



Geography = pedagogy = politics

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Forum



Geography, pedagogy and politics

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Abstract: This Forum takes seriously the proposition that *everything* we do as geographers is potentially 'relevant' to the affairs of the wider society. Using expanded conceptions of 'pedagogy' and 'politics', the Forum suggests why and how we are always engaged in processes of shaping and steering this wider society, wittingly or not, and intentionally or not. In the minds of many of us, this shaping and steering only (or mostly) occurs through activities we assume to be self-evidently 'relevant' in intention or effect – like undertaking policy-relevant research. However, this Forum argues that it is misplaced to regard only a select group of our activities as socially consequential. Pulling together recent debates on 'participatory', 'activist' and 'public' geographies, the Forum offers arguments and examples that show readers the potential relevance of the whole range of diverse practices in which we professionally engage. The introduction and five subsequent contributions together suggest that we aim for a 'joined-up' conception of ourselves and our activities as professional geographers embedded in a wider society. As such, the Forum aims to make a distinctive contribution to ongoing discussions of how big-G academic geography relates to the plethora of small-g quotidian geographies – imagined and real – that are the stuff of our world.

Key words: participatory geography, pedagogy, popular geography, public geography, social relevance.

Introduction: Geography = pedagogy = politics

This Forum is predicated on the idea that all geographical knowledge is pedagogical and that all pedagogy is political. This idea – which some readers will find strange or else greatly overstated – should, in my view, be axiomatic for all of us engaged professionally in the business of Geography. More than this,

it is sufficiently powerful and robust to help geographers – and not just on the human side of the discipline – to think anew about themselves and their societal role. Let me explain.

If that exceedingly heterogenous group of people called 'geographers' have anything in common it is this (and it is inevitably generic, even banal): they are together engaged

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in an ongoing process of producing, sharing, reconstituting and distributing knowledge. This does not make geography a purely epistemological enterprise; on the contrary, the geographical knowledges that are our stock-in-trade both arise from and inform our practical engagements with the world. Even so, these knowledges occupy centre-stage in all we do. We routinely engage with all the codified knowledge that is published in journals, monographs, working papers and the like precisely in order to inform the research that we, in turn, wish to codify in essays, books, databases, pamphlets and other publications of our own. We routinely communicate this geographical knowledge to students and other audiences. What is more, some of us – as part of our research, dissemination, consultancy or advocacy activities – routinely engage with those various geographical knowledges circulating in the wider world – in newspapers and magazines, in governmental policy documents and legislation, in popular culture and various subcultures, and so on. As Derek Gregory (1995) noted a decade ago, the discourse of geography (with a small g) is far, far wider than the big-G discipline of that name. Professional geography thus occupies a particular position within the epistemological landscape of geographical knowing. Along with other disciplines and subdisciplines possessed of a geographical sensibility (like earth systems science, area studies or cultural anthropology), it creates and distributes to various actors a wide array of esoteric, often highly specialized ‘expert’ knowledges. In relation to these diverse other epistemic communities outside the academic world, professional geography is, variously, a supplier of research findings, a proposer of policy measures, a source of methodological insight, and a critic (of those myriad geographical knowledges found in the public, governmental, community, voluntary and corporate domains).

I realize that none of this lends a substantive coherence to professional geography; it is a fairly riven discipline with multiple

fault-lines (though no more so than most other university subjects). Even so, the notion of ‘geographical knowledge’ does offer an otherwise elusive means of identifying the commonalities-within-difference. Notwithstanding the manifest intellectual plurality of the discipline, we can broadly agree that we are undertaking a common project – one variously preoccupied with how absolute location, relative position, milieu, space, spatiotemporal scale, landscape, borders, and distance make a difference to how the world is understood and operates. Metaphorically speaking, we are like members of a multicultural nation state: we share the same epistemic space and, somehow, our very diverse ‘ways of intellectual life’ together ensure the reproduction of that common space and thus our heterogenous professional selves. Or, to use a different metaphor, an invisible hand is at work wherein our intentionally different labours together create something that is both real and larger than ourselves, and which possesses a fuzzy coherence: the discipline of geography and the body of knowledge that is its principal product and advertisement.

What of pedagogy? Most of us typically equate the word with teaching. My *Concise Oxford dictionary* defines a pedagogue as a ‘schoolmaster’. However, I regard this as unduly restrictive. It suggests that teaching and instruction is confined to the lecture theatre, the seminar room, the laboratory or the field-trip location. What, though, if we broaden our conception of pedagogy? What if we recognize that ‘education’ is now writ large in twenty-first century societies? I am not referring here (or not only) to the notion of ‘the learning society’ that many western government have been vigorously promulgating for some years as they seek to postindustrialize their economies. Instead, I am referring to the now numerous organizations whose core business is to create and spread knowledge, ideas and a vast array of visual representations – not (usually) for their own sake, but as means to other ends (for example: money, political influence, or

moral hegemony). Think of the print media, television, commercial advertising, think tanks, private foundations, major charities, large NGOs, media industries, information-science firms, and much more besides. Some years ago the critical theorist Henry Giroux coined the term ‘public pedagogy’ in order to draw our attention to the educational force of these ostensibly non-educational institutions. In Giroux’s view, all members of advanced capitalist societies undergo a process of what cultural critic Raymond Williams once called ‘permanent education’. This is not at all synonymous with ‘lifelong learning’ – that is, the normative idea that all twenty-first-century westerners need to reskill and retask themselves in order to meet the demands of an ever-changing global economy. Instead, Giroux’s point is that ‘undeclared schooling’ is operative on individuals each and every day as various actors and organizations bombard us with an array of messages, enticements, prohibitions, directives and inducements.

Giroux’s argument is not intended to lose sight of either the specificity or the importance of formal education. Pedagogy, in the familiar, restricted sense of the term, clearly matters a great deal. But what is useful about Giroux’s notion of public pedagogy is that it obliges us to recognize that the education of living persons does not cease when they leave high school, university or any other recognized educational establishment. This is because Giroux does not see education – in both its formal and informal modes – as about the mere communication of information to persons who are free to take it or leave it as they please. Instead, he quite rightly regards all education as implicated in subject-formation and thus the very character of whole societies. In short, for Giroux ‘knowledge’ in its various forms has the power to materially reshape living individuals and, as a consequence, the worlds they inhabit and remake. Also, because knowledge is plural – variously specialized and colloquial, authoritative and everyday, ubiquitous and

rent-seeking, cognitive and non-cognitive, and so on – the work it performs on individuals and social groups is highly uneven. Depending on the suite of knowledges that have shaped a person, and the sort of ‘knowledgeability’ they display on a CV or in person, their life-chances are profoundly affected – as is their sense of self and other.

This last point is important. Although an uncompromising critic whose early work was Marxist in character, Giroux does not regard pedagogy as always and everywhere synonymous with social control – an idea common in twentieth-century debates on the academic Left about ‘ideology’, ‘hegemony’ and ‘power-knowledge’. The simple take-home message of his many writings is that pedagogy in its various forms always *matters* for better or for worse and ought, therefore, to be the focus of our collective attention on a constant basis. This gives a new meaning to ‘educational policy’: we should, Giroux argues, scrutinize the pedagogy of corporations, think tanks, the media, NGOs, etc, with as much diligence and intelligence as we do that of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions of education. For him, it is simply wrong-headed to regard the governance of formal education as somehow separate from policy decisions about how to govern all those pedagogical actors that exist in the wider society.

In light of all this, what about the third term in my titular equation? To my mind all pedagogy is politics by other means (except where those activities formally recognized as ‘political’ are concerned since these are manifestly pedagogical). I realize that not all readers would agree with this statement. For some, ‘politics’ is a term with a specific and restricted meaning (as in the commonplace assumption that politics is synonymous with the activities of governments, political parties, etc). For others, it is something of a dirty word such that if one calls X, Y or Z ‘political’ it implies something unsavoury, crafty and less than honest. Relatedly, still others cling to the idea that while very many

things may well be 'political' (including things existing outside the formal political sphere) plenty of other things are non- or apolitical and thus not characterizable by whatever meanings attach to the word. In academia, this last idea enjoys a wide – if usually unspoken – currency as evidenced by unresolved debates about the 'objectivity' of knowledge, the limits of 'science' and so on. In geography specifically, this idea is made manifest in the belief that, while an increasingly postpositivist human geography is preoccupied with power and politics, physical geography remains focused on truth by virtue of its ostensibly value-free object, namely the biophysical world.

In my view, it is not necessary to place sharp limits on the semantic reach of the term politics, so long as we are clear what meanings we are attributing to what things. Etymologically, the word refers to those deliberations, resolutions and actions that together determine how a state and its people will be governed. Politics is thus, in essence, a process of steering and thus about decisions and directions selected out of a multiplicity of theoretical or practical possibilities. In light of this, to say that pedagogy – in Giroux's expansive sense of the term – is always political is simply to acknowledge that, in its myriad forms, it is variously reproducing, challenging or even transforming ways of life at the individual, group and societal levels. To insist that all pedagogy is political – including that occurring within the formal educational domain – is not, therefore, to make a pejorative claim. It does not mean that knowledge is irredeemably 'biased', distorted or tainted. Neither is it a normative argument which says that, within formal education, all teaching and research should in future be seeded with healthy doses of Marxism, feminism, environmentalism or any other politicized ism. It is simply a recognition of the fact that *consequential choices* are constantly made about what sort of knowledge to create, disseminate, revise, validate and challenge – choices that could,

in theory, be *otherwise*. Not everyone is equally empowered in any society to make these choices, nor to contest them. There is, in short, nothing natural about the unplanned 'curriculum' that all the pedagogical institutions in any given society together deliver to their various audiences, be those audiences receptive or not; and this curriculum is not fixed according to any process we might reasonably describe as inclusive or democratic.

What follows if, as I am suggesting, we accept the equation 'Geography/geography = pedagogy = politics?' First, we are obliged to see our own teaching and research practices in a new light – if we did not already take their social importance seriously enough. There are numerous fine and dedicated teachers within the world of university geography, but, for many others, research is king, while even those who take their teaching seriously often see it as an essentially academic exercise focused on the substantive geographical issues we wish students to understand. In western countries there are now more undergraduate and postgraduate students than at any point in history. Yet how many of us take seriously our crucial role in actively shaping not just the knowledge our students are exposed to (and the skills they develop along the way) but also students' personhood? And how many of us do this with some sort of coherent, worked-out philosophy of education that can anchor and guide our efforts in the lecture theatre and elsewhere? As Allan Pred (2007) shows in his 2006 Commencement Address at Berkeley these questions cut two ways, because students themselves may have a pretty restricted sense of what 'education' is until encouraged to think otherwise. We thus do them a great disservice if, for us, teaching is something to be 'fitted in' between activities we regard as somehow more important, like writing a piece in this journal.

Similarly with research, the maxim 'knowledge for knowledge's sake' certainly survives

as an unwritten norm guiding much of what we do. Many of us privately lament the apparent ‘irrelevance’ of our findings and writings, and worry that even our supposedly ‘applied’ or ‘problem-relevant’ research falls on deaf ears. We do not, in short, believe that our research matters as much as it could or should do, as evidenced by ongoing debates over public policy, participatory geographies, activist-research and – most recently – ‘public geography’. However, in their book *Knowledge monopolies: the academicization of society* (2006) the educational analysts Alan and Marten Shipman suggest that university professionals are greatly underestimating their social importance. The Shipmans’ argument is that western universities have become more not less significant within the twenty-first century ‘knowledge society’, even though they must now compete with other research and teaching institutions for clients, funding and kudos. According to the Shipmans, universities have become very adept at ‘capturing’ stakeholders and students who might previously have gone elsewhere to fulfil their need for knowledge, training, education, wisdom or foresight. In this light, the sort of research we conduct and publish can be seen not only as a key part of degree-level pedagogy (in so far as it is integrated into undergraduate and post-graduate course syllabi); it also, more widely, has real (if not easy-to-measure) effects on various users outside the university who are reliant on academic expertise and the legitimacy it confers. However esoteric our research may be, it acts as a material force within the wider society rather than being – as many of us habitually think – enclaved in obscure journals and monographs. None of this is to suggest that we can somehow control the influence that we do or do not exert through our activities. I am simply saying that teaching and research are, equally and together, forms of public pedagogy not merely ‘academic’ undertakings whose effects are, for the most part, confined to the campus environment. Just because the wider

effects of our collective labours are impossible to quantify, we should not assume them to be minimal.¹

In the second place, the notion of ‘Geography/geography as pedagogy as politics’ is a useful way to throw a rope around some ostensibly separate debates that nonetheless share an obvious family resemblance. I mentioned some of these debates above, a recent one being that about ‘public geography’. In essence, all these debates are about pedagogy: they show that many of us are rightly vexed by the question of what sort of knowledges we ought to produce, how they should be mobilized, and who their beneficiaries might be. We can begin to bring these debates into a productive dialogue if we see them as different ways of addressing the same important question rather than as self-contained discussions about discrete issues. In the process, we may gain a richer sense of the possibilities attaching to our individual activities as we no longer so readily pigeonhole certain of them as (say) ‘policy-relevant’ or ‘public’ as opposed to others labelled as ‘academic’ or ‘classroom-based’. Indeed, by refusing such pigeonholing we can come to see just how *much* of what we do has the potential to matter for a range of other actors.

Third, all this has implications for our self-conception as professionals and as people. It is, of course, conventional for us to perform a series of different roles in our lives: as teachers, researchers, sons, daughters, parents, men, women and so on. This is entirely understandable to the extent that (1) these roles pre-exist our occupancy of them and so are difficult, if not impossible, to avoid such is their social significance, and (2) these roles also reflect and reproduce very real differences in our individual behaviour relative to other people – differences that cannot, for good reason, be done away with. However, role-separation also allows us to live with many internal contradictions in our modes of thinking and acting. We can be one sort of person in one role, entirely

another when playing a different role. One obvious example would be the separation between our professional identities as academic geographers and our identities as 'ordinary people' who must shop, eat, rest and play. Our *modus operandi* at work might not inform the values, habits and choices of our non-academic selves; a quiet and quotidian schizophrenia reigns. As I see it, the equation 'Geography/geography = pedagogy = politics' obliges us to think again about some of these separations and the internal inconsistencies that they often sustain. This equation challenges us to overcome some of these separations, not necessarily to 'simplify' ourselves intellectually or practically speaking, but in recognition of the fact that it is at some level arbitrary to divide our sense of self into 'professional' and 'personal' halves. Or, if not arbitrary, then something we do not do by accident. As pedagogic actors, we are not just inhabiting roles as teachers or researchers in our 'day jobs'. We are also, in our private lives, real and potential players in the drama of societal governance – as consumers, as voters, as givers to charitable organizations, as family members, as local residents, and so on.

This may appear to set the bar unfairly high. Why, it may be asked, ought university academics be expected to have a holistic rather than fragmented sense of self? One answer is that many of us are far more likely to regard our jobs as a vocation than are many others – something we do not for money (after all, academic salaries are modest compared to most other professions) nor because we are unable to think of anything better to do with our time. At some level, many of us live to work rather than working to live, so bound up with our identities are our occupations. We are thus possessed of the potential to connect our professional and personal lives, to see the former not just as a 'job' but as a privilege and a responsibility that implicates others – students, colleagues, research collaborators, publishers and so on. How many of us currently circumscribe the

reach of those practices and values we hold dear professionally? And how conscious are we of the self-limitations we are imposing through the sheer inertia of habit? Currently, only isolated events seem to pose these unsettling questions to us sharply – such as the recent concerns, voiced by David Featherstone and Paul Chatterton among others, that we are not scrupulous enough about monitoring the ethical conduct of the publishing firms that disseminate our writings. Is this not a symptom of the unthinking routinization that characterizes much of what we do? And doesn't it suggest the need for us to think about what we *don't* do, as well as to reflect on the why and wherefore of what we choose to do week in, week out?

The Forum is an invitation to think about the implications of the equation 'Geography/geography = politics = pedagogy' for everything that we do, both within and beyond the university. The five pieces assembled here all take very seriously indeed the capacity of professional geographers to make a positive difference to the lives and agendas of a diversity of others. They demonstrate some of the different faces and dimensions of geographical pedagogy as I have defined it here. They each see big-G geography – the enterprise we are engaged in – as part of a much bigger field of small-g geography which involves the knowledges and practices of publics, firms, states, and numerous other social actors. They accent both the responsibilities we have and the variety of ways we can use academic freedom – a principle and practice worth defending if ever there was one – to discharge them. Though apparently disparate at first reading – two are about teaching students, one about debates over public geography, one about the nature of the university, and one about a participatory research project – their essential unity becomes apparent once we challenge ourselves to stop 'boxing' our professional and personal activities. In theory, and indeed in practice, each of the subjects discussed by the contributors to this Forum, ought to be of direct

interest and relevance to most readers of *Progress in Human Geography*. If this is not the case, then I would ask readers to consider exactly why: how are your personal definitions of 'interest' and 'relevance' working to shut out certain things and of what might this be symptomatic?

Several positives will, I hope, come out of this Forum. First, the pieces by Audrey Kobayashi and Christopher Merrett remind us of the enormous importance for students of the university experience. Only those who have turned cynical or lazy – or else those who never realized its significance in the first place – can fail to see the power of university education to shape students' identities 'all the way down'. They are not fully formed persons at age 17/18 or even after a first degree, leaving us with the task of simply imparting knowledge and skills. That knowledge and those skills can (and should) make a big difference to the sort of person that a student becomes – not just in the sense of the being 'employable' but in the wider, whole-person sense. At a time when, regrettably, many of us regard teaching as a chore – as something to be hastily 'done' before we get onto the more 'important' and 'interesting' matters – we need more than ever to recognize our responsibility as teachers and the great opportunities it affords us. Here we surely need some help in thinking through what teaching is, for us individually, all about. Until recently it was assumed that possession of a PhD equipped one to be an effective university teacher. New faculty teaching and learning courses have addressed this problematic assumption to some degree, but they remain long on the 'technical' aspects of teaching and short on the philosophical side – they rarely invite us to consider in a mature and considered way the question 'what is teaching *for*?'. It is possible to teach for years without ever answering this question for oneself explicitly or robustly. The 'teaching' journals we have in Geography do not always help here, dominated as they are by essays on the 'how'

and 'what' rather than the 'why' of pedagogy. It arguably behoves us to ponder this last question properly, if we have not already done so – perhaps taking some inspiration from the rich literature in the philosophy of education (for example, Blake *et al.*, 2003). This has implications for the sort of degree-level curricula we design and teach in our respective departments. The recent high turnover of professional geographers that has arisen as baby-boomers retire and young faculty replace them means that 'curriculum planning' has often defaulted to gap-filling and fire-fighting. Indeed, my experience suggests that most of us are not really in control of our degree curricula, so contingent have they become on the vagaries of new and temporary appointments, of illnesses and absences, and so on. It is surely necessary to address this unplanned drift in the content and aims of degree programmes, and to take collective control of, and responsibility for, our teaching on the basis of articulated principles.

Second, this concern with pedagogy narrowly defined connects to the wider question of the role of the university in the twenty-first century (Andrew Kent's concern in this Forum). The education of students is just part of this role, but are we any more literate about the purpose of the university than we are about the aims of degree-level teaching? I suspect not. Gary Day, a sometime-columnist in the British *Times Higher Education Supplement*, has often quipped that working in higher education offers no guarantees that one can say anything intelligent about the sector itself. How true. Fortunately, there is now a voluminous literature on 'the university' in the twenty-first century, one that can help us think carefully about what our own respective institutions are up to and what stance we might take towards them. Reading some of this literature should not, surely, be optional or something we do 'on the side'. Instead, it is arguably necessary if we are to develop the self-understanding we require as members of institutions which – as

the Shipmans rightly argue – have enormous societal importance. We are *full* members of such institutions not mere ‘employees’, even though I recognize that the discourses of the ‘corporatized’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ university have left many of us feeling like managed workers.

Third, and finally, I hope this Forum can inspire readers to appreciate the connections between geographical pedagogy in all its forms and sites and the processes of socio-economic reproduction at all geographical scales. In their pieces Duncan Fuller, Laura Barraclough and Laura Pulido together reflect on the connections that can be made between us (in big-G geography) and those myriad non-university actors whose words and deeds constitute the wider discourse of geography (in Gregory’s expansive sense of the term). For me, this raises the question that David Harvey posed over 30 years ago in two now famous essays on revolutionary theory and on public policy. This is the question of what *sort of society do we wish to make by virtue of the sorts of things we do within and beyond the campus gates?* If this seems too big and grand a question to pose, then it is only because we cannot readily see (or quite believe) the causal linkages between our individual actions and the fate of the societies in which we live. The question enjoins us to recognize that we are thoroughly *social* actors who exist within a tangled skein of relationships, obligations and duties. Why do we teach, research and do other things with our geography besides? Can we offer a considered answer to this question? As geographers and people, are we seeking to sustain democracy, to address social injustice, to satisfy people’s curiosity about the world, to further economic growth, to engender mutual understanding among diverse groups, or to make ‘sustainable development’ flesh? The point of this last question is not that there is a single correct answer but that, for each of us, there surely has to *be* an articulated answer of some kind.

In conclusion, if we register the full implications of my titular equation then it seems to me that a number of exciting and challenging possibilities follow. We can think again about ourselves as professionals with certain capacities and powers, as well as certain responsibilities; we can think again about the role of Geography within the university specifically and society more generally; most profoundly of all, we can think normatively about the sort of world we wish to engender through our teaching, research and other activities. We can, in sum, expand and enrich our sense of self professionally as well as personally in the full knowledge that we are, ineluctably, political actors. There is nothing heroic about such an exercise. It simply entails realizing the potential we have to make meaningful individual contributions that can, together, have larger consequences of the sort we would approve of.

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Part I: What kind of pedagogy for what kind of publics?

In recent years increasing attention has been paid to a variety of ‘alternative’ social, economic and political practices that are, to a greater or lesser extent, delinked from the global capitalist system and the territorial system of nation states (see, for example, Gibson-Graham, 1996; 2006; Leyshon *et al.*, 2003; Fuller *et al.*, 2008). Last year I was asked to be a panellist at the RGS/IBG conference held in September in London, tasked to debate such ‘alterity’. So there we were, academics discussing weighty issues at 1 Kensington Gore, home of the Royal Geographical Society, in the shadow of the Royal Albert Hall, large Rolex clocks on the walls, mulling over the latest failure to do anything meaningful about the Society receiving sponsorship money from the likes of Shell and Landrover ... And yes, of course

it was fun, 'productive' even (Fuller and Askins, 2007a; 2007b). But what was it for? What impact would it really have? On whom? Just who was listening? Why would 'they'? And if 'they' were, what must they have thought?! Why would 'they' care what 'we' said? What difference would it make to them?

The whole experience got me reflecting (again) on the relevance, perception and impact of our work, alterity-focused or otherwise. As I sat there, my stomach struggling to digest the salmon from lunch, eaten from boxes that apparently were not recyclable, such issues seemed to be gradually amplified as the other panellists spoke, and the audience received our wisdom. Or not. One of them noted his surprise that the discussion was not what he expected! Hang on – a discussion around 'alterity' that was, well, too 'alternative' to even be any use to a room full of geographers seeking insight into 'alterity'? What are 'we' thinking? And why? And so what? These are interesting, challenging times. British geography is in 'crisis' (Castree *et al.*, 2007; Cassidy, 2008; Curtis, 2008; Hyde, 2008; Ofsted, 2008; though see Royal Geographical Society, 2008). The 'public' continues to misinterpret and misunderstand what 'geography' is all about ('it's the conceptual "grammar", stupid!' – see Jackson, 2006). Many key issues facing the planet are inherently 'geographical' in nature, but they are not necessarily identified or labelled as such within the wider, public sphere – and when someone speaks out about them they are never a 'geographer'.

Perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that inside the academy there is the increasing interest in our relations with a variety of publics. Such interest is epitomized by the recent growth in interest in the triumvirate of geographical 'outreach' – academic/scholar-activism, participatory geographies, and, embracing and overarching these two forms, public geographies (see, for example, Castree, 2000; 2006; Lamphere, 2004; Pain, 2004; Wilson Gilmore, 2005; Gregory, 2005;

Lassiter, 2005; Burawoy, 2005a; Murphy, 2006; Ward, 2006; 2007b; Chatterton *et al.*, 2007; Kindon *et al.*, 2007a; 2007b; Pain and Kindon, 2007; Fuller and Askins 2007a; 2007b; Fuller, 2008). All of these forms stress the need to rethink what *researchers* do, and what *doing* (*good, ethical, emancipatory*) *research* is all about – we must recognize the extractive nature of much research; we must be aware of the epistemic violence (Code, 2006) that can result from thoughtless, self-centred research engagements with publics; we must show greater commitment to social transformation with committed research; we must develop solidarity with oppressed others in determining communally beneficial research agendas for social change; we must challenge power relations through our research interactions; we must build emotional connections with 'the researched' through our investigative endeavours; and we must develop prefigurative actions to ensure, alongside these other elements, the furtherance of meaningful, mutual 'research' engagements with those beyond the academy (see Chatterton *et al.*, 2007). But what about other aspects of our academic 'roles'?

In this short reflection I want to paraphrase these kinds of demands in the context of our roles as 'teachers' or 'learning-providers' and think about what these forms of geography suggest about the kinds of styles of *learning engagements* that might enhance our role in shaping 'geographical literacy and illiteracy' outside of the more formal spheres of education. It seems clear to me that if we are going to play any role in responding to any of those aforementioned 'challenges' then we need to reimagine not only the ways and places in which our *research* engages (or not) with the wider social sphere, but also the style and ways in which we engage in *teaching* and *learning* beyond the academy. Two main questions motivate me – first, how can we facilitate the learning of key geographical issues, topics, concepts and ways of thought by publics in ways which make the value and relevance of doing so independently of

formal educational structures so absolutely obvious, necessary, and taken-for-granted? Second, what does this mean for the roles we perform in facilitating and encouraging publics to 'research' geographically for themselves outside of the formal teaching environments, spaces and times of the University?

1 Learning engagements and engaging learning beyond the classroom

Academic/scholar-activism, participatory geographies, and public geographies are all underlain by the desire to study *and change* the intergroup and personal relations that create unequal, uneven, unjust and exploitative geographies. In varying degrees they espouse the *need* to come together with, to come into contact with, be welcomed by, become affiliated to and/or work alongside publics.

The range of public geographies, sociologies, histories, anthropologies that have appeared in recent years are underlain by the premise of valuing being engaged in a 'conversation with publics, understood as people who are themselves involved in conversation' (Burawoy, 2005a: 263; see also 2003; 2004; 2005b; 2005c). For Burawoy, proponent of public sociology, such public engagement is based upon *communicative* knowledge exchanged between sociologists and their publics, with that knowledge based on '*consensus* between sociologists and their publics'. Burawoy emphasizes the need for (and value of) two-way conversations, comprised of talking *and* listening about relevant and meaningful issues, in relevant and meaningful ways, alongside if not within the undertaking of what he terms organic public sociology – engagements undertaken 'in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local and often counter-public' (2005a: 264–65). For academic activists engagements with publics are embedded in the need to be similarly positioned alongside non-academic resisting others engaged in mutual social struggles around key issues of our time for a more just and progressive world (Harvey,

1972; 1973; 1974; Routledge, 1996; 1998; 2003; Maxey, 1999; Wills, 2002; Cumbers and Routledge, 2004; Fuller and Kitchin, 2004; Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006; Chatterton *et al.*, 2007; www.autonomousgeographies.org). And, of course, participatory geographers are also focused on the need for (collective) actions to emanate from participatory engagements, on the need for empowerment, on the need to be proactively inclusive, and on the need to challenge established beliefs and power relations within participatory processes and approaches while continually striving for reliability and good ethical practice (see, for example, Fuller *et al.*, 2003; 2006; Pain, 2004; Kindon *et al.*, 2007a; 2007b; Pain and Kindon, 2007; www.pygywg.org).

Now, the learning engagements demanded by these forms of geography are not sterile, guarded interactions between apparent expert providers of knowledge and a passive consuming audience. They are not underpinned by any sense of making things too easy by giving away all 'the answers' (as if we had them) in the traditional academic guise as legislator or interpreter (Bauman, 1987). They are not about creating space and time for learning as memorizing, or acquiring facts or procedures which are to be used. They are not even primarily about learning as an increase in knowledge. Instead they are about something deeper, more rewarding, more engaging, more engaged – 'understanding-seeking' (Brown *et al.*, 1997; see also Entwistle, 1987; 1992). As Rogers (1979; 1987) makes clear, 'there is such a thing as significant, meaningful, experiential learning' (1987: 121), and all of these forms of geographies strive to create space, time, enthusiasm and motivation for publics to engage with geographies on their own terms, and for their own benefits. This type of learning:

has the quality of personal involvement – the whole person in both his [sic] feeling and cognitive aspects being in the learning event. It is self-initiated. Even when the impetus or

stimulus comes from the outside, the sense of discovery, of reaching out, of grasping and comprehending, comes from within. *It is pervasive*. It makes a difference in the behaviours, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner. *It is evaluated by the learner*. He [sic] knows whether it is meeting his [sic] need, whether it leads toward what he [sic] wants to know, whether it illuminates the dark area of ignorance he [sic] is experiencing. The locus of evaluation, we might say, resides definitely in the learner. *Its essence is meaning*. When such learning takes place, the element of meaning to the learner is built into the whole experience. (Rogers, 1987: 121–22, original emphasis)

In these terms, public, participatory and academic activist geographies are – aspirationally at least – deeply concerned with providing quality stimulation in new spaces for and of self-experiential learning. It is about the ‘academic geographer’ engaging the learner ‘by engaging their lives not suspending them: starting from where they are, not from where we are’ (Burawoy, 2005a: 266). It is about the ‘academic geographer’ as facilitator, as communication catalyst, described by White and Nair (1999, cited in White, 2003: 51) as ‘putting people together in order to make things happen, to catalyze thinking, motivation, interaction, action, reaction, and reflection’. From a ‘traditional’ perspective this might involve relatively ‘indirect’ engagement – writing books, articles, newspaper columns – while in a more ‘organic’ sense embodied outreach and performance are undertaken in a variety of settings and styles where academics intersect and interweave with participants, engaging in ‘dialogue’ and ‘a process of mutual education’ (Burawoy, 2005a; see also Fuller, 2008). As White and Nair continue, ‘the transformation goal of the CC (Catalyst Communicator) is to unlock the human potentials of individuals, increasing their capacity to think, to relate, to act, and to reflect from a foundation of communication competencies. The courage to launch out on an expanded vision [sic] of their own quality of life and what it takes

to achieve it, will be an important outcome when this transformational goal is reached’ (1999: 40, cited in White, 2003: 51).

In their own ways, then, all of these forms of geography are underpinned by the desire to reframe and reimagine academic life and how we engage with potential ‘learners’ beyond our classroom-based publics. They all reject traditional conceptualizations of learners as empty vessels waiting to be filled by ‘expert’ knowledge, and seek to move beyond and outside traditional spaces of learning, striving to reach new publics. They are all, necessarily, inspired by and couched within a variety of alternative approaches to, and perspectives on learning, pedagogic practice, ‘instruction’, and the process of ‘teaching’ that valorize the need to engage, the need to be engaging, the need to be in partnership, to learn together, to experience, and base learning on experience. They all mirror, if not explicitly draw upon, the theoretical aspirations of the likes of Giroux, Freire and others to ensure that ‘learning’ is embedded within, and underpinned by ‘resistance, hope, and reconstruction in the here-and-now’ (Cote *et al.*, 2007: 3). They stress the need to explore pedagogically stimulating and effective ways of achieving politically committed *learning* opportunities, the differential power relations within teaching and learning ‘out there’, who, why, what, and how our ‘teaching’ is produced and undertaken for, and the most effective spaces in which it can occur. For as Chatterton *et al.* (2007) have argued, ‘[i]t is essential that participatory spaces are created for building understanding, encounter and action which are inclusive, which nurture creative interaction with others independent of electoral politics; and which can lead to critical reflection and interventions. How does our work contribute here? We need to ask ourselves: how can we create spaces and conversations beyond our research encounters, and (as crucially) how can we open up universities so they become embedded in this critical civil society?’

Here inspiration can be gained from a number of sources. In the UK many attempts to reach out and engage publics in their own living geographies are visible, from the Geographical Association's own 'Living Geographies' initiatives (www.geography.org.uk/projects/livinggeography), the Rescue Geography project (www.rescuegeography.org.uk), which 'seeks to capture people's understandings of the Digbeth & Deritend ("Eastside") district of Birmingham before it's redeveloped ... to produce something a bit like rescue archaeology, where people go in and record the remains of a landscape before they're destroyed by a major development, except in our case we're recording people's recollections, rather than traces of buildings', to the slightly more esoteric mywalks (www.northumbria.ac.uk/mywalks) and biomapping initiatives (<http://biomapping.net>), Guerrilla Geographers (<http://guerrillageography.blogspot.com>) and Space Hijackers escapades (www.spacehijackers.co.uk/html/welcome.html), EVENT (<http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=184339219>), and the TRIP festival (<http://trip2008.wordpress.com>). As witnessed all too briefly at the recent 'Connecting People, Participation and Place' conference in Durham, the activities and ethos of the 'popular education' Trapeze Collective (www.trapeze.org) fuse the above notions of activist, participatory and public academic categories, identities and sentiments through their belief that 'how things are taught is as important as what is taught in inspiring people to take action in their own lives' alongside the need to deploy 'creative ways to think and learn about the problems we face' (see Trapeze Collective, 2007). Even closer to (my) home I recently also observed a two-day workshop in participatory video held not in a university seminar room, but at the Star and Shadow Cinema in Newcastle. Perhaps it was the ambience of the venue or the special skills of the facilitators in releasing the trainees' potential to discover things (apparently) for themselves and to come

back for more, more, more while latently getting them to navigate their own ways along a predetermined learning path, I am not sure. But it was good. It *felt* good (and I was only watching).

In the United States, innovative AREA Chicago (www.areachicago.org) has similar intentions, being 'dedicated to gathering and sharing information and histories about local social movements, political and cultural organizations. Through this practice, it seeks to create an independent network for organizations and individuals committed to social justice through cultural and educational practices within the city'. Last year the Hyde Park Art Center drew together AREA Chicago alongside a number of other popular education initiatives, groups, alliances and organizations to initiate the interactive exhibition titled Pedagogical Factory, the aim of which was to 'critically explore the intersection between art, education, and the city' (www.hydeparkart.org/exhibitions/2007/07/the_pedagogy_project.php). The Center's role was to 'act as a hub for this lively exhibition, which through a portable research center, mobile audio studio, radio broadcasts, free school supply exchange, radical library, lectures, performances, and programs will expand out to the extended public, embracing audience interaction and feedback' not only to offer 'visitors the beginning tools to question and modify educational systems, but [also to become] a site for alternative, collaborative, and free-exchange learning'. Finally, there is the Onyx Foundation, 'committed to supporting community activists, educators, and professionals dedicated to transforming their neighborhoods, workplaces and schools through education, assistance, and service' (see www.onyxfoundation.org). Through their belief that 'lectures and teaching engagements are instrumental in coalescing ideas related to democratic governance through community self-management of economic, social, cultural, and judicial affairs' details have recently been circulating on various email discussion lists and beyond

concerning their second ‘annual C.L.R. James Scholar Essay Contest’ which ‘focuses on questions of gender in relation to democratic movements from below tackling issues of patriarchy, race, class, and empire’ and which is ‘open to students of all levels, lifelong learners’.

Scratching the surface, then – yet something for everyone?

2 Conclusions

It is increasingly clear that many academic geographers are already attempting to effect meaningful societal change through their ‘research’ engagements with those beyond the academy, whether as academic-activists, co-participants, or in a wide variety of other ‘public’ guises. Less focus, though, is given to the need for similar goals in our teaching and learning endeavours. In this reflection, therefore, I have outlined what I see as the need to draw upon deeper, more engaging, more grounded, less directed, more popular approaches to engaging with non-academic audiences in creating spaces to interact with, experience and learn geographical knowledges. These approaches to achieving ‘learning’ among those beyond the academy (in their roles as day-to-day researchers) require similar levels of commitment, enthusiasm, imagination and engagement as do our committed research endeavours, alongside a need for us to reflect upon our perhaps secure taken-for-granted identities as conduits or fountains of knowledge. Of course our students, and the teaching we undertake in our classrooms are important, for, to paraphrase Burawoy (2005a: 266), as teachers we are all potentially public geographers, but the current state of the discipline and how it is perceived and received compels us to pay attention to the benefits and opportunities in facilitating fun, exciting, ‘deep’ teaching and learning engagements, and the positive, emancipatory, and meaningful outcomes they can engender ever more seriously too.

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Part II: The pedagogical unconscious

Pedagogy, it seems, is on the geographical Left’s agenda. In one sense, of course, it was never off the agenda. It has long been a favoured corridor/coffee room/water cooler subject that is raised to the level of discourse day after day (if not, perhaps, self-consciously); publications like *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education* and *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, among others, take educational practices to be serious objects of knowledge; and, last but not least, social scientists regularly (and maybe unknowingly) anatomize all manner of ‘public pedagogies’ – what we call discourses, narratives or (to be most unfashionable) ideologies are nothing if not educational. All of this said, in another sense for too long pedagogy has been conspicuously absent from the ongoing ethico-political debates on what critical geography ought to be. Discussions around ‘activism and the academy’ and ‘geography and public policy’ have been waxing and waning for almost 40 years in Anglophone human geography, despite (and because of) their hitherto under-acknowledged limited, and thus limiting, nature (Heyman, 2001; 2007). To be sure, in some ways it is taken as axiomatic that if one wishes to be a good leftist and ‘make a difference’ or ‘change the world’ then one must forget ‘geography’ and ‘the academy’ *per se* and, as it were, *go beyond*. In other ways, however, this common sense is increasingly being challenged. In some illuminating essays (see, for example, Cook, 2000; Angus *et al.*, 2001; Cook *et al.*, 2007; Evans *et al.*, 2008), a growing number of critical geographers are reminding us that the ‘real world’ is very much *in here*. Influenced by educational theorists such as Paulo Freire, Peter McLaren and Henry Giroux, their devastatingly simple argument is that ‘education is already a space of politics, power and authority’ (Giroux, 2004: 500), and thus ‘the project’ is not all about ‘getting outside’ the institutionalized discipline, but thinking through the ‘ways in which the pedagogical can be made *more* political’ (Giroux, 1988: 63, emphasis added).

Pedagogy is political through and through – *whether we acknowledge it as such or not* – yet the possibilities held out by teaching and learning do not seem to be as self-evidently important as those held out by activism and public policy. This is, I think, a peculiar state of affairs, and certainly not unproblematic.

For example, Ian Cook (2000) argues that it is all too easy for teachers committed to progressive praxis outside the classroom nevertheless to implicitly put to work what Freire (1998) called a ‘banking’ model of education where knowledge is reduced to information to be quickly presented in lectures and quietly represented in essays and exams. The problem is that learners become mere passive objects – ‘empty vessels’ to be filled up and moved on. Students are, so to speak, written out of the classroom, and thus it is closed down as a potential public sphere. *Border pedagogy*, though, takes seriously the different voices, perspectives and the like in/ of the classroom. Explicitly struggling against cultural domination, the non-recognition of difference and so on, it enables or facilitates *dialogue*, ‘giving to’ rather than ‘taking from’ students, and addressing the exclusions, silences and lacunae that all too often make education an alienating experience for many. As Cook *et al.* note, students are ‘not dupes or blank slates’ (2007: 1116) – their ‘border crossing’ experiences and interpretations really matter. Hence progressive praxis inside the classroom, or, ‘critical pedagogy’, must be *meaningful* pedagogy that takes seriously the plurality of positionalities and situated knowledges that make any given classroom what it is. What we are talking about here is not a passive, individual process of knowledge distribution but an active, collective process of knowledge production – what James Evans *et al.* (2008) call the ‘de-centring’ of authority, the ‘hailing’ or ‘calling forth’ of a community through struggles for conversations and solidarity. This empowers students, giving resources to them by changing the relationships between

teachers and learners, within the student body, and between students (as, for example, consumers) and the wider world. The point is that an overtly rather than subliminally theorized pedagogy could be less didactic, instructive or moralistic, *and quite simply more engaging*. This is a thoroughly relational, ‘cyborg’ pedagogy that repositions teachers and learners as actors situated in myriad socio-ecological networks, and thus responsible for the power to make and remake history and geography, in one way or another, both within and beyond the classroom (Angus *et al.*, 2001).

Of course, all this critical pedagogy talk can sound a little too much like a pious hopefulness – painfully abstract and utopian (see Ellsworth, 1989). This notwithstanding, it is surely all to the good that we have critical geographers willing and able to extend the so-called ‘relevance debate’ into that social space that is ostensibly so ordinary, mundane and banal that – at least in print – most academics, most of the time, are blind to the not inconsiderable possibilities it holds out. So far, then, so good. Pedagogy is on the ethico-political agenda, the hegemony of the long-sighted discourses of ‘activism and the academy’ and ‘geography and public policy’ is unravelling, and space for new thinking on the old ‘theory and practice’ problematic is opening up. Given all of this, I wish to offer pause for thought. It seems to me that writing on critical pedagogy *as such* is one-sided and partial. It is necessary but not sufficient. What we have is work on what higher education *ought* to be, in virtue of our actions, adumbrated from the perspective of real individuals ‘on the ground’. What we *do not* have, though, is work on what higher education ever more *is*, in spite of our beliefs, adumbrated from the perspective of (to use an apparently dated concept) ‘the system’. It is one thing (and, indeed, no bad thing) to think through what dialogical narratives *in* the classroom may look like, and, it is another thing altogether to do this

in relation to the metanarrative of the classroom that is emerging ‘behind the backs of the producers’ (as Marx would say) – namely, the capitalist state’s take on what and whom the university is for. One does not have to be an unreconstructed Marxist to argue that teachers and learners cannot not ‘be in’ and ‘become through’ some or other set of social relations. It is in no way news that there are transsubjective relationships overdetermining those intersubjective relationships mentioned above – setting limits to and exerting pressures on how we produce and reproduce Anglophone human geography. For something that is putatively anti-didactic, the discourse of critical pedagogy sketched out above is, in and of itself, awfully instructive and moralistic – we *should* ‘just do it’, and be more engaging, but *can* we? If not, then *why*? What is more, if our increasingly governed and regulated workplaces are tolerant, open, etc, with respect to this or that ‘meaningful’ educational practice, then *why*? To appropriate another one of Marx’s felicitous phrases, ‘we are real individuals struggling to make history and geography, but not under conditions of our own making’.

What I am emphatically not arguing is that teachers and learners are only pawns in the capitalist state’s game, that we ‘fiddle’ (remake education more engaging than didactic, reconstruct the temporality and spatiality of the classroom, reinvent assignments and assessments, and the like) ‘while Rome burns’ (the inexorable forward march of capitalism proceeds apace). What I *am* arguing, simply put, is that the debate on critical pedagogy is (or should be) but one moment in a broader, many-sided discussion around what, exactly, education in social formations like ours is all about. To be sure, critical geographers’ answers to the question ‘what is it that produces education and what is it that education produces?’ will be very different from the answers of government, business, and so on. However, in Anglophone human geography, the latter are, in the

current conjuncture, arguably what Slavoj Žižek calls ‘unknown knowns’ – the things that we do not know that we know, the disavowed suppositions we pretend not to know about, ‘but which [are] always-already here’ (Žižek, 2006: 137). This is what, in this context, we might call the geographical Left’s ‘pedagogical unconscious’. McLaren argues that critical pedagogy has been ‘domesticated’ over the last 20 years. To simplify rather, a domesticated critical pedagogy is reflexive when it comes to what it is that it is ‘against’ (namely, cultural domination, the non-recognition of difference, sexism, racism, etc) but not-so-reflexive when it comes to what it is that it is ‘within’ (namely, a capitalist economy and society). It repositions teachers in relation to learners, students in relation to one another, etc, but it does not situate education *as such* as a process that is complicit and compliant in something other than itself (a post-Fordist ‘knowledge economy’, a post-Keynesian ‘learning society’, or whatever). Again, one does not have to be a dialectical materialist to concur that, as teachers and learners, ‘[w]e are divided against ourselves, and within ourselves – as labour within (but also against) capital’ (McLaren, 1998: 457), and thus what is to be done is not just criticism of ‘isolated relations of domination’ (McLaren, 2003: 73), but critique of ‘the capitalist system as a whole’ (2003: 73). Teaching may be too important to be left to teachers, but it is far too important to be left to government and business.

To put this another way, Freire once said that education is the ‘practice of freedom’ (1986: 81). The freedom he had in mind, though, was not only ‘formal’ freedom – that is, the freedom to engage in more engaging educational practices – but also ‘actual’ freedom – that is, the freedom to problematize ‘the predominant liberal-democratic post-ideological consensus’ (Žižek, 2002: 545). Lest we forget, despite our own dialogue on the future of education, it is being reconceptualized in terribly myopic and

one-dimensional ways beyond the ivory tower. In these neoliberal times, the capitalist state is shockingly reductionist and essentialist. For example, the British government's recent review of skills declared that the educational system is *still not functionalist enough* despite the fact that 'back in 1776, Adam Smith's *The wealth of nations* suggested that "the greater part of what is taught in schools and universities ... does not seem to be the proper preparation for ... business"' (Leitch Review of Skills, 2006: 11). This is 'the predominant liberal-democratic post-ideological consensus'. It is unthinkable and thus impossible that a New Labour report would take it to be a matter of concern that the educational system is *still too functionalist* despite the fact that, back in 1867, Marx's *Capital* suggested that schools and universities were not unlike *Lehrfabrik* ('teaching factories'). The astonishing thing about this is that it is so unremarkable. It is the background of our lives. It is as if there *is* no alternative, or, as if capitalism *is* here to stay, and the radical question is something like 'what is to be done, despite the order of things?' rather than what is to be done about *the status quo itself*. The 'properly' political question, in other words, is precisely the unquestioned – it is ideology properly so-called; that which is everyday placed beyond the pale. A *sine qua non* of higher education as we know it is its functionality for a capitalist economy and society, *but not* cultural domination, the non-recognition of difference, etc. The danger is that if this remains at the level of the unconscious then the critical pedagogy I describe above may not just exist but flourish without endangering the system itself.

To push this argument further, a critical pedagogy – again, in and of itself – may serve to legitimize a thoroughly functionalist higher education. As what the educational theorist Martin Trow (2006) calls the transition from 'elite' (educating up to 15% of the relevant age group) to 'mass' (educating up to 50% of the

relevant age group) to 'universal' (educating over 50% of the relevant age group) higher education proceeds apace, the state badly needs more inclusive classrooms. The UK's universities were educating around 400,000 students in the early 1970s, just under one million in the early 1980s and just over two million in 2000. Reduced to something all about 'method', a multiculturalist critical pedagogy that is sensitive to the politics of difference could do very well in this brave new world of 'widening participation', refusing to exclude anyone from the processes of capitalist social reproduction (Giroux, 1988; 2004). Let me be absolutely clear: I am not 'against' critical pedagogy, but *for* the extension of thinking on teaching and learning beyond narrow normative theses on what higher education ought to be, in virtue of our actions. Something is missing from the nascent dialogue in Anglophone human geography – theses on what higher education ever more is, in spite of our beliefs; theses on the *necessary conditions for* and *unintended consequences of* teaching and learning, in terms not only of 'isolated relations of domination' but also of 'the capitalist system as a whole'. It is not that the transition from elite to mass to universal higher education is a bad thing, but that the lack of dialogue around the penetration and colonization of the university by the wants of the capitalist state should be deeply troubling. If this sounds rather too 'structuralist' (did somebody say 'determination in the last instance?'), then let me give the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills the last word. The DIUS tell us that 'world class', twenty-first-century higher education needs to 'break down the barriers between ...' (2007: 47). Who, exactly? Teachers and learners? Students and the wider world? Sadly, no: '... universities, colleges and employers' (2007: 47).

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Part III: 'Race' and racism in the classroom – looking back on anger

1 Introduction

For the past 12 years, I have taught an interdisciplinary course entitled "'Race' and Racism'. This is a third-year course with an enrolment ranging from 75 to 100 students. In a university at which fewer than 20% are students of color, my classroom stands out for its diversity. Typically, the students of color make up about a third of the class. The course has always proven a significant challenge, both intellectually and emotionally, as we struggle to work through the often emotionally fraught environment of a classroom in which students are coming to terms with themselves, their colleagues, and the wider social environment that many had not before thought of as racialized (Kobayashi, 1999). The experience and acknowledgement of racialization as an affective driver of everyday life works in tense dialectic with the pedagogic project of theorizing the complex historical project of creating Others.

One of the affective results of coming to terms with racialization is anger, sometimes felt by white students for whom the attempt to understand racism as a social process comes too close to personal experience, sparking both white guilt and resentment that all white people are 'blamed' for something that is beyond their control. In contrast, students of color experience anger cast mainly toward the university administration that has been so slow to recognize their experiences of campus life and to initiate anti-racist programs, and toward white students in the class who do not seem to 'get' it. They too resent the often implicit understanding that they speak on behalf of their race. Tutorials run by very skillful teaching assistants can become tense.

In this reflection, I work through the dialectic of theory and emotion in the production of racialized anger in the classroom, using ideas derived from Jean-Paul Sartre's discussion of

constituting Others. I do so with a marked sense of irony, given the famous exchange between Sartre and Franz Fanon, who took up Sartre's philosophical writings with enthusiasm during the 1950s as a basis for understanding the production of the colonial Other and the process of objectification that allowed the western world to dehumanize and subjugate the colonized. Fanon eventually condemned Sartre, however, for what he saw as the appropriation of negritude to a history of consciousness.² I cannot, of course, begin to do justice to the debate between Fanon and Sartre here, except to say that it came about in the development of what Sartre saw as situated ethics, or the historical conditions under which human relationships take shape and are situated in the world. Sartre's thinking on this topic is profoundly geographic, and provides a theoretical basis for understanding the situation of anger in the classroom. But it was also his failure to understand the experience of living in black skin that provoked Fanon's anger. The irony, then, is that the most profound theoretical insights are subject to transformation when actually situated. This irony extends to the relationship between white students and students of color in the classroom.

2 *Situating others in the classroom*

I begin the course by asking participants to look around the room and recognize that, on the basis of socially constructed physical characteristics, there are those in the class who have experienced everyday racism (Essed, 1991) and those who have not. They all know who they are, but what does the Other know? This initial exercise of 'seeing' the Other provides a starting point for discussing the process of racialization. I ask them to think about what it might mean to wear the skin of the Other, and to use those thoughts as a basis for cultivating respect and informed dialogue. I ask them to think about the *act* of looking and what it means for both the objectification of the Other

as well as the initiation of human relationship. The 'ordinary appearance' of the Other (Sartre, 1956: 228) thus becomes the basis for what will become over the course of the term a collective effort to understand racialization as a form of human relationship.

Set in motion by the act of looking, the geography of the classroom is an expression of 'human reality in situation' (Sartre, 1956: 544). Sartre used this phrase near the end of *Being and nothingness* to clarify what I believe is one of the most important – and most overlooked – aspects of his influential work: that ontology, or the understanding of what *is*, in itself provides no basis for ethics, which must be developed, and lived, in situ.

To help students situate themselves in relation to others, I engage them in a pedagogic 'trick'. I ask them to close their eyes and then, immediately, to think of a 'typical American' and open their eyes quickly. The trick has worked for over a decade: the vast majority of the class acknowledges that the image that came to mind was that of an able-bodied white man. The subsequent discussion of why almost no one thinks of a black woman, Asian man, or any other marginal stereotype, provokes a thoughtful and introspective exercise in imagining the self in relation to others within a socially constructed world. It propels them into an understanding of themselves as part of an ongoing social discourse constructing racialized stereotypes, and it focuses their attention on the act of looking as a discursive act.

I attempt to encourage their engagement in their own discursive acts using a number of other introductory techniques. We break into small groups of two or three to explore common – and uncommon – experiences; we play a game of 'Anti-racist Jeopardy' in tutorial groups; and we act out skits that demonstrate discourses of everyday racism, through which people not only think about wearing the skin of the Other, but also start to think about what it means to inhabit their own skin. The impossibility of the former

forces an existential evaluation of the latter. Thus seemingly frivolous exercises create an atmosphere in which students open themselves to the prospect of learning from and about Others.

These simple exercises are excellent pedagogic tools, but they do not in themselves provide a basis for anti-racism. Rather, taken alone, they run the risk of being interpreted as 'diversity' exercises. The diversity discourse is a dangerous one because it tends to subsume racialized experience within a universal and normalized view of difference as something that everyone wears as a badge of identity. Everyone is different, and therefore we are all basically the same (under the skin). Because the diversity myth has become so pervasive in contemporary social and institutional settings, it is one of the most obdurate forms of backlash against anti-racism. While the exercises can play a very helpful role, therefore, it is of utmost importance that the concept of anti-racism underlie all the class activities, readings, and lectures.

Those activities constitute a geography of positioning, or spatializing, human relationship. Through an active engagement of one another and the texts that inform their learning, students position themselves through what Sartre calls 'being-for-others'. They are pushed to think about the process of racialization as active social engagement, rather than as a set of ideas, or prejudices, disconnected from history. Guided and hopefully inspired by appropriate readings, they are pushed also to understand racialization as a process that occurs spatially and temporally, through the embodiment of practices such as colonialism, nationalism, and warfare, but also through everyday acts of positioning, Othering, and control. Their actions in reference to one another are thus situated, both in the actual spatial terms of where they sit and how they use their own bodies as part of a racialized discourse, and also as part of a larger historico-geographical project.

Sartre's depiction of situated being-for-others goes much further, however, in establishing a geography of human relationship. Although he never uses the term 'geography' his examples always occur *somewhere*: on a street, in a hallway, on top of a wall. He *sites* every human act, in a setting in which human beings engage one another, constitute the Other as object, primarily through the active form of meeting face-to-face, looking one another in the eye (see especially 'The Look', 1956: 228–79). Such ordinary, everyday encounters are always first self-referential and simultaneously an act of organizing the world, or, to use a geographical term, constituting a *landscape* of related things. The act of establishing relationship, for Sartre, *transcends distance*, and in the process *unfolds spatiality* (p. 230), so that Others 'belong ... to my distances' (p. 231). That distance has a certain modality, filled by affect – jealousy, passion, disinterest – as the way of being through which the Other is constituted. Moreover, and most importantly, the process is recursive and mutually constitutive: a multiplicity of people constitute those around them, as the self becomes 'spatializing-spatialized' (p. 242). In such acts the Other either remains an object, or is constituted as a subject.

The implications of Sartre's work for understanding the affective spatiality of human relations are far-reaching and as yet little explored by geographers.³ I shall not attempt to go further with these ideas here, but only to point out that reading Sartre's concept of spatiality through a geographical lens allows us to understand any social process as placed or situated, spatial, affective, and transformative. In a classroom setting, the pedagogic value of such an approach lies in recognizing the specific ways in which transformation of self/knowledge occurs by instituting relations among students.

Of course what I have just stated is mere ontology, a claim about the fundamental quality of human relationships. It is the move from ontology to ethics that is important,

and this move depends upon the ways in which modality and affect – both contingent – are worked out in any specific landscape, as people look one another in the eye. Also, for all that Sartre took pains to point out the need to go beyond ontology, he never really did so. His subsequent contributions (especially 1991), while saying much about the social construction of history and the formation of social projects, do not engage the ethics of personal relations. Anti-racist scholars such as Fanon and Said (see Said, 1981), however, provide graphic accounts of the epistemic violence that the racist gaze invokes, and of the inescapability of that process (for excellent spatialized accounts of Fanon's racialized look, see Bhabha, 1994: 41–43; Razack, 1998: 1–22) as colonial history is revisioned in each new encounter. The goal in the classroom, therefore, must be to disrupt the gaze, shift the positionality, through which everyone involved constitutes the Other, and to do so in such a way that the tensions that result are positive. Getting to anti-racism, however, is not a straightforward process.

3 From diversity to anti-racism: working through anger

I find it quite helpful to think of the process of becoming anti-racist along the lines of Kübler-Ross's (1969) five stages of coming to terms with grief: denial, anger, negotiation, depression, acceptance. This model has of course been interpreted in any number of scenarios, but my observations of students' struggles to engage anti-racism tell me that it works as a useful heuristic to depict this journey, although not everyone goes through all the stages and they do not always occur in rote order. Here, I wish only to address the first two, denial and anger.

The collective journey from diversity to anti-racism is troubled and troubling. Not all students want to take the journey to its conclusion. As a confirmed anti-racist who believes that the diversity myth is one of the major impediments to overcoming racism,

I often find it difficult and frustrating to confront the barriers that students place around themselves during the denial stage, using the concept of diversity as a shield.

For white students, denial is most commonly expressed along two lines of logic: (1) Canada is a liberal country in which multiculturalism and diversity are valued, so racism is either a thing of the past or something practiced by a few individuals (the 'bad apples' argument); and (2) just look around and see all the diversity in the university as an indication of how open our society is. If people think they experience racism in this setting, then either they were unlucky enough to encounter one of those bad apples, or they did something – such as not conforming to Canadian 'values', or being overly sensitive – to warrant being treated differently.

Students in the denial stage respond very well to readings on the history of racism, addressing past practices that can be surveyed and judged from a temporal distance. They also respond well to readings about the extreme forms of racism such as that practiced by radical white supremacists, who clearly fit the bad apple archetype. They can view the products of racist hate by lurking on the internet, also at a safe distance from the everyday encounter.

They can also justify denial by acknowledging their own privilege. Peggy McIntosh's (1989) famous essay on the knapsack full of white privilege is extremely well received, both because it provokes a thoughtful analysis of how privilege works to construct the Other, but *also* because it affirms that privilege. Students can acknowledge their privilege as a denial of individual complicity in the process of racialization, but they still have the power to name their privilege. The paradox of acknowledgement is thus another form of privilege. Recognizing this troubling outcome of what has become one of the most widely read undergraduate readings ever, I still assign it, but with the clear intent of using it as one very important stage on the road to anti-racism.

Denial can turn to anger, however, when the class material shifts to talk about everyday racism. We use Philomena Essed's (1991) concept of everyday racism because it provides what she calls a 'heuristic' for understanding how racialized minorities experience common and often subtle acts that are imbued with racialized meaning, the acts that exclude, belittle, other. Essed's most important point is that racialized people know when they are being racialized, even if the process is not apparent to those who do not experience it. When I take up the issues in lecture, and provide them with a series of examples of the ways meant to have meaning in their own lives (see Kobayashi, 1999, for a description of these examples), the effect is quite dramatic.

I see the effect from my position at the front of the classroom, in the eyes that look back at me. Some are quizzical: surely this is not the racism of history and the extreme right that they expect to analyze and condemn? Some are appalled to hear of situations that sound familiar to them and to realize their own complicity in constructing a racialized world. Eyes widen, hands fly to mouths, and – unless quickly dealt with by myself and the teaching assistants – the corrosive process of white guilt can set in. Still others look away, sink lower in seats. A few look back in anger, defiant, faces set in opposition. Few students take Essed's erudite analysis as simply an academic exercise, then. It hits them between the eyes. It situates them within a racialized social field that is ripe for anger as students resist the personal implications of understanding everyday racism.

On one occasion, a student stalked to the front of the room after class to confront me: 'Why do you stand up there and just try to make me feel guilty?' Wow, talk about a pedagogic moment! When this incident occurred some years ago, I realized the need to take a different approach that would offset the unspoken anger that flashed from eyes unwilling to accept this new view of racism. By speaking of racism as something

lived outside textbooks and the internet, I had become no longer the authoritative professor, but the transgressor. I had intruded into their personal space, and I needed to reposition the classroom. I was, spatializing, spatialized.

One should not take lightly the power of the professorial gaze, nor use it to detrimental effect. At moments such as the one I have described, fraught with the complex anxiety that occurs when personal experiences collide with what many students hope will be the much less ethically complex demands of academic success, things can go off the rails quite easily. Students may resent not only the fact that by speaking of everyday racism I have intruded upon the personal, but also that I have the power, they fear, to use the personal as a basis for academic evaluation. Anger mixed with a fear of 'saying the wrong thing' can stifle classroom exchange with all the force of a prison lockdown.

The challenge, then, is to move past the anger. While I do not claim to have all the answers, I have over the years learned a great deal about the range of actions that work. I try not to be provocative for no reason, while recognizing that if my words do not provoke serious response then students will not push themselves to see differently. I never, ever, call out individuals, even when they express troubling racist views; rather, I address the problematic idea in private, at another time, or in a way that does not personalize the analysis. I initiate conversations about respect, acknowledgement, willingness to change. Then, when the environment seems right, I come back to McIntosh and try to convey the idea that thinking about privilege, feeling guilty, even feeling angry, are all privileged ways of being that emphasize difference, and create distance between people. When the students are ready to hear it, that conversation can be very effective. I also try to encourage thinking about the power of racialization coming from its multifaceted modality, a process that is simultaneously economic, political, historical, cultural, emotional, and, of

course, geographical. Indeed, discussions of spatiality as recursive can be very effective in getting past anger.

Notwithstanding all these attempts, however, last year I faced a situation in class that was completely new. I had invited a student anti-racist activist to come to class to talk about some campus issues that had caused a great deal of tension. In particular, a report citing a 'culture of whiteness' (Henry, 2004) had been submitted earlier in the year. The report had met outright indignation by some members of faculty and alumni, to the point that individuals involved in generating the report had received hate mail. Many others had downplayed the results or depicted the concept of whiteness as reverse racism. A large number of people were making sincere efforts to understand why this depiction of everyday racism was so different from the established understanding of racism as history and bad apples, and a small but vocal group of students, staff, and faculty had organized to implement programs to address racism on campus.

The presentation covered a series of events over the past century to document the emergence of a culture of whiteness on campus. The students seemed interested, and their interest seemed to increase as events closer to the present filled the power-point screen. The ensuing conversation was lively, so much so that when the buzzer sounded to end class only a few students left their seats. Most of the class stayed. Not wanting to interrupt what was clearly an important conversation for all concerned, I allowed it to continue until, nearly an hour later, the tone of conversation between the student activist and some of the white class members became heated, at which point I quickly brought the session to an end. Apparently not quickly enough, however; what I had taken for an engaged and constructive conversation had actually been much more upsetting. The majority of the class, white and not white, came to subsequent tutorials angry. They told the teaching assistants how

inappropriate they thought the presentation had been. They were clearly offended to see the community to which they were strongly attached depicted as racialized. They were quick to assert their commitment to overcoming racism but to condemn this particular approach as too radical.

This event created another of those pedagogic moments at which I was forced to rethink my own role in the classroom and pushed to develop a new approach to anger. What made this event – which in many ways is typical of scenarios occurring on any Canadian campus, or any campus throughout the world – different? Why was the anger so much stronger than anything that I had previously encountered? Sartre's ideas of spatialization, power, and situated ethics can help to answer these questions.

In the recursive relationship of spatialization, it matters who the subjects are. I was an observer on the sidelines in this exchange between students, the force of my gaze diminished. While I maintained the power to influence the conversation in significant ways, I had retreated in such a way that the power relations among the students could be exercised on a more equal basis, allowing what was probably a more frank and heated discussion than could ever take place under professorial authority. More importantly, the student presenter had strategically engaged the class by overcoming the distance at which they had previously set their understanding of racism. She had encroached upon their sense of personal space much more forcefully than I or the teaching assistants had ever done. The geography of the classroom closed in, forcing a situation of personal ethics that could not be set aside, not a situation that most students expect to encounter in a classroom.

The dilemmas are profound. Should one assert more professorial authority in such a situation or less? Was resolution of the issues advanced through this discussion or were positions merely entrenched? What

are the ethical bounds of discomfort in the classroom, and how are those bounds influenced by the distinction between anger that leads to learning and anger that only hurts? Does anger have any place in the classroom at all? What rights do students have not to have their anger provoked?

In retrospect, I do not view that situation as a constructive one, although many of the students subsequently made constructive analyses of the events that day. What could/should an instructor have done differently? I should not have let the conversation go on, but should have organized a different setting, such as the tutorial groups, where the spatialization of subjects is less likely to create confrontation than in the larger and more agonistic atmosphere of the lecture hall. I would not want to stifle anger, even if it were possible, but, rather, to encourage a form of anger that is more self-reflective, that engages seriously the construction of meaning and ethics in what Sartre calls 'being-for-others'. This year, I plan to be even more open at the start of the term about the affective aspects of racialization, asking students to think about the seemingly unavoidable emotions that come with anti-racist pedagogy but also to work towards going beyond those emotions in constructive ways.

But I have left out a major part of the story. Also in class that day was a group of students of color for whom the student presentation was not radical at all, but only an accurate depiction of their experiences. They were angry too, but for different reasons.

4 Looking back in anger: students of color in the classroom

By now it will be clear that there are certain parallels between the Sartre-Fanon relationship and that developing between white and not-white students in the classroom. The majority of white students make sincere efforts but never quite overcome their distance from the Others. Of course the

condition of alterity makes complete transcendence an impossibility and any (every) attempt to do so an example of what Sartre calls 'bad faith'. In believing that they can 'help' to overcome racism, they actually reconstituted difference, privileging themselves as the anti-oppressors. Students of color do not buy it.

My constant hope is that by the end of term all students have thought deeply about racialization as a mode of 'being-with' Others (Sartre, 1956: 337–408). But students of color too go through stages of denial and anger that influence their capacity of being-for-others, and profoundly alter the spatiality of the classroom. The denial stage is typically expressed through diversity talk, as students explore how racism was something experienced by their parents or grandparents, but something that they can transcend as individuals. On one occasion, a student in the commerce program challenged the general claim that business practices can overcome racism through 'diversity'. As a class project, she identified several situations in the commerce faculty that she viewed as racialized, including the fact that at the start of the academic year the student association had refused to participate in the anti-racist training that is a traditional part of student orientation. She developed an anti-racism training course tailored for the commerce faculty, and went public with her program. The backlash was considerable and came, ironically, from other students of color who claimed that she was stirring up trouble, creating a situation where none existed. Their denial of any issues of racialization turned to anger heaped personally upon the student who had originally thought that her efforts would be welcomed as a contribution to the faculty as a whole. In the course of the controversy, involving letters back and forth in the student newspaper, the student in question raised the issue in my class, asking class members for support. Several other members of the commerce

faculty, also students of color, began hurling insults at her from the back of the classroom. Of course I shut down this behaviour immediately, but could not do so before the student left the room in tears. In this case, the teaching assistants and I could intercede effectively by providing support to the student ostracized by her peers and by speaking strongly in private to the students who had attacked her. But their reaction illustrated a common discourse of resistance and denial identified by many scholars as typical of 'new racism' (Henry and Tator, 2006: 22–29). Each year since, similar controversies have arisen, but I always take time near the beginning of term to emphasize that the isolation of individuals is not acceptable.

More difficult, however, is the anger expressed by students of color toward white students. Especially near the start of term, white students feeling their way towards anti-racism frequently make comments that can at best be understood as uninformed and at worst be construed as outright racism. Such comments are especially common in expressing islamophobia, where the conversation often turns to 'culture', or 'values', in conjunction with a denial of racism ("they" need to understand "our" values"). Muslim students have come to me after class angry because instead of condemning such comments as racist I tend to ask the commenter to reflect on the meaning of 'our' values. I believe that such a response carries more pedagogic value because it forestalls the unconstructive anger, resentment, or guilt that I have described above; yet it does not satisfy the Muslim woman who feels silenced and Othered by the conversation. My strategy here is to explain to the angry student why I take the approach that I do, and to wait for a week or two before reintroducing the issue in a way that will not focus on the individual who made the original remark, hoping that intervening readings and discussion will have moved the entire class to think differently. The spatialization

of human relations in the classroom thus also involves temporal distance as an effective discursive strategy.

Yet no discursive strategy had prepared me for the diverse reactions that occurred in response to the student activist described above. Even as many of the white students, and not a few students of color, became angry with what they saw as her radical politics, there was a group of students of color sitting at the front of the class who became equally angry with their classmates. One student dropped the course in frustration, claiming that it was a waste of her time to be in class with white students who were so racist, ill-informed, and politically apathetic. Others, after long conversations with me and with the teaching assistants and strategic discussions among themselves, decided to stay but remained angry. They felt that they could not advance their own anti-racist development when so many of the class did not 'get it'. When Essed's concept of everyday racism was discussed in tutorial, they resented the fact that the only way to get across to white colleagues was to recount their own personal stories, only to have those stories challenged as being about something else, not racism. In other words, the Essedian concept that racialized people know when they are being raced was challenged by white students who did not acknowledge their positionality in claiming to judge when Others experienced racism and when they did not. White students failed to *see* racism for themselves; therefore it was not. Thus racialized through the very process of denial, the students of color were mad.

No classroom situation will transcend the anger that refers to hundreds of years of colonial relations lived in the everyday situation of students of color as Other. They transcend denial either with anger towards other students of color, as in the first example, or with anger towards white students, as in the second. The challenge is to question how such students can channel anger sufficiently to engage in effective anti-racist

activism. Some students have used class projects as creative means of constituting alternate futures: not only through traditional essays but also in art projects, music, dance, poetry, and the creation of participatory training practices. Still others become more active outside the classroom in political lobbying or developing campus-wide programs through the Queen's Coalition against Racial and Ethnic Discrimination (QCRED).⁴ Do these projects quell the anger? Not necessarily, but they were conceived in anger and have been developed as a means of focusing attention on the need for anti-racism.

5 Transcending anger: new directions

A new academic term approaches as I write and my thoughts turn to new challenges. I have no wish to promote the anger that occurred in last year's classroom. Not only would it be unethical to do so, but anger does not promote constructive learning. It leads to resentment and may only reinforce racist attitudes. It corrodes human relationships. I intend therefore to build upon some of the lessons used in past experience to work through anger, and other forms of non-constructive emotion, by maintaining the position that anti-racist education is based on political action, where theory, practice, and personal experience provide a tripartite basis for understanding and ameliorating the effects of racialization (see Dei, 1996).

The immediate challenge is to address the spatialized human relations of the classroom by placing a stronger emphasis on the concept of what Anne Bishop (2002) calls 'becoming an ally'. The QCRED website cites the following quotation attributed to Lila Watson: 'If you have come to help me then you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.'⁵ It is difficult to move Canadian students beyond the helpful modality that most of them bring to a class in anti-racism. It is a particular feature of our liberal democracy that middle-class kids

are brought up to be helpful. They remain most comfortable talking about diversity and situating their privilege. My hope is to shift them away from that position not by angering them but by encouraging them to work as allies. It is a risky pedagogic strategy, but anger is riskier.

Finally, I need to acknowledge my own subject positioning and occasional anger, without falling into the trap of privileging my power by naming it as I see students doing with Peggy McIntosh's knapsack. I can do so only by recognizing that I too need to learn to be an ally, of all students, white and not white, and by acknowledging the ironic situation in which the professorial position is spatializing-spatialized.

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Part IV: Pedagogies of scale – universality and particularity in geographic education

Geography ... must teach us, from our earliest childhood, that we are all brethren, whatever our nationality. (Kropotkin, 1885)

Writing over a century ago, Peter Kropotkin (1885) proclaimed that teachers should do more than disseminate tedious facts to their students. Geographers should engender within students an understanding of values such as social justice and egalitarianism. However, this vision has been marginalized by those who promote Geography as a value-neutral deductive science or by those who condemn civil rights advocacy in academia as subversive (Fish, 2003). Further complicating the role played by values in geographic education is the question of whose values take precedence. Modernist ideas that evolved out of the eighteenth-century 'Age of Enlightenment' (eg, positivism and rational individualism) served as the foundation for learning in industrial democracies. However, postmodern critics of the late twentieth

century argued that the western 'canon of ideas', with their pretensions to universality, had suppressed voices from the non-western periphery. If this is true, then critical geographers must provide pedagogical space at the core for ideas from the geographical and philosophical periphery.

However, by acknowledging non-western ideas critical geographers perpetuate the universal values they are trying to overcome. They do so because to recognize and respect an alternative viewpoint, even if you do not agree with it, is an expression of the 'Golden Rule', which asks us to 'treat others as you would have them treat you'. Its universal status is conferred by its inclusion in both Testaments of the Bible, the Quran, the Confucian Analects, and many other foundational texts (Merrett, 2004).

Paradoxically, the critique of western metanarratives based on the metanarrative of the Golden Rule (ie, fair treatment for different cultures) leads to an ineluctable dialectic of universality and particularity that we cannot transcend because 'universality always exists in relation to particularity: neither can be separated from one another even though they are distinctive moments' in both history and geography (Harvey, 2001: 194).

How then, can teachers of critical geography explain seemingly contradictory truths? I suggest that a tolerance for *ambiguity* inherent in the dialectic between the universal and the particular offers a pedagogical and theoretical toe hold. In the case of contending modernist versus postmodernist discourses described above, most people have chosen sides. A tolerance for ambiguity instilled in students will allow them to move beyond simple binary conclusions to see that both sides have something valuable to say about the human condition.

I begin to explore this dialectical pedagogy by examining the interplay of 'truths' operating at different scales using an example from Mexico. This illustrates how individual rights can conflict with group rights. Section 2

discusses the underlying ambiguity in competing truths by referring to Kurt Gödel's 'incompleteness theorem'. The final section uses the Mexican example and Gödel's theorem to show how the progressive pedagogical strategies of Peter Kropotkin, Antonio Gramsci, and Paulo Freire can be enhanced by incorporating geographic scale as an active element in critical pedagogy.

1 The scale dimension of universal truths

Critical geographers tread a fine line when they teach. When they show respect for non-western cultures, they are sometimes disparagingly called 'cultural relativists'. But the promotion of universal democratic values risks marginalizing non-western cultures. The following situation in Mexico illustrates how competing truths operating at different scales can complicate how we teach Geography.

An indigenous woman in the Mexican state of Oaxaca was recently denied the right to run as a candidate in a local mayoral election even though she had a university degree and was gainfully employed at a local school (Associated Press, 2008). The denial occurred because she wanted to become mayor of an indigenous Zapotec village that fought for centuries to retain local customs – one of which is to exclude women from community leadership positions. This example shows the clash of two universal truths operating at different geographic scales. On the one hand, Mexico has codified in its constitution the importance of individual rights as a universal value. Hence, this woman was able to leave her village, get a college education, and presume to run for public office. On the other hand, the Mexican constitution has since 2001 allowed indigenous communities to govern themselves according to traditional customs.

The Mexican government made this change in response to indigenous uprisings in Chiapas and protests by human rights groups from around the world demanding greater respect for indigenous cultures. The

clash is therefore between universal rights of the individual versus cultural rights of the community. Despite her initial defeat, she has appealed her case to higher levels of government because the Mexican Constitution states that indigenous customs only apply as long as individual rights are not transgressed. Yet no government agency has formally supported her cause. Furthermore, an estimated one-fourth of all indigenous communities in Mexico continue to disregard women's rights, despite constitutional protections. Ironically, human rights groups that promote the universal right of indigenous cultures to protect their traditions have compromised women's political participation within those communities.

In order to help students reconcile the contending claims of individual versus community rights, Kurt Gödel's 'incompleteness theorem' can help develop a scale-based pedagogy. The next section employs this theorem to suggest that the ability to embrace ambiguity is integral to our pursuit for truth and meaning.

2 All metanarratives are false!

The attempt to reconcile paradoxes and dialectical relations has a long history. The sixth-century BC Cretan philosopher Epimenides stated that 'All Cretans are liars' (Hofstadter, 1979: 17), but because Epimenides was a Cretan his universal statement contains a self-referential paradox that cannot be reconciled. More recently, Einstein's theory of relativity and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle had unmoored the assumptions of Newtonian physics and Euclidian mathematics. The rising ambiguity at the heart of scientific logic prompted Gödel to ponder how mathematical proofs are derived. His response was based on transposing Epimenides' paradox into mathematical terms. Paraphrased, his theorem says: 'All consistent axiomatic formulations of number theory include undecidable propositions' (Hofstadter, 1979: 17). More simply, Gödel

showed that some mathematical systems may contain 'statements that cannot be proved true or false inside that system' (Boxer, 1998: A17).

The following couplet illustrates the problem Gödel was trying to solve (Hofstadter, 1979: 21):

The following sentence is false.
The preceding sentence is true.

Neither sentence is extraordinary on its own. However, when combined as related axioms, the logical inconsistency is obvious. This scientific ambiguity prompted some postmodernists to take Gödel's theorem to mean that there are no universal truths. But Gödel was not abandoning the pursuit of truth. He was trying to understand how ambiguity in the empirical world could fit into a logical metanarrative. He was also motivated by the epistemological rigidity of his colleagues in the Vienna Circle of philosophers. Gödel worried that their logical positivism limited the pursuit of truth. He was a platonic idealist who believed that some things were true even though they could not be proved in an internally logical system. Logic can have 'nonrational, though not irrational' elements at its very core (Byers, 2007: B12). This point is illustrated in the phrase 'All metanarratives are false'.

Gödel prompts a more careful look at the idea of ambiguity, which occurs when something can be seen from two or more conflicting viewpoints. As a geographical metaphor, ambiguity can help us to consider processes operating at different scales. Byers (2007) argues that binocular vision is a good metaphor for ambiguity:

When you look at things out of one eye, the world seems flat and two-dimensional. However, when you use both eyes, the inconsistent viewpoints registered by each eye combine in the brain to produce a unified view that includes something entirely new: depth perception. In the same way, the conflicting points of view in an ambiguous situation may give birth to a new, higher-order understanding. (Byers, 2007: B12)

As a metaphor, ambiguity can be used to help teach complex concepts. As an example, consider again Enlightenment ideas such as deductive reasoning and economic individualism that are condemned now for perpetuating social inequalities. In the eighteenth century, these ideas helped undermine the religious and monarchical power structures which oppressed the lives of common people in Feudal and Renaissance Europe.

The life of Edward Said represents another example of paradox and ambiguity. The dialectical trajectory of his personal and intellectual life shows how particularity intertwines with universality. He was a Palestinian-Christian born in Jerusalem. As a Harvard-trained professor of literature at Columbia University, he was an effective critic of the western canon. His book *Orientalism* (1978) attacked the intellectual and political practices of the west, which when touted as universal values, diminished non-western ideas. Said is celebrated as a post-colonial theorist who laid bare the global pretensions of Eurocentrism. Said (2001) was also a Juilliard-trained classical pianist who loved to play Mozart. The paradox is that Mozart was a product of the Enlightenment, who included 'Orientalist' themes in his work. Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* is a 'good versus evil' drama about a western European hero who rescues his lover from an Ottoman Sultan. Not only did Said embrace Mozart's music, but he actively promoted classical music through the Palestine Mozart Festival and the Edward Said Conservatory at Birzeit University, located on the West Bank.

Does this mean we should disregard his postcolonial writing because he plays classical music? No, this ambiguity is just the dialectical expression of particularity and universality played out in the life of a single person. It also provides a pedagogical case study. As teachers we know how some students tend to see issues in 'black and white'. But educational psychologists confirm that tolerance for ambiguity is correlated

with higher levels of critical thinking and open-mindedness (DeRoma *et al.*, 2003; Kroll, 2006). Therefore, ambiguity is not a problem to be avoided. Students should be exposed to ambiguity because they will perform better academically and be more accepting of diverse ideas. The next section discusses how ambiguity and geographic scale can inform critical pedagogy.

3 *Geographical scale as part of critical pedagogy*

Depending on one's viewpoint, formal education serves one of two roles: maintain the social status quo or promote social change. This section describes three teachers who embraced the latter rationale, but whose pedagogy neglects the importance of geographic scale.

In the nineteenth century, Geographers embraced environmental determinism because its link to evolutionary theory gave it a veneer of scientific credibility. That it used biological analogy to explain why nation states must grow through military force shows that geographers willingly served the purposes of nationalism, imperialism and colonialism. Kropotkin (1885) offered a different view. He was a Russian noble who abandoned his privileged life to become an anarchist geographer. He believed that the forces of modernity such as capitalism caused social inequality. To promote social justice, geographers should teach students about regional differences – but also about shared problems such as working-class oppression.

He also criticized how geography was taught. He implied that *how* one teaches is as important as *what* one teaches. Instead of the rote learning and social control found in most schools, Kropotkin advocated a student-centered teaching style that promoted self-discovery, a joy for learning, and the respect for others.

While Kropotkin offers refreshing insights, his focus on the local neglects how many societies are based on oppressive local social relations. The Mexican example above confirms that point. Additionally, Kropotkin's embrace of scientific discovery is itself based on the rationalist ideals of the Enlightenment. The point is that progressive values can exist at the local scale or the universal (Table 1). Similarly, oppressive social processes can operate at the local scale (eg, patriarchy in the household) or at the global scale (eg, colonialism).

While Kropotkin emphasized the local scale, the Marxist philosopher (and occasional geography teacher) Antonio Gramsci emphasized the universal scale. Gramsci, born in Southern Italy in 1891, recognized that capitalist class relations helped cause the regional inequalities afflicting Italy. Like Kropotkin before him, he thought that social change could occur through education. However, his curricula and pedagogy differed from that of Kropotkin. Gramsci believed that workers could only overturn the hegemony of the capitalist class by learning the hegemonic ideas of the capitalist class – that is, the western canon. He also favored strict teachers who

Table 1 Status quo and emancipatory pedagogy

Pedagogical issue	Status quo pedagogy	Emancipatory pedagogy
Role of school	Social control	Social liberation
Role of student	Passive learners	Active learners
Teacher's role	Authoritarian	Agent of social change
Learning process	Rote learning	Collaborative problem solving
Scale of values: Freire and Kropotkin	Universal	Local
Scale of values: Gramsci	Local	Universal
Scale of values: Pedagogy of scale	Universal/local	Universal/local

Source: Adapted from Merrett (2004).

controlled the flow of ideas in the classroom. Gramsci agrees with Kropotkin about the emancipatory goals of education, but he disagrees on the pedagogy needed and the scale at which progressive values might be discerned (Table 1).

Paulo Freire (1998) further describes the emancipatory role for education. He was born into a middle class Brazilian family that was plunged into poverty during the 1929 depression. This first-hand experience with poverty profoundly shaped his life. In graduate school, he developed an adult literacy program. Its success prompted the Brazilian president to implement the plan nationally. This was revolutionary because illiterate citizens could not vote in Brazil. As more Brazilians learned to read, the more the working class could participate in democracy. These plans were cut short in 1964 by a military coup. Freire was imprisoned for subversive activities and then forced into exile for 16 years (Mayo, 1999).

Freire saw schools as sites for promoting social change. The military junta that imprisoned him thought otherwise. Like Kropotkin, Freire argued that how we teach is as important as what we teach. He empowered students by valuing their local life experiences. He argued that knowledge was not some *a priori* system that students should be forced to learn through rote memorization. It is actively constructed by students as they openly interact with their teachers and community. This approach runs against Gramsci's view that the working class will only advance by mastering the ideas of the ruling class.

This paradox can be resolved by recognizing that progressive ideas originate from local or global sources (Table 1). It is one task of the geography teacher to explain how the scale at which a movement originates does not determine its emancipatory value. Only by comparing the defining values of two clashing social systems can we deduce whether the local or the universal is more progressive. Simply put, the 'contemporary

'radical' critique of universalism is sadly misplaced. It should focus instead on the specific institutions of power that translate between particularity and universality rather than attack universalism per se' (Harvey, 2001: 194).

Consider again the ideas of Said. His critique of Eurocentrism is Freirian in its defense of non-western culture, diverse viewpoints and local knowledge. On the other hand, Said's devotion to Mozart, including his support for a Mozart Festival and music conservatory in Palestine reflects Gramscian pedagogy. This is not a coincidence. At a global scale, Said used *Orientalism* to attack the hegemony of western discourse. At the same time, he taught classical music to Palestinians to help them to master 'the dominant culture in order to transform it' (Mayo, 1999: 51). This political strategy unveils the false dichotomy between Gramsci's call for education steeped in rational thought and Freire's embrace of local knowledge.

The broader point is that rigid pedagogies are limiting because all knowledge is contextual. We can use our geographical knowledge about *where* and *what* we are teaching to adjust *how* we teach. This requires critical geographers to understand that progressive ideals are not tied to any particular scale, and that, consequently, a critical pedagogy needs to consciously incorporate a dialectical understanding of scale and tolerance of ambiguity. This 'pedagogy of scale' moves beyond simple notions of status quo (or universal) ideals versus revolutionary (or particular) ideals to teach students about the transcendent values of egalitarianism and tolerance.

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Part V: A People's Guide to Los Angeles – an experiment in popular geography

A People's Guide to Los Angeles (PGTLA) is a collaborative attempt to document the city's marginalized histories of community,

solidarity, and struggle. The *POTLA* seeks to disrupt mainstream accounts of the city's history that center on politicians, wealthy investors, real estate developers, and Hollywood celebrities by chronicling the struggles of everyday people. A counterhegemonic tour guide as well as a meditation on history and landscape, the *POTLA* offers diverse audiences an accessible analysis of how power is embedded in place.

From its inception in 2000, the project has grown in its size, scope, and format. It began in casual conversation, developed into a poster, expanded into a website, and has been utilized in walking tours and exhibits. As of this writing, we – an interdisciplinary team of four scholars inside and outside of the academy – are preparing the *People's Guide* for publication as a coffee-table book. The *People's Guide* has shifted from an individual project to a collective one, and as such it offers important lessons and contributions to popular geography. What follows below are the reflections of two of the team members on the various ways in which the *People's Guide* is 'popular' and the challenges we faced at different stages of the project. The 'voice' we use in the essay shifts from Pulido's first-person reflections on the history of the project, which she originated, to our collective reflections on how it has evolved.

1 A popular process

The initial idea for the *POTLA* came from a book project that I, Laura Pulido, was working on, *Black, brown, yellow and left: radical activism in Los Angeles* (2006). During my research, I uncovered numerous sites where pivotal events had occurred – such as where the Black Panther Party and the Los Angeles Police Department had their final shoot-out, and where the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* worked to support the Mexican Revolution – that were not recorded in standard histories of the city. While sharing this information with friends, local schoolteacher Tony Osumi suggested that these sites should be collected and called 'The People's

Guide to LA'. His idea immediately resonated and for several years I sought out sites that recorded class and racial struggles.

After accumulating approximately 75 sites, I began thinking about producing a book. However, I quickly learned that finding a publisher would not be easy, as the *POTLA* was neither a conventional tour guide nor an academic book. Eventually another friend, Alexis Moreno, suggested first producing a poster, and then using it to attract presses. While this sounded like an excellent plan, the truth was that I had zero graphic and artistic skills, and thus needed collaborators. This was not hard to do. The more I shared the project with others, the more interested and excited people became.

The first people to get involved were graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Southern California, my home institution. Many students – including current co-authors Laura Barraclough and Wendy Cheng, then graduate students in American Studies and Ethnicity – were so excited about the project that they volunteered to research sites and take photos. In addition, there were a few paid student workers. However, funding the *POTLA* was and remains a challenge because it falls in between most funding parameters – it is not a straight scholarly project, nor is it a community organizing initiative. As a partial solution, I siphoned funds from my 'unpopular' research projects to fund the *POTLA*.

One of the most important partnerships we made was with Sharon Sekhon, a recent PhD graduate in history with a passion for social history, a background in advertising, and the technical skills to make the poster a reality. Through Sekhon we applied for a university program to develop media projects, which allowed us to create a web-based version of the *POTLA*. Consequently, a whole new group of students experienced in multimedia joined us. The other critical person we brought into the team was photographer Wendy Cheng. Previous to Cheng we treated the visual as an afterthought, a

mere step in the process. Wendy brought a whole new artistic perspective to the project that has significantly enhanced it and taught us a great deal about the importance of visual communication in a popular project.

Both Barraclough and Sekhon incorporated the *People's Guide* into their teaching by assigning students to research and write site histories for papers and independent studies. We recognized that not only are students 'our first public, for they carry geography into all walks of life' (Ward, 2006: 500), but that the adult and non-traditional students we worked with could be especially important producers (not just consumers) of geographic knowledge. Student projects drew upon their situated and embodied knowledge to fill in crucial gaps about which we had little information, such as sites of transgender activism in Los Angeles.

It was not always easy working with a large team of volunteers. In addition to the usual challenges of coordinating volunteer labor, I realized how hard it was for me to surrender control to cartographers and web-designers. Because I lacked technical knowledge, I had to rely on others more than I would have liked, but, of course, it is precisely such sharing of knowledge and control that makes projects popular. Moreover, I was touched by how many people were drawn to the *PGTLA* and were willing to contribute. Especially exciting was the fact that it inspired Sekhon to create various local history projects that documented some of the sites in greater detail, and to eventually establish the Studio for Southern California History, a museum committed to representing unknown histories. Thus, the *PGTLA* had created a synergy between people with different tools, resources, and visions of popular history and geography.

2 Popular media

We spent many hours debating the form the project should take. My initial impetus was to create a coffee-table book, not only because a book is a format that I feel comfortable

with as an academic, but also because I was drawn to the idea of beautiful photographs of sites of resistance and domination. I liked the idea of subverting the usual purpose and content of a coffee-table book. On the other hand, such a book would be expensive – which somewhat defeats the purpose of a 'popular geography'.

These questions were put on hold for a while as we focused on the other formats. First, there was the poster. Our initial run included 2000 color posters, many of which we gave to local organizations as well as everyone who worked on the project. We donated the remainder of the posters to the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, a private institution located in South Central Los Angeles established by former members of the Communist Party and which documents labor, racial and popular struggles. The Library sold the posters for \$8 each, using the proceeds to help fund its work. The posters were/are especially popular because they are portable, and we later learned that people actually took them into the field to see the sites in person.

After the poster was completed we moved onto the website (www.pgta.org). We felt that this was an essential dimension to a popular project, as it would allow for more people to engage with it. The website not only includes a digital version of the poster, but also allows people to submit their own sites and information. People from as far as Germany, Japan, and New York have used the website and contacted us about it. Conversely, the poster works very well for locals without ready access to the web – a sizeable population given Los Angeles's poverty. The *PGTLA* has also been the source of numerous tours by local community-based organizations and was recently featured in an exhibition on spatial justice at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibits. Again, this allows us to reach many people who do not exist in cyberspace.

Still, we decided to pursue the coffee-table book. We kept returning to the idea

of a beautiful text, filled with striking photos and archival materials dedicated to unraveling the city's complicated power relations. We have never seen anything quite like it, and, although not everyone will be able to afford it, we think it is worth it. Furthermore, we feel confident that the project's multiple formats will allow us to engage publics with diverse resources, skills, and interests (Ward, 2006; 2007a). As of this writing, four of us – Pulido, Barraclough, Sekhon, and Cheng – are in the process of consolidating and refining all of the material collected over almost ten years and preparing it for publication as a moderately priced coffee-table book.

3 *Popular content*

Though the focus of the poster and website was on race and class, our primary goal at this stage is to show through diverse examples how power works. Therefore, our sites collectively demonstrate the interplay between oppression and resistance along multiple axes of struggle. The *People's Guide* includes sites where people have exercised power and oppression against others, including the site of the 1871 Chinatown Massacre and the California Club, a men's club that refused to admit women and comply with non-discrimination legislation as recently as the early 2000s. Other sites highlight the historic everyday landscapes of political leaders, such as the homes of Dorothy Ray Healey, head of the LA branch of the Communist Party, and Upton Sinclair, who led the End Poverty in California (EPIC) campaign in the 1930s. Finally, the *PGTLA* includes sites of successful resistance that are still visible and functional in the landscape, such as EsoWon Books, one of LA's only remaining African American bookstores, and Haramoknga American Indian Cultural Center in the San Gabriel Mountains. To collect this information, we relied upon the memories of activists, friends, family, and staff at local museums and community organizations in addition to archival records and secondary sources. As these people

shared stories of their personal relationships to place, they contributed to the participatory, popular nature of the project and subverted conventional academic notions of 'researcher' and 'researched' (ie, McIntyre, 2003; Pain, 2004).

In order to uncover hidden histories in the landscape, the book juxtaposes archival and contemporary photographs. Figure 1 is a historic photo of the Santa Anita Race-track where Japanese Americans were temporarily held until they were sent to permanent 'relocation centers' during the second world war. The contemporary photo, seen in Figure 2 and taken by Wendy Cheng, demonstrates powerfully not only how everyday places can be turned into sites of state-sponsored terror, but also how that history is obliterated as people now enjoy horse races at Santa Anita devoid of such knowledge. Figure 3 shows what was once the South Central Farm. The Farm was the largest community garden in the USA, cultivated primarily by Latina/o immigrants. However, the farmers were forcibly evicted in June 2006, and the farm bulldozed, because of the city's inability/ unwillingness to acquire the land. This site illustrates how efforts at community empowerment and autonomy can be squelched by the state and capitalist markets.

Many of the struggles that we document in the *People's Guide*, such as the Farm, no longer 'exist' in the physical landscape. This is one of the challenges of examining the constantly shifting landscape as a historical record. Similarly, many of the social movements we identify could be categorized as 'failures'. Some activists and organizations were short-lived at best; viciously repressed, imprisoned, or killed at worst. Still, we believe that documenting their stories allows us to better understand the complex negotiation of power.

We did not always agree on the content of the *PGTLA*. There were (and still are) endless conversations about how to define the project and criteria for inclusion. Some



Figure 1 Japanese Americans arriving at the Santa Anita Racetrack, 1942 (courtesy of *Herald Examiner* Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)



Figure 2 Contemporary photo of Santa Anita Racetrack (courtesy of Wendy Cheng)



Figure 3 The space of the former South Central Farm, Los Angeles, 2007 (courtesy of Wendy Cheng)

of these decisions are constrained simply by the availability of historical materials. For example, while sources on Japanese Americans in Los Angeles are plentiful, materials on the history of other Asian communities, such as Thais, are more limited. One of the hardest issues, especially early on, involved the question of white people. Because the project initially sought to illuminate the oppression and struggles of people of color, and since most popular representations of Los Angeles are overwhelmingly white, some of us felt that it was appropriate to focus exclusively on people of color. Conversely, others felt that we could not really call ourselves ‘the people’s guide’ while excluding the diverse role of whites in shaping the landscape. Ultimately, we reached a compromise of sorts: we would include one site of Jewish history on the poster, but the book would include sites of white racism and

anti-racist activism, as well as many other axes of difference and power.

4 Tools for popular empowerment

The *PGTLA* is rooted in the conviction that the city itself is a decipherable record of historical geography. All people, regardless of language, levels of literacy and education, can see inequalities between communities and the distribution of resources in space. We have repeatedly seen how this kind of rooted-in-place spatial analysis can be a powerful vehicle to mobilize people, and we want the *People’s Guide* to support that process.

Accordingly, the final popular dimension to the *PGTLA* is a section that encourages people to make their own People’s Guides. The ‘how-to’ section contains information about local archives and repositories and tips on conducting historical and geographical

research, such as information on oral histories and landscape analysis. It will also address issues of scale, access to resources, and how to find information in unexpected and sometimes unwelcoming places. Our hope is to create a popular education tool that, while not activism *per se*, nonetheless is linked to contemporary progressive organizing in Los Angeles. Thus, the *People's Guide* may have indirect impacts on public policy, funding of non-profit work, or public education that we have not intentionally planned and cannot foresee (Ward, 2005).

5 Conclusion

The *PGTLA* has been a deeply transformative project, in ways that we did not always anticipate. It has touched the lives of many people, including the researchers, photographers, cartographers, and techies who contributed. It has affected local community activism by providing a useful tool to organizers, assisting in fundraising efforts, and inspiring related projects and institutions. Finally, it has transformed us as individuals. We all consider the *PGTLA* to be a 'touchstone' project that keeps us grounded and gives us joy. As people who have lived much of our lives in Los Angeles and hold it dear, learning about its histories of struggle and resistance has been fascinating and rewarding. It has informed our work, both academic and popular, and continuously recommits us to our individual and collective struggles. It has not always been easy, but it has always been worth it.

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Notes

1. In several earlier publications (eg, Castree, 2000) I suggested that many geographers were overly preoccupied with making a difference in the wider world, so neglecting issues of university governance and other 'domestic' matters. I believe this earlier assessment still holds good, but would now want to acknowledge that it is entirely legitimate to look closely at how and to what ends our professional labours can have a wider societal impact locally, nationally or beyond.
2. See Sartre (1956; 1963; 1976; 1991). Sartre wrote a preface to Fanon's *The wretched of the earth* (1963), and Fanon's major critique appears somewhat later in *Black skin, white masks* (1967). Some of the many discussion of this issue include Bhabha (1994), Gordon (1995), Judy (1996), and Kruks (1996). Philosophically, the issue over which Fanon agonized was the struggle for freedom in moving from consciousness to representation; ethically, however, he was concerned with the power to control that process by white Europeans, whom he deemed the 'masters'. Note that all works cited here by Sartre and Fanon in this article are the English translations from the original French.
3. Sartre's potential contribution to geography is explored in a forthcoming paper by Mark Boyle and Audrey Kobayashi. See also Boyle (2005) and Kobayashi (2004).
4. The Queen's Coalition against Racial and Ethnic Discrimination, organized largely in response to backlash against the Henry Report, has initiated a peer support program, a mentorship program, and an 'Inclusive Space' training program. See <http://www.qcred.org>
5. This statement is widely cited throughout the internet and BLOG world, and is probably not actually attributable to the woman named Lila Watson, an Australian Aboriginal activist: <http://northlandposter.com/blog/2006/12/18/lila-watson-if-you-have-come-to-help-me-you-are-wasting-your-time-but-if-you-have-come-because-your-liberation-is-bound-up-with-mine-then-let-us-work-together/>

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