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6

Crossing the Boundaries of Educational Discourse: Modernism, Postmodernism, and Feminism

Henry Giroux

We have entered an age that is marked by a crisis of power, patriarchy, authority, identity, and ethics. This new age has been described, for better or worse, by many theorists in a variety of disciplines as the age of postmodernism (e.g. Foster 1983; Hassan 1987; Hebdige 1986, 1989; Huyssen 1986; Hutcheon 1988a, 1988b, 1989; Appignanesi and Bennington 1986; Aronowitz 1987/8; Connor 1989; Jameson 1990; Lash 1990; and Flax 1990). It is a period torn between the ravages and benefits of modernism; it is an age in which the notions of science, technology, and reason are associated not only with social progress but also with the organization of Auschwitz and the scientific creativity that made Hiroshima possible (Poster 1989). It is a time in which the humanist subject seems to no longer be in control of his or her fate. It is an age in which the grand narratives of emancipation, whether from the political right or left, appear to share an affinity for terror and oppression. It is also a historical moment in which culture is no longer seen as a reserve of white men whose contributions to the arts, literature, and science constitute the domain of high culture. We live at a time in which a strong challenge is being waged against a modernist discourse in which knowledge is legitimized almost exclusively from a European model of culture and civilization. In part, the struggle for democracy can be seen in the context of a broader struggle against certain features of modernism that represent the worst legacies of the Enlightenment tradition.

And it is against these features that a variety of oppositional movements have emerged in an attempt to rewrite the relationship between modernism and democracy. Two of the most important challenges to modernism have come from divergent theoretical discourses associated with postmodernism and feminism.

Postmodernism and feminism have challenged modernism on a variety of theoretical and political fronts, and I will take these up shortly, but there is another side to modernism that has expressed itself more recently in the ongoing struggles in Eastern Europe. Modernism is not merely about patriarchy parading as universal reason, the increasing intensification of human domination over nature in the name of historical development, or the imperiousness of grand narratives that stress control and mastery (Lyotard 1984). Nor is modernism simply synonymous with forms of modernization characterized by the ideologies and practices of the dominating relations of capitalist production. It exceeds this fundamental but limiting rationality by offering the ideological excesses of democratic possibility. By this I mean that, as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) have pointed out, modernism becomes a decisive point of reference for advancing certain and crucial elements of the democratic revolution.

Beyond its claims to certainty, foundationalism, and epistemological essentialism, modernism provides theoretical elements for

analyzing both the limits of its own historical tradition and for developing a political standpoint in which the breadth and specificity of democratic struggles can be expanded through the modernist ideals of freedom, justice, and equality. As Mark Hannam (1990) points out, modernism does have a legacy of progressive ambitions, that have contributed to substantive social change, and these ambitions need to be remembered in order to be reinserted into any developing discourses on democracy. For Hannam, these include: 'economic redistribution towards equality, the emancipation of women, the eradication of superstition and despotism, wider educational opportunities, the improvement of the sciences and the arts, and so forth. Democratization was one of these ambitions and frequently was perceived to be a suitable means towards the realization of other, distinct ambitions.' . . .

I want to argue that modernism, postmodernism, and feminism represent three of the most important discourses for developing a cultural politics and pedagogical practice capable of extending and theoretically advancing a radical politics of democracy. While acknowledging that all three of these discourses are internally contradictory, ideologically diverse, and theoretically inadequate, I believe that when posited in terms of the interconnections between *both* their differences and the common ground they share for being mutually correcting, they offer critical educators a rich theoretical and political opportunity for rethinking the relationship between schooling and democracy. Each of these positions has much to learn from the theoretical strengths and weaknesses of the other two discourses. Not only does a dialogical encounter among these discourses offer them the opportunity to re-examine the partiality of their respective views. Such an encounter also points to new possibilities for sharing and integrating their best insights as part of broader radical democratic project. Together these diverse discourses offer the possibility for illuminating how critical educators might work with other cultural workers in various movements to develop and advance a broader discourse of political and collective struggle. At stake here is an attempt to provide a political and theoretical discourse, that can move beyond a postmodern aesthetic and a feminist separatism in order to develop a pro-

ject in which a politics of difference can emerge within a shared discourse of democratic public life. Similarly at issue is also the important question of how the discourses of modernism, postmodernism, and feminism might be pursued as part of a broader political effort to rethink the boundaries and most basic assumptions of a critical pedagogy consistent with a radical cultural politics. . . .

Mapping the Politics of Modernism

To invoke the term 'modernism' is to immediately place oneself in the precarious position of suggesting a definition that is itself open to enormous debate and little agreement (Lunn 1982; Kolb 1986; Larsen 1990; Giddens 1990). Not only is there a disagreement regarding the periodisation of the term, there is enormous controversy regarding to what it actually refers. To some it has become synonymous with terroristic claims of reason, science, and totality (Lyotard 1984). To others it embodies, for better or worse, various movements in the arts (Newman 1985; 1986). And to some of its more ardent defenders, it represents the progressive rationality of communicative competence and support for the autonomous individual subject (Habermas 1981; 1982; 1983; 1987). It is not possible within the context of this essay to provide a detailed history of the various historical and ideological discourses of modernism even though such an analysis is essential to provide a sense of the complexity of both the category and the debates that have emerged around modernism (Habermas 1983; 1987; Berman 1988; Richard 1987/88). Instead, I want to focus on some of the central assumptions of modernism. The value of this approach is that it serves not only to highlight some of the more important arguments that have been made in the defense of modernism, but also to provide a theoretical and political backdrop for understanding some of the central features of various postmodernist and feminist discourses. This is particularly important with respect to postmodernism, which presupposes some idea of the modern and also various elements of feminist discourse, which have increasingly been forged largely in opposition to some of the major assumptions of modernism, particularly as these relate to notions such as rationality, truth, subjectivity, and progress.

The theoretical, ideological, and political complexity of modernism can be grasped by analyzing its diverse vocabularies with respect to three traditions: the social, the aesthetic, and the political. The notion of social modernity corresponds with the tradition of the new, the process of economic and social organization carried out under the growing relations of capitalist production. Social modernity approximates what Matei Calinescu (1987: 41) calls the bourgeois idea of modernity, which is characterized by:

The doctrine of progress, the confidence in the beneficial possibilities of science and technology, the concern with time (a measurable time, a time that can be bought and sold and therefore has, like any other commodity, a calculable equivalent in money), the cult of reason, and the ideal of freedom defined within the framework of an abstract humanism, but also the orientation toward pragmatism and the cult of action and success.

Within this notion of modernism, the unfolding of history is linked to the 'continual progress of the sciences and of techniques, the rational division of industrial work, which introduces into social life a dimension of permanent change, of destruction of customs and traditional culture' (Baudrillard 1987: 65). At issue here is a definition of modernity, that points to the progressive differentiation and rationalization of the social world through the process of economic growth and administrative rationalization. Another characteristic of social modernism is the epistemological project of elevating reason to an ontological status. Modernism in this view becomes synonymous with civilization itself, and reason is universalized in cognitive and instrumental terms as the basis for a model of industrial, cultural, and social progress. At stake in this notion of modernity is a view of individual and collective identity in which historical memory is devised as a linear process, the human subject becomes the ultimate source of meaning and action, and a notion of geographical and cultural territoriality is constructed in a hierarchy of domination and subordination marked by a center and margin legitimated through the civilizing knowledge/power of a privileged Eurocentric culture (Aronowitz 1987/88: 94–114).

The category of aesthetic modernity has a dual characterization that is best exemplified in its traditions of resistance and formal aestheticism. But it is in the tradition of opposi-

tion, with its all consuming disgust with bourgeois values and its attempt through various literary and avant-garde movements to define art as a representation of criticism, rebellion, and resistance that aesthetic modernism first gained a sense of notoriety. Fueling this aesthetic modernism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was an alienation and negative passion whose novelty was perhaps best captured in Bakunin's anarchist maxim, 'To destroy is to create' (Calinescu 1987: 117). The cultural and political lineaments of this branch of aesthetic modernism are best expressed in those avant-garde movements that ranged from the surrealism and futurism to the conceptualism of the 1970s. Within this movement, with its diverse politics and expressions, there is an underlying commonality and attempt to collapse the distinction between art and politics and to blur the boundaries between life and aesthetics. But in spite of its oppositional tendencies, aesthetic modernism has not fared well in the latter part of the twentieth century. Its critical stance, its aesthetic dependency on the presence of bourgeois norms, and its apocalyptic tone became increasingly recognized as artistically fashionable by the very class it attacked (Barthes 1972).

The central elements that bring these two traditions of modernism together constitute a powerful force not only for shaping the academic disciplines and the discourse of educational theory and practice, but also for providing a number of points where various ideological positions share a common ground. These elements can be recognized in modernism's claim for the superiority of high culture over and against popular culture, its affirmation of a centered if not unified subject, its faith in the power of the highly rational, conscious mind and its belief in the unequivocal ability of human beings to shape the future in the interest of a better world. There is a long tradition of support for modernism and some of its best representatives are as diverse as Marx, Baudelaire, and Dostoevsky. This notion of the unified self based on the universalization of reason and the totalizing discourses of emancipation have provided a cultural and political script for celebrating Western culture as synonymous with civilization itself and progress as a terrain that only needed to be mastered as part of the inexorable march of science and history. Marshall

Berman (1982: 11) exemplifies the dizzying heights of ecstasy made possible by the script of modernism in his own rendition of the modernist sensibility (1982; 1988: 81–6).

Modernists, as I portray them, are simultaneously at home in this world and at odds with it. They celebrate and identify with the triumphs of modern science, art, technology, communications, economics, politics—in short, with all the activities, techniques, and sensibilities that enable mankind to do what the Bible said God could do to 'make all things new.' At the same time, however, they oppose modernization's betrayal of its own human promise and potential. Modernists demand more profound and radical renewals: modern men and women must become the subjects as well as the objects of modernization; they must learn to change the world that is changing them and to make it their own. The modernist knows this is possible: the fact that the world has changed so much is proof that it can change still more. The modernist can, in Hegel's phrase, 'look at the negative in the face and live with it.' The fact that 'all that is solid melts into air' is a source not of despair, but of strength and affirmation. If everything must go, then let it go: modern people have the power to create a better world than the world they have lost.

Of course, for many critics, the coupling of social and aesthetic modernism reveals itself quite differently. Modernist art is criticized for becoming nothing more than a commercial market for the museums and the corporate boardrooms and a depoliticized discourse institutionalized within the universities. In addition, many critics have argued that under the banner of modernism, reason and aesthetics often come together in a technology of self and culture that combines a notion of beauty, that is white, male, and European with a notion of mastery that legitimates modern industrial technologies and the exploitation of vast pools of labor from the 'margins' of Second and Third World economies. Robert Merrill (1988: 9) gives this argument a special twist in claiming that the modernist ego with its pretensions to infallibility and unending progress has actually come to doubt its own promises. For example, he argues that many proponents of modernism increasingly recognize that what has been developed by the West in the name of mastery actually indicates the failure of modernism to produce a technology of self and power that can deliver on the promises of providing freedom through science, technology, and control. He writes:

[A loss of faith in the promises of modernism] . . . is

no less true for corporate and governmental culture in the United States which displays a . . . desperate quest for aestheticization of the self as modernist construct—white, male, Christian, industrialist—through monumentally styled office buildings, the Brooks Brothers suit (for male and female), designer food, business practices which amount only to the exercise of symbolic power, and most of all, the Mercedes Benz which as the unification in design of the good (here functional) and the beautiful and in production of industrial coordination and exploitation of human labor is pre-eminently the sign that one has finally achieved liberation and master, 'made it to the top' (even if its stylistic lines thematize what can only be called a fascist aesthetics).

It is against the claims of social and aesthetic modernism that the diverse discourses of postmodernism and feminism have delivered some of their strongest theoretical and political criticism, and these will be taken up shortly. But there is a third tradition of modernism that has been engaged by feminism but generally ignored by postmodernism. This is the tradition of political modernism, which, unlike its related aesthetic and social traditions, does not focus on epistemological and cultural issues as much as it develops a project of possibility out of a number of Enlightenment ideals (Mouffe 1988: 31–45). It should be noted that political modernism constructs a project that rests on a distinction between political liberalism and economic liberalism. With the latter, freedom is conflated with the dynamics of the capitalist market place, whereas with the former, freedom is associated with the principles and rights embodied in the democratic revolution that has progressed in the West over the last three centuries. The ideals that have emerged out of this revolution include 'the notion that human beings ought to use their reason to decide on courses of action, control their futures, enter into reciprocal agreements, and be responsible for what they do and who they are' (Warren 1988: 9–10). In general terms, the political project of modernism is rooted in the capacity of individuals to be moved by human suffering so as to remove its causes, to give meaning to the principles of equality, liberty, and justice; and to increase those social forms that enable human beings to develop those capacities needed to overcome ideologies and material forms that legitimate and are embedded in relations of domination . . .

Postmodern Negations

If postmodernism means putting the Word in its place . . . if it means the opening up to critical discourse the line of enquiry which were formerly prohibited, of evidence which was previously inadmissible so that new and different questions can be asked and new and other voices can begin asking them; if it means the opening up of institutional and discursive spaces within which more fluid and plural social and sexual identities may develop; if it means the erosion of triangular formations of power and knowledge with the expert at the apex and the 'masses' at the base, if, in a word, it enhances our collective (and democratic) sense of possibility, then I for one am a postmodernist.

Dick Hebdige's guarded comments (1989: 226) regarding his own relationship to postmodernism are suggestive of some of the problems that have to be faced in using the term. As the term is increasingly employed both in and out of the academy to designate a variety of discourses, its political and semantic currency repeatedly becomes an object of conflicting forces and divergent tendencies. Postmodernism has not only become a site for conflicting ideological struggles—denounced by different factions on both the left and the right, supported by an equal number of diverse progressive groups, and appropriated by interests that would renounce any claim to politics—its varied forms have also produced both radical and reactionary elements. Postmodernism's diffuse influence and contradictory character is evident within many cultural fields—painting, architecture, photography, video, dance, literature, education, music, mass communications—and in the varied contexts of its production and exhibition. Such a term does not lend itself to the usual topology of categories that serve to inscribe it ideologically and politically within traditional binary oppositions. In this case, the politics of postmodernism cannot be neatly labeled under the traditional categories of left and right.

That many groups are making a claim for its use should not suggest that the term has no value except as a buzzword for the latest intellectual fashions. On the contrary, its widespread appeal and conflict-ridden terrain indicate that something important is being fought over, that new forms of social discourse are being constructed at a time when the intellectual, political, and cultural boundaries of the age are being refigured amidst significant historical shifts, changing power structures,

and emergent alternative forms of political struggle. Of course, whether these new postmodernist discourses adequately articulate rather than reflect these changes is the important question.

I believe that the discourse of postmodernism is worth struggling over, and not merely as a semantic category that needs to be subjected to ever more precise definitional rigor. As a discourse of plurality, difference, and multinarratives, postmodernism resists being inscribed in any single articulating principle in order to explain either the mechanics of domination or the dynamic of emancipation. At issue here is the need to mine its contradictory and oppositional insights so that they might be appropriated in the service of a radical project of democratic struggle. The value of postmodernism lies in its role as a shifting signifier that both reflects and contributes to the unstable cultural and structural relationships that increasingly characterize the advanced industrial countries of the West. The important point here is not whether postmodernism can be defined within the parameters of particular politics, but how its best insights might be appropriated within a progressive and emancipatory democratic politics.

I want to argue that while postmodernism does not suggest a particular ordering principle for defining a particular political project, it does have a rudimentary coherence with respect to the set of 'problems and basic issues that have been created by the various discourses of postmodernism, issues that were not particularly problematic before but certainly are now' (Hutcheon 1988a: 5). Postmodernism raises questions and problems so as to redraw and re-present the boundaries of discourse and cultural criticism. The issues that postmodernism has brought into view can be seen, in part, through its various refusals of all 'natural laws' and transcendental claims that by definition attempt to 'escape' from any type of historical and normative grounding. In fact, if there is any underlying harmony to various discourses of postmodernism it is in their rejection of absolute essences. Arguing along similar lines, Laclau (1988: 10–28) claims that postmodernity as a discourse of social and cultural criticism begins with a form of epistemological, ethical, and political awareness based on three fundamental negations.

The beginning of postmodernity can . . . be conceived as the achievement of multiple awareness: epistemological awareness, insofar as scientific progress appears as a succession of paradigms whose transformation and replacement is not grounded in any algorithmic certainty; ethical awareness, insofar as the defense and assertion of values is grounded on argumentative movements (conservational movements, according to Rorty), which do not lead back to any absolute foundation; political awareness, insofar as historical achievements appear as the product of hegemonic and contingent—and as such, always reversible—articulations and not as the result of immanent laws of history.

Laclau's list does not exhaust the range of negations that postmodernism has taken up as part of the increasing resistance to all totalizing explanatory systems and the growing call for a language that offers the possibility to address the changing ideological and structural conditions of our time. . . .

Postmodernism and the Negation of Totality, Reason, and Foundationalism

A central feature of postmodernism has been its critique of totality, reason, and universality. This critique has been most powerfully developed in the work of Jean-Francois Lyotard. In developing his attack on Enlightenment notions of totality, Lyotard argues that the very notion of the postmodern is inseparable from an incredulity toward metanarratives. In Lyotard's view (1984: 24), 'The narrative view is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements—narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on.' For Lyotard, grand narratives do not problematize their own legitimacy; rather, they deny the historical and social construction of their own first principles and in doing so wage war on difference, contingency, and particularity. Against Habermas and others, Lyotard argues that appeals to reason and consensus, when inserted within grand narratives that unify history, emancipation and knowledge, deny their own implications in the production of knowledge and power. More emphatically, Lyotard claims (1984: 82) that within such narratives are elements of mastery and control in which 'we can hear the mutter-

ings of the desire for a return of terror, for the realization of the fantasy to seize reality'. Against metanarratives, which totalize historical experience by reducing its diversity to a one-dimensional, all-encompassing logic, Lyotard posits a discourse of multiple horizons, the play of language games, and the terrain of micropolitics. Against the formal logic of identity and the transhistorical subject, he invokes a dialectics of indeterminacy, varied discourses of legitimation, and a politics based on the 'permanence of difference.' Lyotard's attack on metanarratives represents both a trenchant form of social criticism and a philosophical challenge to all forms of foundationalism that deny the historical, normative, and the contingent. Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson (1988: 86–7) articulate this connection well:

For Lyotard, postmodernism designates a general condition of contemporary Western civilization. The postmodern condition is one in which 'grand narratives of legitimation' are no longer credible. By 'grand narratives' he means, in the first instance, overarching philosophies of history like the Enlightenment story of the gradual but steady progress of reason and freedom, Hegel's dialectic of Spirit coming to know itself, and, most important, Marx's drama of the forward march of human productive capacities via class conflict culminating in proletarian revolution. . . . For what most interests [Lyotard] about the Enlightenment, Hegelian, and Marxist stories is what they share with other non-narrative forms of philosophy. Like ahistorical epistemologies and moral theories, they aim to show that specific first-order discursive practices are well formed and capable of yielding true and just results. True and just here mean something more than results reached by adhering scrupulously to the constitutive rules of some given scientific and political games. They mean, rather, results that correspond to Truth and Justice as they really are in themselves independent of contingent, historical social practices. Thus, in Lyotard's view, a metanarrative . . . purports to be a privileged discourse capable of situating, characterizing, and evaluating all other discourses, but not itself infected by the historicity and contingency that render first-order discourses potentially distorted and in need of legitimation.

What Fraser and Nicholson imply is that postmodernism does more than wage war on totality, it also calls into question the use of reason in the service of power, the role of intellectuals who speak through authority invested in a science of truth and history, and forms of leadership that demand unification and con-

sensus within centrally administered chains of command. Postmodernism rejects a notion of reason that is disinterested, transcendent, and universal. Rather than separating reason from the terrain of history, place, and desire, postmodernism argues that reason and science can only be understood as part of a broader historical, political, and social struggle over the relationship between language and power. Within this context, the distinction between passion and reason, objectivity and interpretation no longer exist as separate entities but represent, instead, the effects of particular discourses and forms of social power. This is not merely an epistemological issue, but one that is deeply political and normative. Gary Peller (1987: 30) makes this clear by arguing that what is at stake in this form of criticism is nothing less than the dominant and liberal commitment to Enlightenment culture. He writes:

Indeed the whole way that we conceive of liberal progress (overcoming prejudice in the name of truth, seeing through the distortions of ideology to get at reality, surmounting ignorance and superstition with the acquisition of knowledge) is called into question. Postmodernism suggests that what has been presented in our social-political and our intellectual traditions as knowledge, truth, objectivity, and reason are actually merely the effects of a particular form of social power, the victory of a particular way of representing the world that then presents itself as beyond mere interpretation, as truth itself.

By asserting the primacy of the historical and contingent in the construction of reason, authority, truth, ethics, and identity, postmodernism provides a politics of representation and a basis for social struggle. Laclau argues that the postmodern attack on foundationalism is an eminently political act because it expands the possibility for argumentation and dialogue. Moreover, by acknowledging questions of power and value in the construction of knowledge and subjectivities, postmodernism helps to make visible important ideological and structural forces, such as race, gender, and class. For theorists such as Laclau, the collapse of foundationalism does not suggest a banal relativism or the onset of a dangerous nihilism. On the contrary, Laclau (1988a: 79–80) argues that the lack of ultimate meaning radicalizes the possibilities for human agency and a democratic politics. He writes:

Abandoning the myth of foundations does not lead

to nihilism, just as uncertainty as to how an enemy will attack does not lead to passivity. It leads, rather, to a proliferation of discursive interventions and arguments that are necessary, because there is no extradiscursive reality that discourse might simply reflect. Inasmuch as argument and discourse constitute the social, their open-ended character becomes the source of a greater activism and a more radical libertarianism. Humankind, having always bowed to external forces—God, Nature, the necessary laws of History—can now, at the threshold of postmodernity, consider itself for the first time the creator and constructor of its own history.

The postmodern attack on totality and foundationalism is not without its drawbacks. While it rightly focuses on the importance of local narratives and rejects the notion that truth precedes the notion of representation, it also runs the risk of blurring the distinction between master narratives that are monocausal and formative narratives, that provide the basis for historically and relationally placing different groups or local narratives within some common project. . . .

Postmodern Feminism as Political and Ethical Practice

Feminist theory has always engaged in a dialectical relationship with modernism. On the one hand, it has stressed modernist concerns with equality, social justice, and freedom through an ongoing engagement with substantive political issues, specifically the rewriting of the historical and social construction of gender in the interest of an emancipatory cultural politics. In other words, feminism has been quite discriminating in its ability to sift through the wreckage of modernism in order to liberate its victories, particularly the unrealized potentialities that reside in its categories of agency, justice, and politics. On the other hand, postmodern feminism has rejected those aspects of modernism in which universal laws are exalted at the expense of specificity and contingency. More specifically, postmodern feminism opposes a linear view of history, that legitimates patriarchal notions of subjectivity and society; moreover, it rejects the notion that science and reason have a direct correspondence with objectivity and truth. In effect, postmodern feminism rejects the binary opposition between modernism and postmodernism in

favor of a broader theoretical attempt to situate both discourses critically within a feminist political project.

Feminist theory has both produced and profited from a critical appropriation of a number of assumptions central to both modernism and postmodernism. The feminist engagement with modernism has been taken up primarily as a discourse of self-criticism and has served to radically expand a plurality of positions within feminism itself. Women of color, lesbians, and poor and working-class women have challenged the essentialism, separatism, and ethnocentricism that have been expressed in feminist theorizing and in doing so have seriously undermined the Eurocentricism and totalizing discourse that has become a political straitjacket within the movement. Fraser and Nicholson (1988: 92, 99) offer a succinct analysis of some of the issues involved in this debate, particularly in relation to the appropriation by some feminists of 'quasi-metanarratives.'

They tacitly presuppose some commonly held but unwarranted and essentialist assumptions about the nature of human beings and the conditions for social life. In addition, they assume methods and/or concepts that are uninflected by temporality or historicity and that therefore function *de facto* as permanent, neutral matrices for inquiry. Such theories, then, share some of the essentialist and ahistorical features of metanarratives: they are insufficiently attentive to historical and cultural diversity; and they falsely universalize features of the theorist's own era, society, culture, class, sexual orientation, and/or ethnic or racial group.... It has become clear that quasi-metanarratives hamper, rather than promote, sisterhood, since they elide differences among women and among the forms of sexism to which different women are differentially subject. Likewise, it is increasingly apparent that such theories hinder alliances with other progressive movements, since they tend to occlude axes of domination other than gender. In sum, there is a growing interest among feminists in modes of theorizing that are attentive to differences and to cultural and historical specificity.

Fashioning a language that has been highly critical of modernism has not only served to make problematic what can be called totalizing feminisms, but has also called into question the notion that sexist oppression is at the root of all forms of domination (Malson, O'Barr, Westphal-Wihl, and Wyer 1989a: 1–13). Implicit in this position are two assumptions that have significantly shaped

the arguments of mostly Western white women. The first argument simply inverts the orthodox Marxist position regarding class as the primary category of domination with all other modes of oppression being relegated to a second rate consideration. Here, patriarchy becomes the primary form of domination, while race and class are reduced to its distorted reflection. The second assumption recycles another aspect of orthodox Marxism that assumes that the struggle over power is exclusively waged between opposing social classes. The feminist version of this argument simply substitutes gender for class and in doing so reproduces a form of 'us' against 'them' politics that is antithetical to developing community building within a broad and diversified public culture.

Both of these arguments represent the ideological baggage of modernism. In both cases, domination is framed in binary oppositions, which suggests that workers or women cannot be complicit in their own oppression and that domination assumes a form that is singular and uncomplicated. The feminist challenge to this ideological straitjacket of modernism is well expressed by bell hooks (1989: 22), who avoids the politics of separatism by invoking an important distinction between the role that feminists might play in asserting their own particular struggle against patriarchy as well as the role they can play as part of a broader struggle for liberation.

Feminist effort to end patriarchal domination should be of primary concern precisely because it insists on the eradication of exploitation and oppression in the family context and in all other intimate relationships.... Feminism, as liberation struggle, must exist apart from and as a part of the larger struggle to eradicate domination in all of its forms. We must understand that patriarchal domination shares an ideological foundation with racism and other forms of group oppression, that there is no hope that it can be eradicated while these systems remain intact. This knowledge should consistently inform the direction of feminist theory and practice. Unfortunately, racism and class elitism among women has frequently led to the suppression and distortion of this connection so that it is now necessary for feminist thinkers to critique and revise much feminist theory and the direction of the feminist movement. This effort at revision is perhaps most evident in the current widespread acknowledgement that sexism, racism, and class exploitation constitute interlocking systems of domination—that sex, race, and class, and not sex alone, determine the nature of any female's iden-

tity, status, and circumstance, the degree to which she will or will not be dominated, the extent to which she will have the power to dominate.

I invoke the feminist critique of modernism to make visible some of the ideological territory it shares with certain versions of postmodernism and to suggest the wider implications that a postmodern feminism has for developing and broadening the terrain of political struggle and transformation. It is important to note that this encounter between feminism and postmodernism should not be seen as a gesture to displace a feminist politics with a politics and pedagogy of postmodernism. On the contrary, I think feminism provides postmodernism with a politics, and a great deal more. What is at stake here is using feminism, in the words of Meaghan Morris (1988: 16), as 'a context in which debates about postmodernism might further be considered, developed, transformed (or abandoned)'. Critical to such a project is the need to analyze the ways in which feminist theorists have used postmodernism to fashion a form of social criticism whose value lies in its critical approach to gender issues and in the theoretical insights it provides for developing broader democratic and pedagogical struggles.

The theoretical status and political viability of various postmodern discourses regarding the issues of totality, foundationalism, culture, subjectivity and language are a matter of intense debate among diverse feminist groups...[1]

Feminism's relationship with postmodernism has been both fruitful but problematic (Ann Kaplan 1988: 1–6). Postmodernism shares a number of assumptions with various feminist theories and practices. For example, both discourses view reason as plural and partial, define subjectivity as multilayered and contradictory, and posit contingency and difference against various forms of essentialism.

At the same time, postmodern feminism has criticized and extended a number of assumptions central to postmodernism. First, it has asserted the primacy of social criticism and in doing so has redefined the significance of the postmodern challenge to founding discourses and universal principles in terms that prioritize political struggles over epistemological engagements. Donna Haraway (1989: 579) puts it well in her comment that 'the issue is ethics and politics perhaps more than epis-

temology'. Second, postmodern feminism has refused to accept the postmodern view of totality as a wholesale rejection of all forms of totality or metanarratives. Third, it has rejected the postmodern emphasis on erasing human agency by decentering the subject; it has also resisted defining language as the only source of meaning and has therefore linked power not merely to discourse but also to material practices and struggles. Fourth, it has asserted the importance of difference as part of a broader struggle for ideological and institutional change rather than emphasizing the postmodern approach to difference as either an aesthetic (pastiche) or as a expression of liberal pluralism (the proliferation of difference without recourse to the language of power)....

Towards a Postmodern Pedagogy

As long as people are people, democracy in the full sense of the word will always be no more than an ideal. One may approach it as one would a horizon, in ways that may be better or worse, but it can never be fully attained. In this sense, you too, are merely approaching democracy. You have thousands of problems of all kinds, as other countries do. But you have one great advantage: You have been approaching democracy uninterrupted for more than 200 years. (Havel 1990: 16)

How on earth can these prestigious persons in Washington ramble on in their subintellectual way about the 'end of history?' As I look forward into the twenty-first century I sometimes agonize about the times in which my grandchildren and their children will live. It is not so much the rise in population as the rise in universal material expectations of the globe's huge population that will be straining its resources to the very limits. North-South antagonisms will certainly sharpen, and religious and national fundamentalisms will become more intransigent. The struggle to bring consumer greed within moderate control, to find a level of low growth and satisfaction that is not at the expense of the disadvantaged and poor, to defend the environment and to prevent ecological disasters, to share more equitably the world's resources and to insure their renewal—all this is agenda enough for the continuation of 'history'. (Thompson 1990: 120)

A striking character of the totalitarian system is its peculiar coupling of human demoralization and mass depoliticizing. Consequently, battling this system requires a conscious appeal to morality and an inevitable involvement in politics. (Michnik 1990: 120)

All these quotations stress, implicitly or explicitly, the importance of politics and ethics to democracy. In the first, the newly elected president of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel, addressing a joint session of Congress reminds the American people that democracy is an ideal that is filled with possibilities but one that always has to be seen as part of an ongoing struggle for freedom and human dignity. As a playwright and former political prisoner, Havel is the embodiment of such a struggle. In the second, E. P. Thompson, the English peace activist and historian, reminds the American public that history has not ended but needs to be opened up in order to engage the many problems and possibilities that human beings will have to face in the twenty-first century. In the third, Adam Michnik, a founder of Poland's Workers' Defense Committee and an elected member of the Polish parliament, provides an ominous insight into one of the central features of totalitarianism, whether on the Right or the Left. He points to a society that fears democratic politics while simultaneously reproducing a sense of massive collective despair. All of these writers are caught up in the struggle to recapture the Enlightenment model of freedom, agency, and democracy while simultaneously attempting to deal with the conditions of a postmodern world.

These statements serve to highlight the inability of the American public to grasp the full significance of the democraticization of Eastern Europe in terms of what it reveals about the nature of our own democracy. In Eastern Europe and elsewhere there is a strong call for the primacy of the political and the ethical as a foundation for democratic public life, whereas in the United States there is an ongoing refusal of the discourse of politics and ethics. Elected politicians from both sides of the established parties complain that American politics is about 'trivialization, atomization, and paralysis.' Politicians as different as the late Lee Atwater, the former Republican Party chairman, and Walter Mondale, former vice president, agree that we have entered into a time in which much of the American public believes that 'Bull permeates everything . . . (and that) we've got a kind of politics of irrelevance' (Oreskes 1990: 16). At the same time, a number of polls indicate that while the youth of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Germany are extending the frontiers of democracy, American youth are both unconcerned and largely ill-prepared to struggle for and keep democracy alive in the twenty-first century.

Rather than being a model of democracy, the United States has become indifferent to the need to struggle for the conditions that make democracy a substantive rather than lifeless activity. At all levels of national and daily life, the breadth and depth of democratic relations are being rolled back. We have become a society that appears to demand less rather than more of democracy. In some quarters, democracy has actually become subversive. What does this suggest for developing some guiding principles in order to rethink the purpose and meaning of education and critical pedagogy within the present crises? In what follows, I want to situate some of the work I have been developing on critical pedagogy over the last decade by placing it within a broader political context. That is, the principles that I develop below represent educational issues that must be located in a larger framework of politics. Moreover, these principles emerge out of a convergence of various tendencies within modernism, postmodernism, and postmodern feminism. What is important to note here is the refusal to simply play off these various theoretical tendencies against each other. Instead, I try to critically appropriate the most important aspects of these theoretical movements by raising the question of how they contribute to creating the conditions for deepening the possibilities for a radical pedagogy and political project that aims at reconstructing democratic public life so as to extend the principles of freedom, justice, and equality to all spheres of society.

At stake here is the issue of retaining modernism's commitment to critical reason, agency, and the power of human beings to overcome human suffering. Modernism reminds us of the importance of constructing a discourse that is ethical, historical, and political. At the same time, postmodernism provides a powerful challenge to all totalizing discourses, places an important emphasis on the contingent and the specific, and provides a new theoretical language for developing a politics of difference. Finally, postmodern feminism makes visible the importance of grounding our visions in a political project, redefines the relationship between the margins and the center around concrete political struggles, and offers the opportunity for a politics of voice that links rather than severs the relationship between the personal and the political as part of a broader struggle for justice and social transformation. All the principles developed below touch on these issues and recast the relationship between the pedagogical and the political as central to any social movement that attempts to effect emancipatory struggles and social transformations.

1. Education needs to be reformulated so as to give as much attention to pedagogy as it does to traditional and alternative notions of scholarship. This is not a question of giving pedagogy equal weight to scholarship as much as it is of assessing the important relationship between them. Education must be understood as the production of identities in relation to the ordering, representation, and legitimation of specific forms of knowledge and power. As Chandra Mohanty reminds us, questions about education cannot be reduced to disciplinary parameters, but must include issues of power, history, self-identity, and the possibility of collective agency and struggle (Mohanty ch. 36). Rather than rejecting the language of politics, critical pedagogy must link public education to the imperatives of a critical democracy. Critical pedagogy needs to be informed by a public philosophy defined, in part, by the attempt to create the lived experience of empowerment for the vast majority. In other words, the language of critical pedagogy needs to construct schools as democratic public spheres.

In part, this means that educators need to develop a critical pedagogy in which the knowledge, habits, and skills of critical citizenship, not simply good citizenship, are taught and practiced. This means providing students with the opportunity to develop the critical capacity to challenge and transform existing social and political forms, rather than simply adapt to them. It also means providing students with the skills they will need to locate themselves in history, find their own voices, and provide the convictions and compassion necessary for exercising civic courage, taking risks, and furthering the habits, customs, and social relations that are essential to democratic public forms.

In effect, critical pedagogy needs to be grounded in a keen sense of the importance of constructing a political vision from which to develop an educational project as part of a wider discourse for revitalizing democratic public life. A critical pedagogy for democracy cannot be reduced, as some educators, politicians, and groups have argued, to forcing students to either say the pledge of allegiance at the beginning of every school day or to speak and think only in the language of dominant English. A critical pedagogy for democracy does not begin with test scores but with questions. What kinds of citizens do we hope to produce through public education in a postmodern culture? What kind of society do we want to create in the context of the present shifting cultural and ethnic borders? How can we reconcile the notions of difference and equality with the imperatives of freedom and justice?

2. Ethics must be seen as a central concern of critical pedagogy. This suggests that educators attempt to understand more fully how different discourses offer students diverse ethical referents for structuring their relationship to the wider society. But it also suggests that educators go beyond the postmodern notion of understanding how student experiences are shaped within different ethical discourses. Educators must come to view ethics and politics as a relationship between the self and the other. Ethics, in this case, is not a matter of individual choice or relativism but a social discourse that refuses to accept needless human suffering and exploitation. Ethics becomes a practice that broadly connotes one's personal and social sense of responsibility to the Other. Thus, ethics is taken up as a struggle against inequality and as a discourse for expanding basic human rights. This points to a notion of ethics attentive to both the issue of abstract rights and those contexts that produce particular stories, struggles, and histories. In pedagogical terms, an ethical discourse needs to be taken up with regard to the relations of power, subject positions, and social practices it activates. This is an ethics of neither essentialism nor relativism. It is an ethical discourse grounded in historical struggles and attentive to the construction of social relations free of injustice. The quality of ethical discourse is not simply grounded in difference but in the issue of how justice arises out of concrete historical circumstances and public struggles.

3. Critical pedagogy needs to focus on the issue of difference in an ethically challenging

and politically transformative way. There are at least two notions of difference at work here. One, difference can be incorporated into a critical pedagogy as part of an attempt to understand how student identities and subjectivities are constructed in multiple and contradictory ways. In this case, identity is explored through its own historicity and complex subject positions. The category of student experience should not be limited pedagogically to students exercising self-reflection but opened up as a race, gender, and class specific construct to include the diverse ways in which students' experiences and identities have been constituted in different historical and social formations. Two, critical pedagogy can focus on how differences between groups develop and are sustained around both enabling and disabling sets of relations. In this instance, difference becomes a marker for understanding how social groups are constituted in ways that are integral to the functioning of any democratic society. Examining difference in this context does not only focus on charting spatial, racial, ethnic, or cultural differences structured in dominance, but also analyzes historical differences that manifest themselves in public struggles.

As part of a language of critique, teachers can make problematic how different subjectivities are positioned within a historically specific range of ideologies and social practices that inscribe students in various subject positions. Similarly, such a language can analyze how differences within and between social groups are constructed and sustained within and outside of the schools in webs of domination, subordination, hierarchy, and exploitation. As part of their use of a language of possibility, teachers can explore the opportunity to develop knowledge/power relations in which multiple narratives and social practices are constructed around a politics and pedagogy of difference that offers students the opportunity to read the world differently, resist the abuse of power and privilege, and construct alternative democratic communities. Difference in this case cannot be seen as simply either as a register of plurality or as a politics of assertion. Instead, it must be developed within practices in which differences can be affirmed *and* transformed in their articulation with historical and relational categories central to emancipatory forms of public life: democracy, citizenship, and public spheres.

In both political and pedagogical terms, the category of difference must not be simply acknowledged but defined relationally in terms of antiracist, antipatriarchal, multicentric, and ecological practices central to the notion of democratic community.

4. Critical pedagogy needs a language that allows for competing solidarities and political vocabularies that do not reduce the issues of power, justice, struggle, and inequality to a single script, a master narrative that suppresses the contingent, the historical, and the everyday as serious objects of study. This suggests that curriculum knowledge should not be treated as a sacred text but developed as part of an ongoing engagement with a variety of narratives and traditions that can be reread and reformulated in politically different terms. At issue here is how to construct a discourse of textual authority that is power-sensitive and developed as part of a wider analysis of the struggle over culture fought out at the levels of curricula knowledge, pedagogy, and the exercise of institutional power. This is not merely an argument against a canon, but one that refigures the meaning and use of canon. Knowledge has to be constantly re-examined in terms of its limits and rejected as a body of information that only has to be passed down to students. As Laclau has pointed out, setting limits to the answers given by what can be judged as a valued tradition (a matter of argument also) is an important political act. What Laclau is suggesting is the possibility for students to creatively appropriate the past as part of a living dialogue, an affirmation of the multiplicity of narratives, and the need to judge those narratives not as timeless or as monolithic discourses, but as social and historical inventions that can be refigured in the interests of creating more democratic forms of public life. Here is opened the possibility for creating pedagogical practices characterized by the open exchange of ideas, the proliferation of dialogue, and the material conditions for the expression of individual and social freedom.

5. Critical pedagogy needs to create new forms of knowledge through its emphasis on breaking down disciplinary boundaries and creating new spheres in which knowledge can be produced. In this sense, critical pedagogy must be reclaimed as a cultural politics and a form of social-memory. This is not merely an epistemological issue, but one of power,

ethics, and politics. Critical pedagogy as a cultural politics points to the necessity of inserting the struggle over the production and creation of knowledge as part of a broader attempt to create a number of diverse critical public cultures. As a form of social-memory, critical pedagogy starts with the everyday and the particular as a basis for learning. It reclaims the historical and the popular as part of an ongoing effort to critically appropriate the voices of those who have been silenced and to help move the voices of those who have been located within narratives that are monolithic and totalizing beyond indifference or guilt to emancipatory practice. At stake here is a pedagogy that provides the knowledge, skills, and habits for students and others to read history in ways that enable them to reclaim their identities in the interests of constructing more democratic and just forms of life.

This struggle deepens the pedagogical meaning of the political and the political meaning of the pedagogical. In the first instance, it raises important questions about how students and others are constructed as agents within particular histories, cultures, and social relations. Against the monolith of culture, it posits the conflicting terrain of cultures shaped within asymmetrical relations of power, grounded in diverse historical struggles. Similarly, culture has to be understood as part of the discourse of power and inequality. As a pedagogical issue, the relationship between culture and power is evident in questions such as, 'Whose cultures are appropriated as our own? How is marginality normalized?' (Popkewitz 1988: 77) To insert the primacy of culture as a pedagogical and political issue is to make central how schools function in the shaping of particular identities, values, and histories by producing and legitimating specific cultural narratives and resources. In the second instance, asserting the pedagogical aspects of the political raises the issue of how difference and culture can be taken up as pedagogical practices and not merely as political categories. For example, how does difference matter as a pedagogical category if educators and cultural workers have to make knowledge meaningful before it can become critical and transformative? Or what does it mean to engage the tension between being theoretically correct and pedagogically wrong? These concerns and tensions offer the possibility for making the

relationship between the political and the pedagogical mutually informing and problematic.

6. The Enlightenment notion of reason needs to be reformulated within a critical pedagogy. First, educators need to be skeptical regarding any notion of reason that purports to reveal the truth by denying its own historical construction and ideological principles. Reason is not innocent, and any viable notion of critical pedagogy cannot exercise forms of authority that emulate totalizing forms of reason that appear to be beyond criticism and dialogue. This suggests that we reject claims to objectivity in favor of partial epistemologies that recognize the historical and socially constructed nature of their own knowledge claims and methodologies. In this way, curriculum can be viewed as a cultural script that introduces students to particular forms of reason, that structure specific stories and ways of life. Reason in this sense implicates and is implicated in the intersection of power, knowledge, and politics. Second, it is not enough to reject an essentialist or universalist defense of reason. Instead, the limits of reason must be extended to recognizing other ways in which people learn or take up particular subject positions. In this case, educators need to understand more fully how people learn through concrete social relations, through the ways in which the body is positioned through the construction of habit and intuition, and through the production and investment of desire and affect.

7. Critical pedagogy needs to regain a sense of alternatives by combining a language of critique and possibility. Postmodern feminism exemplifies this in both its critique of patriarchy and its search to construct new forms of identity and social relations. It is worth noting that teachers can take up this issue around a number of considerations. First, educators need to construct a language of critique that combines the issue of limits with the discourse of freedom and social responsibility. In other words, the question of freedom needs to be engaged dialectically not only as one of individual rights but also as part of the discourse of social responsibility. That is, whereas freedom remains an essential category in establishing the conditions for ethical and political rights, it must also be seen as a force to be checked if it is expressed in modes of individual and collective behavior that

threaten the ecosystem or produce forms of violence and oppression against individuals and social groups. Second, critical pedagogy needs to explore in programmatic terms a language of possibility that is capable of thinking risky thoughts, that engages a project of hope, and points to the horizon of the 'not yet'. A language of possibility does not have to dissolve into a reified form of utopianism; instead, it can be developed as a precondition for nourishing convictions that summon up the courage to imagine a different and more just world and to struggle for it. A language of moral and political possibility is more than an outmoded vestige of humanist discourse. It is central to responding not only with compassion to human beings who suffer and agonize but also with a politics and a set of pedagogical practices that can refigure and change existing narratives of domination into images and concrete instances of a future that is worth fighting for.

There is a certain cynicism that characterizes the language of the Left. Central to this position is the refusal of all utopian images, all appeals to 'a language of possibility.' Such refusals are often made on the grounds that 'utopian discourse' is a strategy employed by the Right and is therefore ideologically tainted. Or the very notion of possibility is dismissed as an impractical and therefore useless category. In my mind, this represents less a serious critique than a refusal to move beyond the language of exhaustion and despair. What is central to develop in response to this position is a discriminating notion of possibility, one that makes a distinction between a language that is 'dystopian' and one that is utopian. In the former, the appeal to the future is grounded in a form of nostalgic romanticism that calls for a return to a past, which more often than not serves to legitimate relations of domination and oppression. Similarly, in Constance Penley's terms (1989: 122), a 'dystopian' discourse often 'limits itself to solutions that are either individualist or bound to a romanticized notion of guerrilla-like small-group resistance. The true atrophy of the utopian imagination is this: we can imagine the future but we *cannot* conceive the kind of collective political strategies necessary to change or ensure that future.' In contrast to the language of dystopia, a discourse of possibility rejects apocalyptic emptiness and nostalgic imperialism and sees history as open and

society worth struggling for in the image of an alternative future. This is the language of the 'not yet,' one in which the imagination is redeemed and nourished in the effort to construct new relationships fashioned out of strategies of collective resistance based on a critical recognition of both what society is and what it might become. Paraphrasing Walter Benjamin, this is a discourse of imagination and hope that pushes history against the grain. Nancy Fraser (1989: 107) illuminates this sentiment by emphasizing the importance of a language of possibility for the project of social change: 'It allows for the possibility of a radical democratic politics in which immanent critique and transfigurative desire mingle with one another.'

8. Critical pedagogy needs to develop a theory of educators and cultural workers as transformative intellectuals who occupy specific political and social locations. Rather than defining teacher work through the narrow language of professionalism, a critical pedagogy needs to ascertain more carefully what the role of teachers might be as cultural workers engaged in the production of ideologies and social practices. At one level this suggests that cultural workers first renounce the discourse of objectivity and decenteredness and then embrace a practice that is capable of revealing the historical, ideological, and ethical parameters that frame its discourse and implications for the self, society, culture, and the other. Cultural workers need to unravel not only the ideological codes, representations, and practices that structure the dominant order, they also need to acknowledge 'those places and spaces we inherit and occupy, which frame our lives in very specific and concrete ways, which are as much a part of our psyches as they are a physical or geographical placement' (Borsa 1990: 36). The practice of social criticism becomes inseparable from the act of self-criticism; one cannot take place without the other; nor does one have priority over the other, instead they must be seen as both relational and mutually constitutive.

At another level, cultural workers need to develop a nontotalizing politics that makes them attentive to the partial, specific, contexts of differentiated communities and forms of power. This is not a call to ignore larger theoretical and relational narratives, but to deepen power of analyses by making clear the specificity of contexts in which power is opera-

tionalized, domination expresses itself, and resistance works in multiple and productive ways. In this case, teachers and cultural workers can undertake social criticism within and not outside of ethical and political discourses; they can address issues that give meaning to the contexts in which they work, but at the same time relate them to broader articulations that recognize the importance of larger formative narratives. Critique, resistance, and transformation in these terms is organized through systems of knowledge and webs of solidarity that embrace the local and the global. Cultural workers need to take seriously Foucault's model of the specific intellectual who acknowledges the politics of personal location. This is important, but not enough; cultural workers must also actively struggle as public intellectuals who can relate to and address wider issues that affect both the immediacy of their location and the wider global context. Transformative intellectuals must create webs of solidarity with those that share localized experiences and identities but must also develop a politics of solidarity that reaches out to those others who live in a global world whose problems cannot be dismissed because they do not occupy a local and immediate space. The issues of human rights, ecology, apartheid, militarism, and other forms of domination against both humans and the planet affect all of us directly and indirectly. This is not merely a political issue; it is also a deeply ethical issue that situates the meaning of the relationship between the self and the other, the margins and the center, and the colonizer and colonized in broader contexts of solidarity and struggle. Educators need to develop pedagogical practices that not only heighten the possibilities for critical consciousness but also for transformative action. In this perspective, teachers and other cultural workers would be involved in the invention of critical discourses, practices, and democratic social relations. Critical pedagogy would represent itself as the active construction rather than transmission of particular ways of life. More specifically, as transformative intellectuals, cultural workers and teachers can engage in the invention of languages so as to provide spaces for themselves, their students, and audiences to rethink their experiences in terms that both name relations of oppression and also offer ways in which to overcome them.

9. Central to the notion of critical pedagogy is a politics of voice that combines a postmodern notion of difference with a feminist emphasis on the primacy of the political. This engagement suggests taking up the relationship between the personal and the political in a way that does not collapse the political into the personal but strengthens the relationship between the two so as to engage rather than withdraw from addressing those institutional forms and structures that contribute to forms of racism, sexism, and class exploitation. This suggests some important pedagogical interventions. First, the self must be seen as a primary site of politicization. That is, the issue of how the self is constructed in multiple and complex ways must be analyzed both as part of a language of affirmation and a broader understanding of how identities are inscribed in and between various social, cultural, and historical formations. To engage issues regarding the construction of the self is to address questions of history, culture, community, language, gender, race, and class. It is to raise questions regarding what pedagogical practices need to be employed that allow students to speak in dialogical contexts that affirm, interrogate, and extend their understandings of themselves and the global contexts in which they live. Such a position recognizes that students have several or multiple identities, but also confirms the importance of offering students a language that allows them to reconstruct their moral and political energies in the service of creating a more just and creditable social order, one that undermines relations of hierarchy and domination.

Second, a politics of voice must offer pedagogical and political strategies that affirm the primacy of the social, intersubjective, and collective. To focus on voice is not meant to simply affirm the stories that students tell, nor to simply glorify the possibility for narration. Such a position often degenerates into a form of narcissism, a cathartic experience that is reduced to naming anger without the benefit of theorizing in order to both understand its underlying causes and what it means to work collectively to transform the structures of domination responsible for oppressive social relations. Raising one's consciousness has increasingly become a pretext for legitimating hegemonic forms of separatism buttressed by self-serving appeals to the primacy of individual experience. What is often expressed in

such appeals is an anti-intellectualism that retreats from any viable form of political engagement, especially one willing to address and transform diverse forms of oppression. The call to simply affirm one's voice has increasingly been reduced to a pedagogical process that is as reactionary as it is inward looking. A more radical notion of voice should begin with what bell hooks calls a critical attention to theorizing experience as part of a broader politics of engagement. In referring specifically to feminist pedagogy, she argues that the discourse of confession and memory can be used to 'shift the focus away from mere naming of one's experience . . . to talk about identity in relation to culture, history, and politics' (1989: 110) For hooks, the telling of tales of victimization, or the expression of one's voice is not enough; it is equally imperative that such experiences be the object of theoretical and critical analyses so that they can be connected rather than severed from a broader notions of solidarity, struggle, and politics.

Conclusion

This chapter attempts to analyze some of the central assumptions that govern the discourses of modernism, postmodernism, and postmodern feminism. But in doing so, it rejects pitting these movements against each other and tries instead to see how they converge as part of a broader political project linked to the reconstruction of democratic public life. Similarly, I have attempted here to situate the issue of pedagogical practice within a wider discourse of political engagement. Pedagogy is not defined as simply something that goes on in schools. On the contrary, it is posited as central to any political practice that takes up questions of how individuals learn, how knowledge is produced, and how subject positions are constructed. In this context, pedagogical practice refers to forms of cultural production that are inextricably historical and political.

Pedagogy is, in part, a technology of power, language, and practice that produces and legitimates forms of moral and political regulation, that construct and offer human beings particular views of themselves and the world. Such views are never innocent and are always

implicated in the discourse and relations of ethics and power. To invoke the importance of pedagogy is to raise questions not simply about how students learn but also how educators (in the broad sense of the term) construct the ideological and political positions from which they speak. At issue here is a discourse that both situates human beings within history and makes visible the limits of their ideologies and values. Such a position acknowledges the partiality of all discourses so that the relationship between knowledge and power will always be open to dialogue and critical self-engagement. Pedagogy is about the intellectual, emotional, and ethical investments we make as part of our attempt to negotiate, accommodate, and transform the world in which we find ourselves. The purpose and vision that drives such a pedagogy must be based on a politics and view of authority, that links teaching and learning to forms of self- and social empowerment that argue for forms of community life that extend the principles of liberty, equality, justice, and freedom to the widest possible set of institutional and lived relations.

As defined within the traditions of modernism, postmodernism, and postmodern feminism, pedagogy offers educators an opportunity to develop a political project that embraces human interests that move beyond the particularistic politics of class, ethnicity, race, and gender. This is not a call to dismiss the postmodern emphasis on difference as much as it is an attempt to develop a radical democratic politics that stresses difference within unity. This effort means developing a public language that can transform a politics of assertion into one of democratic struggle. Central to such a politics and pedagogy is a notion of community developed around a shared conception of social justice, rights, and entitlement. Such a notion is especially necessary at a time in our history in which the value of such concerns have been subordinated to the priorities of the market and used to legitimate the interests of the rich at the expense of the poor, the unemployed, and the homeless. A radical pedagogy and transformative democratic politics must go hand in hand in constructing a vision in which liberalism's emphasis on individual freedom, postmodernism's concern with the particularistic, and feminism's concern with the politics of the everyday are coupled with democratic social-

ism's historic concern with solidarity and public life.

We live at a time in which the responsibilities of citizens extend beyond national borders. The old modernist notions of center and margin, home and exile, and familiar and strange are breaking apart. Geographic, cultural, and ethnic borders are giving way to shifting configurations of power, community, space, and time. Citizenship can no longer ground itself in forms of Eurocentricism and the language of colonialism. New spaces, relationships, and identities have to be created that allow us to move across borders, to engage difference and otherness as part of a discourse of justice, social engagement, and democratic struggle. Academics can no longer retreat into their classrooms or symposiums as if they were the only public spheres available for engaging the power of ideas and the relations of power. Foucault's notion of the specific intellectual taking up struggles connected to particular issues and contexts must be combined with Gramsci's notion of the engaged intellectual who connects his or her work to broader social concerns that deeply affect how people live, work, and survive.

But there is more at stake here than defining the role of the intellectual or the relationship of teaching to democratic struggle. The struggle against racism, class structures, sexism, and other forms of oppression needs to move away from simply a language of critique, and redefine itself as part of a language of transformation and hope. This shift suggests that educators combine with other cultural workers engaged in public struggles in order to invent languages and provide critical and transformative spaces both in and out of schools that offer new opportunities for social movements to come together. By doing this, we can rethink and re-experience democracy as a struggle over values, practices, social relations, and subject positions that enlarge the terrain of human capacities and possibilities as a basis for a compassionate social order. At issue here is the need for cultural workers to create a politics that contributes to the multiplication of sites of democratic struggles. Within such sites cultural workers can engage in specific struggles while also recognizing the necessity to embrace broader issues that enhance the life of the planet while extending the spirit of democracy to all societies.

Far from being exhaustive, the principles

offered are only meant to provide some fleeting images of a pedagogy that can address the importance of democracy as an ongoing struggle, the meaning of educating students to govern, and the imperative of creating pedagogical conditions in which political citizens can be educated within a politics of difference that supports rather than opposes the reconstruction of a radical democracy.

Note

1. A number of feminist theorists take up these issues while either rejecting or problematizing any relationship with postmodernism (Hartsock 1989–90; Felski 1989). For a range of feminist theoretical analyses concerning the construction of gender and modes of social division, see the two special issues of *Cultural Critique*, 13 (1989), 14 (1989–90).

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Having a Postmodernist Turn or Postmodernist Angst: A Disorder Experienced by an Author Who is Not Yet Dead or Even Close to It

Jane Kenway

... my title to this chapter ... defiant and I do feel ... I'd like to. I'm not ... 'chocolate' unfortu- ... certain political unease, ... if not a sense of hope- ... induced optimism with ... and maybe beyond edu- ... but not surprised at the ... feminism in Aus- ... health systems (this is ... of the boys' and the ...), but I am also ... anxious about some of ... feminism in educa- ... my anxieties and see ... I am anxious, oth- ... there is a range of ... others say some of these ... problem than femi- ... is true, but let me at ... and see if they strike ... be damned. Others say ... be damned; you will ... backlash. Yet others say ... times, I should ... criticize it. They say ... educators' (what- ... academics' (what- ... promote feminist ... and that criticism ... particularly at those who

detract from, and undermine, such causes and who benefit most from current inequitable social and educational arrangements.

I agree to some considerable extent with this last imperative. How could I do otherwise when I live in the Australian state of Victoria, a state governed by radical conservatives who, since coming to power less than two years ago, have vandalized the school system, removed 8,200 teaching positions, closed or amalgamated over 230 schools, wound back the provision of educational support services, pushed schools into a market mode, instituted a model of management which has turned educational leadership into a form of institutional management devoid of educational concerns, undermined the morale of teachers, almost totally destroyed the teachers' unions, officially removed the concept of social justice from the educational agenda, shaved $300 million off the state education budget and increased aid to private schools by 15 per cent in real terms (see further Marginson, forthcoming). I agree that there is an urgent and pressing need for educators to speak out strongly and courageously against those types of educational manoeuvres, to deconstruct the truth claims which have been mobilized to justify and legitimate such moves and to name them for what they are. I also think it is equally important that the broader national and global political, cultural and economic shifts which