, the facility for comprehension and assimilation of concepts on the part of populations who only yesterday were forgotten if not despised and regarded by the colonizer, and even by some natives, as incompetent beings.

AMILCAR CABRAL



In this chapter I focus on listening as a potentially revolutionary pedagogical activity. I argue that listening should not be understood as an essentially passive state, and focus on pedagogical situations where the educator can be misled by prejudices regarding the abilities, or lack thereof, of the individuals that the pedagogue is interacting with in a specific pedagogical context. I will be mostly concerned with pedagogy in the context of political and social movements. In the first section, I argue that there is a direct relationship between the manner in which dominant social groups, especially ruling classes in societies stratified along class lines, accumulate social power in a given society and the manner in which the conceptual tools that are available for the interpretation of social reality make it difficult for members of oppressed social groups to interpret social reality in a way that accords with their interests, either because the adequate conceptual tools are not part of the conceptual repertoire of their society, or because they do not have access to them due to their material conditions (grinding poverty, illiteracy, etc.). I argue that the revolutionary pedagogue must be aware of this structural problem.

In the second section, I draw on the methods of participatory action research in an attempt to specify what the revolutionary pedagogue must be like as a listener in order to compensate for the existence of this deficiency in adequate conceptual tools for the analysis of social reality and the identification of objective social interests on the part of members of oppressed social groups. In other words, I specify the qualities that revolutionary pedagogues must possess as

listeners in order to fulfill their task. In the third and concluding section, I argue that in order to compensate for the structural problem that I identify in the first section, pedagogues must be willing to identify with the members of the oppressed groups that they are attempting to teach (in a dialogical manner). They must be willing to commit what Amílcar Cabral called *class suicide* and its analogues in relation to other forms of oppression (Cabral, 1979a, p. 126).

### Social Dominance and Its Reflection in Conceptual Resources

Differentials in social power in a given socially stratified society (stratified along lines of class, gender, and race) are reflected in the set of conceptual tools through which people structure, identify, and analyze their social experiences.<sup>1</sup> This point was made by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expressions of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. (Marx & Engels, 2013, p. 64)

This means that ruling classes in society produce the conceptual scheme through which people interpret the social reality.<sup>2</sup> This becomes clearer if we look at a historical example. In Ancient Egyptian peasants, who made up the vast majority of the population, had no say in the formulation of the conceptual schemes through which social reality was interpreted. Consequently, despite the fact that the ancient Egyptian state apparatus was essentially a machine for the exploitation of peasant labor, as the economic historian Robert C. Allen puts it: “the main function of the Pharaonic state was to transfer a considerable fraction of the income produced by Egypt’s farmers to an unproductive aristocracy,” no conception of exploitation was ever formulated in ancient Egyptian discourse (Allen, 1997, p. 139).<sup>3</sup> For it is clear that it was not in the interests of the Pharaoh, his family, the state bureaucrats, the priesthood, and private landowners to formulate a concept like the concept of the exploitation of labor, since their very existence (qua parasitic, unproductive

aristocracy) depended on the preservation of that relation of exploitation. Consequently, an Egyptian peasant simply could not formulate a belief such as “I am being exploited because...” or “the landowners are exploiting my labor by doing...” This had nothing to do with any lack of conscientiousness qua epistemic agents on their part, but was simply a structural fact about the collective conceptual resources which were available to them. Here we have a case where social power was almost completely in the hands of dominant social groups (in this case grouped by class, and specifically by their relation to the surplus that is produced by the peasantry), and this near complete monopoly of social power was reflected in a near complete monopoly on the manner in which the conceptual resources of this society were structured. I say near complete monopoly because we do have some evidence of resistance to exploitation, articulated in the surviving literature from Ancient Egypt. Specifically, *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant*, composed during the Twelfth Dynasty (1985–1773 BC). However, even this expression of resistance is hampered by the fact that it employs a conceptual scheme that makes it difficult for peasants to see themselves as agents who can bring about justice through their own activity. Ultimately, in this tale the peasant is only petitioning the Pharaoh to rectify an unjust situation (Parkinson, 2000, p. 42).

The transparency of relations of exploitation in the ancient Egypt (along with other societies where the tributary mode of production was dominant), has led some Marxist theorists to maintain that the only way to explain how such societies could survive (in that form) is if ideology was dominant (as in not just existent and influential, but essentially without significant challengers when it comes to interpreting social experience). As Samir Amin puts it: “The transparency of the relationships of exploitation in these societies demands that the ideological play a predominant role and be regarded as sacred” (Amin, 2009, p. 111). If this is true, then the question arises how was ideology so dominant that it could not be challenged in anyway? Perhaps the disparity between exploiters and exploited in the ability to shape collective hermeneutical resources was so great that any attempt to counter the dominance of ideology would not have been able to get off the ground so to speak. Here we have a clear case where the individuals who compose the ruling class “rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus, their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch” (Marx & Engels, 2013, pp. 64–65). This thesis holds across all societies where there is social domination by one group over other groups. For instance, in the colonial situation the conceptual scheme through which social reality was interpreted was one that was imposed by the colonizing social group. As Albert Memmi has pointed out, in Tunisia, for example, the colonized were made to

believe that their destitution has its cause in their own laziness (Memmi, 1974, pp. 124–125). Aimé Césaire has pointed out the same phenomenon in other French colonies: “I am talking about millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkeys” (Césaire, 1972, p. 7).

It is reasonable to suggest that the power of the dominant social group to shape the conceptual schemes through which social reality is interpreted varies from one mode of production to another. In the tributary mode of production, where relations of exploitation are transparent, the only way in which we can explain the relative stability of such social formations is if we posit that the power of the dominant social group to shape the conceptual schemes through which social reality is interpreted is greater than in social formations where relations of exploitation are not transparent (e.g., in social formations where the capitalist mode of production is dominant). However, it is necessary to account for events such as peasant rebellions and slave revolts, so it is necessary to engage in historical studies of specific social formations in order to test this hypothesis.

It is worth noting however, that the existence of slave revolts in Ancient Rome for instance does not by itself disprove this hypothesis, for it is one thing to maintain that the dominant social group produce the conceptual scheme through which social reality is interpreted, and it is another thing to maintain that this conceptual scheme can never justify revolt by the oppressed. What I am claiming is that this conceptual scheme is skewed towards the preservation of the interests of the dominant social group and not that it can never serve the interests of the oppressed social groups. There is a difference between a tool which is not optimally suited to the actualization of one's objective interests and one which can never be used towards the actualization of one's objective interests under any circumstances. I think that the ruling ideology, from the point of view of the oppressed, is similar to the former rather than the latter. Moreover, we must account for why, for instance, slave revolts almost never occurred in ancient Greece (Cartledge, 2003).<sup>4</sup> Ideological limitations and constraints are surely part of the explanation. Though the power of the dominant social group to shape the conceptual schemes through which people understand their social reality may vary from one social formation to another, it is not clear how any kind of domination can be sustained for long periods of time without domination on the ideological level. Hence, my thesis would hold for all Western societies that comprise the imperialist core, as well as the dominated societies of the periphery that are ruled by a class of comprador bourgeoisie in today's world. In so far as both sets of societies are instantiations of socially stratified societies.

The revolutionary pedagogue must take this into consideration when listening to the testimony of members of social classes and groups that are oppressed. It is helpful to draw on some contemporary work in feminist epistemology to specify the characteristics that the revolutionary pedagogue should possess. Miranda Fricker defines the virtue of the hermeneutically just listener (or interlocutor) in the following terms: “an alertness or sensitivity to the possibility that the difficulty one’s interlocutor is having as she tries to render something communicatively intelligible is due not to its being a nonsense or her being a fool, but rather to some sort of gap in collective hermeneutic resources [of a given society]” (Fricker, 2007, p. 169). This point is important insofar as it is necessary for the pedagogue as a listener to think of the manner in which the hegemony of the ideas of the ruling class in a given society might impede the oppressed from articulating their interests and problems in a clear discursive manner. However, unlike Fricker, I would emphasize the lack of availability of the requisite conceptual resources as opposed to the existence of some “gap” in collective conceptual resources. For example, the fieldwork conducted by radical feminist researchers, such as Marjorie Mbilinyi, amongst poor rural women in the Global South shows that the issue is often not so much that the concepts which are necessary for the oppressed to make sense of their social experiences in ways that would enable them to assert their interests and defend them do not exist in their societies, but rather the issue is that due to their social position (being illiterate, lacking formal education, and being relatively isolated from centers of intellectual discourse, etc.) they do not have access to them (Mbilinyi, 1993, 1998, 2015; MOTT, 1979).<sup>5</sup>

The characterization of the epistemic situation of poor rural women and of members of oppressed social groups is a complicated task. On the one hand, we see that research teams like the MOTT (the Mobile Orientation and Training Team of the Indian Social Institute) emphasize the fact that these women suffer from “a state of submerged consciousness,” and I think that what they mean here is that they do not have an explicit structural social analysis of their situation, and not that they do not know anything about their interests and how they are systematically thwarted. On the other hand, Mbilinyi emphasizes that in almost three decades of participatory action research she has been constantly reminded that “exploited and oppressed women *know*—they are not ignorant.” (Mbilinyi, 2015, p. 517).<sup>6</sup> This is not incompatible with the claim that oppressed women may find it difficult to articulate knowledge claims in certain kinds of discursive forms (i.e., in the form of sentences expressing propositions). Reflection on the results obtained by this research indicates that we should not think that an inability to express one’s interpretation of especially crucial aspects of one’s experience in propositional form is a sufficient

condition for inferring that the person who is unable to do so is unable to interpret their experience at all. However, it must be admitted that the inability to articulate one's experiences in discursive form makes it difficult to *develop a theoretically rigorous interpretation of social reality*. The revolutionary pedagogue must confront the question that was posed to members of MOTT: "How can leaders be trained among illiterates?" (MOTT, 1979, p. 15).

### The Relevance of Participatory Action Research for the Revolutionary Pedagogue

Given that the aim of participatory action research (PAR) as it has been formulated by Mbilinyi is to strengthen "the capacity of oppressed and exploited women and men to organize themselves, analyze their own situations, identify basic causes of their problems, and carry out strategic actions for change," it is clear that the techniques developed by those engaged in PAR are relevant to the revolutionary pedagogue (Mbilinyi, 2015, p. 516).<sup>7</sup> The connection between PAR and revolutionary pedagogy is both historical and conceptual. It is historical because PAR's ancestry can be traced to Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (first published in 1968, then translated into English in 1970), and the debates that took place at Dar es Salaam University in the late 1960s and early 1970s about how to recast and adapt historical materialism to the situation in Tanzania (Park & Kinsey, 1991).<sup>8</sup> PAR has been used to help rural women in countries like Tanzania, and India develop their own political and social movements. Both radical pedagogues and the adherents of PAR subscribe to the claim that "Education ought to enable whomever acquires it to fight against oppression" (Mbilinyi, 2010, p. 89) and that "the job of teachers is revolution" (Mbilinyi, 2010, p. 90).

PAR's methodology is essentially aimed at the transformation of both the pedagogues (or the facilitators, in the language of PAR) and the participants (those who would usually be called "the subjects of the study" in standard social sciences research jargon). PAR is based on the assumption that one cannot be a responsible interlocutor without being able to recognize the constraints that are placed on the oppressed groups' ability to communicate and articulate their experiences in propositional form. To this end, facilitators are trained to identify the way in which differentials in social power can structure the conversations that they have with members of oppressed groups (Mbilinyi, 2015, p. 517). The importance of dialogue for conducting participatory action research cannot be overstated. It is precisely the type of dialogue which aims at creating a more inclusive hermeneutic climate. It fits rather well with Fricker's

own description of that kind of dialogue: “such dialogue involves a more pro-active and more socially aware kind of listening than is usually required in more straightforward communicative exchanges. This sort of listening involves listening as much to what is *not* said as to what is said” (Fricker, 2007, pp. 171–172). In this kind of dialogue, it is crucial that the facilitator or pedagogue avoids giving the impression that she is lecturing her interlocutor, since this simply reinforces the epistemic identity which has been thrust upon those individuals, i.e., passive subjects who cannot know or think for themselves.

This kind of dialogue requires that the pedagogue be willing to engage with her interlocutor in a manner which conveys her respect and recognition of the fact that her interlocutor is a capable epistemic agent, who is able to offer reasonable explanations for their behavior and experiences, if they are provided with a suitable dialogical environment. This point is important because one might think that recognition of the existence of a structural imbalance in the conceptual resources that are available for the interpretation of social reality which adversely affects one’s interlocutors should lead one to adopt an undemanding stance towards them. However, one should recognize that their confidence in their own epistemic abilities is often completely shattered, especially in the case of those who have been subjected to abuse. Due to the manner in which their status as epistemic agents has been consistently undermined by structures that perpetuate their oppression, it is important to recognize that members of socially oppressed group may not even trust their own experiences (Maguire, 1987, p. 157). Hence, it is incumbent upon the revolutionary pedagogue to listen to them in a manner that clearly conveys that she takes them seriously as interpreters of their own experiences.

Moreover, one should recognize that even though such individuals may often attempt to explain their situation in a way that seems excessively subjectivist, it is often the case that there are social theories which are implicit in their narratives. The role of the revolutionary pedagogue in a political or social movement is to attempt to get her interlocutors to articulate explicitly the theories that are implicit in their first-person accounts.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, when listening one should not focus obsessively on tracking occurrences of the words that one expects to hear, (e.g., exploitation, alienation, etc.). The pedagogue should convey to her interlocutors that one is a listener who is going to account for the fact that their ability to interpret their experience and to communicate their interpretations in propositional form is hampered by the structural issues that I have identified in the first section.

It is crucial to keep in mind the social situation of one’s interlocutors (and how that affects the conceptual resources that are available to them) when attempting to interpret what they say. Often, the responses to questions will

seem, to the untrained ear, almost unintelligible qua answers to the specific questions that have been posed. They will seem almost completely irrelevant as answers. However, the pedagogue should recognize that the apparent unintelligibility often reflects a deficiency on her part and not on the part of her interlocutors. It is the role of the revolutionary pedagogue to interpret what her interlocutors want to say despite the fact that they lack the conceptual apparatus to convey it in propositional form.

For instance, rural women, from Kadimpara in Bangladesh, gave the following response when asked about their energy needs as part of a project conducted from 1985 to 1987: “We put in a lot of sweat to grow the turmeric. At the time of harvest, we are so desperate for cash to buy our foodstuff that when a rich man offers us 300–400 takas per maund, we sell it right away. He then dries it in the sun and sells dry ginger for more than 2,000 takas per maund” (Bajracharya, Morse, & Pongsapich, 1989, p. 25). The first impression that one may get from this answer is that it is completely inadequate and irrelevant as an answer to the question “what are your energy needs?” After all, what does the price of turmeric have to do with the village’s energy needs? However, the facilitators who have been trained to recognize that their interlocutors might not have the concepts that they need to convey their meaning clearly in propositional form were able to understand that the village women were actually expressing a demand for ways to dry the turmeric that they grow so that they can keep the added value, and not have it accrue to middlemen. In other words, given the situation of the villagers, their answer made perfect sense once one recognized the conceptual constraints that they were operating under.

It is important to recognize that while the apparent confusion is often not attributable to the speaker but rather to the listener, it is equally important to recognize that the search for clarity should not be abandoned. Audrey Thompson, on the other hand, advocates for the adoption of “broken listening” which “is not meant to dispel contradiction, eliminate confusion, and impose clarity” (Thompson, 2010, p. 7). I do not see how progress can be made in terms of the development of a more refined understanding of social reality on the part of the oppressed without an emphasis on clarity as a goal for the oppressed in relation to their interpretations of their own social reality. Thompson focuses excessively on the pedagogue in the context of her discussion of clarity, in the sense that she focuses on whether the content of the dialogue should be transparent to the pedagogue. On the other hand, I am more interested in the necessary conditions which must obtain for the oppressed to attain clarity regarding their own interpretations of reality. Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that the oppressed somehow wish to preserve unclarity in relation to their own interpretations of social reality. This excessive focus on the



pedagogue or on what dialogue is thought to accomplish for the pedagogue is also reflected in some of Alison Jones' work. Jones argues that "while marginalized groups may be invited—with the help of the teacher—to make their own conditions visible to themselves, the crucial aspect of this process is making themselves visible to the powerful" (Jones, 1999, p. 308). There are two things to note here. First, the oppressed must indeed make themselves visible to the powerful not as a gesture of surrender at the epistemic level, but rather as a material political gesture. The powerful should see the oppressed and should understand that the oppressed have understood the conditions which make the perpetuation of their oppression possible and that they have in hand a theory of social transformation which makes it possible for them to **under end** their oppression. The powerful should be confronted by the presence of the oppressed as a historical subject which they should fear. Jones claims that in dialogue "the address of the other involves answering the colonizer's benign, maybe even apologetic, request: 'tell us exactly what happened'" (Jones, 1999, p. 309). However, in the case of the colonial context for example, the oppressed were encouraged by anti-colonial movements to make themselves visible to the colonizer not in order to tell them what happened and how they felt about it qua passive objects. Rather they made themselves visible to the colonizers in order to tell them what they would do, specifically, *what they would do to them*. Second, there is a significant difference between the context that I am interested in, namely the process of the construction of political and social movements that are led by the oppressed themselves, and the context within which Jones is presenting her critique of dialogue, namely the classroom. In the context of the process of the construction of political and social movements, the oppressed are almost exclusively focused on understanding their own conditions, and not on revealing themselves to the pedagogue. In fact, the aim of dialogue in the context that I am interested in is to create social movements that do not need the guidance or even the presence of the pedagogue. The classroom as a site that binds the interlocutors to the pedagogue is absent in the context that I am interested in.

Facilitators must also be aware that communication in discursive form (in the form of sentences expressing propositions) is not the only way through which people can convey what they mean. Facilitators must be attuned to the possibility that their interlocutors might be more comfortable communicating their interpretations of their experiences in other ways, and that they might be more receptive to the information that the facilitator wants to convey if it is conveyed using other means of communication. Moreover, one should recognize that in relation to certain domains of knowledge, non-verbal forms of expression may be superior to verbal forms of expression. This was something

that the researchers of MOTT discovered during their work with rural women in the state of Orissa (now known as Odisha) in eastern India. The research team was attempting to train a group of 40 women (32 of whom could not read or write at all) to become health workers in their communities. The team was essentially not making any progress through discursive exposition of lessons about basic health practices and how to identify the various diseases which are prevalent in the region. They noticed that the women would break out into chants, dances during lessons. At first, they interpreted this as a sign that the women were simply not interested in learning. However, through careful thought about the hermeneutic tools which these women had access to, they came to realize that chants and dances were key tools through which those women interpreted their experiences and conveyed them to others. In other words, the facilitators were able to discover that the women far from being uninterested in learning were subtly trying to educate their would-be educators on how best to educate them. Consequently, the facilitators changed their approach, and crafted the entire syllabus in the form of dances and chants (MOTT, 1979, p. 66). The radical pedagogue must not forget that “it is essential to educate the educator himself,” and that the educator must at all times be prepared to be educated by the recipients of education regarding both the content of the education and the form in which it is presented (Marx, 1978, p. 144). However, recognizing that non-verbal forms of communication may be superior to verbal forms of communication in relation to some domains of knowledge does not imply that one should hold the view that the expression of knowledge in propositional form is not important as a goal in relation to other domains of knowledge, e.g., theories of history.

We should not think that the acquisition of adequate theoretical models for understanding social reality is superfluous, simply because people are not helpless without them. The issue is whether the acquisition of such theoretical models is helpful for the oppressed in their struggle to overturn the given social order, given that one of the ways in which the social order perpetuates itself is through the imposition of a conceptual scheme for the interpretation of social reality that is skewed towards the interests of the dominant social groups. This is not to say that there is no room for maneuver within the context of that conceptual scheme for members of oppressed social groups. However, this does not mean that this conceptual scheme is *optimal* for the analysis of society from the standpoint of the interests of the oppressed, and the aim of radical pedagogy should be to overcome the constraints that are imposed by this conceptual scheme.

Recognizing that the fault may often be with the pedagogue, and not with her interlocutors, the radical pedagogue must always check with her interlocutor in order to ascertain if she has understood her correctly, and, more

importantly, must realize that her interlocutor may not verbalize her belief that she has been misunderstood. Revisiting testimonial exchanges in this manner allows the interlocutor to add things that they wanted to say but that they were reluctant to say the first time around because they might have thought that the person listening would treat what they said as an expression of folly, if they did not have the concepts needed to express what they meant clearly in propositional form. There is also another factor which should motivate revisiting testimonial exchanges, namely the fact that the interlocutor might have more to add because her confidence in her epistemic abilities has increased because of her interaction with a sensitive listener.<sup>10</sup>

### Committing Class Suicide and Listening in a Revolutionary Way

If the pedagogue comes from a social group that is relatively powerful in relation to her interlocutors, the attempt must be made to adjust for this fact by identifying with one's interlocutors. Identification in this context requires that the pedagogues live among the people and that they actively participate in their struggles. For instance, if the pedagogue is working with women who are struggling to have a maternity clinic built in their village, the pedagogue should be actively involved in their struggle. She should take part in their protest marches, participate in their conformation with government officials and so on. In other words, identification here is understood as a form of ongoing concrete social activity (this might help differentiate identification from merely feeling sympathy towards their struggles). The thesis is that without such identification, the pedagogue will not be able to understand the specific ways in which the oppressed have difficulties in articulating their interests in relation to specific demands in the form of sentences expressing propositions. Failure to recognize this and to attempt to correct for it can lead to the failure of entire projects. For example, the members of MOTT emphasize that "Individuals can spend years in the rural area without really coming close to the rural poor, except physically" (MOTT, 1979, p. 16). In other words, without a deep commitment to and identification with the interests of the rural poor (taking the interests of the poor to be one's own), especially the women among them, one will not be able to understand their concerns and the way in which their ability to express their concerns in propositional form is often thwarted because of the lack of adequate hermeneutical resources. To do this the pedagogues must commit class suicide. The term 'class suicide' as coined by Amílcar Cabral refers to the need of members of the petty bourgeoisie to forgo their allegiance to the interests of their class and to identify with the interests of the

oppressed. In other words, the radical pedagogue must destroy her sense of self qua member of the petty bourgeoisie or a member of the bourgeoisie, and “be restored to life in the condition of a revolutionary worker completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which he [or she] belongs” (Cabral, 1979a, p. 136).

This means that tremendous demands are made of the pedagogue. In fact, the MOTT researchers go so far as to say that an effective facilitator among the rural poor must reconstruct their own sense of identity, i.e., the effective facilitators must become class traitors, and if they are men, gender traitors: “we must die to our class-belonging [become class traitors] and resurrect with the victims of a class-society” (MOTT, 1979, p. 29). It is worth remarking that even though the language of treason might be criticized for being rather too dramatic, it is in some respects more accurate than the language of allyship (which seems to dominate “progressive” discourse in North America). The language of treason makes it clear that a man who, for example, attempts to take a stand against a patriarchal social system is betraying his own material interests as well as the normative ideals that have shaped his very sense of selfhood. He is rebelling against the destiny which was assigned to him to by society (i.e., to be an oppressor of women). It is not clear that the label of “ally” adequately describes the massive rupture which is necessary for someone attempting to identify with the interests of the oppressed (which would involve undermining one’s own material interests qua member of a privileged group), and therefore someone attempting to essentially destroy their social identity and replace it with a new one. Moreover, because class suicide requires that one should turn against the normative ideals which have previously shaped one’s self-understanding, it is inevitable that class suicide will not be an instantaneous resurrection with a new identity. It will inevitably be a process with many temporary setbacks. This means that class suicide is a process which requires constant self-criticism as well criticism by others. The context for such criticism is provided by the dialogical context. It is through interactions with one’s interlocutors that elements, e.g., bourgeois prejudices that one carries, about oneself that are not visible to oneself can be made known to oneself through others, who due to their social position are better attuned towards the detection of elements, and who consequently can teach the pedagogue how to progress further towards the successful actualization of the process that is class suicide. Nonetheless, this is only a byproduct of the pedagogical process, it is not its main aim.

Though it may be demanding, identification with the interests and social position (and the hermeneutical and epistemic limitations that are associated with it) of the oppressed is what makes revolutionary pedagogy possible: “we need, therefore, to enter with empathy into the ‘limit-situation’ in which these

people are caught. If we succeed we will find the explanations they give, of their way of life and of their economic practices, often very admirable" (MOTT, 1979, p. 23). Hence, to learn to listen in a revolutionary manner, one must participate in the revolutionary struggle. No sheer mental act of willing can serve as a substitute for concrete struggle. Class suicide and its attendant ideological transformation can only take place in the course of a process of concrete struggle: "Such reconversion—re-Africanization in our case—may take place before the struggle but is completed only during the course of the struggle, through daily contact with the mass of the people and the communion of sacrifices which the struggle demands" (Cabral, 1979b, p. 145). What we have here in outline is the description of the pedagogical process as essentially a "struggle against our own weaknesses" (Cabral, 1979a, p. 121). It is a struggle against the weaknesses of the pedagogues in relation to their underdeveloped receptivity to knowledge and interpretations of reality expressed in non-propositional form. It is also a struggle against the weaknesses of the oppressed in relation to their ability to interpret social reality in propositional form in a manner that accords best with their objective interests.

### Notes

- 1 The feminist epistemologist Miranda Fricker makes a similar point with her concept of hermeneutic injustice. According to Fricker hermeneutic injustice is "the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource" (Fricker, 2007, p. 155). However, Fricker, in so far as she approaches the issue from what remains an essentially liberal standpoint, is primarily concerned with how the individual listener can attempt to compensate for the existence of hermeneutic injustice through being a virtuous listener. She is not primarily interested in how one can develop a revolutionary pedagogical practice that contributes towards the revolutionary overthrow of the material conditions which give rise to hermeneutic injustice in the first place. However, combined with a materialist social theory, her work is clearly useful in articulating what the revolutionary pedagogue must do as a listener. In this chapter, I will be using her term 'hermeneutical resources' interchangeably with the term 'conceptual resources.'
- 2 I think that this is a more precise and accurate formulation of what Paulo Freire is trying to capture with the idea that the oppressed internalize their oppressors (Freire, 1983, p. 166).
- 3 Though there was certainly a conception of justice or Ma'at (Jeffers, 2013). Nonetheless, the concept of economic exploitation has greater specificity than the concept

- of injustice, so one should not infer from this fact that there was an adequate substitute for the concept of exploitation.
- 4 Although we should not think that resistance to slavery was ever absent. However, there is a significant difference between resistance to slavery and full-blown slave rebellions.
  - 5 It is important to qualify the lack of education as a lack of “formal” education, rather than a lack of education as such, since in many cases those women have had to learn to abide by the limits of what they can and cannot do given the oppressive structures which govern their lives. Even if this does not amount to a clear interpretation of their social experiences, it is a form of education which helps them identify the contours of their social environments and potential grounds for resistance. As the members of the Mobile Orientation and Training Team (MOTT) of the Indian Social Institute (based in New Delhi) put it in their report outlining the lessons learned from conducting participatory action research among various communities in rural India from 1977 to 1979: “Though life has taught people struggling for mere survival many lessons, they nevertheless live in a state of submerged consciousness” (MOTT, 1979, p. 24).
  - 6 I should add that there is a strand in Mbilinyi’s writings that can be characterized as quite close to the feminist standpoint epistemology that has been articulated by Nancy Hartsock. Mbilinyi often seems to subscribe to Hartsock’s thesis that: “like the lives of proletarians according to Marxian theory, women’s lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point on male supremacy, a vantage point which can ground a powerful critique of the phallocratic institutions and ideology which constitute the capitalist form of patriarchy” (Hartsock, 1983, p. 284).
  - 7 See also Bajracharya, Morse, and Pongsapich (1987, p. 4).
  - 8 Mbilinyi also emphasizes the importance of the politically and socially charged environment in Tanzania in the 1970s in motivating the development of the methods of participatory action research: “Intellectuals in Tanzania were challenged to identify with the interests and struggles of oppressed laboring classes in Tanzania, and to promote a new kind of research which sought to break the division of mental and manual labor” (Mbilinyi, 1989, pp. 207–208).
  - 9 Compare this to Mao’s approach to political education: “we must teach the masses clearly what we have received from them confusedly” (quoted from Freire, 1983, p. 82).
  - 10 For a specific example of this scenario see Mbilinyi (1998).

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