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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/24150479/aa52i2/11>

ISSN:0587-2405

e-ISSN: 2415-0479

Acta Academica -
2020 52(2): 204-222

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Alienation, reification and the banking model of education: Paulo Freire's critical theory of education

First submission: 14 February 2020

Acceptance: 14 September 2020

Published: 31 December 2020

I argue in this paper that Paulo Freire's work *Pedagogy of the oppressed* should be reconsidered as a contribution to critical theory, given its proximity to first-generation critical theory concerning both theory and praxis. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, I argue, is well suited to provide a viable praxis for the social critique provided by first-generation critical theory. While Freire's critique in *Pedagogy of the oppressed* can be viewed typically as pedagogical in character, if we consider Freire's classroom as a microcosm of society, it mirrors the dialectical relations of both the oppressor and oppressed. *Pedagogy of the oppressed* offers a means of overcoming the state of social oppression through a total social liberating praxis. Consequently, I argue that *Pedagogy of the oppressed* should be reconsidered as a contribution to first-generation critical theory.

Keywords: Paulo Freire, critical theory, Frankfurt School, pedagogical theory, the banking model of education

Introduction

I argue in this paper that Paulo Freire's work *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (2000) should be considered as a contribution to the corpus of first-generation critical theory. Freire, one of the most influential Latin American thinkers of the 20th century, had a significant impact on the development of pedagogical theory, through his most significant work, the *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Through *Pedagogy of the oppressed* Freire changed our understanding of the way teaching occurs in the classroom, by providing a critique of the contemporary education system. I argue that *Pedagogy of the oppressed* should also be considered a contribution to critical theory due to its proximity to first-generation critical theory with regards to both theory and praxis. This reclassification of *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, not just as a radical pedagogy but as critical theory¹, has been attempted with regards to the critical social theory of Jurgen Habermas. Raymond Morrow and Carlos Torres also argue for the inclusion of Paulo Freire into critical social theory, going so far as to argue that Freire and Habermas are "complementary thinkers" (Morrow 2002: 2). This paper, however, aims at bringing Freire further into the sphere of critical theory². While his critique in *Pedagogy of the oppressed* was seen as purely pedagogical to most, particularly in the West (Darder 1991), I claim that Freire's real contribution to critical thought is his portrayal of the classroom as a microcosm of society, mirroring both the oppressor and oppressed.

I make two arguments in support of my claim that *Pedagogy of the oppressed* should be considered a contribution to the corpus of critical theory. The first argument points to an explicit and conceptual similarity between *Pedagogy of the oppressed* and critical theory. It is known that Freire read, and was influenced by, critical theory. This is evidenced by the extensive references made to members of the first-generation of the Institute of Social Research³, namely Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse, throughout the *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Along with this explicit similarity, I will argue that Freire shares conceptual similarities with the members of the Frankfurt School, namely Fromm's theory of alienation and

1 In this paper when I refer to 'critical theory' it may be assumed that I am referring to the first-generation of the Frankfurt School, unless stated otherwise.

2 It is widely known that Freire's work is claimed by many schools of thought, indeed Freire has accepted that *Pedagogy of the oppressed* was influenced by many different thinkers from various schools of thought as detailed in *Pedagogy of hope* (2004). My argument is that critical theory would benefit from the inclusion of *Pedagogy of the oppressed* into its cannon. The addition of Freireian praxis can revive the explanatory and normative analysis of society provided by first-generation critical theory.

3 Also known as the Frankfurt School.

Marcuse's interpretation of reification⁴. I will compare and contrast these two central critical theory concepts with the key concepts that Freire puts forward in his book in order to show the similarities between them. The second argument is of methodological isomorphism. I argue that not only does *Pedagogy of the oppressed* have an explicit and conceptual likeness with the first-generation Frankfurt School, it also shares the same methodology. The Frankfurt School, in its first-generation, had a specific methodology shared by its key thinkers, which Horkheimer articulates in *Between philosophy and social science* (1993). Namely, that critical theory must be explanatory⁵, normative and practical (Horkheimer 2018). It is my argument that Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* applies the same methodology throughout the book. Whether or not the presence of critical theory methodology in *Pedagogy of the oppressed* is done on purpose or not is not what I will engage with in this paper, but instead I will just engage in an argument for methodological isomorphism. Freire also shares the same objectives as the Frankfurt School, namely the liberation and empowerment of the oppressed and the identification of the possibilities for, and characteristics of, revolutionary consciousness.

It is based on these arguments of explicit and conceptual similarity, and methodological isomorphism, that I argue for the inclusion of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* in the category of 20th century critical theory.

The Frankfurt School and critical theory

Critical theory emerged in the early 20th century and combined Marxist thought of a Hegelian inspiration with insights from phenomenology, existentialism and psychoanalysis to produce a theory that could identify the conditions and possibilities for liberation from oppressive social systems without associating itself with any given political system.

Critical theory shares Marx's views that one should observe society through a critical method that focuses on the idea of alienation and reification. Critical theory maintains that there is always a contradiction between the oppressor and the oppressed⁶. In the following section, I will lay out the fundamental concepts and methodological commitments that defined the first-generation. This is

4 When I refer to reification in this paper, I mean the kind of reification developed by Georg Lukács. See George Lukács. 1971. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*

5 Note: In the secondary literature on the Frankfurt School, the term 'explanatory' is often used interchangeably with the term 'descriptive'. In this paper I shall be using the term 'explanatory'.

6 This contradiction is best understood through Georg Hegel's master-slave dialectic. This Hegelian dialectic describes an oppressive social structure in which neither slave nor master can exist without each other.

necessary for the comparative analysis of Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* and the first-generation of the Frankfurt School.

First-Generation Frankfurt School

In this paper, I will focus on three members of the first-generation Frankfurt School, namely Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse, the latter two because of Freire's explicit use of their concepts, while the use of Horkheimer is key to understanding the key concepts of first-generation critical theory.⁷ Fromm is the member of the first-generation most referenced in *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Freire references two of Fromm's works, namely, *Escape from freedom* (1965a), also known as *Fear of freedom*, and *The heart of man: its genius for good and evil* (1965b). The former is known for its critical analysis of totalitarianism and of humanity's strange fear of freedom, the latter serving as "a counterweight to cynical assaults on Western culture" (Bronner 2011: 12). One of Marcuse's most influential works is *One-dimensional man: studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society* (1991); this critical interpretation of the industrialised society of the time is aimed at showing how consumerism is a form of "social control" and how an "affluent society" is one that dominates and results in fewer opportunities for a revolution against capitalism.

Key concepts of critical theory

Bronner (2011) identifies alienation and reification as key concepts of critical theory. The analysis of alienation mainly concerns itself with the "psychological effects of exploitation" (Bronner 2011: 4). It is a concept drawn directly from Marxist theory and is integral to the Frankfurt School's analysis of capitalist society. This is important to this paper as Freire engages in a similar analysis of the oppressive banking model of education in *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, which I will argue is grounds for conceptual similarity. Marx tells us that capitalism treats subjects engaged in the production of commodities as objects even though it turns the real objects into fictive subjects. Reification, on the other hand, focuses on "the appearance of people's productive activity as something strange and alien to them" (Held 1980: 22). Lukács elaborates this concept of reification in *History and class consciousness: studies in Marxist dialectics*, and the Frankfurt School furthers the concept in their social analysis. For the Frankfurt School, the conceptual dyad of alienation and reification robs the "world of meaning and purpose and turns the individual into a cog in the machine" (Bronner 2011: 5).

7 In this paper I have tried my best to be as gender inclusive as possible. However, I would like to acknowledge the extensive use of the male pronoun by the quoted authors in both titles of the texts and in quoted passages as regrettable and unfortunate.

However, critical theory is more than just key concepts. It is the application and analysis of these concepts within a methodology that allows critical theory a more in-depth interrogation of society.

Critical theory methodology

The methodology of critical theory is explanatory, normative and practical. Critical theory does not only restrict itself to the analysis of what is but also explores what could and should be. Critical theory, in principle, aims at stating what is wrong with the current oppressive social reality, and identifies key actors that can change it while still providing concise normative guidance and attainable practical goals for the emancipation of society. This is elaborated in *Between philosophy and social science* (1993) where Horkheimer defines critical theory as a social theory that meets the requirements of being explanatory, normative and practical. "It is not just a research hypothesis which shows its value in the ongoing business of men; it is an essential element in the historical effort to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers of men" (Horkheimer 2002: 245-246). This shows Horkheimer's commitment to a normative and practical critique. This concern with how things are and how they came to be so (explanatory) and how things should be (normative) form the base of this critical method. However, in addition to being normative and explanatory, Horkheimer states that there needs to be an aspect of practicality, rather than merely theoretical critique.

With key concepts and methodology of first-generation Frankfurt School presented, the backdrop is set for the presentation of principal assumptions of Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed*.

Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed*

Freire's overall aim in *Pedagogy of the oppressed* is to draw our attention to the current oppressive society we live in, by using the classroom as a microcosm of society. Freire claims that the system of education used in school is oppressive in nature, and he provides an alternative liberatory system of education. The reason I argue for *Pedagogy of the oppressed* to be reconsidered as a contribution to critical theory is the emphasis on praxis, a viable, practical solution to the oppressive nature of society. In this work, Freire engages in the conceptual analysis of three key topics: oppression and humanisation, the banking model of education, and problem-solving education. Consequently, the following sections will provide an overview of the above topics in order to facilitate the subsequent comparison with key conceptual commitments of the first generation of the Frankfurt School.

Banking model of education

The banking concept of education is, according to Freire, the prevailing system of education within our society. Education on this model, Freire says, is “fundamentally narrative in character” (Freire 2000: 71). A narrative style of teaching may be a convenient and effective way to educate people in the recollection of facts. However, when a teacher teaches a student that the capital of France is Paris, “the student records, memorises and repeats these phrases without perceiving ... or realising the true significance of ‘capital’” (Freire 2000: 71). This leads Freire to view the student in this system as a ‘container’ to be filled by the all-knowing teacher, and this perpetuates societal oppression.

For Freire, the banking model of education should be seen as a microcosm of society, in that this model exists to serve the oppressor within that society. The classroom mirrors the political structure of contemporary society, with the teacher being the oppressor and the student being the oppressed. Freire’s portrayal of the classroom serves as a model of the dialectic between oppressor and oppressed within the broader society. In this way, Freire’s critique of the banking model of education connects directly to an analysis of the concept of societal oppression.

Oppression and humanisation

Freire analyses the oppressed-oppressor relationship in terms of the Hegelian dialectic. Freire writes that the oppressed discover that “they exist in a dialectical relationship to the oppressor, as his antithesis – that without them the oppressor could not exist” (Freire 2000: 49). Freire claims that oppression manifests itself in a more subtle form in the indoctrination provided by the banking model of education. He argues that it is the oppressed who must lead the process of societal liberation and the humanisation of all since they have an understanding of the dominating mechanisms that the oppressors have used upon them. This conscientisation of the oppressed comes about through the problem-solving dialogical education that Freire suggests. By this I mean the conscientisation of the individual; Freire uses the term *conscientização* which “refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire 2000: 35), formed through an awareness of self in the broader society, in particular the position of one within the oppressive system.

However, for Freire, the conscientising of the oppressed was not the only important outcome of a dialogical problem-solving education. Freire placed a significant emphasis on the idea of humanity; for Freire, the oppressed were

dehumanised by virtue of being oppressed and dehumanised. However, he also argued that the oppressors too are dehumanised by virtue of their oppressive action. Freire says, "While both humanisation and dehumanisation are real alternatives, only the first is the people's vocation" (Freire 2000: 43). By this Freire means that the ultimate liberation is one that is led by the oppressed and that leads to the humanisation of both the oppressed and the oppressor. This pursuit of humanity is what should guide the oppressed to liberate themselves and push for the humanisation of all. "This, then is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well" (Freire 2000: 44).

Problem-solving education

Freire argues that in order for the oppressed to liberate themselves and their oppressors, there needs to be conscientisation. This conscientisation needs to come in the form of a dialogical education. Dialogical education is one in which the onus of educating is not only shouldered by the teacher but by both teacher and student. The resulting model is more of a horizontal dialogue between teacher and student than a vertical one with a narrating teacher and a receiving student. This breakdown of the teacher/student contradiction is similar to that of the oppressed/oppressor contradiction. 'The word',⁸ both written and spoken, forms the basis of language and our education, which in turn forms part of the work one does when one is educated, and this work becomes the praxis we enact. In dialogic education, students do not just contain knowledge; they also create it. So, then the idea of the true dialogue between teacher and student or oppressor and oppressed comes about.

In this dialogical problem-solving model of education, students are not treated as vessels to be filled. Instead, Freire argues for the forming of a horizontal dialogic that creates the teacher-student (former teacher in the banking model), this is a teacher that is also a student; and the student-teacher (former student in the banking model), a student that is capable of their own learning through being able to create and shape the dialogue with the teacher-student. This leads the oppressed to a feeling of them being masters of their own education and thought (Freire 2000), and this leads to the conscientisation of the oppressed.

This outline that I have given enables us to grasp the conceptual and methodological likeness of Freire's key concepts to concepts and methodology used by the first-generation – thereby supporting my claim that Freire's work, conceptually and methodologically parallels that of the Frankfurt School.

8 This term is seen as a placeholder for the concept of the spoken word or practiced word.

Explicit and conceptual similarity

Having given a brief introduction to Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* and critical theory, I will now move to the arguments in support of my claim that *Pedagogy of the oppressed* should be considered as a contribution to critical theory. I argue that in *Pedagogy of the oppressed* Freire explicitly and extensively references both Marcuse and Fromm. This, I suggest, indicates that Freire read, was influenced by, and used critical theory to develop key concepts in *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. I will show the ways in which Freire understood each of the first-generation that he appropriated and how he appropriated their work. I will then move to my argument that *Pedagogy of the oppressed* and the Frankfurt School share a conceptual similarity. In this argument for conceptual similarity, I will show how key concepts that Freire employs in his work share an apparent conceptual similarity to key concepts from critical theory, namely Fromm's theory of alienation and Marcuse's interpretation of reification. Elaborating these two points of conceptual convergence will provide more evidence in support of my claim that Freire should be considered a critical theorist.

Herbert Marcuse

I will start with Freire's use of Marcuse's ideas from *One-dimensional man* (1991), particularly Marcuse's psycho-political critique of industrial society. I will argue that Freire and Marcuse are explicitly alike, in their use of themes, as well as conceptually similar in the concepts that they present, namely Marcuse's 'false needs' and Freire's banking model of education. While Freire does not cite Marcuse as often as he cites Fromm, the idea of the "dominant forms of social control" that Marcuse argues for is a major theme in Freire's idea of oppression and his banking model of education. Freire states that the oppressors utilise these "dominant forms of social control". Freire provides an insight of what these modern forms of "social control" are:

More and more, the oppressors are using science and technology as unquestionably powerful instruments for their purpose: the maintenance of the oppressive order through manipulation and repression (Freire 2000: 60).

This echoes Marcuse's argument in *One-dimensional man* that technology is used to dominate. Marcuse says:

Technology as such cannot be isolated from the use to which it is put; the technological society is a system of domination which operates already in the concept and construction of techniques (Marcuse 1991: xlvi).

The system that Freire critiques is the one that would be necessary to produce the model citizens of the contemporary consumerist society that Marcuse analyses. Marcuse argues in *One-dimensional man* that the capitalist system creates “false needs”. These false needs are needs that are created out of the need to keep the population in a state of distraction and complacency. However, these needs are entirely false, as they have no real impact on human progress. These dominant forms of control are used by the oppressor, in both Freire (2000) and Marcuse (1991), to create “false needs” and to further distract society from the real domination by the oppressors.

Freire tells us in *Pedagogy of the oppressed* that the oppressed are such because of the ability of the oppressor to dominate the narrative of the education system through the banking model. This parallels Marcuse’s account of a political system that indoctrinates citizens into a state of contentment with their own domination. This disconnection that is created by this indoctrination alienates the citizens from their awareness of being individuals within society, turning them into mere cogs in the machine (Marcuse 1991: 68). Central to attaining this state of uncritical contentment, for Marcuse, is the conviction that one needs what consumerist society has to offer. This subjectifying of goods⁹, which are objects, leads people in this society to chase down these subjectified goods. In the process, they become objects, merely part of the machinery that creates goods for people to buy, even though the people that are driven to buy these objects are the people that produce them. Hence, subjects become objectified, and objects become subjectified, and this is reification.

Marcuse’s commitment towards a conscientised liberation also follows on from something akin to what Freire argues for in his own liberating ideas, that without a sense of conscientisation of the oppressed, there can be no liberation, and the banking model of education robs the oppressed of this ability to conscientise themselves as individuals. Marcuse provides us with a reason for why this conscientisation never happens. It is very similar to that which Freire proposes, and the two commitments are provided below respectively:

All liberation depends on the consciousness of servitude, and the emergence of this consciousness is always hampered by the predominance of needs and satisfactions which, to a great extent, have become the individual’s own (Marcuse 1991: 9).

Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual’s choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the

9 By this I mean the process whereby material goods i.e. objects become subjects.

person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness (Freire 2000: 47).

With no conscientisation of the oppressed, they will continue to be dominated by the oppressors. Along with Freire's use of Marcuse in *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, I find that Freire makes use of the concept of reification, in the same sense as that found in critical theory. As I mentioned earlier, Marcuse's idea of 'false needs' creates an atmosphere that is seemingly disconnected to reality. This is reinforced through a massified culture machine that serves to support the desire for these 'false needs' to be fulfilled, keeping the masses in a subdued state of oppression. I argue that Marcuse's 'false needs' is also conceptually similar to Freire's banking model of education.

Moreover, instead of going through the education system to gain an education, the students are rather recipients of a process of objectification by the system, that denies the students their humanity as well as that of their oppressors. It does so by ripping the idea of education from its conceptual moorings and turning it into an oppressive tool used to perpetuate and subdue the masses. Reification, as used by Marcuse, seeks to explain how people come to be treated as objects, as opposed to subjects, through the use of concepts that have been ripped away from their historical context (Bronner 2011: 4). In *One-dimensional man*, the subjectifying of objects is created through the creation and reinforcement of 'false needs'. I argue that Marcuse and Freire do indeed share an explicit similarity as well as being conceptually similar in terms of Marcuse's 'false needs' and Freire's banking model of education. Antonia Darder further enhances this claim in *Freire and a revolutionary praxis of the body* (2018), where she argues for the "one-dimensionality of banking education" (Darder 2018: 422). In addition, these two concepts inherently take up the analysis of reification within society as both aim, among other things, to explain how objects are subjectified and vice versa. In effect, I argue, Freire's banking model is a critique of one-dimensional society and its propagation of false societal needs designed to perpetuate the social status quo.

Erich Fromm

Fromm shares many key concepts with Freire and this is shown by Robert Lake and Vicki Dagostino in *Paulo Freire's intellectual roots: towards historicity in praxis* (2013), in a chapter that looks at the relationship between Fromm and Freire. "Of all of the Frankfurt School writers that have influenced Paulo Freire, there is more concurrence with the work of Erich Fromm than any of the others" (Lake and Dagostino 2013: 101). The work cited from is Fromm's *The heart of man* (1965b); however, Freire also draws on the concept of the fear of freedom which

comes from Fromm's *Escape from freedom* (1965a). Another similarity between Fromm and Freire is their humanist sentiments. This is evident in Freire's concept of humanisation and in Fromm's idea of the syndrome of growth, which is a love of life, intrinsic growth. In the text of *Pedagogy of the oppressed* we also clearly see Fromm's *The heart of man* in Freire's explanation of the consciousness of the oppressor, the sadistic love that forms part of that consciousness, and the "necrophilic behaviour" of the oppressed that is created by the banking model of education. Fromm and Freire share an idea of the fear of freedom, which is explicit; they are both humanists; and the concepts that Freire explicitly appropriates from Fromm show that they have a common desire for the achievement of an intrinsically valuable humanised individual.

When I claim that Freire and Fromm are explicitly alike, I refer to Freire's humanist likeness to Fromm. This explicit similarity is expressed in Freire's use of the Frommian term 'necrophily'. In *The heart of man*, Fromm introduces the concepts of the 'syndrome of life' or biophily and the 'syndrome of death' or necrophily, death-loving behaviour. Freire links oppression to necrophily as only those who 'love death' are able to oppress and dominate another. It is this process, Freire argues, that dehumanises the oppressor. Freire's repurposing of these Frommian ideas again shows that Freire had an understanding of the concepts of the first-generation. The oppressed, Freire tells us, are dependent on the oppressors. Due to the narrative nature of the banking model of education, the oppressed have a false idea of what it means to be human; the only idea of a human is that of the oppressor. This idea promotes the kind of necrophily that Fromm posits.

When life is characterised by growth in a structured, functional manner, the necrophilous person loves all that does not grow, that is mechanical. The necrophilous person is driven by the desire to transform the organic into the inorganic, to approach life mechanically, as if all living persons were things ... He loves control, and in the act of controlling he kills life (Fromm 1965b: 37).

Oppression – overwhelming control – is necrophilic; it is nourished by love of death, not life. The banking concept of education, which serves the interest of oppression, is also necrophilic ... It attempts to control thinking and action, leads men and women to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power (Freire 2000: 77).

If we contrast these two extracts, we see a unity of ideas. The false liberation of the oppressed within a banking model of education gives them their only idea of

humanity as the inorganic and mechanical idea of what it means to be human, like the oppressor, rather than an organic idea of the conscientised self. This is the kind of behaviour that leads to the destruction of life as a person distinct from that of the idea of the oppressor. This then is the death-loving behaviour that Fromm terms necrophilia. However, Freire says, it is the duty of the oppressed to lead both fellow oppressed and the oppressors to humanisation. "The oppressed, who have been shaped by the death-affirming climate of oppression, must find through their struggle the way to life-affirming humanisation" (Freire 2000: 68). In effect, Freire's resolution of the master-slave dialectic lies in Fromm's biophilic humanisation.

I argue that for Freire, the alienation of the individual has already occurred through the disconnection that the oppressed encounter from their work. This kind of alienation is present in *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Freire uses the term 'alienation' to describe the banking model of education. The theory of alienation developed by the Frankfurt School has to do with the psychological effects of exploitation. This, I suggest, is what Freire was charting in his exploration of the gulf between the needs of the students' own concrete existence and the content they are being taught. So long as there is a disconnection between the students and the content they are being taught, Freire demonstrates, alienation exists. On Freire's account students become part of a system of education in which the effort that the students put into their work becomes alienating. By this I mean that students who are part of this banking model of education are made to do work that they do not find fulfilling, and even if they do find work fulfilling, they are not being taught in a manner that allows an understanding of the work but instead it is parroted work. Like the alienated worker, they do not grasp the totality of the production process, but only their repetitive part of the process. This disconnection causes students to feel alienated from their work. Instead of studying to liberate themselves, they seem to be studying simply to pass a test, a test that is set up to measure how well you can parrot what the educator has narrated to you, and this is alienation.

To bring this into Fromm's theory of alienation, I argue that the disconnection between worker and work has already occurred, as I have shown above. What occurs now is the alienation of the individual through the erasing of individual autonomy that Fromm theorises through a fear of freedom. And while Freire does not mention that this fear of freedom originates in Fromm, there is a clear theoretical connection between the two as provided by Lake and Dagostino:

Freire does not directly reference Fromm in his discussion of the fear of freedom anywhere in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, but a thorough reading of Fromm's works demonstrates that this idea,

as used by Freire, originated with Fromm's theory of the fear of freedom (Lake and Dagostino 2013: 103).

Freire posits a fear of freedom whose "possessor is not necessarily aware, makes him see ghosts. Such an individual is actually taking refuge in an attempt to achieve security, which he or she prefers to the risks of liberty" (Freire 2000: 36). I suggest that these individuals that Freire is mentioning in this quote are those who exist in a society with negative freedoms and are hence more likely to submit to an oppressor. I say this because in *Escape from freedom*, Fromm says that people have two choices either "unite himself with the world in the spontaneity of love and productive work or else to seek a kind of security by such ties with the world as destroy his freedom and the integrity of his individual self" (Fromm 1965a: 37-38). To contrast this to what Freire theorises, Freire believes that only a true liberating dialogue through a pedagogy of the oppressed will unite the bridge of disconnection that exists between the student and the work that the student does, leading to true liberation.

However, on the conceptual similarity between Freire and Fromm in terms of the concept of fear of freedom, I argue Freire would say that the oppressed are actively seeking security as opposed to taking the risk of liberty. Lake and Dagostino support this interpretation, stating that "this idea originated with or was based in Fromm's writings in several books, but especially *Escape from Freedom*" (Lake and Dagostino 2013: 105). I say this because the oppressed have been indoctrinated to seek security through a narrative that is reinforced through an oppressive banking model of education. Thus, the kind of fear of freedom that Freire highlights seems to be a hybrid of the three reasons Fromm states, which are the following: the appeal to psychologistic subjection to a father figure which we seek in the form of the idea of the human as being that of the oppressor; economic subjection to economic interests that are promoted in the banking model of education; and the cultural behaviour of the oppressed in the banking model of education as one that is subdued due to the one-dimensionality of the banking model of education.

We can see here that, as with Marcuse, Freire critically appropriates several key concepts from Fromm. Moreover, Freire and Fromm share a humanist commitment to human emancipation through psychological liberation. The explicit ideas and explicitly referenced works, however, can be seen as a Freireian interpretation of Fromm. Freire's dialogic educational praxis is the Frommian biophilic solution to the Marcusean dystopian banking model of social existence.

I have shown the explicit conceptual proximity of Freire to that of the first-generation. Firstly, Freire's understanding of the impact of the creation of false needs in society that Marcuse posited in *One-dimensional man*. Secondly, Freire's

use of Marcuse's interpretation of reification. Thirdly, Freire's understanding and explicit use of Fromm's necrophilic understanding of human nature and biophilic solution to the Marcusean dystopia. Fourthly, Freire's use of alienation and the conceptual similarity to Fromm's theory of alienation through a fear of freedom. This explicit and conceptual similarity shows that Freire has a good understanding of critical theory in that he is able to repurpose and employ key concepts from the first-generation. It is for these reasons that I believe that there is an explicit and conceptual similarity shared between Freire and critical theory.

Methodological isomorphism

I will now show that in *Pedagogy of the oppressed* Freire also exhibits an analytic methodology isomorphic to critical theory. The methodology behind critical theory is to be explanatory, normative and practical, as Horkheimer prescribed. The link between current social reality (explanatory) and the emancipated norm of how society ought to be (normative) is this practical aspect. Putting this in terms of Freire, it would be as follows: the current social reality (explanatory) is the domination of the oppressed through the banking model of education. The emancipated norm of how society ought to be (normative) is the liberation through the humanisation of society, and this is done through the practical aspect that is the problem-solving dialogical education model.

Explanatory

Being explanatory, as I have shown earlier, is a crucial part of the methodology of critical theory. This is aimed at analysing the current oppressive systems in order to find a theorem for the liberation of all within the oppressed society. There are many instances of this commitment to an explanatory account of analysing current oppressions within society. In *One-dimensional Man* Marcuse gives us an in-depth analysis of the oppressive systems within contemporary industrial society, as the following shows:

Today political power asserts itself through its power over the machine process and over the technical organisation of the apparatus. The government of advanced and advancing industrial societies can maintain and secure itself only when it succeeds in mobilising, organising, and exploiting the technical, scientific, and mechanical productivity available to industrial civilisation (Marcuse 1991: 5).

Freire goes to great lengths to give us an explanatory account of oppression and to explain the role played by the banking model of education in *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. He states that:

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing ... The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence (Freire 2000: 72).

For Freire, this model of education represents the exercise of domination by the oppressor over the oppressed. This then is how Freire explains the current conditions of the oppression of social reality. He does this by defining the banking model of education, which is the current social reality, and then identifies that both teacher-students and student-teachers would be responsible for changing this oppressive form of education. In this way Freire, I claim, meets the critical theory methodological requirement of being explanatory in terms of explaining current social realities and identifying the relevant actors needed to change it through the banking model of education and the student-teacher, teacher-student agents respectively.

Normative

Now that I have shown how Freire's *pedagogy of the oppressed* uses an explanatory method, I will move to the normative. For society to be truly emancipated, there needs to be an idea of how society ought to be. This is one of the benefits of critical theory, that while providing a critical analysis of current oppressive social reality, it also provides insight into how this social reality ought to be. We see this commitment to a normative account of society in Fromm's *The sane Society* (1991):

Man is the end, and must never be used as a means; material production is for man, not man for material production; the aim of life is the unfolding of man's creative powers; the aim of history is a transformation of society into one governed by justice and truth (Fromm 1991: 226).

For Freire, the ultimate aim of society is the humanisation of all within society. This society would be made up of both the former oppressed and former oppressor emancipated through humanisation.

The pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are

manifestations of dehumanisation ... the man or woman who emerges is a new person, viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanisation of all people (Freire 2000: 48-49).

Freire claims that society ought to be humanised as this is the “people’s vocation” (Freire 2000: 43), both oppressor and the oppressed living together as one humanised group. The norm of what society ought to be, according to Freire, is one where the oppressed lead all within a society to a humanised liberation, or in terms of critical theory, true societal emancipation. This then proves that Freire, through his idea of emancipation through humanisation, meets the next requirement for a normative critical theory methodology.

Practical

Having shown the explanatory and normative isomorphic connections between Freire’s *Pedagogy of the oppressed* and critical theory, I will move to the last sub-set of the critical theory methodology, that is the practical aspect. This practical part of critical theory is needed if critical theory is to concern itself with true liberation. While one of the downfalls of critical theory is that it does not go far enough to provide a practical application of its explanatory and normative analysis, there were commitments made by members of the first-generation to achieve this practical aspect, such as the case in Fromm’s *The sane society*:

A sane society must provide possibilities for adult education, much as it provides today for the schooling of children. This principle finds expression today in the increasing number of adult-education courses, but all these private arrangements encompass only a small segment of the population, and the principle needs to be applied to the population as a whole. Schooling, be it transmission of knowledge or formation of character, is only one part, and perhaps not the most important part of education; using “education” here in its literal and most fundamental sense of “e-ducere” = “to bring out”, that which is within man (Fromm 1991: 338).

Freire gives us the idea of a problem-solving dialogical education that was aimed at creating liberating action. This is the answer to the problem of the deficiency of practicality that is faced by critical theory. The Praxis in *Pedagogy of the oppressed* that Freire provides has its foundations in ‘the word’.

Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at

the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world (Freire 2000: 87).

The 'word' is then the basis for all liberating action, which for Freire takes place through dialogue. He says, "Because liberating action is dialogical in nature, dialogue cannot be *a posteriori* to that action, but must be concomitant with it. And since liberation must be a permanent condition, dialogue becomes a *continuing* aspect of liberating action" (Freire 2000: 139). This problem-solving dialogical education model that Freire gives us is the practical aspect that allows the emancipated norm of how society ought to be. It is important to note that the reason I selected *Pedagogy of the oppressed* is that the praxis found within has the potential to bridge the gap between explanatory and normative social critiques that have been provided by members of the first-generation. To this end, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* meets the last of the requirements for a critical theory methodology, that is being practical. Thus, a Freireian praxis enables a Frommian biophilic solution to the Marcusean dystopia of our society.

I have now shown a clear methodological continuity between critical theory, of being explanatory, normative and practical, to concepts Freire puts forward in *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. This methodological isomorphism I have shown here is another reason why *Pedagogy of the oppressed* should be considered as a contribution to critical theory.

Conclusion

My arguments for considering *Freire's Pedagogy of the oppressed* as a contribution to critical theory revolved around two arguments, explicit and conceptual similarity, and methodological isomorphism.

The argument for explicit similarity is as follows: the first-generation of the Frankfurt School formalised critical theory; Marcuse and Fromm were among the first-generation, and Fromm had the most marked influence on Freire. In *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, Freire explicitly references members of the first-generation and demonstrates a clear understanding of their concepts in repurposing them for his own ends. Closely related to the explicit similarity, I argue that *Pedagogy of the oppressed* also exhibits a clear conceptual similarity to first-generation critical theory in its reliance on concepts such as alienation and reification. Based on these explicit and conceptual similarities I argue that *Pedagogy of the oppressed* should be considered as a contribution to critical theory.

The second argument relies on the notion of methodological isomorphism. For a piece of work to be considered as critical theory, it needs to be explanatory, normative and practical. As demonstrated above, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*

makes use of concepts that allow it to be explanatory, normative and practical. Therefore, I conclude that *Pedagogy of the oppressed* also meets the methodological requirements for being considered as critical theory.

The above argument could make a valuable contribution to the field of critical theory. Freire's focus on praxis reinvigorates a social critique using concepts from the first-generation, and therefore introduces the possibility of a liberatory practice. This commitment to a societal liberating praxis is echoed by Lake and Dagostino who make the following comment on Freire's praxis in *Pedagogy of the oppressed*:

Education must help people to understand the psychological hold that oppression has on their psyche, and it must also help them to develop the ego, strength, and wisdom to break that hold and to replace it with care for the self and hence for others, while raising critical consciousness about oppressive forces in society. Such an education will go further in allowing individuals to resolve the fear of freedom and move toward a productive life (Lake and Dagostino 2013: 125).

Some may claim, however, that the first-generation is outdated. To this, I say that a retrospective analysis of critical theory using critical theory and applying refashioned ideas of contemporary society is highly beneficial. It leads to a contemporary understanding and application of first-generation concepts through the praxis outlined by Freire, thus producing a contemporary understanding of first-generation concepts of critical theory through a Freireian praxis.

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