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**Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body**

**A Critical Praxis**

Sherry B. Shapiro

*For Svi who helped me learn how to articulate a language of embodied lived experience.*

## Contents

**Forward** by Peter McLaren

**Preface**

**Chapter 1. Thinking About Thinking.....1-35**

Education and Critical Theory: Finding The Structures

Perspectives on Critical Pedagogy

A Way of Looking that Dances with Life

Limitations of Critical Pedagogy

Language Without a Body

**Chapter 2. The Body and Knowledge: Towards Relational Understanding.....36-62**

Knowledge as the Dialectic of Mind and Body

The Historical Perspective

Body and Society; an Inseparable Identity

**Chapter 3. Skinned Alive: Towards a Postmodern Pedagogy of The Body.....63-92**

Our Skin: The First Clue to Identity

Being - Skinned Alive

A Political Collaboration: Giving Up Freedom for Compliance

The Corporeality of Language

The Body in Resistance: We Shall Not be Moved

Cynical Reason and Kynical Resistance

**Chapter 4. Re-Membering The Body in Critical Pedagogy.....93-127**

The Body in Postmodern/Feminist Thought

Towards an Embodied Voice

Reflection One: The Body in The Hidden Curriculum

Reflection Two: Dance Class; Searching for Home

Reflection Three: Woman as Body

Reflection Four: A Prejudice Towards Difference

Reflection Five: Life Against Death

Reflection Six: Touching

Conclusion

<b>Chapter 5. The Dancer’s Life: Existence and Transformation.....</b>	<b>128-151</b>
The Dancer as Solitary Individual: Artist or Cultural Worker?	
Home for The Dancer	
Body	
Conclusion	
<b>Chapter 6. Reaching Beyond The Familiar: Redefining Dance Education as an Emancipatory Pedagogy.....</b>	<b>152-169</b>
The Question of Meaning	
Living The Image	
Tangled Theories or Subverting The Tango	
A Different Language for Movement	
<b>Chapter 7. Towards a Critical Pedagogy of The Body.....</b>	<b>170-202</b>
Introduction	
The Specific, The Local and The Body	
Silent Voices: Dance Education and The Process of Liberation	
Sentient Knowledge: Reclaiming a Discourse	
Conclusion: Remembering The Emancipatory Self	

**Forward**

Sherry Shapiro's book, *The politics of the Body*, is inspired by an acute and often painful realization that, no matter how distant, removed, and powerless human beings feel in relations to the complexity of contemporary social and economic life, they carry the mega - and microstructures of social life in the machinery of their flesh, in the pistons of their muscle, in the furnaces of their guts, and in the steely wires of their tendons. Shapiro both recognizes and affirms the primacy of the body in the creation of all knowledge. She further demands the inclusion of the human body as a nexus of textual production since she is aware that, produced within discourse, the body is also generative of discourse. Shapiro admonishes that educational theory doesn't place much importance on the body.

Merely to recognize the importance of the body in educational theorizing is to attract censure from the doyens of the educational establishment, but to affirm such a knowledge and render it valid - as does Shapiro - is firmly an act of apostasy. We all have unfinished business with the history of our body, and Shapiro provides us with an approach to map and transform such history.

The field of education needs impertinent and irreverent scholars like Sherry Shapiro. Her act of scholarship is both a reflective practice of resistance and a tactical engagement in transformation.

Shapiro's book is centered around resisting the injustice that our bodies know only too well

through the sorrow and the suffering of the flesh. Our bodies, Shapiro opines, are being “skinned alive,” inscribed by the productive processes that exploit human lives for economic purposes, violently inserting these bodies into the global division of labor. Shapiro is referring not only to individual bodies but collective bodies. The body, for Shapiro, is the prison house of injustice. We can see the history of injustice written into the steely eyes and sadistic grin of the Latinophobic, southland gringo politician; in the downcast eyes, heavy postures, and swollen faces of the people. Yet we also learn from Shapiro that the future is written into the body. We discern the glimmer of possible futures in the loving smile of a teacher in the thrall of a dialogical embrace of her students, in the improvised moves of a dancer in harmony with her surroundings, in the soothing words of friendship spoken from the heart to a person dying from AIDS, or in the shuddering currents of hate-filled pleasure (that have L.A.P.D. written all over them) that unleash a fury of baton swipes aimed at suspected “illegal” aliens.

Shapiro argues that all knowledge is body-mediated, that all learning is primarily somatic; that the act of knowing is largely a form of corporeal shaping in which women are transformed into objects of display and identity, their image circumscribed and policed by the male gaze. Corporeal shaping is particularly pronounced here in Los Angeles where getting buffed, toned, and ripped are prerequisites for attracting even a passing glance.

Shapiro is especially sensitive to how oppression is lived by the female body/subject, how women in particular have been transformed through a patriarchal will to dominate and to subjugate, into ornaments of male desire to be worn as decorative signs that signify male

ownership and power. This will to dominate is facilitated by the Western counterpositioning of mind against body, fact against value, reason against the chaos of the emotions.

Drawing on the work of Andrea Dworkin, Frigga Haug, Maxine Greene, and others, Shapiro argues that “the objectification and oppression of women finds its parallel in the life of all human beings described as ‘other’ - for foreign-born workers, Jews, blacks, gays, those who are physical and mentally, differently abled - any human being who is dehumanized for the sake of another.”

Her message, grounded in materialist feminism and underwritten by a politics of liberation reminiscent of the work of Paulo Freire, is that educators and cultural workers who are compliant and collaborative with such dehumanization must hold themselves responsible for the “stripping away” of those possible futures arching towards hope. As a feminist, Shapiro sets out to “re-flesh” women who have been “skinned alive,” that is, to create conditions of emancipation for those women whose bodily knowing and politics of location have been devalued, displaced, and de-legitimated through patriarchal relations of domination and oppression. More specifically, Shapiro is involved with women who struggle against the hegemony that inscribes the relationship between themselves and the world, a world that has grown increasingly sexist, racist, and class divided, a world less hospitable to social justice, to equality, to the struggle for freedom. Shapiro recognizes that hope must be dialectically reinitiated through a hieroglyphics of possibility pressed into the hearts and minds of the people, into the flesh of reason where dreams are released from the bondage of history and enter into the realm of the concrete.

Of course, criticalists in the field of education have struggled for decades against the steady erosion of civil rights and equality as these relationships are played out in the institutional and political life of schooling. But Shapiro recognizes that such a struggle, while admirable, is often itself predicated upon the very mind-body split that she is dedicated to overcoming, that as a “stepchild of modernist thinking,” critical pedagogy recapitulates a pedagogical masculinity underwritten by devouring machineries of cynical reason. Many criticalists have participated in resurrecting, even as they claimed to oppose, the normalizing aspects of male privilege that they ostensibly wish to overcome.

Shapiro argues that our lives are dominated by a prevalent system of intelligibility that structures “seeing” as “knowing” and that this “seeing” sets itself in opposition to the female ways of knowing that are relational. Such seeing is linked, among other things, to ocularcentrism as masculine forms of ownership. She writes that “the mode of exchange that organizes a standard human pleasure and desire is regulated by the masculine mode of desire.” She speaks from a feminist epistemology that not only rejects the “prevalent masculine way of knowing” but develops a “relational” engagement with knowledge. In doing so, she vigorously attacks the disembodied discourse that scaffold official epistemological positions and legitimating objective knowledge.

Knowledge is as much about bone, gristle, and capillaries as it is about objective fact and universal value. Shapiro trenchantly adopts the position that “there is no view from nowhere,”

refusing the attractive allure of epistemological relativism that has enchanted so many educationalists who fancy themselves as liberal humanists. Shapiro knows better. She knows that the body/subject is always emplaced and placated in history, is always narrativized by discourse, is always already situated within cultural memory, within the seamless folds of the social. For instance, Shapiro understands how the social landscape of the classroom prepares students for their place within the social division of labor while naturalizing existing gender roles within patriarchy and within heteronormative discourses of power. She understands that the body-subject is an agonistic field of conflict, a contesting and contestatory site where flesh meets steel, where bone meets metaphor, where mind meets manure. Knowledge is never pristine and odor-free; it is always tainted and sometimes it stinks; it is enfolded within systems and structures of domination, within criss-crossed vectors of power and asymmetrical relations of privilege. The map of knowledge is never clean, but always cross-hatched by lines of forces.

Not only does Shapiro navigate these lines and force fields of power that inscribe knowledge in the flesh, but she has lived within their vortex. Nobody ever escapes these fields unscathed and the outcome, while never irrevocably determined or predictable, is nevertheless overwhelmingly influenced under capitalism in the construction of ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation. She sees the worlds of determinism (physical world) and indeterminism (subjective and social world) as mutually informing just as she sees meaning and matter as undeniably related to each other.

Shapiro advocates for the centrality of situated knowledge that is inscribed in the flesh, and for understanding how the body can become a vehicle for oppression but also for resistance and transformation. She further undertakes an exercise of “writing the body.” In so doing, she attempts to redefine bodily knowledge outside of a mere technical discourse in order to lay the foundation of a critical discourse of the body.

Shapiro reinstates the body at the center of educational discourse. Because, for Shapiro, bodies are the primary means by which capitalism does its job, to develop a critical discourse of the body means mapping the body and the space in which it is fashioned. The body is produced in the image of capital but through the creation of a critical vernacular and praxis of liberation it can be reappropriated. Shapiro’s own experiences as a dancer inform much of her theorizing, as she attempts to bring aesthetic feeling into the domain of ethical sensibility in order that educators and cultural workers can understand, name, and transform social life. The realm of the aesthetic is important because it links people through a type of sensuous belonging, yet it can also inscribe forms of social power - often malevolent - more deeply into our bodies, thereby increasing the social control of the state. Dancing, according to Shapiro, enables her “volatilized” body to locate itself in time and space in order to enact “a form of resistance to the separation of the mind and body, thought and feeling, creativity and existence.” Of course, embodied actions such as those of dance are not ahistorical constants but are developed out of situated practices. Subjectivity itself has to be seen from this perspective as material, occurring

in three-dimensional space and within the symbolic density of the process of signification.

We can trace philosophical attempts to break from the mind-body dualism to Spinoza, Nietzsche, and more recently, Deleuze. Spinoza, for instance, held that reason was the greatest power available to body/subjects, but that such reason is immanent, embodied, and enfolded. For Spinoza, the mind is the idea of the body (Gatens, 1996). Spinoza posited an irreducible difference between bodies, and an absence of a common body. Since ethics or reason has its genesis in the body - and not, as Hegel claims, in the abstract individual - the absence of a collective body makes the Kantian notion of a universalized ethics produced by an autonomous will simply incoherent (Gatens, 1996). For Spinoza, necessity governs the mind and the passions of the body, and such necessity provides the conditions of possibility for free human activity. Analysis of the concrete must therefore proceed from an analysis of the passions and the imagination. Indeed, as Gatens illustrates, following Antonio Negri, politics must be seen as the metaphysics of the imagination, as the metaphysics of the human constitution of the world. If knowledge is embodied, then one would need to follow Spinoza in positing that all human relations are ethically structured.

Spinoza presumes a conception of the univocity of being. Following Spinoza, Moira Gatens (1996, p. 100) writes that “the ethics or reason which any particular collective body produces will bear the marks of that body’s genesis, its (adequate or inadequate) understanding of itself, and will express the power or capacity of that body’s endeavor to sustain its own integrity.” It

follows that criticalists must share an “embodied responsibility” for achieving and maintaining social justice within civil society.

In *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz, following Nietzsche, Notes:

Philosophy is a product of the body’s impulses that have mistaken themselves for psyche or mind. Bodies construct systems of belief, knowledge, as a consequence of the impulses of their organs and processes. Among the belief systems that are the most pervasive, long-lived and useful are those grand metaphysical categories - truth, subject, morality, logic - which can all be read as bodily strategies, or rather resources which coordinate the will to power. (p. 124)

Elizabeth Grosz writes that for Nietzsche, beliefs “are adjuncts to the senses, modes of augmentation of their powers and capacities; and, like the senses, they yield interpretations, not truths, perspectives which may be life-enhancing which may favor movement, growth, vigor, expansion” (p. 127).

For Deleuze and Guattari, the body exists “as a surface of speeds and intensities before it is stratified, unified, organized, and hierarchized” (Grosz, 1994, p. 169). Grosz argues that bodies are constituted by alterity, which is both the condition for and result of embodiment. She is worth quoting at length:

Bodies themselves, in their materialities, are never self-present . . . because embodiment, corporeality, insist on alterity . . . . Alterity is the very possibility and process of

embodiment: it conditions but is also a product of the pliability or plasticity of bodies which makes them other than themselves, other than their “nature,” their functions and identities. (p. 209)

In his book, *The Body in Late-Capitalist U.S.A.*, Donald M. Lowe examines the intersection among body practices, work habits, language, and the social relations of production and consumption and argues that capital and the body constitutes a new binary opposition in which the body acts as the “other” to late-capitalist development. Late-capitalist accumulation depends upon the exploitation of bodily needs and of non-exchangist values. Lowe further notes that “the unequal development of valorized lifestyles, social reproduction, gender, sexuality, and psychopathology displaces and camouflages the unequal social relations of production” (1995, p. 174). In order to resist the means/ends relations in the late-capitalist opposition between bodily needs and capital accumulation we need to recode the issues of bodily needs provoked by the hegemony of exchangist practices (Lowe, 1995, pp. 175-176).

An important direction taken by Shapiro is her attempt to develop a critical pedagogy of the body. According to Shapiro, social relations of exploitation and enforced poverty are naturalized as they partake of an unspoken allure of commonsense knowledge and received meaning. Shapiro’s pedagogy of corporeal resistance - what she calls a “choreographic/pedagogic project” consists of strategies of rupture, decentering, and textuality that focus on the intersection of bodily knowledge and the repressed social order. Yet Shapiro is not content with a pedagogy that

offers only oppositional readings of social and cultural antagonisms; rather, she is interested in developing concrete strategies and tactics of resistance and transformation at the level of representations, institutional practices, and social and cultural relations. Shapiro's critical pedagogy is a site-specific cultural politics that concerns itself with decentering dominant systems of classifications as well as the current global political economy; in other words, it is a pedagogy that is designed to contest social relations informed by a white-supremacist patriarchal capitalism. It is a pedagogy that attempts to break through the motivated amnesia of body-subjects unable to even look upon the images of homeless crowding the parks and streets, in order to rouse bodies into acts of resistance and liberation. Such a pedagogy of liberation must involve economic restructuring as well as discursive and symbolic path-making. Shapiro recognizes that patterns of distribution, division of labor, and relations of production and consumption figure prominently in such a pedagogy.

In Judith Butler's (1993) terms, Shapiro is calling forward a pedagogy of radical resignification, a restorative dismantling and reassemblage of subjectivity, a substantial remaking of the subject. As part of a critical pedagogy, counterhegemonic practices must take into account and contest specific practices of bodies, such as those created by phallo-militaristic machineries of fascist desire that - as recent history attests - are more than incipient possibilities here in Los Angeles and elsewhere throughout the United States.

Sherry Shapiro's pedagogy does not follow a Platonic logic; in other words, it is not merely

about a “lack” between present circumstances and an imaginary representation of that which we do not possess in concrete reality. Rather, she recognizes that the so-called lack is itself an historical and social production and not some universal prerequisite for fulfillment. Consumer “lacks” are always already installed within contemporary forms of global capitalism. Everything within capitalism conspires to conceal how the body is ordered symbolically in accordance with the desiring-production of the marketplace. Such a pedagogy, in assuming responsibility for the embodied history of the civil body, strives for new relations of sociability that work to confront and contest the political-economic arrangements designed to serve and protect mainly white males. Readers are provoked to ask: How might human relations be restructured and re-embodied outside of appeals to transcendent moral or religious categories and from the perspective of a community of rational and sensual beings? (Gatens, 1996)

Sherry Shapiro has written an engaging book that resituates the struggle for freedom in both the hope and the promise of the senses and the ethical sway of the political imagination. It is a book that invites educators and cultural workers to develop new forms of self-fashioning, new modalities of sense-making, and new social formation of collective struggle.

Peter McLaren

Los Angeles, 1997

## Preface

This book represents the work of eight years of focusing on the body as this intersects with questions of pedagogy, art, and social change. The intellectual endeavor grew out of many more years experiencing my body as a dancer. If there was a watershed moment in this process in which the rational and sensual seemed to come together, it was in the office of one of my doctoral professors when he asked, “How do you think about your body?” My quick reply was, “We don’t think about our bodies in dance!” Dissatisfied with my own response, I began to question why we didn’t think about our bodies - other than as objects for technical proficiency. I had become conscious of my own alienation.

I began, in my doctoral work, making connections between the individual and the social, the rational and the sensual, art and life. Wanting to value both my intellectual self, an aspect which had been denied as a female, and my embodied self, an aspect denied as a dancer, I tried to do what I named at the time as “reclamation.” I wanted to reclaim my intellectuality *and* keep the awareness that is mediated through the body. From that point forward, I have been creating a pedagogic process that gives attention to the project of liberation in a way that takes seriously the body as a site for self and social transformation. This book reflects my struggles to do just that - to create a process where the “body/subject” becomes a means for producing liberatory knowledge about the person and the culture. *As such, it examines what it might mean to*

*approach questions of identity, justice, moral responsibility, ideological conformity, and resistance through an engagement with our own body experiences and memories.* In particular this book tries to lay the foundation for a theory and practice of a somatically-oriented critical pedagogy. While recent writers in education (especially those concerned with the postmodern) have emphasized the significance of the body as a focus of cultural inscription and power, there have been only a few real attempts to follow through on such a perspective and elaborate what it would mean to teach critically about, and through, the body.

The chapters range across a number of discourses; education, art and the aesthetic, dance, the history of philosophy, and popular culture. They emphasize the way the body - especially the female body - is shaped and reshaped to the ideological contours of the existing society. Noting how the body is not only inscribed by power, but also expresses resistance to a hegemonic culture, I attempt to create a dialogue between embodied knowing and cultural critique. I suggest that the body is always a locus of freedom, pleasure, connection and creativity, and that a critical pedagogy of the body means to understand not only how it is socialized into heteronomous relations of control and conformity, but is also a site of struggle and possibility for a more liberated and erotic way of being in the world. In all of this, the book lays out the argument for an expanded, sensuous notion of knowing and learning, and the way this might relate to existing traditions of critical and emancipatory education.

The diversity of writing styles reflect the nature of this project; moving from the analytic to

the phenomenological, to evocative description forms. The latter help us to convey in personal language what it means to critically reflect on our lives as en fleshed creatures, and also to capture the mood and sense of my choreographic work. In chapter one, "Thinking About Thinking," I draw upon the work of Martin Heidegger to begin an examination of the Western philosophical tradition as a foundation for questioning those aspects of critical pedagogy which continue to be shaped by dualistic notions of mind and body. Utilizing the work of Paulo Freire, Maxine Greene, Peter McLaren, Kathleen Weiler and others who have been engaged in connecting education theory to the larger concern for human liberation, I provide a perspective which calls into question any approach committed to human liberation which does not seriously address the "body" as a site for both liberation and oppression. I contend that human liberation significantly depends on the struggle to achieve critical awareness of our "embodied knowledge." Developing out of both Foucauldian and feminist traditions, the body/subject, is viewed as both socially inscribed and managed. It is this understanding which provides the basis for a critical pedagogy which addresses itself to, and is reflective upon, the body in contemporary culture.

Chapter two, "The Body and Knowledge: Towards Relational Understanding," explores the epistemological subordination of a concrete language of the body, or sensate lived-experience. The order of the "rational" over the "irrational" is brought into question as I review the historical and philosophical underpinnings of thinking. Questions concerning the dominant paradigm of knowing is addressed in the context of the sociology of the body, feminist and critical theories, as well as Heidegger's work on thinking.

"Skinned Alive: Towards A Postmodern Pedagogy of the Body," chapter three, explores the work of a number of commentators who have developed a discourse of the body and struggled to provide a framework for understanding embodied knowledge. Following previous arguments concerning the importance of an embodied, critical discourse, this chapter provides a sense of how we might begin to broaden our understandings of lived experience through a language made sensuous and corporeal. I have looked here to the work of Andrea Dworkin, Don Johnson, Toni Morrison, John Berger, Helene Cixous and others. The intention is to employ such a language in discovering deeper possibilities for contesting the experience and structures of oppression and authority as these are manifested in patriarchal, classist and homophobic society.

Chapter four, "Re-Membering the Body in Critical Pedagogy," continues to look at the inadequacy of much of the current theoretical discourse of critical pedagogy. Utilizing current feminist and postmodern critiques, I focus upon the body's role in the process of knowing and in the praxis of freedom. Much of the chapter consists of a series of my own reflections on the way in which subjectivity and identity are formed through the body's situatedness within the culture. I combine personal narrative with social critique illustrating how such reflections can produce a language of cultural understanding. Particularly, this critical process of coming to know brings together the traditions of both feminist and critical theory through the use of personal narrative, embodied knowledge, and cultural understandings. These traditions have sought to bring to consciousness the way in which personal experience mediates social relationships, especially

those concerned with power or domination.

In chapter five, "An Existential Look: Research As Praxis," I discuss a research study concerned with the life histories of three dancers. The study attempts to provide an example of research as praxis - that is research which has, as its purpose, dialogue, that engages participants in questions that make possible self and social change. Going beyond the purely phenomenological approach, it attempts to relate experience to cultural context clarifying the ways in which dance mediates both practices of social conformity *and* liberation. Questions in this study relate to existential issues, such as identity, home, individualism, the female body (tracing the traditions of women in dance as patterned by the larger culture), and the understanding of aesthetics as a potential practice of freedom.

Following from this, chapter six, "Reaching Beyond the Familiar; Redefining Dance Education as an Emancipatory Pedagogy," critiques the dominant discourse of dance and attempts to redefine dance education as an emancipatory pedagogy. Central to this is a conceptual schema (drawing upon Habermas' contrasting bases for the production of knowledge) that lays out the alternative discourses which structure pedagogies of dance. These include the technical-authoritarian; the creative (understood in the 19th century aesthetic romantic mode); and an emergent participatory-emancipatory form of learning.

In the final chapter, I return to a specific focus on a critical pedagogy of the body. I attempt to look at the theoretical and practical implications of such a pedagogy and address questions raised

within feminist and postmodern discourses. These questions examine the use of power by critical pedagogues themselves, and the potential hazards of their own use of authority. There is also the danger in postmodern theories of the loss of any meaningful subjectivity, and thus the exclusion of any real notion of a body/subject from which human actions and creativity emanate. As an advocate of critical pedagogy, I seek to draw upon re-membering as an act of re-identifying the self in all of its creative, critical, and ethical dimensions; a process in which the self might find a home in this torn and afflicted world. The task is larger than a cognitive repositioning of the historical and cultural subject. No longer can we suggest that the ability to rationally apprehend is enough. A pedagogy concerned with human liberation must insist upon a sensual language and practice for education, which may evoke among our students a passion for love, justice, and the sense of what it might mean to live purposeful lives.

I would like to express my solidarity with those who continue to struggle for an education which is critical, creative and moral; and express my gratitude for their ideas, conversations, encouragement, and support. I would like to thank my students who have traveled with me on my journeys, given me great trust, and acted with courage. I would also like to thank Svi, without his questions, editing and love this book would not have happened.

Historians long ago began to write of the body. They have studied the body in the field of historical demography or pathology; they have considered it as the seat of needs and appetites, as the locus of physiological processes and metabolisms, a target for the attacks of germs or viruses; they have shown to what extent historical processes were involved in what might seem to be the purely biological base of existence; and what place should be given in the history of society to biological “events” such as the circulation of bacilli, or the extension of the lifespan. But the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

As a stubbornly local phenomenon, the body fits well enough with postmodern suspicions of grand narratives, as well as with pragmatism’s love affair with the concrete. Since I know where my left foot is at any particular moment without needing to use a compass, the body offers a mode of cognition more intimate and internal than a now much-scorned Enlightenment rationality.

Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*

*I think, therefore I am* is the statement of an intellectual who underrates toothaches. *I feel, therefore I am* is a truth much more universally valid, and it applies to everything that’s alive.

Milan Kundera, *Immortality*

## Chapter 1

### Thinking about Thinking

. . . the most thought-provoking thing about our thought-provoking age is that we are still not thinking . . . . Thinking is not so much an act as a way of living . . . a way of life. It is a remembering who we are as human beings and where we belong. It is a gathering and focusing of our whole selves on what lies before us; a taking to heart and mind these particular things before us in order to discover them in their essential nature and truth.

(Martin Heidegger, What is Called Thinking)

Martin Heidegger (1968) brings our attention to the dialectical relationship between “how we think” and “how we live.” He reminds us that our being-in-the-world is one of relationship to others and to the larger world. What is to be uncovered in relationship are the “truths” of human existence; that which lies before us. There is no final or absolute “Truth,” but there are “truths.” At the same time there is an undeniable reality to existence. This is the social and institutional reality that confronts human beings in their everyday lives - a reality that cannot be ignored or forgotten without punishment. Cornel West (1988) speaks to the “realness” that is found in our everyday lives:

There is a reality that one cannot not know. The ragged edges of the Real, of Necessity, not being able to eat, not having shelter, not having health care, all this is something that one cannot not know. (p. 277)

West (1988) speaks out of that neo-pragmatist tradition that calls into question any claims to truth or reality separated from the social practices from which they are produced. Rejected is the notion of a transcendent reality or ahistorical truth, which have so dominated our philosophical traditions in the West and hidden the connections between knowledge sought and knowledge gained, and the knower and the known (Sandra Bartky, 1990). Under the influence of postmodern thinking recent educational and philosophical conversations have been engaged in a paradigm shift questioning any “totalizing” theory. Not only have particular theoretical perspectives been challenged but so have knowledge claims that aren’t culturally and historically situated. Challenged by Heidegger’s work, one can no longer think in terms of purified abstractions; rather truth, being, and existence are to be understood as a single event. And further, events, truths, or reality can be better understood through a critical understanding of the individual/social relationship. Understanding of such social relationships requires a critical way of thinking that recognizes and brings to awareness human participation in the co-creation of life as it presently exists.

Most poetically, Heidegger’s “ways of thinking” call us back to think with our heart, to hear the most primal call, the call of Being. He brings together the critical, creative, and moral aspects of thinking and unifies them into a philosophy that is ontologically, rather than epistemologically, oriented. The power underlying Heidegger’s question, “What is called thinking?” is in his desire to recall the original question of being. This question unites us as

humans with a responsibility for ourselves and the world in which we live. This ontological understanding is one in which, Heidegger asserts, thinking and questioning are inherent in being-in-the-world. Questioning leads the way of thinking about our lives and the world in which we live. In connecting what we care about to what and how we question, Heidegger reasserts the importance of the relationship between the structuring of the question (what we both know and desire to know) to the answers or realities we find. This shift from epistemology to ontology suggests that the manner in which we construct and validate knowledge or knowing is related to how we construct reality or experience. Thinking and being are, in a sense, one in the same.

In Old English, as reflected in Heidegger's work (p.139) thinking is referenced to the word "Thanc," which means memory; as a thinking that recalls the gift of thinking and gives thanks for it. Heidegger (1968) writes:

The thanc, the heart's core, is the gathering of all that concerns us, all that we care for, all that touches us insofar as we are, as human beings. What touches us in the sense that it defines and determines our nature, what we care for, we might call contiguous or contact . . . . Only because we are by nature gathered in contiguity can we remain concentrated on what is at once present and past to come. The word "memory" originally means this incessant concentration on contiguity. In its original telling sense, memory means as much as devotion . . . . The *thanc* unfolds in memory, which persists as devotion (pp. 144-145)

Human consciousness *is* constituted through memory. “Devotion” here can be thought of as the human desire to “make sense” of life, in ways that it connects to feelings of care and concern. This contiguity Heidegger speaks of is the relationship between all that we touch and all that touches us. Touching can be imaged as all that concerns us in the “everydayness” of our lives. The relationship is one between all that is the subject/object - human/other/world relationship. In this sense, the thinking of wo/man recalls her or his own ability to hold close those things we come to care for and be concerned about. These things are to be known as all inclusive of ourselves and our relationship to others and the larger world. Further, we are to remember that our humanness depends on our construction of these relationships into “a way of living.” In so doing, one devotes oneself to the memory of what has been taken to heart; all that touches us insofar as we are human beings. In giving thanks, the heart recalls where it remains gathered and concentrated. It belongs in acknowledgment of relationship. For Heidegger, the human condition is based on our ability, not to reject history, but to understand that human beings carry within them their history into the present. From this present, we create our future through projections from this historical context (Seidel, 1964). Here there is a place that is “real” enough - one that speaks to the continual dialectic between individual experience and the conditions and circumstances of our lives.

Why start with Heidegger’s work? This can only be explained in the context of my own life experiences through which my readings were interpreted at the time of this writing. Growing up

during the 1950s and 1960s in the Western Appalachian mountains of North Carolina, I came to understand my body as something strong, even powerful. The experiences of exploring trails through woods, swinging from grapevines, making houses from fallen leaves, and lying on damp moss, all taught me to understand my world through sensual experience. Coming to know was certainly an *embodied* experience. Truth, limits, and possibilities were composited through experience. Freedom was something felt - exhilarating, breathtaking, and powerful. Early in my forming, I learned that freedom came out of decided action and risk taking. I also learned that it felt liberating. In reading Heidegger, I found affirmation of a way of knowing that wasn't objective, something only outside myself, but something that included me, my own experiences. I learned not only about the woods, trees, and earth; I learned about myself as I felt these things. My being-in-the-world was meaningful, my presence necessary to bring the world into being (not meant in the anthropomorphic sense). What I mean by this is that my sensual understandings had immense importance in the structuring of my being, and just how it is that I relate to others and the environment. My body was the mediator of experience, and knowledge was subjective. Entering school, I learned that coming to know was not inclusive of body knowledge. My physical being, which felt pain, joy, tiredness, exasperation, love and energy, possibility and freedom, was to be ignored, even controlled. Indeed, I came to understand my body as some "thing" to be controlled. And sensual knowing was simply excised from the process of learning. Philosophically speaking, my body became *it*, rather than *is*; knowledge as objective, rather than subjective.

I turned to dance classes that involved body knowledge, even if in a technical way. Unfortunately, dance did not escape the reach of the instrumental rationality that was pervasive, and continues to be, in the field of education and arts. My body was an object for the gaining of technical skills. “It” was to learn to do the steps, mirroring the teacher, replicating the knowledge given. Yet the reunion of body and action in dance, contrary to schooling, did give me immense pleasure. I felt the connections between them. It was a confirmation of knowing and doing. Somewhere in these experiences, I was able to sense the relationship between power and possibility. Clearly, I understood the relationship between present action and future possibility as something that was influenced by me. Later in my life, as a woman and dancer, I experienced dance as oppositional, in some ways, to the dominant ideology for women, because dancing is about taking up space, defying stasis, being strong, and bending of the “normal” images and relationships of what “gendered” human beings can be and do. (Note here that both male and female images in dance are also highly problematic. I return to discuss this issue in later chapters.) Dance was a place where I could remember my body, and experience myself as whole again.

Growing up female during this time in history also meant a particular understanding of what the future concerns of a woman needed to be. My mother introduced me at the age of 18 to a 35 year-old man, saying, “Sherry, he is a millionaire.” (We both “understood” what this meant. What more could a girl want? A rich man was certainly the “best” you could do.) My parent’s

response to higher education for me was, “If you want to go to college you will have to find a way to pay for it.” It wasn’t simply that I was female. It was that I was “artistic” and “pretty.” Inherent in the messages, blatantly stated, was, “Why go to school, when you have the looks to get a rich husband?” and “Dancers are not academically smart.” Intellectual scholarship or theory was something with which I was not to be concerned. Denied body in schooling (in the public sphere) and mind in the social construction of women’s identity (in the private sphere), I struggled to overcome the painful denial of what I felt myself to be.

Somewhere embedded in my corporeal memories, I drew on body knowledge that “reminded” me of risk taking and possibility. Eventually (after the birth of two sons; two marriages, neither to rich men; and two divorces; a book in itself) I did complete my degrees and entered a doctoral program where, for the first time in education, I was introduced to critical thinking and discourses concerned with human meaning and existence. Starved of theoretical knowledge, I devoured them. Drawn to questions of meaningful existence, I found existential discourse as a powerful source to examine my own life. In Heidegger’s work, the concept of “being-in-the-world,” with its strong opposition to institutional conditions that required an unthoughtful acceptance of one’s life and reality, provided a philosophically resonant place for me to begin to contemplate the human condition. What I later learned from Marx and feminist theory was to make that place more concrete. I also resonated with Heidegger’s understanding of truth to be found in the relationship *between* subjects and objects; truth is about *who we are* as human

beings not *what we are*. It is a way of finding truth that depends upon an understanding of ourselves as we relate to others. His explanation of “being-in-time” places humans always within a historical narrative where one carries one history into the present and projects into the future. Here is where conscious possibility is found, in “remembering” the past and imaging the future. In this work a space was opened for me to begin to resolve the mind/body split; where subjective knowledge could begin to be valued, “Truth” questioned, and human agency embraced and positioned within the context of future possibility.

### **Education and Critical Theory: Finding the Structures**

For one year I took Heidegger’s work to bed with me. I read and reread. Yet while studying I became dissatisfied with the referencing self, the authentic being (a term commonly called “authentic movement” in dance). This Self, as noted in Hannah Arendt’s work (Young-Bruehl, 1982, p.76), has as its most essential characteristic, “its absolute egoism, its radical separation from all its fellows.” Even where Heidegger posits the value of human sociality, it is historically undifferentiated and institutionally unsubstantiated (maybe this is how he could embrace the Nazi *volk* so easily). It is precisely in this silence that my encounter with Marxism, critical theory, and feminism were made so powerful. For here in their different ways were clearly indicated structures of human experience and oppression - historically and sociologically specific. Marxism taught me to understand the immense power of capitalism in shaping human life; and feminism, the pervasiveness of patriarchal domination. Each insisted that the point of

sociopolitical analysis was not merely to understand the world but to change it. They provided discourses of critique and of possibility. Feminism, in particular, also radically expanded my language of social transformation, making it possible for me to integrate consciously into my work, and my life, notions of compassion, love, and justice.

As an educator and dancer, I began to seriously rethink how, in Western philosophical tradition, sensual knowledge was abstracted from what is called “thinking.” As a woman and dancer my only recourse was to reclaim that which had been taken away. No longer would I be left out of the epistemological conversation; I was determined to reclaim thinking in terms that would acknowledge and affirm what I understood so powerfully, body knowledge. As I gained insight into my own ignorance of and compliance with the oppressing structure, I began to search for another story. I was not seeking a “born-again experience.” What I needed was the ability to make choices that were liberatory and somewhat consistent with my strong sensibilities. It was in critical theory that I was able to ground my philosophy, meet radical democracy, and begin to understand the dynamics of human oppression and alienation in ways more grounded than I had previously seen them. (Kanpol & McLaren, 1995). The direction of my existential concerns and pedagogic concerns converged. In encountering other critical educators, I discovered the possibility of integrating my concerns about human existence with questions of pedagogy. At the risk of covering ground that is familiar to some of the readers, I want to return to some of the key ideas and insights of these writers.

Critical pedagogy theoretically developed and drew from a number of perspectives including the social reconstructionism of Dewey, the Frankfurt School of critical theory, democratic theory, feminist and cultural studies and more recently, postmodern ideas and perspectives (McLaren, 1994). Characteristic of these disciplines or perspectives is the concern for the problematization of the concrete relations between the individual and the cultural forms in which they exist. Critical pedagogy starts from a critique of schooling in terms of its role in the shaping of subjectivity for a particular form of social life. Implied in this view is the recognition of the way existing social structures reproduce and perpetuate racism, sexism, and the inequalities of the class structure. Kathleen Weiler (1988) notes, “what essentially defines critical educational theory is its moral imperative and its emphasis on the need for both individual empowerment and social transformation (p.6).” Critical pedagogy as a philosophy of praxis actively induces a dialogue that struggles with competing concepts of “how to live meaningfully in a world confronted by pain, suffering, and injustice” (Hammer & McLaren, 1989, p. 39). Pedagogy here is not to be equated narrowly with instructional practices. It includes the total reality of the classroom and a critique of how that reality comes to be formed through the integrating of a particular curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, and methods of evaluation, purpose, and selection of texts. Together they produce a particular ideological version of what knowledge has the most worth; who has the knowledge; what it means to know something; and how we use that knowledge to construct or reconstruct ourselves, others, and our

environment. Students' experiences must be analyzed to understand how those experiences were shaped, produced, legitimated, or disconfirmed in reference to the dominant forms of knowledge.

As Roger Simon (1987) writes:

In other words, talk about pedagogy is simultaneously talk about the details of what students and others might do together and the cultural politics such practices support. In this perspective, we cannot talk about teaching practices without talking about politics (p. 370).

Critical pedagogy takes to heart the possibility of education engaging in a process of human liberation for social transformation. It speaks with a vision of, and commitment to education, with this as its central purpose. Peter McLaren (1989) gives words to the foundational principles.

Critical pedagogy resonates with the sensibility of the Hebrew symbol of "tikkun", which means "to heal, repair, and transform the world. All the rest is commentary." It provides historical, cultural, political, and ethical direction for those in education who still dare to hope. Irrevocably committed to the side of the oppressed, critical pedagogy is as revolutionary as the earlier views of the authors of the Declaration of Independence: since history is fundamentally open to change, liberation is an authentic goal, and a radically different world can be brought into being. (p.160).

The connection between critical pedagogy and the Heideggerian sensibility for thinking is in the

understanding that “how we think” is implicated in “how we live.” This critical remembering of existence is the crucial departure and returning point for all inquiries into how we create our own lives and the lives of others. Critical inquiry becomes an integral part of revealing the interaction between the student’s individual life and the society in which it is formed. Critical pedagogy concerns itself with “problematizing” the students’ lives in the context of their world. Essential to this is a critical understanding through which students come to “make sense” of their lives through an awareness of the dialectical relationship between their subjectivity and the dominant culture. Central to this is the validation of personal knowledge and the concept of empowerment through which individuals “find their voices,” (a common phrase used by critical pedagogues, which refers to creating spaces in the classroom for students to articulate their thoughts, concerns, ideas, feelings, and yearnings). Their voices articulate both a critical language and a language of possibility.

The purposeful question from which so many other questions originate is the question of being, living as such, making concrete one’s own existence. In recognizing the essential question of being, critical pedagogy follows Heidegger’s concern, but extends it into a deeper analysis of social institutions and an emancipatory vision of self and social transformation. It is dedicated to critical understanding and the project of human liberation. It gives attention to “the way,” or the journey that takes us out of alienation and to some significant apprehension of the meaning of our lives (Bruss & Macedol, 1985).

### **Perspectives on Critical Pedagogy**

To understand how pedagogical practices represents a particular politics of experience, Henry Giroux (1985) argues that

critical educators need to develop a discourse that can be used to interrogate schools as ideological and material embodiments of a complex web of relations of culture and power, on the one hand, and as socially constructed sites of contestation actively involved in the production of lived experiences on the other. (p. 23)

Underlying Giroux's argument is one that points to "problematizing" and interrogating everyday classroom experiences; how they are produced, interpreted, accepted, contested, and/or legitimated. Most simply, it is a recognition that schools embody the politics of the culture from which they are formed. Svi Shapiro (1989) defines culture as

the terrain of struggle and contestation in which the subordinate and the oppressed constantly produce counter values, beliefs, images and ways of thinking that question and challenge domination, injustice, and alienation. (p. 81)

The discourse needed directs us towards the concept of cultural literacy where the meanings embedded in the dominant and subordinate cultures are exposed and discussed in their knowledge/power relationships. Cultural literacy is a reading of personal experiences as they are formed by the dominant culture. "Dominant" refers to social practices, social forms, and social structures that affirm the central values, interests, and concerns of the social interest in control of

the material and symbolic wealth in society (Nieto, 1996). Giroux and Simon (1988) note that a starting point for the critical pedagogical encounter is in popular culture - the “terrain of images, knowledge forms, and affective investments which define the ground on which one’s ‘voice’ becomes possible” (p. 16). Individual voices must be understood within their cultural grounding. Critical pedagogy refers to this process as giving voice to one’s own experiences by articulating the “reality” of one’s life; coming to critical understanding of the sociocultural mapping of consciousness; and using individual voices collectively to struggle in the retelling and remaking of life stories. More recently the postmodern turn in critical pedagogy has emphasized the importance of challenging those “normalizing” voices of authority and knowledge. It has made clear that culture comprises a multiplicity of voices and identities, many of which are suppressed or invalidated. More than this it has shown us how much these identities come into being and continue through relationships with others. That is to say, there is no such thing as a sealed or essential cultural identity, only the constant play and interaction of diverse people marking out spaces of value and power. What Giroux and others call “border pedagogy” is the attempt to understand and become sensitive to the connections and separations that mark the conflict-filled terrain of our social lives. Giroux expresses it this way:

Border literacy calls for pedagogical conditions in which differences are recognized, exchanged and mixed in identities that break down but are not lost, that connect but remain diverse . . . Underlying this notion of border pedagogy and literacy is neither the logic of assimilation (the melting pot), nor the imperative to create cultural hierarchies,

but the attempt to expand the possibilities for different groups to enter into dialogue in order to further understand the richness of their differences and the value of what they share in common. (in Kanpol & McLaren, 1995, p. 121)

Reading critical theorists' work and understanding their rejection of the tenets of the traditional patriarchal educational system, as well as their concern for bringing to the core of the curriculum the lives of the students themselves, I began to understand that what was being offered was the substantiation of experience and the beginnings of an analysis of the social construction of those experiences (Middleton, 1993). The stories, told by students, are to be examined for their underlying assumptions, what was voiced and what was silenced, and what they divulge about our cultural experiences.

Such a process can be understood when returning to Paulo Freire's work, where literacy became connected to questioning and understanding lives in the context of a people's politics and culture. Freire (1988) called for a pedagogy that leaves behind what he calls the "banking" concept of schooling, in which students become depositories for a set knowledge imposed by teachers. He asserted the need to replace this concept of schooling with one in which

- the purpose of education is to empower students for personal and social transformation;
- the curriculum is always connected to the concrete issues of the student's life;
- critical thinking is a way of finding one's own voice within the individual/social dialogue;
- critical understanding is a foundational process in meaning-making in one's own life; and

- critical and creative consciousness are reunited in imaging a moral vision for a more fully human life.

Freire's notion of transformation brings to the conversation a hermeneutic process of attending to, reflecting upon, and interpreting reality as we know it. Beyond interpretation is the moral intention for change from "what is" to "what ought to be." David Purpel (1989) echoes this transformative theme: "curriculum for justice and social passion unites serious social criticism with possibilities for an alternative community based on ethical principles" (p. 162). Giroux and Simon (1988) summarize the concerns of education that is organized around critical pedagogy.

This means that teaching and learning must be linked to the goals of educating students: to understand why things are the way they are and how they got to be that way; to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar; to take risks and struggle with ongoing relations of power from within a life-affirming moral culture; and to envisage a world which is "not yet" in order to enhance the conditions for improving the grounds upon which life is lived. (p. 13)

Such a pedagogy engaged in ideological critique inevitably raises moral concerns. It exposes questions of social injustice, inequality, asymmetrical power, and the lack of human rights or dignity. This kind of education is at once both a political and a moral challenge. Svi Shapiro (1989) distinguishes the curricular concerns of a critical cultural literacy with its "social-interventionist" intent.

At the core of the social-interventionist approach to curricular knowledge is the notion of cultural literacy. Its central concern is not the accumulation of discrete skills or the segmented topics of sub-oriented schooling, but broad apprehension of the social/cultural formation which structures our everyday world. In this sense the curriculum is concerned with the connection of human practices among and between the moral/cultural, the political, the economic, the religious, the artistic and literary, and elsewhere. It must also emphasize, in the study of these spheres, the need for critical insight - awareness that penetrates the ideology of surface description in which our world is named in partial and distorting ways. Of course, a cultural literacy that attempts to provide critical awareness of the social/cultural formation cannot be a continuation of the remote abstractions of liberal arts tradition. It must, instead, be deeply rooted in the experience of individuals daily struggling with the crises of survival - material, moral, spiritual, and psychological.

(p. 11)

Education, in the critical sense, focuses on the relationship between the individual's experiences and the sociohistorical context within which the experience is produced. It speaks a language developed out of everyday experience; the experience of "what is." Yet this is only one side of the coin. Shapiro (1989) explains, "Social-interventionist pedagogy is concerned with both what is and what might be. While the first face is analytic and relentlessly probing, the latter face is creative, imaginative, and also, hopeful" (p. 10).

For students to be able to engage in critical reflection requires a certain belief or faith.

Kathleen Weiler (1988) writes that the single most important assumption of Giroux's educational theory is the "belief in each person's ability to understand and critique his or her own experiences and the social reality 'out there' that any project of pedagogical and ultimately social transformation rests on" (p. 23). What is significant to critical pedagogy is the belief in the capacity of individuals to act and react upon the social world they inhabit. Hegemony or domination is never complete but always in a process of being reimposed, *yet always capable of being resisted by historical subjects* (Brosio, 1994).

Antonio Gramsci's analysis of social consciousness as an organizing but resisted principle of everyday life has allowed radical educators to develop the concept of counter-hegemony. Purpel and Shapiro (1995) calls for the work of critical teachers to be viewed as counter-hegemonic, recognizing not only the structural constraints under which they work, but also the potential inherent in teaching for transformative work. For critical teaching, it means to struggle with students in understanding their resistance to forces acting upon their lives. It is the development of self and collective consciousness that can oppose the hegemony of the existing order, and begin to define and articulate our most desired human needs. Thus the ability of students to actively resist implies more than a change of consciousness. Patty Lather writes:

The task of counter-hegemonic groups is the development of counter-institutions, ideologies, and cultures that provide an ethical alternative to the dominant hegemony, a

lived experience of how the world can be different. (quoted in Weiler, 1988, p. 54)

### **A Way of Looking That Dances with Life**

A possible way of looking at things . . . gives the humanities their power to challenge the taken-for-granted, to move those who attend beyond their limited horizon.

Maxine Green (1981, p. 302)

It is when we find our personally named human conditions unbearable that we can decide to act upon beliefs of what can be. In this action, freedom is taken as a movement leading towards a more compassionate existence. As such, freedom is relational, opening up the opportunities for greater human contact and reciprocity. The impetus towards this are painful feelings of alienation, powerlessness, and the vacuity felt from the decay of our moral and spiritual connections (Lerner, 1994). The “other side” that drives this movement are remembrances of past experiences of joy, happiness, touching, holding, closeness, community; those experiences that bring us in touch with the need for relationship in which love and understanding flourish. They produce the memories that can evoke our passion for life, one full of meaning, purpose and joy (Marcuse, 1969). It is a movement grounded in the concrete dance with life, in which one remains in touch with human possibility. Maxine Greene (1981) writes concerning the link between critical thinking and possibility.

Like Freire, I believe that the educator's efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization . . . . there is an obligation, I think, on the part of all who educate to address themselves, as great artists do, to the freedom of their students, to make demands on them to form the pedagogy of their own liberation - to do so rigorously, passionately, and in good faith . . . . there is possibility of transcendence, at least the transcendence of wide-awakeness, of being able to see. And to live with "eyes open" is something other than living submerged. (p. 298)

Greene's approach to the pedagogical process is in terms of conscious states of being, where students are called out of their submerged consciousness, their taken-for-granted world, and challenged to critically appropriate their own experience (Greene, 1990). In naming the existential dimensions of their lives, they gain insight into the very structures that form their ways of being. Reflection and understanding, in critical pedagogy, has as its purpose human freedom. Freedom, here, is a way of living, a praxis that has possibility as its project, giving meaning to one's life through a process of making connections. Praxis here is a bonding between the two faces of thinking and being; a "moral cementing" as thinking and feeling combine in an impassioned understanding of the human condition.

If thinking is a way of life, inextricable from how one lives, then freedom is synonymous with a way of thinking that is critical, creative, and visionary. David Purpel (1989) gives insight into the connections between the critical, creative, and moral aspects of education.

Indeed, the essence of education can be seen as critical, in that its purpose is to help us to see, hear, and experience the world more clearly, more completely, and with more understanding . . . . Another vital aspect of the educational process is the development of creativity and imagination, which enable us not only to understand but to build, make, create, and re-create our world . . . . We are talking about a vision that can illuminate what we are doing and what we might achieve . . . . The questions of what our vision is and should be are in fact the most crucial and most basic questions that we face. (pp. 26-27)

Simply stated in terms of a critical pedagogy: the critical is turned toward the realities of living; the creative toward social transformation; and the moral toward the democratic principles of equality, social justice, freedom, and human dignity. The educational process then, becomes a paradigm for nourishing a critical and creative consciousness for the purpose of human freedom (Purpel, 1989).

### **Limitations of Critical Pedagogy**

While critical pedagogy has offered me a perspective of incalculable value, on the philosophy of education and teaching, I've come to view the philosophy as having serious shortcomings. None of these is more apparent than the way it, as a discourse, has continued to speak in terms of mind/body dualism. I argue throughout this book that any approach committed to human liberation must seriously address the body as a site for both oppression and liberation.

Recognizing the body, as well as the mind, as a cultural-historical construction illustrates the

necessity for developing a critical discourse that expands our bodily understandings of human existence. Critical pedagogy, as an emancipatory philosophy, emphasizes a curriculum structured around students' experiences as a way of understanding the formation of one's identity. Yet, to understand this process we must also ask how the body absorbs and constructs particular ways of being as a vehicle for this socialization. Critical social theory has given us a framework that conceptualizes the relationship between being and consciousness - helping us to understand that not only does consciousness affect being, but being affects consciousness; how we think affects how we live, and conversely how we live affects how we think. Here thinking and being are in continual interplay. To a great extent, however, this ideological or dominant consciousness has been examined and understood in terms of the disembodied consciousness of the mind. The body, as the physical reflection of the culture in which one lives, has only more recently become part of the postmodern and feminist discourse. In terms of critical pedagogy, only recently has the question of what it might mean to take the body seriously been raised. Often when we talk about the body, it is in a highly abstract way. What is typically unexplored is the way the dominant culture is embodied and "lived out" in the individual subject. Indeed a great deal of my educational work has been, precisely, to "unpack" the forms of embodied culture with my students. "The human drama," writes Morris Berman; "is first and foremost a somatic one" (1989, p. 108) or as Emily Martin (1989 p. 15) might suggest for understanding human history, "at the level of the social whole, at the level of 'person,' and at the level of body."

It might seem a somewhat strange phenomenon, at this time of extraordinary questioning of paradigms and “regimes of truth,” that it is necessary to restate the argument against the mind/body dualism in a discussion of critical social science and philosophy. Yet, our own scientifically-based model for understanding ourselves and our world has produced a methodology that continues to ensnare us in an acceptance of a language of separations and abstractions. This situation has not gone unnoticed. As Terry Eagleton (1996) notes, with insight and humor::

The postmodern subject, unlike its Cartesian ancestor, is one whose body is integral to its identity. Indeed from Bakhtin to the Body Shop, Lyotard to leotards, the body has become one of the most recurrent preoccupations of postmodern thought. Mangled members, tormented torsos, bodies emblazoned or incarcerated, disciplined or desirous: the bookshops are strewn with such phenomena . . . (p. 69)

In other words, there has been an extraordinary upsurge of interest among critical theorists in the question of the body. This has reflected the strong critique of understanding and truth that appear to emerge from objective, that is unsituated, human thought and reason. Both among feminist and postmodern writers, there has been a determined attempt to see all knowledge as emerging from human beings situated in very particular places, cultures, languages, and histories. Nobody speaks or knows with a God’s-eye view. This assertion of situatedness can be seen as a form of materialist philosophy, which starts, not with modes of production, but with the body itself - the

ultimate material presence in the world. I will, in succeeding chapters, return to this postmodern turn of discourse. Let me say here, however, that while this attention to the body has given great impetus to my own work, it too is found wanting. Surprisingly, while we have come to see just how much culture and language inscribe the body, indeed construct it, there is still a relative lack of attention and understanding of what this might mean for a pedagogy concerned with human emancipation and social change. Also, postmodern's antagonism towards notions of human agency has left the body, paradoxically, in a peculiarly objectified state. I will return to this in my final chapter of the book. Nonetheless, we must take very seriously all that has been learned about the erasure of the body from our critical perspectives. It is also worth reflecting on why there is now this embrace of the body among intellectuals especially those who are male. "Traditional, white, western male philosophers," suggests Frigga Haug (1987, p. 28), "are beginning all of a sudden to identify with the animalistic body, perceiving their human identity threatened by the decision-making process of the computer." She argues that our previous conceptual framework, (which in its abstractions allowed for a mind/body separation, and further placed the 'mind' as the master of knowledge), has come under theoretical suspicion in its inability to provide a theory for understanding our human condition.

Under the influence of universally disruptive developments in the forces of production, the mode of domination articulated to the division of labour finds itself in a process of constant (and, currently, chaotic) reconstruction. Whereas previously it was the 'mind' that was to gain mastery both over body and nature, it is now the body that is to be saved

from the ravages of the scientific and technical revolution . . . . The fact that the dualisms of body and mind, together with the division of labour between head and hand, have themselves been laid open to debate, can clearly be traced to their incapacity to explain the world as it is today. (p. 28)

The question of the mind/body dualism continues to be a terrain of compartmentalized investigation. The body has been divided into regions of biology, physiology, and kinesthetics all attempting to explain the functions of “body” in abstracted language. There is also the language of psychology, which discusses the body as an access to emotions for the mind to rationally sort out and take control of. The emphasis being on the individual gaining self-awareness and self-control. What is left out in these theories is the notion of a body/subject as a positioned social being. The consequence of this absence is that the experiences of the person come to be explained in highly individualistic terms (e.g., “You can learn how to control your stress.”). Such statements give us the illusion that we’re control of our lives, but they disregard the social context in which our bodies are situated. We can come to better understand how to control our stress levels through internal relaxation processes, but we cannot begin to understand what induces the stress without consciously locating the existential realities of people in their everyday life as social beings. It becomes clear that without a particular kind of critical language that situates the body/subject in its social context, we continue to speak, in dualistic ways, of mind and body, individual and society. The absence of a dialectical reflective language that

attempts to make these connections results in an inability to fully express and understand our lives, and therefore, to transform the conditions we live.

Fragmentation of understanding leads to abstraction of the self from its world situation, and from its embeddedness in social relations. Haug (1987, p. 64) writes, “Contrary to reputation, our everyday language is more than a little abstract: it suppresses the concreteness of feelings, thoughts, and experiences, speaking of them only from a distance.” The way language is used directs our behavior. Language itself is taken to be reality, signs are as they appear. Therefore, language is the material through which we live, understand, and name our world. It begins in our earliest schooling. We learn to write about the facts of the world rather than about the lives that create it. We neither express the feelings we experience, nor do we have any means for reflecting on, or understanding them. Haug (1987) states, “We simply reproduce the perceptions we have heard spoken by others, from whose experience they are as equally far removed” (p. 65). This relationship between ideology and language is the overriding factor for instilling values as it structures behavior. Our relationship to language becomes strangely artificial as we learn to explain our world as if we exist outside of it.

### **Language without a Body**

As critical educators have immersed themselves in exposing the relationships between the dominant ideology and the corresponding educational system, they have fallen into their own ideological trap. The concentrated effort in critical pedagogy to make explicit the relationship of

power to the dominant form of knowledge often ignores body knowledge. Laurie McDade (1987) writes that knowing in the mind does not lie dormant, separate from the knowing of the heart and of the body.

Everyday moments of teaching at school in communities, then, are personal, pedagogical, and political acts incorporating mind and bodies of subjects, as knowers and as learners.

When we are at our best as teachers we are capable of speaking to each of these ways of knowing ourselves and our students. And we may override precedents in the educational project that value the knowing mind and deny the knowing of the heart and body.

Students, the partners in this enterprise of knowing, are whole people with ideas, with emotions, and with sensations. If we, as teachers, 'are to arouse passions now and then' (Greene, 1986, p.441) the project must not be confined to a knowing only of the mind. It must also address and interrogate what we think we know of the heart and of the body. (pp. 58-59)

Any serious attempt to construct theories for understanding the relationship between the individual and society must bridge the gap between theory and experience, mind and body, and the rational and the sensual. We must question how we become "some-body," if we are to outline strategies for liberation. This leads us to examine how we have unconsciously accepted particular interpretations of the world, and how particular patterns of 'normality' have been drilled into us. The aim is to identify the ways in which our consciousness becomes ideologized,

and in so doing, we begin to define and determine our relationship to other human beings and to the larger world (Haug, 1987). To do so in bodily terms is to reinterpret those taken-for-granted aspects of our lives with an intention of investigating: (1) the ways in which bodily activities are organized; (2) the ways in which the body itself and the feelings in and around it have arisen historically; and (3) the ways in which this relates to our insertion into society as a whole.

Guiding this investigation are two processes. The first is an inquiry into our “body memories.” Secondly, these memories are given meaning by relating them to situations in which we voluntarily submit to our own subordination, or those in which we develop forms of lived resistance. This decoding process becomes the written signs of the relations within which subjectivity is formed. Critical social theorist Brian Fay (1987) tells us:

Put starkly, since the problem is not in people’s minds nor dependent on what goes on in them, then giving them insights into who they are, raising their consciousness by altering their self-conceptions and thereby altering their beliefs and values, is likely to be insufficient. *Embodied repression calls for a strategy of liberation richer than envisioned* . . . (p. 52) (Italics mine)

“Embodiment” refers to the process by which the body becomes a vehicle for socialization. Fay argues (p. 146) that learning is not simply a cognitive process, but also a somatic one in which the “oppression leaves its traces not just in people’s minds but in their muscles and skeletons as well.” In Peter McLaren’s work in critical pedagogy he speaks of “embodiment” defined as “the

terrain of flesh where ideological social structures are inscribed.” McDade’s, Fay’s, and McLaren’s work reflects an important struggle for finding language that questions, understands, and apprehends the unspoken knowledge of our bodies.

In a similar vein, Don Johnson (1983) vividly captures how, through schooling, the physical bodies of students are patterned to fit our social and economic structures. He argues that education is primarily designed to train docile citizens and workers and this is partially achieved through forming bodily behavior. He speaks of the unspoken inferences of a particular ordering of “body knowledge,” which becomes instilled within our bodies as behaviors that lead to success.

Bodily patterns of fatigue, hunger, and excitement are brought into alignment with the externally determined rhythm of the school day. Idiosyncratic behavior is generally punished, either physically, in the case of students who are too loud or restless, or through poor grades, in the case of those who don’t express themselves ‘correctly.’ Industry is the principal beneficiary of these corporeal disciplines. Schools train people in the bodily patterns that most jobs require. The organic rhythms of the body are geared to meet the needs of the standardized working day, beginning and ending at certain hours, with carefully specified breaks for food, toilet, and rest. (p. 37)

McLaren (1988b) critiques education for insufficiently recognizing its own power to construct students’ subjectivities by teaching us how to think about our bodies and how to experience our

bodies. He ascribes to language a powerful constitutive influence in shaping the body/subject.

The problem with schools is not that they ignore bodies, their pleasures, and the suffering of the flesh (although admittedly this is part of the problem) but that they undervalue language and representation as a constitutive factor in the shaping of the body/subject as the bearer of meaning, history, race, and gender. (p. 62)

We remain ignorant of the ideological use of language imposed upon the body, which speaks directly to the forming of subjectivity. This ignorance or lack of awareness of how our everyday language is packed with preconceived values and meanings becomes the obstacle in understanding the power concealed within language. Haug (1987, p. 63) writes, “Language can serve as either a prison house, or as the material for liberation.” Not only does ignorance block possibilities for liberation, but the lack of an adequate language to bring to consciousness our “embodied” selves hinders the articulation of our experiences in theoretical terms. The project of liberation is once again thwarted in this disjunction between experience and language. The dominant discourse surrounds the attempt of liberatory actions and contains them within its ideological net - one that excises feelings and bodies in all of their torment. Ana Maria Araujo Freire wrote passionately in the afterword of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994).

I am fed up with bans and prohibitions: bans on the body, which produce, generation after generation, not only Brazilian illiteracy (according to the thesis I maintain), but an *ideology* of ban on the body, which gives us our “street children,” our misery and hunger,

our unemployment and prostitution, and, under military dictatorship, the exile and death of countless Brazilians. (Freire, 1994, p.204)

She notes too, the ban on Paulo Freire's body (along with his ideas), which was forbidden, for fifteen long years, in Brazil.

The body is not to be understood as an abstract object, it is not other. It is real. It is by definition an I with that which is more than the mind and more than the physical body. It is not a dualistic split or even multiple splits. It is the presence of all that we know, housed in stories of meaning.

Stanley Keleman (1981), suggested that the education of the body occurs in two specific ways. One is direct somatic learning in which the body becomes the receptor for behavioral influences addressed through language and physical environments (i.e., "Sit still"; "Face front"; "Don't touch anyone or anything"; "Keep your legs together"; "Stand tall"). And the second process is indirect somatic learning, noted, for example, in educational institutions, when the student learns acceptable ways of being particular to his or her culture by taking on roles (e.g. the role of mastery: "Don't cry"; "Swallow your anger"; "Keep a stiff upper lip"; of occupation: "How much schooling have you had?"; "What's your earning capacity?"; and, that of sexuality: "Girls don't argue"; "Boys don't cry"). To be concerned with the shaping of the body/subject is to remember as Keleman (1981, p. 13) writes, "The body you have is the body you live." Our feelings and responsiveness shape our lives. We form our bodily selves as we shape our own reality. Our bodily living shapes our existence. Thus, for example, he suggests:

In the name of Knowledge we dampen and channel aliveness. Our current system of education creates spasms. We cramp our children's bodies so that we can form their minds. The school system institutes a social contract between the kids and the teachers, and between the kids and adult authorities in general. And the model is a contraction model. Learning becomes painful. Learning becomes a chore that requires discipline. (p. 128)

The forming of our being grows out of our experiences. Experiences are perceived in coordination between our minds and bodies - that which forms our being. This forming is the historically situated, culturally inscribed "reality" in which we live. Morris Berman (1989) gives a lived example of the educational spasm of which Keleman speaks of.

I was born and raised in upstate New York. During my high school years, we were required, as part of the history sequence of our education, to spend time learning about local and regional history. Our textbook had a chapter about the Colonial period, another about the defeat of the Iroquois, still another about the building of the Erie Canal, as well as ones on the rise of the steel and textile industries. For all I remember, there may even have been chapters on working-class movements, strikes, the formation of labor unions, possibly something on the life of Emma Goldman (though I doubt it). (pp. 107-108)

That I don't remember is largely the point here. It was all crushingly boring; it seemed to

have little relevance to anything that really mattered, to me or any of the other students forced to study this material . . . . Chemistry and Latin were no different from history, even though history was supposedly about “real life.” Yet none of us were deceived about what actually constituted real life. Real life was your awkwardness in front of the opposite sex, your relations with your peers, your struggle to cope with what went on in your family . . . (what resonates with what is familiar to you). In a word, your emotions, or more broadly, your “spiritual” and psychic life. *These things are what your real life is about; they reflect the things that matter most to you, for they are experienced in the body.* (pp. 107-108) (Italics mine)

Critical educators need to understand that the process of liberation requires that the body be situated linguistically, and therefore discursively, in the sociohistorical context. To *write the body* is to understand that “the voice is the body” (p. 58), representing the incorporation of the social into the corporeal. Therefore, it is within this specific context that body/subjects are able to recognize the set of connections necessary “to make sense” of their lives, and thereby begin to consciously define both their own subjugation and possibilities for liberation.

A language that emerges from our bodily living speaks of a kind of rationality distinct from one that is *intellectually* rooted. It demands that we listen to our bodies, feel our emotions, release our passions, and reunite our critical powers of thinking with our feelings in hopes of a fuller humanity. As stated earlier, even in our critical discourse we continue to speak in terms of a rational-mind orientation. In rational thinking, students are encouraged to see beyond the

surface of the ideology in which they live, ask for justifications, seek alternatives, and be critical of their own ideas, as well as others. Missing in the text is literacy of embodied knowledge, which is essential to adequately address contemporary issues such as colonization, difference, identity, affects of technology and media, gender, commodification, and capitalism (Gutierrez & McLaren in Kanpol & McLaren, 1995). All of this suggests the need to “embody the discourse” of critical pedagogy. Critical awareness must enter new territories in order to address the overriding emphasis in institutions of education on valuing the knowing mind, which continually denies the knowing of the heart and of the body. What is to be exposed is what remains absent, silent, and un-named, revealing the relationship between language and ideology, and specifically the failure to adequately name the way we live, as embodied beings.

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