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First published 2016 by  
PALGRAVEMACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN 978–1–137–56243–2

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Typeset by MPS Limited, Chennai, India.

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# Introduction: The Pedagogical Obstacle of the Phenomenal Forms

## An ongoing project

This book is a further development from a previous one, published only in Spanish, whose title can be translated as *The Copernican turn and the social sciences* (Villacañas de Castro, 2013). It was a philosophical work relating to a general epistemological problem lying at the heart of the social and natural sciences. On the other hand, the present volume is firmly rooted in pedagogy. This difference reflects the professional journey that I have made in the meantime, from being a Graduate Student at a Faculty of Philosophy to becoming a member of staff at a Faculty of Education, where I currently lecture and carry out research. Despite the various shifts brought about by this transition, an underlying interest has remained throughout and inspired me to write this volume. This is why I consider both books to be part of a single, ongoing project.

Accordingly, the first aim of this introduction is to make the nature—the essence—of the continuity I am alluding to clear, an objective which cannot be satisfied without summarizing (no matter how briefly) *The Copernican turn and the social sciences*. This summary should prepare the reader for the original contribution that I make in the following five chapters. Accordingly, the first three sections of this introduction present some of the ideas developed in that earlier work, while the last three begin to deal with those developed in this one.

Let us start with my previous book. My aim then was to analyze a problem which I considered to be no less than an epistemological mystery, or enigma, presented by those revolutionary theories which,

## 2 *Critical Pedagogy and Marx, Vygotsky and Freire*

in my view, had enacted a *Copernican turn* in the realm of the sciences. Four scientific theories fell within the scope of that concept: Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, Karl Marx's contribution to sociology, Neo-Darwinism (the paradigm which ensued when Darwin's and Mendel's discoveries in biology were articulated), and relativity theory in the field of physics. I assume readers possess some basic notions of them, although this is not necessary to understand this project. I defined these Copernican turns as scientific discoveries whose revolutionary nature consisted precisely of the fact that they had contributed new knowledge about particular objects (the psychic apparatus, the mode of production, the natural habitat, and the universe) but also about the position that human beings held in relation to those realities, insofar as they formed part of them. Actually, an individual crystallized where these four objects intersected. A Copernican turn thus involved two kinds of knowledge: about the *object* and the *subject*; knowledge about specific realities; and also new knowledge about how human beings should understand themselves in relation to those four objects. All four Copernican turns revealed that human beings were neither independent nor separate from the realities which they studied, but were inscribed in them, embedded in their materiality. Instead of downplaying the objective quality of outside reality in order to stress its subjective side, this argument focused on the objective quality of dimensions to which the human being had normally attributed a subjective character.

### **Copernican turns**

Many consequences unfolded from this ontological argument. For instance, the scrutiny which scientists professed to exercise with neutrality and detachment suddenly seemed to be epistemologically unsound, since it developed from within the subject matter under analysis. The 'positivistic myth of the researcher as detached secretary to the universe', as Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, p. 570) described it, forcefully crumbled down. At the same time, dimensions which humanity had always interpreted as evidence of its own exceptional mode of existence in the world (of its own transcendence from the natural plane) were suddenly revealed to be connected to objective, material developments. As one may imagine, all sorts of sentiments were stirred against those discoveries. Although he did not refer to

them as Copernican turns (and left Marx's theory out of his analysis), at one point in his later work Sigmund Freud described the impact of these theories (including his own, psychoanalysis) as inflicting *narcissistic blows* to humanity, an expression which he pulled from his own theory, and through which he attempted to stress their traumatic character. 'The universal narcissism of men, their self-love', Freud (1917) said, 'has up to the present suffered three severe blows from the researches of science [...]: the *cosmological* one [...], the *biological* blow to human narcissism [... and], the third blow, which is psychological in nature, [and] probably the most wounding' (pp. 3612–13). It seemed as if science had unveiled a kind of knowledge that challenged the privileged position that human individuals had presumed to hold in history and in the universe.

Freud was not the first to identify this resistance, of course. Darwin, Einstein, Marx—all of them had to face fanatical opposition to their discoveries. Centuries before them, Galileo even experienced danger when he bore out Copernicus' heliocentric cosmological model, the first Copernican turn proper and the discovery which set in motion a process that Einstein would draw to an end. In the 18th century, philosopher Immanuel Kant approached this experience again from a philosophical perspective. His observations on Copernicus' original hypothesis of the Earth orbiting around the Sun formulated, for the first time, the structure of Copernican turns. On account of the precision of his commentary, I have always kept it at the heart of my own theoretical developments:

We have here the same case as with the first thought of Copernicus, who, not being able to get on in the explanation of the movements of the heavenly bodies, as long as he assumed that all the stars turned round the spectator, tried whether he could not succeed better, by assuming the spectator to be turning round, and the stars to be at rest. (Kant, 2001, p. 12)

As I have mentioned, centuries later, Marx, Darwin, Freud, and Einstein became perfectly aware of the cognitive and affective consequences effected by their turns. They anticipated the resistance which their contemporary and future generations would *per force* undergo, as people tried to accommodate their commonsensical, superficial impressions to the ideas implied by these scientific breakthroughs—or

4 *Critical Pedagogy and Marx, Vygotsky and Freire*

more concretely, as they attempted to see themselves in terms of the concrete dynamics which ruled their own divided mental apparatus, the mode of production, the natural habitat, and the surrounding universe in which they worked, reproduced, and lived. Since then, the only factor which has proven capable of attenuating the enmity raised against these theories has been downright ignorance, lack of acquaintance with them—something which could actually be interpreted as a kind of resistance in itself. Yet neither Freud, Marx, Darwin nor Einstein developed a profound epistemological reflection on this topic. None of them made the leap from a scientific to a meta-scientific plane of thought. This being the case, when I started to analyze the nature of Copernican turns, I had to come up with my own terminology and ways of illustrating my argument. This is not to say that I found no guidance in other authors; for example, I resorted constantly to the works of Thomas Kuhn (his theorization of *paradigm shifts*) and Louis Althusser (his analysis of Marx's *change of problematic*), among others. But in the end it was Kant's previous quote which proved to be the most determining influence on my own understanding, and set the terms of my discussion. Following suit from it, I ended up describing Copernican turns as if, at some point in the course of a scientific investigation, the observer had gradually started to question his or her own subjective position vis-à-vis the object of inquiry; and as if, in addition, this revision had ended up becoming instrumental for discovering something radically new in the nature of the object. The subjective and the objective dimensions of this epistemological process were both integrated into my perspective, since they characterize a revolutionary scientific development that can, in fact, only be explained as a dialogue or an interaction between the two.

Let me bring the discussion to a more general plane, by reminding the reader that it is only when we know exactly which place we occupy in reality that we can establish with certainty how much more our concrete perceptions owe to the essence of the real objects we are observing than to our local position. What is more, there is no question that some vantage points simply make it impossible for the real facts of a situation to be accessed and truthfully conveyed by our impressions. Indeed, this idea is closely tied to the Copernican breakthrough, for it was only when these scientific observers were able to know themselves—to know humanity—fully that they could

access new knowledge of the world. They did so by discounting that which, in the way they perceived it, was affected by the way the world impacted on them qua observers. In Villacañas de Castro (2013), I chose to describe this expansion of the individual's self-awareness in terms of a *part* (the subject, the scientific observer) comprehending better the *whole* to which he or she belonged (the object, reality), a whole which did not translate itself properly in any one act of observation, and a subject which would never cease to be a part of it, including during the knowledge process. At the end of the day, these scientific accomplishments implied that the scientific observers had not only come to understand the ontological truth they formed part of the same reality they wanted to investigate (a psychic apparatus, the mode of production, a natural habitat, or the universe); but also that they had found a rational way of dealing adequately with this fact, in the form of a method which allowed them to overcome the epistemological obstacles that ensued.

## Phenomenal forms

That book found a name to call the epistemological obstacles I am referring to: the *Erscheinungsformen* (which is rendered into English equally well as *forms of manifestation or phenomenal forms*), a term which ended up becoming as important to the book's line of reasoning as the Copernican turns. Originally formulated in the context of Karl Marx's sociological investigations, the phenomenal forms also appear in the title of the present volume, so the reader may well consider them to be the true *leitmotiv* of this ongoing project. This work approaches them from a different standpoint, so let me make this new orientation explicit. While *The Copernican turn and the social sciences* dealt with the *epistemological* effects that derived from the phenomenal forms, *Critical Pedagogy and Marx, Vygotsky and Freire: Phenomenal Forms and Educational Action Research* focuses on their *pedagogical* effects. In other words, while the first book analyzed the threats and difficulties that phenomenal forms posed to the advancement of scientific knowledge, and how Marx, Freud, Darwin, and Einstein contributed to overcoming them through their Copernican turns, the present work explores the threats and difficulties that the *Erscheinungsformen* pose to teaching and learning, and how educators should negotiate these obstacles properly to make any knowledge

related to the objects conceptualized through those radical discoveries be understood and learned.

The previous lines provide a clear-cut definition of the aims of this book. Nevertheless, for the reader to get an even clearer idea of its content, a specific comment on the phenomenal forms seems worthwhile. Generally speaking, the concept refers to the distorted ways in which reality necessarily presents itself to the individuals who experience it from within, ways which do not translate—except untruthfully—the underlying nature of the real objects observed. The theoretical link between phenomenal forms and Copernican turns is straightforward, since the latter were the scientific advances through which four different sciences were able to overcome the distorted mirages which until then had enveloped them. If I were to devise a metaphor to illustrate the obstacles presented by the phenomenal forms, I would say that our own attempts at understanding reality always seem to find us in the way, and vice versa: our attempts at understanding ourselves always seem to find reality (nature, society, the unconscious) in the way. Our material anchorage in reality seems to bar us from understanding properly how this anchorage is articulated, preventing us from knowing the world properly, and therefore ourselves. As such, phenomenal forms also imply that there exists a gap between how processes really develop and how they end up being perceived by human observers. This gap is expressed, epistemologically, as the existence of two kinds of knowledge: ideological and scientific, according to Marx; phenotypic and genetic, in Vygotskian terms; implicit and explicit, as Fals-Borda (1991a, p. 146) called them. Throughout this book, I prefer to formulate the issue in terms of Vygotsky's dichotomy. Hence, while genetic knowledge is about the deeper processes and underlying causes of real phenomena, knowledge of the first kind concerns only their superficial and distorted manifestations. Well inscribed in this second level of knowledge, phenomenal forms consist precisely of the distorted and deceitful mirages through which the mental apparatus, the mode of production, the habitat, or the universe—for example—are perceived and represented spontaneously in the minds of the same human spectators who form part of each and every one of them.

This situation can be described equally well in terms of the relationship between the part and the whole or the effects and the cause. Either way, it is only when we realize that we are but the effects of objective causes that lay well hidden in the nature and the history



of the very objects which we wish to understand, do we finally come across the real complexity of the epistemological (and pedagogical) problems posed by phenomenal forms. The prospect of solving it is made worse once we realize that science often attempts to understand reality in total ignorance of the subject/object dialectic explained above, as well as of its grave epistemological consequences. And it is also at this moment when the radical significance of the Copernican turns is adequately appreciated. The revolutionary nature of the discoveries and the theories that Freud, Marx, Darwin, and Einstein contributed to human development has to do with the way they cut through the superficial representations of the abovementioned objects to access their deeper and constituting developments at the same time as they articulated the observer's participation in them.

### The pedagogical obstacle

Up till now this introduction has dealt only with ideas which are contained in *The Copernican turn and the social sciences*, but from this point on it will unfold arguments that (though stemming from those) the reader will find in the present volume. To put it briefly, this book describes (1) how the aforesaid epistemological obstacles posed by the phenomenal forms become translated into pedagogical ones, which impinge on the essential purposes of education; and (2) which pedagogical orientations are best suited to solve these problems, and why.

It will be obvious from the book's title that three authors have been especially influential in attempting to fulfill these goals: Marx, Vygotsky, and Freire. The works of the first two provided the main cornerstones for unfolding the first issue, related as it is with the transfer of the epistemological obstacle into the pedagogical dimension. Freire's ideas, on the other hand, are the hinge connecting this argument with the second one, through which the book finally engages *critical pedagogy*, signaled as the most suitable pedagogical orientation for remediating the havoc played with education by phenomenal forms. Finally, the book justifies why *participatory action research* may possibly be the most effective educational concretization of this pedagogical orientation. I believe all three issues stem from a single line of reasoning and follow from the same logical argument. From the very first chapter the reader will see how the

discussion of these pedagogical obstacles involves exactly the same elements as those through which I have just described the epistemological ones, and which Copernican turns were able to overcome: the subject/object dialectics, the relationship between the part and the whole, or the connection between the effects and the cause. Not by chance, the same factors which obstructed the advancement of scientific knowledge obstruct teaching and learning. Hence the unsurprising fact that 'both critical pedagogy and action research grew out of a critique of traditional empirical research and traditional pedagogy', according to Wamba (2010, p. 173).

The resulting question is: how can a corresponding Copernican turn be effected in the field of pedagogy? Before I develop this answer fully, however, let me explain how the epistemological conundrum translates itself into pedagogical terms. Basically, in this case the problem lies in that students cannot learn and apply the knowledge of the subject matters tackled by Freud, Marx, Darwin, or Einstein without learning, at the same time, about themselves. It is impossible to separate both spheres insofar as the students are part of the objective realities they need to learn about. 'There is no way of separating the knowing subject from the object to be known. [...] The knowledge of something is also, simultaneously, a self-knowledge' (Santoro Santos, 2005, pp. 7–17). On account of this, becoming acquainted with the divided structure of the psychic apparatus, or with the class-ridden nature of a mode of production, or with the ecologic and genetic variables which come into play in determining the destiny of any given species (including ours) within a biological habitat, or finally with the relationship between space, time, and energy in the cosmos—any of these educational processes, as well as the transformative effects that may ensue from them—implies a *vital experience* in which students' self-definition and self-image is caught up. In itself, this need not be problematic, however. The real pedagogical problem comes when these learning experiences are too negative or traumatic, as they necessarily are from the moment when these theories demand students to push their own narcissism and individualistic perspectives aside, to de-center themselves, and rather think of themselves in terms of being part of four concrete subject matters. At that moment, negative reactions will arise. Resistances, both cognitive and affective, will be put up. And it is reasonable that it be so. We should bear in mind that Vygotsky's earlier distinction

between phenotypic and genotypic kinds of knowledge (superficial or profound) also applies to the knowledge one holds true of him- or herself, that is, to the representations through which one pictures his or her own place in reality, and his or her relationship with it. Indeed, as affirmed by Santoro Santos (2005), ‘changes that take place in [one’s] significations of the world [...] essentially imply changes in [one’s] perspective as a subject’ (p. 17). The content of both significations is neither arbitrary nor unmotivated, of course, but grounded in an accumulated history of experiences taking place within immediate surroundings. In some way they show, according to Balibar (2007), ‘the way in which reality (a certain form or social structure) cannot but appear’ (p. 60).

Now, if phenomenal forms built on dialogue with the external world are accompanied by corresponding ones arising from our contact with ourselves, the latter will be more or less superficial or distorted depending on the extent to which they move beyond an individualistic and subjectivist understanding and articulate themselves with the real structure and processes ruling the surrounding world. As Rozas (2007) claimed as a comment on Freire’s work: ‘We come to know ourselves only when we come to know the world’ (p. 565). He or she who ignores the world will ignore him- or herself also. He or she who, for example, tends to obliterate the effects of class-division within a given social milieu will also tend to overemphasize the role that personal initiative and individual merit play in gaining a certain social position and life standard. As a result, the chances are that he or she will also hold individuals (him- or herself included) responsible for a social destiny which Marxian sociology, by contrast, makes institutions accountable for. The reason why I have chosen this example is because this book deals mainly with the pedagogical obstacles derived from the phenomenal forms through which students portray their social reality and their place within it, and hence with those which are likely to arise as they become acquainted with the sociological outlook which was definitely capable of overcoming them: the Marxian one, with its focus on *social class*. This is also the perspective adopted by most of the critical educational literature I have taken into account to write this book. Besides, it was in relation to this Copernican turn precisely that Freire’s pedagogical contribution was most meaningful. And yet, a similar conflict involving contradictory perspectives is bound

to appear in the teaching and learning processes oriented towards any of the subject matters whose scientific examination underwent a Copernican turn—the natural habitat, for example, the knowledge and sustainable transformation of which *ecopedagogy* (Kahn, 2009) attempts to ensure. On some occasions, this book will also draw on the other three subject matters evoked above, and use their key concepts as metaphors to illustrate educational inquiries into the object of study privileged by critical pedagogy.

With all this in mind, the pedagogical problem originated by the conflict between pre-phenotypic and genetic standpoints, pre-Copernican and post-Copernican views of the individual and the world, is no other than *student resistance to knowledge*. This resistance may take up many forms and lead to many negative educational outcomes. Because of this, it should not be confused with those negative students' reactions that arise from their discomfort towards the way a teacher teaches and organizes learning. The two dimensions are connected, and I will dwell on the inextricability of this relationship later on—indeed, the pedagogical relationship mediates the learners' conceptual relationship with the reality in which they are situated, since it is through their relationship with the teacher that the world is unveiled and becomes known. The specific kind of resistance I am alluding to develops as an ideological reaction against certain ideas and contents, rather than against the way they are taught. It therefore results from the trauma of being exposed to a theoretical perspective which is radically different from ones' own, yet essential for one's self-understanding. Against profound narcissistic blows—to recall Freud's words—the individual resists. From occupying class standpoints, the individual's ego defends itself, to put it in the words of Cho (2009, p. 93). Learning and resistance to learning imply a cognitive side—phenomenal forms contain blind spots and distortions—but also an affective side. Students' cultural representations always reach back to concrete life experiences, to singular moments of learning taking place within their immediate surroundings. If not handled properly by the educator, the affective dimension may end up placing the whole educative process at a halt or even under risk of breaking down. Of course, this resistance can be toned down, negotiated, and re-oriented by pedagogy, if educators expose students to traumatic knowledge only in certain appropriate ways, as opposed to others. This is precisely the solution we are looking for.

## The pedagogical solution: critical pedagogy and educational action research

I am now in a position to introduce the second main contribution of this book. Based on what has been said till now, the question concerning which pedagogical orientations are best suited to overcome student resistance can receive a justified answer: namely, those which attend to the subjective and the objective inertias that shape students' lives and knowledge. But this is too abstract an answer, and needs to be broken down before it can offer any practical advice. What I mean by it is, in the first place, that educators must internalize and put into practice what we have emphasized so much: namely, that students participate materially in the same realities that we ask them to understand and learn about. But, secondly, teachers must also realize that this participation (on account of the dynamics of the phenomenal forms) is never experienced as such, but rather concealed from spontaneous experience and from the implicit or commonsense knowledge that is associated with it. In point of fact, according to Marx's suggestions in *The German Ideology* and throughout *Capital*, phenomenal forms show things in the opposite light to the way they are. Actually, social phenomenal forms tend to reinforce individualistic perspectives and understandings vis-à-vis the social reality implied.

Complex as this reasoning already is, this book asks educators to complete it with further pedagogical awareness. Essential to the success of their educational endeavor is that they realize that the objective dimension I have just attributed to students does not cancel out the need for the educational process to proceed through the liberal principles of *freedom*, *equality*, and *tolerance*. Actually, the opposite is the case. In contrast to the trend that Allman (2009) noticed among some radical educators in Britain, this argument claims that the most challenging content-knowledge can only be attained through the most democratic pedagogical processes. In other words, educators will only foster their students' understanding of their own *objective* nature by engaging in the most *humane* pedagogy. This logic was already anticipated in Althusser's double demand for theoretical anti-humanism and practical humanism, a statement which loses its apparent contradiction the moment one understands the second clause as a pedagogical proviso. When read this way, the statement

seems to suggest that Marxist socialism should not dispense with including certain humanist or liberal principles at the core of its political and educational pedagogy. Individual freedom, equality, tolerance had to be reinforced even more strongly if the teaching process was to reverse the cognitive and pedagogical effects of the phenomenal forms, and thus bridge the gap between students' 'common sense' and 'good sense', to say it in Gramsci's words.

Let me explore this point in more depth. It is a well-known fact that, in order for students to transition from their original cognitive background to the attainment of academic capabilities, teaching processes must integrate their original cultural wealth in a significant way. 'When students witness the validation of their culture within the educational process, they concatenate their identities as family members, students and emergent intellectuals. Moreover, the cultural substance of their identities feeds and sustains an academic persona' (Cammarota & Romero, 2011, p. 492). Freire never tired of mentioning this too. As stated by Araujo Freire and Macedo (2000), 'By respecting and starting from common sense, Freire proposes to overcome it' (p. 8). This means that, while inscribed in phenotypic levels of knowledge, students' experiences and culture must be valued by the educator and appraised for the wealth and reality which they contain, hence also validated as a suitable point for students to continue with their learning process. This is as true for formal educational contexts as it is for non-academic ones, such as oppressed rural and urban communities that have traditionally been the focus of participatory action research initiatives. There too, 'valuing and applying folk culture' (Fals-Borda, 1991b, p. 8) is a necessary technique for success. Yet what I am especially interested in clarifying is the key role that freedom, equality, and tolerance play in this transition. Regarding these principles, the first thing to bear in mind is that, unlike humanistic or liberal educational traditions, this book justifies them for their pedagogical value and not on the grounds of philosophical, ethical or political planes of meaning (although it is not necessarily opposed to them either). In other words, I am only considering their pedagogical potential. In fact, liberal and humanistic political or ethical viewpoints are completely external to my own. My only claim is that the objective determinations which underpin students' phenotypic representations can only be properly tackled and reversed if teachers

and students build their mutual relationships on the principles of freedom, tolerance, and equality.

When critical pedagogy follows these principles, it may find its goals hard to attain. When it does not, its goals become simply impossible. Only in the first case can the ideological inertias be reversed, and the traumatic experience which certain learning processes involve be adequately negotiated. Impossible as it is for the educator to avoid some of the negative consequences that derive from challenging students' phenomenal forms, authoritarian, transmission-like, teacher-oriented methodologies are likely to impede any learning whatsoever. This is due to the fact that, while the cognitive side of learning has normally been considered compatible with educators transferring knowledge to the students (as if the latter were mere recipients, vessels devoid of all affects and knowledge), the moment one bears in mind the importance of students' affects and identities, one also realizes that this orientation, simply, cannot work. And the reason why it cannot work is that no educator can impose upon a student the traumatic experience that true knowledge involves. If *trauma*, according to Giroux (1997), can ever become a 'useful pedagogical tool, [as] the pedagogical moment when identities become unsettled, provoking both anxiety and the opportunity to rethink political nature and moral content of one's [...] identity' (p. 293), it will only do so under the condition that educators don't add an extra negative layer onto the students' experience by embracing an authoritarian pedagogical orientation which forces them to assume passivity and silence as the only means to encounter new ideas which threaten them.

It is precisely due to the need for educators to respect the objectivity of the affective dimension—the *algorithms of feeling*, as Fals-Borda (1991a, p. 150) put it—that the principles of freedom, equality, and tolerance must remain active in educational contexts. These principles must define the teaching methodology. Not by chance did Freire's theory of *conscientization*, so influential in the field of critical pedagogy and in participatory action research, insist on democratic forms of research and collective action (for example: Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Fals-Borda, 1991; Flores-Kastaris et al., 2009; Glassman & Erdem, 2014; McIntyre, 2008; Gullion, & Ellis, 2014; Thomson & Hunter, 2009). The need to combine critique and liberal principles (something rarely done by orthodox socialist pedagogies)

may thus prevent educators from being ‘theoretically [...] correct and pedagogically wrong’, in the words of Giroux (2006, p. 63), or to ‘establish a contradiction (a logical one) between their methods and their objectives’, in Allman’s (2009, p. 428). The unity of critique, freedom, and tolerance should stem from the realization that the aforementioned affective and cognitive transitions can only be made by the individual learner acting upon him- or herself, and not by the teacher. In other words, it derives from recognizing certain limits to the educators’ power to ensure the learning process. Unlike what is often assumed of knowledge—that it can be imposed—educators must realize that they cannot enforce certain feelings or emotions on their students in relation to certain contents, at least not those which may be conducive to learning. In this respect at least, they are impotent, and it is desirable that they remain so. The transitions on which learning depends lies in the hands of each individual student, who must build the bridge across from his or her original cultural experiences (and the affects attached to them) to the new ones. Hence the impossible nature of presuming to organize a successful learning process *against* the students, without their active participation and involvement, or by assigning them a passive role.

‘Allowing students to participate in constructing the learning process’, Romero et al. (2008) claim, ‘encourages them to perceive education as their project, something they can create. [...] No longer do they sit passively waiting to be told what to do; they realize that they too have something to offer education and society’ (p. 136). If the success of the affective transition depends on whether or not students are given the opportunity to participate actively in their learning process, this in turn will only occur provided that, as this quote shows, a significant degree of freedom and equality (expressed in terms of participation) is shared among all the agents involved in it, teachers and students equally. Herein lies the essential pedagogical role I attribute to those democratic principles, whose significance in the affective dimension has also been explored. Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (2007), for instance, once alluded to the impossibility of forcing someone else to desire, and the same holds true for learning, a process in which students will only give worth to those feelings they have experienced freely and to the cognitive content to which those feelings attach. In this regard psychoanalysis (a Copernican



turn itself) undoubtedly lends educators a valuable hand which this book also tries to underscore. Just as therapy proceeds to overcome repression—by allowing the patients to *freely* talk themselves through transference and the symbolic paths of their unconscious libido—only if students are allowed to express themselves truly along the educational process, through words or actions, will they be able to transfer the affects which clung originally to their previous, commonsensical experiences and cultural representations to the new scientific ones that, at first, were foreign and threatening to them. Only then may the cognitive and affective transitions take place, and understanding and action ensue.

The first transition lies in the hands of the educator, who must design and organize all the cultural elements involved in the educational context. Like architects, teachers organize contexts where experiences take place—educational contexts, in this case. And in the same way as a building only displays its beauty or its functionality to whomever inhabits it, educators must design their own contexts bearing in mind the agency of the learners who will act and think within them. From this perspective, learning consists of the knowledge and skills that result from the educational experiences learners undergo in the context of an activity. Yet for the cultural elements that are present in it to crystallize into concrete learning, the students' agency still remains the moving force. And the educator must be able to recruit it. In the end, the pedagogical orientations which enable students to traverse their own phenomenal forms are those which allow them to exercise their agency through verbal or non-verbal self-expressions in which affects as well as concepts become involved. Critical pedagogy becomes, thus, indivisible from *critical literacy* (Ada & Campoy, 2004; Ballester, 2015; Reyes Torres & Bird, 2015; Shor, 2009), as it already was in Freire's original cultural circles, where learners learnt how to *read the word and the world*. 'Inquiry into narrative, stories lived and told, creates spaces, gaps, which allow for change' (Pushor & Jean Clandinin, 2009, p. 292). By objectifying their cognitive lines of thought, students open up a space within themselves for new learning to occur. And the more they express themselves, the more they will clear new ground that allows them to transform. Understanding the objective causes of our own individuality does not come as a sudden revelation or epiphany, but only through a guided but constant (and possibly never-ending) process of 'objectification

of experience', in the words of Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, p. 571). Naturally, dialogue and shared participation, not one-way instruction, must become the main educational tools.

Taking all this into account, one can barely be surprised by the fact that Part III of this book presents participatory action research as the ideal approach for critical pedagogy to realize its challenging educational aims. The same words which Carr and Kemmis (1986) at first applied to action research qualify also for critical pedagogy: 'it should not be seen as a recipe or technique for bringing about democracy, but rather as an embodiment of democratic principles in research' (p. 164), or in pedagogy in this case. In point of fact, I find no clearer evidence of the pedagogical potential of freedom, tolerance and equality than those action research projects conducted in the field of education, which, by honoring these principles, increased also student participation without sacrificing the learning component. The opposite was actually the case. Educational action research, which started as a framework of reflective inquiry for teachers to explore the underpinnings of their practice and experiment with curriculum design (Elliott, 1988; 1991; Stenhouse, 1981) revealed an extraordinary pedagogical potential once students were included as full researchers alongside educators. As Brydon-Miller et al. (2009) explain in their account of the participatory action research projects developed by the Institute for Community Research (ICR):

for the last nearly 20 years, the ICR has used a participatory action research approach to involve youth in their own research on issues of concern to them, by teaching them to utilize critical ethnographic methods including social mapping, digital photography and video, various types of face-to-face interviews, cognitive mapping, and other data collection techniques. (p. 501)

This participatory variant of action research has proven capable of lifting the phenomenal veil from adults and young people alike, and of raising their awareness on decisive issues that shape their global perception of social reality. And, as the quote above suggested, it has done so especially by providing the opportunity for learners to conduct research projects around issues they perceived as being immediately related to their own lives and interests. The same degree of proximity has been maintained, in addition, for the rest of the

dimensions involved in these projects, which were accordingly conducted by leading researchers who (despite frequently coming from academia) made sure that none of the people who took part in them felt detached or alienated from either the aims or the processes of the research—the goals, the language used, the ideas explored throughout, the research tools, the ways of sharing the resulting knowledge, the activities developed, and finally from the relationships established within the research team.

When all these conditions are satisfied, participatory action research projects naturally develop practical effects which affect the participants' lives and, by extension, their communities. Due to the overlap between the investigated subject matter and the participants' lives, the members of the research team learn about themselves as they explore a specific object of inquiry. They come to know more about themselves, about their surrounding reality, and about their real place in it. Furthermore, this cognitive processing is accompanied by parallel forms of identity and language expansion and self-awareness, of the sort that Freire understood by *conscientization*. It is not unusual, thus, for poems, autobiographical narratives, or introspective essays (among other possible text types) to be generated during the research process, as verbal companions of other forms of social action. Through public exhibitions, talks, books, reports, and other examples of school or out-of-school intervention, the members in a participatory action research project may share the knowledge they have generated with an audience, and summarize the action steps taken. These outlets may be planned in advance or may simply arise organically from the research process, as the response to a certain need or problem addressed. Because of this, Cammarota and Romero (2011) claim that 'participatory action research serves as a mediating pedagogical structure between lived context and learning through which students accurately identify and interpret the social influences shaping their experiences' (p. 498). In this context, political or community action develops as a 'corollary of heightened understanding and motivation' (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 571).

As a result, not only does participatory action research offer today a powerful reminder for critical pedagogues not to succumb to the authoritarian temptation, but its ability to foster knowledge construction sets an example for what all teaching and learning should be in the future.

## Chapters of the book

This introduction has abstracted the main theses which the present book unfolds in each of its chapters. All five approach these ideas from different angles, by discussing a specific topic which gradually opens up to the whole argument. In addition, the chapters in the volume are distributed into three parts. Allow me now to present a summary of the contents of each chapter. The first one is called 'Beyond *The ignorant schoolmaster*: On education, Marxism, and psychoanalysis', and it contains the book's first engagement with the phenomenal forms. It sets the basic conceptual context in which the pedagogical problem and its solution will be explored later on. The chapter contends that any serious attempt to advance in the realm of critical pedagogy must integrate the discoveries issued by Marxism and psychoanalysis, two theories which identified and overcame the effects of specific phenomenal forms which interfered with the knowledge of the mode of production and the psychic apparatus. The chapter revises the educational proposal from the Enlightenment pedagogue Joseph Jacotot, written at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as recounted in 1987 by philosopher Jacques Rancière in his book *The ignorant schoolmaster. Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. As the reader will see, Rancière's analysis is only partially informed by the premises of Marxist sociology and Freudian psychoanalysis. Thus, Jacotot's method of the *ignorant schoolmaster*—as Rancière calls it—is reviewed and assessed critically in conjunction with the fundamental theses of these two theories. The chapter argues that the teacher's mobilizing of the student's attention—the only resource Jacotot's method used—cannot be conceived of in isolation from the influence of other two variables that, as the book tells us, also result in successful learning processes: *desire* and *necessity*. At the end of the day, the reason why Jacotot's pedagogy should take into account the premises of Marxist sociology and psychoanalysis ultimately appears to be a consequence of the fact that these theories offer a scientific treatment of desire and necessity.

'The pedagogical problem: Vygotsky's encounter with the phenomenal forms' is the name of the second chapter. It describes the epistemological and pedagogical obstacle posed by Marx's concept of phenomenal forms. Initially, the chapter dwells on how Lev Vygotsky regarded this concept as central to the original Marxian

paradigm, and deployed it as he developed his account of cognitive development in human beings. By analyzing the concept in depth, however, Chapter 2 soon reveals that its integration into cognitive psychology by Vygotsky was incomplete in crucial respects, and that pedagogical flaws were the result. In the process of exploring these shortcomings, the chapter contends that the pedagogical obstacle posed by the phenomenal forms may prove useful in explaining the transition between Vygotsky's socio-constructivism and the subsequent developments led by Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy.

Chapter 3 takes up this hypothesis and develops it in the context of a discussion on political philosophy. 'The pedagogical solution: Freire's critical pedagogy and social democracy' sets out to prove how Freire's pedagogical project provided a solution to the problem caused by the phenomenal forms, but examines it against the background of the social democratic political project, in the belief that this joint examination will reveal a common underlying framework, and disclose the essential characteristics of Freire's critical pedagogy. A concrete analysis of the revisionist debate which took place within the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) at the end of the 19th century is developed, one which places special emphasis on the pedagogical arguments put forward by Eduard Bernstein. Most importantly, by reading these arguments in the light of Paulo Freire's project, the chapter identifies the enormous pedagogical potential of principles such as individual freedom, equality, and tolerance, precisely in relation to the aim of overcoming the negative effects of the phenomenal forms. As a result, not only does the chapter suggest that social democracy is the most coherent political model in relation to the tenets of critical pedagogy, but it also demonstrates that the main strength of the social democratic project is pedagogical, and lies precisely in the respect it shows, in the political realm, for these principles of liberal origin.

Chapter 4, 'The critical potential of John Elliott's *liberal* pedagogy' dwells even further on the complex relationship between critical pedagogy and liberal principles. This time it does so by exploring John Elliott's procedural principles and the model of educational action research which he developed around it. The chapter starts by locating his work in the context of key ideological debates of the 20th century, and Elliott's stand at this ideological crossroads is defined as *liberal*, on account of the way he tied his own educational

philosophy to the ethical sphere and to the *means* of education, in opposition to the learning of objective knowledge. The chapter then explores Elliott's pedagogy from the point of view of the potential it may have to suggest an educational approach that, contrary to his (but in keeping with the aims of most critical pedagogues), defends the objectivity of the social sciences and the need for students to fulfill and attain certain content-goals. In contrast to Elliott's intentions, Chapter 4 finally arrives at the conclusion that the fact that students participate in the same social reality they must come to understand—a fact which generates the phenomenal forms—poses a number of emotional and cognitive obstacles which Elliott's ethical principles were particularly well suited to overcome.

The volume concludes with its only experimental contribution: 'A practical case of participatory meta-action research'. It presents a case study of a project I had the privilege to lead, together with 50 students, in a Master's Course in Teacher Training in the University of Valencia (Spain). After introducing educational action research, Chapter 5 describes the critical incident that motivated the collective decision to start this research process, and then justifies the meta-theoretical orientation that was selected as the best way to confront a pedagogical problem. The rest of the chapter illustrates how the project's reflexive dimension unfolded through widening concentric circles, as the participants tied sociological, academic, and conceptual factors to the conflicting situation that they had set out to solve. By applying a meta-cognitive focus, important advances in learning ensued, and the pedagogical potential of this research method was thereby confirmed.

Early versions of Chapters 2, 4, and 5 appeared in the following journals under these titles, in article form: 'A critique of Vygotsky's Misapprehension of Marx's phenomenal forms', *Science and Society* (2015), 79 (1), pp. 90–113; 'Epistemology and pedagogy re-examined: The unsuspected potential of John Elliott's liberal pedagogy for teaching content-goals in the social and human sciences', *Teoría de la Educación* (2014), 26 (2), pp. 93–113; and 'Meta-action research with pre-service teachers: a case study', *Educational Action Research* (2014), 22 (4), pp. 534–51.

Finally, let me acknowledge that this book is framed within the research project GV/2015/050, funded by the Conselleria d'Educació, Cultura i Esport of the Generalitat Valenciana (Spain).

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