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THE DISCRETE CHARMS OF SELF-ESTRANGEMENT:
HISTORICAL MATERIALISM AND POWER

presented by

RAJA HARISH SWAMY

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

____M.A.____   degree in   ____ANTHROPOLOGY____

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June 3, 2004

Date

THE DISCRETE CHARMS OF SELF-ESTRANGEMENT: HISTORICAL
MATERIALISM AND POWER

By

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

2004

ABSTRACT

THE DISCRETE CHARMS OF SELF-ESTRANGEMENT: HISTORICAL
MATERIALISM AND POWER
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This thesis is concerned with two related aspects of critical social theory, the material context for the development of any critical intervention against oppressive conditions, and a dyadic conception of power, which emphasizes the role of consent in the reproduction of oppressive relationships. After charting out the basic characteristics of a model of critical social science as described by Brian Fay, I provide a historical materialist explanation for the ideology critique presented by the Buddha in ancient India utilizing Eric Wolf's description of modes of production as a model of socio-cultural change. In the third part of this thesis, I discuss the radical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator, focusing on how his critique exemplifies a dyadic conception of power alongside Douglas Foley's ethnographic work which illustrates important aspects of Freire's conception of 'banking education.' In sum, this thesis holds that any critical social theory would have to stand the test of being both materially and historically representative of the interests and desires of the oppressed, and which must also provide a conception of power that shows how the consent of the oppressed contributes to oppression, before providing a methodology to overcome self-estrangement, and oppression.

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Introduction

This thesis consists of three parts: in the first part, I outline the basic characteristics of a model of critical social science presented by Brian Fay.[1] I am interested in two related aspects of critical social theory; the material basis for any critical intervention in the context of resistance to domination, and a dyadic conception of power, which recognizes the role of consent in the reproduction of oppressive relationships. A metatheory of critical social science is an account of critical theoretical accounts of the world, specifically those that perceive the human condition in terms of a primary condition, self-estrangement, and provide a programmatic account of liberation tied to the transformation of the material conditions of existence. While critical social science represents a modern version of the self-estrangement theory, many instances of self-estrangement theories exist in history. After introducing the basic outline of a critical metatheory (ie. a theory about critical social theories), I present one such historical instance in early Buddhism.

The goal in the next section is to outline a historical materialist analysis of the rise of Buddhism, to show how the ideas and apprehensions articulated by the Buddha and his followers, reflected and were immersed in, a history of material relations. I describe the outlines of a historical materialist context utilizing the theory of modes of production elaborated by Eric Wolf, with a focus on the relations between ideology and political economy. In order to chart the context for the rise of Buddhism and related heterodox movements, we examine the antagonistic and eventually oppressive relationship between

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[1] Brian Fay, Critical Social Science, 1987. Cornell University Press.

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hegemonic monarchic states and tribal polities. We also examine the ways in which the ethical idealism of the Buddha, aligned itself with an idealistic conception of the world, which rejected materialist explanations despite its opposition to the magico-religious social hegemony of the Brahmanic priesthood. How did the ethical idealism of early Buddhism reconcile its critique of power, with a strident opposition to materialism? What were the historical implications of such an orientation, for the goals of social transformation? I conclude by suggesting that early Buddhism offered a self-estrangement theory that proposed ethical idealism while denying the centrality of the material world; it did not enable the critical transformation of the world, but sought to reform the world by universalizing egalitarian values drawn from tribal polities.

The third part of this thesis discusses Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, in which he argues for, and proposes a methodology to contend with, the dyadic character of power. Douglas Foley's ethnographic study of socialization in a small town Texas school provides compelling evidence for Freire's critique of 'banking education' and illustrates the processes that underlie the reproduction of oppressive social orders in schools. Foley's study provides illustrations of Freire's conception of 'internalization' of oppression, particularly in relation to the struggles of working class Mexicano youth in the school. This leads us to a consideration of Freire's radical alternative to 'banking education,' an approach that is partly characterized by its unique commitment to a dialogical mode of learning. Such an approach considers liberating knowledge to be constructed in collaboration with the purpose of mutual humanization and liberation at its core, and rejects hierarchical modes of learning. The practice and process of dialogue

leads from an initial encounter with what appears to be a dense and opaque concrete representation of lived social reality, to the mutually arrived at realization of interrelated components and their relationship to the 'whole,' and finally to a clarified and complex understanding of the initial representation. Importantly a deepened understanding of a codification must relate the material world to the material social world within which the co-learners are immersed. Through dialogical and liberating education, Freire proposes to address one problem at the root of the dyadic nature of power: the internalization of oppression.

In the discussion that follows this section, I briefly examine the ways in which reactionary praxes emerge in the context of elite political agendas. By reactionary praxis, I refer to the expropriation of the symbolism and discourse of critical social theory for the goals of strengthening oppressive agendas. Two related instances of transformed 'self-understandings' pertain to the growing hegemonic power of the Hindu supremacist movement in India. One is directed towards imposing a new politics of 'Vanavasi' identity on historically oppressed Adivasi (tribal) populations of central India. The elite proponents of this politics demand allegiance to a fictive 'Hindu' community through the adoption of antagonistic and militant chauvinism, which subverts and negates the ability of Adivasi populations to resist the theft of their lands by the state and its big capitalist allies. The second is the elaborate effort by the classes and social groups behind the Hindu supremacist movement, to impute a narrative of victimhood, which then provides the excuse and justification for a politics of chauvinism, social conceit and oppression.

Both these efforts are instances of reactionary praxes in that they are attempts to utilize the symbolism and discourse of liberation against the interests of the oppressed.

The ideas explored and expressed in this thesis draw on a specific conception of human action. Both Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault have influenced conceptions of power in the social sciences. Foucault's approach to power sees concepts like truth, morality and meaning as constituted through discourse.[2] Privileged discourses pertain to ideas and values of the ruling classes while counter discursive responses challenge power when they grow as a result of communication among members of society. All discourses are never pure, in that they contain elements of counter-discursive tendencies in them. While Michel Foucault's understanding of power is rooted in a view of social life that is fundamentally discourse-centered, this thesis focuses on the nature of this discourse centeredness in the context of a material basis for all social life. It is my contention that the relationship between socially mediated ideas and material social relations is the basis for any consideration of power.

Antonio Gramsci's conception of hegemony holds that consent is a basic constituent of any relation of power, which derives from a structural context that is manipulative and tied to the ability to use force. This approach to power ties the ideological with the material in a way that points out that the oppressed have a two-fold challenge facing them: to overcome their own false-consciousness, which underlies their consent, and to overcome the oppression of those who are the beneficiaries of the

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[2] Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977, Random House, 1980

oppressive relationship. Foucault's discourse-centered approach is partially considered by Brian Fay as part of an interpretive model of social science, which focuses on text and discourse; while the interpretive approach deconstructs the structures of power in discourse, it is not tied to any specific political program, and as such does not offer a theory of revolutionary action based on its critique of power.[3] In contrast, Gramsci's conception of power is analytically directed towards the development of a program of action, which enables revolutionary struggle. It is therefore an approach that is clearly critical in its descriptive and explanatory methods, towards politically emancipatory ends. Nevertheless, Foucault's insights into the nature of power have shaped the thinking of social scientists interested in understanding hegemonic power and opposition to it.

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[3] Brian Fay, Social Theory Political Practice, 1985

Critical Social Science:

Critical Social Science is an intellectual tradition that concerns itself with a scientific approach to the problem of liberation from conditions of oppression. The epistemology of critical social science commits it to connect a description of the world to its resolution, theory to practice. What this entails is an orientation towards the alteration of a given set of social conditions ultimately tied to relations of power. The universal experience of all kinds of oppression has generated innovative ways of thinking and acting that seek to eliminate oppression. Throughout history there are many instances where the role of knowledge in the maintenance of oppressive social orders has been countered by the production of alternative knowledge pointing to the transformation of those very social orders. The view of knowledge operative here is one that sees knowledge as embedded in relations of power, and hence in situations of conflict and contradiction, as opposed to agreement and accord. How one thinks about the world is shaped by relationships of power, and determines how these relationships are reinforced, challenged or tolerated. The ideas produced and struggled over, in the course of history, are shaped by, and shape the political, social and economic realities of class, race, ethnicity, and gender.

Critical social science treats knowledge as a product of the dynamics of struggle, and not just as the accumulation of 'truth.' 'What is known' is itself an arena of struggle. The truth claims of a hegemonic social system require strict adherence to laws of hierarchical behavior. These truth claims are mediated through socially sanctioned

violence and through the reproduction of symbols and cultural narratives, achieving consent, but also simultaneously creating conditions for resistance. Critical social science proposes a dyadic conception of power that emphasizes the importance of consent in the reproduction of unequal social relations. Thus even in the 6th century B.C.E., while magico-religious ideologies like Brahmanism established a strict correlation between legitimate knowledge and the power of the dominant social classes, their ability to establish hegemonic power rested on the consent of both beneficiaries and victims. In the contemporary world, the hegemonic system of global capitalism similarly ties the interests of global elites to the truth claims of normative hegemonic ideas.

Represented and reproduced ceaselessly through the corporate media, the dominant discourse enforces forms of consent and self-censorship that require us to speak of "the economy" rather than of capitalism, "foreign policy" rather than hegemonic control, "reconstruction" rather than imperialism. The consent of victims in their own subjugation, through such means of acquiescence as "culture," "religion" or "tradition," is broadly describable through the concept of "false consciousness." Such "false consciousness" is sustained by self-understandings that deny the autonomy and freedom of the oppressed. "False consciousness" denies the oppressed the right to see themselves as oppressed, and more importantly, as persons capable of acting against their oppression. Only an alternative consciousness that affirms the humanity of the oppressed, and enables them to mount a challenge against the oppressive system and its defenders, can overcome "false consciousness." In this way, critical social science proposes a model for social

transformation that is openly political in orientation, in that it addresses questions of

power with a view of transforming the existing configurations of power.

Brian Fay's 'metatheory' of critical social science

The philosopher of social science, Brian Fay is interested in the presuppositions built into the foundations of critical social science. He states as his intention, not another contribution to questions of methodology and epistemology, but an evaluation of the ontological basis for critical social science. Such a science inevitably involves assumptions about human nature and ideas about how humans ought to live; thus critical social science operates with a vision that needs to be evaluated for its merits and demerits. Fay distinguishes between three tendencies in the social sciences, the positivist, interpretive and critical. The positivist approach is identified best with modernization theory and consists of a technocratic approach tied to a model of explanation-prediction modeled on the natural sciences. Questions of power in positivist social science, are considered extra-scientific, and not of importance to the analyst. This approach easily lends itself to social–engineering and has been challenged vigorously in the social sciences.

The second tendency Fay identifies in the social sciences, the interpretive approach, is centered on discourse, and the constitution of meaning in the context of human actions. It is perhaps best identified with symbolic anthropology, especially in the works of Clifford Geertz, and later the deconstructionists and Foucault. Post-modernism is the general term used to describe this approach to the study of society, which focuses on text and discourse, and seeks to delineate the structures of power that shape discourses and consequently human social life. This approach is dismissed by Fay as one tied

eventually to a conservative conception of society, since it explicitly avoids the question of political mobilization and revolutionary action. By revealing the structures of power, without proposing a means by which this understanding could effect a social change through organized political action, the interpretive approach falls short. Critical social science, the third tendency, is explicitly concerned with tying a description of a given social reality to its resolution, and as such is best equipped in terms of providing both an analysis of power, and a program of action for the oppressed, to overcome their oppression and achieve more equitable social and political relations. The vision of critical social science is one that sees human beings as creatures capable of acting on their lived social world, in order to fashion a more satisfying life for themselves.

Fay believes the heart of this vision to be rooted in a "deep history in human thought," reflecting an overall concern with accounting for and providing a remedy for profoundly problematic aspects of human experience. This he calls the self-estrangement theory, a 'primary story' of human existence. The basic structure of this 'primary story' points to a view of humans as living an incomplete existence as 'fallen creatures,' and ties to this view a means by which this 'fallen' state can be overcome. Critical Social Science is a uniquely modern version of the self-estrangement theory; it is expressive of the 'modern humanist spirit,' and points to the 'fallen' state in purely secular terms. Humans are pictured to be capable of overcoming this (secularly constructed) 'fallen' state through analysis and effort. Such a conception rhymes well with the European Enlightenment ideal of achieving forms of free and satisfying life through the exercise of reason. In his construction of critical social science, Fay is evidently influenced by a

Marxist humanist framework, especially the work of Antonio Gramsci, the early 20th century Italian Marxist, whose elaboration of the concept of hegemony, illustrated the ways in which consent aids the reproduction of oppressive relationships. Fay outlines three propositions made by Gramsci, which characterize his conception of the revolutionary action towards political emancipation. Gramsci holds that 'consent is a fundamental ingredient in all power,' that 'consent derives from a structural context which is manipulative and which ultimately rests on the capacity to coerce through violence,' and that 'political action, including revolutionary action, can only be understood in terms of a dual perspective which includes both consent and force, persuasion and violence.[4]'

Theory and Metatheory

In terms of its dual characteristic with respect to the object, theory has been defined as a "unitary vision of the whole[5]" and an understanding of its constituent parts. While considering the totality of the object for instance, the nature of its constituent parts might be given less attention, and vice-versa. This echoes the holism versus particularism dilemma in anthropology, and points to the rootedness of such a dilemma in the very nature of theory-construction. Theory is further characterized by two aspects: the origin of theory is tied to some practical problem, and its value is dependent on practical results. The nature of the problem and the practical outcomes of the theory lead

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[4] Brian Fay, Critical Social Science, page 139
[5] D. P. Chattopadhyaya, Theory and Practice, page 109, from J.N. Mohanty & S.P. Banerjee, Self Knowledge and Freedom.

us into the relationship between theory and practice. In contrast to the assumption of value-neutrality, particularly in positivist social science, reflecting the application of natural-scientific concepts to the domain of social and cultural phenomena, the critical approach in the social sciences tends to see such claims to value-neutrality as inherently problematic.

Theory according to Fay's conception pertains to a specific body of statements about the world. Metatheory involves a philosophical account of theories of the world. Thus "a model of science is a metatheory about what a scientific understanding of the world is; it is not a theory about how the world functions."[6] However a metatheory is also built upon understandings of the world and is thus not ontologically neutral. Critical metatheory according to Fay's conception is ontologically committed to a conception of human behavior that assumes humans to be inherently capable of acting on the basis of their self-understandings. This ontological commitment of critical metatheory is tied to a conception of political practice, which may be laid out in terms of a 'basic scheme.' The ontological commitments of critical metatheory are reflected in terms of four 'fundamental dispositions.'[7]

Intelligence, Curiosity, Reflectiveness and Willfullness

Intelligence is defined as 'the disposition to alter one's behavior on the basis of new assessments of one's situation.' This leads to either the rejection of an old belief or

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[6] Brian Fay, Critical Social Science, page 42
[7] Brian Fay, Critical Social Science, page 48

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the acquisition of a new one. Nevertheless both possibilities arise from new information about one's situation. This disposition does not however guarantee action since the person might be inclined to wait passively for the situation to reveal new information. This 'epistemic passivity' may be overcome by the disposition to 'seek out' new information about the world to make possible a better basis for one's interpretation of the world. This is describable through the term curiosity. The person who is curious acts to obtain information relevant to his or her assessment of the world, in order to transform behavior in accordance with this new information. Thus the above two dispositions pertain to change in behavior based on 'actual or speculated' change in their situation. They say nothing about the capacity or the desire to change the situation itself. In other words, action is still restricted to the self, the person, based on new information. It is not yet seen to be directed towards the world with the intention of transforming it on the basis of new information.

The third disposition, reflectiveness refers to a situation where the object of analysis is the self. The examination of one's beliefs and wishes and the bases on which these were formed is reflection. Reflection involves an evaluation of existing beliefs and desires on the basis of some criteria. The criteria may be justifiability in terms of evidence, mutual consistency, relation to some ideal, or justifiability in terms of conceptions such as 'the greatest possible good.' Importantly, reflection points to questions of values with regard to appropriate ends in life, and related to that understandings about the goals of the self; 'what sort of a person ought I to be.' Reflection makes it possible to tie the 'is' to the 'ought.' The 'is' here points to a 'first

order' set of desires and beliefs about the self and the 'ought' to a 'second order' set of beliefs and desires. The 'ought' therefore consists of preferences and criteria, against which, through the activity of reflection, the 'is' gets evaluated.

The capacity to reflect on oneself, termed self-consciousness, allows a person to view oneself and one's behavior. In a sense this involves separating oneself from one's activities and mental experiences ('first order' beliefs and desires), in order to be able to examine them, and evaluate them in terms of 'second order' beliefs and desires. This manner of reflection may also apply to 'second order' beliefs and desires; here a 'third order' set of beliefs and desires may serve as criteria for the evaluation of ideals. This according to Fay is characteristic of philosophy, which reflects on the claims of 'second-order' ideals.[8]

Yet the conception of a person reflecting on his beliefs and desires on the basis of some criteria involving 'second order' beliefs and desires, does not imply any action directed towards transformation. The person remains what he or she 'is' irrespective of what the activity of reflection reveals. In order to act based upon one's reflection, the disposition of willfullness needs to be considered.

"By 'willfullness' I mean the disposition to be and act on the basis of one's reflections. A creature with will is one which not only asks the question, is this the kind

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[8] Brian Fay, Critical Social Science, page50

of being I want to be or ought to be? but is one whose answers to this question are partially constitutive of the sort of creature it is."[9]

The will to transform oneself on the basis of one's reflections arises from the understanding that the person is at least partially self-created, and therefore self-transformable. This means that the ideas that a person has about himself partly form his identity, and here ideas refer to epistemic, emotive and attitudinal aspects. 'Self understandings' therefore are not merely ideas about the self, but are in part the constituents of the self. With willfulness, the last of the four dispositions, we see the connection between self-understanding and self-transformation. While the four dispositions considered assume the centrality of the individual, the fact that a 'group' provides the basis and context for self-understandings means that the 'cultural community' is central to any consideration of human action.

It is within the context of conflicts, compromises, and other forms of interaction between individuals that questions of self-understandings and self-transformation become meaningful. An active person is active only in the context of a group with whose members he or she shares some sense of identity; it is also the interaction between the individual and members of other groups which provides the basis for evaluation of alternative possibilities in the transformation of the self, but the key point here is that self-transformation is inevitably tied to the transformation of at least part of the 'social world that shapes its identity.' Thus the idea of self-transformation is understandable only in terms of social-transformation.

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[9] Brian Fay, Critical Social Science, page50

In addition to the above four dispositions which underlie the activist conception, society is necessarily conventional, meaning that life for an active person would be centered around shared values, norms, customs, and institutions. However this does not mean that society is characterized by agreement and solidarity, since the capacity for transformation of self-understandings is tied to negative assessments of existing self-understandings that inevitably are rooted in oppressive relationships within the social world. Lastly, the activist conception implies change and transformation in the social order, rather than stasis and permanence. Self-transformation based on reflection upon self-understandings involves a dynamism, which manifests in the idea of history.

Thus the activist conception implies the historical character of self-understandings and social orders; historical in the sense that these orders change not merely due to external factors or general laws, but due to the result of transformation of the social order through the active transformation of self-understandings: new conceptions of self and society, new avenues of action, made meaningful through new relations and practices.

The Basic Scheme

Given the above ontological claims, critical metatheory proposes a 'basic scheme' which has four parts:-1) A Theory of False Consciousness, 2) A Theory of Crisis, 3) A Theory of Education, 4) A Theory of Transformative Action.

1) A Theory of False Consciousness must:-

a) describe how self-understandings fail to account for the lived-experiences of a group of people. By failing to account for the lived experiences of the people, the self-understandings in question must be shown to be either false, or incoherent (based on internal contradictions) or both. The term 'ideology critique' is another way of referring to this sub-theory. Ideology, or the logic of the structure of social relations, within which self-understandings become meaningful, emphasizes the role of social relations in shaping self-understandings. A critique of ideology therefore refers to the negative evaluation of self-understandings. It is largely interpretive, in that it seeks to discern meanings implicit in self-understandings.

b) provide an account of how members of the group arrived at these self-understandings on the one hand, and how these self-understandings are sustained on the other. The development of false or contradictory understandings must be shown to be directly relatable to the 'fallen state' condition.

c) provide an alternative self-understanding that is superior to the false one. A narrative-historical account of the emergence of the problematic self-understanding forms the basis for the presentation of an alternative self-understanding. An example of this would be Marx's contrast between the false self-understandings in capitalist society and the alternative conception of homo faber as fully manifested in the communist society. The latter is true in the sense that it is superior with respect to the former. While people in capitalist society tend to see aspects of their own self-activity

(such as God, the market, authority and the state as 'objects independent of themselves,' to be obeyed), the alternative portrays human activity in terms of how humans recreate their own material and social conditions while recreating themselves. Self-transformation and social transformation manifest each other.

2) A Theory of Crisis:-

a) Addresses the question what is a social crisis? What are the ways in which it takes shape and what are its basic features? This part draws upon the insight that societies are characterized by conflict and the development of conflicts in society is manifested in felt-dissatisfactions among groups within society.

b) By taking into account the felt-dissatisfactions of a group of people within a society, a theory of crisis must show how that society is in crisis. Crisis here points to conditions where social cohesion is no longer possible given the self-understandings of the members of that society and its basic organization. The approach is functional in the sense that it ties the dissatisfactions of a group of people to a system of social relations. If conflict provides the context for false self-understandings, then this conflict must be explanable in terms that tie self-understandings to actual social relations.

c) The development of this crisis must be explained historically in terms of both the false-consciousness of the members of the given group and the structural foundations of the social order. The idea here is that false-consciousness is partly

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responsible for the maintainence of the social order. Therefore its history is an important aspect of the history of the social order.

3) A Theory of Education:-

a) The conditions sufficient and necessary for the elimination of false-consciousness, must be described. This sub-theory employs a causal-explanatory approach, with an emphasis on the capacity for rational self-transformation through reflection. If enlightened action is the goal, then the conditions necessary for reflection must be understood. In order for an alternative conception to be acceptable, the rational nature of the explanation is hardly a guarantee that it will be accepted.

Emphasizing the importance of this, Fay cites Paulo Freire's account of the two possible barriers to the development of a radical consciousness among peasants: the 'culture of silence,' which means that they do not see the social world as something that they can change; and the internalization of the values and beliefs of their oppressors which leads them to participate in their own oppression.[10] Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, which aims to overcome these two important barriers to transforming self-understandings, is discussed in section 3 of this paper.

b) The existing social situation must be shown to satisfy the necessary and sufficient conditions for the elimination of false consciousness.

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[10] Brian Fay, Critical Social Science, page106

4) A Theory of Transformative Action:-

a) In order for the social crisis to be resolved and the dissatisfactions of its members reduced it is necessary to identify those aspects of society which must be transformed. Concrete and tangible goals that take account of existing conditions are preferable to vague ideals. Thus opposition in many forms exists against corporations, multilateral institutions, and national governments that pursue anti-worker policies, because those organizing and mobilizing such opposition increasingly see the role of capitalism, its institutions and states in their disempowerment. These are concrete relationships that are targeted for critique and political opposition. The Ogoni in Nigeria organized themselves against Shell Oil not because they believed in some general ideal of fighting global capitalism, but because the specific depredations inflicted on their land and people by Shell, prompted them to fight for their rights against the armed might of the global capitalist corporation and the state.

b) An action plan which identifies the 'carriers' of the transformation and the means by which it can be carried out. The agents of transformation form the 'vanguard' of the transformative process. They have themselves overcome false consciousness and action derives from a new self-understanding. They merely help others to help themselves, and therefore are not 'carriers' in the sense of being repositories of any secret knowledge. The actualization of social transformation is necessarily an act of human communication and not an act of an external agent or a 'superior' power. The particular action plan envisioned must include at least some general idea about what the alteration of parts of society would entail. What institutions

and practices will have to be transformed and in what ways in order for the elimination of 'felt-dissatisfactions.'

Power

Fay describes two distinct approaches to power: one exemplified by Bertolt Brecht's treatment of power in 'The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui,' and another, defined as a dyadic conception of power, consistent with the aims of critical social science. The former emphasizes the achievement and maintenance of power through 'intimidation, threats, lies, and physical force by people who are utterly rapacious and unscrupulous.'[11] Power, according to this conception, is brute force; a phenomenon external to the self-understandings of the oppressed, and thus, outside the scope of enlightened action. The only solution to such power would be the acquisition of greater 'brute force,' the capacity to inflict equivalent harm.

Fay dismisses such a conception of power, because it denies the understanding that social relations are in part maintained through the self-understandings of humans.

"Something as crucial in social life as power must involve the activity of those being led or commanded as much as those leading or commanding. Power must arise out of the interaction of the powerful and the powerless, with both sides contributing something necessary for its existence."[12]

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[11] Brian Fay, Critical Social Science, page 118
[12] Brian Fay, Critical Social Science, page 120

Such a conception of power indicates that power is dyadic, and rooted in social relations. It also rests upon an emphasis on false-consciousness in the maintenance of unequal arrangements. Consent is an important aspect of power according to this conception. Even under extreme conditions of oppression, the power of the oppressor depends upon the consent of the oppressed. Implicit in such an understanding of power is the acknowledgment that the oppressed are also capable of acquiring power. Thus power not only exists when the oppressed are dominated by the oppressors, but also when the oppressed are able to overcome their false-consciousness and empower themselves, towards the goal of liberation from the oppressors. Fay distinguishes between oppressive power and empowerment by pointing to the enabling character of the latter in comparison to the dominating character of the former.

"Here the paradigm case of power is not one of command but one of enablement in which a disorganized and unfocused group acquires an identity and a resolve to act in light of its new-found sense of purpose."[13]

This is a general sketch of Fay's conception of a metatheory of critical social science. False consciousness and liberation are tied together by a series of processes that emphasize the capacity of the enlightened to transform conditions of oppression. Theory is treated as a heuristic tool and not as a fetish commanding allegiance on the basis of some 'hidden' power. Therefore the actual historically unique conditions will to a large extent characterize the forms that critical theories will take, but the general features of

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[13] Brian Fay, Critical Social Science, page 130

critical self-transformation and enlightened self-interested action are no doubt central to this conception.

Criticism of critical social science's depiction of human action:

It may be argued that the conception of action implicit in critical social science, as described by Fay, is unjustifiably centered on individual self-transformation. Since social movements are shaped and directed by historical conditions, it may not necessarily be the case that the mobilization of the oppressed automatically proceeds from a transformation in individual consciousness. The ontology of human action implicit in critical social science, Fay admits, is founded on an activist conception of human beings. Accordingly, humans are considered primarily as creatures intent on acting upon and transforming the world.

However, the basic scheme ties the subjective end of the individual's self-transformation to the objective world, and as such does not isolate individual self-transformation from the goal of social transformation; the transition from the transformed individual consciousness, to directed collective action, ultimately depends on the effectiveness of the pedagogical component of any critical approach. How do theories of liberation tie transformed consciousness to the dynamics of political struggle? Since there is no linear path from individual self-transformation to social and political struggle, the specific ways in which the consciousness of the oppressed is directed towards exposing and confronting the contradictions between their own interests and those of

their oppressors, can only be delineated in specific historical instances. In other words, it may not be feasible to expect a grand theoretical model of human behavior that can account for all instances of critical intervention, without placing such an analysis in the context of history.

In the next section, we will examine two distinct historical illustrations of the self-estrangement theory; the history and philosophical ideas of early Buddhism reveal facets of an epochal conflict that emerged at a time when a profound material transformation was underway in Northern India during the 6th century B.C.E. How did the Buddha's critiques of hegemonic Brahmanism, and its codified hierarchical cosmologies, emerge from and speak to, the material conditions and contradictions of the age? A historical materialist analysis of early Buddhism is employed in order to explore this, drawing largely from the work of D.P. Chattopadhyaya, and the theory of modes of production discussed by Eric Wolf. On the other hand, how did Buddhism propose to respond to the conditions it described as 'dukkha' or suffering, and how were these responses themselves hampered by an inward focus on ethical idealism. This first illustration is intended to highlight the material basis for a critical social theory, and the ways in which historical analysis can draw upon a conception of history as an arena of hegemonic power and resistance.

The second instance of the self-estrangement idea we will examine is the pedagogical theory of liberation presented by Paulo Freire, the radical Brazilian educator and activist. Here we will briefly examine Freire's conception of conscientização, and

the relation between transformed consciousness and the abilities of the oppressed to transform their world by confronting oppression. How does Freire's conception highlight critical metatheory's claims about the nature of power, particularly the internalization of oppression, and the dyadic/consent-based understanding of power? Freirian pedagogy is founded on a critique of 'banking education' and the institutionalized reproduction of social and political inequalities in the classroom/school. Importantly, Freire focuses on the ways in which the consciousness of students is manipulated and controlled by the processes of 'banking education,' leading to the production of pliant and submissive workers who are expected to accept their conditions of oppression rather than develop a critical consciousness of the world.

A consideration of the ethnographic work conducted by the anthropologist Douglas Foley in a small town Texas school, as an illustrative case of the Freirian critique follows, leading into a discussion of Freire's radical pedagogy. The concluding discussion examines the case of reactionary praxes, where the internalization of the oppressor takes the form of extreme manipulation, as the oppressed are mobilized to act against their own interests. A brief and related instance of how a reactionary praxis appropriates the discourse of liberation towards its oppressive ends, follows. These two cases are presented in order to highlight the dangers of internalization in actually preparing the grounds for reactionary forms of self-transformation.

A historical instance of the self-estrangement theory: early Buddhism

Oppositional knowledge – Orthodox-Heterodox & Idealism-Materialism

In a book titled 'Lokayata, a Study in Ancient Indian Materialism,' D.P. Chattopadhyaya presents a historical materialist interpretation of early Buddhism and discusses the role of the Buddha as an 'unconscious tool of history.'[14]

"Thus the age of the Buddha was the time when the organization of the state was beginning to develop within the womb of the tribal organizations, and in the case of the Maghadas and the Kosalas, they had already emerged as such on the ruins of the tribal organizations. However, these two state powers were still surrounded by tribal societies which, as we shall presently see, were not going to maintain their independence very long. In this sense the age of the Buddha saw the most momentous social upheavals in the Gangetic Valley."[15]

Chattopadhyaya argues that Buddhism provided an illusion of liberty unlike any other in a time when tribal alliances could no longer hold out against aggressive new monarchic states. It represented hope in an era of hopelessness for people, particularly those at the bottom of the now solidifying caste structure, and yet it also aided in the

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[14] D. P. Chattopadhyaya, Lokayata, Page 466.
[15] D. P. Chattopadhyaya, Lokayata, Page 471.

expansion of trade and the earliest Indian empire, Magadha. Buddhism's adherents were drawn from the toiling classes, but in the period following the death of the Buddha, it gradually became a religion favored and supported by monarchs, and its growing body of adherents also included merchants and traders. In addition to rejecting the Brahmanical caste system, Buddhism also represented a critique of the triumph of new values associated with acquisitiveness, rampant materialism and greed, over what Chattopadhyaya calls 'tribal morality.' This 'tribal morality' is characterized by the virtues of classless society, and hence the Buddha

"...did not look forward, to what had emerged, and was emerging fuller and fuller every day, the pomp and grandeur of the rising state powers. Instead, he looked backward, to the tribal collectives, threatened and undermined before his own eyes."[16]

The basis for this is to be found in the persistence of the 'lost collective life' as the memory of an ideal age in the Buddhist tradition, a characteristic that also fits into the doctrinal assertion that the present somehow reflects a degeneration of virtues, the fundamental condition yearning to be remedied. Another compelling reason for this is the fact that the early Buddhists organized themselves along the lines of the Sangha, the institutional basis for the tribal collective. In fact the Buddhist order was itself called the Sangha, a new form of an older system, that was the outcome of an attempt to retain in an institutional form, the social and political organization of the now endangered tribal societies. Given that the material bases for the rise of Buddhism as an 'oppositional' ideological current lay in the historical transformation of the organization of societies

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[16] D. P. Chattopadhyaya, Lokayata, Page 481.

around centralizing monarchic states, it would be useful to examine this relationship in the light of anthropological approaches to examining the material bases for ideological contestation and conflict. Buddhism's critique of Brahmanism, and its metaphysical demolition of Brahmanic ideology drew from the concrete world of expansive states, and the forced incorporation of tribal polities into new hierarchical state structures.

Modes of production: a model of socio-cultural change

By attempting a historical materialist interpretation of the nature and role of the movement identified as Buddhism, Chattopadhyaya ties the uniqueness of the Buddha's message to the conditions and demands of a material, physical world that was going through momentous change. This interpretation ties the rise of early Buddhism to the destruction of a primitive communitarian mode of production. The idea of a primitive communitarian mode of production was first enunciated by Marx, drawing on insights from Lewis Henry Morgan's studies of pre-capitalist societies in the Americas. A mode of production refers to a historically specific configuration of social relations through which labor is directed towards the extraction of energy from nature with the use of tools, skills, organization and knowledge.[17] This formulation originally outlined by Marx, views human beings as both intrinsically part of nature and society. Humans act on nature and transform nature, thereby transforming themselves; however this ability to act on nature is mediated socially, as labor.

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[17] Eric Wolf, 1982 p79

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The different historical forms by which labor is directed towards nature constitute modes of production. Among several modes described by Marx including slaveholding, tributary, feudal, and capitalist modes, the primitive communitarian mode is characterized by relatively egalitarian social relations, where values of sharing resources equitably predominate. Property is shared communally and kinship predominates as the primary organizing principle. According to Chattopadhyaya, the tribal societies of the Himalayan foothills, whose societies were gradually being overwhelmed by emerging monarchic states of the Gangetic plains, were organized in the primitive communitarian mode of production. Organized around egalitarian political institutions like the Sangha, or 'council' of tribal chiefs, these political formations are described in the historical record as 'gana-sanghas' or 'tribal republics.' Examples of these republics include the Licchavi of Vesali, whose tribal council is reported to have had more than seven thousand 'rajas.'[18] Thus the emergence of expanding monarchic states through the forced incorporation of adjoining tribal republics is described in terms of a supplanting of the communitarian mode of production by the monarchic state.

The mode of production associated with the growing monarchic state would be Marx's tributary mode, since it is characterized by the accumulation of surplus through coercive mechanisms such as the military and political power, from producers who may retain direct control over the means of production, but are bound in subordinate relations which enjoin them to pay tribute from what they produce; significantly this mode is also characterized by a strong magico-religious tendency to associate the temporal power of

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[18] Democracy in Ancient India, Steve Muhlberger, World History of Democracy, 1998, Nipissing University

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the 'tribute-taker' with 'divine' power; the resulting divine hierarchy is intimately associated with the temporal hierarchy as "god on earth" mimics the "king of heaven." Conceptually, the tributary mode may be located within a continuum between:

1) Centralization, where the central tribute-taker has commanding political-military power over the regional, local tribute-takers who transmit surplus from the producers to their overlords within the context of a subordinate relationship that assigns them appropriate rights, privileges and obligations in the social, political and ideological hierarchy;

2) Decentralized tributary societies in which local and regional tribute-takers enjoy relative autonomy and political fragmentation occurs frequently, often at the expense of producers, who ironically tend to favor centralization in that such a condition provides needed security and predictability especially in view of the common distrust of intermediaries shared by both the primary ('central') tribute-taker and the producer.

The gana-sanghas of the middle Gangetic plain were spread over an area between the Himalayas to the Ganges in a roughly north-west to south-east direction.[19] Politically decentralized, the institutional basis for decision-making in these polities was centered on the Sangha, a council of elders and important members of the community. The 'common life was regulated by discussion among the elders or noblemen of the tribe meeting in a

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[19] Trevor Ling, The Buddha, page 51

regular assembly.[20] These 'tribal republics' represent some of the earliest instances of the republican form of government, and were both contemporaneous with and often much larger than Greek republics. Later Greek accounts in the time of Megesthenes, the ambassador of the Greek king of Antioch, Selekeus, to the Mauryan court in Magadha, also note the presence of large tribal republics throughout India.

The Gangetic monarchic states that emerged during the time of the Buddha (6th century B.C.E.), exhibited tendencies towards political centralization, engaging in intensifying military competition for hegemony; inter-state rivalry and the related expansionist competition over the subjugation of 'tribal republics' appear to have been part of this process of monarchic state-development, with the process of consolidation evident even as late as the 4th century C.E.[21] The two most powerful monarchies during the time of the Buddha, Magadha and Kosala, pursued an expansive policy and strictly regulated their societies through Brahmanical caste laws.

The "magico-religious" component of this early struggle for hegemony is reflected in the ritual-centered and hierarchical caste-society that developed within this context, with notions of a divine right of kingship, the divinely sanctioned ritual superiority (and intermediary role) of the priestly caste (Brahmins), and the legitimated subjugation of cultural 'others' within a growing and rigid caste system. Caste not only codified the inequalities founded on the Brahmana-Kshatriya ("priest" and "warrior") hegemony, but also functioned as a means of assimilation of diverse peoples into an

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[20] Trevor Ling, The Buddha, page50
[21] Romila Thapar, A History of India, volume 1, Penguin, 1991

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unequal social and political world. This assimilation process is evidenced by the expansion of the number of castes and sub-castes over several hundred years. The gana-sanghas on the other hand were not subjected to the caste domination of the Brahmanical system, and reflected independent traditions. For instance Brahmans are referred to in Buddhist sources mostly in the contexts of kingdoms, most frequently the two powerful states of Kosala and Magadha.[22]

However there were several features of monarchic states influencing the tribal republics, and this may have meant that assimilation into the hegemonic domain of a state included the reproduction of the characteristics of the dominant society. Shared cultural idioms between tribal republics and monarchic states can also be attributed to fact that both polities were peopled by Indo Aryan tribes over at least a millennium of migration and interaction with indigenous non-Aryan tribes. The material basis for the long-term expansion of Indo-Aryan tribes eastward, into the Himalayan foothills was the presence and use of iron tools for deforestation; the resulting ability to garner greater surpluses created the conditions for a 'second urbanization' that is placed at roughly the 6th century B.C.E. centered in the Gangetic plains. The concomitant social organization included the development of centralizing states and rigid social hierarchies, as larger state-centered societies grew through the forced incorporation of diverse cultural groups; it is in this context that a period of conflict ensues between these two types of polities, the older tribal republics and the newly emergent states. Thapar's "Lineage to State" provides a fascinating analysis of the formation of caste in the first millennium B.C.E, as small

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[22] Romila Thapar, From Lineage to State, page 88

endogamous kin groups became consolidated into larger caste groups in the case of Brahmanas and Kshatriyas, 'priests' and 'warriors.'

Table 1 Political context Northern India, 6th century B.C.E.

	Primitive communitarian	Tributary
Contending polities	"Gana sanghas" or tribal republics like Sakya, Vajji, Licchavi, Malla	Monarchic states like Koshala, Videha, Magadha
Political structure	Relatively egalitarian – politically decentralized	Hierarchical – political centralization through warfare and conquest
Predominant social/cultural ideologies	Heterodox belief systems predominate – the religions of Buddha and Mahavira (Jainism)	Bastion of orthodoxy, particularly the magico-religious and social ideologies of the Brahmins.

Among the tribal republican institutions highly valued in the teachings of the Buddha, the tribal assembly, or Sangha, occupies a special place. The MahaPariNibanna Sutta narrates how Ajatasattu, the King of Magadha sends his Brahmin minister to the Buddha asking for his opinion on impending plans to destroy the Vajji gana-sangha. The Buddha's response is that 'so long as the Vajjians gather often, and attend the public meetings of their clan,...meet together in concord, and rise in concord, and carry out their undertakings in concord,...'[23] they may expect to prosper and not decline. The minister leaves believing this to mean that victory over the Vajjians could be achieved by sowing the seeds of disunity among them. The Buddha then calls a meeting and addresses his disciples (bhikkhus) laying out the 'seven conditions for the welfare of a community,' among which he lists the need to:

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[23] Trevor Ling, *The Buddha's Philosophy of Man, page 148*

'gather together frequently, and attend the meetings of the Order, and as long as they meet together in a spirit of unity and rise in a spirit of unity and carry out the duties of the Order in a spirit of unity,...so long may the Bhikkhus be expected not to decline, but to prosper.'[24]

'Dukkha' or universal 'suffering' in the context of military conflict and the subjugation of tribal republics such as the Sakyas of the historical Buddha, reflects more than an abstract characterization of existence. It represents an unconscious articulation of the hopelessness sensed in coming to terms with the disintegrating world of the 'primitive communitarian' republics. However, given the exigencies of the historical period under consideration, the Buddha could not develop a materialist critique of power, and instead opted to turn critical analysis inwards, into the domain of cosmological claims. Despite the social critiques of Brahmanism, for the Buddha, the world of the social remained enmeshed in a cosmology, which held that the ultimate nature of reality was transitory, and objectively unknowable. So while this implied that the hierarchies of caste were themselves subject to change and transformation, it also implied that social relations are inextricably tied to cosmological bases, and the unending cycle of deaths and rebirths. Materiality was developed as a philosophically undesirable fact that was in effect, and upon critical reflection, ultimately held to be unreal.

This inward philosophical direction does not however detract from the profound social transformation engendered by the Buddhist movement in the 6th century B.C.E.

[24] Trevor Ling, The Buddha's Philosophy of Man, page 150

which found adherents among socially oppressed populations, and significantly large numbers of women. Buddhist nuns traveled the world as missionaries more than five centuries before the earliest Christian nuns were organized. It is however important for us to consider the idea of denying material bases for reality and its various historical implications further.

Buddha and materialism: the Lokayata materialists

In a sense, the Buddha's emphasis on withdrawal provides a non-solution in the guise of a solution, since it excludes the possibility of transformation in the real world. The limitations of an ideological emphasis on withdrawal from the material world has to also be seen in terms of another contradiction, that between materialism and idealism. The Buddha's message of liberation inevitably expressed itself in terms that may be described as idealistic, a position that denied the primacy of the material world in the construction of knowledge.

Among the many dialogues recorded in the Pali canon are numerous instances of meetings between the Buddha and materialists such as Ajita Kesambalika, of the Lokayatas, a Sramana (heterodox) movement that denied all metaphysical explanations and adhered to a materialistic worldview. While the dialogue between the two is narrated in such a way so as to emphasize the primacy of the Buddha's 'superior' teachings, the texts offer a fair description of the Lokayata point of view. This approach of presenting an opponent's views in as solid a manner as to depict him as a worthy opponent, with the

goal of eventually demolishing that point of view, is known in the Indian tradition as Purvapaksha, and is commonly used in various schools of Indian philosophy. In more mundane contemporary terms, such an approach could well be described as 'setting up straw men.' However, Indian philosophers seem to have taken great pains to provide as detailed a description of their opponents as possible, despite painting them in ways that made it easy for them to be dismissed. Notably, Lokayatas have been such targets of philosophical critique within the Brahmanic, Buddhist and Jain traditions. Based on the descriptions and depictions of Lokayata thought in the various traditions, it is possible to reconstruct the outlines of what their uniquely radical perspective represented in the 6th century B.C.E.

Lokayatas defended the validity of inference and the primacy of perception in determining the nature of reality. They also held that inference was valid only to the extent that it resulted from direct sense-perception.[25] This position distinguished the Lokayata from both orthodox Vedic Brahmanism, as well as heterodox movements like Buddhism. Lokayata also translates to 'of the people' and hence a mundane 'common sense' pervades its denunciations of the Brahmanical Vedas as the works of charlatans. While the Brahmanic tradition disparagingly describes the Lokayatas as Carvaka, which 'sophisticated speech,' the Buddhist and Jain traditions refer to them as Lokayata, indicating that they had a popular following. The Lokayata denounced Brahmanism by posing rhetorical questions in response to ritualistic practices and beliefs in the supernatural. Ridiculing the practice of sacrificial rituals, the Lokayatas asked:

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[25] D. P. Chattopadhyaya, In Defence of Materialism in Ancient India

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"If a beast slain in the Jyotistoma rite itself goes to heaven, Why then does not the sacrificer also offer his father?"

Questioning the notion that offering sacrifices pleased beings in the heavens above, they asked:

"If beings in heaven are gratified by our offerings made here, Then why not give the food down below to those who stand on the housetop?"

Bluntly opposed to any notion of an after-life, the *Lokayata* challenged almost every other religious and philosophical trend in the 6th century B.C.E. by posing the question:

"If he who departs from the body goes to another world, how is it that he comes not back again, restless for love of his kindred?"

All these instances are recorded from texts written by the opponents of the Lokayata since their legacy has largely been obscured and hidden due to repression by Vedic Brahmanism in later centuries. It is significant that the only character who completely denounces the fratricidal war in the epic Mahabharata is a 'demon' called Carvaka, who disguised as a Brahman, offends the celebratory audience of King Yudhishtira, upon his triumphant return after the great war. In doing so, he earns the instant wrath of the gathering and is promptly burned to death: a startling reminder of the immensely threatening power ascribed to the Lokayata-Carvaka by the authors of this

classic epic. In contrast, while Buddhist (and Jain) depictions of the Lokayata are intended to prove their ultimate intellectual inferiority, these outspoken materialists are not depicted as demons deserving death and destruction. In several texts of the Pali canon, the Buddha admonishes his disciples against teaching the views of the Lokayatas, and dismisses the position that material reality and empirical knowledge are sufficient for an understanding of the world. Given this dimension of materialism-idealism, we may then elaborate the ideological scene during the time of the Buddha further:

Table 2 Religious/philosophical trends in terms of Idealism/Materialism

	Idealism	Materialism
Orthodox	Vedic Brahmanism, Upanishads	
Heterodox	Buddhism, Jainism	Lokayata

In sum, Buddhism represented a critique of the orthodox (Brahmanic) tradition, asserted gana-sangha, or tribal republican ethical values, but did so within a worldview that precluded and rejected the materialism of the Lokayatas. In this sense Buddhism offered a more universalistic defense of idealism than Brahmanism, because it rejected the notion of caste and the very idea of essential difference while insisting on a model of causation that reduced material reality to sense perception, mind, eventually ignorance and the process of rebirth, or Karma.

The strident rejection of materialism by Buddhism brought it closer to Brahmanism after centuries of competition for political patronage. When Brahmanism

ultimately reasserted its hegemony with the decline of Buddhism in the latter part of the first millennium C.E, Buddhists were persecuted throughout India. This era of 'rollback' is celebrated in Brahmanical tradition as the resurgence of the Vedas, and the extrication of abhorrent atheism and denial of the divine. Significantly, the re-imposition of the rules of the caste system marked the return of Brahmanism after much of India was Buddhist for more than a thousand years. It can be argued that despite the Buddha's rejection of caste, and his assertions that caste emerged from social convention, the Buddhist doctrine of Karma or the 'unending cycle of rebirth' provided a powerful justification for the hierarchical caste system. Karma tied an individual's actions to the fruits of those actions in the future, and the future includes future lives.

At the same time, life in the present is also explained in terms of the karma of past lives. In other words, human beings faced with oppressive conditions in the present are paying for the sins of past lives. Buddhism's increasing harmony with the magico-religious traditions of Brahmanism enabled its own decline; both Mahayana and Vajrayana schools of Buddhism extended the reach of extreme idealism and a fascination with symbolism to uncharted heights. Echoing these trends came Brahmanism's own versions of extreme idealism, with Sankara's orthodox Vedanta, and the originally anti-Brahmanic, but later assimilated Tantric traditions that espoused extreme symbolism and magic/mysticism.

Contemporary resurgence among Dalits

Nevertheless, Buddhism as a religious tradition has re-emerged in the 20th century as part of the politics of emancipation for the Dalits, formerly referred to disparagingly as "untouchables.[26]" B.R.Ambedkar, who was also the architect of the Constitution of independent India, saw a connection between the revival of Buddhist thought and practice and the social and political emancipation of the most oppressed classes of people in Indian society. Ambedkar argued against the Hindu nationalist bias in Indian history, which sought to emphasize an unproblematic unity in the history of the subcontinent, one which rested upon a fictively unified 'Hindu' identity, that implied a false sense of solidarity, contradicting the oppressive historical and contemporary experience of Dalits. Ambedkar saw the history of ancient India as consisting of three phases: Brahmanism, the early 'barbaric' phase, followed by Buddhism, the period of the Magadha-Maurya empires, representing a Buddhist 'revolution' and an associated rise of civilization, and finally, 'Hinduism,' a counter-revolution, marking the resurgence of reactionary caste ideology, and the subjugation of women and the toiling classes.[27]

"..;but the conversion to Buddhism was seen, by Ambedkar and by large numbers of those who took part, as a social rebirth, a gaining of a new identity, a way in which the Dalits were leading, not simply joining, a movement for the recreation of India."[28]

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[26] D.L. Ramteke, *Revival of Buddhism in Modern India.*
[27] Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution, page 246*
[28] Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution, page 248*

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The significance of this return to Buddhism cannot be underestimated in the face of intensified identity politics tied to electoral strategies of various political formations claiming to represent the authentic voice of Dalits. It represents a challenge to the neo-Brahmanic Hindutva movement which seeks to co-opt Dalits and Adivasis (indigenous tribal people of India) into a "Hinduized" identity constructed in violent opposition to Muslims and Christians, once again as part of a broad electoral strategy aimed at subverting the historical politicization and radicalization of the Hindu social order's most oppressed sections. In this context, Dalit mass conversions to Buddhism, which have been organized as mammoth events throughout India, has posed a direct challenge to Hindutva, as it represents a collective snub to the latter's hegemonic tirades against "conversion." It remains to be seen however, whether the resurgence of organized Buddhism in India represents anything more radical than it can claim thus far.

A contemporary instance of the self-estrangement theory: Freireian pedagogy.

Conscientização

In this section we will examine the ways in which Paulo Freire's model of a Pedagogy of the Oppressed [29] exemplifies many of the central claims of critical social science. Freire's work in adult education and workers' training shaped his radical pedagogical program of dialogical education. Exiled in 1964 after the military coup in Brazil, he wrote 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' in 1970, which became one of the most influential handbooks of dialogical education in South America, Africa and Asia, and remains widely read and cited throughout the world. Freire's analysis which begins with the observation that human beings are denied their full humanization by oppressive, unjust institutions and practices, leads into a full fledged pedagogical program that brings together facilitators (as opposed to teachers) and co-learners (as opposed to students) in a dialogical process of learning. Freire ties the humanization process to the liberation of the oppressed and the oppressor, and cautions against sectarianism and identification with the values of the oppressor.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed introduces the concept of conscientização, which refers to 'learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against oppressive elements of reality.' By increasing the ability to relate lived

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[29] Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 1997, Continuum

realities to the structures of power, an awareness of one's own dehumanization, as a limiting condition to be overcome grows.

Historical and objective reality reveals the concrete possibility of both humanization and dehumanization. Humanization is considered the 'vocation' of humans, a process that is suppressed by injustice, oppression and exploitation, but affirmed by the desire of the oppressed for justice and liberation. Dehumanization is the result of injustice, oppression and exploitation, but even when it occurs, the oppressed affirm humanization by struggling against injustice, oppression and exploitation.

Since dehumanization is a process that distorts life, it eventually impels the oppressed to challenge those that are responsible for it; however, Freire cautions that the oppressed should seek to restore the humanity of both: the dehumanized oppressed, *and* the dehumanized/ing oppressors, instead of simply replacing the oppressors.

In the process of overcoming oppression, the oppressed often reproduce oppression since their thinking has been shaped by the experience of concrete conditions of oppression and their many contradictions; the desire for humanization takes the shape of imitating the oppressor, as the oppressed develop an "adhesion" to the oppressor, and are unable to "discover" the oppressor as someone objectively external to themselves. The reality of oppression debilitates the self-perception of the oppressed and imposes barriers to the task of liberation.

Freire argues that the inability to conceive of a "new man/woman" as the product of a resolution of the contradiction arises from an individualistic conception of the "new man/woman." This individualistic "new man/woman" identifies with the oppressor, fails to identify with the oppressed, and lacks a sense of 'person' separate from that of the oppressor. In this condition, it is through the 'person' of the oppressor that the oppressed sees himself/herself as a person.

The inability of the oppressed to overcome such "adherence" to oppressive ideologies reflects a tendency to merely overturn the poles of the oppressor-oppressed relationship rather than challenge the basis of the relationship itself. Accordingly, the oppressed, "having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom." This can only be overcome when the oppressed objectively identify the image of the oppressor outside themselves, eject that image from themselves, and replace it with 'responsibility and autonomy.' By this Freire refers to the values, attitudes and practices that would have to be built by the oppressed in opposition to those of the oppressor's worldview. It is ultimately only the oppressed who can lead the struggle for humanization of both themselves and the oppressors.

The oppressor on the other hand, is incapable of leading the struggle for humanization because the fundamental source of dehumanization lies in the exploitation of the oppressed, on which the oppressor's own power depends. Thus 'false charity' as Freire calls it, allows the oppressor to mask the sources of dehumanization by softening domination, and engendering submissive and supplicant behavior in the oppressed.

In order to challenge oppressive power, it is necessary for the oppressed to develop a consciousness of themselves as active agents of change. This is often difficult for the oppressed to undertake since through cultural and ideological conditioning, people tend to accept self-understandings that are imposed on them. For instance, servile behavior of peasants in the presence of landowners persists in spite of formal 'equality' in countries like India. Conditions of dependency keep working people tied to the power of traditional elites despite the presence of formal democracy and elections. Freire notes an instance when peasants in a South American country, having seized a cruel landlord, feared keeping guard over their prisoner, as they had grown accustomed to fearing him.

Moreover, the oppressed have a self-deprecating sense of their own abilities, internalizing the conceits of the oppressors, as a way of accepting their own dehumanization as a condition of existence. Freire relates several instances of peasants putting themselves down in deference to the perceived superiority and worth of those belonging to advantaged classes; radical educators are cautioned against ignoring this tendency, as it is only through overcoming such a lack of confidence in oneself that dehumanization can be seen as a reality. The oppressed look down upon their own abilities to understand the world, their terms of reference and the worth of their knowledge and experience, because such an orientation towards the world enables them to accept their dehumanization as a necessary condition of existence; to be is to be somebody else's tool, an object that reflects the worth of somebody else, but that carries no worth in itself.

Freire's model points clearly to an existing condition (dehumanization), a desirable alternative condition (renewed humanization) and a means to achieving the transition from one to the other (conscientização). The process by which conscientização can develop is through a change in the self-perception of the oppressed, by which the reality of oppression is seen as a limiting situation which can be transformed instead of as an insurmountable obstacle they must live with. By learning about the world that makes up the existential oppressive situation, the oppressed gradually begin to see themselves as capable of transforming that world; it is therefore central to Freire's pedagogy that the educative effort to build conscientização must be directed towards transforming the objective conditions of existence.

An ideology critique of 'banking education.'

Freire contends that the educational system is based on a 'banking' model whereby students are treated as empty receptacles to be deposited with prescribed doses of knowledge, which the teacher possesses. In contrast, a liberating educational strategy is founded on establishing dialogue between co-learners with the goal of mutual humanization. This dialogue proceeds with the understanding that every human being has a right to name the world, not in the simple sense that every human being's subjective view of the world is correct or valid, but in the sense that every human being ought to exercise her/his right to develop self-understandings that enable humanization and defeat dehumanization. 'Banking' education prescribes and enforces self-understandings that reinforce inequalities and reproduce a sense of self-doubt and incapacity in the oppressed.

In the banking model of education, the oppressive society is reflected in the ways in which a hierarchical model encodes the relationship of power between teacher and students. Accordingly, in the banking model:

Table 3 Banking education[30]

The Teacher	The Students
Teaches	Are taught
knows everything	know nothing
Thinks	Are thought about
Talks	Listen
Disciplines	Are disciplined
Chooses and enforces personal choices	Comply
Acts	Have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher
Chooses program content	Adapt to it
Confuses authority of knowledge with professional authority which is set in opposition to the freedom of the students	Students lack authority and look up to the authoritative claims of the teacher
Subject of the learning process	Objects

The above model serves the interests of the oppressors by engendering a passive, submissive, and credulous attitude in students, shaping them into malleable and manageable human beings, and discouraging critical thinking which may enable students to become aware of the world they live in, with the goal of reshaping that world in their own interest. Children of the oppressed are for the most part taught to accept their status in life, and aspire to be loyal and obedient workers, instead of critical thinkers who may discover their capacity to change the oppressive realities they experience. As an instance of how the educational system reproduces inequalities, and enforces the acceptance of

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[30] Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, page 54

social inequalities, we turn to Douglas Foley's anthropological study of North Town, Texas.

Education and class-consciousness in small town Texas.

Douglas Foley's ethnographic work in a small town in Texas provides an illuminating case of the struggles of working class Mexican American youth within the educational system.[31] The political and social environment of the town was reflected in conservative school boards dominated by businesspersons and "members of 'high status' professions." North Town High School was ranked in the 30th percentile among Texas schools, with a national achievement score below the state average. About 37 percent of its graduates, mostly middle-income students, went on to pursue higher education, and 19 percent earned college degrees.

Teachers reproduced the racial and social class order by discriminating against working class Mexicano students, and simultaneously privileging Anglo students. Rebellious working class Mexicano youth, Vatos, were singled out for reprobation, with frequently invoked connotations of criminality affecting both the ways in which other students saw these youth, and how these youth developed their own self-understandings as social outcastes and rebels. Despite decades of changing social attitudes brought about by the Chicano movement for La Raza, many teachers continued to reproduce social prejudices in their treatment of students. Foley notes how students handled specific situations in innovative ways that often represented a rebellious rejection of both Anglo

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[31] Douglas E. Foley, Learning Capitalist Culture: Deep in the heart of Tejas, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990

racism, with defensive references to La Raza, and the monotony of an academic routine that centered on textbooks and what Foley calls 'pedagogical formalism.'

Foley's description of North Town High School illustrates Freire's critique of banking education; teaching of all subjects centered on textbooks, with a predictable routine of reading, memorizing new terminology, and writing answers to exercise questions for each chapter. Students frequently copied each other's answers to these questions, and uniformly treated them as tedious tasks to be completed. Notably, only about half of North Town High School's teachers supplemented textbooks with outside materials. The pedagogical formalism of North town High School's textbook centered curriculum helped teachers keep out open discussions of issues. Textbooks have become 'controlling technologies' in the sense that their usually bland, dilute versions of history, literature and science offer a structured and delimited content, that also help teachers control the pace of work without having to make difficult content and evaluation choices.

Another aspect of this overbearing pedagogical formalism was the manner and style of teaching used by most teachers: teachers commonly reproduced classification systems and expected students to memorize them. Foley cites examples of English students spending time studying the differences between romanticism and realism, Biology students memorizing plant and animal phyla, History students memorizing dates, events and chronological information pertaining to 'conventional caricatures of great leaders,' and Spanish students learning the Spanish language as it is spoken in Spain. While this practice of memorizing information was seen as useful for students planning

to go to college, the vast majority of North Town's High School's students found little use for it. Such 'pedantry' in effect reinforced the consensus of most students against the routine of textbook centered school-work. Notably, such school-work was devoid of activities or exercises that enabled students to engage in reflection and do independent work.

As students overwhelmingly considered academic work to be boring and uninspiring, they often resorted to adopting various strategies to ease their workload. Foley draws a comparison between the school and the factory, with the students adopting strategies similar to those of workers in factories, by collaborating with each other in order to make tasks easier; tasks that were similarly alienating and ambiguous.

North Town's students (academic workers) collaborated with each other imposing delays and diversions in order to subvert the 'normal' functioning of the classroom; this was often done by asking questions that appeared serious, an act which then prompted others to participate in such 'making out games.' By reducing the time spent on tedious lectures, students often feel like they were getting the better of teachers. However teachers also used these 'games' as opportunities to reinforce social inequalities by selectively targeting students, and in a manner similar to the approach of factory managers, even tacitly approved of such disruptions since they provided an outlet to the frustrations of students/workers. Students (academic workers) were encouraged to engage in such outlets while their real interests remained obscured under the weight of racial, class and gender inequalities.

The socialization of the Vatos, working class Mexicano youth, imposed harsh and often enduring lessons in accepting and reproducing distorted self-understandings; in response to oppressive actions by teachers however, the Vatos often resorted to actions that Foley describes as guerilla style tactics; mostly these were in the form of 'make out games' in the classroom, but in one instance, a particularly aggressive Vice Principal had his car's windshield shattered weeks after he singled out and collectively humiliated a group of Vatos. Foley recounts how the Vatos occupied the lowest status in the school social hierarchy on account of being working class and Mexicano. They dressed distinctly, borrowing from the expressive styles of Mexicano Pachucos, or "hipsters," wore their hair long, and considered themselves to be "fighters" and "lovers." However school authorities referred to Vatos frequently as "punks," "delinquents," and "troublemakers," which encouraged these young proletarians to develop their own distinct style of rebellious counter culture.

The Vatos' resulting defiance of authority was in itself an important part of their socialization process as proletarians, and drew on their expressive and rebellious counter culture, which they staunchly defended. However Foley notes that the Vatos, while outwardly defiant and angry, also nurtured deep resentment at being semi-literate. Showing "the hidden injuries of class," they internalized the routine criticisms of their teachers even while outwardly rejecting them. While they considered themselves smart and competent in a practical sense, many Vatos seemed convinced that they were incapable of becoming fluent in standard English, and comfortable with books.

While the anti-intellectualism of many of North Town's students may be attributed to rebelliousness in the face of the sheer monotony of school work centered on textbooks and routine academic work, Foley also notes that such views also reflected the general conservative attitudes of North Town society; teachers were particularly concerned about standing out and being noticed by the school board for any adventurous attempts to engage socially controversial issues in the classroom. The school also extended a certain level of social control over, and prescribed appropriate behavior to teachers, making even after-school life constraining for them; this effectively ensured that North Town High School remained an institution devoted to producing loyal citizens who would not challenge the social order, or learn to raise questions about their social world. It also enabled the reproduction of oppressive social orders built on deep-seated class and racial inequalities, which the majority of students were immersed in, and prevented from confronting and resolving.

Among students, Foley describes a range of social attitudes that in some cases subverted the broad socialization into the hegemonic order: Anglo and Mexicano students could break racial barriers in the context of sports, although racial and class politics underwrote even this arena. However, the dominant view in both 'communities' treated at such episodes of interracial friendships with disdain. The oppressed youth of North Town High School had little recourse within the educational system, to critically confront the realities that they faced; their choices were restricted by the logic of class, and their position in the racial hierarchy; the school system ensured that the social structure remained skewed in favor of a few while the majority learned to contend with being

workers in a world where their everyday experience of dehumanization became codified within the realm of 'acceptable' social norms. Such a system of banking education makes dehumanization acceptable, and forces the oppressed to accept the view that they are incapable failures on account of their own imputed inferiority, while the grotesque practices of class and racial prejudice remain out of reach of students' critical faculties.

The oppressed are denied the opportunity to reflect on their dehumanization, and cannot objectively identify the oppressive system and its agents outside of themselves; they succumb to the overwhelming pressures of conformity and discipline, and accept the self-understandings imposed on them through the school system. In other words, the banking education system reproduces consent, the culturally normative value systems that dominate society; by reproducing consent, the hegemonic power of the oppressive social classes, expresses itself within the (false) consciousness of the oppressed. The inability of working class Mexicano students to challenge these oppressive conditions results in acts of rebellion, that in turn are made full use of, by the school authorities, as evidence to further reinforce culturally normalized negative views of such rebels; the most marginalized sections of the working class are criminalized, and considered beyond hope. These oppressed youth in turn internalize such views of themselves, as they struggle to navigate a hostile world in which they experience increasing dehumanization.

Discussion

The school system, by reproducing social inequalities, functions as an important part of the ideological structure of the dominant classes. It also trains a workforce that is

loyal to the hegemonic order, despite the fact that the majority of these workers' lives are constrained by that very hegemonic order. In Freirian terms, the students of North Town High School are denied their right to humanization; they are dehumanized by the very forces that seek their loyalty. Student are expected to be good academic workers, accepting the formulaic rituals of 'text-book' based banking education, and simultaneously learning 'their place' in the larger social hierarchy through socialization inside and outside the classroom. Importantly, students *as* workers are prevented from using their critical faculties towards unraveling the world around them; the truth is given to them in prescribed doses, designed more to obscure the causes of their oppression, than to reveal some facet of the world.

Similarities between the school and the factory offer more evidence of the conditions of learning being an important part of the system of social control against the interests of the working class, in the interests of the powerful classes in society. Students as workers are also increasingly seen as cannon fodder for the imperialistic goals of capital. Recently, the Bush administration, as part of the 'No Child Left Behind' program, required "public secondary schools to provide military recruiters not only with access to facilities, but also with contact information for every student -- or face a cutoff of all federal aid."[32] While students are faced with diminishing opportunities for sustainable wage labor in depressed economic regions of the world's capitalist core, their desire to escape the cycle of poverty is channeled towards becoming cannon fodder. Engendering loyalty to the state, and conservative symbols of authority, schools turn

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[32] David Goodman, No Child Unrecruited, Mother Jones, November/December 2002.

working class children into malleable objects in service of the powerful, against their own interests.

In summary, Foley's study highlights the processes that build consent, through the many ways students, and teachers learn to accept the world not as limiting conditions to be overcome, but as necessary bases for acceptable social and cultural behavior. However, this process of building consent is not an uncontested terrain, as shown in the various ways students attempt to subvert authority. The working class Mexicano youth, the Vatos face the brunt of discrimination and prejudice, but employ their own cultural and ideological resources to defend themselves. However in the process they also internalize some of the oppressor's deep-seated conceits about their own intellectual abilities. The inability of the oppressed to overcome their oppression within the confines of a hegemonic institution like the school system, and its 'banking education,' inspires the alternative program of action presented by Freire.

While Foley's work offers illustrative examples of ways in which the oppressive social order is reproduced through consent, it falls short in one important regard. It does not adequately address resistance against the hegemonic order, particularly among Vatos. This is one aspect of Foley's work critiqued in the Foreword, by Paul Willis, whose own work 'Learning to Labor' showed how working class English youth prepared to enter the industrial workforce through their acts of rebellion against school authorities.[33] Willis points out that Foley's treatment of working class socialization in Northtown High School, while rich in terms of providing a detailed political and economic background,

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[33] Paul Willis, Learning to Labor, 1977

fails to provide an analysis of the 'degree of commodification or resistance to commodification in the expressive styles of the vatos and kickers, for instance.'[34] With a focus on consent, Foley neglects to elaborate on strategies of resistance he briefly considers, among the working class youth, especially Vatos.

Dialogical education

Freire's view of history treats an epoch as a period of time 'characterized by a complex of ideas, concepts, doubts, values, and challenges in dialectical opposition with their opposites, striving towards plenitude.' All of these considered with their opposites, in concrete terms exist as themes. Themes are at all times dynamically in interaction with their opposites, and as such cannot be treated as static and fixed. Such dynamism means that themes allow for the generation of, and interaction with other themes. A thematic universe is then the sum total of all such interacting themes. One fundamental theme in the present epoch according to Freire, is domination, which implies that its opposite, liberation constitutes the task to be struggled for, through critical intervention.

Themes defined in this manner are generative, and constitute the thought-language by which people refer to reality. Generative themes in any historical epoch ought to be explored in order to discern how people refer to reality, particularly those aspects of reality that pose important challenges. The most important of these aspects of reality would be those that oppress people, and prevent critical intervention in order to

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[34] Douglas Foley, Learning Capitalist Culture, page viii

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liberate themselves from oppression. In contrast to the elitist approach to education that seeks to impose pre-packaged 'truths' on people, a truly radical pedagogy begin with the everyday thought-language of people in order to see their world as they see it.

Since people's everyday lives offer many concrete representations of their lived experiences, such representations are possible starting points for critical dialogical exploration. Any concrete representation of everyday life, which permits a dialogical exploration of the concrete situation that it represents, is therefore a codification; common codifications include images, drawings, photographs, and language. A driver's license for instance represents on one level, a codification in relation to the particular rights and obligations an individual has with regard to the state and its institutions of enforcement, but it also reflects on another, the politics of domination and disempowerment in the context of the threatened denial of drivers licenses to California's so-called "illegal" Mexican population.

From the point of view of a radical pedagogy, codifications operate at two levels: between reality and its representation (the theoretical context), and between teacher-students and students-teachers, who attempt to explore and unmask the meanings implicit in the representations of their lived experiences. Such a dialogical learning process involves decodification, or the critical analysis of the codified situation. The activity of decodification proceeds in several steps.

Initially a person presented with a codification tends to break it up into components, enabling a tentative discovery of interactions among components. This part of decodification is referred to as the description of the situation. Through dialogue, an exploration of these interactions show that the codification, and the concrete reality represented by it, are more complex than first thought. More descriptive dialogue leads learners back to the original codification, now seen in the light of a new appreciation for the interaction of its component parts, as something less dense and impenetrable than originally thought. The whole, which the codification represents is now more than what it was perceived to be at an earlier stage. Thus the decodification process leads from the whole, apprehended unclearly, to the various parts in interaction with each other, seen through dialogical exploration, finally back to the whole, now seen as something distinct from the earlier perception which rendered it dense and impenetrable. Since the codification represents an abstraction of lived reality, a transformation in the understanding of the codification, implies that the perception of the world has also undergone a transformation.

Freire's theory of educational praxis provides a highly nuanced approach to the problem of false consciousness; it does not begin by negating false consciousness, but dialogues with the bearers of false consciousness, in order to explore in dialogue, the various building blocks of false consciousness. It enables the oppressed to become aware of their oppression without requiring them to renounce their right to name the world. In the process, the oppressed actualize a new consciousness that enables them to further translate their self-understandings into political struggle.

Discussion:

In our consideration of critical metatheory's conception of power and its immersion in material relations we have looked at two distinct versions of the self-estrangement theory. One historical example offered an ideology critique of hegemonic power in its historical time, denounced social hierarchies, maintained an atheistic attitude, and yet disdained materialism, associated with common folk and 'commonsense.' The second instance of a self-estrangement theory treats the common-sense of people, as the thought-language by which common people relate to their lived reality. Through the practice of dialogical learning, social and political structures pertinent to oppressive relationships become evident. The oppressed begin to see these aspects of reality in order that they may then act on and transform them in their self-interest.

What are the implications of such a study: first, the acknowledgement that religion-based self-estrangement theories, like early Buddhism, are tied to practices that may be guided by universal ethical ideals; however, ethical idealism cannot confront the necessity of political struggle as the latter does not assume social concord, but recognizes conflict as the basis for the social order. With ethical idealism, the rich may be entreated in order to bestow charity on the hapless poor, but a physical struggle against the rich by the oppressed poor will still be treated as a problem of law and social order. Second, material reality is the basis for human physical existence, and cannot be wished away in the garb of philosophical argument; human beings faced with oppressive conditions cannot imagine those conditions to be illusory, or nonexistent. Political struggle by the

oppressed must be directed towards the revolutionary overthrow of the physical conditions of oppression, and not anything less.

However overthrowing the oppressor and maintaining his practices and values is a condition of internalization, by which the oppressed is still unable to see himself/herself as an independent being in his/her own right, distinct from the oppressor. Internalization characterizes both such imitative forms of oppressive behavior and the extreme forms of consent and servility in oppressed people. Both intensify dehumanization, and often result in the channeling of hatred, frustration and anger against other oppressed human beings; often a day laborer, having survived a day of back breaking work and humiliating treatment, experiencing nothing but anger and frustration, as he goes through the rounds of gesticulating reverently to landlords and their sons, sometimes young boys no older than his own children, returns home and vents his misery on his hapless wife and children. A mild altercation with an equal could result in the most extreme response, while the brutality of the landlords is accepted as a norm.

Freire's critique of the values and attitudes of oppressors bears some striking resemblances to the Buddhist description of human ethical conduct. The self-understandings of hegemonic classes are centered around a sense of material privilege, resulting in an orientation in which 'to be is to have,' and to be the 'class of the haves.' As the sense of being propertied and thus privileged, is predicated on a view of the world in terms of ownership and control, the oppressor mentality is driven by acquisitive values. In the present epoch, the development of capitalism, has witnessed the growth of

such a desire to objectify everything and apply property rights claims on more and more parts of the material, and social world. While this tendency is tied to the long-term development of capitalism itself, with the never-ending quest for markets, resources and malleable labor, resulting in the rise of imperialism and wars of competition and conquest, it is also part of the increasingly globalized hegemonic consumer culture associated with those very interests. The Buddhist critique of power similarly ties the claims of the powerful to the dynamically interconnected tendencies towards rampant objectification, self-delusion and hatred. The following table summarizes 'The Three Defilements' and their respective degrees of seriousness.

Table 4 'The Three Defilements'[35]

Defilement	Degree of Seriousness
Lobha (Greed)	←...mild longing,...lust,...avarice,...seeking power and fame,...clinging to dogma,...→
Dosha (Hatred)	←...mild irritation,...anger,...resentment,...wrath,...→
Moha (Delusion)	←...dullness of mind,...confusion with regard to moral and spiritual matters,...willful distortion of the truth,...turning away from the truth,...→

In the above scheme, a person afflicted most seriously with these three 'defilements' is one who is extremely greedy, harbors intense hatred, and holds self-understandings that are grossly exaggerated. Anthropological perspectives suggest that the construction of the self is tied to the simultaneous construction of the 'other.' This process is however never separate from material relations and history, so a culturally

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[35] Peter Harvey, Criteria for Judging the Unwholesomeness of Actions in the Texts of Theravaada Buddhism.

mediated process of reification provides an ideological basis for the structures and hierarchies within and between social groups. We turn briefly to Edward Said's analysis of Orientalism, as an instance of how an oppressive system is reproduced through the reproduction of exaggerated self-understandings of the oppressor, and the parallel dehumanization of the oppressed.

Said's landmark work 'Orientalism' describes how the Orient was constructed and used, as an ideological weapon, by European powers intent on dominating North Africa and West Asia. Said points out that Orientalism was and is a narrative about the Orient meant not for the Orientals but for the consumption and digestion of the west itself. Orientalist thinking has had a long history and informs current U.S. and Israeli hegemonic claims in West Asia. Influential ideologues in the political world of the Anglo-American Orientalist establishment, like Bernard Lewis provide racist 'intellectual' arguments to dehumanize Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims. Said analyses portions of Bernard Lewis' writings that use sophisticated 'scholarly' arguments to claim for instance that Arabs are incapable of carrying out a political revolution, of the sort envisioned in Europe. Lewis's style is sophisticated in that he displays a genuine interest in the history of Islam and Arab culture; however his agenda becomes clear when one examines his arguments and the manner in which he makes them. His writings, Said notes, are "a perfect exemplification of the academic whose work purports to be liberal objective scholarship but is in reality very close to being propaganda against his subject material." For instance, in the above claim that Arabs are incapable of revolution, Lewis pretends, in a seemingly erudite manner, to examine the word "thawra," the Arabic

equivalent of the English word 'revolution.' Suggesting that the etymological root of the word is in a verb describing the act of a "camel rising," Lewis goes on to use terms like "excitement," and "stirring up sedition" to paint an image of limited imagination imposed by a supposedly unchanging Arab Islamic culture, which Lewis of course has carefully and selectively interpreted for this ideologically malicious purpose.

Far from being motivated by a desire to oppose oppression, Arabs are alleged to be driven by an illogical hatred of the west and of Jews. The supposed hatred of the west and Jews is what Lewis imputes from the rhetoric of Arab revolutionaries who condemned imperialism and Zionism. Conveniently, he all but ignores the historical context of colonization, dispossession and illegal occupation of Palestine by Zionism and Israel, which even Israeli historians would acknowledge. Lewis' goal in sum is to expand on Orientalist stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims as unchanging people, incapable of distinguishing between truth and falsehood (like good westerners), incapable of understanding lofty western ideals like revolution, and overall, a people doomed to an existence of failure and defeat which their supposed cultural inferiority prevents them from coming to terms with. Bernard Lewis' latest 'best selling' book is titled "What went wrong," another glaring indicator of his life-long project to reduce and vilify the Arab people and their heritage.[36] The muted and dehumanized subject of his chauvinist political propaganda masquerading as 'scholarship' is perpetually reduced to being in a

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[36] Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong: Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, OUP, 2001. The title itself captures the framework of Lewis's view of history: 'the west' acts, and the 'middle east' responds. Juan Cole, middle east scholar at the University of Michigan, has this to say about this work: "Lewis never defines his terms, and he paints with a brush so broad that he may as well have brought a broom to the easel." Global Dialogue, 27 January, 2003. M. Shahid Alam also provides a powerful critique of Lewis's 'What went wrong' as an exemplary work of Zionist Orientalism. Counterpunch, June 28, 2003.

'fallen condition,' with no hope for change, on account of his (the subject's) own supposed cultural inferiority.

Such sophisticated versions of modern Orientalism cannot however hide the fact of their politics, as after all Orientalism could not prevent the birth and development of resistance movements, and several anti-colonial revolutions. It is however an important way by which, through the garb of politically connected scholarly legitimacy, racist conceits towards official enemies, become internalized by scores of policy bureaucrats and intelligentsia in the Anglo-American political establishment. The anti-colonial Arab revolutions of the 1950's unnerved the imperialist powers of the west and increased their political and military support for the settler-colonial state of Israel; this political development provided the backdrop for the meticulously prepared racialist rantings of the likes of Bernard Lewis, and continue to this day in the works of such writers as Daniel Pipes, who recently claimed that the entire conflict between 'Israel and the Arabs,' is due to 'a history of Arab rejectionism,' as if politics, colonialism, wars of conquest and subjugation, have nothing to do with history. The Arabs supposedly can only be negative since after all, like any colonized and oppressed people, they reject subjugation and the pleasure of being oppressed by "democratic" states like Israel.

While contemporary Orientalism dehumanizes Arabs and Muslims, it bestows on the European, American, and Israeli the mantle of "civilizer," "liberator," and "modernizer;" today, the brutally oppressed Palestinians, along with the many victims of "desert storm," "shock and awe," "infinite justice," and "iron hammer," are stripped of

their humanity so that their subjugation and oppression can be justified, while the purveyors of wars of conquest and aggression, are portrayed as exemplars of nobility and chivalry. Thus in terms of the three "defilements" described by the Buddha, contemporary imperialism's exaggerated sense of self, or extreme self-delusion, is tied to its need to dehumanize and hate its opponents and victims. The tendencies are connected and feed into each other. Exaggerated self-understandings that rest on racial and ethnic conceits however cannot completely obscure the contradictions of divisions rooted in material relations, since after all, material interests are central to any context where oppression and resistance exists. Imperialism is never a system where the contradictions of class disappear; on the other hand, class allegiances are central to the workings of an imperial order just as much as the intensification of class conflict shapes its development.

With the concept of class, the reification of false and distorted self-understandings represents the means by which those sections of society/the world that own and control the means of production legitimate their domination. As such, two important contemporary facts point to the centrality of the material basis for class contradictions that shape domination and resistance: While the military-industrial complex led by the United States and its allies, attempt to hammer away at the post-Soviet world order, while global capitalism (despite 'globalization') was visited by repeated crises through the 1990s, it is the increasingly marginalized and disempowered working classes of the United States who are paying the domestic costs of imperialism. Similarly, Israel's working classes have also suffered greatly at precisely the same time that the Sharonist era has revealed the most brutal face of racialist and class war against the colonized

Palestinian people. The greatest cost of corporate globalization and enforced economic strangulation, with its ensuing plunder of resources and wealth to the coffers of giant corporations, has of course been borne by the suffering working classes throughout the third world. Material wealth, or in terms of contemporary capitalism, profit, is the driving force behind the aggressive expansion of capitalism, in its wars of conquest and subjugation. In terms of the Buddha's description of 'defilements,' extreme greed accompanies extreme self-delusion and hatred. Yet, given the centrality of the material basis for the current war, the intense desire for immense wealth (greed) would be the driving 'defilement.' By seeing the whole world as an infinitely divisible source of wealth, and resources for the generation of more wealth, global capitalism, on whose behalf contemporary imperialism acts, draws on the hyper-objectification of material and social worlds, as sources of infinite profit.

However, such an interpretation conflates individual intent with what is, in material social terms, class politics. In this, Freire's depiction of the oppressor mentality distinctly ties the tendencies towards intensified acquisitive objectification, to a specific politics that is rooted in material social relations, and not a fundamental human condition in the sense that the Buddha suggests with his conception of the three "defilements." Nevertheless, in the context of the Buddha's own epoch, the conflict between tribal polities and monarchic states could well have been the dominant theme, inspiring him to conceptualize a model of human behavior in which the three defilements, in their extremes, corresponded to the hegemonic values of the monarchic states, namely

expansionism (greed), Brahmanic hegemony (self-delusion) and the dehumanization of the toiling sections of the population as "lower" castes (hatred).

Internalization, manipulation, and **reactionary** *praxes*

In conclusion, I would like to take into account an important variant of the self-estrangement story, one that effectively consolidates false-consciousness. Historically there have always been instances of 'alternative' self-understandings that firmly tie members of oppressed groups, to the agendas of oppressors. This relationship arises in situations where a hegemonic class seeks to win the support of sections of the oppressed in order to more effectively dominate and control the oppressed. Members of the oppressed sections of society who embrace such a collaborationist 'self-understanding' often adopt a fictive group identity with the oppressors. In such contexts, racial, linguistic, religious, and nationalist themes engender a false sense of equality between such groups and their bosses, though the fundamental relationship of power is diversified, and entrenched. To some extent, overt symbolic types of domination may be eased as a way to please the new 'allies,' whose only role however, will remain as guarantors of the consent and acquiescence of the oppressed.

Putting this in historical context, it would be instructive to briefly discuss how the crisis of capitalism generates a perpetual reserve army of labor, in order to keep wages low, and workers malleable to the demands of capitalists. As workers' struggles with capital are diverted towards competition with each other for scarce wages, endemic

poverty, unemployment and desperation create the conditions for the growth of criminal activities, often with the connivance of the ruling classes. Marx's lumpenproletariat[37] refers to the 'degraded' section of the working class that is criminalized, and often mobilized against efforts by workers to organize themselves. This section, while constantly referred to in the propaganda of 'decent society' as being representative of workers, and the poor as a whole, is ruthlessly mobilized against workers in times of intensified capitalist crises, as in the case of twentieth century European fascisms in Germany, Italy and Spain. In the course of the development of capitalism, the growth of the lumpenproletariat provides a recruiting pool for capitalists and their allies to build militia like organizations that are used against the oppressed.

It is from the growing ranks of the lumpenproletariat that the killing mobs of the Hindu supremacist movement are drawn.[38] What accounts for this turn from self-deluding false-consciousness to complete identification with the interests of capitalists against one's own class? Do those who self-identify with their own class-oppressors have any sense of belonging to the class of the oppressed? As Freire points out, this cannot be the case. There is little feeling of belonging to the oppressed group vis a vis the material conditions of existence, but this lack is replaced by a sense of belonging to a 'larger group' that is founded on mythical and ideologically elitist bases, which inevitably ties the lumpenproletarian to the capitalist by virtue of 'race,' 'religion,' 'language,' 'culture' or other arbitrary criteria. Those workers whose (already problematic) self-understandings as workers, become fatally distorted through the

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[37] Karl Marx, The Class Struggles in France 1848-50, Selected Works, Volume 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969
[38] Thomas Blom Hansen, The Saffron Wave, Princeton, 1999

imposition of racial, religious, or ethnic criteria, represent the ultimate destruction of the oppressed, as they serve as consenting tools in the destruction of their own class interests, while internalizing the vain belief that their interests are tied to that of those who direct and manipulate them against themselves. In conclusion, such grievous manipulations of the oppressed are founded on the notion that the oppressed are tools for the oppressors, and not beings in their own right. It reflects an extreme logical conclusion of the banking conception of education that posits students/workers as actors, exclusively through the authoritative action of the teacher. The fascist demagogue replaces the teacher in this extreme case, with lumpenproletarians displaying extreme forms of consent and approval but never "naming the world" on their own.[39]

Reactionary praxis to subvert the struggles of the oppressed

Central India's tribal population known as the Adivasis, have been targeted with an intense program of indoctrination by the Hindu supremacist RSS.[40] This indoctrination is described as "Hinduization" and consists of a process of instilling a militant Hindu identity among people who have traditionally been marginalized by mainstream Hindu society. During the colonial era, some most militant and long lasting

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[39] For examples of this tendency to parrot and mimic the language and worldview of the oppressors, see Hansen 1999, which analyzes the growth of the Hindu fascist movement in India over the last two decades; significantly, large numbers of lumpen elements, a growing population in the context of disastrous 'free market' reforms, form the 'muscle' of the Hindu fascist organizations; their self-understandings are distorted into a mythical "Hindu" unity which does not however entitle them to challenge the authority or power of upper caste, ruling class leaders in the movement. They merely mouth the words and claims of their leaders, and direct their vengeance against working class Muslims and Christians, or any enemies identified by their leaders, including left-leaning liberals, or women's rights activists.

[40] Angana Chatterji, Hindu Nationalism and Orissa: Minorities as Other, Communalism Combat Special Report, 2004

struggles against the British were by the indigenous people of Central India. Interestingly, their opposition to the British took the form of attacks against their perceived agents, such as Hindu moneylenders.[41] Their struggles to defend their lands from encroachment and plunder, has continued even after the departure of British rule. The term Adivasi, which literally means 'original people,' is used by India's indigenous people as a self-identifier, but the Hinduization program imposes an alternative term, Vanavasi, which literally means "forest dweller," a signifier that subtly promotes both a Brahmanical ideal akin to the 'noble savage,' and simultaneously negates the claims of Adivasis as indigenous inhabitants of their lands.

Some Hinduized Adivasis have been organized into militias that have been used by the Hindu supremacist RSS and its affiliates, in mob violence against Christian Adivasis, and missionaries, who are considered foreign agents in the worldview of the Hindu supremacists, and entire Muslim communities in central and western India.[42] This ideological negation has its roots in the efforts of the Hindu supremacist movement to make inroads into and consolidate the electoral support of Adivasis, as new members into the 'Hindu' fold, for the B.J.P. The transformation from Adivasi to Vanavasi is described in the Hindu supremacist literature as a 'return home,' a supposed rebirth of a people long "separated" from the supposedly benign Hindu order. However, over the last two decades, two important forces that the Adivasis of central India have had to contend with point to the material interests served by "Hinduization."

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[41] Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, Macmillan India, 1983

[42] Human Rights Watch, *"We Have no Orders to save you" State Participation and Complicity in Communal Violence in Gujarat* a special report on the Gujarat genocide of 2002. The report specifically notes that in 1998, "Thousands of Christian tribal community members in the region were also forced to undergo conversions to Hinduism."

The sheer rapaciousness and aggressiveness with which Adivasi lands have been appropriated, their villages and homes destroyed and their lives displaced and transformed through destructive mega-dam projects on the Narmada river,[43] and the privatization of India's mineral wealth,[44] which is almost entirely concentrated in central India. Both the Narmada valley mega-damming project, and the rapid privatization of mineral resources, are supported by the Hindu supremacist BJP, which stands to gain by the increased mobilization of the very people who lose their livelihoods as a result of its economic policies. These direct political and economic implications of "Hinduization" also underwrite the ways in which the new anti-Muslim and anti-Christian identity politics has dramatically subverted the growing resistance of Adivasis to the above-mentioned forces.

In sum, oppressed Adivasis are being indoctrinated into a new identity politics that ties them more solidly with the agenda of their real oppressors and diverts their attention to concocted enemies amongst their own people. Meanwhile, their lands are brazenly expropriated on behalf of domestic and global capital, which are currently firmly allied to the Hindu chauvinist led government. The imposed Vanavasi "self-identity" does not enable them to overcome oppression, but locks them into the embrace of caste and class enemies intent on using them for purposes that eventually diminish their political, economic and cultural rights.

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[43] Dilip D'Souza, *The Narmada Dammed: An Inquiry into the Politics of Development*, Penguin India, 2002
[44] Rajeev Dhavan, *Mabo and Samatha*, The Hindu, March 9, 2001 describes how the Indian constitutional provision protecting the rights of Adivasi lands has been quietly subverted as part of the process of illegally handing over tribal lands to domestic and multinational mining interests, under the rubric of neoliberal economic restructuring and disinvestment of public resources.

Reactionary praxis to consolidate the ranks of the oppressors

When used by oppressors in order to mobilize support among their own class ranks around an agenda of supremacist thinking: the Hindu supremacist movement's idea of "Hindu" is founded on a curious inversion of history. It proclaims a unique sense of Hindu victimhood that obscures and ignores the history of caste discrimination, but insists that the presence of Muslims in India represents some sort of "fallen condition." Discounting the rich and varied history of India's diverse peoples, the Hindu supremacists believe in a mythical anti-history, which merges historical and mythological characters. Hindutva builds on Orientalist conceits like the notion that India's Islamic heritage is something alien to India, and that Indians, particularly Hindus, are more interested in matters of spirit than they are in the material world. Additionally, this transformation to a new "Hindu" identity politics legitimates the Brahmanical social order and promotes the ritual-based social power of Brahmanism and its symbols. The oppressors of the pre-capitalist social order, which still exists alongside globalized capitalism, are merely recast as defenders of an embattled culture, against the now intensely demonized Muslims of South Asia.

In this case, a change in self-understanding is driven by an effort to consolidate political power on behalf of a fascist movement of the ruling classes and castes. The alliance between big business and social elites has been the foundation of the Hindu chauvinist movement since its early beginnings in organizing anti-Muslim pogroms during the so-called 'cow protection' riots of the late 19th century. The Hindu Mahasabha

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for instance attained notoriety in the 1930s as a movement violently opposed to the secular nationalist movement led by Gandhi, since the latter not only openly espoused a composite nationalism founded on a warm acceptance of religious differences, but also dared to challenge, however mildly, aspects of the Brahmanical social system. The assassin of Gandhi was a member of the paramilitary RSS, whose political front, the BJP, rules India today. There is substantial evidence to show that the Hindu supremacist movement drew and support from Hitler and inspiration from Mussolini; their founding fathers, V.D. Savarkar, and M.S. Golwalkar praised these two fascist dictators and their treatment of Jews as models to be applied to Muslims in India. For the purposes of this thesis, we will conclude this consideration of Hindutva, by seeing it in terms of a *reactionary* praxis, one which proposes an alternative "self-understanding" that appropriates the discourse of resistance to oppression, and through this appropriation consolidates and intensifies oppression to the point of outright fascistic tyranny.

Conclusion

I have attempted to examine critical social metatheory, through a study of two instances of the self-estrangement theory. My purpose has been to explore two related aspects of any critical social theory: its immersion in material relations, and its approach to conceptualizing and explaining power. I outlined the basic scheme of critical metatheory as proposed by Brian Fay, its conception of power, and examined two possible drawbacks; an activist conception of human beings, and the idea that oppressed individuals' changed self-understandings lead to social change. I suggested that on the

contrary, critical metatheory connects the individual to a conception of political action, since the empowered individual is the locus of action and reflection for any social movement. With early Buddhism, I attempted to tie the unique ideology critique offered by the Buddha, to a material history that suggests a political economic basis for this critique. I engaged Eric Wolf's description of modes of production as a model of socio-cultural change in order to chart the connections between ideology and political economy during the time of the Buddha. At the same time, I considered a major drawback of the Buddha's critique, with its emphasis on ethical idealism, as seen in his strident opposition to the ancient materialist Lokayatas. Early Buddhism therefore offers a self-estrangement theory that proposes ethical idealism while denying the centrality of the material world; it does not enable the critical transformation of the world, but seeks to reform the world by universalizing egalitarian values drawn from tribal polities.

With Freirean pedagogy, I attempted to delineate a self-estrangement theory that is rooted in a dyadic conception of power. Radical pedagogy explains how oppression is internalized, in order to produce consent. Freire's critique of banking education leads us into a consideration of an ethnographic study of a north Texas school, by Douglas Foley. Processes of socialization inside and outside the classroom shape the reproduction of unequal class and racial relations. The most oppressed section of the student population, the working class Mexicano youth, the Vatos, despite outward defiance, internalize the conceits of the oppressive social order. Their ability to succeed in school is in many ways hampered deliberately by an authoritarian school system that enforces social conservatism and racism in the guise of discipline. Significantly, the school's dominant

text-book oriented teaching style exemplifies the 'banking education' model that Freire holds to be the basis for the social reproduction of oppression. In considering Foley's description of the socialization of working class Vatos in North Town High School, we also noted his lack of an adequate account of resistance, following Willis' critique. Finally, I examined Freire's alternative radical pedagogy, with its emphasis on dialogical education, and rejection of hierarchical modes of learning. The practice and process of dialogue leads from an initial encounter with a codification (representation of concrete reality), in which reality appears dense and impenetrable; through the discovery of components and interconnections between components of that codification; back to a clarified and more complex understanding of the codified reality. Importantly a deepened understanding of a codification must relate the material world to the social world within which the co-learners are immersed.

In conclusion, I briefly described the material conditions for the rise of reactionary praxes, followed by two related forms of the self-estrangement idea, which employ the symbolism and discourse of liberation, but in reality, strengthen oppression and the power of the oppressors. These pertain to the Hindu chauvinist movement and its role in "Hinduizing" tribal populations in Central India, in effect subverting efforts by these traditionally marginalized people to defend their real interests; and in mobilizing support around a false sense of "victimhood" among social and economic elites, with a politics of state-sanctioned hatred and violence against Muslims and Christians in India. These two variants of the self-estrangement idea are what we may term reactionary efforts to use the rhetoric of resistance to oppression, against the oppressed.

It is hoped that this work has shed at least some light on two central issues: the material basis for oppressive social relations, and the dyadic conception of power. In examining these, I have attempted to strengthen discussions of theory with illustrative examples drawn from historical, ethnographic and contemporary materials pertaining to oppression and resistance to oppression. As our world teeters towards intensified crises resulting in wars of conquest and reactionary fascisms, it is hoped that efforts to clarify and extend the objectives of a critical social praxis inspired by a radical politics of liberation, expand and deepen resistance, and most importantly, sustain much needed hope for the future. As Marx concluded in his moving call for united revolutionary action to the "workers of the world" more than a century ago: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."

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