

Creativity, Promotion of Creativity and Destruction of Creativity

Gianluigi Segalerba^{1*}, Kathrin Bouvot²

¹Instituto de Estudos Filosóficos, Universidade de Coimbra

²University of Vienna

*Corresponding author's email: gianluigisegalerba@gmail.com

doi: <https://doi.org/10.21467/proceedings.154.13>

ABSTRACT

In our analysis we would like to expose some ideas on creativity, promotion of creativity and destruction of creativity. Our general intent is to show that creativity is not reserved to geniuses but, on the contrary, belongs to all individuals. Moreover, we aim to describe how creativity can be promoted in the individuals in the different ages of their life. Finally, we wish to expose that creativity is a disposition which always needs to be cultivated with all possible care: for creativity can be easily damaged or even destroyed because of a false education of the individuals or due to negatively organised work environments.

For our investigation, we shall take elements from different sources: we shall analyse ideas expressed in the works of Teresa Amabile, we shall consider the criticism of traditional pedagogy exposed in the meditation of Paulo Freire, we shall propose some examples of the black – namely the poisonous – pedagogy contained in the work of Katharina Rutschky, we shall present Alice Miller's criticism of determined models of education, and we shall then inquire into the concept of innovation exposed in the research of Tina Seelig.

The works of Teresa Amabile will show that creativity is a faculty which belongs to all individuals, not only to the most endowed ones. Amabile shows in her book different examples of the ways in which creativity and motivation are improved both in schools and in the companies; she analyses how, on the contrary, creativity and motivation are damaged and destroyed in schools and in the companies. With the help of Amabile's inquiries we shall show the importance of making progress in the work both in schools and in the work environments: people and their progress ought always to be supported in order that the disposition to creativity can function. People always need a positive consideration in schools and in the work environments.

Rutschky's analysis of the poisonous pedagogy will show us how certain methods of education lead to the destruction of any creativity whatsoever and of the whole personality of the individual. Alice Miller's works will give further examples regarding the destruction of autonomy through traditional methods of education. Thanks to Paulo Freire's meditation we shall see how creativity depends on the models of the society: in particular, concepts like bank account of education and internalisation can teach us how the individuals in the schools are transformed into completely passive audience, thus losing any capacity whatsoever of proposing innovation in the work and in the society. The structure of the society and the aims of the society determine the models of schools operating in the society. The works of Tina Seelig will finally give us the possibility of seeing the different components needed for the development of creativity: for instance imagination, knowledge, resources and culture will prove to be essential components of creativity.

Keywords: Freire, Internalisation, Banking Account, Oppressor, Oppressed



1 Introduction

In our study we shall concentrate our attention on some aspects of Freire's thought on pedagogy: in particular, we shall focus on Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the oppressed¹. We would like to begin our analysis with a quotation from Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. The passage synthesises many foundational aspects of Freire's meditation on pedagogy like the connection between the problem-posing education and the dimension of change in the future, hope, historical dimension of mankind, self-transcendence of individuals, action and modification of the existence, and relationships between past and future for the action:

Problem-posing education is revolutionary futurity. Hence it is prophetic futurity (and as such, hopeful). Hence, it corresponds to the historical nature of humankind. Hence, it affirms women and men as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead, for whom immobility represents a fatal threat, for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future. (1970/1992, p. 84)

Individuals transcend themselves: the essence of individuals consists in their transcending themselves and in their being incomplete entities. Therefore, men are open for change. They are not bound to the particular conditions in which they live and work: they are something else and something more than these conditions, even though they are not immediately conscious of it. Individuals are not chained to a dimension, to a fixed nature, essence, duty, or place in society. The oppressors' pedagogy represents the opposite of the contents of the quotation. The principles of the oppressors' pedagogy are the following:

- Reality is presented as unchangeable; it is given once and for all. Reality is a complete, closed system.
- Individuals ought to accept reality as it is. No modification of society is possible. There is no alternative to the given reality. Individuals are exclusively receptors, i.e. collectors of reality: they are spectators, not creators. They receive contents of an already established tradition and cannot modify them. They ought to be and remain receptors. They ought to limit themselves to receive contents which have been decided by others.
- There is a natural order of things: there are fixed roles and fixed duties in society for the members of the society. Each individual is assigned a precise duty in society. Individuals are identified with the duties they ought to accomplish: they are nothing beyond the position which they have in society. They cannot transcend the dimension in which they live. There is nothing beyond the given reality and there is nothing beyond the fixed individual nature. Another world is not possible.
- Individuals are complete entities: their destiny is given, and their roles in society are given. Everything is already determined. Individuals are assigned a place in reality: they ought to acknowledge that this place is the right place for them. They ought to accept the system of values which is in force as the only possible system of values.
- The structure of reality is mythicised so that it appears holy and untouchable. Reality is beyond the intervention of individuals: it has a value which cannot be discussed.
- In schools, students ought to receive the principles of reality in a completely passive way as a consequence of the unchangeability of reality.

¹ For our study we analysed further works too which are mentioned in the bibliography. Within our investigation, we would prefer to concentrate our attention on Paulo Freire.

- There are precise roles in society: inferior individuals are presented as the ill part of society.
- The work of indoctrination of the oppressors' pedagogy is carried out through the process of internalisation of the contents of the oppressors. Internalisation is the process through which the minds of the oppressed are completely occupied by the contents of the oppressors: an autonomous mind does not exist any longer after the process of internalisation. The individual is annulled in his individuality.

2 The Process of Internalisation

Internalisation means transforming individuals into entities which are directed from outside: individuals are directed by other people. They are domesticated like animals which should answer only to stimuli from the outside; they should not have an autonomous initiative. Individuals should only re-act, never act. They should never transcend themselves and they should believe that they cannot transcend what they are. Internalisation corresponds to the strategy because of which the mind of the oppressor becomes the mind of the oppressed. This happens in two ways:

- a) Transmission of contents as if these contents were indisputable.
- b) Mechanism of self-depreciation.

Internalisation is a conquest of the mind. The oppressed will think like the oppressor, applying the doctrine of the oppressor to himself and maintaining that this doctrine is the correct one. He will be against any attempt to modify reality. The masterpiece of the oppressor consists in transforming, through the process of internalisation, the oppressed into the first and most convinced guardians of the order established by the oppressor. The oppressor does not need to defend the order which he wants to be established; the oppressor, through his strategy of indoctrination, internalisation and mythologisation, manages to transform the oppressed, i.e., those individuals who most should fight against the order of the oppressor, into the most convinced guardians of the order of the oppressor². The mechanism of internalisation functions through the following strategy:

- The oppressed are imposed determined contents. The oppressed are subjected to a process of indoctrination consisting in spreading the belief that, in reality, there is only one correct way of thinking, the model of thinking of the oppressors.
- The oppressed are closed all spaces of thought, all alternatives to the existing world since the existing world is presented to the oppressed as the only possible one. The oppressed cannot even imagine an alternative reality in comparison with the way of thinking that has been imposed on them.

² Freire notices for instance as regards the psychological conditions of the oppressed individuals:

'But almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or "sub-oppressors." The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity. This phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience, adopt an attitude of "adhesion" to the oppressor. Under these circumstances, they cannot "consider" him sufficiently clearly to objectivize him—to discover him "outside" themselves. This does not necessarily mean that the oppressed are unaware that they are downtrodden. But their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression.' (1970/1992, p. 45)

Due to the system of values of the oppressors, who have taken possession of their minds, oppressed people can only think that the model oppressor/oppressed is the only possible model of the structure of the society. The system of thought 'oppressor/oppressed' is the exclusive way of thought which they have at their disposal.

Through the internalisation of the contents transmitted by the oppressor, the oppressed loses his autonomy. The oppressed are being progressively assimilated into the system of values of the oppressor³. Freire observes:

The “fear of freedom” which afflicts the oppressed, a fear which may equally lead them to desire the role of oppressor or bind them to the role of oppressed, should be examined. One of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed is prescription. Every prescription represents the imposition of one man’s choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the man prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber’s consciousness. Thus, the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor.

The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility. Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for human completion. (1970/1992, p. 31)

The attitude of the oppressor towards the oppressed consists in prescription. Prescription is imposition: It is the imposition of the mentality of the oppressor over the oppressed; it is an imposition of the choices of the oppressor on the choices of the oppressed. The life perspective of the oppressor becomes the life perspective of the oppressed. The values that the oppressor has decided to be the values of reality become the values of the reality of the oppressed. Oppressed are therefore annulled in their values. The process which takes place is not only a process of imposition: it is a process of assimilation⁴. They are subalterns without knowing that they depend on the values of others. They think that the values of the society in which they live are the only possible values; they cannot think that those who are presented as absolute values are, actually, the values of a precise part of the society.

One of the consequences of the process of internalisation is the fear of freedom. The internalisation has provided determined contents, which have been decided by the oppressors, for the oppressed. In order to become free, the oppressed ought to free himself, and ought to have the will to free himself, from all the contents with which he has been endowed. He ought to substitute the contents received from outside with his autonomy and his responsibility, i.e., he ought to eliminate all the contents of his mind. The deepest and most dangerous form of oppression is that represented by the internalisation of the thought of the oppressor, by the conquest of the minds of the oppressed by the oppressors, by the transformation of the oppressed into beings that are for others, by the constant presence of the oppressors in the minds of the oppressed, and by the substitution of the mind of the oppressed with the mind of the oppressor⁵.

³ Imposition of values does not necessarily mean that oppressors assimilate the oppressed to their values: the real danger for the oppressed is the assimilation, the internalisation of contents, of systems of values, since, through the internalisation of values, the oppressed disappears as an autonomous person. To be indoctrinated means to be assimilated. The individual has no more an autonomous will, an autonomous thought, an autonomous capacity for reflection. The individual qua individual is annulled.

⁴ The oppressor dictates everything: rules, contents, aims, and interpretations of reality and of society.

⁵ In a simple situation of domination of oppressed, individuals could maintain their identity while being oppressed. They could think differently from the oppressors. Freire’s conditions are different: individuals are not able to think differently from the order which is imposed on them. The order is internalised by them; they acquire a nature which completely dispossesses them of the whole capacity of imagining a different order. They are the order which is imposed on them; they have no autonomous dimension.

The conquest of the mind happens through the process of internalisation of the contents of the oppressors: the mind of the oppressed are so formed that they cannot imagine an alternative world, an alternative society, an alternative reality in comparison with the world, society and reality in which they are living⁶.

The central point of the strategy of internalisation consists in depriving the individual oppressed of his dimension, of the very possibility of having an own dimension which is detached, separated, and different from the dimension of the oppressor. There must and can be exclusively a perspective: this is the perspective of the oppressor⁷.

Self-depreciation of the oppressed belongs to the strategy of internalisation. Freire tells about the mechanism of self-depreciation:

Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything – that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive – that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness. (1970/1992, p. 49)

Freire's passage is particularly important for the understanding of the strategy of the oppressors: the oppressor aims to destroy any sense of self-confidence of the oppressed.

- Self-depreciation is the very symbol of the victory of the oppressor over the oppressed: the oppressor has destroyed the oppressed up to the point that the oppressed cannot but despise himself. Self-depreciation is imposed through the constant manifestation of contempt: the oppressed are subjected to the continuous expression of negative judgments made by the oppressors against them.
- Oppressed persons are compelled to steadily hear that they are good for nothing, that they do not know anything, and that they are incapable of learning anything. Sickness, laziness, and unproductivity are the constant manifestations of accusations that are expressed by oppressors against the oppressed.
- Oppressed internalise the opinions of the oppressors so that they become mental slaves of the oppressors.
- Through the process of internalisation, the oppressed are imposed a way of thinking because of which they become convinced that they should be and should remain subordinate, that they should follow the orders of the oppressor.

⁶ The organisation of society in oppressor and oppressed determines the minds of the oppressed individuals:

‘It is a rare peasant who, once “promoted” to overseer, does not become more of a tyrant towards his former comrades than the owner himself. This is because the context of the peasant’s situation, that is, oppression, remains unchanged.’ (1970/1992, p. 46)

The case of the peasant who, if chosen as overseer, becomes a tyrant should not surprise: it is clear that, if an individual does not know any other scheme of reality than the organisation in oppressor and oppressed, he will not be able to be something else than the oppressor if he occupies power positions. To have power means oppressing, so that, if he has power, he oppresses. He simply repeats what he has been taught, what he has learnt about the structures of reality. A reform of the minds is needed: without a reform of the minds, the liberation of the oppressed only means the substitution of the old oppressors with new oppressors. The society would remain the same: the roles within society would remain the same, only the persons who are oppressors and oppressed would change.

⁷ People who grew up in an atmosphere of oppression will repeat the same behaviour:

‘Internalizing paternal authority through the rigid relationship structure emphasized by the school, these young people tend when they become professionals (because of the very fear of freedom instilled by these relationships) to repeat the rigid patterns in which they were miseducated.’ (1970/1992, p. 155)

No matter which position an individual has, in case of internalisation the individual will repeat what the doctrine says. The strategy of the oppressor is to form the mind of the oppressed so that they become replicants of the doctrine.

The problem is the very structure of the roles and the existence of roles as such. There is who is accused and there is who can be accused. There is who judges and there is who is judged. It is all a process of persuasion towards the acceptance of being valueless. It is a kind of psychological strategy through which the oppressor eliminates any sense whatsoever of self-confidence of the oppressed: the basis of self-confidence is being progressively destroyed. The oppressed does not only dominate the scene: the whole scene is made by the oppressor.

3 Against the banking concept

The principal characteristics of the banking concept of education as it is discussed and criticised by Freire are the following ones:

- the narrative character of teaching as the way of teaching in which being active and being passive are rigidly distinguished from each other;
- the division in subject and objects;
- the transmission of contents as lifeless and petrified;
- the presentation of reality as motionless, static;
- the position of students as entities which are to be filled with contents;
- the consideration of students as containers and as receptacles;
- the consideration of education as an act of depositing.

In particular, Freire tells about the traditional teaching methods:

A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level, inside or outside the school, reveals its fundamentally *narrative* character. This relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). The contents, whether values or empirical dimension of reality, tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified. Education is suffering from narration sickness.

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to “fill” the students with contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity. (1970/1992, p. 57)

We can see the following points:

- Narration of the teacher implies the passivity of the students. The relationship holding between teacher and student is structured as a narration in which the teacher is the narrator. The teacher is the only active part of the situation. All other persons are passive. To be a student means to be passive within the traditional education system⁸.
- The structure of society is hierarchical, therefore the school ought to transmit a hierarchical structure.
- Students are containers of contents. From students, only the passivity represented by their being “filled” is expected. Nothing else is required from the students; on the contrary, it is required that students exclusively are containers to be filled: they may not be something else.
- Not only from the students it is not expected that they are something else as passive spectators in the lesson; they ought not to be something else than passive spectators in the lesson.

⁸ This particular organisation corresponds to a particular ideology and to a particular organisation of society. The oppressor aims to produce and to maintain a specific order of society. Pedagogy and school must impose on the students the structure of the society. They have to let appear as natural an organisation that is, on the contrary, artificial.

- The contents being transmitted in the school activity become lifeless and petrified. This comes about as a consequence of the particular organisation of the school: if the organisation of the school determines only an active part, the teacher, and all passive persons, the students, the contents being transmitted in the school tend to become a kind of replica without addition or without modification.

Reality is being presented as motionless, static, compartmentalised, and predictable in order that the oppressor can present reality as something given, given once and for all.

The model of teaching corresponds to a precise intent which aims at the internalisation of the structure of the society in the students. As society is organised into leading subjects and subordinated subjects, correspondingly the school ought to be organised into leading subjects and subordinated subjects⁹. School is the first environment to promote indoctrination and internalisation of the contents of the oppressed. As to the transformation of students into containers and receptacles, Freire is particularly clear in his judgment:

Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into “containers,” into “receptacles” to be “filled” by the teacher. The more completely he fills the receptacles, the better a teacher he is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are.

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the “banking” concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is men themselves who are filed away¹⁰ through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, men cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. (1970/1992, p. 58)

- The way of teaching is narrating. Narration is a form of imposition of contents on the students. The narration implies that students must accept and memorise the contents of the narration.
- Narration implies that the teachers speak and the students exclusively listen.
- Students are transformed into containers, into receptacles. This is, we could say, the triumph of passivity, of the transformation of students into passive spectators.
- The degree of efficiency of the students is measured on the basis of their capacity to act as containers. The duty of the students consists in their letting themselves be filled without any criticism. Students’ capability of being filled becomes the absolute value of measurement of all the capacities of the students.
- Students receive, memorise and repeat: they are completely passive.
- Objects of knowledge are implicitly presented through the banking model of education and through the passivity imposed on students as fully given, as completely immutable¹¹.

⁹ The structure foresees leading individuals and subordinated individuals: there is no alternative model.

¹⁰ It is interesting the transformation of individuals from collectors to collected entities. Individuals are relegated to the function of an archive for contents thought out by other subjects and then, through this first relegation, are further relegated to the status of archived entities. They lost any dignity which belongs to living, thinking, and creating subjects. The victory of the oppressor is complete: oppressed individuals are reduced to things.

¹¹ Just as the structures of society are immutable, knowledge is immutable. Just as society is given and unchangeable, so contents of knowledge are presented as already given.

- This way of education destroys creativity. This cannot be a surprise: the banking model of education has as its main aim to transform students into passive elements; consequently, every form of creativity has to be eliminated. Creativity could and would mean a project of change within society: the banking model of education is the instrument used to destroy the very birth of creativity.
- The bank model of education constitutes a form of dehumanisation: individuals are authentically human only if they can autonomously inquire, only if there is space left for an independent inquiry, and only if the autonomous inquiry as such is openly appreciated, instead of being depreciated through the banking model of education.

Knowledge can be produced only through the inquiry that individuals pursue in the world with mutual dialogue. The banking model is the anticipation and the promotion of a model of blind and absolute obedience to be held in society. The banking model aims to produce series products, replicants, and multipliers of the same doctrine. Freire further develops his criticism of the banking model. At the basis of the banking model there is the interpretation of individuals as manageable entities:

It is not surprising that the banking concept of education regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. The capability of banking education to minimize or annul the students' creative power and to stimulate their credulity serves the interests of the oppressor, who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed. The oppressors use their "humanitarianism" to preserve a profitable situation. Thus they react almost instinctively against any experiment in education which stimulates the critical faculties and is not content with a partial view of reality but always seeks out the ties which link one point to another and one problem to another.' (1970/1992, p. 60)

The following points of Freire's statements should be, in our opinion, underlined:

- The fundament of the banking model of education is that individuals are adaptable and manageable things. The interpretation of individuals within the banking model of education is that individuals are entities which can and may be managed: there is no respect for their autonomy, their independence, and their dignity.
- The banking model of education aims to transform individuals into passive persons, into dominated persons. The banking model of education aims to eliminate every form of creativity from individuals. The banking model of education aims to eliminate every capacity for independence and for autonomy which individuals possess.
- The more the students accept the passive role, the more they adapt to the world, the less they have a critical conscience of the world as it is. The strategy of continuously transmitting contents which have been determined by the dominant class to the students is the consequence of the aim of diminishing or eliminating every form of critical consciousness the students could develop. This is a strategy and a method of closing spaces for the mind and its capacity: students must be so engaged in assimilating contents that they cannot have the time to develop their critical consciousness.

Acceptance of the passive role in education corresponds to the adaptation to the world as it is: the student who accepts his passivity in education will be the adult who adapts to the world without even considering the possibility that the world can and may be changed. Passivity in school means passivity in life. If the students accept their passivity in school, they acknowledge that they have to accept the world as it is. The world is not there in order to be transformed; the world is there in order to be accepted.

The oppressor aims to propose as the exclusive model of education the banking model of education since this model is perfect in promoting in the students an attitude of passivity, of lack of self-initiative, of refusal of transformation of the world and of acceptance of the world as it is. Creativity is the enemy and creativity is correspondingly destroyed.

The banking model of education makes part of a whole programme of making individuals passive in relation to reality: the banking model is the particular part of a general programme aiming to have people subjected to reality. Individuals are convinced through the banking model of education that reality is unchangeable; the banking model is an application of a general programme of domestication of individuals.

4 Conclusions

The principal characteristics of the oppression strategy can be synthesised in the following way:

- a) There are fixed roles in reality. These roles are rigorously separated from each other.
- b) The role of those who lead the society is different from the role of those who obey. Both roles are incompatible with each other: they mirror a division in the natural order of society.
- c) Reality is unmodifiable: the roles of reality are given; the places due to individuals and to classes are natural.
- d) Just as contents transmitted in schools are to be received without discussion and analysis, so the structures of the society are to be accepted without discussion. There is no need to discuss what is naturally given. There is no point in analysing an order which is transcending the individuals.
- e) The structure of society wants to perpetuate itself in schools. The field of schools is part of a greater programme, i.e., to perpetuate certain forms of social orders and to present them as natural, to hinder that the persons have at least a free sight, a free imagination.
- f) Indoctrination in schools serves to close the spaces of mind so that the indoctrinated individuals themselves believe and contend that no other world is possible.
- g) Indoctrination is not only a process of closing the minds: it is, more than this, a process of forming the mind to the advantage of dominators. It is not simply a process through which the oppressed has no autonomous contents in his mind; the oppressed has no more an autonomous mind. Passivity, acceptance and being pillars of the given order are the principles which the dominated individuals have to learn.

5 Publisher's Note

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How to Cite

Segalerba & Bouvot (2023). Creativity, Promotion of Creativity and Destruction of Creativity. *AIJR Proceedings*, 110-118. <https://doi.org/10.21467/proceedings.154.13>

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