

Title: Is Transformative Learning the Trojan Horse of Western Globalization?

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There have been a number of major changes in the world since 1983, when I published the article titled “Linguistic Roots of Cultural Invasion in Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy.” My critique was prompted by reading the account of two cultural linguists, Ron and Suzanne Wong Scollon, of the differences between the mainstream Western patterns of thinking, and that of the Fort Chipewyan in the Northern part of Alberta. This early effort to clarify the ways in which Freire’s ideas, and thus his pedagogy, was based on the assumptions of the Western Enlightenment has now been validated by a number of Third World activists who initially were highly committed as well as knowledgeable followers of Freire. This group of activist included, among others, Siddhartha (who from 1978-1984 served as the Asian coordinator of Freirean pedagogical methods), Loyda Sanchez (a militant in the Bolivian ELN and worker in the Popular Education movement based on Freirean ideas), Grimaldo Rengifo (co-founder of PRATEC and an early user of Freirean ideas in the Peruvian popular literacy program), and Gustavo Esteva (an activist who works with marginalized indigenous and urban groups in Mexico and Central America). In a collection of essays titled Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the Environmental Crisis (Bowers and Apffel-Marglin, 2005), they describe the difficulties they encountered in getting the members of indigenous cultures to engage in the Freirean process of consciousness raising as part of becoming literate.

As they explain in their essays, Freire’s assumptions about the emancipatory nature of critical reflection, as well as how its practice supposedly leads to the highest expression of humankind’s potential, were fundamentally different from the cultural ways of knowing of the indigenous groups these activists worked with. What separates the observations of these activists about the Western colonizing nature of Freire’s pedagogy from the uncritical promotion of his ideas in Western colleges of education is that these activists spoke the local languages. Thus, their knowledge of the indigenous cultures they initially set out to transform, and their subsequent realization of how the colonizing influence of Freire’s ideas would undermine the local commons, stands in sharp contrast to the ethnocentrism of the promoters of Freire’s ideas who have ignored the differences in cultural ways of knowing.

Another fundamental difference is that these Third World activists, who are now engaged in cultural affirmation programs that strengthen resistance to economic and technological globalization, are acutely aware of the deepening ecological crisis—which, according to Moacir Gadotti (the Director of the Instituto Paulo Freire in Brazil), Freire only became aware of just before his death.

In addition to the criticisms of Third World activists, there are other reasons for reassessing the adequacy of the ideas of Freire and John Dewey—and more generally the conceptual foundations of the various interpretations of transformative learning theory. Since publishing my 1983 essay on the colonizing nature of Freire's pedagogy, the rate and scale of environmental changes have become more visible and are now having a greater impact on peoples' lives—from the state of their health to sinking further into poverty. Unless the environmentally destructive nature of local and global cultural practices are reversed or at least significantly mitigated, wars over the control of potable water, fisheries, and sources of energy will become even more widespread. Other changes occurring since 1983 include the acceleration in the process of economic and technologically-based globalization—which are now being driven by a neo-liberal ideology that promotes the outsourcing of work and technologies, the effort to achieve greater efficiencies and profits through further automation, and the reduction in health care and retirement benefits for the workers that remain. This neo-liberal agenda, which is spreading around the world, is being furthered by such international institutions as the World Bank, the World Trade Organizations, and the further merging of Western science and the industrial culture. In addition to increasing the rate of environmental degradation, globalization of the West's industrial culture is also undermining the linguistic/cultural diversity that is essential to maintaining biological diversity and to resisting the further spread of a market mentality.

In light of the criticisms by these Third World activists, as well as the deepening environmental crisis and the Western colonizing trends, it is particularly important to ask the question: why have these changes not led to a critical assessment of the silences, ethnocentrism, misconceptions, and hubris of Freire, Dewey, and the many professors of education who promote the spread of transformative learning theories? Why have so many editors of Western presses become agents of political correctness by refusing to publish a critical rethinking of the cultural assumptions shared by Freire, Dewey and their many

followers? And why is criticism of the promoters of transformative learning theorists rejected on the grounds that it is “bashing” (which was Nicholas Burbules’ justification for rejecting my article on Dewey that was subsequently published in Environmental Ethics). Could it be that the cultural alternatives to economic and technological globalization, and the neo-liberal ideology globalization is based upon, would require acknowledging that many of the core cultural assumptions that underlie the ideas of Freire, Dewey, and their many followers are shared by the industrial culture? Freire, Gadotti, and the theorists who are primarily popularizers of Freire’s ideas are critical of capitalism and, now, of economic globalization—but that they avoid facing their own complicity in the efforts to globalize the non-economic side of Western liberalism by referring to the industrial culture as a conservative force.

The labeling of the ideology and practices of economic globalization as conservative helps to hide the basic reality that is being experienced by nearly everybody on a daily basis: namely, that the growing dominance of a market mentality is forcing people around the world to engage in transformative learning; but it is not the emancipatory nor is it the progressive view of transformative learning promised by its proponents. Rather, new technologies, innovations in what can be outsourced, new consumer goods and fads (often professionally motivated shifts in expert knowledge), new drugs and the accompanying discovery of their health risks, the growing spread of unemployment and underemployment through different ranks of society, and environmental changes ranging from the pollution of water to the decline in fisheries, are forcing transformations in how people think and respond to an increasing rate of change. Further evidence of transformative learning that does not fit the vision of Freire, Dewey, and their followers include how global warming is changing the basic weather patterns of the Inuit of Northern Canada, which forces them to relearn how to read the new and increasingly unpredictable patterns. And the increasing amount of mercury now found in North American lakes makes it necessary to engage in transformative learning—including where to find fish that has not been contaminated as well as how to deal with the physical deformation of children caused by mercury and other toxins (which will become for their parents a lifelong transformative learning experience that also differs from the educational theorist’s romantic vision). These two examples, which could be multiplied

many times over, are cited in order to make the point that there is nothing conservative about the nature and impact of industrial culture—and the ideology it rests upon.

Another point needs to be made, and that is by identifying the West's industrial culture as conservative, the followers of Freire and Dewey are able to avoid facing up to the fact that their liberal ideas about the need to emancipate students from what they claim is the oppressive nature of all intergenerational knowledge and traditions, which they consider to be their world-wide mission, makes them complicit in the spread of Western hegemony. The educational approaches to transformative learning --Dewey's method of experimental inquiry, Freire's process of conscientization, Giroux's teacher who is to act as a "transformative intellectual"—even in Islamic cultures, McLaren's appeal for a "pedagogical negativism" (that is to doubt everything) and now for them to become followers of Che Guevara's Marxism, and the professors of education who advocate that students should construct their own knowledge—support the transformative nature of industrial culture in undermining what remains of the world's diverse commons and thus cultural sites of resistance to the spread of a consumer dependent and environmentally destructive lifestyle. As I have suggested elsewhere (2001, 2003, 2004, 2005), the emphasis on transformative approaches to learning undermine other forms of knowledge and intergenerational renewal that are essential to the resisting the spread of the anomic form of individualism that is dependent upon consumerism. To make the criticism more directly, none of the transformative learning theorists recognize the importance of the culturally diverse approaches to sustaining the commons—which are conserving in terms of natural systems and cultural traditions of mutual aid and community self-sufficiency.

The way in which Moacir Gadotti represents the nature and purpose of transformative learning is particularly important to consider, as he makes the ecological crisis the central focus of his analysis and prescription for reform. He claims that just before his death Freire became aware of the importance formulating an ecopedagogy that would address the roots of the crisis, and that he, Gadotti, was simply expanding upon Freire's ideas that would lead to the recognition of Freire as a pioneer environmental thinker. As Gadotti did not make available Freire's writings on the nature of an ecopedagogy, there is no way of verifying Gadotti's claim. But an examination of Gadotti's writings and the public talk he gave at a recent conference sponsored by the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education

reveal that Gadotti has departed in a significant way from Freire's idea of how knowledge is to be transformed. At the same time, Gadotti reproduces both the silences and colonizing hubris that can be traced back to Freire's penchant for interpreting cultural differences as representing different stages in the evolutionary development of cultures.

A key characteristic of Freire's thinking, which Gadotti revises in an even more problematic way, is that there is only one valid approach to knowledge, and that this approach (conscientization roughly interpreted as critical reflection) must lead to a transforming praxis. Learning, as Freire put it, involves a constant renaming of the world of previous generations. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1974 edition), he writes that "to speak a true word is to transform the world" (p. 75). Thus, humans can only realize their fullest potential as they learn to speak a "true word." To quote Freire again, "To exist humanly, is to name the world, to change it." He goes on to reject the intergenerational knowledge achieved by all the world's cultures by claiming that "once named, the world in its turn reappears as a problem and requires of them a new naming." What has become an unquestioned Truth for his many followers around the world is that "men are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection" (p. 76, italics in original). Anything other than transformative learning based on critical reflection and the assumption that change is inherently both humanizing and progressive in nature must be viewed as a "banking approach" to learning where the Other transfers (imposes) knowledge that alienates humans from fulfilling their essential nature as makers of history (1985, p. 199).

In the essay, "Pedagogy of the Earth and Culture of Sustainability" (2000), Gadotti repeats Freire's warning about the dehumanizing nature of the banking approach to learning by quoting Emile Durkheim's warning of the danger of turning the process of education into the transmission of culture "from one generation to the next" (p. 8). Gadotti agrees with Freire that, regardless of the differences in cultural knowledge systems, there is only one true approach to knowledge. But he deviates from Freire's position on the emancipatory power of critical reflection and the constant renaming of the world by claiming that an ecopedagogy can only achieve the goal of creating a planetary consciousness (and thus a planetary citizen) as each individual undertakes "the grand journey...in his interior universe and in the universe that surrounds him" (p. 8). This reformulation is deeply problematic for a number of reasons. The most obvious is that subjectively based knowledge, which is always influenced by the

individual's taken-for-granted cultural assumptions, will not lead to a shared understanding of what is required of a planetary citizen. Given the inability today of supposedly rational people from different cultures who, for example, exercise their rationality within the context of a Hindu, Muslim, or Christian based culture, cannot agree in ways that would lead them to give up their own deeply held assumptions about the origins and nature of reality, it would seem that Gadotti would have avoided making the "grand journey" into the interior universe of each individual the basis of an ecopedagogy. The only possible explanation is that viewing knowledge as subjectively constituted is consistent with the widely held view of many transformative learning theorists that students should construct their own knowledge—and what better way to avoid the cultural transmission model of learning than to locate the source of true knowledge in the interior, subjective universe of the individual and in his (Gadotti's culturally influenced gender bias) subjective interpretation of the surrounding universe.

Aside from this difference in the way emancipatory knowledge is to be attained, Freire and Gadotti share more than the assumptions about the progressive nature of change, the need to impose on the rest of the world's cultures a single approach to knowledge, and their way of understanding what constitutes the highest expression of human nature. That is, they both share the same silences—which are also reproduced in the thinking of their many followers. The silences include avoiding any recognition of the traditions of different cultures that sustain their commons, that are sources of empowerment and self-sufficiency within the possibilities and limits of the local bioregions, and that are the basis of the moral codes that govern human/nature relationships. While Gadotti must be credited for his in-depth discussion of the cultural forces that are major contributors to the ecological crisis, he repeats the error of Freire and his followers in not addressing the educational issues that surround the need for students to understand that while socially unjust and ecologically unsustainable practices need to be reformed, there is also a need to become aware of what needs to be conserved as sources of resistance to being colonized by the Western project of economic globalization—which is another form of planetary citizenship, but one suited more to the requirements of an industrial/consumer dependent culture.

One of the ironies surrounding the widespread acceptance of the ideas of Freire, Dewey, and now such current proponents of transformative learning as Edmund O'Sullivan

is that they all rely upon evolutionary theory to explain cultural differences. For Dewey and Freire it was Social Darwinism; while for Gadotti and O'Sullivan it is the Darwinism of Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme. The evolutionary-based hubris of Dewey and Freire can be seen in how they understood the more culturally evolved nature of their respective one-true-approach to knowledge, and in their total indifference to the possibility that we can learn anything about environmentally sustainable practices from cultures that Dewey referred to as "savages" (1916, pp. 394, 396) and as based on a "spectator theory of knowledge" and that Freire referred to as backward and living an existence little advanced over that of animals.

As this criticism of Freire's may appear as unfair, I shall quote the attributes he associates with different levels of cultural development. In Education for Critical Consciousness (1973), he describes the characteristics of the "backward regions of Brazil" in the following way: "men of semi-intransitive consciousness cannot apprehend problems situated outside their sphere of biological necessity. Their interests," he continues, "center almost totally around survival, and they lack a sense of life on a more historical plane" (p. 17). As cultures evolve beyond this near animal state of existence, they move to what he calls "naïve transitivity" where they begin to respond to questions that arise from the context they live in; but their "permeable" state of existence is still limited by their tendency to rely upon polemics and magical explanations. The most evolved cultures are characterized by what Freire calls a "critically transitive consciousness"—which is the state of consciousness that he identifies himself with. The attributes of this state of consciousness include depth in the interpretations of problems, substitution of casual explanations for magical explanations, the practice of dialogue, accepting what is new—and here Freire makes the rare acknowledgement of the need to accept what is good in the old (p. 18).

Unfortunately, he fails to recognize that this acknowledgement does not fit with his theory about the need for each generation to rename the world and to avoid forms of knowledge that do not emerge from the process of critical reflection. An example of his inability to provide a more balanced understanding of the need for reform as well as the need to renew some forms of intergenerational knowledge can be seen in his discussion of the nature of mentoring—which is a relationship where empowering traditions and skills are intergenerationally renewed in face-to-face relationships. In Mentoring the Mentor (1997), he suggests the possibility of a more complex understanding of the differences in cultural

knowledge systems when he writes “what I am proposing is a profound respect for the cultural identity of students—a cultural identity that implies respect for the language of the other, the color of the other, the gender of the other, the sexual orientation of the other, the intellectual capacity of the other; that implies the ability to stimulate the creativity of the other” (p. 307-308). This explanation of the role of the mentor holds out the promise that he is finally understanding the need for a more complex account of the importance of intergenerational renewal in the mentor/mentee relationship as being complementary to the transformative power of critical reflection. But he returns to the mission of promoting the western imperialism that he masks as a liberatory pedagogy that can be traced back to his most seminal book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, when he describes the teacher’s role as a mentor. As this is such an important point, it is essential that the reader ask whether the following statement is evidence of Freire’s inability to recognize how he subordinates cultural differences to the need to impose a particular set of Western cultural assumptions upon others—ironically, in the name of emancipation and dialogue. He writes that

The fundamental task of the teacher is a liberatory task. It is not to encourage the mentor’s goals and aspirations and dreams to be reproduced in the mentees, the students, but to give rise to the possibility that students become owners of their own history. This is how I understand the need that teachers have to transcend their merely instructive task and to assume the ethical posture of a mentor who truly believes in the total autonomy, freedom, and development of those he or she mentors. p. 324, italics added

What if the traditions of the culture do not include this Western Enlightenment ideal of “total” freedom and the autonomous individual? And what if the members of other cultures instead recognize total freedom to be an abstraction of Western intellectuals who do not understand the interdependencies and historical continuities that characterize how all individuals are nested in a culture, and how the culture they are linguistically embedded in is nested in the natural systems that sustain life? A possible explanation for why Freire does not recognize the fundamental contradiction that is at the center of his theory of transformative learning is that his evolutionary way of understanding cultural differences leads him to promote what he understands as the most evolved way of thinking—which is his mission to impose on the less evolved cultures.



Gadotti's evolutionary way of thinking is more implicit, yet every bit as imperialistic in intent. Following an insightful critique of how the industrial/capitalistic culture is ravaging the environment, he presents his own vision of how to move from what Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme refer to as the technozoic phase of evolution to the life-sustaining ecozoic phase. Like Freire and Dewey, he proposes a single approach to knowledge: that is, the grand journal into each individual's interior universe. It is important to note that Gadotti anticipates the possibility of criticism for his recommendation that the world's cultural diversity is to be replaced by what he refers to as a "planetary citizenship, a planetary civilization, a planetary consciousness" (p. 2. italics in original). Thus, he argues that "globalization in itself does not pose problems, since it constitutes an unprecedented process of advancement in the history of humankind" (p. 8). It is interesting to note here that scientists and techno-utopians whose hubris has led them into the morass of scientism also explain that natural selection is leading to a global culture that will be based on the better adapted culture memes (Bowers, 2003, 2004). Gadotti also shares with these futurist thinkers the vision that the next stage in globalization will be characterized by cooperation and solidarity. In effect, Gadotti leaves the reader with the idea that the "invisible hand" of natural selection that supposedly guides the transition of cultures from the stage of conflict and aggression to the higher stage where the elimination of differences leads automatically to solidarity will be activated by the grand subjective journey of individuals who are no longer influenced by the culture they are born into. It is important to remind readers, before they become mesmerized by this oft-repeated Western vision of entering a secular paradise where capitalists become at one with their critics, that the neo-liberal corporate culture also needs a planetary consciousness-- but one that shares the same dependency upon industrially processed food, health care, entertainment, and that finds consumerism as the highest goal in life.

It is important to acknowledge that the rise of liberal/Enlightenment ideas in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century led to basic improvements in the lives of the people of Western Europe who had been oppressed by feudal ideas and institutions—and by the authoritarian political systems that were equally resistant to change. The emphasis on the authority and power of critical reflection to overturn unjust traditions, the idea that change can lead to social progress, the view of the individual as having the power of self-determination, and the idea

that new forms of knowledge will mitigate the ravages of the illness and the stultifying nature of work, led to important advances. But it also needs to be kept in mind that the widespread acceptance in the West of these ideas also coincided with the rise of the Industrial Revolution. And more importantly, these liberal ideas had no self-limiting principle. That is, the dominant motivation has been to achieve more and faster progress, more reliance on critical reflection (increasingly by experts promoting the development of new technologies and markets), more labor saving technologies (and now the elimination of the need for workers), newer drugs (and the control of the American Congress to ensure the growing dominance of the drug industry), and more self-determination—including self-determination in the construction of knowledge and values. The lack of any self-limiting principles, which made these liberal ideas even more problematic when they were merged with the market liberalism of John Locke, Adam Smith, and, later, Herbert Spencer, becomes especially evident when we consider the current drive to turn every aspect of the environmental and cultural commons into market opportunities—and to convert the entire world to a survival of the fittest business mentality.

To reiterate a point that I have been making in the earlier part of my critique, in basing their interpretations of transformative learning on these liberal assumptions Freire, Dewey, Gadotti, and the current group of critical pedagogy fundamentalists not only reproduce the contradictions that arise when relying on abstract ideas for reforming a culturally diverse world, but they also reproduce in their interpretations of transformative learning the silences that characterized the earlier phase of liberal/Enlightenment thinking. These silences in the writings of the earlier liberal/Enlightenment thinkers led to ignoring the differences in cultural ways of knowing. In reality, it was not really a case of ignoring these differences. Rather, in the early phase of liberal thinking it was a matter of viewing other cultures as primitive, uncivilized, and as heathens that needed to be turned into Christians. The deficit model of culture has in more recent times been revised so that they are now viewed a pre-literate, pre-scientific, economically and technologically undeveloped, limited by a spectator approach to knowledge, and locked into a semi-intransitive state of consciousness. What earlier and present liberal theorists have overlooked is that many of these non-Western culture have developed in ways that have a smaller ecological footprint,

and many of them place more emphasis on the forms of knowledge and relationships that sustain the commons in ways that reduce the dependence upon consumerism.

The reductionism ways in which various traditions of liberal thinking have categorized non-Western cultures, as well as marginalized cultures in the West, have led to ignoring the need for an in-depth understanding of their approaches to knowledge and intergenerational renewal. This reductionist way of thinking, as I have been arguing, is part of the reason for the imperialist orientation of transformative learning theorists such as Freire and Dewey, and the professors of education who are now promoting transformative learning in 29 non-Western countries. More importantly, this bias which shows up in the messianic nature of transformative learning theorists should also be understood as one of the reasons that, when theorists such as Gadotti, O'Sullivan, and McLaren do address environmental issues, their panacea is to promote the global acceptance of an even more culturally uninformed interpretations of liberal ideals. That is, their response to the industrial culture that is accelerating the rate of change in the Earth's natural system, and in making the people of the world more dependent upon consumerism, is to promote more change through an approach to education that fosters a rootless form of individualism.

But they add to the crisis of the commons that is spreading around the world in other ways. Their uncritical embrace of various explanations --current versions of Social Darwinism, the oppressive (banking) nature of all cultural models of learning other than their own, the messianic drive to share (impose) our highest ideals on other cultures, the effort to enable other cultures to achieve a Western interpretation of what constitutes the fullest expression of their humanity, and so forth—all add up to a thinking of other cultures as fundamentally deficient—and thus, as Derek Rasmussen points out, as in need of being rescued (Bowers, Apffel-Marglin, pp. 115-131). This way of thinking does not take account of the fact that there are still nearly 6000 languages still spoken in the world today—with a third of them in danger of becoming extinct in the near future. Conserving this diversity in language/knowledge systems is directly related to conserving biological diversity, as these languages encode knowledge accumulated over many generations of living in one place and from observing the interdependent relationships that make up the natural and cultural ecology. Unfortunately, transformative learning theorists have not become a voice for educational reforms that support linguistic and, by extension, biological diversity. As long as

they maintain their core ideas about learning being only a transformative, emancipatory experience, any references to the importance of cultural diversity is simply empty rhetoric that has as its real purpose the need to represent themselves as being on the politically correct side of the social justice and environmental debate.

In effect, Freire and the other transformative learning theorists should be understood as having accepted themselves as being subjects of the banking process of education that they reject for others. That is, their professors imposed upon them a restricted political language that neither they nor their professors have thought critically about. And one of the primary characteristic of this political language, which I have earlier identified with classical liberalism (sans Adams Smith's emphasis on the progressive nature of a market economy) is that it lacks a vocabulary for naming those aspects of culture that are now the only real source of resistance to the imperialism of market liberalism. It is especially noteworthy that the word "commons" is not part of the emancipatory liberal discourse. The problem with the language of liberalism can be seen in Gadotti's way of addressing the ecological crisis. Globalizing the romantic idea of a planetary consciousness emerging from the grand journey into the individual's subjective universe simply does not address the genuine sources of resistance to economic globalization and its impact on natural systems.

What from the beginning of human history has been understood as the commons, and which exists today in various state of viability in the diverse cultures of the world, is the only alternative to the way in which the West's industrial culture is creating greater dependence upon Western style consumerism and technologies. The nature of the commons varies from culture to culture, and from bioregion to bioregion. What they have in common is that much of the culture's symbolic patterns as well as the natural systems of the bioregion are available to the members of the community on a non-monetary basis. That is, they have not been enclosed—that is, privatized, commodified, monetized, incorporated into an industrial process, and so forth. This general account of the commons does not mean that all of the culturally diverse commons were entirely free of political systems that gave certain groups special advantages—including the right to restrict the commons to the bare essentials for sustaining life, such as access to water, soil for growing small crops, animals, traditions of ceremonies, patterns of reciprocity, intergenerational knowledge of how to use medical plants, preparing food, and so forth. To make the point more directly, the commons should

not be understood as always free of status systems and the unequal use of power. On the other hand, many of the cultural commons have been and still are characterized by local decision-making—an important phenomena that is now being undermined by the World Trade Organization and capitalistic forms of enclosure where decision about the use of the commons is now made by corporations and private owners who are unaffected by their decisions. The enclosure (privatization) of municipal water systems, as well as the corporate ownership and sale of supposedly “pure” bottled water, are examples of how the process of enclosing the commons also undermines local democracy.

In terms of the discussion of the relevance of transformative learning theories for addressing the ecological crisis, what is important to consider is how the liberal discourse of Freire, Dewey, Gadotti, and the critical pedagogy fundamentalists (Giroux, McLaren, Peter Roberts, and so forth) lacks the language for representing in other than pejorative terms what is distinctive about the commons. This includes their inability to recognize that the commons are dependent upon intergenerational knowledge-- which can also be understood as traditions. As mentioned earlier, the word tradition has a pejorative meaning for all of the transformative learning theorists even though they are entirely dependent upon the re-enactment of traditions in their use of language and most other areas of their daily lives. By associating intergenerational knowledge with oppression (and some of it is oppressive), and in not recognizing the many ways different cultures encode and renew it, they are unable to clarify how the revitalization of the commons of various communities in North America, and in other parts of the world, are both sites of resistance to economic globalization—and at the same times sites of affirmation of the possibilities of local decision-making, the importance maintaining cultural diversity, and the possibilities of living less environmentally destructive lives.

Instead of being able to recognize that critical reflection is essential to clarifying which aspects of intergenerational knowledge and traditions should be conserved (such as the gains in the labor movement, civil rights, gender and racial equality, local democracy, ethnic alternatives to industrially processed food, and so forth) the transformative learning theorists represent critical reflection as the way of overturning all traditions—including the traditions that are essential to sustaining what remains of the world’s diverse commons. Recall Freire’s claim that each individual and generation should rename the reality of the previous

generation, Gadotti's warning about the oppressive nature of cultural transmission, Giroux's teachers whose only responsibility is to function as "transformative intellectuals", McLaren's "pedagogical negativism which translates into the need to doubt everything, and Dewey's equating of traditions with mindless habits. In effect, the major weakness of transformative learning theorists is that they lack the conceptual basis for recognizing that resistance to the imperialistic nature of market liberalism, in all of its cultural and ecological destructiveness, requires a more balanced understanding of the dual role of critical reflection—which is to overturn the sources of eco-injustice (which encompasses social justice issues) and to renew the traditions and intergenerational knowledge that strengthens the commons. They also ignore that critical reflection is not the only legitimate approach to intergenerational renewal, and that many aspects of the cultural construction of everyday reality are sources empowerment and the basis of moral reciprocity.

The implications of their collective silences and reductionist thinking is that they have nothing to say about the need to re-direct curriculum reform in ways that help students recognize the different aspects of the commons that they take-for-granted. In not being given the language for naming the commons they take-for-granted, they are unable to recognize and thus challenge politically when the commons are being further enclosed. That is, in addition to not understanding their rights within the commons, as well as their responsibility to future generations for ensuring that a commons are not further diminished by corporate capitalism, their present form of education (which will become even more limited as transformative learning becomes more widespread) now leaves them largely ignorant of the non-monetized face-to-face alternatives to consumerism within their communities. The other irony is that the use of the restrictive liberal political vocabulary that the transformative learning theorists reinforce in teacher education classes, which in turn is reinforced in public schools, is that a significant number of Americans call themselves conservatives while supporting the imperialistic assumptions and practices of market liberals. This has the effect of social and eco-justice advocates not wanting to identify themselves with the word conservatism. The result is that both the faux conservatives such as President George W. Bush and the transformative learning theorists support each other in avoiding the question that now needs to be ask in this era of economic and cultural colonization: namely, what do we need to conserve in order to resist the forces that are increasing poverty around the world

and putting future generations at greater risk of an environment that is too contaminated to support a healthy and fulfilling life. The challenge will be for the current generation of transformative learning theorists to recognize how they have been indoctrinated by liberal ideologues who failed to renew what was viable in the earlier formulations of liberal ideas in ways that address issues related to the diversity of the world's cultural commons and the environmental changes that these earlier liberal theorists were unaware of.

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