CHAPTER 15

Paideia for Praxis: Philosophy and Pedagogy as Practices of Liberation

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Introduction: A Pilgrimage to Forest Home

It is easy for academic workers, even those of us who consider ourselves anarchists, to become detached and disengaged from the sad realities of the world. During the two or so years I was writing my dissertation, I was often so engrossed in philosophical minutiae that I'd forget that the richest 2 percent of the world's adults control more than half of the world's wealth, while the bottom half owns barely 1 percent; that the combined wealth of the three richest individuals is greater than the combined Gross Domestic Product of the forty-eight poorest countries; that of the one hundred largest economies, more than fifty are corporations; that three billion people are living on less than one dollar a day; that twenty-five million people in Africa are dying of AIDS; that eight-hundred million people lack access to basic health care; that eight-hundred and seventy million people are illiterate; that seven-hundred million people are starving or malnourished. My reaction to these lapses of memory was always the same: I felt ashamed of myself. How could I sit in the comfort of my apartment in a clean, safe, middle-class neighborhood, an alien to the struggle, and write a dissertation about the evils of poverty and state-sponsored violence, all the while aware of my own complicity in the very system which generates these evils and unleashes them upon the world?

The role of intellectuals in general and academic workers in particular within the anarchist movement is famously ambiguous. Anarchists have long harbored skepticism toward formal academic institutions, which they tended to regard, rightly, as ancillaries of the existing social, political, and economic order. "It was not for the People," Proudhon writes, "that the

Polytechnic, the Normal School, the Military School at St Cyr, the School of Law, were founded; it was to support, strengthen, and fortify the distinction between classes, in order to complete and make irrevocable the split between the working class and the upper class" (Proudhon, 1972, p. 111). In a similar vein, Bakunin argues that "just as Catholicism once sanctioned the violence perpetrated by the nobility upon the people, so does the university, this church of bourgeois science, explain and condone the exploitation of the same people by bourgeois capital" (Bakunin, 1992, p. 124). Academics, in turn, are "by their very nature inclined to all sorts of intellectual and moral corruption," chiefly a tendency toward arrogance and pomposity (Bakunin, 1990, p. 134). (Anyone who has spent more than five minutes at an academic conference can scarcely take issue with this observation). At their worst, Bakunin says, they are "modern priests of licensed political and social quackery [who] poison the university youth so effectively that it would take a miracle to cure them" and who produce "doctrinaire[s] full of conceit and contempt for the rabble, whom [they are] ready to exploit in the name of [their] intellectual and moral superiority" (Bakunin, 1992, p. 74). Regrettably all of Bakunin's claims, though written in the 1860s and '70s, remain just as true in the present day. As Peter Gelderloos writes:

> We do not want to be like these people [bourgeois academics] . . . There is honor among thieves, and we prefer that kind to the honor of titled professionals. Imagine the hypocrisy, the blindness, of the social scientists studying "hierarchy and power" evident in one particular scene, the reception dinner at the end of the conference. A hundred ladies and gentlemen in expensive dresses and suits, gobbling up *hors d'ouevres* in a building guarded by private security in the capital of a poor country, only aesthetically aware of the dozen t-shirt-and jeans-clad anarchists among them, some packing weapons because their very real struggle against hierarchy puts them in constant risk of attack by fascists, casually stealing silverware and filling plastic bags with banquet delicacies to feed themselves for the next few days. I recall one conversation: a flirty prof mentioned the lovely seaside hotel he stayed in during a conference in Barcelona. I couldn't help but interject: "ah yes, there used to be a fishermen's village there before they demolished it and built the artificial beach. It was really nice." He didn't get the irony. Let me repeat: we do not want to be like these people. (Gelderloos, 2007)

Even honest, clear-eyed, and well-intentioned academics—the kind of academics we *want* to be—constantly run the risk of valorizing the abstract and theoretical at the expense of the concrete and the practical. This is a serious problem since, as Bakunin notes, "abstraction can easily conceive the principle of real and living individuality but it can have no dealings with real

and living individuals" (Bakunin, 2004, p. 35). In other words, theoretical analysis and other forms of intellectual work do not by themselves guarantee any meaningful connection with the concrete, lived experience of human beings, which is precisely why theoretical analysis tends to invite disengagement and detachment from reality. For this reason, Rocker writes, "all higher understanding, every new phase of intellectual development, every epoch-making thought, giving men new vistas for cultural activities, has been able to prevail only through constant struggle with . . . authority" (Rocker, 1997, p. 84). This illustrates one of the major challenges which anarchist academic workers face—namely, how to marshal our intellectual work in the lived struggle against authority and the service of human liberation. Two years after completing my dissertation, an assistant professor of philosophy in a provincial North Texas military town, it is a challenge which I myself face on a daily basis.

On July 17, 2010, the seventy-fourth anniversary of the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, my wife and I visited Forest Home Cemetery outside Chicago, where some of the most famous and beloved figures of the historical anarchist movement are buried. It was in that spot, in the shadow of the Haymarket Martyrs Monument, that a dear comrade of ours had chosen to celebrate his commitment ceremony. As happy as I was for Bill and his partner, the experience of standing amid the remains of those heroes was infinitely more harrowing than it was the first time I visited the cemetery. That was in 1999 when, newly radicalized in the aftermath of Seattle and flushed with a romantic revolutionary fervor, I ventured out to lay roses at the base of the Monument and upon the graves of Emma Goldman, Lucy Parsons, and Voltairine de Cleyre.

Having been raised in a religious household, I am no stranger to the concept of pilgrimage; indeed I continue to appreciate it even though I have long since abandoned all religious creeds. To religious people, the point of pilgrimage is to draw near to holiness, to immerse themselves in the sacred. While most anarchists are not religious, we are nonetheless people of great and unwavering faith—faith in the values of liberty and equality, in the capacity of humankind to construct a world free of greed, oppression, and violence. More importantly, we belong to an old and august tradition populated by others who have shared this faith and have even laid down their lives in its name. Whenever I visit Forest Home, I feel a deep and profound connection to these heroic forebears; a profound sense of belonging to something larger and more powerful than myself; a visceral pride in the accomplishments and sacrifices of "my" movement throughout history. That was the point of past pilgrimages: to keep silent and solitary company, however brief, with giants—the giants upon whose shoulders we stand upon today. This most recent pilgrimage, however, was different. Gazing at the Haymarket

Monument, looking down at the graves of Goldman and Parsons and de Cleyre, I thought about what these people did and wondered how I could dare to count myself among them. After all, what was I doing to merit the honorable title of "anarchist"? As Beckett would say, "very little, almost nothing."

In my scholarly work I join Bakunin in condemning abstraction as politically, socially, and economically oppressive, yet isn't there something incredibly hypocritical about this? Isn't Bakunin right, after all, in intimating that scholarly work is itself a form of abstraction? More importantly, does not this abstraction entitle me to privilege—privilege which is denied to others, privilege which prejudices my work and alienates me from the class struggle, privilege which I consistently and constantly take for granted? And what, at the end of the day, does this abstraction do to promote the liberation of humankind? Does it perhaps do nothing? Worse, does it actually serve to perpetuate domination? In the face of such suspicion, it is little wonder that so many online anarchist and Left-socialist forums are constantly brimming with invective against "academics," or that I often find myself feeling ashamed and guilty in the presence of comrades. Whether such suspicion and the accompanying self-doubt are warranted remains to be seen. My point is that I find myself thinking and worrying and getting depressed about these issues all the time, and I know that I am not alone in this. Any honest anarchist who finds himself or herself toiling in the bowels of academia and kindred institutions cannot avoid these feelings. The salient question, and one which I am keen to discuss in this essay, is whether they are rational or at least understandable; whether they can be overcome with a mind to transforming us for the better; whether they can impel us to think or act differently. I think they can, but only if we think carefully about our roles as teachers and scholars.

Anarchists as Intellectuals and Academics

Malatesta writes, "All of us, without exception, are obliged to live more or less in contradiction with our ideals" (Malatesta, 1993, p. 142). This, in my view, is the first and most important lesson of modern politics: that we are all hypocrites, that purity and authenticity are vain aspirations, that we are all accomplices with State and Capital whether we like it or not. What matters for anarchists, Malatesta continues, is that "we suffer by this contradiction and seek to make it as small as possible" (Malatesta, 1993, p. 142). We strive to be *aware* of our complicity and to do whatever we can to minimize that complicity without compromising our individuality and personal ideals. Clearly this recognition was enough to ameliorate Malatesta's shame, if indeed he had any in the first place. But then again, Malatesta was a professional revolutionary, whereas I am simply a teacher and a writer of books. If I am being truly honest with myself, I cannot help but think this makes a difference. Surely people like Malatesta—people whom I admire very much, people

whom I envy because they seem so much stronger and braver than I, because they accomplished much more than I could ever see myself accomplishing—could afford to be a bit bourgeois. Yet when I try to take Malatesta's lesson to heart, it inevitably ends up seeming like a cop-out.

At the same time, are other comrades' choices really that different from mine? After all, one must earn a living whether she likes it or not, and whether she chooses to work in a factory or in a university, she necessarily remains an accomplice to the very system she seeks to abolish. So the question becomes: given one's distinctive talents, interests, and passions, how can one do the best for herself and for humanity as a whole? Clearly for some of us, the answer to this question lies in intellectual work. As Alexander Berkman writes:

> Do not make the mistake of thinking that the world has been built with hands only. It has also required brains. Similarly does the revolution need both the man of brawn and the man of brain. Many people imagine that the manual worker alone can do the entire work of society. It is a false idea, a very grave error that can bring no end of harm. In fact, this conception has worked great evil on previous occasions, and there is good reason to fear that it may defeat the best efforts of the revolution. The working class consists of the industrial wage earners and the agricultural toilers. But the workers require the services of the professional elements, of the industrial organizer, the electrical and mechanical engineer, the technical specialist, the scientist, inventor, chemist, the educator, doctor, and surgeon. In short, the proletariat absolutely needs the aid of certain professional elements without whose cooperation no productive labor is possible. (2003, p. 190)

Bakunin, too, stresses the essential role of the intellectual proletariat which, he insists, "must now be imbued with a passion founded on reason for the socialist-revolutionary cause if it does not want to succumb shamefully to total ruin; it is this class henceforth that is called to be the organizer of the popular revolution" (Bakunin, 1990, p. 212). Unlike bourgeois intellectuals, whom Bakunin resolutely condemns, the intellectual proletariat is "upright, sincere, and devoted in the extreme . . ." (p. 212). Its mission, accordingly, is to "go to the people, because today, all over the world . . . outside of the people, outside of the millions and millions of proletarians, there is neither existence, nor cause, nor future" (p. 212). And although the intellectual proletariat by itself is too small to "organize a revolutionary force apart from the people," it is sufficient to produce such a force if it works with and among the people (p. 212). The question, of course, is whether, how, and to what extent the intellectual proletariat can "go to the people" from within the universities, or whether there are other, more productive avenues for it to pursue.

In his "Prison Notebooks," Gramsci famously argues that every socio-economic class organically generates a network of intellectuals which administer and organize that class and construct a cohesive and uniform class identity within and across the social, economic, and political fields (Gramsci, 2001, p. 1138). At the same time, every class which "emerges into history out of the preceding economic structure, and as an expression of the development of this structure" finds "categories of intellectuals already in existence," which, in contrast to "organic intellectuals," Gramsci terms "traditional intellectuals" (p. 1139). Because traditional intellectuals—such as philosophers, artists, and the clergy—have continued to exist despite "the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms," (p. 1139) they have gradually come to believe in their own autonomy and independence from the ruling class and have erected a variety of self-serving mythologies to reinforce this belief. In reality, however, their continued existence has been permitted, not only by the ruling class, but by the "stratum of administrators, etc., scholars and scientists, theorists, non-ecclesiastical philosophers, etc." organically generated within capitalist society. Once these traditional intellectuals have been "conquered and assimilated," their function, like that of bourgeois intellectuals, is to organize, promote, and maintain "social hegemony and state domination" (p. 1143). In this capacity, they work chiefly as "creators of the various sciences, philosophy, [and] art . . ." and "'administrators' and divulgators of pre-existing, traditional, [and] accumulated intellectual wealth" (p. 1143). Their value consists precisely in their putative "independence" (or, as we say nowadays, "objectivity"), which in turns gives them the magical ability to transform contingencies into timeless, universal truths or mere propaganda into "common sense." Ultimately, Gramsci argues for the development of "organic intellectuals" within the working class coupled with the radicalization of bourgeois intellectuals (both traditional and organic).

Despite the flaws inherent in Gramsci's analysis of intellectuals, most of which are already well known to the readers of this essay, it is clear that anarchists like Bakunin and Berkman are sympathetic to several of its key components. Both recognize, for example, that intellectual work in bourgeois society has been co-opted by capitalism and that, as a result, the vast majority of intellectuals consciously or unconsciously serve the interests of the ruling class. So, too, both recognize and appreciate the importance of the intellectual proletariat and argue for the incorporation of academics and other intellectuals into the revolutionary movement regardless of class origins. But what might these thinkers have to say about anarchists working in the universities? In fairness, there are many careers, such as military service or the chairmanship of Halliburton, which would appear to be closed to anarchists on the basis of prefigurative ethics. The reason, in both cases, is that conventional armies and capitalist firms are intrinsically hierarchical, centralized, authoritarian,

and exploitative institutions. Is the same true of universities? I don't think so. Although it is true that the vast majority of contemporary colleges and universities are hierarchical, bureaucratic, centrally organized, and deeply authoritarian institutions—and that's just the beginning of their problems—these aren't intrinsic features of "the university" itself. One can imagine a university (or university-like institution) that is nonhierarchical and decentralized (in fact, the original universities were marked by both features to greater or lesser degree), whereas one cannot easily imagine a capitalist firm that is nonhierarchical, decentralized, nonexploitative, and worker-owned. The fact is that universities, despite their myriad problems, serve useful and valuable functions in society. What is more, there are no viable alternatives which, at least at the present time, could even begin to accomplish the same ends.

This is all the more reason why at least some anarchists ought to work in universities: to direct the existing power and influence of universities toward anarchist goals and to work toward transforming the universities from within *with a mind to eventually making the current university model obsolete*. As Kropotkin writes:

> Repeating the formulation of Proudhon, we say: if a naval academy is not itself a ship with sailors who enjoy equal rights and receive a theoretical education, then it will produce not sailors but officers to supervise sailors; if a technical academy is not itself a factory, not itself a trade school, then it will produce foremen and managers and not workmen; and so one. We do not need these privileged establishments; we need the hospital, the factory, the chemical plant, the ship, the productive trade school for workers, which, having become available to all, will with unimaginable speed exceed the standard of present universities and academies. (1993, p. 22)

At present universities provide narrowly focused and hyperspecialized training that serves the interests of State and Capital. But what if we created universities that genuinely served the interests of humanity? Such institutions would be, to paraphrase Kropotkin, naval academies on ships, or trade schools in factories—places, in a word, where theory and practice are united and harmonized. To my mind, it makes sense to affect the transformation of existing institutions while simultaneously developing alternative institutions. To simply abandon existing institutions, especially those which contain so much transformative and revolutionary potential, strikes me as the height of folly.

Philosophy, Paideia, and Anarchist Praxis

Now I cannot speak for all academic workers, but about 75 percent of my own intellectual work is devoted to teaching, the remaining 25 percent to

research and scholarship. Whether and to what extent this work is at all useful or valuable as anarchist praxis depends crucially on (a) what, how, and why I'm teaching; and (b) what, how, and why I'm writing, and here I think my discipline could ultimately provide some saving grace. There is not now, nor has there ever been, any consensus among philosophers regarding the definition of philosophy as such. Historically this has proven both a blessing and a bane, for although philosophy's lack of any narrowly circumscribed subject matter has afforded a degree of flexibility and openness which few other disciplines can match, it has also given philosophy an unsavory reputation, memorably lampooned in Aristophanes's *The Clouds*, for hairsplitting and abstraction.

This is why Russell, Ayer, Carnap, Quine, and various other early and mid twentieth-century "analytical" philosophers are so often characterized as reformers; by rejecting metaphysical speculation, shifting attention to linguistic and conceptual analysis, and seeking to reconstruct philosophy on the model of logico-mathematical and scientific inquiry, they collectively transformed philosophy into a "modern" discipline The truth of the matter is far more complicated. The early analytical philosophers were fiercely committed to Enlightenment thought and practice, the "distinctive assumptions" of which, according to Philip Pettit, can be roughly described as follows:

1 There is a reality independent of human knowledge of which we human beings are part.
2 Reason and method, particularly as exemplified in science, offer us the proper way to explore that reality and our relationship to it.
3 In this exploration traditional preconceptions—in particular, traditional evaluative preconceptions—should be suspended and the facts allowed to speak for themselves (Pettit, 2005, p. 7).

Although there is no doubt that analytical thinkers were reacting in part against what they saw as the muddle, imprecision, and opacity of their philosophical peers, they were far more troubled by those philosophers (e.g., Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx, Nietzsche) and movements (e.g., German Idealism, Romanticism, Marxism, Nietzschean perspectivism, phenomenology, etc.) which posed a challenge to their key assumptions. These same assumptions, after all, not only provided the foundations of modern philosophy but also made possible:

> The positive self-image modern Western culture [had] given to itself, a picture born in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment . . . of a civilization founded on scientific knowledge of the world and rational knowledge of value, which places the highest premium on individual human life and freedom, and believes that such freedom and rational-

> ity will lead to social progress through self-controlled work, creating a better material, intellectual, and political life for all, (Pettit, 2005, p. 12)

As Anthony Giddens notes, this "set of attitudes towards the world, the idea of the world as an open transformation by human intervention" is the condition of possibility for all the other salient characteristics of modernity, a society "vastly more dynamic than any previous type of social order . . . a society—more technically, a complex of institutions—which unlike any preceding cultures lives in the future rather than the past" (Giddens and Pearson, 1999, p. 94). This "complex of institutions" includes "economic institutions, especially industrial production and a market economy" and "a certain range of political institutions, including the nation-state and mass democracy" (p. 94). To this list Cahoone adds "new, powerful technique[s] for the study of nature, as well as new machine technologies and modes of industrial production that have led to an unprecedented rise in material living standards . . . capitalism, a largely secular culture, liberal democracy, individualism, rationalism, humanism" (Cahoone, 1996, p. 11). If certain strands of nineteenth-century philosophy developed in reaction to the Enlightenment project, then analytical philosophy developed first and foremost in defense of its emerging status quo.

I agree with Aaron Preston that "it is a mistake to regard analytical philosophy as a philosophical school, movement, or tradition, and that, instead, it is (and always has been) a purely social entity unified by what interactional memes, maintained at high frequency by conformist transmission" (Preston, 2005, p. 292). But even as a "social entity" analytical philosophy has distinguished itself in two ways: first, by successfully achieving the total professionalization of philosophical practice—that is, by redefining philosophy as a highly specialized academic discipline that is taught, studied, and practiced exclusively by trained experts within Anglo-American universities; and second, by narrowing the focus of the discipline to minute, technical, and highly specialized problems. When analyzed from a Gramscian perspective, it is not difficult to make sense of these phenomena. By the beginning of the twentieth century, philosophers-qua-"traditional intellectuals" were in direct competition with the new "organic intellectuals" (e.g., scientists and technicians) of modern industrial society. Facing obsolescence and desperate to prove their ongoing relevance, the philosophers rebranded themselves in the image of their competitors. It is important to recognize, however, that in doing so the analytical philosophers have largely renounced their role as traditional intellectuals, retreating into the minutiae of logical and linguistic analysis instead of serving the status quo as apologists armed with "eternal verities." Unlike traditional intellectuals they do not think of themselves as serving God or mankind, let alone the ruling class, but rather the "profes-

sion." To this extent we might say they serve the status quo "by omission"—that is, in virtue of their irrelevance.

Yet the irrelevance of analytical philosophy to society at large has deep repercussions for the practice of philosophy in general. As a result of analytical hegemony, a de facto definition of philosophy has long since taken root that is considered normative for those who teach and conduct research within the Anglo-American academy, a definition which makes an engaged, socially and politically relevant philosophy virtually impossible. According to that definition, philosophy just is the set of "interactional memes"—the methodologies used, the topics studied, etc.—by those philosophy professors employed by elite philosophy departments in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Professional advancement and recognition within the discipline is determined in accordance with this definition; those who adopt alternative methodologies or study alternative topics will almost certainly be marginalized in various ways precisely because they are seen, at best, as doing "bad philosophy" and, at worst, as not doing philosophy at all. Most "elite" departments are invested with this status by tradition or, what comes to the same, because a preponderance of their faculty can trace their professional and philosophical lineages back to past analytical luminaries in a more or less unbroken succession. The underlying assumption, in all events, is that these philosophers—who ultimately share the same general concerns, discuss the same general topics, and utilize the same general methodology—should be regarded as the supreme arbiters, either implicitly or explicitly, of what counts as philosophy. They occupy the uppermost echelons of what might be called "the philosophical establishment"—the hierarchical network of professional relationships that determines topical, methodological, and disciplinary orthodoxies. What must be emphasized is that these "professional relationships" are nothing more than relations of power. The network they constitute is a purely social phenomenon that does not (and probably should not be expected to) act on the basis of "philosophical" considerations.

To this picture we must add an additional contour—namely, that philosophers employed by elite departments are generally paid obscenely high salaries compared to their lesser colleagues in the profession. The main duties they perform in order to receive such compensation are two: first, they publish research that is directed almost exclusively toward other members of the disciplinary ruling class; and second, they strive to replenish their numbers via the training and credentialing of graduate students. In order to meet the first duty, they must employ only those methods, discuss only those topics, and publish only in those journals that are met with the approval of their peers. More importantly, they must have ample time at their disposal, which means that they must avoid teaching undergraduates as much as possible. This necessitates the second duty, as the responsibility for teach-

ing undergraduates is mainly outsourced to graduate teaching assistants. Of course, the overwhelming majority of Anglophone colleges and universities are not able to provide their faculty with these sorts of luxuries and privileges. Yet most junior faculty, having been trained in research-centered departments, are predisposed to regard publishing as their main priority even at institutions which emphasize undergraduate teaching. (It is little wonder that teaching is met with such disdain among academic philosophers, at least in my experience.)

The academic philosophical establishment regards philosophy as an essentially scientific and theoretical discipline for which rigorous argumentation and valid reasoning are the highest virtues. The goal of philosophical pedagogy, accordingly, is to instill basic familiarity with, and comprehension of, the range of theoretical problems that are regarded as distinctively "philosophical" and, more importantly, to cultivate the critical skills necessary to "philosophically" analyze these problems. It is important to recognize that this approach to philosophical practice and pedagogy differs markedly from that of our Greek and Roman predecessors, to say nothing of philosophers from ancient India, China, and other non-Western climes. Socrates famously claimed that the aim of those who practice philosophy is "to prepare for dying and death" (Plato 1950: II. 59), while Seneca upbraided teachers for reducing philosophy to argumentation, contending that their single-minded emphasis on logic demonstrated a "love of words" rather than a "love of wisdom" (Seneca 1925: epistle 108). This "love of words" has won the day, the result being that modern philosophy exists "to train [people] for careers as clerks or professors—that is to say, as specialists, theoreticians, and retainers of specific items or more or less esoteric knowledge" (Hadot, 1995, p. 38). The modern philosophy professor can ruminate for hours at a conference or in the classroom only to go home, spend an evening in front of the television, and never give his or her lecture a second thought. The same is true of any working professional whose "career" has been separated from his or her life.

There is no doubt that the study of philosophy is extremely conducive to the development of those general critical thinking and reasoning skills which are universally regarded as beneficial in every field of inquiry and endeavor. Indeed, to the increasingly limited extent that professors of philosophy are regarded as useful at all in higher education, it is mostly for our ability to help students develop these sorts of skills, not (or not mainly) to teach philosophy. Critical thinking and reasoning skills are also *sine qua non* for freethinkers and revolutionaries of all stripes, but that is obviously not why they are stressed by college and university administrators. Their goal, of course, is to produce the highly educated technical-managerial-professional class that is necessary to administer capitalist society on behalf of the ruling elite. In order to do their jobs well, members of this class not only require

rote vocational training but also a moderate degree of critical intelligence (coupled, ideally, with an anemic or altogether nonexistent moral sensibility). This is by way of saying that while critical acumen may be necessary for the development of what we might call a "liberated consciousness," it is scarcely sufficient.

"All rational education," Bakunin writes, "is at bottom nothing save the progressive immolation of authority for the benefit of freedom, the final aims of education necessarily being the development of free men imbued with a feeling of respect and love for the liberty of others" (Bakunin, 2004, p. 41). Anarchists have long claimed, after all, that liberation is coextensive with education, which in turn requires a practiced ability to read, write, and think critically. The problem, which I have just illustrated, is that there is nothing inherently "radical" about teaching students "how to think." Many students simply don't *want* to engage in critical thinking even if they are able to learn how, and those that do are just as likely to marshal critical thinking in the service of self-interest or the manipulation and oppression of others. In order to make philosophical pedagogy a potentially anarchistic practice, one must pay serious attention to *what* students are thinking *about*, *how* they're thinking about it, and *to what end*. Again, the goal cannot merely be to teach students "how to think." If a student never learns what is worth thinking about, what questions are worth asking, what issues are worth caring about, et cetera, then her ability to think well is at best pointless (because she will never use it) and at worse dangerous (because she will apply it in harmful ways). The goal must be something altogether different.

The philosophical establishment, which is already inclined to regard teaching as a "necessary evil," does not recognize this. Its goal, as I have already stated, is to protect itself and the larger political, social, and economic system of which it is a part. To this extent, it has a vested interest in keeping its pedagogical vision as vacuous and unthreatening as possible. "Teaching students to think" sounds gutsy, but in reality it is a soft-footed and conservative approach that leaves the status quo fundamentally unchallenged. So what is the alternative? What is philosophy ("the love of wisdom") if it is not (or not *just*) a narrow, hairsplitting, logic-chopping discipline? In looking for an answer to this question, many are immediately drawn to Socrates, the spiritual godfather of Western philosophy. Socrates, after all, was not what we could call a "professional philosopher." He wasn't a specialist or a retainer of esoteric knowledge. He wasn't interested in obtaining a tenure-track position at a university or padding his CV. He wasn't offered a named chair or paid an extravagant salary to conduct research. In fact, he vehemently criticized the Sophists for teaching in exchange for money and, if we take the words of Plato at face value, insisted that these so-called "professionals," with their trumped-up claims to knowledge and wisdom, were actually charlatans.

Socrates had no ideas of his own. Instead, he traveled from place to place in search of those who *did* have ideas (or at least claimed to) and, guided by nothing but a relentless desire for truth, subjected these self-proclaimed sages to persistent and even obnoxious interrogations. The inevitable result of these interrogations, as we all know, is that the sages were shown again and again to be fools. Socrates, meanwhile, was left with even more unanswered questions, increasingly convinced that he knew nothing at all. The fact that Socrates was willing—indeed, unshakably determined—to die for the sake of philosophy strongly suggests the converse—that is, that he *lived* for his beliefs. Preparing for dying and death isn't about mastering a specialized academic discipline. On the contrary, as Plutarch noted, "at all times and in every place, in everything that happens to us, daily life gives us an opportunity to do philosophy" (Plutarch, 1936: no. 4). Philosophy is a praxis—a process by which an idea, concept, skill, or theory is realized, actualized, or implemented. Life itself is the idea or concept which philosophical praxis embodies.

It is precisely this openness to life, coupled with a desire to experience and understand it in all its richness and complexity, which underlies the ancient Greek educational philosophy of *paideia*. In the simplest and most general terms, *paideia* is analogous to Bakunin's "integral education"—it is well-rounded, broad-based and holistic training, the goal of which is the cultivation of sensibility and excellence of character rather than the accumulation of knowledge. The Greeks believed that training in a wide range of scientific, theoretical, and artistic disciplines placed students in a better position to successfully overcome the internal and external challenges posed by human life and so to achieve happiness. Philosophical acumen, historical knowledge, aesthetic sensitivity—these are all skills necessary for the pursuit of excellence (*arête*).

Philosophy is in many ways the heart and soul of *paideia*, emphasizing as it does the *process of seeking* rather than the *act of finding*. If we take seriously the sentiment which is repeated time and again throughout the works of the Stoics, the philosophical way of life is a search for knowledge about oneself and others. This search, which is something that one lives rather than lectures or writes or debates about, is coextensive with the development and practice of *arête*. Understood as a way of life, philosophy has the potential to make better people and better worlds. Understood as a scientific or theoretical discipline, as philosophy is today, it is seldom more than an accomplice of the status quo. This is best confirmed, perhaps, by asking what modern philosophers are willing to give up in defense of their doctrines and theories. If the answer is "not much"—and I suspect without cynicism that it is—we ought not to be surprised. After all, academic philosophy portrays itself as a dispassionate attempt to understand the world, a project that gets by per-

fectly well without martyrdom. Philosophy as a way of life is far more risky, since it calls upon the philosopher to examine and, ultimately, *change* herself.

This view of philosophy has never disappeared entirely but has continued to flare up here and there throughout history. Marx, to cite just one example, expands it by suggesting that the philosopher's goal isn't just to change herself but to change the world as well. In other words, philosophy as a way of life isn't just an introspective spiritual exercise or a voyage of self-discovery but a conscientious attempt to unite theory and practice with a mind to opening up new and heretofore unforeseen possibilities for the human race at large. It is no mistake that Marx was first and foremost a *political* philosopher, because it is within the realm of the political that the unity of theory and practice finds its most visible expression. From this perspective, the goal of a philosophical way of life isn't to offer solutions to abstract, universal problems but to immerse oneself in the dialectic of questions and answers, problems and solutions, etc. in order to discover what is possible, what might be done that hasn't be done before. In an important sense, this process of immersion precedes all inquiries about what is the case or what ought to be the case. If modernity has been guided, at least in part, by a "love of words" (or, what comes to the same, the "love of images"), if it has been directed toward solutions rather than to problems, we ought not to be surprised if alternatives to modernity have presented and continue to present very different approaches. This does not automatically imply a simple recuperation of premodern philosophical methodologies. I would suggest, however, that anything that can be genuinely regarded as "postmodern" (in the sense of "going beyond" the modern, not just coming after it) has important lessons to learn from the ancient ideal of *philos sophia*, understood, again, not as a theoretical discipline but as a lived experience.

My own philosophical pedagogy, then, may be summarized as follows. First, it situates philosophy within a broad-based, multifaceted, and holistic learning context whose goal is the cultivation of a strong, sensible, principled, adaptable, and resourceful character. (Bakunin called this "integral education, the Greeks called it *paideia*). Following Emma Goldman's advice, I draw heavily upon "the larger human expression manifest in art [and] literature . . . the strongest and most far-reaching interpreter of our deep-felt dissatisfaction," recognizing with her that "an adequate appreciation of the tremendous spread of the modern conscious social unrest" cannot be ascertained from any one kind of source (Goldman, 2004, p. 2). Second, my pedagogy treats philosophy not as a theoretical or scientific discipline, but as a way of life founded on the *praxis* of seeking, questioning, complicating, problematizing, potentiating, "possibilizing." To be sure, I am often compelled to ask students to think about traditional philosophical questions and arguments, as this is more or less unavoidable in the context of ordinary

philosophy classes, but I strive as much as possible to avoid both abstraction and hairsplitting and to keep discussions grounded in the harsh and often frightening realities of the contemporary world.

Third, and most importantly, my pedagogy is an *anarchist* pedagogy because it seeks to advance, however minimally, the cause of total human liberation from oppression and inequality. To achieve this goal, it is not enough to teach students how to think; as an anarchist, I strive to help at least some of them learn to *care*, as caring is the condition of possibility for all of us to "break [our] mental fetters," to "think and judge for [ourselves]" and to escape "the dominion of darkness" (Goldman, 2008, p. 38). If I am doing my job well, at least a few students will remember and puzzle over topics we discuss in class; they will think about and be troubled by issues they read about in our books; in short, they will be *haunted*. Initially, perhaps, this haunting will take the form of nagging, intransigent thoughts; over time, it has the potential to become something else: a deeply held conviction that something is wrong with oneself and the world coupled with a desire to do something about both. It is this feeling that brings a person, eventually, to anarchism. The aim of my anarchist pedagogy is to help students discover that feeling in themselves using the tools of philosophy.

Going to the People

How might these same ideas apply, if at all, to the issue of academic research? This is a thorny question, since research is something academic workers must do as a condition of employment and to this extent is often limited by more or less arbitrary and repressive institutional and professional standards. By and large, adhering to these standards tends to be severely at odds with the task of making one's work interesting, relevant, or useful to individuals outside one's discipline, let alone to radicals or other nonacademics. For this reason, even the most well-intentioned academic writing tends to be utterly useless as a form revolutionary praxis. That said, I take strong exception to the idea that academic writing as such is *inherently useless*, even in institutionalized forms. The foremost challenge faced by radical academic workers is overcoming the outmoded and elitist model of knowledge production that remains dominant in academic institutions. A secondary challenge is producing work within that model that actually contributes in some way to the possibility of revolutionary change.

Research, according to Gelderloos, is one "major area where the academy can be useful to anarchists." He continues:

> [Academics] have us cornered when it comes to investigation and critical debate. Anarchists are lazy researchers. Many prefer religion to research. Objective, and objectively false, statements that bear great

> importance for anarchist theory circulate freely in our circles. Some of the basic premises of primitivist, vegan, and historical materialist strains of anarchism would have been abandoned long ago if we'd had a culture of serious inquiry and debate. Instead we have name-calling on internet forums. I think we also could have made some headway on the eternal debate about the nature of formal and informal power and the extent to which each allows hierarchies to be established or challenged. But alas, in our circles it's still anybody's guess. (Gelderloos, 2007)

Certainly in the last ten years anarchist-related research has become increasingly acceptable within academia. This means it's possible to safely pursue an academic career with anarchism as a principal research focus; it does not mean that all or even most anarchism-related research is or will be relevant, interesting, or useful to the anarchist movement. For that to even become a possibility, anarchist academics must be something like Gramsci's organic intellectuals. That is, we must be a natural and integral part of the anarchist movement. Our work must emerge from within that movement and serve to reinforce and promote its interests (which are ultimately inseparable from the interests of humankind as a whole) rather than those of discipline, profession, institution,the academy, or the social and political system to which the academy belongs. This is not a matter of "activism" in some narrowly defined sense, but of passion, awareness, commitment, and historical sensibility. The last is pivotal, since anarchism, as I suggested earlier, is as much about the past as it is about the present. It is as much a lived tradition or history as it is a contemporary phenomenon. As such, a certain kind of historical consciousness would seem indispensible in making one's work relevant from the standpoint of praxis.

If I am right about all of this, then it is not difficult to understand how a certain kind of intellectual work, even of a specialized academic kind, can be valuable. First, and most obviously, it is extremely beneficial for anarchists and other revolutionaries to apply the model of *paideia* to their own lives by actively seeking out the broadest possible range of practical and theoretical knowledge. In particular, it behooves anarchists to know as much as possible about our own past, which Bakunin rightly refers to as our "mental capital, the sum of the mental labor of all previous generations" (Bakunin, 1973, p. 351). Academic workers have a crucial role to play in this respect, for, although we are not the only individuals capable of engaging in historical research and other forms of productive and valuable intellectual work, we are ideally placed to pursue it owing to our greater share of access to time, resources, and institutional support.

Anarchist academics and other intellectuals are also well disposed to engage in "theoretical work, direct communication with lots of people

outside our circles . . . intervention in public discourse" (Gelderloos, 2007)—in short, what Marx called "the ruthless critique of everything existing." We are called to be, as Gramsci says, "constructers, organizers, permanent persuaders and not just . . . simple orators" (2001, p. 1143). Without theory, anarchism becomes a dogma on par with Leninism and most organized religions. Its principles become empty axioms whose truth is simply taken for granted and which have no purpose other than to mechanically justify practices. I strongly suspect there would be many more anarchists in the world if those principles were really as self-evident as we often take them to be. In fact, it is precisely our failure to better articulate and defend such principles that has fueled our ongoing historical insignificance across several key segments of Western society. No wonder Kropotkin writes, "The most important thing is to spread the truths already acquired, to practice them in daily life, to make of them a common inheritance" (Kropotkin, 2002, p. 265).

Obviously the task of "going to the people" and uniting with them in struggle involves writing to, as well as for the benefit of, nonacademic audiences. Even those non-tenured or non-tenure-track academic workers who must address a portion of our work to academic peers should strive as much as possible to make this accessible and relevant to non-academics. "With both irony and seriousness," writes Gelderloos, "I call for the excommunication of all academic anarchists who produce not for the movement but for the academy. If you study networks, find ways to explain to [the movement] how to effectively extend networks to people currently plugged into the system (or some other useful question), not how to analyze our networks so they can be understood by outsiders, as intellectually stimulating as that task may be" (2007). In offering such explanations, moreover, we ought to strive as much as possible to avoid needlessly technical language and other self-consciously "academic" conventions which serve no purpose except to alienate outsiders and ingratiate ourselves to other academics. In short, academic workers should only observe academic writing standards to the extent that doing so is practically and professionally expedient; beyond this, our foremost goals in writing should include clarity, accessibility, sincerity, relevance, and effectiveness.

To what kind of nonacademic audiences should our work be addressed? The answer, which is the same as it was more than a century ago, has already been divulged. It is "the people," which is to say, the whole mass of human persons who have been systematically oppressed, exploited, and disinherited irrespective of age, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, or national origin. Among these, it has always been clear that our foremost attention, at least for the foreseeable future, ought to be focused on those who have suffered the most—for example, members of the poor and working classes, racial and sexual minorities, displaced indigenous populations, and

so on. This does not mean, however, that the better-off, including students and bourgeois intellectuals, should be completely neglected. Kropotkin is right to point out that "propagandizing" among them "requires so much erudition . . . that it involves a terribly unproductive waste of time and distraction of energy from incomparably more urgent matters" (Kropotkin, 1993, p. 45). But we obviously need to reach young people (and, to a lesser extent, fellow intellectuals) in order to replenish and maintain the strength of our own intellectual proletariat

In all of this, we must remember that our enemies are ready and willing to use our own intellectual work against us. As Gelderloos notes:

> Simply producing information aids the system, even if that information seems to be revolutionary in its implications. This is because in democratic societies, people are pacified, and even if they are well informed they will not have gotten what they need to fight back. Information is not what's lacking. It is the institutions of power, and not the people, that are positioned to act on this information, and even critical information coming from dissident academics can help these institutions correct themselves. (2007)

To prevent this sort of thing from occurring, we need to be careful when working within the academic establishment and exercise discretion in what we choose to study, publish, and write. In the long run, we need to build up networks of reliable alternative institutions that successfully bridge the academic/anarchist divide. Publishing houses such as AK Press and PM Press and organizations such as the North American Anarchist Studies Network (NAASN), the Transformative Studies Institute, and the Institute for Anarchist Studies are slowly but surely helping anarchist academics and independent scholars to produce, disseminate, and share work that is not only "credible" to their academic peers but also useful and relevant to their comrades in the anarchist movement.

I close by enjoining academic workers to always think about what we do in terms of what came before as well as what could be. We must remember that our work is in the middle, the present, the space of "what's happening now," and to this extent we can never afford to become distanced from the realities of the world. This doesn't mean that we should all be activists *as well as* academics; it means that we should see our work itself as activism, and we should do so proudly and without shame. As Alexander Berkman writes:

> It is sad to admit that there is a tendency in certain labor circles, even among some socialists and anarchists, to antagonize the workers against the members of the intellectual proletariat. Such an attitude is stupid and criminal, because it can only harm the growth and devel-

> opment of the social revolution. It was one of the fatal mistakes of the Bolsheviks during the first phases of the Russian Revolution that they deliberately set wage-earners against the professional classes, to such an extent, indeed, that friendly cooperation became impossible . . . (2003, p. 192)
>
> In justice to the intellectuals, let us not forget that their best representatives have always sided with the oppressed. They have advocated liberty and emancipation, and often they were the first to voice the deepest aspirations of the toiling masses. (2003, p. 193)

As I made clear at the outset, I am still trying to come to terms with all of this myself. I'm nowhere near overcoming self-doubt; I have absolutely no idea how important intellectuals in general or my own intellectual work in particular are in the grand revolutionary scheme. Then again, I'm not sure that it matters. Over and above everything I've just outlined, I suspect what really matters for academics and intellectuals is just giving a real, honest-to-goodness, and passionate *damn* about what's happening outside the classroom and the conferences. Only then, it seems, can we determine whether what we do in the classrooms and at the conferences is worth giving a damn about, too. In the meantime, I hope I've offered an honest appraisal of our situation and a fair case for the potential value and usefulness of our work within the anarchist movement. For my part, I continue to wrestle with self-doubt and will probably do so for a long time. But maybe the next time I visit Forest Home I won't feel so alienated from my forebears. Maybe next time I will feel like I am part of their, *our* tradition once again.

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CHAPTER 16

That Teaching Is Impossible

Alejandro de Acosta

1

That *teaching is impossible* is not a proposition to be argued for. It would be of little interest to offer it up for debate. It would be useless to defend it against the evidence of history or common sense. To consider that teaching is impossible is to open ourselves up to an experience of the most outlandish sort. In staging this experience I wish to contemplate the happy frustration of the urge to teach, and to affirmatively invoke the limits of all pedagogies.

It is useful for anyone who thinks that they teach to explore their urge to do so. This urge is an intimate matter, the libidinal support for the innocent claim that good ideas ought to be passed on to others. I call the claim innocent in that it usually leaves the good of ideas (and the Idea of the Good) implicit and unexamined; since the good remains unexamined, people may obtusely invoke their mere participation in efficient schooling as evidence that teaching is possible. That the school, as institution, survives; that the role of teacher is understood primarily in reference to the survival of the institution: these seem to be the only evidences necessary. But one can at least begin to account for and explore the complex of desires that aim at the role of teacher. Some of them wear the mask of the ego: "I am the one who impresses the lessons."

Beyond the ego-mask, moving, that is, from what appears as inner to what appears as outer, one may observe the inevitable calcification of the urge to teach into the kinds of systems we call pedagogies. These may be described as organizations, not just of knowledge and methods of passing it on, but primarily of desire. They are institutional manifestations of the urge to teach, or rather, they are the ways in which the urge to teach, combined

with other urges, invents for itself a gregarious existence, a school: "This is where the lessons are impressed." In this sense, pedagogies may also be characterized as the fantasy of the efficacy of the urge to teach.

To say or think that teaching is impossible is to let go, however temporarily, of both the urge to teach and its more or less precisely formed collusions with other urges in gregarious forms, affirming rather that study is interminable, and so learning is endlessly frustrated and frustrating. To say or think that teaching is impossible is to assert that teaching *on purpose, for a purpose*, is impossible. For the urge in its gregarious form has other purposes, which concern the person of the teacher, his role, her specialization, in the context of the school; it has nothing in particular to do with learning. I am inclined to think that neither do schools. What anyone who thinks they are a teacher *can* do purposely is mainly of two natures:

- One can transmit data, information. This is better known as *communication*. It is commonly assimilated to teaching, but, as students well know, really has nothing to do with it. This transmission is eminently possible and does not require a teacher.
- One can *model* behaviors and practices, silently offering them up for imitation. This is not only possible, but inevitable. But to whatever extent we do it for a purpose, it is for one other than to teach them. In this modeling we exceed the role of the teacher.

Pedagogy, then, is precisely the in-between of the ego-mask and the school, their mutual insertion, the becoming-method or becoming-gregarious of an urge in a fantasy: "This is how the lessons are impressed." In this sense to say or think that teaching is impossible is also to invoke the countless ways that learning takes place despite and beyond pedagogy. This is the beginning of the antipedagogical lesson. Let us consider it.

2

Sometimes, I think that I teach. When I do so I imagine I am not alone in underlining the evident gap between discussing practices and engaging in them. Classrooms have this virtue, that in them almost anything may be said; but to the degree that the desires that allow us to survive in such spaces remain unexamined, we will tend to confuse the ability to say almost anything with the ability to do almost anything. This gap in capacity is especially manifest for me in the context of philosophy or anthropology, in courses that take up topics such as spiritual exercises, mysticism, shamanism, or the many practices that P. Hadot calls "philosophy as a way of life." I mean any topic where what is posited is not merely thinking differently in the context of a given way of life, but a thinking that (because it is not just a thinking) requires a conversion. Becoming someone or something else, living differ-

ently, in short. One can certainly talk about such matters endlessly, treating them as historical or sociological facts, without grasping what is vital in them—without, that is, being transformed in the doing.

The minimum form of the affirmation *that teaching is impossible* would then be that with regard to practices that require a conversion, at least, teaching is impossible. I found in myself, not just an urge to teach, to be the teacher, but to teach these topics, and the urge was frustrated. The role of teacher became, if not impossible, at least somewhat laughable. The reason was clear enough. No one can teach such practices in a school unless it is the school of such practices: Epicureanism needs the Garden . . . Thinking I taught, I communicated information concerning these practices, but at a great remove; I did not model them. Moreover, some of them seem separate from any known pedagogy: mystics don't seem to me to have a school, but rather to be those who are usually expelled from schools. This is not because schools are dogmatic or authoritarian (though of course most are), but because of the sort of experience that mysticism seems to entail. (Or maybe not. One might go so far as to consider the maximum form of the claim, that the problem has to do with practice as such, with any practice other than those peculiar to schools as we know them.)

So what is left in such situations? The mere intention to teach what is impossible to teach, I suppose: the urge in its raw and complicated form, not its calcification into a pedagogy. We can try to collectively give in to the will to knowledge, to more than idle curiosity. That is, to what is in fact possible given the practices and ways of life that make schools as we know them possible. (As opposed to, and without in any way devaluing, those that destroy them, or mutate them until they are unrecognizable.) But I find that this will and that curiosity are unevenly distributed. You, teacher, must seduce your students into a certain fascination. That is what I call modeling, at least when modeling has a chance of success. It is akin to what psychoanalysts call the transference, or to hypnosis when it is grasped that what is at stake in it is something other than mind control, that the one hypnotized must at some level accept the process. It must involve your body, teacher, your gestures, movements, laughter: the mask, its generation, and its corruption. Those particulars can never be bypassed in the mimesis of the model.

But even if the will to knowledge or more than idle curiosity can be modeled and imitated, (and I do think that they can, on purpose and accidentally as well!) I do not think it is wise to therefore claim that teaching has happened, and is therefore possible. Something else is at stake. In modeling, the teacher's ego-mask is revealed in its development (from the urge to the role), but also in its happy failure: the failed transition from the urge through the role to its calcification as pedagogy and its sedimentation in schooling are all provisionally laid bare. In at least one important sense, the teacher is

naked. What has been modeled and perhaps imitated is still quite separate from the topics in question, from the experiences at stake in them. What has been staged is rather an antipedagogical problem.

3

Can one pass on anything other than the will to knowledge and more than idle curiosity? What about less exotic practices, those that seem more at home in what we know as schools? For two years I was part of a university committee concerned with feminist studies. Once, in the course of a review of our work, we tried to define what constituted, for us, a specifically feminist pedagogy. The conversation was both frustrating and (at least for me) quite amusing. ("Giving students a greater role in planning the curriculum," someone suggested. "Allowing people to speak from their experience," another said. "Encouraging connections between class readings and real-world issues," a third added. And so on.) The more concepts and examples that we collectively proposed, the clearer it became that we could produce no difference between a specifically feminist pedagogy and good pedagogy in general. It seemed as if the problem was that we had it as our goal to stay away from the humdrum of the generic, unmarked good, and to cleave rather to a more rarefied good, the sharp edge of feminist politics. But in that humdrum, generic, unmarked mainstream, there are said to be good teachers, are there not? Is their pedagogy not good? Many, arguably most, of them are in no way feminists. Our true problem was not our desire to cling to the specificity of feminism—it was that we assumed that were the ones who impressed its lesson, that our school was where the lesson was to be impressed, and that feminism, our method, our pedagogy, was to be how the lesson was to be impressed. We had supposed that teaching is possible.

Do these assumptions have anything to do with feminism as a way of life? If feminism can be learned, not as a set of theories or "studies," but as an attitude, as something that can grow into a resistant politics, it is because some of us are capable of modeling it as it exists and develops in our lives. As such it has zero informational content, or its content is incidental. That something like feminism exists at all suggests that it was, at some point, invented. At that time those who invented it were not producing new information (at least that was not what was remarkable in their invention). They were problematizing existing practices and the ways of life they flowed out of and into, proposing new ones. That something like feminism is still possible, still remarkable, suggests that someone can stage that problematization anew, in effect reinventing feminism. What does any of this, however, have to do with schooling?

The committee's troubling, unstated conclusion was that that we, presumably experts in feminism as "study," could not guarantee that, in teach-

ing classes with feminist content, we were teaching feminism. (A student could, for example, pass a course with flying colors and in some fundamental way remain oblivious to sexism. The same went us as teachers of the course). Or, if we *were* teaching feminism, we could not define in what ways we were doing so in the context of "feminist studies."

It ought to be clear by now that this version of the antipedagogical problem does not merely concern feminism. So, where to go from here? One familiar path is that of a certain ressentiment, leveraged in this case against the good teachers who do not mark the differences that we do, leveraged against students who do not become feminists or whose feminism is alien to us, leveraged ultimately against ourselves, in our inevitable failure. This ressentiment is fed by the failure of an ideal of representation and inclusivity (its index: the presence of a certain sort of data, of information) to effect anything other than a reform in schooling—in the curriculum, I mean, in "studies," defined according to the standards, the good, of what we know as schools.

Another path, which I admit I fell into as if by instinct, would be that of bemusement. It would be to simultaneously admit that teaching is impossible and that feminism, if it is a form of resistance and not just of study, will be reinvented quite despite those of us who, well-meaning, might think we are teaching it.

4

Let us consider, then, the lesson of resistance, turning from reformist to revolutionary pedagogies. Another university tale: I was once asked to speak at a symposium called "Achieving Success as a Latino." I was asked by the organizers to address the difficulties Latinos and Latinas might encounter at a predominantly Anglo institution: "obstacles," more generally, that all minorities face in the educational system. I said more or less the following: I don't want to speak purely in praise of schooling, the overcoming of obstacles as progress, confusing the efficacy of schooling with the unqualified good of learning. I want to affirm learning in its entirety and as a process, with all of its conflicts and breakdowns, not to adopt a narrative of successes in the face of hardships. I regard phenomena such as Latinas dropping out of school, not going to college, feeling alienated in college, not just as problems to be solved institutionally, by schools or by groups in schools acting as their proxy. If we view all of these "problems" as negativities, deficiencies, bad attitudes, we miss their complexity, what in them is positive, is desire. I think Latinos and everybody else have countless reasons and ways to engage with schools. I also think that Latinas (and everybody else!) have good reasons to resist some or all of what is institutionalized as education. Among other things, I am referring to what we know as schools: generally, spaces where training,

discipline, authoritarianism, bureaucracy, are made more or less efficacious; spaces that are often culturally hostile or indifferent, etc.

A young Latino indeed ought to ask himself, "What is school to me? Why should I risk my life for this?"—of course "life" here is not the life taken away by the gun or torture, but the life of one's barrio, community, friends, family—because many aspects of what it means to feel in one's own skin, at home, or in a community are threatened in schools. That's on the side of the construction of identity, a sense of self. On the side of the destruction of identity, the desire that so many of us have to overcome what we've been told we are—that process and its freedom are also threatened in that schooling has always had to do with acculturation to a dominant culture, language, religion, etc. And also in the sense that schools neither teach nor favor rebellion. Institutionally this is discussed in terms of curriculum and catchphrases like "campus climate," "diversity," etc., but I think the real issue is one of power and gregarious desires: the school's explicit and implicit hierarchies and their insertion into greater social arrays. Let us consider those seen as "problems" or at least having "problematic attitudes" as resisting. I think that they are right to do so, at least as right as the schools in exercising power and modeling gregariousness. Some are more at home here than others. People inhabit, move through, move in and out of a school, at different speeds, for different reasons, in different moods, using different gaits. To regard resistance as a problem to be resolved by the school, or by us as its proxy, is to fully reinforce the role of the teacher in the school: "I am the one who solves this problem"—"I transform this problem into the good of the lesson."

The critical question is: how are we using the school? What are we doing here if teaching is impossible? And this implies its converse: how is it using us? What is it doing with or to us (acknowledging that "it" is not a thing or subject, but the anonymous, gregarious actions of others)?

5

That talk ended with a proposal that I now recognize as well-intentioned (perhaps influenced by the good intentions of the symposium's planners) but poorly thought out. It was a gesture characteristic of a certain anarchism that claims for itself the side of the good, that proposes its revolutionary politics as the staging of the ultimate good.

I said: So much for the side of the institution! Schooling doesn't—can't—end there. Gregariousness certainly does not. It is part of being engaged with an institution, resistantly or not, that one tends to orient much of one's discourse and practices around the institution. (Supposing one wanted to define institutions, it might be worthwhile to begin by describing the various forms of this operation of capture). It takes some distance (and dropping out, along with the other forms resistance takes, is a way to attain that distance) to be

able to speak of schools as I have been doing, or of pedagogy as an outgrowth of the urge to teach. But really, there are schools everywhere. If I were to discuss the other possibilities for schooling I could of course talk about activism, popular education, etc., but I would rather race to the utopian end and propose that schools should have the ultimate goal of abolishing themselves as particular, separate, specialized spaces. My political proposal is that all of society be a school: that the social field be coeval with the space of learning. This means, of course, that there would be a series of spaces, remarkable places of learning, rather than one megainstitution. It could come about through a collaboration between those happiest with schools as we know them, and those who resist or refuse schooling, relatively or absolutely.

My antipolitical criticism of that political proposal is that making a plan for all of society (especially one with a grandiose slogan such as "abolish schools as separated spaces!") without aiming at annihilating what we know as society is to give ourselves a Cause. The Cause of Making All of Society into A School. Now the mask is transformed. I am no longer in the role of teacher, but that of teacher-activist: "I am *still* the one who resolves this problem"—now putatively through revolution instead of reform. Schooling would be coeval with society in the worst sense, fostering in people not only the illusion that teaching is possible, but that freedom can be taught (anarchist pedagogy in its most nightmarish form). We would have set out with the best of intentions and ended up with the most grotesque gregariousness. It is true that study is interminable and that schools are everywhere; but schooling is not for all that omnipresent—it can and does end.

I would rather restate *that teaching is impossible* (and this time perhaps the modesty of the claim, so hard to see at first, begins to shine through). To focus our efforts, our analyses, on failure and resistance is to grasp the eccentric but vital role of modeling in the transmission of practices. It is inevitable that modeling will meet resistance. A model may be imitated, counterimitated, or met with sovereign indifference. We might cooperate, we might fight, or we might ignore each other. In that social chaos, in its interstices of order and stillness, someone might learn something. But nothing about this can be guaranteed. Why assume, why hope, even, that we will all collaborate? Why sculpt the mask in a way that arrogantly banks on success? It is the urge to teach, again reaching for the form of its survival. "I impress the lesson that schooling is interminable."

6

I have already said that modeling is inevitable, and implied that it may be done more or less purposefully. This is difficult because we habitually vibrate in sync with others who share our models, and in this local phenomenon the entirety of our interactions is to effect tiny variants, microimitations and

counterimitations, of each other's practices. The micropolitics of power; or, a day in school. But modeling is also impersonal and indefinite. Its tautological claim: "I am the one who lives as I live" or even "I am the one who expresses the model that I am modeling."

The fullness of a self or a person is, as far as I am concerned, always and only an artifice, that of an apparently completed mask. The mask of the teacher, however, is incomplete. To think, to say, to embody "I am the one who impresses the lesson" is to simplify, to fool ourselves into identifying with our own mask, to frustrate the many other desires clamoring against the role, demanding, if you will, other masks. To seduce anyone else (to seduce oneself!) into fascination with a model is something else than to mistake oneself for the one who impresses the lessons. It is rather to display the urge, the mask, the frustrated tendencies to pedagogy and schooling, with all of their defects and failures—the failures of the simple mask of the teacher, the gregarious phenomenon of the school, and ultimately the failure of method, of all pedagogy. This impersonation shows what in the urge to teach is impersonal.

One way to conceive of this impersonality is the "silent teaching" R. Blyth reports on in his books on Zen. "We teach silently and only silently, though we may be silent or talk." Silence: the offering up of the model for imitation, with no attendant command to imitate (or maybe with the most parodic of commands). Informationless speech, laughter, sighs . . . your body, again, teacher, in its becoming-mask. Everything else is a dance of data.

Irreparably, to live is to offer one's life up for imitation. "People teach what they can. People teach what they teach. Everybody teaches everybody else." This is what I was getting at in deemphasizing the distinction between what can be passed on purposely and what is passed on inevitably. I am more interested in whether such things are done gracefully, as one may live one's life more or less gracefully. And perhaps the most graceful lesson is that teaching is impossible. But how is *that* to be passed on? "The only way to teach not teaching is really not to teach."

7

One final antipedagogical lesson, this one specifically for my friends, the anarchists. I hope it is clear that I have written from my own resistance. I like to think that, despite my several decades of study, I have resisted schooling. But my distance is double, since I observe that I maintain a willful incompetence when it comes to political movements that amounts to a form of resistance. There are, after all, schools everywhere! It is my style, my predilection, my *wu-wei* regarding schooling, regarding the roles of academics and activists. I believe that everything I have proposed about the urge to teach, about schools, and about pedagogy applies mutatis mutandis to activ-

ism, organizing, movements. Try the experiment yourself: go to a rally or meeting looking for teaching. You will find it. Ah, the pedagogy of rallies and meetings!

Some activists and their theorist friends are busy looking to the primitive past or the utopian future for a humanity without social institutions, as though discovering their absence someplace, somewhere, could lead to their amelioration or eradication today. Now, the absence of a given institution, especially one that I find intolerable, such as money or the police, is indeed a fascinating question for study. But study is interminable; it only leads to more study. I prefer to add to study another practice, to model a kind of disappearance, an incompetence that is a way to absent oneself from routinized activities on the side of schools as well as the side of the movements. It is possible to live this as something other than a negation. And as in all modeling, what I can do is simply to offer up the urge to teach and the urge to act as some desires among many. We can try to (and I suppose that we should) eradicate whatever social institutions we find to be intolerable; but we can also do what we can, silently, to lay bare our desires as we discover them, our social teachings as they meet resistances that, after all, have their reasons. We can be naked, with a mask on. Naturally, to call oneself an anarchist is to wear a fanciful mask: "I am the one who . . ." But if anarchism is our perhaps inevitable pedagogy, anarchy could be something else: our antipedagogy.

References

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