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In defence of liberal theory of education

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state or nation. This was found in a number of early nineteenth century German thinkers. The uniqueness of the individual becomes subsumed in the uniqueness of the nation, which is an organic and spiritual whole. Individuality and self-expression are to be found in membership of the Volk. This brand of individuality, which is reminiscent of the dangers which Isaiah Berlin saw in the notion of positive freedom, is obviously, by virtue of its inclination towards authoritarianism alone, opposed to liberalism. I observed in Chapter 6 how it finds expression in the South African context in the principle of self-determination for different 'cultural' groups, and threatens individual freedom as a result. It is not compatible with a liberal view of education as developing individual freedom, the latter notion calling up principally the three kinds of autonomy which I have argued to be necessary and central to a liberal notion of education.

We have observed that theories of 'individuality' have certain features which are inimical to a liberal position. Theories of individuality have had a historical tendency to types of élitism, abstract individualism, egoism and nationalism. But what is the significance of this observation? It demonstrates that it would be misguided to assume, and I am not suggesting that White necessarily does this, that while individualism is undesirable, individuality is desirable. I have shown that both have historical tendencies towards ideas which are incompatible with liberalism, although I would probably have to concede that this is particularly marked in the case of individualism. But both

also express liberal principles; the one which White treats as the core of theories of individuality is that they are concerned with individual self-determination, which I have incorporated in my account of liberal individualism as a feature of personal autonomy. With these complexities in mind I must respond to the objection in question that I do not think that my use of White, who inclines in favour of individuality and against individualism, is inconsistent.

Ultimately the difference between the two is unclear. Although some have seen a very clear-cut difference between the two, for example Balzac, as Lukes points out, 'stressed the opposition between <u>individualism</u>, implying anarchy and social atomization, and <u>individualité</u>, implying personal independence and self-realization',(19) Lukes himself, as I have shown treats the German idea of 'individuality' as a particular use of the term 'individualism'. It is interesting to observe that in three editions of the <u>British Journal of Educational Studies</u> containing a series of papers on individuality and individualism,(20) none of the contributors attempts to clarify the difference between the two notions, although it is assumed that there is a significant difference.

I do not propose to try to resolve this problem here. It is possible that in emphasising the importance of a notion of 'individualism' I may be talking about what White calls 'individuality'. Once both of these notions have been shorn of their undesirable historical associations we may well indeed be

left with a very similar idea. In these circumstances I must choose to plump for the terminology of 'individualism'. That I do so is in part a matter of expediency, since we turn now to examine a notion of 'ethical individualism' which opens up my considerations on a Marxist notion of education, in which I will argue that there are strong similarities with a genuinely liberal notion of education.

5

It is time to return to the central issue in this thesis, which is the radical attack on 'liberal' theory of education. In section 3 of this chapter I showed how the forms of 'individualism' attributed to liberal theory of education by the radicals are not necessary to a genuinely liberal theory of education - indeed that some historical forms of individualism are at odds with such a theory. As a further thrust to my argument that radical critics of 'liberal' theory of education are misguided in their attack on its 'individualism', I will now consider the argument that a form of individualism can be attributed to Marx, whose work is, of course, the inspiration for the positions developed by the radicals.

Marx himself is a powerful critic of some of the individualist doctrines considered in section 3, particularly abstract individualism, and economic and political individualism, which it underlies. For Marx, 'man is not an abstract being, squatting outside the world. Man is the human world, the state,

society'.(21) Marx saw economic and political individualism as part of the ideological expression of an emerging capitalist order which was the manifestation of the interests of industrialists and capitalists. His theory contests the idea of society as comprising abstract individuals who are independent and rational, generating their own wants, arguing instead that individuals are shaped by forces and relations of production, and by their location within conflicting classes.

But this does not necessarily mean that Marx is opposed to all possible forms of individualism. Indeed, D. F. B. Tucker argues that there has been a tendency among radicals to caricature individualism and that they need to rethink their attitudes on this issue, and he sets out to defend the thesis that 'Marx, despite his criticism of abstract individualism, and the anti-humanist polemic which can be found in much of his mature work, should be regarded as both an ethical and a methodological individualist'.(22) I will examine Tucker's two arguments, attributing methodological and ethical individualism respectively to Marx, in turn.

First, Tucker suggests that we can attribute methodological individualism to Marx. His grounds for this suggestion are, at best, controversial, and I will mention them briefly before proceeding to Marx's alleged ethical individualism, which I consider more pertinent to my present enterprise.

Tucker rests a part of his case for ascribing methodological

individualism to Marx on the observation that for Marx 'the motor mechanisms that provide the connecting links between the important structural features of each historical period (that is, the relations of production and the means of production) and thus underpin his account of social change are the choices which rational individuals would make if they were intent on protecting and enhancing their individual interests'.(23) Tucker quotes Marx and Engels in The German Ideology:

> The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.(24)

Tucker suggests that on the basis of this type of statement (and Marx's admiration for the methods of the classical economists) it is safe to conclude that Marx is 'an individualist'.(25)

> If, for example, we imagine him making a methodological statement (contributing to the debate between reductionists and wholists about the correct approach in sociology), we can see, in the light of the passage quoted above [from The German Ideology], that he cannot, without contradicting himself, allow for any causal agency other than acting individuals. What Marx means by a materialist explanation is precisely an account in which the point of reference is acting individuals, their motives, interests and needs, in given historical situations. Thus, we are to explain historical change by reference to the choices which individuals are likely to make; but we do not explain the choices which individuals are likely to make by referring to the imperatives of history.(26)

Tucker makes it clear that he favours the interpretation of Marx which emphasises his earlier, humanist writings, and is opposed to the structuralist view of Marx's work. Tucker makes it clear

too that he opposes Althusserian Marxism, but I do not propose to be drawn into the debate over which interpretation of Marx is preferable. The problem which concerns me is whether Marx's allowing for human agency to the extent suggested by Tucker is sufficient grounds for Tucker to describe Marx as a methodological individualist, particularly bearing in mind the strongly wholistic elements quite apparent in his theory. Nor does Tucker's argument that Marx, using a strategy analysis, i.e. constructing an abstract model from which he makes deductions, convince me that he should be described as a methodological individualist.

It seems that the central problem in Tucker's argument is whether individualist elements in a writer's work mean that we may describe him as 'an individualist'. In Marx's case this is particularly difficult to justify, in the light of the wholistic elements in his work. But the issue is not one which I need to settle here, because there is another element in Tucker's argument that Marx is a methodological individualist which, while in my opinion also not necessarily proving Tucker's argument about Marx's methodological individualism, is of considerable interest for any deliberations on individualism, and does succeed in establishing a strong individualist element in Marx.

This element in Tucker's argument, also (controversially) in favour of ascribing methodological individualism to Marx, is that, in spite of Marx's lack of interest in 'the psychological dimension of life', Marx's few references to his conception of

human nature clearly reveal his assumption that all people share certain general characteristics. By virtue of being human every person possesses a certain potential, and it is by fulfilling this potential that we claim our humanity. Along with this potential there are basic human needs, which are articulated differently in different historical circumstances.

But the development of human potentiality, for Marx, is dependent on the abolition of the capitalist system of production and its replacement by socialism. Under socialism the conditions will prevail which will allow the full development of the potential of each individual. The relations of production which prevail under capitalism inhibit the development of human potential because the particular interests of individuals are in conflict with collective goals and interests.

> This is partly because social interests represent the negation of the aspiration to develop human potentiality, and because the goals of individuals serve in turn to undermine the debilitating structures imposed by the collectivity. In such circumstances it becomes possible, even imperative, for those who own the means of production to extract a surplus by competing with other owners, and they must, therefore, extract the largest possible contribution from their employees. What outrages Marx about this situation is the dehumanization which, he argues, takes place when labour is treated as a commodity.(27)

Here lies the main cause of alienation, which will continue to inhibit human development until collective control of social resources replaces the domination of the market. Now my response to Tucker here is that the feature of Marx's theory which he recounts here, while it smacks of methodological individualism's

attribution of potentialities, needs etc. to individual human beings, does not establish methodological individualism, if we interpret it as Lukes does, as asserting that all social explanation is to be couched completely in terms of facts about individuals, to the exclusion of social, structural or institutional factors. I emphasise again here the wholistic element in Marx, and that elements of 'individualism' do not establish methodological individualism.

What I find of greater interest in Tucker's argument at this point is that he is attributing to Marx's theory two features which are clearly identifiable, in the light of my discussion in section 3, as basic values of individualism. Marx's notion of alienation is plainly underpinned by a recognition of human dignity, which is destroyed under a capitalist system of production. This is complemented in Marx's analysis by the value of the development of human potential, which is seen to be inhibited by capitalist relations of production. Here is the notion of self-development in the individualist tradition, finding a particular expression in Marx, whose conception of self-development is a communal one:(28) self-development can only take place in community with others, in contrast with the individual of Mill's view, pursuing self-development independently of social pressures.

Tucker, regardless of whether his attribution of methodological individualism to Marx succeeds, is correct in emphasising that Marx's argument about human potential and alienation under

capitalism is a type of individualist argument. And I suggest that this element in Marx should be treated as a feature of what Tucker calls Marx's ethical individualism. Tucker's argument on this score is more successful than his attempt to attribute methodological individualism to Marx.

As Tucker emphasises, Marx, while concerned about the effects of the capitalist mode of production on the human beings subjected to it, asserted that moral outrage and appeals to a change of consciousness are pointless without explanatory theories, and abandoned early on serious speculation about normative issues. Yet Tucker wants to argue that Marx is an 'ethical individualist'. Tucker posits two principles as indicative of ethical individualism.

> First, individualists place a value on the achievement of personal autonomy - on the development, that is, of a capacity to be self-directing and not simply a pawn of other people's manipulations, or subject entirely to the forces of nature and society. We can express this by saying that individualists comprehend the dignity of persons as somehow requiring that they be left free to realize aims which they have decided for themselves.(29)

In this regard Tucker raises Marx's rejection of possessive individualism, on the grounds that individual development is incompatible with private possession of property because this precludes communal life in which collective decisions are made. The development of autonomy is dependent on collective decision making. Where there is private property the resulting antagonism created by the imperatives of the market prevent the emergence of individual and collective autonomy.(30)

I need hardly point out the significance of this argument for my enterprise. Here is a third basic value of individualism. Again, as with the individualist notion of self-development, autonomy is to be exercised in a largely collective sense. The presence of these two individualist notions in particular, in Marx's theory, will be crucial to my argument in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

Tucker explains the second principle indicative of ethical individualism:

> ... individualists refuse to accept that the purposes and values of actual individuals be subordinated to the claims of the collectivity; thus, the only reason which individualists accept as a sufficient justification for foreclosing on the choices of others is to ensure that everyone enjoys the maximum liberty compatible with a like liberty for all. It follows that although particular individualist writers will have their own distinctive conception of the good, they do not regard it as legitimate for this to be promoted at the cost of violating the autonomy of others.(31)

Tucker suggests chat Marx's radical ideas on the ownership of property do not entail that individual purposes be subordinate to collective claims; 'Indeed, a careful reading indicates that Marx's own understanding of class conflict entails a strong condemnation of any situation in which some are subordinated to the claims and purposes of others'.(32)

If Tucker is right here in ascribing to Marx these two features of 'ethical individualism' (I do not think that the difference between Lukes and Tucker on what this involves is as problematic as their apparent difference of opinion on the nature of

methodological individualism), then he has a fairly strong case for his argument that Marx's writings provide us with room for taking seriously liberal ideas like autonomy and rights. But, whatever labels are appropriate, and I do not think that the question of what types of individualism are aptly ascribed to Marx is crucial, Tucker's argument that Marx has strong individualist elements, especially in his considerations on human potential and its development, and autonomy,(33) is useful and important for my enterprise. It is important for two reasons.

Firstly, Tucker's argument raises further doubts about the radical critics' view that one of the problems about liberal theory of education is that it endorses 'individualism'. In addition to the problems I have already identified in this view, I must now add that, if Tucker is right, then the very theoretical underpinning of the radicals' own positions, i.e. Marxism, incorporates a feature which they regard as 'liberal' and unacceptable.

A second feature of importance in Tucker's argument is that it indicates several themes in Marx's social theory which are vital to my discussion of a Marxist notion of education in the next chapter. Among the features which Tucker identifies as parts of Marx's ethical individualism are, in the first place, that Marx is concerned that capitalism be overthrown and replaced with a socialist system which will facilitate the development of each individual's potential. In the second place, Tucker suggests as a principle indicative of ethical individualism that personal

autonomy is valued. In noting the central features of Marx's social theory we need to add a third which is implicitly present in my account of Tucker's argument. This is the view that only a revolutionary transformation of society can replace capitalism with socialism. Setting aside for the moment this third feature, it will be obvious to the reader that in the first and second features we have features also found in the liberal notion of education which I have proposed in this and the previous chapters.

While hastening to add that I do not intend to suggest too close a similarity, I will show in the next chapter that there are striking similarities between a Marxist notion of education and a genuinely liberal one. Not only is it a mistake to attribute 'individualism' to liberalism while assuming its absence in Marxism. It would also be a mistake to assume that we can attribute distinctively different views of education to the two. The matter is, to reiterate one of my central convictions in this thesis, more complex than that.

Notes

(1) Berlin, op. cit., p. 131.

(2) Ibid., p. 132.

(3) John Gray argues in 'On Negative and Positive Liberty' (1984), p. 321, that Berlin is 'mistaken in his view that all forms of positive libertarianism necessarily involve such commitments'.

(4) Mill, op. cit., p. 73.

(5) Lukes, op. cit.

(6) Ibid., p. 124.

(7) Ibid., p. 151.

(8) Friedman, op. cit.

(9) Ibid., p. 4.

(10) Ibid., p. 5.

(11) Lukes, op. cit., p. 155.

(12) It could seem as if ethical individualism takes the notion of autonomy seriously, for the individual may choose even the criteria of moral judgment and what is to count as a moral judgment. But, as Lukes (ibid., p. 165) argues, there is a difference between autonomy and the extreme moral pluralism of ethical individualism.

> Indeed, it is arguable that ethical individualism, in proposing a limit to the giving of reasons in moral argument, so that ultimately the individual performs an acte gratuit of reasonless 'commitment', thereby denies the possibility of realizing autonomy at all - since, on my account, autonomy is intimately connected with consciousness and 'critical reflection', which themselves involve an appeal to rationality. If moral choice is ultimately non-rational, how can its exercise be autonomous?

(13) Lukes distinguishes between three strands of political individualism. It should also be noted that possessive individualism, discussed in Chapter 3, reflects the assumptions of political individualism.

(14) It must be acknowledged that political individualism was also historically liberating. Lukes observes (ibid., p. 153):

> The individualist view of consent had an inherently anti-authoritarian thrust ...; the individualist theory of representation ... played a part in the breaking down of political inequalities and the establishing of universal suffrage and a uniform franchise; while the individualist theory of the purposes of government was central to the growth of limited government, constitutional safeguards and the protection of individual rights.

(15) 'Conceptions of Individuality' (1980).

(16) Ibid., p. 173.

(17) Mill, op. cit., p. 122.

(18) The Ego and its Own: The Case of the Individual Against Authority (1844), tr. S. T. Byington, London and New York (1907); quoted in Lukes, op. cit., p. 19.

(19) Lukes, op. cit., p. 8.

(20) June and October 1980, and February 1981.

(21) Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy (1857), in A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, tr. N. I. Stone, Chicago (1913); quoted in Lukes, op. cit., p. 76.

(22) Marxism and Individualism (1980), p. 11.

(23) Ibid.

(24) The German Ideology, Selected Works, Moscow, Vol. I, p. 19; quoted in Tucker, op. cit., p. 32.

(25) Tucker, op. cit., p. 32.

(26) Ibid., p. 11.

(27) Ibid., pp. 30-31.

(28) Lukes, op. cit., p. 71.

(29) Tucker, op. cit., p. 59.

(30) This is an area of strong disagreement historically between Marxism, and liberalism, which has traditionally been committed to individual ownership of private property. I am not convinced that the principle of the right to private property is indispensable to the liberal position. While I acknowledge it as a major disagreement between liberalism and Marxism I do not propose to take up the issue here.

(31) Tucker, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

(32) Ibid., p. 65. Some interpretations of Marx would disagree with Tucker's argument here.

(33) The notion of privacy, identified by Lukes as one of the basic values of individualism, is rejected by Marxist theory, which must dispute the idea of a private sphere of an individual's life separate from a public one. But it is not only Marxists who may question this distinction. The notion of privacy has, of course, a central place in Mill's theory, and is necessary to the idea of negative freedom attributed to Mill by Berlin. I have already, in addition to acknowledging that it raises issues concerning compulsion which must be seriously considered by liberal theory of education, suggested that issues of autonomy or positive liberty are more central to a liberal notion of education.

CHAPTER 8

LIBERAL AND MARXIST NOTIONS OF EDUCATION COMPARED

1

Until now my arguments have been responses to the main radical arguments against 'liberal theory of education' sketched in Chapter 2, but in this and the following chapter the discussion takes a different turn. In accepting towards the close of the previous chapter the argument that Marx's ideas exhibit a strong strain of ethical individualism as well as three of the basic values of the individualist tradition, I suggested that three themes of central importance to his theory of society called for further examination in the light of their significance for education. Tracing these themes, of developing the individual's potential, of developing her autonomy, and of revolutionary transformation of society, is the main subject of the present chapter. In the course of doing this I will draw some comparisons between Marxist and liberal notions of education.

The task of sketching a Marxist notion of education is made difficult not only by the unsystematic nature of Marx's own considerations on education, but also by the dearth of positive accounts of education in contemporary Marxism, by contrast with

the massive industry of negative critique of schooling in capitalist societies.(1) Harris does pay some attention to this question, with resulting problems which I will consider in the next chapter. Sarup has little to say on the matter.(2) Neither does Matthews offer a positive account of education, despite the inclusion of a chapter which bears the title: 'Marxism and Education'. I shall therefore pay considerable attention to the work of Paulo Freire, who has developed an extensive, also rather unsystematic, analysis of education inspired by Marxist theory, although Freire's ideas are also influenced, of course, by both Phenomenology and Christian liberation theology.(3) While mention will be made, in passing, of some of Gramsci's ideas on education, these are not chosen as a central reference, largely because of continuing controversy on interpretation of his work.(4) The eight features of polytechnic education which will be analysed below have been extrapolated from Castles and Wüstenberg's The Education of the Future,(5) which I shall regard as reliably representative of a Marxist stance.

Before outlining the features of a Marxist notion of education, and how they reflect the three central themes to which I have pointed, it is in order to make some general observations about the nature of education in Marx's writings. We note that although Marx himself wrote little on education specifically, we can extrapolate quite clear implications for education from his theory of society. For Marx, a precondition for human emancipation is that the workers should exert planned control of economic relationships. For this to be possible Marx envisages

the notion of the '"totally developed individual" who is capable of controlling a rational process of production and distribution within a new form of society - "an association of free men" '.(6)

This concept of the 'totally developed individual' included

> the ability to work hard and master modern technology, but it went a lot further. Marx envisaged a worker who not only understood technology, but also its economic and political basis and the consequences of its use. Knowledge was to make the working class capable of controlling and transforming the forces of production to meet its own needs and interests.(7)

On these grounds, according to Castles and Wüstenberg, Marx bases his call for what he terms 'polytechnic education' which he describes as a 'revolutionary ferment', part of the struggle to transform society. The theory of polytechnic education links education closely with productive work. 'Its aim is to produce "fully developed human beings", which means people who are capable not only of doing productive work, but also of controlling production and running society. Every person must be capable of mastering the aims, technology and concrete methods of production processes, and understanding their relationship with society in general ...'(8)

We see clearly reflected here the three central themes in Marx's theory of society which have been identified as relevant to his notion of education. There is a strong emphasis on the notion of the fully developed individual. But this development is essential to the other two themes. Such full individual development is necessary to enable each individual to understand

and control technology, as well as participate in the economic and political life of her society, i.e. to develop autonomy. And clearly the revolutionary transformation of society requires both the fully developed individual and her consequent autonomous participation in this new society.

I am going to use the term 'polytechnic education' as being more or less equivalent to a Marxist notion of education. This could be seen as a controversial move. Robin Small(9) emphasises that the polytechnical or technological theme is one part of Marx's view of education, but I am going to adopt the looser use of the term which characterises Marx's general notion of education.(10) That there might be some controversy about this does not undermine the kind of discussion in which I am engaged here. This will involve an exploration of the notion of polytechnic education, which I will approach by examining eight central features, in the light of the three themes in Marx's theory of society to which I have already pointed.

These eight features of polytechnic education are: (i) that education should emphasise the priority of the community over the individual; (ii) that education must help people to understand the natural and social world they live in; (iii) that there should be a high level of education for everybody; (iv) that there should be no narrow specialization; (v) that education should include, and equip children for, both mental and manual labour; (vi) that it should aim at the removal of the distinction between working and learning; (vii) that it should

develop critical attitudes; (viii) that the method and content of teaching should be in accordance with these aims.

In the course of analysing these features, and showing their interrelationships with the three central themes and with one another, I will draw some comparisons between these features and the alleged and genuine liberal views of education identified in earlier chapters. The vehemence of the radical attack on liberal theory of education could tempt one to assume that the few attempts which have been made to develop a positive account of education from a Marxist perspective would produce results quite different from a liberal account of education. While the comparative observations which I will make between polytechnic education and a genuinely liberal notion of education like John White's will reveal some areas of difference, I will argue that there is a considerable degree of agreement between the two. On the other hand, I will show that generally there are more marked differences between a Marxist view of education and the alleged 'liberal' view of Hirst and Peters. In the course of developing the former point I will suggest that the substantial contrasts between a Marxist and a genuinely liberal notion of education are largely a function of the two different paradigms from within which they are produced. These contrasts will be taken up in Chapter 9 where it will be argued that tensions between the three themes reflected in a Marxist notion of education, which will be indicated in the present chapter, are indicative of serious problems which threaten the viability of this notion of education as such.

2

(i)

The first feature of polytechnic education, that education should emphasise the priority of the community over the individual, takes us back to the central issue in the last chapter. 'Individualism', profit-seeking and competitiveness are values regarded as unsuited to socialist education.(11) This requirement, prominent in radical attacks on 'liberal' education considered in previous chapters, is emphasised by Freire. In discussing the educational system in Guinea-Bissau he writes that 'participation in common experiences stimulates social solidarity rather than individualism. The principle of mutual help [among others, is] expressed daily. The learners begin creating new forms of behaviour in accordance with the responsibility they must take within the community'.(12)

It is clear from the discussion in the previous chapter that this requirement of education is not unproblematic. For, while it was noted there that Marx was opposed to certain forms of individualism, it was accepted, following Tucker's argument, that Marx displayed a kind of ethical individualism. This he did chiefly by emphasising the goal, both generally as a social good, and implicitly as a goal of education, of developing the capacities of the individual to the full, which I have suggested as one of the three central themes of his social theory. Thus we have an apparent paradox: an anti-individualist notion of

education inspired by ethical individualism.

But the paradox need only be an apparent one, although there is some confusion in evidence among disciples of Marx as a result of the simplistic way in which the notion of individualism is viewed. It is clear by now that it is simplistic to posit, as does Freire in the quotation above, social solidarity and 'individualism' as alternative values. We recall here that John White sees pupil-centred aims as important aims of education, qualified by the idea of the individual holding an extended notion of her own well-being which includes the well-being of others. One can make perfectly good sense of an argument which sees profit-seeking and competitiveness as being at odds with social solidarity. But, crucially, this need not be at odds with ethical individualism's emphasis on individual development.

Perhaps the central thrust of Marx's argument on the relationship between individual and community, and its implication for the notion of polytechnic education, is that it is only in community with others that each individual can develop her potential. Where a division of labour prevails there will, write Marx and Engels in The German Ideology, be a 'contradiction between the interest of the separate individual or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another'.(13) Emphasis in education on social solidarity and attacking competitiveness and profit-seeking goes together with the aim of destroying the division of labour. Both are goals of the revolutionary transformation of society. We

will return to the issue of the division of labour in discussing features (iv) and (v) below, but should note here that, once we penetrate beyond the apparent paradox, we have in this feature of polytechnic education both the theme of the development of the individual and that of the revolutionary transformation of society.

(ii)

The second feature of polytechnic education is that it must help people to understand the world they live in - both natural and social. This is an obvious requirement, at both pre- and post-revolutionary stages, for without such understanding people would not be in a position to exercise the autonomy necessary for participation in either the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism or the control of production and running of the new society. Implicit in this feature of polytechnic education is the recognition of the problem of ideology. The dominant ideology in an oppressive society imposes on the oppressed a view of the world which favours the interests of the dominant class, thus preventing the masses from understanding the natural and social world to their own advantage. Freire is particularly aware of the need to develop a critical consciousness, as essential to the struggle against oppression (of which more below). This fundamental feature of polytechnic education, which underpins all those which follow, obviously reflects the theme of developing autonomy, and that of revolution, whose success depends on this autonomy. And if absent, the lack of this feature in an

individual's education must result in an impairment of that individual's full development, of which an autonomous understanding of the world must be a prominent feature.

As far as 'liberal' theory of education as identified by the radicals is concerned, there has been a marked tendency in the kind of 'liberal education' associated with the traditional curriculum of the grammar school type to fall short of this requirement. I have already pointed, in Chapter 4, to the radical argument, which I think is correct, that Hirst's forms of knowledge, modelled on the traditional subjects or disciplines of middle class schooling, provide a narrow and misguided basis for the curriculum, by playing down the study of economic, social and political realities in which the learner is located. But I think a genuinely liberal view of education cannot quarrel with this feature of polytechnic education. If, for example, we consider John White's emphasis on education as preparing people to be able to make autonomous choices, and for democratic participation at all levels, especially in the workplace, then understanding of the natural and social world is clearly an essential aim of education. Without it, the exercise of autonomy would be out of the question, because the making of autonomous decisions is dependent on being sufficiently well-informed about the matter in question.

(iii)

Thirdly, the kind of education which Marx had in mind, and the

sort of person which he envisaged that it would produce, would require 'a high level of education for everybody'.(14) This is emphasised by both Gramsci and Freire. For Gramsci, for whom the possibility of change depended heavily on the education of the working class, 'democracy, by definition, cannot mean merely that an unskilled worker can become skilled. It must mean that every "citizen" can "govern" and that society places him, even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this'.(15) Freire refers to the 'right to be human',(16) which is clearly a right he envisages for all people. His pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument of humanization for the oppressed and dehumanized, exposing oppression and its causes to reflection and thence to engagement in the struggle for liberation.

In this feature of polytechnic education we see reflected all three of the main themes in Marx's theory of society. We have here a clear call for the development of autonomous thinking in all members of society, as a prerequisite for democratic participation. We also see the theme of revolution, the success of which depends on a high level of education for all. And we detect here the theme of the development of the capacities of all, although this is again less explicitly present than the other two themes. At the same time the goal of a high level of education for all, as a prerequisite for democratic participation, is also a feature of a genuinely liberal notion of education. White, while not committing himself to the same political ends as Freire, shares the view that an aim of education should be a high a level of education for all members

of society. It will be recalled from Chapter 6 that White rejects a Platonic view of the distribution of education according to which, while the small ruling élite receives an extensive and well-rounded education, the masses receive a more limited education, appropriate to the jobs they perform. The masses do not need a broad understanding of society. White argues in favour of a synoptic education for all and does not accept the argument that only the minority are capable of benefitting from a synoptic education.

(iv)

A fourth feature of polytechnic education, which is closely associated with the subsequent two, is that narrow specialization should be avoided. In a celebrated passage in The German Ideology Marx and Engels analyse the consequences of the division of labour:

> ... as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in a communist society where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and this makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming a hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.(17)

The narrow specialization enforced by the division of labour cannot promote the production of fully developed human beings.

In response to the problems of narrow specialization, Marx wrote, in the 1886 'Geneva Resolution' adopted by the International Workingmen's Association, of education as a combination of three elements:

> By education we understand three things. Firstly: Mental education. Secondly: Bodily education, such as given in schools, by gymnastics, and by military exercise. Thirdly: Technological training, which imparts the general principles of all processes of production, and, simultaneously, initiates the child and young person in the practical use and handling of the elementary instruments of all trades. A gradual and progressive course of mental, gymnastic, and technological training ought to correspond with the classification of the juvenile labourers. The costs of the technological schools ought to be partly met by the sale of their products. The combination of paid productive labour, mental education, bodily exercise and polytechnic training will raise the working class far above the levels of the higher and middle classes.(18)

Writing [illegible]tal, Marx sums up the purpose of this combination of elemen[illegible]eflecting 'an education that will, in the case of every chi[illegible]r a given age, combine productive labour with instruction and gymnastics, not only as one of the methods of adding to the efficiency of production, but as the only method of producing fully developed human beings'.(19) On the strength of this last stipulation, we can conclude that this feature of polytechnic education reflects the first of the three relevant themes in Marx, that of the fully developed individual. But there is also evidence of the second theme, for Marx is concerned that people's autonomy should be developed, and calls for a variety of educational activities to this end. By implication, his third theme is also present; revolutionary overthrow of the division of labour and the capitalist system which it underpins is necessary to save the individual from the crippling effects of

narrow specialization.

My comments in Chapter 4 have made it clear that, while Peters does emphasise breadth and depth of understanding, Hirst misses the boat on a defensible account of the notion of education by defending a notion of liberal education which, while purporting to advocate breadth, is largely confined to the narrowness of the traditional curriculum. Once again we find that White's notion of education is closer to a Marxist one than the putative liberal notion of Hirst. White shares Marx's concern that education should, among other things, enable the individual to develop her capacities.(20) His emphasis on the need for a basic compulsory curriculum and for the facilities and opportunity to pursue voluntary activities, and his concern for breadth in education, goes far beyond Hirst's 'forms of knowledge', and places his account of education in obvious contrast to Hirst's.

(v)

The fifth feature of polytechnic education is an extension of the fourth. It is that education must feature, and equip children for, both mental and manual labour, countering the hazards of narrow specialisation. This concern about the division between mental and manual labour is at the heart of Marx's critique of capitalism. Brian Simon reminds us that, as we noted in Chapter 7, for Marx, Man is endowed with certain 'natural and acquired powers' which require certain definite conditions for their development - 'the rich human being', as Marx puts it, 'is

simultaneously the human being in need of a totality of human life-activities' - he requires, in effect, the widest possible scope to practice varied activities.(21)

Marx's analysis of capitalism argues that human development is constricted by the division of labour, primarily the division between mental and manual labour. From private property (see Chapter 7) and the division of labour come alienation, as the labourer is alienated from the product of labour as it is appropriated by another. Not only is man alienated from the product of his labour; man is also estranged from man. With the division between mental and manual workers, mental workers are often privileged by comparison with manual workers, some mental workers serving the ruling class by helping to dominate other workers. As theory and practice are separated in both industry and society intellectual activity is concentrated at one pole and practical activity at the other. Crucially, as far as education is concerned, manual workers are denied the knowledge they need to understand the natural and social world and thus to control it. Overcoming this division is a precondition for a society of 'fully developed individuals'. Simon sums up Marx's argument on how to deal with the problems arising from this division between mental and manual labour:

> Marx went on to argue the need for social ownership of the means of production ... Marx held that the socialist mode of production would bring to an end the basic division between mental and manual labour, that it would bring all men into a direct relation, not only with each other, but with the instruments of production - which embody man's intellectual powers - and therefore provide a basis for

> "the development of a totality of capacities in the individuals themselves". Once man's "self-activity" - by which Marx means activity which freely derives from and develops man's natural capacities and talents - coincides with material life, the conditions exist for "the development of individuals as complete individuals and the casting off of all natural limitations".(22)

As far as education is concerned, if the belief that mental work is superior to manual work is to be overcome, all workers must have the opportunity of doing both. Freire emphasises 'the impossibility of separating practice from theory. A society that seeks to live the radical unity between the two overcomes the dichotomy between manual labor and intellectual labor'.(23) He argues:

> The new man and the new woman toward which this society [Guinea-Bissau] aspires cannot be created except by participation in productive labor that serves the common good. It is this labor that is the source of knowledge about this new creation, through which it unfolds and to which it refers. Such education, then, cannot be elitist in character because this would lead, in contradiction to socialist objectives, to strengthening the division between mental and manual labor.(24)

Arguing the need for education to contain elements of both mental and manual labour, and to contribute to the destruction of the dichotomy between the two in a new society reflects, as does the previous feature on which it is based, all three of the Marxist themes under consideration. Both forms of labour are necessary to the full development of the individual. An overemphasis on either threatens the individual's autonomy - especially if her activities are confined largely to tedious manual labour. The destruction of the distinction between the two in society is both a goal of revolution and necessary to its success.

The distinction between mental and manual labour appears to echo a mind-body distinction which is now largely discredited. Manual labour is not after all 'manual' in the sense that it has no mental dimension. To perform manual labour is to act in the light of an understanding of how to, say, dig a ditch, and of its dimensions. No labour could be completely 'manual'. But setting aside the unhappy terminology, the centrality of the necessity to break down the division between mental and manual labour marks a clear point of great difference between the Marxist notion of polytechnic education and the alleged 'liberal' theories of Hirst and Peters. We took note in Chapter 4 of the radical charge against Hirst that he tends to regard only propositional knowledge as knowledge, and to view the abstract and theoretical as superior to practical knowledge. We also noted how Hirst's account of 'liberal education' explicitly excludes 'vocational' elements. Hirst's insistence that education must not be instrumental results in too restricted a notion of 'knowledge'. The 'forms of knowledge', which underpin his notion of 'liberal education' do not include knowledge particular to the performance and understanding of manual labour.

While Peters places considerable emphasis on the connection between education and social and political issues, it could be said that his position does not take the kind of problems raised by the mental-manual labour distinction seriously enough. We have already noted the following passages, which are quoted by Harris and which indicate Peters's insufficient emphasis on the problems to which this feature of polytechnic education points.

Firstly, Peters writes:

> Unless the wheels of industry keep turning the conditions will be absent which will allow any man to pursue a multitude of individual interests. And keeping the wheels of industry turning is a policy that favours no particular sectional interest.(25)

The problem is that in a capitalist society keeping the wheels of industry turning does tend not only to favour the interests of the shareholders, but also to depend on the division of labour, with a resulting division between mental and manual workers, with all the resulting inequalities to which Marxists point. Peters reinforces the impression that he is insufficiently sensitive to these problems when he writes:

> Nevertheless societies cannot be perpetuated unless many menial and instrumental tasks are also performed and vast numbers of people are also trained in them. The Athenian way of life was made possible, to a large extent, by the slaves and metics who performed such functions. In modern industrial society all such tasks have to be undertaken by citizens; for many of them training is essential. The school, therefore, has also an instrumental function in training and selecting people for such functions.(26)

It would not be unfair to suggest that, although Peters might not necessarily welcome these features of contemporary and earlier societies, he might have considered more carefully the consequences of his observations here. He is at least endorsing by default the distinction between mental and manual labour. But in spite of this we should not assume too great a difference between Peters's notion of education and the concerns behind polytechnic education. What is at stake in pointing to the mental-manual labour distinction are the wider implications of

different people performing different kinds of work in a society, and I will return to this in commenting on White in this regard. Surely a crucial consideration in exploring the implications of the distinction is that the work performed by manual labourers is more likely to be boring and of no value in itself to the worker. In portraying manual workers under the capitalist mode of production as alienated labour part of what concerns Marx is that the work that they perform is not intrinsically worthwhile. This, of course, is strongly reminiscent of Peters's insistence that the aims of education are intrinsic, rather than extrinsic. Both have a notion that the most worthwhile activities are those performed for their own sake. Marx and Engels's compelling vision in The German Ideology of the individual who is able to be hunter, fisherman, shepherd and critic in a post-capitalist society conveys implicitly the value of being able to do all these things for their own sake.

But while Hirst and Peters do seem to be exclusively concerned with education as mental labour, a point to which I shall return in discussing the sixth feature of polytechnic education, concerning the related issue of the relation between study and work, the position with John White is, again, rather different. Although White, whose ideas I have been arguing to be genuinely liberal, does not use the terminology of 'mental and manual labour', development of his notions of autonomy and democracy would require acceptance of the gist of the particular Marxist argument in question. What White correctly highlights about the problem of the distinction between mental and manual labour is

that under the capitalist mode of production there is a sharp distinction between those who take decisions and those who don't. Without both intellectual and manual knowledge, no member of society can take part in decision-making as a relatively autonomous participant. And if White's subsidiary goal of promoting the good of the individual, which looks to me much like Marx's theme of the fully developed individual, is to be pursued, then no educational system could justify equipping a child to perform only manual or mental labour, to the exclusion of developing her other capacities. White's concern that there should be a basic compulsory curriculum for all should be seen as evidence of this.

(vi)

A sixth characteristic of polytechnic education, closely related to the fourth and fifth, is that it requires, as Castles and Wüstenberg put it, 'removal of the distinction between working and learning, between school and work; every child should take part in socially necessary production from an early age; every adult should have the chance to go on learning, both at school and elsewhere'.(27) Thus there must be a close relationship between education and productive work.

This is strongly emphasised by Freire. Stressing the need to overcome the dichotomy between mental and manual labour, he writes,

> The result is a totally different model of education. In this model, the school - whether primary, secondary or university level, - is not essentially different from the factory or farm, nor does it stand in opposition to them. Even when a school exists outside the factory or the practical tasks of agriculture, this does not signify that it is in any way superior to them, nor that factory or agricultural work are not in themselves schools also. In a dynamic vision of the unity between theory and practice, the school, inside or outside the factory, cannot be defined as an institution bureaucratically responsible for the transfer of a select kind of knowledge. It is rather a pole or moment of that unity. Thus, distancing ourselves from the concrete practice, wherever we exercise critical reflection about that practice, we have there a theoretical context, a school, that is, in the most radical sense which that word should have.(28)

Tracing the relationship between this feature and the three themes in Marx's social theory is less straightforward than in the other features. But it does appear to be indicated here that we have present the third of the three themes; a revolutionary transformation of the relationship between learning and working is being proposed, as part of a general social transformation. It seems to be suggested too that more space will be created for the full development of the individual's capacities. This will now be possible in the workplace, where before there was little chance of this, especially given the division of labour. And learning, previously associated only with schooling, will be enriched by its association with the reality of work. In this way autonomy is likely to be enhanced, as individuals are enabled to develop an understanding of work and its context in production.

From the point of view of this feature of polytechnic education it is clear that for one who argues the need to remove the distinction between learning and working in this way, there is much to criticise in Hirst and Peters, as I suggested in

discussing the previous point on the division between mental and manual labour. Hirst and Peters do nothing to suggest that work is in any way related to education, and the learning which it involves. Indeed, the emphasis in their work, on education as having intrinsic and non-instrumental aims, establishes the dichotomy in question in their view of education. As to White, and the more genuinely liberal view of education, the matter is less clear-cut. Although there is no difficulty about the fact that the anti-élitist element in the argument in question is shared by White, and indeed White indicates that industry ought to contribute to change by educating people for democracy, attempts to remove the alleged dichotomy between work and study may not receive sympathy from White or other liberal theorists. From the liberal point of view there is something disturbing about arguments in favour of collapsing this supposed dichotomy. In his enthusiasm for this proposal Freire writes: 'In a certain moment it becomes true that one no longer studies in order to work nor does one work in order to study; one studies in the process of working'.(29) I will return to this issue in the next chapter, and will argue that this move raises problems about the whole nature of education, primarily to do with the nature of knowledge.

This problem of the relation between knowledge and its pursuit, and the other goals of polytechnic education, emerges strongly in the two features of polytechnic education which remain to be discussed. As they are the most problematic they have been saved for last. This is not intended to suggest that they are less

important than those which I have already considered.

(vii)

A seventh characteristic of polytechnic education is that it should develop critical attitudes, especially to authority. The notion of ideology dominates radical considerations on education. As the masses are immersed in a dominant ideology which keeps hidden from them the nature of their oppression, the means of combatting this dominant ideology are crucial to its overthrow. Both Gramsci and Freire emphasise the central importance of the development of a critical consciousness. Freire writes:

> In our highly technical world, mass production as an organization of human labor is possibly one of the most potent instruments of man's massification. By requiring a man to behave mechanically, mass production domesticates him. By separating his activity from the total project, requiring no total critical attitude towards production, it dehumanizes him. By excessively narrowing a man's specialization, it constricts his horizons, making of him a passive, fearful, naive being.(30)

This passage points to the central place in the pedagogy of the oppressed of critical discovery by the oppressed 'that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanization'.(31) Dennis Goulet, in his introduction to Freire's Education for Critical Consciousness, suggests that 'The unifying thread in his work is critical consciousness as the motor of cultural emancipation'.(32) In the essay in the same collection entitled 'Education versus Massification', Freire, writing about Brazil in the 1950s and early 1960s, before the coup of 1964, discusses

economic development as part of the development of democracy. Ending the power of the rich over the poor was as dependent on 'the passage from one mentality to another' as it was on technical or economic reform;

> The special contribution of the educator to the birth of the new society would have to be a critical education which could help to form critical attitudes, for the naive consciousness with which the people had emerged into the historical process left them an easy prey to irrationality. Only an education facilitating the passage from naive to critical transitivity, increasing men's ability to perceive the challenges of their time, could prepare the people to resist the emotional power of the transition.(33)

This feature reflects strongly all three of the themes of Marxist social theory under consideration. Critical consciousness as a means of perceiving the origins of the oppressive ideology in which one is immersed is obviously a prerequisite for the development of autonomy, and hence of genuine democratic participation. Thus it is necessary to the process of revolution, and to its success. And the individual is more likely to be able to develop her capacities if she is able to perceive, via critical consciousness, the real nature of her situation, which ideology disguises and keeps hidden from her.

Hirst too sees critical thinking as an aim of education, but there are obvious differences between what he and Freire have in mind. The crucial feature of critical thinking in Hirst's account is that it takes place within the various forms of knowledge, critical thinking in one form of knowledge being different from critical thinking in another. Further, Hirst does

not give a political interpretation to crit[illegible]l thinking, but is concerned with the rational pursuit of the various disciplines which he has in mind as part of a 'liberal education'. With Freire, by contrast, the urgency of the need for an educational process which encourages critical attitudes arises from the centrality of critical thinking to liberation. Freire writes:

> The education our situation demanded would enable men to discuss courageously the problems of their context; it would warn men of the dangers of the time and offer them the confidence and the strength to confront those dangers instead of surrendering their sense of self through submission to the decisions of others. By predisposing men to re-evaluate constantly, to analyze "findings", to adopt scientific methods and processes, and to perceive themselves in a dialectical relationship with their social reality, that education could help men to assume an increasingly critical attitude toward the world and so to transform it.(34)

This emphasis on critical thinking as essential to the process of transforming society has much in common with White's discussion of the importance of autonomy in the democratisation of institutions like the workplace. It will be remembered from the discussion in Chapter 6 how he links the questioning of the aims and practices of the white bread factory to the breaking down of hierarchical, undemocratic structures. White's liberalism here is close to the thinking of Freire in that critical thinking and its development are linked to the aim of transforming society. The difference lies in the fact that while Freire is precise about the goals of this transformation, White takes a more agnostic view. We will return to this key issue in the next chapter where we will consider whether a Marxist can consistently be agnostic about the goals of social transformation.

At this stage I want to emphasise, again, that while the position of the alleged 'liberal' philosophy of Hirst and Peters is markedly different from a Marxist notion of critical thinking, the genuine liberalism of White is close on this particular issue to the kind of position a Marxist will take up.

(viii)

The eighth and final, but by no means least significant, feature of polytechnic education is that the form as well as the content of education will be in harmony with the aims of education as indicated by Marx. Krupskaya took up Marx's theory,(35) arguing that 'Rigid curricula and authoritarian drill cannot educate socialists capable of running society in their own interests'.(36)

This argument is central to Freire's defence of dialogical education, the outlines of which are worth noting here. Developing an anti-authoritarian view of teaching methods, Freire makes his distinction between anti-dialogical and dialogical education. Anti-dialogical, 'narrative' education, which is found in oppressive systems, is likened by Freire to a system of 'banking' in which the knowing teacher transfers learning to the passive, ignorant learner.(37)

This 'domesticating' learning leads to a distorted view of reality. By contrast with banking education, dialogical education which, by actively creating political consciousness, is a condition for liberation, involves a dialectical relationship

of joint responsibility between educator and educatee, in which the dichotomy between teacher who transmits and learner who receives disappears. 'Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students.'(38) This calls to mind Marx in the Third Thesis on Feuerbach: '... it is men who change circumstances and ... it is essential to educate the educator himself'.(39)

The method of education is thus radically altered. So too is the content. The pedagogy of the oppressed is 'a pedagogy which must be forged with, not for the oppressed ... in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. And in this struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade'.(40) In the making of this pedagogy 'defining what should be known must count on the involvement of the learners as part of the plan. This means that the dialogic relation, as a seal of the act of knowing, between active teachers and learners is not the result of some objective of learning proposed by the professor to the learners but arises in response to the definition of what needs to be known'.(41) The participants in the educational process have the right to a role in defining what they need to know. 'The starting point for organizing the program content of education or political action must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people. Utilizing certain basic

contradictions, we must pose this existential, concrete, present situation to the people as a problem which challenges them and requires a response - not just at the intellectual level, but at the level of action.'(42) Both education and political action can only succeed if account is taken of the people's situation in the world, and their particular view of the world. In participating dialogically with the people in developing their own educational programme the dialogical educators focus with the students on generative themes within the students' own view of the world. This, of course, is where Freire himself has attempted to locate the starting point for the adult literacy programmes in which he has been involved.

This feature of polytechnic education reflects strongly both the second and the third themes in Marx's social theory. The second theme, that of developing autonomy, is present in the emphasis on the active role of the learner in both the learning process and the selection of what she needs to know. Alongside this runs the theme of revolutionary transformation of society in which dialogical education is an inseparable part of the process of liberation. However, I am going to suggest, for further discussion in the next chapter, that there is a tension between these two themes in this crucial feature of a Marxist notion of education. Freire writes of dialogical education as a process

> in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed. In a humanizing pedagogy the method ceases to be an instrument by which the teachers (here, the revolutionary leadership) can manipulate the students (the oppressed), because it expresses the consciousness of the students themselves ...

> Teacher and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement.(43)

This passage contains the tension to which I am referring. It emphasises that dialogical education is an inseparable part of the process of liberation, an instrument which forms part of the strategy of the revolutionary leadership. Where it is problematic is that one wonders what would happen if the knowledge which the newly-autonomous oppressed created were to be in conflict with the aims of the revolutionary leadership. We will return to this issue in Chapter 9.

It is also worth mentioning in passing that the theme of the fully developed individual is present in this feature too, by implication. The notion of the fully developed individual, which must include the development of a degree of autonomy, is incompatible with that of banking education; clearly little room would be left for individual development by an approach to teaching in which 'deposits' of knowledge not relevant to the individual's universe were made by an authoritarian teacher.

I turn now to a comparison of this feature of polytechnic education with the notion of education held by the alleged and genuine liberals whose ideas have been discussed in earlier chapters. Here I will show that the similarities and contrasts

are far from straightforward. In the light of the Freirian defence of dialogical education, in terms of both method and content, a Marxist view is critical, as I have shown in Chapter 4, of certain key aspects of the ideas of Hirst and Peters. In marked contrast to Freire, Hirst and Peters wish to see education as the initiation of pupils into 'worthwhile activities', which they identify in terms of public traditions and modes of understanding. Their view is that, regardless of whether the individual sees any point in these activities, they are 'intrinsically valuable', reflecting the Socratic argument that if a person does not choose the Good this is a reflection not on the Good but on that person. The Freirian response to this would be to argue that as Hirst and Peters hold an abstracted notion of knowledge, as the kind of activities which Hirst and Peters have in mind are outside the 'thematic universe' of the learners, and as we have here a clear-cut case of the educator deciding what the educatee needs to know, Hirst and Peters hold, in this regard at least, a banking, anti-dialogical view of education.

Now as I argued in Chapters 4 and 6, the radical attack on Hirst and Peters, while it may be justified on this and other scores, argues mistakenly that Hirst and Peters hold a 'liberal' view of education. My argument in Chapter 6 was that P. S. Wilson and John White are better examples of liberal philosophers of education. So far, it seems that, on the issues raised by this eighth feature of polytechnic education, Freire has much in common with White and Wilson. I showed in Chapter 6 how Wilson,

and White, oppose the Hirst-Peters position. Although Wilson's argument is a depoliticised one, in sharp contrast to that of Freire, it is that the interests of the individual child are the starting point for determining what educative schooling is. On the basis of this, Wilson's account of the role of the teacher is very different from that offered by Hirst and Peters. The teacher's role is not to 'initiate', but to respond to the pupil's interests, and to help her to develop these interests. There appears to be much in common here with Freire's insistence that the educator responds to the thematic universe of the educatee, as they develop a pedagogy together.

But this argument of similarity must not be pushed too far, for Freire and Wilson use the notion of 'interests' quite differently. For Freire, in his insistence that the interests of the learner must be the starting point, is referring to the learner's political interests. And the learner may not be aware of what her political interests are. Castles and Wüstenberg emphasise this in arguing, while discussing strategies for transforming education, that 'The starting point for education must be the real situation and interests of the pupils, teachers and parents'.(44) I shall not pursue the problem of their introducing the principle that the interests of teachers and parents as well as pupils should figure as a common starting point. I refer to this assertion by Castles and Wüstenberg because it emphasises the Marxist presupposition that individuals of an oppressed class are usually not aware of their real interests because their perception of them is clouded as a result

of their being immersed in an ideology which serves the interests of the dominant class. It is on these sorts of grounds that a Marxist educator can insist that she perceives the real (political) interests of the learner, and has the role of making those interests clear to her. On this account a learner who denied having political interests would be described as suffering from what some would call 'false consciousness'. Now while Wilson would probably accept the idea that in some cases a person's interests might be political, he would not share Freire's insistence that this must be so. In comparing, therefore, Wilson and Freire's common emphasis on a learner's 'interests' as a starting point in education, we have to conclude that the notion of 'interests' here is ambiguous, and that the similarity between Wilson and Freire on this issue is largely merely apparent.

White may appear at first glance to have little in common with Freire on this issue, considering that White calls for a basic compulsory curriculum. White's view of the development of autonomy prompts one to be skeptical of Freire's notion of the educatees defining 'what should be known', on the grounds that people do not present themselves for education as autonomous beings. How, one asks, in a question reminiscent of Socrates in the Meno, can educatees define what they need to know if they don't already know it? There certainly seems to be a disagreement between White and Freire on this score. But it must be borne in mind that for White the reason for the defence of the compulsory curriculum, and a very good reason, is that it should

increase the long-term autonomy of the learner. And White makes it very clear that, as far as he is concerned, an appeal to education in which teachers are seen as 'initiating' and 'committing' children to a 'higher culture' involves imposing the teachers' values on the pupils. The unacceptability of this kind of imposition is at the heart of Freire's attack on anti-dialogical education. One is not sure that the apparent difference of opinion on whether there could be compulsory features of an education programme at some stage is necessarily a fundamental difference between White's and Freire's views of education. We should bear in mind that Freire's prime interest is in adult literacy in oppressive or post-revolutionary third world societies, rather than education in general. I see no reason why a Marxist account of education, which must share with White a concern to equip people to behave autonomously as a prerequisite for participation in decision-making, should not accept the principle that there is room for some compulsion in education.

The issue of the degree of similarity between Freire on the one hand and Wilson and White on the other can be viewed from another perspective. While I have argued a closer similarity between Wilson and White, and Freire than between Hirst and Peters and Freire on most of the features of polytechnic education, on this feature the picture is different. While there are aspects of Hirst and Peters's notion of education to which a Freirian would object, I want now to point to a significant similarity between their positions. It was suggested earlier that, in treating

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education as the initiation of pupils into intrinsically worthwhile activities, Hirst and Peters accept the Socratic argument that if a person does not choose the Good this is a reflection not on the Good, but on that person's failure to understand it. While prima facie this seems to mark a strong contrast with a Freirian notion of education, this is only prima facie so. For Freire in his own way embraces the same Socratic principle. It can be said that for Freire the Good is to be interpreted as liberation of the oppressed. To participate in this process, the oppressed need 'conscientization', i.e. to perceive the nature of their oppression. Here we come face to face again with the notion of ideology. For a central problem in the process of liberation is the consciousness of those supposedly in need of it. They are, as we have noted, in a state of naive consciousness, and in this state are unable to perceive that their real interests lie in the sort of process of liberation that Freire has in mind. They do not, in terms of the Socratic principle, know what the Good is; but that is a reflection not on the Good, but on their state of consciousness. Freire, like Hirst and P ters, claims to know what this Good is; the individual is not the final authority on what the Good is. For Wilson and White, on the other hand, the individual must, in the end, discover for herself what the Good is. Teachers can give some guidance here, of different kinds, as I have already indicated in earlier analyses of Wilson and White's varying but ultimately similar stances on this issue.

This common feature between the notions of education of Hirst and

Peters, and Freire, could be indicative of a degree of commonality between conservatism and Marxism. But I will not pursue this line of thought here. What is of interest at this juncture is that Freire's subscription to the Socratic principle points to a fundamental difficulty in his notion of education, and as I will argue in the next chapter, in the notion of polytechnic education which he reflects. The tension is between Freire's concern for an equal dialectical relationship between educator and learner on the one hand, which is an expression of the theme of autonomy, and on the other the political goals which he articulates, and which reflect the general theme of revolution. In other words, the tension lies between having a very clear idea of what the Good is for the learners, but at the same time wishing to develop their capacity to deliberate autonomously on the nature of that Good. What, one asks, if the conscientized learners choose a Good which is different from that chosen for them by Freire? This tension will be taken up for more detailed consideration in Chapter 9. It is worth noting, before leaving this issue, that, by contrast with Freire, the reflection of the Socratic principle in Hirst and Peters's notion of education does not cause similar tensions. For a conservative, the Good can only be articulated in the light of an understanding and appreciation of the current institutions and traditions in a particular society. These concerns are both compatible with and necessary to the notion of education as initiation into traditional modes of understanding which are the product of these institutions. There are no obvious tensions between this notion of the Good and a conservative notion of

autonomy, for it is only out of these traditions and institutions that autonomy can develop.

3

The eight features of polytechnic education are obviously not discrete, but interrelated in various ways. In addition each reflects some or all of the three themes which I have taken to be present in both Marx's general theory of society and in the notion of polytechnic education.

The first feature, that of the priority of the community over the individual, can be seen as the ethic underlying education, and social relations generally, in a post-revolutionary society. This feature is of a different order from the rest of the features, but not necessarily at odds with the notions of education of either Hirst and Peters, or Wilson and White.

The second feature, that education should help people to understand the natural and social world they live in, underpins those which follow, as does the third, that there should be a high level of education for everybody. Both reflect most strongly the second theme of autonomy and, by implication, both the first and the third themes, of individual development and revolution respectively. In other words, without a high level of education and a consequent understanding of the natural and social world, both the development of the individual and a revolutionary transformation along the lines envisaged by Marx

would be jeopardised. These two features, I have suggested, are clearly reflected in John White's notion of education. This does not apply to Hirst and Peters in the case of the former, although they would almost certainly not oppose the latter feature.

I have indicated that the next three features hang together - i.e. the fourth, that there should be no narrow specialization, the fifth, that children should be educated for both manual and mental labour, and the sixth, that the distinction between school and work should be removed. In discussing them I indicated, first, that we have reflected in the fourth and fifth features all three of the Marxist themes in question, i.e. that these two features are aimed at the full development of the individual, her autonomous understanding of the world, and at a revolutionary removal of the division of labour. Secondly, I showed how, in regard to the fourth and fifth features, there is a clear contrast between the notion of polytechnic education and the notion of education held by Hirst and Peters. Setting aside the third theme, of revolution, over which commonality is not present, there is much in common between White's notion of education and polytechnic education's fourth and fifth features. The sixth feature, calling for removal of the distinction between school and work, while closely allied to the previous two, has been suggested to be problematic and unlikely to be compatible with a liberal notion of education. This will be taken up in the next chapter.

The remaining two features reflect strongly the theme of

developing autonomy. The seventh feature, that of development of critical thinking, is at the same time a manifestation of both the theme of the fully developed individual and that of revolution. The capacity to think critically ought to be seen as necessary to the full development of the individual, and without the capacity for critical thought the revolutionary goals of Marxist theory could not be reached. I have indicated how, while White shares a similar concern for critical thinking, excepting its association with the particular theme of revolution which is constitutive of polytechnic education, Hirst holds a more restricted notion of critical thinking.

The eighth feature of polytechnic education, concerning the form and content of education, and analysed in the light of Freire's theory, has been pointed to as the most problematic. It reflects the theme of autonomy and in taking the thematic universe of the learner as its starting point, it appears to share something in common with Wilson. It also has a common concern with White, in its emphasis on developing autonomy and on purportedly not imposing the teacher's view of what is valuable on the learner. Yet at the same time, by virtue of its emphasis on the theme of revolution as a goal it shares with Peters the Socratic tendency of holding a view of what the Good is which is independent of the individual's perception of it. This by contrast with the liberal view that the Good is what the individual sees as good. In discussing this I have indicated the tension here between the second and third themes, which will be taken up for further discussion in the next chapter. There the question will be

considered, in the light of the analysis in the present chapter, of whether Marxist theory can offer a coherent notion of education.

Alongside the task of setting up the issues which are the subject of Chapter 9, this chapter has set out to show that there are no simple contrasts between a genuinely liberal notion of education, like that of White, and a Marxist one. On a number of features of polytechnic education, particularly the second, third, fourth, fifth and seventh, there is much in common. There is far less of a similarity between polytechnic education and the notion of education held by Hirst and Peters, who are assumed by their radical critics to be representative of 'liberal' philosophy of education. The result of this thread in my argument in this chapter is to emphasise again that no simple distinction can be made between liberal and radical notions of education.

Notes

(1) Exceptions to this rule are: William N. Blake, 'Karl Marx's Concept of Education' (1968); Stephen Castles and Wiebke Wüstenberg, The Education of the Future: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Socialist Education (1979); Gert Hellerich, 'Some Educational Implications of Karl Marx's Communism' (1970); Brian Simon, 'Karl Marx and Education' (1971); Robin Small, 'The Concept of Polytechnical Education' (1984).

(2) In Education, State and Crisis: A Marxist Perspective (1982), Sarup comments briefly (pp. 51-52) on what he describes as a recent recovery of earlier popular educational traditions. The features of 'radical education' cited by Sarup are considered in my discussion in this chapter. These are centrally that education is a political strategy, and features (vi) and (viii) of polytechnic education.

(3) While there may be a number of problems of interpretation of Freire's work, I do not think this consideration undermines the use made of his ideas in this discussion.

(4) This is acknowledged to be caused in part by his own censorship of his work written in prison.

(5) Op. cit.

(6) Ibid., p. 33.

(7) Ibid., p. 98.

(8) Ibid., p. 7.

(9) Small, op. cit., pp. 29 and 40.

(10) Castles and Wüstenberg, op. cit., p. 205 fn. 69.

(11) Ibid., p. 3.

(12) Paulo Freire, Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau (1978), p. 42.

(13) Robert C. Tucker (ed.), The Marx-Engels Reader (1978), p. 160.

(14) Castles and Wüstenberg, op. cit., p. 7.

(15) Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks (1971), p. 40.

(16) Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1972), p. 33.

(17) Robert C. Tucker (ed.), op. cit., p. 160.

(18) Quoted in Small, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

(19) Robert C. Tucker (ed.), op. cit., p. 412.

(20) In view of White's critical comments (1982 op. cit., pp. 35-37) on the notion of pupils developing their potentialities to their fullest extent, he would probably have reservations about the Marxist ideas of the individual developing her capacities to their fullest extent and of the totally developed individual. Nevertheless White does share the view that through education the individual should be enabled to develop her potential or capacities.

(21) Simon, op. cit., p. 186.

(22) Ibid., p. 189.

(23) Freire, (1978) op. cit., p. 90.

(24) Ibid., p. 95.

(25) Peters, op. cit., p. 170.

(26) Ibid., p. 252.

(27) Castles and Wüstenberg, op. cit., p. 7.

(28) Freire, (1978) op. cit., p. 90.

(29) Ibid., p. 21.

(30) Paulo Freire, Education for Critical Consciousness (1979), p. 34.

(31) Freire, (1972) op. cit., p. 25.

(32) Freire, (1979) op. cit., Introduction by Dennis Goulet, p. vii.

(33) Ibid., p. 32.

(34) Ibid., pp. 33-34.

(35) Castles and Wüstenberg note that Krupskaya combined Marx's theory with the theories of the progressive educators.

(36) Ibid., p. 8.

(37) Although an attempt has been made by Harold Entwistle, in Antonio Gramsci: Conservative Schooling for Radical Politics (1979), to attribute to Gramsci a 'conservative' view of schooling, this has been widely repudiated as a misinterpretation. Madan Sarup argues in Marxism/Structuralism/Education (1983), p. 131, that while Gramsci advocated didactic teaching and rigorous disciplined study, the pupil was not to be a passive recipient of knowledge and the teacher-pupil relationship was to be a reciprocal one.

(38) Freire, (1972) op. cit., p. 46.

(39) Robert C. Tucker (ed.), op. cit., p. 144.

(40) Freire, (1972) op. cit., p. 25.

(41) Freire, (1978) op. cit., p. 106.

(42) Freire, (1972) op. cit., p. 68.

(43) Ibid., p. 44.

(44) Castles and Wüstenberg, op. cit., p. 191.

CHAPTER 9

CAN MARXISM OFFER A COHERENT NOTION OF EDUCATION?

1

In the previous chapter the notion of polytechnic education was analysed in terms of eight features. It was treated as an expression, in relation to education, of three central themes in Marx's social theory: that of the fully developed individual, that of the goal of autonomy for all citizens, and that of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. In the course of this discussion it was suggested that although these themes, and the features of polytechnic education which express them, are interrelated in a variety of ways, their interrelationship is not unproblematic. It was suggested, in particular, that there are tensions between the theme of developing autonomy, and that of revolution. The tension was pointed to in discussion of the eighth feature of polytechnic education where the question was raised of whether the autonomy resulting from dialogical education might not result in the learners challenging the revolutionary goals of the leadership who sponsored such education. Similarly, in the case of the seventh feature of polytechnic education, what if the new-found critical consciousness of the formerly oppressed was turned on the

revolutionary aims of the vanguard? A similar difficulty was also raised concerning the sixth feature of polytechnic education: the collapsing of the distinction between school and work.

The argument of this chapter is that because of the severe tension between the second and third themes in Marx's social theory, Marxism cannot offer a coherent notion of education. The goal of autonomous thinking and its allied notion of democratic participation for all is in severe tension with that of revolutionary transition to socialism. Of these three themes the first, that of the full development of the individual's capacities, is the least problematic although, as I suggested in the last chapter, it could conflict with the goal of revolution. I must state before proceeding to my discussion that in line with the stance I took in Chapter 1, I do not propose to tackle the question of whether or not the Marxist theory of revolutionary change is correct or incorrect. To do so would be to take on the unrealistic task of attempting to adjudicate between a Marxist and a liberal paradigm.

2

Turning to the second theme which I have isolated above, of autonomous thinking and, associated with it, democratic participation by all as an aim of education, we have here an aim shared quite clearly with the liberal notion of education as exemplified in White's ideas. Let us remind ourselves of its

presence in most of the features of polytechnic education sketched above. In the second feature we have the aim that polytechnic education should help people to understand the natural and social world in which they live. This is a requirement essential to taking part by all (see the third feature of polytechnic education) in decision making as, to put it in liberal terms, autonomous and informed participants. As part of this emphasis on education for democratic participation, we have the seventh characteristic of polytechnic education, that it should develop critical attitudes, especially towards authority. The level of understanding and critical awareness of the individual, so necessary to democratic participation, must not be reduced by being confined to engagement in and education for manual or mental labour only, as emphasised in the fourth and fifth features of polytechnic education. The accompanying concern that learning and working be more closely related (feature six) and that narrow specialization be avoided (feature four) are also expressions of the central importance of developing an understanding of the individual's world in the broadest possible sense.

These features of polytechnic education, part of what I shall call the knowledge condition, essential to an individual's being equipped for democratic participation, could be described in liberal terms as necessary to individual autonomy. They reflect that feature of the defence of autonomy which emphasises that a person who is lacking in awareness and who has insufficient knowledge about the issue on which a decision must be made, is

not capable of arriving at an autonomous decision. And without autonomy in this sense democratic decision-making is not possible. For example, if the workers on a co-operative farm need to decide, democratically, what crops to produce in the following season, they need a certain level of knowledge and understanding, of autonomy, in order to do so. Of course, in the absence of this knowledge and understanding the co-operative as a whole may also not act autonomously, but perhaps, as individuals might, in the light of superstition, or habit, or a gamble. Without some knowledge of current demand, likely weather patterns, available equipment etc., neither the individuals called on to contribute to making decisions on whether, say, to plant wheat, maize or sugar-beet, and in the absence of some basic general understanding of agriculture and economics, nor the co-operative as a whole could be appropriately described as acting either autonomously or democratically.

I find that a Marxist account of education is, in its emphasis on the need for a broad understanding on the part of all members of society, i.e. on the knowledge condition as a necesary condition for democracy, admirable. But such an account of education and its aims runs into trouble when we see how uncomfortably this theme sits with the third, accompanying, theme to which I have pointed, that is education as a feature of revolutionary transition from capitalism to socialism.

Marx saw education as a 'revolutionary ferment', as part of the struggle to transform society. I find it difficult, <u>prima facie</u>,

to object to this.(1) Indeed, White makes it quite clear that he sees education as having a strong role to play in transforming society. But when one looks at some examples of how education is to play its role as part of this revolutionary ferment, severe problems are revealed. These are exemplified in the work of Freire, and they can be seen to centre around problems of neutrality and political alignment in education. Freire proposes that education is not and can never be neutral. It is part of the nature of education that it cannot be neutral; in oppressive societies anti-dialogical education serves the interests of the oppressors, while dialogical education as a form of revolutionary praxis is a means of both revolutionary transformation and of maintaining permanent revolutionary ferment once this transformation has taken place. Dialogical education as explicated by Freire is not neutral, in two senses; it is committed practically to social transformation of oppressive societies into non-oppressive societies in line with Marxist theory. It is also not neutral in the sense, implied by Freire, that, as Crittenden puts it, 'the framework, presuppositions, and basic content of the curriculum of dialogical education would be Marxist in some sense of the term'.(2) Here we have, in a nutshell, the fundamental problem of the incompatibility of the second and third themes in the notion of polytechnic education. P. J. Crittenden argues cogently that 'Dialogical education is to be marked by open and critical thought; at the same time, a version of dialectical theory, based loosely on Hegelian and Marxian theory, is made a central and unquestioned part of its content. This acceptance of a basic orthodoxy does not sit well

with the insistence on open and critical thought'.(3) If the framework, presuppositions and basic content are to be Marxist, then individual autonomy is overridden; it cannot also be an aim of education, for autonomy requires that an autonomous person be given the freedom to choose a Marxist, or other, perspective. The major problem here is that these two themes evident in the notion of polytechnic education are in severe tension: it is simply not feasible that there could be a notion of <u>education</u> that could incorporate both. Hence a coherent notion of education does not emerge from the theory of polytechnic education.

This ambiguity in the uneasy relationship between the political goals of dialogical education and the goal of the informed, autonomous individual is also present in Freire's notion of the role of the teacher. Freire casts the teacher in a key role in the overthrow of oppression. Yet at the same time he is insistent on the removal of the supposed teacher-learner dichotomy. Freire apparently refuses to give a directive role to the teacher, but this sits uncomfortably with the teacher's role in the struggle against oppression. More serious is: what if the learners were to choose a direction to the pedagogy which they forge together with the teacher which was at odds with the political goals of the teacher? To be true to these political goals, could a point not be reached where the teacher would have to set aside her egalitarian relationship with the learners, if she knows a truth about the ideal goal of political action which apparently eludes the learners? Taking a slightly different but

telling tack on this problem, Crittenden comments: 'The commitment to a basic orthodoxy, especially one which is of wide embrace, must also create problems for an anti-instructional, non-authoritarian form of education such as Freire proposes. It becomes clear that dialogue would need to go hand in hand with a great deal of instruction concerning the main doctrines as set out in the main authoritative texts of the approved dialectical theory'.(4)

Kevin Harris runs into similar difficulties in his defence of consciousness-raising. This forms part of a consideration of whether there are alternative possibilities to education in 'capitalist liberal democracies', in which distorted misrepresentations of the world are instilled in people. The ideology disseminated by the ruling class prevents people from seeing that their real interests would be served by the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Harris defends consciousness-raising as an alternative to this kind of imposition. He describes imposition as 'deciding what someone needs to know and them attempting to ensure that he comes to know it'.(5) By means of consciousness-raising people will be made aware of how the dominant ideology distorts their view of the world, and they will be enabled to develop new ideologies with which to address their own real interests. Harris describes consciousness-raising as 'stepping in and helping people to see the realities of their situation and how it works against their best interests'.(6)

Harris is emphatic in his insistence that consciousness-raising is not just another form of imposition. He is aware that others have run into trouble in attempting to offer a formulation of the notion, and qualifies his position with some care. For example, the 'vanguard' who take on the task of consciousness-raising 'need not come exclusively from the intellectuals, or from the "higher" classes'.(7) In considering the justification of consciousness-raising Harris makes a number of provisos. These include the stipulation that the consciousness-raiser's research programme must be more progressive than the one in which those whose consciousness is to be raised are immersed, thus enabling her to help people to understand how their own consciousness has developed. Further, in its content consciousness-raising must begin with people's actual lived experiences, and offer them a methodology for improving their own definition of their situation.

In its method consciousness-raising uses a new form of pedagogy which does not create a distorted view of the world. One such possible form Harris attributes to Freire, whose dialogical model we have already considered. A second possible new pedagogy might be based on a Socratic model like the three stage method adopted in the Meno. Consciousness-raising on both these models is, according to Harris, not cultural imperialism but a matter of discovering answers with the people to problems emerging from their real situations.

But, in spite of all Harris's qualifications and disclaimers, he does not succeed in meeting the objection that this form of

pedagogy is also a matter of imposition. For underpinning his alternative pedagogy are some very specific assumptions, for example that capitalist society is characterized by class conflict and that failure to perceive this is indicative of false consciousness, which is a product of ruling-class ideology. People need to 'discover' that their interest would be served by the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society.(8) Here, ironically in the light of Harris's admiration for Socrates's views on teaching, he succumbs in spite of himself to the Socratic principle examined in the last chapter. Harris knows what the Good is. That most people do not share this knowledge is a reflection not on the Good à la Harris but on those people, or their present state of consciousness. Ultimately Harris's notion of the sort of learning people need is formally little different from that of Peters and Hirst. It most certainly is a reflection of the severe tension in a Marxist notion of education between the goal of autonomy and the goal of revolution. (For surely Harris's aim is to help people to attain autonomy from ideological domination).(9)

A possible response to my suggestion of a tension between the theme of revolution and that of the development of autonomous thinking, would be an appeal to the notion of the vanguard, and the problem of the transition from capitalism to communism. Marx offers a powerful description of the problem in the Critique of the Gotha Programme:

> We are dealing here with a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but on the contrary, just

> as it emerges from capitalist society. In every respect, economically, morally, intellectually, it is thus stamped with the birth-marks of the old society from whose womb it has emerged.(10)

In the first phase of communism the birth-marks of the old society are still retained and the state, which still exists, remains in control. In the second, higher, phase the need for state interference is reduced as work becomes fulfilling rather than alienated. In the light of these considerations, it could be argued that it is necessary for the vanguard or revolutionary élite, in the first stage of communism, to set aside for the time being the goal of democratic participation by all (which is intimately associated with autonomous thinking), in the interests of getting rid of the capitalist birthmarks which are still present in the new society. Authoritarian education could be justified at this stage, alongside a temporary suspension of democratic participation in decision-making. Once this stage has been successfully completed it will be possible to abandon authoritarian control of society, including its education, and to take steps to develop a democratic education.

This kind of attempt to meet my argument that there is a fundamental tension in the notion of polytechnic education between the goals of revolution and of autonomy is not successful. The obvious and powerful response to it is to raise doubts about the likelihood that the revolutionary élite will indeed abandon its authoritarian role. Those committed to democracy must surely feel uneasy about the risks involved in sanctioning 'temporary' authoritarianism.

A further problem in Freire's ideas, also related to difficulties about neutrality and education, is raised in respect of the sixth feature of polytechnic education, that the distinction between school and work be removed. We recall how Freire, in his enthusiasm for the removal of the alleged dichotomy between learning and working, envisages a model of education in which school is essentially the same as factory or farm. A difficulty in responding to this is that it is not quite clear what Freire means. I have no quarrel with the argument that it is unacceptable that we see schools as places where we learn and, hopefully, are educated, and factories and farms as places where we work, but do not learn, if this is what Freire is talking about here. I accept that work for a large number of people involves little learning of any value beyond training in the performance of tedious tasks, in a division of labour. I also have no difficulty with the idea that from a fairly early age children should be encouraged to participate in socially necessary production; doing so is part of coming to know and understand the world. Nor do I have problems with the stipulation that adults should not have to work to the exclusion of learning while children learn to the exclusion of working. But I think that Freire is arguing for something more radical than all of this. This is suggested at the end of the passage quoted on page 223, where Freire argues that, in overcoming the dichotomy between mental and manual labour, and between school and factory and farm, 'distancing ourselves from the concrete practice, we have there a theoretical context, a school, that is, in the most radical sense which that word should have'.

A problem here is that in this model of education Freire seems to equate schooling with 'education', whereas schooling, of course, need not be educative. But if Freire is concerned with education, then there are grounds for opposing the idea that the distinction between the factory or farm where one works and the school where one learns in an educative sense, should be collapsed.

My argument in support of this is that there are certain key values constitutive of education such as neutrality and a concern for truth (and the concern for the value of critical thinking which both Marx and Freire emphasise), which may be threatened if one collapses the distinction between education on the one hand and production in factories and farms on the other, where concerns such as meeting targets may threaten the sort of values which underpin the enterprise of education. And these values are, after all, essential to the knowledge condition which I have argued to be necessary to the possibility that individual members of society participate democratically as informed and autonomous members of the community. I don't propose to tackle here the project of giving an account of what I mean by 'knowledge' beyond emphasising the necessary connection between knowledge and truth. One way in which a concern for truth is demonstrated is in holding the belief that something is true provisionally. Freire himself subscribes to this sort of nocion of truth when he criticises those who close themselves in 'circles of certainty' and those who 'suffer from an absence of doubt'.(11) While certainty and absence of doubt could never be appropriate to

education, effective engagement in production in the factory or on the farm seems to require a considerable absence of doubt.

At this point I must turn to meet some possible objections to my argument. The first objection could be that I simply ignore the fact that educational institutions are not in practice neutral, and that to suggest that neutrality is a feature of education is to indulge in a kind of liberal naivety. My response to this is to agree firstly that educational institutions have indeed been used by dominant élites to maintain oppression. Secondly, I agree that in practice or in effect, educational institutions are not able to conduct themselves entirely neutrally between different political interests, economic interests, and so on. But neutrality is a matter of degree. There is a difference, for example, between a university committed in most of its departments to research which supports or purports to prove the validity of the policy of 'Separate Development', and a university which tries as far as possible to avoid such a commitment by, for example, encouraging free enquiry and open discussion, and critical thought in all fields. It may well be possible to argue that the latter can still never be neutral, e.g. merely by having a department of mining engineering it supports mining interests, but to argue this is to miss the point. A university committed to education, to the pursuit of knowledge and truth, must try as far as possible to be neutral and impartial. If it decides that neutrality is impossible and should therefore be abandoned, then it is no longer engaged in the pursuit of knowledge and its business is no longer education.

One form which this kind of objection can take is to point to the alleged failure of liberal theory of education to perceive that education and politics cannot be separated. Of course what this means is open to lengthy discussion, but a simple response to this position is to reply that of course there are a variety of senses in which education and politics cannot be separated, e.g. in the very fact that the state provides compulsory schooling for all or some of its members. But there are certain respects in which education is independent of politics and must be kept so, particularly in respect of the criteria for truth and excellence in particular pursuits, e.g. the truth of a proposition in physics or the quality of a painting or piece of historical research. In suggesting that such criteria be kept independent of politics I am arguing that they should not be dictated by political considerations, e.g. the class origins or commitment to the struggle on the part of the physicist, artist or historian. In this sense education must attempt to be politically neutral. If it does not then it is not education, but something else.(12)

A possible objection to this argument might run: in suggesting that in certain respects education must be kept independent of politics you imply that it can be. The issue is not that political considerations should be kept out of education - the fact is that they cannot be kept out. To pretend that political considerations are being kept out simply conceals the class interests which are being served. The problem with this objection is that in the end it is very difficult to establish exactly <u>what</u> it sets out to assert. Since it behaves as a

definition of education it is difficult to imagine how it might be shown to be either true or false. In part this objection is symptomatic of the tendency to argue or assume that everything is political, or that no human activities of any significance could be neutral. What this sort of move does is to leave notions like 'political' and 'neutral' virtually empty of meaning, as we are left with nothing that is non-political or non-neutral with which to contrast them.

Further objections are possible in response to this argument. One is that to assume that impartiality and open discussion have anything to do with the truth is a liberal myth, as the truth has been discovered in Marxism. But there are convincing responses to this line of argument in both Mill's liberalism, and the notion of dialectic essential to Marxism. Charles Taylor points to a view 'as old as philosophy' but more recently associated with Mill, that only through dialectic can the truth be approached. Taylor sums up Mill's well-known argument in <u>On Liberty</u>:

> ... truth, particularly important truth, can be found, or in cases where we cannot speak in such clear-cut terms, truth can be approached, only where different beliefs, different theories, different manners of seeking truth are allowed to dispute with each other. The necessity for intellectual polarization is fundamental and inescapable, so that even where one is sure that one theory or approach is superior to its rival, one nevertheless loses by prohibiting this rival because the acuity and depth of one's perception of that truth one sees declines when it is no longer forced to defend itself against rivals.(13)

Another possible but unlikely objection to the commitment to the open pursuit of truth is the argument(14) that questions the

value of truth. If the struggle for liberation from oppression is our chief and overriding goal, we cannot afford the luxury of being distracted by the so-called search for truth. This objection offers a way out of the difficulty I have pointed to of the problematic relationship between the second and third themes in the notion of polytechnic education - its answer is that the third theme takes priority over the second; the goal of revolution is prior to the goal of democratic participation. But then of course the concern for education, both in order to promote the 'fully developed individual' and a democratic society, falls away. If we discount altogether the importance of truth then we can no longer be talking about education at all. We thus abandon large chunks of Marx's theory, including most of his ideas on education, and his notion of science.

3

The central thrust of my argument has been that the third theme in the notion of polytechnic education, i.e. the goal of revolutionary transformation of society from capitalism to socialism, is in severe tension with the second theme, of developing autonomous thinking in all citizens. The liberal position as exemplified in White's account of education shares Marx's concern for the development of autonomy, as well as the development of each person's capacities. While also emphasising the need for radical social change, White does not specify in as much concrete detail as a Marxist would the destination of these changes, or the precise nature of the changed society. This, of

course, opens him to accusation of liberal vagueness, but, crucially for this discussion, this agnosticism produces a notion of education which is more coherent than the Marxist one.

Just as the definitive characteristic of the liberal position in general is its concern for the freedom of the individual, so in the context of developing a notion of education it is the notion of individual autonomy which is definitive of a liberal notion of education. This may well be allied, as it is in White's case, with both a notion of individual development, and one of radical transformation of society. What makes White's notion of education a more coherent one than a Marxist notion of education is that the concern for autonomy, specifically moral autonomy, is over-riding and so not in tension with more general radical change. A feature of liberal education is that it cannot specify in advance its outcome. While its aim is the development of autonomy it cannot specify how this autonomy will be exercised. It is up to the individual to decide what the Good is, and how to pursue it. Education on this account is certainly a gamble - but it is a coherent account. This cannot be said for the notion of education on a Marxist account.

Notes

(1) An objection which could be raised is whether this account of education could always be true, especially once utopia has been achieved. It might be met by some sort of appeal to the notion of 'permanent revolution', but whether this notion makes sense is another question.

(2) P. J. Crittenden, 'Neutrality in Education (Reflections on a Paulo Freire Thesis)'(1980), p. 7.

(3) Ibid., p. 10.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Harris, (1979) op. cit., p. 176.

(6) Ibid., p. 172.

(7) Ibid., p. 171.

(8) I am indebted here to John Krige's review of Harris's Education and Knowledge (1981).

(9) Harris appears to accept that 'autonomy' is an aim of education in Teachers and Classes: A Marxist Analysis (1982), where he writes on p. 146, discussing revolutionary strategies for teachers, that '... no teacher with an ounce of subtlety is going to be fired for bestowing human rights on children, making them autonomous, attending to their needs, fostering critical thought, or encouraging and practising truthfulness'.

(10) Quoted in Castles and Wüstenberg, op. cit., p. 5, from Karl Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in The First International and After, Harmondsworth, (1974), p. 346.

(11) Freire, (1972) op. cit., p. 18.

(12) Similarly, R. F. Dearden, in 'Education and Politics' (1980), p. 156, argues in discussing the example of the relationship between sport and politics that although there is obviously heavy state involvement in sport, e.g. in provision of facilities and in the national prestige attached to achievement in sport, 'there are certain aspects of sport which have to be recognized as autonomous, just as certain aspects of scientific or aesthetic education have to be recognized as autonomous. For example, there is the place of various kinds of fairness in competition, stylistic values in judging gymnastics, diving or skating, and the values specifically constitutive of excellence in any given sport'.

(13) Charles Taylor, 'Neutrality in the University' (1975) p. 133.

(14) This position is raised by Taylor, ibid., p. 134.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

To suggest that there is a simple choice to be made between a radical theory of education and a misguided and irrelevant 'liberal' theory of education is to take a simplistic view of both stances and of the nature of theory of education. I have demonstrated this in a number of arguments which will now be summarised.

Fundamental to the simplistic nature of the radical attack on 'liberal theory of education' is its mischaracterization of this position. Looking back to the suggested features of 'liberal theory of education' as outlined in Chapter 2, we find that not one of the seven features attributed to 'liberal theory of education' in the radical literature can be taken as a reliable or uncontroversial characteristic of liberal theory of education. The alleged arguments for economic growth and equality of opportunity, while they may have been expressed by people who regarded themselves as liberal, are not necessary features, as recounted, of liberal theory of education, assuming as they do a necessary connection between liberalism and capitalism. Neither is the kind of 'individualism' attributed to liberalism by the radicals, although as Chapter 7 demonstrates

there are other forms of individualist thinking which are necessary to a genuinely liberal notion of education. Nor is defence of the status quo, associated with an assumption that education is politically neutral, definitive of a genuinely liberal notion of education. And in addition neither the view of knowledge nor that of education of Hirst and Peters can, as shown in Chapter 4, be taken as the definitive example of liberal philosophy of education. The method of analytic philosophy is neither necessary to nor distinctive of liberal philosophy of education. Thus all of the characteristics attributed to liberal theory of education are not necessary to a genuinely liberal theory of education, including much of what is mistakenly described as the dominant 'liberal' tradition in the study of education in South Africa, as shown in Chapter 5.

Underlying the mistaken characterisation of liberal theory of education made by the radical critics is the failure to see that, as Chapter 3 demonstrates, the essence of the liberal position is its central and fundamental defence of the principle of individual freedom, and that particular expressions of such a point of view cannot be treated as timeless statements of the liberal position.

Discussion of P. S. Wilson and of John White in Chapter 6 moves to a consideration of what a genuinely liberal notion of education would be. In this chapter a start is made to giving a formal account of a liberal notion of education, and it is argued that the development of autonomy must be the central aim of a

liberal education. This account is pursued further in Chapter 7 which argues that, on a certain account of liberal individualism, 'individualism' must be defended as an aim of education. Some of the strands in the history of individualist notions are teased out and it is shown that the forms of individualism attributed to 'liberal' theory of education by the radical critics are not necessary features of liberal theory of education, and are incompatible with it.

The argument which concludes Chapter 7, that in spite of the radicals' rejection of 'individualism' a form of ethical individualism can be attributed to Marx himself, sets the scene for the discussion in Chapter 8. This is concerned partly to show that there are some striking similarities between White's liberal notion of education and the Marxist idea of polytechnic education. Nonetheless it is shown in Chapter 9 that there is a fundamental incompatibility between some aspects of the Marxist notion of education, which White's notion is able to avoid.

What is the significance for my enterprise of the arguments in Chapters 8 and 9? As far as Chapter 8 is concerned, the significance is that, in the spirit of demonstrating that the matters at issue between a radical and a liberal theory of education are of greater complexity than the radicals suppose, we must recognise that there is no simple choice on offer here between two notions of education which are in all respects quite fundamentally different from one another. The significance of my argument in Chapter 9, that there is a basic incompatibility in

the Marxist notion of education between the goal of political revolution and that of developing the autonomy of each individual, is that when looking at a particular issue in theory of education, that of developing a notion of education, in the sense of what education should be like, the liberal point of view, for reasons identified in Chapter 8, has certain advantages over the radical one.

One of the central points made here is that theory of education must address itself to a variety of issues, and there are simple answers neither to the various substantive questions we can ask in theory of education nor to questions about what procedures or models are best utilized in approaching different problems. To address the issue of describing and explaining the features of schooling in capitalist societies is one thing, and to ask what education is is another. What we need to recognize is that different theoretical positions foreground and conceal different questions. While Peters's position brings to the fore the question: 'What is education?', it conceals questions about the class interests served by the schooling system. While Marxist theory foregrounds questions about the function of schools in capitalist societies, illuminating in particular the functioning of ideology and the reproduction of the labour force, it all but conceals questions about what education is. The tendency in Marxist theory of education is not to address moral questions, because 'morality' is seen as a feature of ideology.

Although there may be other issues which he in turn conceals,

White, in positing moral autonomy as the highest aim of education, does so in a way which brings to the fore issues of morality and the nature of education, as does Peters. But he also manages to contextualize his deliberations more successfully than Peters and Hirst, in the sense that his theory, like Marxist theory, is a more wholistic one, seeing institutions like schools as interrelated with the political and economic life of a society.

What I have set out to challenge is the radical assumption that there are theory-neutral criteria for deciding which are the important questions about education. While the radicals are correct in insisting that Hirst and Peters should have been concerned with questions other than those with which they have been centrally concerned, my response is that the radicals in turn ought to have been concerned with other questions beyond those about schooling in capitalist society with which they have tended to be preoccupied. Indeed, ultimately I am not convinced that to accept the Marxist critique of schooling in capitalist society is incompatible with a liberal notion of education. The assumption that it might be is an example of the lack of theoretical rigour displayed by the radicals.

It is a crucial feature of the position which I have developed in this thesis that I acknowledge the positive achievements of the application of Marxist tools of analysis to the study of schooling. I have been at pains to emphasise that the injection of Marxist theory into the study of education in South Africa is a promising move, but that it is based on a mischaracterisation

of the liberal tradition. Liberalism and Marxism are distinct but not incompatible theoretical positions. Given the present state of theory of education and of social theory in general we are not in a position to make a choice between these theoretical positions intelligently, and we may never be. Liberal theory of education has a crucial role to play in the study of education, and we should not be deceived by unrigorous and flawed characterizations of it into thinking that its irrelevance has been proved once and for all, and that it is time to retire it from a role in theory of education.

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