

**A CRITIQUE OF THE STRUCTURAL
DETERMINISTIC APPROACH TO EDUCATION AND
THE PARADOXICAL STRUGGLES IT SPAWNED
AGAINST BANTU EDUCATION**



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UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

**A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of M.Phil in the Department
of Philosophy of Education, University of the Western
Cape**

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ABSTRACT

Title : **A CRITIQUE OF THE STRUCTURAL DETERMINISTIC APPROACH TO EDUCATION AND THE PARADOXICAL STRUGGLES IT SPAWNED AGAINST BANTU EDUCATION**

Candidate : **NTOZELIZWE XOLISILE TOM**

Course : **M.Phil, Department of Philosophy of Education, University of the Western Cape**

The question which the minithesis seeks to answer is:- To what extent did oppositional projects against Bantu Education advance the emancipatory process in the sphere of Education? The question has been prompted by the widely-held notion that oppositional projects against Bantu Education went a long way towards advancing the struggle for a better system of education.

The line of argument which the minithesis seeks to advance is that oppositional projects against Bantu Education, while they contained some emancipatory moments were to a large extent counter productive as they undermined the culture of learning and teaching in the schooling system.

This minithesis offers a critique of the theoretical analysis employed by the teachers, students and other civil society structures that operated in the sphere of education in South Africa in their struggle against Bantu Education. The tool of analysis employed was structural determinism postulated by Marxists like Althusser who tended to favour a deterministic explanation of events over those which provide theoretical space for human agency and deliberation. This approach gained ascendancy over all other theories of analysis in the course of the struggle against Bantu Education.

This minithesis, however, does acknowledge the fact that the teachers, students and civil society structures saw through the ideological smokescreen propagated by the state through Bantu Education to give ideological sanction to oppression, but charges them with displaying impotence in generating the power to engage the dominant class in theoretical ways that were emancipatory. Although they saw through the pretences of Bantu Education they failed to stimulate a discovery of the best ways to advance the project of transformation and emancipation. Thus, by the oppositional projects they engaged in, they condemned themselves to a specific place in a system of exploitation and oppression.

one only

DECLARATION

I declare that **A Critique of the Structural Deterministic Approach to Education and the Paradoxical Struggles it spawned against Bantu Education** is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used and quoted from have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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NTOZELIZWE TOM

28 August 1998
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Date

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although Marx was a founder of a materialist conception of history, the theory of historical materialism has followed a development of its own to such an extent that there exist various conceptions of historical materialism, some contradicting Marx in important ways.

The clearest original statement of the theory of historical materialism in the writing of Marx is to be found in the Preface to "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy". The claim which Marx advanced in it was clearly a materialist conception of history which leaves space for dialectical transformation of society and the creativity of historical agents to transform the world around them. In it Marx advanced a claim that:

In the social production which men engage in, they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material forces of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society - the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the social, political and intellectual life processes in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come into conflict with the

existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal expression of the same thing - with the property relations within which they have been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. Within the change of economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed.....¹

The above quotation mentions what Cohen calls the "three ensembles"², namely, the productive forces, the relations of production and the superstructure. This is the foundation upon which the base-superstructure model is founded. However, this same passage gives rise to the tension within the Marxist school of thought, especially a deterministic reading and a treatment thereof as the only reference to the relationship between base and superstructure by Marx.

The idea of relations that are "indispensable and independent" of the wills of the people raises a problem for determinism and places the notion of human agency in jeopardy. Normally understood, the idea of determinism suggests that everything that happens is conditioned such that, given them, nothing else could happen. The idea that could be extracted from this theory is that of "correspondence" which leaves no room for tension, resistance or conflict.

Furthermore, the identification of the economic structure as the "real basis" of society means that every phenomenon in society can be reduced to the economic and all other phenomena become merely epiphenomenal. It is for these reasons that the distinction between Marx's writings and the theory of historical materialism becomes useful, because there are other conceptions of historical materialism that are at odds with the implied one-way determinism. Against this determinism, notions of agency, resistance, criticism, open-endedness, compete

for centre stage etc. that one sees as integral to education and transformation.

My task in this mini-thesis is to demonstrate that critical pedagogy could have been applied even within Bantu Education schooling and the global apartheid system. I want to highlight the fact that it was structural determinism which provided an analytical tool for some radical intellectuals in South Africa in their struggle against the Bantu Education System. This approach which informed their activities led them to engage in forms of struggle which were sometimes paradoxical as they did not ameliorate the suffering of the oppressed. This does not in any way detract from the profound effect which this form of approach, underpinned by a structural deterministic conception of history, had on the struggles that unfolded in South Africa.

What I challenge in this mini-thesis is the idea embedded in the approach of determinism, of a scientific approach to historical materialism that does not only want to set the stage for the unfolding of world history, but also wants to prescribe the acts to be performed on that stage. In this scenario, world history unfolds according to set laws. This is but one of the competing variants of Marxism. I wish to examine the various conceptions of Historical Materialism to establish if any of those allow for concepts of transformation in education. Put simply, if any of these variants do have theoretical space for the concepts of transformation and critical pedagogy.

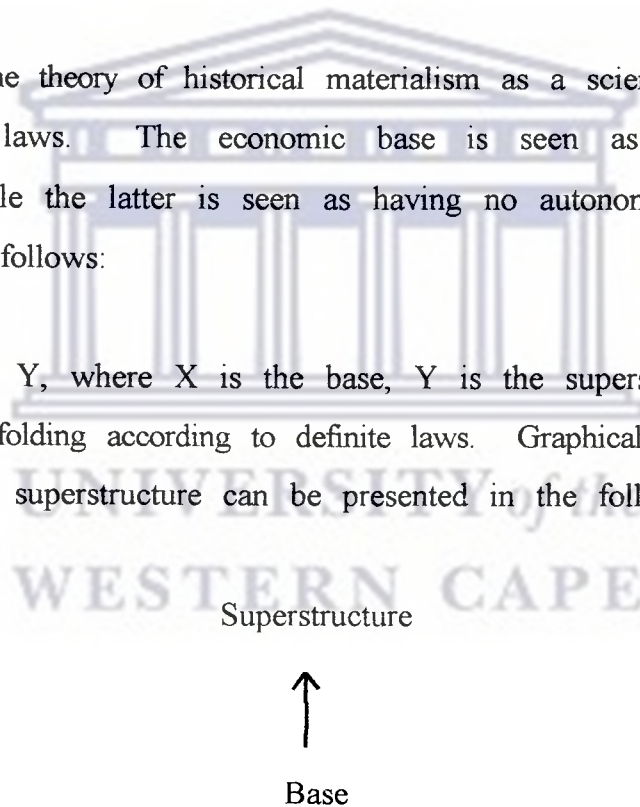
CONCEPTIONS OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

All the conceptions of historical materialism accept a relationship between the material base of society and the superstructure. However, it is the nature of this relationship that is contested. What follow are the different ways of presenting the relationship.

i One-way determinism

This view treats the theory of historical materialism as a science that generates its own causal laws. The economic base is seen as determining the superstructure while the latter is seen as having no autonomy. The type of explanation is as follows:

Whenever X then Y, where X is the base, Y is the superstructure. History is perceived as unfolding according to definite laws. Graphically the relationship between base and superstructure can be presented in the following way:



In this illustration the arrow shows the direction of causality. Authors associated with such a position include Bukharin, Plekanov and Kautsky.

ii Relative autonomy

This position differs from one-way determinism in the sense that it allows for

relative autonomy of the superstructure, but puts it that the superstructure is determined "in the last instance" by the economic structure or base. This is a position that exists in the realisation that the superstructure cannot be adequately explained by casual explanation, especially in the light of passages from Marx that suggest that beyond the determination of the superstructure by the base, the superstructure itself acts to keep together the base.

As a solution to this, Cohen³ suggests that functional explanation is the only way of presenting historical materialism as inherently consistent. In this way we can assert that "the superstructure is functional for the stability of the economic structure"⁴. The position of relative autonomy can be seen as an attempt to get away from one-way determinism that does not altogether succeed, because of the inability to get away from determinism "in the last instance". Althusser and his followers are associated with this position.

iii Dialectical Interpretation

This is a position where the base-superstructure model is preserved, but where there is no subordination of the superstructure by the base. It is a relationship between base and superstructure that Hall describes aptly as "mutually determining"⁵. The superstructure can thus also initiate change in the economic base of society.

Generally, this position can be shown in the following way:

Base ← → **Superstructure**. *** The double sided arrow

indicates a "mutually determining" relationship.

Can it be possible for critical pedagogy or transformation in education to

take place in an oppressive society?

This question stems from the thesis that there can be no transformation in education or transformation pedagogy within the context of an oppressive society such as we had in South Africa. This claim posits the idea that education in an oppressive society cannot be anything but a mirror image of the society within which it takes place. Implicit in this idea is the belief that in an oppressive society, education is of necessity education to inculcate into the minds of its recipients a feeling of worshipping the superiority of the colonial master. As such, the recipients of education in an oppressive society must of necessity act in accordance with the expectations of an oppressive regime.

In the case of South Africa education was thought to be part of social engineering which can produce no results other than those intended by the State. This led to the belief that there can be no education at all in an oppressive society but only an "organised form of indoctrination". This is the view that shaped the approach of many intellectuals in South Africa whose project was to overthrow the status quo. Flowing out of this approach was the belief that problems that afflicted education in South Africa could be resolved only when Apartheid had been overthrown.

What it meant was that the economic structure in South Africa determined the superstructure and as such fashioned the activities of the actors in the society. This seems to deny the agency of the actors of human beings as autonomous agencies. This was structural determinism.

What this mini-thesis sets out to do is to take a critical view of the oppositional projects that were launched in South Africa which were to a large extent fashioned by structural determinism. Put simply, the view that I attack

in this mini-thesis is the belief that education in South Africa could not be transformed within the context of an oppressive society. As such, Apartheid must be the focus of attack and it is only when it has been overthrown that education in South Africa can be transformed. This is the idea which influenced radical intellectuals and some of the oppositional projects launched in the sphere of schooling in South Africa.

In a nutshell the claim that will be presented here is that schooling, and invariably education, is not a slave to any system. Its nature is critical and open-ended. It produces knowledge in an environment that is free from determinism. Agency has to do with the ability of people to influence events that shape their lives. Thus an active relationship with the level of politics is assumed, and sustained by the agency of the people or social actors. As such the undermining of the space for agency and the perceived presence of coercion sound the death knell for education and transformation.

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CHAPTER 2

DO ANY OF THE CONCEPTS OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM ALLOW THEORETICAL SPACE FOR TRANSFORMATION IN EDUCATION?

In this chapter I want to examine the three concepts of understanding and perceiving the society outlined in the previous chapter and see whether they allow theoretical space for the concepts of critical educational practice and thus transformation of education. I will also try to explore the claims the critics made about the link between Apartheid, education and schooling.

My contention is that many of the claims made about education or schooling can be located in the sphere of structural determinism. This is so because one of the striking developments that unfolded in the course of the struggle against Bantu Education was the declaration of schools as "sites of struggle". The implication was that educational relationships were at base power relationships and that educational decisions were not of epistemological significance as their significance lay chiefly in the realm of politics. In a nutshell some conceptions of historical materialism posited that there could be no critical educational practice, and thus transformation of schooling practices, in the context of an oppressive society.

a ONE-WAY DETERMINISM

This conception subordinates the superstructure to the economic base. Causal laws can thus be constructed to explain education and transformation exhaustively in terms of the economic base. Thus development and changes in education and politics can only come about in response to changes in economic

conditions.

Such a view, because of its doctrine of determinism, treats bourgeois democracy found in capitalist countries as being necessarily conditioned. It, however, fails to explain the contradictory nature of bourgeois democracy, especially with regard to the expansion of the franchise to the working class. It rules out any notion of resistance and conflict that can effect changes in the economic base of society.

This view of historical materialism claims to generate its own account of education and critical educational practice and thus transformation. This view can, however, be challenged with the notion of education and transformation. What is presented as schooling is the consumption of knowledge that is necessary to maintain the desired economic base.

Given the limitation of the scope of education, one gets the feeling that schooling is seen as merely reflecting the economic base and therefore epiphenomenal. There can be no concept of education and transformation as practice (given its links with freedom and agency) in this atmosphere of limitation and necessity.

What this means is that transformation can be only vague promises of eventual freedom and equality, situated within a practice of set laws denying human agency. Such a conception of historical materialism offers no concrete concept of transformation and critical epistemological practices at school. This conception leaves no space for conceptions of education and transformation linked in explicit practice.

b. RELATIVE AUTONOMY

This approach is sensitive to criticisms levelled at one-way determinism. It attempts to deal with this problem by assigning relative autonomy to the superstructure, but does not, however, completely overcome the criticism as it cannot rid itself of the refrain that the superstructure is determined "in the last instance" by the economic base. This leads to criticism that is not much different from that made in connection with one-way determinism.

According to Althusser, Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) are the primary reproducers of the relations of production, and in modern capitalist social formations, it is the school which is the number one ISA.⁶ Benade makes two valid criticisms of Althusser. Firstly, he states that ideologically-determined knowledge can never be educative.⁷ He does this with a concept of education in mind that is associated with critical thought, autonomy, non-instrumentality etc.; one that is in line with an educational practice as set out in this mini-thesis. He charges Althusser with the collapse of schooling and education.

Secondly, Benade criticises Althusser for portraying the school as a mere consumer of state ideology and "denying the possibility that the school can become the point of knowledge production"⁸. Transformation of educational practices through critical educational practice is also seen to be ideologically conditioned in the same way. Such a view precludes the possibility of exploiting the contradictory nature of bourgeois democracy.

What is clear here is that the function of the school and political arrangements become subordinate to the economic base of the society. While this approach opens possibilities, they are closed almost simultaneously by an insistence on "determinism in the last instance". In the last instance, this approach cannot

have space for the concept of critical educational practices and thus transformation of the schooling system because of its failure to break from determinism.

In a nutshell, in his "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", Althusser assigned to schooling the structural role of reproducers of the dominant ideology. His conclusion was that schools, by their very nature, aided the dominant group in maintaining its ideological hold over the oppressed. This view was buttressed by Bowles and Gintis in their correspondence theory that correspondence exists between the practices of the school and that of industry. Their conclusion was that the form of schooling and not necessarily its content educated the oppressed for service within the capitalist society. Thus students and teachers were portrayed as victims of the structure.

Given the power of structural arguments, like those of Bowles and Gintis and Althusser on the one hand, and given the depth of the anger and disillusionments with the apartheid schooling on the other, the oppressed were encouraged to accept that no meaningful education was possible within the apartheid structure. Apartheid education, had to be replaced by an alternative form of education, a demystified education which would provide the oppressed with access to knowledge. This could be achieved only after the demise of the apartheid system. This structural notion of education was pervasive and potentially destructive. It manifested itself in the forms of oppositional projects against Bantu Education and more dramatically in the call for Liberation before Education. These are the issues I will take up on later in this mini-thesis.

c. DIALECTICAL INTERPRETATION

In the competing concepts of historical materialism this is the only conception that allows us to avoid the problems of determinism, while at the same time preserving the relationship between the material base of society and the superstructure. It is only by adopting a "mutually determinate" relationship between the base and superstructure that one can avoid the problem of one-way determinism by the base. In this approach, we discard determinism by the economic base, without of course, dismissing the economic as unimportant.

In this conception of historical materialism, education "is no longer seen as subordinate to the economic base, but can sometimes be superordinate to it to the extent that knowledge production in school can lend considerable weight to the class struggle in its attempts to alter the form of the base"⁹.

Similarly a simplistic linear relation between class and politics is avoided by an approach that can fully appreciate the existence of resistance, criticisms and agency that is crucial to a revolutionary project. I must however hasten to add that talking of agency does not mean any form of agency, but rather a more conscious agency driven by practices that ameliorate rather than paradoxically buttress the suffering of the oppressed.

The point here is that the contradictory nature of democracy under a capitalist dispensation can be exploited fully in attempts to change the economic base of such a society. However, such a conception of historical materialism allows theoretical space for the concepts of critical educational practice and transformation.

This it does because of its open-ended and contingent nature and because it does not induce any limitations on historical outcomes. Such an understanding

of history is itself linked to notions of freedom and agency and as such it can accommodate all notions of critical educational knowledge or practice and transformation.

Thus, the claim I have made here is that a dialectical understanding of historical materialism allows theoretical space for concepts of critical educational practice and transformation that are conceptually linked to freedom and agency, because of its commitment to these notions. It, however, achieves these without portraying their relations as "floating free of determinate effects of the concrete relations in which they are located"¹⁰. The material world sets the stage on which history unfolds, but history unfolds in contingent and impromptu ways and not according to a predetermined script. Such an approach leaves space for historical outcomes and offers a much more desirable alternative if compared with the closed-endedness of one-way determinism.

I must, however, warn that as much as this dialectical conception of history offers space for free agency, it is not an unconstrained agency and as such its activities can to some extent be hamstrung by the base. We can make history, but only on the stage on which we find ourselves acting.

Having said this, I wish to offer a critique of the theoretical foundation or paradigm which underpinned the struggle against Bantu Education. My assertion is that the struggle against Bantu Education was to a large extent underpinned by structural determinism which Marxists like Althusser postulated. My critique of this theoretical underpinning is that it did not offer space for agency and the intervention each individual can make to transform education. The structural deterministic approach tended to close off all possibilities for change which human beings as historical agents can initiate in the superstructure. This is the issue I wish to examine in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

STRUCTURAL DETERMINISTIC CONCEPTIONS OF BANTU EDUCATION

Having outlined the contending conceptions of historical materialism, I now wish to discuss the structural understanding of the educational struggles in South Africa as they unfolded in the past two decades. I wish to outline the claims which were made about Bantu Education and my contention is that they could be located within the sphere of structural determinism outlined in two of the conceptions of historical materialism outlined in the preceding chapter.

The claim was made that schooling in the colonial situation was aimed at nothing less than producing capitalist social relations. In colonial situations, the colonisers have attempted to recruit amongst the ranks of the oppressed, to groom functionaries and apologists for the system, indoctrinating them so that they would not identify with some of the issues which were regarded as the prerogatives of the oppressed, as well as turning them into insensitive objects who would not challenge the very system that keeps them in servitude.

Thus the aim of schooling which came with colonialism was to inculcate into the minds of its recipients a feeling of worshipping the superiority of the colonial master and to create an elite class that would man the colonial machinery. As such schooling has been used to groom its recipients, people who would inherit the values and morals of the colonialists, and to be people who would stand above their own cultures.

In the case of South Africa, a claim was made that schooling was used to divide the people by creating an elite who could benefit from the system of

apartheid and was employed to promote the intellectual underdevelopment of Blacks. It was designed to affirm the colonial status of a special type to be assigned to Blacks as it was synchronised with the Bantustan system. This is the view which radical intellectuals espoused. This is the issue I now turn to.

Radical intellectuals rejected Bantu Education and central to their rejection was the idea that the opportunities in the lives of Blacks, amid the sphere in which they lived, were defined by the oppressor. The oppressor makes choices for the oppressed and as such the oppressor sees to it that the activities of the oppressed remain strictly within the material and cultural frame imposed by the oppressive system. This was the main thrust of the critique offered by radical intellectuals against Bantu Education. Here I want to refer to the works of at least four radical intellectuals whose work was based on the structural deterministic model of South Africa's schooling system, particularly Bantu Education.

a. Four radical critics

I B Tababa¹¹ claims that the whole system of oppression consists of twin pillars - Bantu Education and the Bantustan system. He goes on to claim that:-

Oppression, like life, cannot be broken into separate compartments. Likewise the fight against it must be seen as a unified whole. The workers in the towns with their problems are part of the nation, as peasants in the countryside are also a part. The workers will have to understand that the pass system cannot be fought in isolation because it is one aspect of the segregated low

wage system and an integral part of the whole machinery of oppression. The peasantry too will have to understand that the Bantu Authorities and the Rehabilitation Scheme are insolubly bound up with low wages in the town, the pass system and all the urban areas legislation. In short, the problems facing the peasantry and all the impediments and lack of freedoms put in the way of workers in the urban locations are aspects of the sum total of natural oppression. The organisation of people has to reflect this dynamic interconnection.¹²

Here Tabata seems to reflect a structural deterministic understanding of South African oppression. This explains why he makes a claim that there can be no way in which an isolated aspect of oppression can be transformed. Instead the whole system of oppression needs to be changed. There is truth in that, but to suggest in a structural deterministic way that there can be no way in which an isolated area of oppression can be transformed, is to deny that the various institutions of society have a degree of autonomy. It is to claim that they are a mere epiphenomenal reflection of an overall structure. Furthermore, Tabata seems to have overlooked the notion of historical agency, the view that persons are not necessarily the victims and objects of history, but subjects as well as the makers of history. The following extract bears this point out. He asks:-

Whose laws are these he (referring to Buthelezi's attempt to suppress the Youth uprising at the height of the Soweto uprising in 1976) is so solicitous, about the laws the workers are supposed to abide by? Who makes them and for what purpose? What kind of education is the Bantu Education which he presumes to lambaste our children for rejecting? Can any Black man in his

full senses rave against the "complete rejection" of an educational system of slavery and barbarism?¹³

Tabata goes on to argue that the majority of people in South Africa have long seen through the treachery of Bantu Education, thanks to the intensive political education they have undergone in the last quarter of a century and more. For the enlightenment of Buthelezi, the people did not and could not get this kind of knowledge from the system of Bantu Education. The point I am trying to make here is that Tabata sees Bantu Education as a complete evil which left no spaces for people to be engaged in proper education and see through its smokescreen, as it was designed to turn them into Bantuised creatures. He sees people as unable to transform and reconstruct and as such his conceptualisation of Bantu Education negates this possibility. Elsewhere Tabata makes a further claim:-

Confident as we are that Verwoerdian policies must fail, we do not for one moment minimise their dire effect in the present. No one take refuge in facile hopes or contemplate with equanimity, the fate of a whole people doomed to frustration and penury, a people to whom every channel of development is closed, and whose children are excluded from the knowledge and culture of a modern state.¹⁴

A second example of a radical intellectual whose intellectual work could possibly be interpreted as falling into structural determinism is K. Smith. Smith¹⁵ claims that through Bantu Education, Blacks were robbed of education and cut off from the mainstream of modern cultures as it had to prepare them for life on the periphery. Through Bantu Education, education for Blacks was emptied of its universally recognised content. Harthorne calls the learning

institutions in the Bantustans "isolated learning communities which suffer isolation, politically, socially and intellectually." Describing these learning communities, Smith argues that they:-

...suffer from separation from the mainstream of educational thought and progress; low level of internal and external efficiency; low rates of financial inputs; powerlessness among local leadership; low levels of educational relevance to the real world; low levels of professional expertise in the community etc. They are also geographically isolated since they are located in the periphery.¹⁶

What comes through from the above quotation is the view that Bantu Education ensured an ignorant Black community whose main purpose, apart from reproducing its kind, was to minister to the needs of their White counterparts. This claim is rooted in the connection that existed between Bantu Education and the Bantustan system. It turned Black teachers into cogs in the well-oiled machine of Apartheid schooling. While it was right to expose this link, the weakness in Smith's view was his conceptualisation of Blacks as the victims and objects of history who were powerless to engage in dialectical interplay to change their position. The point here is that the agency of Blacks in effecting changes and improving their lot was overlooked.

A third example of a radical intellectual who could possibly be interpreted as falling into structural determinism is Pam Christie. Christie¹⁷ makes the claim that divided schooling prepares children for social divisions outside of school. She sees Bantu Education as an instrument through which the racially structured social order was engineered.

She claims that Black schools are more authoritarian than others. The idea is

to mould the Black child for an authoritarian society and inculcate in her or him the belief that failure to conform to societal rules could earn harsh punishment. Christie looks at the hierarchial organisation of Bantu Education schools as parallel to a hierarchically arranged social as well as economic order.

The point she is making here is that the rigidly hierarchically organised schooling system was a vehicle of socialising the Black child into a wider society that is characterised by inequality. In this view Bantu Education was no less than a system of total indoctrination which attempted to get certain beliefs drummed home by enmeshing them in an ideological system that underpinned Bantu Education.

The sentiments expressed by these radical intellectuals have a certain plausibility. However, what is striking about them is the way they fall into the trap of the correspondence theory espoused by Bowles and Gintis which denies the importance of historical agency as the subject and the maker of history. This analysis is therefore deterministic and reductionist and overlooks the idea that the system of Bantu Education or any structure for that matter can produce unintended as well as intended results. This explanation cannot account for resistance and the use of schools as the "sites" of contestation since it overlooks the possibility of historical agency and its ability to intervene to change the course of history. Hence it is my aim to contest them in this mini-thesis.

M. Themba is another radical intellectual whose work is embedded in a structural deterministic notion. He¹⁸ claims that education was a device concocted by the state to reduce people to slavery and to maintain domination over them. He claims that the African and White children initially attended the same schools but, however, in the eyes of the White rulers the Africans were threatening to become too completely integrated into the new system, as

the educated class of Africans would become serious competitors with the White minority. They would challenge the White minority not only in the business field but also in the political field as they would lay claim to political power. He claims that education was to be devised as a means to combat this threat. He put it thus:-

What better means than to arrest the mind itself? And what better instrument than the very system of education that had set the African on the road to these aspirations? Insidiously in the schools the germ of inferiority was implanted in the mind of the Black child. In the history books, for instance, his forbears were painted as loafers, thieves, scoundrels and cowards, until he learned to be ashamed of them. He was taught to "know his place" in society; he had to see himself as "different" and he had "developed along his own lines", so that by the time he grew up, he was conditioned to accept an inferior position, politically, economically and socially and it was the Black teacher who had to implant all this in his mind.¹⁹

The point that Temba is making is that education takes the mind of the Black child and moulds it to its purpose and creates the attitude of mind that accepts inferiority and segregation. Thus the function of education is to condition the Black child to acquiesce in occupying a subordinate position in society. As such it produces intellectuals who become the human agency for the dissemination of those ideas of inferiority amongst people, and such intellectuals become effective instruments of domination. This perception had the effect of counselling despair and fostering resignation.

The view that could be extracted from the above analysis, is that education is

simply a displaced form of politics. Schooling and indeed education are seen as merely a branch of politics. This view clearly posits the idea that the society is monolithic and invariably educational resistance will of necessity have to be identified as part of the broader political struggle. Flowing from this is the notion that any form of schooling in an oppressive society is meaningless as it only buttresses the form of oppression prevalent in such a society.

The point which these radical intellectuals made was that in an illegitimate state, all the organs of that state and its institutions, including institutions of learning, must also be illegitimate since the state in their view was monolithic. This was in line with the view that there can be no transformative project in an oppressive society.

According to this view there can be no way in which schooling can drive the process of transformation forward. The only way in which the transformation of schooling can be achieved is to seize or overthrow the oppressive system as all social spheres are deeply enmeshed with one another in a hierarchical system. This is the view which the Althusserian conception of historical materialism posited. This is the view which the mini-thesis seeks to challenge.

The radical intellectuals whose works I have examined seem to overlook the fact that teaching is a profoundly political activity. They overlooked the fact that the teachers as social agents (rather than the objects of history) can, firstly, shape student awareness of what constitutes acceptable conduct and a desirable order in the classroom, shaping acceptable ways of thinking, speaking and writing. Secondly, the political action which teaching entails constitutes a realm of appearances in which human agents, acting together, disclose who they are and what they wish the world to look like. The schooling system, even in an oppressive society, does create this possibility and therefore a space for

emancipatory educational projects.

b. Critique and despair

The structural deterministic notion of education is pervasive in all the above conceptions of education in South Africa and is potentially self-defeating. It seems to suggest that critical pedagogy is possible only when all the structural constraints have been removed. Most of these arguments claim to be revolutionary.

I think the ideas of B. Simon, a leading Marxist educational historian, are particularly illuminating in terms of advancing a contrary argument to the above. In his critique of contemporary educational theory from the Marxist perspective, Simon rejects both the thesis that genes are the sole determinant of an individual's educability, and the argument that we are the products of our environment. He avers that to argue that no significant education is possible within unfavourable physical, political or economic environments is to condemn the oppressed to ignorance.²⁰

The point here is that if one really believed that all education was uncompromisingly ideological, in the sense that it inevitably contributed to one's domination, and that all efforts at education within race-capitalist economy were meaningless, then one would be counselling despair. One would be arguing that people are but victims of external forces with no possibility of acting in the interest of change. It would mean that education offers the oppressed no means of understanding their oppression and responding to it. The effect of such a belief on teachers and students would be debilitating in the extreme, yet this is where such views of Apartheid education have led us.

The deterministic notion of education prevented individuals, including teachers,

from attempting to find spaces within a rigidly constructed curriculum in order to subvert the Apartheid intentions of the state by engaging in acts of creativity, or acts of transformation and acts of transcending the Apartheid legacy. The problem with such intellectual work was that it did not provide us with a pedagogy for reconstruction and empowerment in response to Apartheid or Bantu Education.

Developing a pedagogy of reconstruction and transformation would restore to the oppressed, confidence in their agency and ability to know and act for change. Radical intellectuals should have produced work that would enable the oppressed to make a conceptual move and not just see themselves as disconnected from the historical process, as the external opponents always disengaged from the process of reconstruction.

If it is claimed that it is impossible for the oppressed to act as historical agents and rise from a state of "helplessness" to a position where they can be able to manipulate and control the forces that constrained them and harness them to their needs, then that is paradoxical opposition to Apartheid education.

These views led to the rejection of Bantu Education as gutter education. However, one interesting yet confused development that arose out of these considerations was yet another disturbing feature that declared schools as "sites of struggle" without of course any attempt to use it as a tool of emancipation. A consideration of the work of S. Badat might illuminate the issues here. He claims that:-

Despite the frequently made assertion that education is a site of struggle, educational resistance has had a tendency to focus more on contesting Apartheid and capitalist social relations in general

than on these relations as they play themselves out in the education sphere. Subsequently much of the activities of the student movement have centred around racist political institutions, political repression and general campaigns of the mass democratic movement.²¹

The general tendency has been for educational politics to be propelled by issues external to the immediate educational sphere. This has unfortunately created the impression that educational administration, curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation are somehow issues that cannot be transformed as they obviously correspond with the oppressive system and as such mirrored it. As such no attempts were made to show that the curriculum and values the schooling purveyed could be contested with the view to transforming them, since curriculum, for example, identifies subordinate groups with bigotry and violence and embodies caricatures of subordinate groups. In this way it cloaks the undemocratic social order. Thus schooling could have been the centre or site where the ideology of the dominant group could have been challenged and transformed. This would have made the emancipatory project possible.

However, this critique does not detract from the fact that the use of schools as sites of struggle brought pressure to bear on the state in ways that were at times difficult to counter. The problem with the theoretical argument against Bantu Education that schools were reproducers of labour power, purveyors of the dominant culture and ideology, was that it tended to locate radical intellectuals into a protest mode of politics that never addressed real educational issues as they tended to fight the "monolithic", oppressive state system. This problem was to some extent created by the complexity of Marx's works, some of which open up space for agency while others shut it down.

In his "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", Althusser assigned to schools the structural deterministic role of reproducing the dominant ideology.²² This notion was buttressed by Bowles and Gintis's correspondence theory. Their conclusion was that the form of schooling and not necessarily its content educated the oppressed for service within the capitalist society. This notion portrayed both the students and the teachers as victims of the structure. Such a theoretical framework underpinned the perception of Bantu Education by radical intellectuals and influenced their understanding of opposition to Bantu Education.

Viewing schooling, particularly Black schooling in South Africa within the above theoretical framework, radical intellectuals were encouraged to accept that no meaningful education was possible within the Apartheid structure. The real problems that needed to be tackled were not epistemological problems but rather political-structural problems. Argument was not about knowledge, how knowledge was acquired and what knowledge ought to be pursued. The questions around educational issues centred instead on who controlled educational institutions and in whose interest these institutions functioned.

Schools were analysed primarily within the language of critique and domination. However, since schools were viewed primarily as reproducers, radical intellectuals failed to provide a programmatic disclosure through which an opportunity for counter-hegemonic practices could be established. The problem then was that the idea that education had to be a form of action that joined the languages of critique and possibility seemed to be lost to the radical intellectuals.

The result was that the language of critique offered no hope for teachers, parents and students or the oppressed communities to start developing policies for transformation and reconstruction of the textual authority, curriculum, social

relations and other critical issues that are central and internal to education. The result was that the language of critique was subsumed within the discourse of despair since it focused mainly on opportunities for control of structures and very rarely on possibilities for education. In this way the structural deterministic notion which dominated thinking about education in South Africa, led to despair. It was good for the intellectuals graphically to offer critique of Bantu Education, but my critique of their work is that their theoretical framework precluded them from moving beyond the language of critique. I think the question: What is to be done? could have served to propel radical intellectuals to go beyond the language of critique.

More recently the structural deterministic framework has manifested itself in the reinstated debate on the transformation of tertiary institutions as a prime focus for debate which seems to suggest that the structural and organisational solutions will be sufficient to come to terms with South Africa's educational dilemma. It also manifests itself in the attitude of teachers who think that critical pedagogy will be possible only when all structural constraints have been removed.

Here I wish to offer a few suggestions as to what radical intellectuals needed to do. Let me appeal to R. Simon and H. Giroux whose critique of structural determinism is instructive. Their claim that the notion that structure is all encompassing, that there can be no meaningful education within the context of Apartheid South Africa, is to remove the focus from the discourse of possibility. Giroux and R. Simons put it thus:-

Educators must be able to evaluate potentials for action that are embedded in actual relationships and practices. To do this demands thinking about education through its interrelation with the

surrounding social formation. This form of analysis requires some familiarity with the questions posed by social theory and some understanding of the state as the agency through which schooling has been organised for the last 50 years. But most importantly it means learning how to analyse concrete situations in a way that shows how and with what limitations and social relationships or institutions form can be transformed through intentional action. How such analyses are formulated depends, of course, on specific views of how the social world is constructed. Indeed, this is an argument for the fundamental intersection of social and curriculum theorising. It is also the call for a new form of curriculum theorising. It is also the call for a new form of curriculum discourse and language.²³

The point here is that the structure does not have to be perceived as all-encompassing, offering no space for people to engage in emancipatory and transformative pedagogical practices. This is where the radical intellectuals could collectively confront the question: What is to be done? How might one think about reading the text to open its mythology? How might one organise learning situations to minimise the symbolic violence of the dominant culture? What new materials and activities might one emphasise that will give the students a sense of alternative possibilities?

This means that despite the constraints created by the structure there are possibilities that needed to be explored by radical intellectuals. Put simply, they need to have moved from the language of critique to the language of possibility. The point here is that the language of critique trapped radical intellectuals into a mind-set of opposition, as the oppressor remained an active and dominant player in the imagination of the radical intellectuals. This was

a paradox in their oppositional projects to Bantu Education as this represented an insertion into the oppressive system.

Here I would like to refer to Muller and Cloete whose views might illuminate the issue. They claim that:-

For a long time political activism against Bantu Education has been characterised by the politics of opposition. Thus radical intellectual work revealed mainly the discourse of critique and politics of opposition. Before 2 February 1990 progressive social theorists by and large practised critique, which demonstrated the radical impossibility of reforming the present state. That is, they practised on the discursive plain, the analogue of activist strategy on the ground...The major consequence...was that they were completely unpractised in conceiving of policy.²⁴

The point here is that radical intellectual work never rose to the challenge posed by Bantu Education to achieve transcendence from the epistemological cubicle of the oppressor and the mode of thinking induced by Apartheid oppressive measures. Instead they remained paradoxically trapped into the total mind-set of critique which closed off all possibilities of transcendence of Apartheid education to emancipatory alternatives. The problem was that the oppressor was still firmly entrenched in the imaginations of the radical intellectuals and they could not remove him. The oppressor continued to dominate and dictate their mode of thinking and as such their mode of opposition. This was fatalism in the language of critique.

Radical intellectuals needed to make a transition from the discourse of pure critique to a discourse in which intellectual work continues to be critical in

character, while simultaneously addressing the possible strategies and means by which social transformation may be effected.

They needed to establish mechanisms through which they could advance the project of transformation. It is in transformative projects where the fleeting images of freedom were to be found. Such transformative projects would have been invaluable in terms of advancing the struggle for democracy as they would infuse new perceptions into the debate about education and thereby create new discourses.

These transformative and reconstructive processes, had they been initiated, could have extended the social imagination of the oppressed and made them ready in concrete terms to deal with the demands of a complex future. This would have been the balancing of the language of critique with the language of possibility. I wish to offer a few suggestions as to what radical intellectuals could have done to achieve this.

All in all, education was seen as creating a space for the flourishing only of those ideas consonant with Apartheid, or as some sections of the left referred to as, colonialism of a special type. It was seen as a devastating tool to police the minds of the oppressed. As such the issue of the content of education was hardly contested. This was obviously a self-defeating determinism that claims that we cannot have an appropriate education before we have established the appropriate state which represents the people.

The struggle for the curriculum especially within the space that schooling provides was an important aspect of the transformative process. The idea is that it was on the classroom floor, it was on the academic and intellectual level that the battle also should have been waged.

The structural notion of education was pervasive and potentially destructive. Subsequent to that, schooling was seen as a place or base in which to engage in protest, a base for outwardly directed activism. This of course, does not suggest that schooling activities, content of education and educational practices could be divorced from the social environment within which they occur. One recognises that the transformative projects would have to include many aspects which are not primarily educational.

The point I am trying to make here is that the outwardly-directed activism in which our students and radical intellectuals were engaged reduced the level of commitment to acquiring appropriate knowledge and skills for the service of the disadvantaged communities in the future. This was the paradoxical aspect of the struggle against Bantu Education. It manifested itself in the call: "Liberation now, Education later" and some other oppositional projects that were paradoxical, such as, instead of ameliorating the suffering of the oppressed, they buttressed their suffering. These are the issues I now wish to explore.

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CHAPTER 4

STRUCTURAL DETERMINISTIC-ENGENDERED PARADOXICAL PROJECTS

My main claim in this chapter is that the systematic use of education, and schooling in particular, to destroy notions of unity and common purpose and to engineer a society divided in terms of race and class, and the manner in which the oppressed responded to it, have left us with an education legacy so horrible in its complexity and destructiveness, that it will be extremely difficult to remedy it. It was ill-advised for the oppressed to launch oppositional projects to Apartheid schooling that were outwardly based or driven by factors external to schooling, as the real issues that were central to education and in particular schooling such as epistemological problems, what knowledge was, how knowledge was to be acquired, what knowledge ought to be pursued etc. were overlooked to the peril of our education and schooling system. This is my main claim in this chapter and the issue that I wish to explore.

The point here is that while not denying the link between academic and schooling practices and the social environment within which they occur, my contention is that this notion was carried too far to the detriment of schooling. This kind of approach and responses were driven by structural determinism which created educational and schooling problems that will be untangled only with great difficulty. Thus the response of the oppressed impaired their capacity to transform schooling.

Thus the contention I wish to make here is that the manner in which the oppressed responded to problems presented by Bantu Education in Black schooling failed to recognise that the way must be found to grant access to

learning, up to the highest levels, to those who were disadvantaged by the Apartheid schooling system, while at the same time they are engaged in critical educational projects. Schooling was abandoned as a terrain of Apartheid discourses that have manipulated and used it to bolster the position of the oppressor. This had the effect of considerably reducing the level of commitment to acquiring knowledge and skills for the service of the disadvantaged communities, both presently and in the future, as it defeated all attempts at establishing the culture of learning.

The point here is that the outwardly-based oppositional projects and the manner in which the oppressed responded to their oppression left schooling to the whims of the oppressors by the oppressed dismissing it as epiphenomenal and an ideological tool of the oppressors. The oppressed lacked the ability to understand that their task was to start building the future in the womb of the Apartheid society and in the womb of Bantu Education.

Firstly, failure of the oppressed to grapple with educational and schooling problems created problems that will be untangled in the future only with very great difficulty. Secondly, due to the inadequate response of the oppressed to these problems, Apartheid schooling, as a system of engineering a colour and class caste society coupled with their inadequate response to these problems, has presented the oppressed with obstacles of such magnitude that may be characterised as burdens, the layers of which may only become apparent as they try to peel them painfully away. In a nutshell, my contention here is that the structural deterministic understanding of educational and schooling problems generated paradoxical oppositional projects that had long-range, damaging implications for education in South Africa.

Althusser²⁵ claims that schools were crucial elements within the process of ideological domination and the reproduction of the status quo. Bowles and Gintis²⁶ led one to interrogate the form of schooling as opposed to its content. That created the impression that there can be no meaningful educational and schooling practices in an oppressive society as schooling institutions and education were epiphenomenal to the economic sphere. This devalued education and schooling.

In Black schools pupils were undergoing a kind of awakening, but in ways that did not meaningfully contribute to transforming the content of schooling and the type of knowledge and values purveyed in the schooling system. Since the Soweto uprising in 1976, the consideration that schooling itself was making a significant contribution to the maintaining of Apartheid had led to the rejection of schools as "sites of struggle", with the implications that the schools' relationships were at base power relationships, and that educational decisions were not epistemologically significant as their significance lay in the realm of politics.

The theory of educational protest, and especially the practice of educational protest, have had significant influence on the course of South African history. The use of schools as "sites of struggle" brought pressure to bear on the state in ways that were difficult to counter. The major thrust of the struggle was that schooling with its programme of "gutter education" prepared the oppressed for exploitation. The conclusion drawn was that the schooling system could not be transformed given the exploitative and oppressive Apartheid structure. The theoretical argument ranged from schools as reproducers of labour power, to schools as the purveyors of the dominant ideology. What emerged from both the political and theoretical condemnation of Apartheid education was a structural understanding of schooling.

There are two clearly distinct and contending conceptions of historical materialism as has been highlighted earlier in the mini-thesis. On the one hand there is economic determination and relative determinism and on the other and dialectical materialistic conception of history. The former rejects or rather accords insignificant role to agency as it accords one-way determinism and shaping of its consciousness by material conditions. It rejected the humanism so prevalent in Marx's early writings and developed the theory of structural causality, a conception of history as a process without a subject.

Given the power of structural arguments like those of Bowles and Gintis and Althusser on the one hand and given the nature of oppression in South Africa, coupled with the depth of anger and disillusionment with Apartheid education on the other hand, the oppressed were encouraged to accept that no meaningful education and schooling were possible within the Apartheid structure. Apartheid education had to be replaced by an alternative form of education, a demystified education which would provide the oppressed with access to true knowledge.

That could happen only when Apartheid had been overthrown. Thus the real problems were seen as simply political-structural problems.

The point here is that the arguments against Bantu education did not centre around the question about knowledge, what knowledge ought to be pursued, etc. Instead arguments centred around the question of who controlled educational institutions and in whose interest these institutions functioned.

This structural argument was pervasive and potentially destructive. It manifests itself currently in the notion of institutional transformation where this is deemed to mean that there is some structural solution to South Africa's educational schooling dilemma. It reveals itself in the attitude of teachers who rationalise that critical educational practice is only possible when all structural constraints

have been removed. Finally it revealed itself in the call for "Liberation now, Education later".

I shall not attempt to outline or explore all the issues I have enumerated. What I intended doing is to explore the oppositional project: "Liberation Now, Education Later" and reveal how paradoxical this project was. I shall not attempt to offer a blanket critique of oppositional projects launched against Bantu education but rather to select certain oppositional projects for critical discussion. I will locate these projects in the pigeon-hole of paradoxical oppositional projects. These projects were "Liberation now, Education later"; Operations Barcelona and Bujuba and the paradoxical or fatalistic role of the teachers in their quest for relevance..

a. Paradoxical oppositional projects

However, before I launch into critical discussion of the oppositional project "Liberation Now, Education Later", I wish to take a little digression and try to give briefly an indication of what it does entail to call an oppositional project paradoxical. In a nutshell, I want to briefly discuss or shed some light on the concept "paradoxical project". This is because there is a tendency for people to think that any oppositional project launched against the status quo is emancipatory.

In looking at this topical issue I wish to appeal to Giroux who gives an exposition as to what paradoxical oppositional projects are. Put simply, the students and the oppressed can paradoxically collude in their own domination or in perpetuating their own disadvantaged positions through their activities or buttress the very system of oppression they purport to be fighting. This brief explanation is important as it overturns the myth that all oppositional projects

to the status quo without thorough consideration of the results they yield, are resistance or rather are emancipatory. Such projects seem to have radical significance but on closer examination they can be seen as serving to sustain the status quo.

Firstly, oppositional projects that ignore gender and race to focus on males and class, analysing domination struggle and schooling, are to be located amongst the paradoxical oppositional project.²⁷ According to Giroux such oppositional projects fail to come to grips with for instance, the notion of patriarchy as a mode of domination that cuts across various social sites as well as a mode of domination that mediated between men and women within and between different social class dominations. While these views profess to be committed to emancipation they contain reactionary views about women and as such yield contrary effects.

Secondly, Giroux makes a claim that resistance as a theoretical construct rejects the behaviouristic notion that the categorisation and meaning of behaviour can be based on observation or a literal reading of immediate expression. Deploying this theoretical understanding, Giroux debunks the claim that teachers who do not adequately prepare for their classroom lessons or rush home early after school ostensibly in opposition to the status quo, were in fact committing acts of emancipation. Perhaps this kind of behaviour could be displaying unprofessional and unethical behaviour on the part of the teachers.

In a nutshell, oppositional projects that were self-defeating would be located in the pigeon-hole of paradoxical oppositional projects as they did not ameliorate the suffering of the oppressed but rather buttressed the status quo. Oppositional projects that serve to perpetuate exploitation and oppression are to be located in the pigeon-hole of the paradoxical. In this case I have in mind the lads

as outlined by Willis; oppositional projects that had a taint of, or were driven by, racism are to be located into the paradoxical oppositional projects.

Finally, oppositional projects that were driven by structural determinism will be located in a pigeon-hole of paradoxical oppositional projects since they counselled despair as they propagated the notion that there can be no meaningful education and schooling in an oppressive society. This was self-defeating determinism that argued that the oppressed could not have appropriate education and schooling before there was an appropriate state which represents the people.

Given the power of structural determinism and correspondence theory represented by Bowles and Gintis and Althusser, and the depth, disillusionment and anger levelled against Bantu Education, the oppressed were encouraged to accept that no meaningful education was possible within the Apartheid structure. The structural notion of education was pervasive and potentially dangerous as it was self-imposed denial and sacrifice which was in the final analysis an insertion into exploitation and oppression. (I will pick up this point later). The oppositional project: "Liberation Now, Education Later" falls into this category as it tended to deny the role of agency to interact dialectically with the learning material, knowledge purveyed by the schooling system and the content of education. This is the issue I now turn to.

b. Liberation Now, Education Later

The slogan: "Liberation Now, Education Later" was a disturbing feature that emerged in the oppositional project of 1985-86. It threatened to roll back the gains made by the students in their opposition to Bantu Education. According to Bundy²⁸ this slogan was driven by immediatism. This means that central to it was an illusion that the oppressed were on the threshold of attaining their emancipation. I am not going to pursue that line of argument. I will

argue that the slogan was an example of a paradoxical oppositional project which characterised some opposition to Bantu Education and the system of oppression in general. This was an oppositional project which, despite good intentions that underpinned it, yielded counter-productive results.

The model of approach to the education problem in South Africa encapsulated by the slogan was not new in South Africa. This approach shaped the student thinking in 1976 at the height of the ubiquitous school boycotts of 1976. This point is driven home by A. Brooks and J. Brickhill in their claim that the battle against Bantu Education had brought home to countless young Blacks the conviction that an equal and democratic system of schooling would only be possible after the overthrow of not only Bantu Education but also the entire system of oppression first and foremost. According to A. Brooks and J. Brickhill a student leaflet declared in 1976:-

If we are still looking for favours from Mr. M.C. Botha (Minister of Bantu Education) to recognise us as matriculants, it simply means that we are not independent but servants of the system, like Gatsha Buthelezi who is paid by Vorster, do we also want Vorster's certificate? To hell with a paper! A certificate? The certificate we want now is our land, and for that we shall fight till the racists are defeated. Criminal Vorster: keep your certificates and give us back our birthrights; we won't exchange them for a paper of enslavement - certificates. Education is in itself good, but the first school for an oppressed people is revolution.²⁹

This assertion is framed in terms of structural notions which proceed from the premise that there can be no better education while Apartheid is in place and

that it would be an exercise in futility to try to exploit the space which the Apartheid schooling system provides. In fact, according to this viewpoint, Apartheid was all-encompassing.

This viewpoint was revisited by the students in 1985 at a time when all other indications pointed to the fact that the struggle for a better system of schooling had transcended that viewpoint. This is so especially in 1985 when a flurry of activities was undertaken to use the schools as contested terrain and sites where Apartheid education was not only to be challenged but was also to be defeated.

When one views the slogan: "Liberation now, Education later", one needs to consider the question, whose education anyway? Put another way: who needs the schooling of children, the oppressors, that is the dominant class, or the subordinate oppressed people? Admittedly these questions do not lend themselves to easy answers.

In terms of Althusser's structural notion, education through formal schooling in a capitalist order would function only to the benefit of the bourgeois class and therefore hold no advantage for the working or dominated classes. This notion, coupled with the legacy of Apartheid education, created an anti-intellectual attitude among the students. Thus the legacy of Apartheid education had buttressed these notions, and hence Black schools in general were filled with students who did not value knowledge in the belief that it would be possible and necessary to start with a clean slate. This conveyed the suggestion that Black education had been so contaminated by Apartheid and all its trappings that the oppressed would have to start from scratch to create a new system of education so as to create a new 'person'.

Thus the knowledge gained under Apartheid was deemed useless for the subordinate classes, such that this knowledge would have to be superseded by the knowledge created after liberation which would perhaps be used as the basis of a new system of schooling. This was because the notion that shaped the thinking of the student was that there can be no meaningful schooling system under the physical, social and political constraints of Apartheid and capitalism. Perhaps this is the notion that gave rise to the slogan "Liberation now, Education later", and underpinned a paradoxical oppositional project.

In debunking this view I wish to return to B. Simon because his ideas are illuminating in this regard. Simon levels severe criticism against relativist theories of knowledge, especially the notion that the knowledge accumulated by the human species over the last two or three thousand years is bourgeois knowledge, and therefore by definition alienating to the oppressed. He argues that no serious student of Marxism could conceivably claim the authority of Marx or Engels for such a position.³⁰

Simon further claims that such devaluation of knowledge has significant educational implications, especially if both students and teachers shared this belief. He laments the fact that many young teachers in Britain, identifying strongly with the plight of the disadvantaged, and exposed only superficially to Marxist or Neo-Marxist critical thought about education, accepted this devaluation of knowledge, and in their sentimental generosity, identifying with their working class pupils, came to see their role as shielding them from the demands of formal schooling.

In the same vein Willis³¹ laments the fact that the lads in spite of their understanding and penetration through the deceptions of schooling dropped out of school. According to Willis not only did the lads reject the alleged

superiority of mental labour but also its underlying ideology, that respect and obedience would be exchanged for knowledge and success. He argues that the lads opposed this ideology because the counter-logic embodied in their families, workplaces and street life that make up their culture points to a different and more convincing reality. The point here is that the logic that seems to promote forms of opposition falls into a trap of being the logic of reproduction. This is one example of paradoxical project.

Willis claims that there is a certain irony in the oppositional behaviour exhibited by the lads in that whilst they were capable of challenging the dominant ideology of the school, they failed to recognise the limits of their own opposition. He put it thus:-

The lads rejected the primacy of mental labour and its ethos of individual appropriation, but in doing so they closed off any possibility of pursuing an emancipatory relationship between knowledge and dissent. By rejecting intellectual labour, the lads discounted the power of critical thinking as a tool of social transformation.³²

Michelle Fine³³ offers another interesting example in her study of drop-outs where the same logic is displayed by students. She discovered that the students who dropped out of schools in New York City's South Bronx tended to be the most critical and politically astute students. They were also likely to identify injustice in their social lives and schools, and most ready to correct injustice by criticising or challenging the teacher.

The irony about this lies in the fact that while such students were capable of challenging the dominant ideology of the school, they failed to recognise the

limits of their opposition. By dropping out of school, they placed themselves in a structural position that cut them off from political and social avenues conducive to the task of radical reconstruction. Subsequently they, like Willis's lads, ended up producing a pool of unskilled workers that would swell the ranks of cheap and exploited workers which is one of the principal outcomes of capitalist education.

I think this historical perspective has striking parallels with the call "Liberation now, Education later", as the students perceived an alternative education after Apartheid as a new knowledge with which the oppressed would be presented rather than a critical process to be engaged in. Thus the project encapsulated by the slogan carried a potential danger of denying the oppressed access to knowledge. This is the real paradox underpinning the slogan as it generated a working class to serve as a wheel spun by Apartheid capitalist South Africa whose task was to generate a reservoir of cheap Black labour. Thus while this position appears liberatory on the surface, it buttressed the very system it claimed to be fighting through the unintended results it would produce.

c. Exposing the fallacies in this framework of thinking

What follows now is an attempt to expose the fallacies of this framework of thinking and to demonstrate the idea that knowledge is not like a block that can be taken away or simply replaced. Strike's claim in this regard is illuminating. He posits the view that:

Conceptual inheritance, in other words, concepts and theories, are not only objects of thought, they are instruments. We think with them as well as about them and therefore they are the means or instruments of thought. If this is the case, then one who

understands intellectual liberty in a way that requires the immediate rejection of any received ideas has committed an absurdity. For such a person has proposed to engage in thought while rejecting the means of thinking. We might illustrate the point of this claim by imagining a society that responded to the belief that their tools were not the best imaginable and all might be improved by throwing their tools away, only to discover that they had nothing left with which to make better tools. A society can use some of the tools to make better ones. It cannot dispose of all its tools at once. Likewise, a society can use some of its received ideas to criticize, investigate and improve others. It cannot doubt everything at once. We must grant received ideas at least some provisional authority.³⁴

What this means is that ideas are not certain and they are not only the objects of enquiry but also the tools of thought. As such they must be subjected to criticism which is a central component of the pursuit of truth. While criticism is necessary if we are to redefine our ideas or see our weakness, we nevertheless need to be part of the intellectual discourse to be able to offer informed and rational criticism and judgement. This means that received ideas and concepts furnish us with tools to move forward and to generate new ideas and concepts that approximate the truth. We cannot start from nothing but we have got to start somewhere. Received ideas and concepts are necessary as they can be used as a springboard to construct new ideas and concepts that approximate the truth. That is how the transformation process can take off.

These ideas seem to have been unknown to the students who pursued an oppositional project encapsulated by the slogan: "Liberation now, Education later". They were oblivious to the fact that oppressive schooling can have unintended

results that can be beneficial to the subordinate classes; that it can serve as tools of transforming the oppressive schooling system and system of oppression. This is the issue I now turn to.

d. Education can provide the oppressed with tools for transformation

Having said that, there can be no doubt that Bantu Education was an oppressive form of schooling. However, oppressive as it was, there were some gaps that could be exploited by the subordinate Blacks and as such it would be wrong to characterise the oppressed group as helpless, hopeless and as people who would not overcome some aspects of their oppression. People could see through the ideological smokescreen intended to obscure the true nature of Apartheid and the oppressive system transmitted through Bantu Education. It not only could furnish them with tools to see through its oppressive dimension but also with tools and concepts which could become the means of their transformation.

What was needed was to challenge the all pervasive monolithic theory of society which holds the view that all social spheres are deeply enmeshed with one another in a hierarchial system. If then a contrary view was held that society was made up of a set of distinct, although interrelated, and sometimes overlapping, social spheres, then those engaged in the project of emancipation and the quest for a better education could understand that the practices of learning comprise one such social sphere.

The students and teachers then would be in a position to resist institutional tendencies that view schools as functioning in order to legitimize the power of the dominant group within that society. All those concerned with the struggle for a better education would then embrace the theoretical framework that people

can participate in making their own history.

If the students and teachers had challenged the monolithic view of society, they would have understood that schooling is the exercise of the mind in order to operate wisely and with rationality amidst the complexities of the social world and systems of laws, rules and arguments. This realisation would enable the learners to construct knowledge and engage in life long learning. This would then make education not apolitical or anti-political, but a project concerned with emancipatory content.

Armed with the non-monolithic view of society, the students would then realise that they could destroy the unacceptable system of schooling, while at the same time shaping the desirable schooling system. They would be engaged in acts of resistance that would give impetus to a new and better system of schooling and a new and better society. Schooling would be at the centre for the strategy for emancipation.

The point here is that non-monolithic view of society, coupled with carefully planned programmes or projects of transformation could lead to a process of emancipation. This approach, although less glamorous and less popularly exciting, could produce greater long term results. Some emancipatory projects are predicated upon strategies that for the moment appear less attractive, but which in the end ensure greater progress towards the bigger goal of emancipation.

Teachers and students have a crucial role to play in re-establishing concepts such as teaching and learning that would be conducive to the project of emancipation. The schooling system was vital in creating a new society, especially if a clear vision for schooling, that would enhance the culture of

learning, was pursued.

The emancipatory projects has to be strategic, responsible and circumspect. The strategy has to be constructive and must be conducive to a larger vision of a better society. The approach of both the students and teachers must be informed by the view that those in pursuit of learning and teaching practices are engaged through words and practices, in creating and recreating the institutions that make life possible. This process is never neutral but is always ethical and political. These institutions are not constraining but are also enabling. They are vehicles through which we seek co-operatively to achieve a better society.³⁵ If we deny this, we are denying the cart its horse.

It is clear that even though education is typically used as an instrument of domination, it can nevertheless have unintended consequences not always beneficial to the dominant class, since schooling institutions were not monolithic but contained contradictions and spaces that could be emancipatory. For example, in spite of the oppressive nature of Bantu Education it created spaces or rather loopholes which were exploited to produce doctors, physicians, engineers etc. who distinguished themselves in various endeavours of life. In spite of the oppressive nature of Bantu Education it produced prominent people who gained knowledge that made them become fiery opponents of Bantu Education.

This means that while the people are part of the conceptual scheme obtaining in the society they can gain transcendence from the discourse by reshaping themselves and by reworking the self-image foisted on them by their past into a new self-image, one that they themselves have helped to create because of their agency.

The point here is that schools are not determined by the logic of the workplace or the dominant society but, on the contrary, are relatively autonomous as are other institutions. As such they harbour spaces for oppositional projects and teaching. They therefore contain contradictions that sometimes make them dysfunctional to the material and ideological interests of the dominant classes in society.

The central point in this argument is that the exponents of the project under review overlooked the idea that schools are contradictory social sites, marked by the struggle and accommodation, which cannot be viewed as totally negative in terms of their effects on the politically dispossessed. What this means is that schools, in spite of their role as reproducers of the culture and ideology requisite to the capitalist mode of teaching, knowledge and social practices, if used creatively by both teachers and students, could be emancipatory.

This also means that the system is neither simply an all-encompassing foothold of domination nor simply a locus of revolution. Contrary to the grossly deterministic and reductionist correspondence theory of Bowles and Gintis and Althusser's structuralism, schools can be sites where a battle for emancipatory interests can be waged by the oppressed through engaging with the text and interrogating power relations existing in schools.

It would have been crucial for the opponents of Bantu Education to realise that the social sites provided by schooling, the interplay between material conditions obtaining in schools and ideas, could enable them to deepen the crisis of the illegitimacy not only of Bantu Education but the overall system of Apartheid. For example the students' daily encounter with the pedagogy of Bantu Education, the undemocratic nature of the schooling system and its dysfunction could always have provided a catalyst for further resistance and as such drive the

transformation process of schooling forward.

In a nutshell the oppositional project encapsulated by the slogan was a thermidorian reaction (a concept coined at the height of the French Revolution denoting a counter-revolution) and a mistake of history. If one considers the fact that it is in the schooling institutions where the students have a terrain or an invaluable social site to generate consciousness among students so as to generate collective action, one can't help but to view the project as a paradoxical oppositional project. The surrender of this very important social site to the state atomised the students and considerably diminished their capacity to act as a collective. As such, this had the adverse effect of demobilising the students. It also impaired the capacity of intellectuals and teachers to engage or initiate transformative projects. This feeling promoted the birth of the National Educational Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) which successfully initiated a back-to-school campaign. This meant that the boycott was used in a very counter-productive way with devastating effects for the oppressed.

e Use of boycott as a counter-productive strategy

Alexander³⁶ claims that the indefinite boycott encapsulated by the project was a death trap for the whole generation of students and one wing of the struggle for democracy. Thus the boycott as a weapon which for years had been exercised effectively by the oppressed to advance the process of democratic transformation became paradoxically a counter-productive strategy. Alexander put it thus:

If we do not stop in our tracks, if we do not get away from the so-called indefinite boycotts of schools and similar institutions, we are going to re-enact, in modern form, the tragedy of Nongquase!

(National suicide of the Xhosa people who slaughtered all their cattle and refused to plant any crops with the hope that the white men would on a certain day disappear into the sea whence they had come). Already thousands of men and women who have not been able to complete their studies, are walking the streets looking for work in an economy which is increasingly retrenching even those who have completed their studies. Already, after just more than a year of the school boycott in most parts of the country, serious divisions have appeared in the student mass, divisions that could have been avoided by the proper attention to strategy and by proper leadership.³⁷

What Alexander claims here is that while the students understood their own alienation and suffering under Bantu Education, they paradoxically condemned themselves to a precise insertion into a system of exploitation and oppression. Thus the students through the project and their own choice trapped themselves into some of the most exploited roles which capitalism offers.

In spite of my criticism of this project, I hold the view that it was espoused by people who were committed to emancipatory concern, although it had unintended paradoxical results that had the potential of condemning the students to a precise insertion into the system of exploitation and oppression. In a nutshell, because the project yielded counter-productive consequences it was a paradoxical oppositional project. It denied the potential of historical agency to transform the society, albeit under constraints. It therefore buttressed the very system the students purported to be fighting. I now wish to explore the dangers inherent in this line of thinking and approach.

f The danger inherent in this line of thinking and approach

The danger inherent in this approach is that it denied students the tools to transform the society and education in that it closed off the possibility for them to acquire knowledge. It was therefore self-imposed denial and sacrifice which in the final analysis was an insertion into an exploitative and oppressive system. The point here is that one's actions cannot be judged in terms of external observation of what one claims to be doing, but by the results yielded by one's action.

One needs to consider that espoused intentions are not sufficient to explain the emancipatory concern embedded in an oppositional project and as such they cannot provide a scaffold upon which to make a distinction between emancipatory and paradoxical modes of oppositional projects. This viewpoint does not, however, detract from intentions pregnant with emancipatory concern but stifled by the state through repression.

It was certainly not good enough for students merely to indulge in action without a clear vision of transformation and reconstruction. Through the lack of strategic thinking, a lack of a larger vision, the students pursued oppositional projects that frustrated transformation and reconstruction. The oppositional project under discussion was to some extent driven by a culture of self-imposed sacrifice and denial which at times promoted a culture of entitlement and cut off any possibility of realising a potential for emancipation or education for empowerment.

It should be borne in mind that education is a political commitment and as such it plays an invaluable role in creating an individual who is critical and able to take informed and rational decisions. So to launch an oppositional

project that has the unintended consequences of limiting the enhancement of one's autonomy and empowerment through education is to buttress the very oppressive status quo which the initiators of the project purported to be fighting.

In a nutshell, although the idea to overthrow the oppressive status quo was underpinned by good intentions, the project that was initiated was self-destructive. What must be clear here is that it is not the good intentions that should be used as a scaffold upon which to ground an evaluation of oppositional project, but rather the results that the project yields, as there can be a disjunction between the intentions and the results deriving from an oppositional project. This means that because the project had a potential danger of denying Black students access to knowledge which they could use as tools or instruments of their thoughts was a paradoxical project.

Looking at the oppositional project under discussion, one finds that it was superficially radical but had the potential to be self-defeating in the long run, as the students renounced access to knowledge and skills that may have enabled them to move beyond the class-specific positions of dead-end and alienating labour that most of them would eventually occupy in the long run. The point here is that in so far as the project had the potential to limit whatever transcendent hopes for the future these students might have, it was a paradoxical project.

This approach encouraged the students and the oppressed to abandon schooling as a terrain of Apartheid discourses that have manipulated and used it to bolster the position of the oppressors. This structural deterministic approach to education encouraged the oppressed to leave Black schooling to the whims of the oppressors by dismissing it as epiphenomenal and an ideological tool of the oppressors. This had devastating and catastrophic consequences for Black

schooling as it developed a stubborn node of under-educated, frustrated young students as a permanent feature of our society through its consistent application of prolonged boycotts.

A crucial aspect of schooling was overlooked: that schooling could, due to the active agency of the oppressed, be used as a terrain upon which to contest and deconstruct the discourse of the oppressors; that schooling could contribute to the shifting of the balance of power in the 'ideological war of position' between the hegemonic class and the subaltern classes rather than leave schooling to the whims of the oppressors. These are the things I will pick up later.

However, ironically at the time when the lessons of this project should have dawned upon the students, another mistake was made in the mounting resistance to Apartheid education. Another completely false reading of the situation manifested itself in 1993 and it found expression through the twin-strategy of 'Operation Barcelona and Bujuba'. The following chapter will focus upon this campaign which was structurally deterministic in approach and in no way liberatory but an entrapment of the students into an exploitative and oppressive system.

CHAPTER 5

"OPERATION BARCELONA AND BUJUBA"

A controversy has been generated by the mode of student resistance code-named "Operation Barcelona and Operation Bujuba". This was an oppositional project engineered by the Congress of South African Students in support of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) in May and August 1993. It was also rooted in the demands to end examination fees. This oppositional project drew condemnation from various organisations of civil society and this threatened to isolate the student movement as other sectors of the community distanced themselves from what was seen by community leaders across the political spectrum as an ill-advised project. This is the mode of protest that unfolded in the Western Cape. From the outset this campaign had wider ramifications which rapidly came into play.

The claim I wish to make is that this project was not liberatory and as such should be seen as a paradoxical oppositional project. This is because, among other things, it unleashed a great deal of violence. I shall begin by giving an account of the project.

"Operation Barcelona and Operation Bujuba" was a two-pronged programme originally launched by the Congress of South African Studies (COSAS) in April 1993 to bring pressure to bear on the Department of Education and Training to scrap the examination fees. The campaign was reintroduced in August to support the strike of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) which, among other things, demanded higher salaries and an end to unilateral state rationalisation. The name "Operation Barcelona" was coined as an ironical reference to the torching of government and capitalist vehicles.

V. Bavuma writes:

According to its protagonists, Operation Barcelona referred to the torching of "capitalist vehicles and government cars". The sin of the capitalists was that they had influence over the economy and were therefore seen as enemies. Operation Bujuba, a Venda vernacular, refers to destruction. In this case it referred to the destruction of state vehicles and properties. Part of the strategy was to drive away "reactionary elements from the townships".³⁸

The project unleashed a spiral of violence which made the life of the communities unbearable. Scores of vehicles with company inscriptions were damaged and the drivers were badly injured. It led to the loss of life. Humanitarian and health services run by organisations such as SACLA broke down as SALCA withdrew its White medical staff rendering service in the townships. The humanitarian organisations also withdrew their staff which led to the breakdown of services in township day hospitals, a move that worsened conditions in the already understaffed hospitals. This project generated a great deal of tension in Black townships, and communities were sharply divided over the campaign as the situation in the townships was threatening to get out of control.

"Operation Barcelona and Operation Bujuba" created a climate which provided a perfect front for criminals to carry out their activities unhindered. This project would have had far more serious consequences not only for the students but also for the entire communities if the oppositional project under review had been sustained. This oppositional project tended to blur the distinction between a politically motivated project and a criminally-inspired campaign as it provided a front for the criminal elements to carry on their activities. This project was

self-destructive and profoundly counter-productive, especially as it undermined the unity for collective action of the communities since significant sectors were staunchly opposed to the project.

One of the paradoxes in this project was racism which underpinned the violence that it unleashed. For example, frequent verbal and actual violence was shown to Whites in the sense that the mere fact of different colour could be enough to justify an attack or intimidation. In a way, Whites came to be seen as enemies; hence the townships were made "no-go areas" for Whites. White motorists fell victims to attacks and even Coloured motorists venturing into the townships were often subjected to these attacks.

Another ramification which came into play was that the organic link which had been established between the students and the communities in the course of the opposition to Apartheid education and the overall system of oppression threatened to break down. It looked as though the students were adopting a go-it-alone strategy as there were signs that the students were bitterly resentful of their sister organisations in civil society. Once again that generation gap which had characterised relations between students and their parents in 1976 resurfaced, and Soweto seemed to be revisited in modern times. As in Soweto's 1976 school boycott, the students cast off their traditional respect for their parents, operating in various organisations of civil society. The moral authority of the older generation was undermined, thereby ending deference of youth to community leadership.

This was ironical as over the years the common interest of students and parents had tended to override tendencies towards a generation gap. Because of the organic relations that had developed between students and parents, this generation gap had to some degree been overcome as parents who might have

hung back from the struggle felt driven into it by the suffering and sacrifice of their children. Over the years it became imperative that in order for the students to make a profound impact on the state they needed the support of other sectors of the communities. They needed not only sympathy but also solidarity and the active participation of the rest of the Black communities. This realisation was now lost on the students. The very important strategy of developing and sustaining their opposition to Bantu Education through the process of uniting all sectors of the oppressed was now being cast aside.

Perhaps the reason for this could be that the students suspected that heeding the warning of the community organisations would have a dampening effect on their ardour, as these were counselling caution. This does in some way indicate that this was a paradoxical oppositional project as this threatened to break down unity for collective action. The situation became even more serious when the students threatened to intensify their campaign to include operation "Vula" according to which the students would disrupt traffic on the N2 motorway and erect roadblocks "on all major roads". This whole oppositional project resembled defiance and pathology on the part of the students. Giroux's view is illuminating in this regard.

Giroux³⁹ makes the claim that resistance has to be situated in a perspective of rationality that takes the notion of emancipation as its guiding interest. This means that the nature and meaning of resistance has to be defined next to the degree to which it contains the possibility to develop a "commitment to an emancipation of sensibility, imagination, and reason in all spheres of subjectivity and objectivity". Giroux puts it thus:

The concept of resistance represents more than a new heuristic catchword in the language of radical pedagogy - it represents a

mode of disclosure that rejects traditional explanations of school failure and oppositional behaviour. Resistance in this case redefines the causes and meaning of oppositional behaviour by arguing that it has little to do with the logic of defiance, individual pathology, learned helplessness, and a great deal to do, though not exhaustively, with the logic of moral and political indignation.⁴⁰

Turning to the undertones of racism which underpinned the project, again Giroux's view is illuminating in this regard. He claims that an oppositional project that suppresses social contradictions while simultaneously merging with, rather than challenging, the logic of ideological domination, fall not under the category of resistance but under its opposite, i.e. accommodation and conformism. He put it thus:

The logic that informs a given act of resistance may on the one hand be linked to interests that are class-, gender -or race-specific; but on the other hand such resistance may represent and express the repressive moments inscribed by the dominant culture rather than a message of protest against their existence.⁴¹

The point here is that the operation was underpinned by racism which was expressed through attacks on Whites who were perceived to be reactionary outsiders. Yet the paradox of this perception is that many Whites who ventured into or frequented the townships rendered invaluable humanitarian services to the communities. The oppositional project threatened to paralyse this invaluable service. One can't help but take a view that the oppositional project was not liberatory, but was an entrapment and an insertion into the things they purported to be fighting - racism and inadequate health services prevailing in the townships. The only conclusion that could be arrived at is that this was

a paradoxical oppositional project.

According to Giroux, resistance must have a revealing function, one that contains an implicit critique of domination and provides opportunities for self-reflection and for struggle in the interest of self and social emancipation. "Operation Barcelona and Operation Bujuba" did not do this; thus it was not an example of resistance.

We can recall Giroux's further claim that it is an error to regard simply any oppositional project as emancipatory. He claims that at a superficial level paradoxical oppositional projects might seem to have radical significance, but on closer examination they sustain the system they purport to be fighting. "Operation Barcelona and Operation Bujuba" may have seemed on the surface to have been an emancipatory oppositional project, yet on closer examination it buttressed the very notions of racism, and inserted the communities into immense suffering and problems. The project contained no fleeting images of freedom. This, however, does not detract from the fact that the students were not simply suffering from false consciousness as they understood their own alienation to the schooling system provided by Bantu Education, but rather it was their mode of opposition that helped to entrap them.

There is another very important issue that needs to be considered here. The students have always claimed allegiance and accountability to the community and all students would probably agree that the community includes their parents and those organisations committed to the mass democratic movement. But paradoxically these organisations repudiated the students and in turn the students failed to heed their advices for restraint.

This raises an issue about democracy which has been a central inspiration in

the opposition to Bantu Education. It seems that while the students share democratic ideals with the community, they have also reserved a whole range of issues as exclusively student-concerned and from which the wide community are excluded. Students do generate their own concerns which sometimes ignore broader community questions. "Operation Barcelona and Operation Bujuba" was a classical example of this tendency which effectively narrows the concept of democracy to exclude anyone not directly connected with the institution of learning.

Democracy then becomes a flag of convenience.⁴² Consequently the student-community divide widens and the notion that it is educational institutions to which the students are accountable, becomes the norm. O'Connell captures this point clearly, and he put it thus:

If, for instance, we acknowledge that students are accountable to the community, and we acknowledge the NECC as a significant community actor in the debate on education and transformation, then it might be expected that the educational debate on the campus and that, at the very least a forum of accountability, which included the NECC, would have to be established....In truth, the notion of student accountability to the community at this stage is pure rhetoric.⁴³

The point that O'Connell is making here is that the students have no clearly articulated notion of accountability and that accountability is equated with solidarity. As such, one consequence of this is that allegiance and support are owed to the student's primary community, the mass at the individual institutions, and only thereafter to the community. While most students can be expected to support or refrain from opposing a student decision, this does not necessarily

say anything about the students' sense of accountability. Accountability has not been a preoccupation, and democracy has largely been articulated as the right to pursue one or another course, rather than as the responsibility of being accountable for one or another action. This absence of accountability tends to make the call for democracy rhetorical.

The campaign under discussion amply demonstrated the image which the students had of themselves as the vanguard of the oppressed. They had won this revolutionary status with the support of the oppressed communities. This created an impression that any call for restraint and accountability to the community must in consequence be conservative and anti-revolutionary. These were the notions that overwhelmingly dominated the modus operandi of the students during the campaign under discussion.

Looking at the resistance to Apartheid, it is believed that it predicated the belief and vision of achieving democracy, non-racialism and equality. It means then, that resistance has to be democratic in the sense of getting those that seek redress on board the process of resistance (although democracy is not necessarily a sufficient condition for the attainment of a democratic outcome). Is it not a myth to go on believing that the edification of numbers and masses is more typical of democracy than a respect for constructive values? We also need to ask ourselves whether the mobilisation of hatred and destructive anger on the part of the students will be conducive to an order of respect for authority and democracy, or whether they do not, in fact, constitute the exact opposite to democracy?

A crucial question we need to ask is that if the state was believed to be bent on the destabilisation of Black communities, is it not therefore logical for us to believe that it was indeed in the interest of the state to allow Black schools

to deteriorate into anarchy? If the answer to this question was affirmative, a further question that needed to be posed was: Are we not by our actions through oppositional projects such as the one under discussion helping the state to sustain the anarchy in Black communities? Why should we not believe that the destruction of authority in townships, schools and Black communities is, in fact, exactly what the alleged faceless forces of destruction and destabilisation really desire? At the bottom of all questions is the pertinent question: Who stands to benefit from anarchy in Black communities and who stands to lose?

If students engage in activities that engender violence and anarchy in the Black communities, they are in pursuance of a paradoxical project which consolidates what oppression by design was intended to achieve. It was surely not the Black communities that benefited from the anarchy and the utter disrespect for authority, both in Black schools and in the larger Black communities. If it was the hidden hand of Apartheid that was responsible for destabilising Black communities and engendering anarchy, which is a widespread belief, then the project under discussion was paradoxical as it helped sustain this process of destabilisation.

The project under discussion was paradoxical because the indiscriminate action of the students had the potential of creating such a degree of instability in Black communities as to confirm the uncertainty and fear among Black communities for the future. The point here is that the project was in keeping with the forces that seek to undermine the process of reconstruction and transformation. Thus "Operation Barcelona and Operation Bujuba" should be seen for the consequence it had, which was the creation of conditions of anarchy and destabilisation which were in keeping with the strategy of assailing and undermining the efforts to lay the foundation for stability, and undermining the reconstruction of both Black schools and the society in general.

Here I would like to refer to S. Aronowitz and H. Giroux as their view is illuminating in this context. Aronowitz and Giroux put it thus:

Oppositional behaviour may not be simply a reaction to powerlessness, but might be an expression of power that is fuelled by and reproduces the most powerful grammar of domination. Thus on the one level, resistance may be the simple and appropriate display of power, and may manifest itself through the interest and discourse of the worst aspect of capitalist rationality. For example, students may violate school rules, but the logic that informs such behaviour may be rooted in forms of ideological hegemony such as racism and sexism. Moreover, the source of such hegemony often originates outside of the school. Under such circumstances schools become social sites: where oppositional behaviour is simply played out, emerging less as a critique of schooling than as an expression of dominant ideology.⁴⁴

I am not claiming here that the project under discussion can simply be written off as reactionary. Obviously the fact that students could act collectively and attempt to define for themselves what they wanted out of life contained an emancipatory moment. But, however, this type of opposition was informed by a dominating, rather than liberating logic. The paradox of the project, as has been indicated earlier, lies in the fact that while it was committed to emancipatory concerns, it ended up contributing to the reproduction of attitudes and practices of racism as it manifested itself through the interest and discourse of the worst aspects of Apartheid and capitalist rationality.

A deterministic view was a driving force behind the project. It was based on overthrowing the capitalist system and never contested the question of text,

knowledge and the form of knowledge pursued in the schooling system or learning situation. It was also insertion into the oppressive system.

The students overlooked the fact that the struggle for transformation is constitutive to education through critical educational practice, especially as history and the role of agency can be viewed in a dialectical way instead of the structural deterministic way which was the driving force behind paradoxical oppositional projects.

While the students displayed a tendency towards self-destruction, the teachers were also displaying inadequacy in their response to oppression. The tendency towards self-defeatism was complicated by enormous demands placed on the teachers and the pressure brought to bear on them to be politically correct. Unfortunately the response of the teachers to the enormous challenges put on them was destructive as it displayed their impotence to initiate transformation.

The following chapter sets out to look at the inadequate response the teachers displayed in their desperation to be "politically correct". Since the institutions of learning came to be seen as apparatuses for the illegitimate imposition of the ideology of the state, the teachers acting in these institutions invariably came to be seen as inevitably agents of this illegitimate or oppressive system. This created a dilemma for the teachers and forced them to engage in activities that were anathema to the practices of learning and teaching. This is the issue I now turn to.

CHAPTER 6

THE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN THEIR QUEST FOR RELEVANCE

One of the major problems that occurred in Black schooling institutions was the rejection of educational authority. Educational authority was undermined because it was widely misunderstood. This was because the institutions that were meant to foster education were severely undermined and concomitant to this was the collective loss of faith in the value of learning. This generated pressure on the practices of learning and the status and self-understanding of all those who foster or engage in educational practices. This is because the role of the teachers had come to be understood as standing for the maintenance of a regime of oppression. This led to the demeaning and the rejection of their authority.

This problem of authority in Black schooling institutions emanated from the structural conception of schooling. Althusser's conception of education in the bourgeois system posited the view that schools function to the benefit of the bourgeois class and therefore hold no advantages for the oppressed classes. Thus the legacy of Apartheid education buttressed these notions, and hence Black schools in general were filled with students who did not value knowledge, in the belief that it would be possible and necessary to start with a clean slate. As has been highlighted earlier, this conveyed the suggestion that Black schooling had been so contaminated by Apartheid and all its trappings that the oppressed would have to start virtually from scratch to create a new system of education so as to create a "new person".

The Althusserian analysis of history was seen as truth rather than a theoretical framework in contention with other Marxist theories. According to Althusserian conception of history the state was a central location from which all significant social power derived its source. The logic of this perception was that the authority of teachers was clearly derivative from the authority of the state.

Flowing from this was the view that if the state as in the case of the Apartheid system was an unjust imposition, so too was the authority of the teachers. The relationship between the teachers came to be understood as adversarial and antagonistic as they were characterised as the relation between the "symbols" of state power and the students. The teaching practice was seen as merely serving to shore up the current injustices of the state. They were seen as agents of the illegitimate state power. This meant that the strategies appropriate in contending political authority was seen as equally appropriate in contending educational authority.

The structural conception of education led to relativism which was driven by the view which rejected forms of schooling and education in an oppressive society. This rejection was coupled with the belief that substantive educational programmes, perhaps to produce "new persons" for the new society and replace one set of educational authorities with another, would have to be postponed until the onset of a new democratic order. This relativist theory has in this way contributed to the breakdown of the culture of learning. This has all too readily led to the rejection of educational authority and all those who engaged in the practices of teaching.

This radically misplaced relativism engendered a dilemma for the teachers as they were the people who were engaged in the practices of teaching. This is because the teachers came to be seen as the purveyors of the demeaning

Apartheid schooling. As such, the teachers came to be seen as the agents of the indoctrinating of students by fostering the Apartheid ideology that gave educational sanction to oppression.

The teachers, reluctant to be understood as part of the oppressive system and be seen as enemies of the struggle, chose wrong options in order to make their contribution to the struggle for better schooling. Their contribution led to the undermining of a culture of learning. In their quest for relevance they chose options that viewed themselves as activists as they were inspired by activists. Some teachers chose an option which sees teachers as professionals concerned only with education. Their practice was to be conducted in an apolitical way which in some sense meant anti political.

If one looks at professionalism in South Africa and the status of teachers as professionals, it becomes clear that the experience of this country under Apartheid gravely distorted the notion of professionalism. Bodies representing teachers have often advanced the claim that their members, as professionals, must serve the interest of schooling in an apolitical way. By this they did not mean that professional interest must take precedence over political or personal interests. They meant simply that obedience to the authority was their primary responsibility.

What this really meant in effect was that teachers were reduced to civil servants within a bureaucratic relationship with the state. This understanding of the concept enabled such bodies to claim the status of "professional" for their members and to insist on apolitical conduct, even if such conduct was detrimental to the welfare of their clients. These bodies, in fact, acted like unions in the classical sense, concerned principally with the material needs of their members while flying the flag of professionalism for the convenience of

status.

It follows from this that the argument for professionalism was an argument for neutrality. This idea into which teachers were locked overlooked an important factor about the conceptual link between professionalism and morality. This means that teacher who failed as teachers to operate from a moral basis were degenerate members of the teaching profession. A strong argument can therefore be advanced that in general terms professional teacher organisations in South Africa have been degenerative.

The perception of these teachers led to the belief that there was a clear cut-off point between education and politics. According to this scheme of things, the nature of the educational relationship removed the child as an actor since the teachers perceived themselves as the bearers of truth. In this scenario the teachers fell into the trap of uncritically presenting the "facts" to the students who were regarded as empty vessels. As "professionals" they claim exclusive monopoly of wisdom, truth and knowledge that had to be transmitted to the child in a dogmatic manner. They presented their "truth" as immutable.

Thus, according to this perception, the status of the teacher as a professional was an ex officio prerogative since it was conferred upon him/her through the acquisition of a diploma. The relationship between the teacher and the child was automatically constructed to confirm the "professionalism" of a teacher and his/her right as the adult to instruct the child in the "truth", of which, in the classroom situation, he/she was the sole bearer.

What they overlooked was the fact that teaching is a practitioner's, not a technician's, work. As a practitioner's task, teaching would entail the coming together of conceptual, speculative, general knowledge, and actual, particular,

non-textbook situations. As practitioners teachers were not obliged to choose to ignore or blindly follow the laws of any subject. The challenge facing the practitioners consists in determining the extent to which theoretical knowledge will affect and be affected by practical intervention. The two most decisive elements of professionalism, breadth and depth of knowledge and independence of judgement, did not feature in their conception of professionalism.

Because of the highly politicised nature of youth in South Africa, the stance which the teachers adopted engendered enormous problems for them. This confirmed the perception that the oppressors attempted to recruit from amongst the ranks of the oppressed through schooling functionaries and apologists for the system of oppression, those who would indoctrinate their clients so that they would identify with some of the issues which were regarded as the prerogative of the oppressors. What I am arguing here is that these teachers, in their attempt to respond to the problems of schooling in South Africa, chose an option which unwittingly projected them as the purveyors of falsehood, upholding the values of the oppressive class. This option engendered an enormous problem for these teachers as it undermined their authority. Their status as teachers declined considerably.

For the activist teachers to reject professionalism was to reject the authority which goes with it. They therefore disempowered themselves by surrendering this status. For those teachers who claimed to be professionals unwittingly perceived their role in the same light as a doctrinaire thinker who, according to Morrow⁴⁵, acts like an actor in a film who, in spite of a brilliant illusion to the contrary, is speaking words of which he/she is not the author. They both overlooked a very important component of professionalism and authority which requires engaging with the text in critical ways and not just accepting it as given truth.

The main problem with those teachers who came to regard themselves as activists was that they were driven by a structural conception of education. This led them to view schooling as a place or base in which to engage in protest, a base for outwardly directed activism. Thus these teachers concerned themselves with fighting structural issues such as control of schooling, governance etc., which, whilst important, ignored or overlooked the content of education and forms of knowledge which were the most crucial issues in education for transformation. This approach reduced the level of commitment of teachers and students to acquire appropriate knowledge and skills which would have served as tools to make better tools. They were driven by outward - directed projects to overthrow the Apartheid system which had to go before "proper schooling" could be initiated.

What becomes clear here is that the activist teachers have denied us the opportunity to develop the notion of education as a practice which A. MacIntyre defines as:-

Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to and partially definitive of that form of activity.⁴⁶

Firstly MacIntyre offers us a way of thinking about education that sees the participants as collaborators, in the common interest of extending human knowledge, and not primarily as antagonists defending different interests. Secondly, what becomes clear here is that the struggle for transformation of education has to be driven by issues internal to education rather than by issues which have little relevance to the project of education. Perhaps MacIntyre's understanding of education could have helped us develop a concept of schooling

that is emancipatory.

My critique of the standpoint of activist teachers does not detract from the good intentions that underpinned it. What I am arguing instead is that these teachers devalued teaching as a professional exercise as well as, the authority vested in the teachers. In their attempt to identify with the oppressed and in devising a new role for themselves as activists, the teachers opened the schooling institutions to invasion by omniscient outsiders like the activists, who considered themselves, by virtue of their standing in their communities, qualified to tell the teachers what should be done and how it should be done. Maeroff captures this point clearly by stating that:

The teachers report to everyone; no-one reports to the teacher.

If there exists such a thing as a powerless profession, a paradoxical concept indeed - it is teaching.⁴⁷

What further generated a dilemma for the teachers was that those groups which obviously misunderstood their role as teachers were at each other's throats as they contested for the favours of their communities. The "professionals" on the one hand came to project themselves as good educators concerned with the development of the child. On the other hand, the activists saw themselves as revolutionaries who were concerned with and engaged in the project of emancipation of the people. Both views were radically misplaced.

Having said this, I must, however, hasten to explain that this mini-thesis, in spite of the critique it offers, does not detract from the heroic role and great sacrifices made by teachers and the student movements and other social movements involved in education. On the contrary, it seeks to highlight the intellectual bankruptcy which characterised their approach to the struggle against Bantu Education. They overlooked a very important and fruitful conception of

teaching and education in the struggle for emancipation. Here I refer to Crittenden who characterises education as by nature an emancipatory activity which enhances authority and constitutes independent and critical beings. Crittenden claims that:

The point is that there is a very strong case for arguing that whether the ordinary people of a given society live in political freedom or oppression is inextricably bound up with the form of education practised or allowed in that society. There is a strong case no less for holding that failure to take this stand would be to open the way to risk of oppression, if not oppression itself. As noted, there are general moral grounds which bear on the need for a choice; in addition, there are grounds which are internal or at least specific, to education. I have in mind, for example, the idea that education, in any adequate sense, is involved with the development of free human beings capable of acting with responsible autonomy. Again, a society which is politically unfree to a significant degree is one in which many citizens may be denied an education at all or which closes off whole areas of knowledge and forms of enquiry because they are politically unacceptable. Those who are engaged in the practice of education or anyone with a concern for it, cannot be neutral about such matters. Thus the need for political commitment in education against oppression is inescapable.⁴⁸

The view that could be extracted from this is that even setting aside the clearly political struggles that arise around schooling system in society, teaching itself remains a profoundly political activity as it is essentially concerned with acts of disclosure. The role of the teacher is shot through with political

meaning because their role makes authoritative judgement about beliefs as the practice of teaching is not necessarily subservient to an ideology. They can through their practice and their daily interaction with the students create a new and better system of schooling.

Thus the schooling institutions, though some people concerned with the project of emancipation dismiss them as functioning to give ideological sanction to the oppressive system, are enabling in terms of creating an environment where the ideology of the ruling class could be undermined and assailed. Thus the teaching practice is never neutral but is always ethical and political.

What this means is that education and indeed schooling is a potent political tool in more deeper sense without the practitioners casting themselves in the role of political activist. As such education can be an effective tool to advance the emancipation process of the oppressed. It can be employed to challenge the ideologically-constructed knowledge purveyed by the dominant class through the schooling system. It therefore presents those engaged in the project of emancipation with a challenge to debunk the ideas and the theoretical claims of the dominant class underpinning their power.

Thus the oppressed need knowledge in order to generate new ideas that speak to the emancipation of the oppressed. They have to assimilate this knowledge critically and generate new forms of knowledge that are subversive to the ideology of the oppressor class. The intellectuals and teachers are not engaged in teaching in a neutral way, if that neutrality is anathema to the goals of emancipation. The schooling is therefore a terrain where ideas have to be contested. This could be possible if dialectical interpretation of history that sees human beings as agents, is employed.

The approach of both schools of thought (activists and so-called professional teachers) had a misguided foundation since they employed Althusserian conception of history which denies human agency a meaningful role in shaping their destiny and creating a new world. This had decided dangers to all concerned, but especially the students as they did not develop a pedagogy for construction and transformation in response to Apartheid education. Instead, they placed their faith in a *mélange* of theories such as the correspondence theory of Bowles and Gintis, and the structuralism of Althusser.

Thus the teachers, radical intellectuals, students and some social movements engaged in "education", placed their faith in the lures of the utopia which would come with political emancipation. They tended to put the cart before the horse in that they believed that political emancipation would of itself bring about better education, instead of critical educational practice bringing about a better society. I wish to claim that it is critical pedagogy, education for transformation and emancipation, that could bring about a truly emancipated and a critical human being, and not the other way round.

The response the teachers should have given was to reclaim their professional authority which has two central elements: breadth and depth of knowledge and the independence of judgement. Morrow⁴⁹ underscores this point, claiming that teaching is a moral activity, and the responsibility of teachers is a moral responsibility. The argument for professionalism is not an argument for neutrality or disinterest if such neutrality and disinterest are detrimental to the welfare of the clients. What this means is that professionalism goes with the concept of authority which entails political, moral and epistemological profundity or expertise.

This means that professionalism for teachers entails conceiving teachers as participants in a practice and not as mere technicians. Flowing from this is the idea that the teacher cannot accept a simplistic explanation about what truth and knowledge are and swallow and regurgitate it as spawned by textbooks. What professionalism would mean for teachers is that they must play a leading role in using received ideas to criticise, investigate and improve others; they must use received ideas as tools to make better ones. This is the concept of professionalism which the teachers should have claimed.

In trying to understand the responsibility of teachers, and in assessing the legacy of Apartheid education in this regard, it may be useful to ask what sort of activity teaching is and how Apartheid has influenced the conception of that activity. The claim that I wish to make is that teaching is a professional activity. I make this claim not so as to set up a hierarchical distinction between professionalism and work, and professionals and workers, but to argue for a distinctive relationship between the professionals and the subjects or clients for whom the service is being rendered.

Morrow⁵⁰ begins his reflections on education by examining the notion of accountability and its link with professionalism. Morrow makes a claim that professionals are distinguished by the need to give an account to their peers of their activity within that professional relationship. Within the context of the educational relationship, this giving of account is what protects the integrity of the relationship and safeguards the interest of those being taught. In this respect teaching is a moral activity and the responsibility of teachers is a moral responsibility.

Professionals are neither salesmen of state ideology of discourse, nor order takers, but rather individuals skilled in observing problems from a number of

unique angles and facilitating situations where they and their clients (students) can explore and exploit alternative viewpoints together. Meeting between teachers and students involves ideas, sessions and work-in-progress interactions where everyone's ideas are brought to the table in a relaxed and open way. While nothing and no one is sacred in this form of interaction, the two elements of the educational or learning situation are, however, unequal. This process is two-fold: firstly, it is the place where the learners are in the position of truth-seekers and the teacher initiates them as truth-seekers rather than as mere assimilators and reifiers of knowledge. This generates a spin-off of maturing the learners' agency.

Secondly, it generates conviction on the part of the learners that they are also creators of knowledge through their experiences. It enhances their capacity as strategic thinkers and problem solvers. In this way their role as historical agents capable of changing the world around them is bolstered. They come to see themselves as agents of transformation.

The role required of the professionals in the learning situation cannot be reducible to that of the functionally-driven bureaucrat. On the contrary, the role of the professional requires an intellectual creativity, an understanding of the complexities of the issues of learning and teaching, and an ability to unlock, and purge, hidden meanings that are detrimental to their learners.

The point I am making here is that teachers as historical agents can engage in educational practices that can have a transformative effect on the society even though the latter has a constraining influence on them. One needs to note that educational practices can change when there are new values to be served by education, especially if teachers can claim their true professionalism and the virtues that go with it.

The point here is that even though society can be oppressive and constraining, it does, however, leave space for creative thinking or for the invention of new ideas which could in turn transform the society. It would be fruitful to look at the creativity of intellectuals and the new ideas and practices they can generate as they can transcend limitations and explore new terrains or modes of thought. It is therefore misleading to regard the societal structure as deterministic as it denies the human agents the opportunity to transform society through educational practices. The professionals can generate new ideas, be creative, be innovative and inject new ideas to change the society, since taking proactive actions to ameliorate the suffering of the oppressed is requisite for professionalism.

Degenhart⁵¹ argues that the scholars must continue to swing one way and the other in mutual correctness and correction. He claims that the philosophers ought to be gadflies nipping others into alert questioning of habitual thoughts. What he claims is that philosophers cannot only mirror their historical context or social conventions as they have space within which they can create or construct new ideas to stimulate the society to move forward within the knowledge they possess by changing their concept and educational practices.

Central to the ideas of Degenhart is that it would be dangerous to deny philosophers, thinkers, administrators, teachers etc. their human responsibility because they themselves possess the capacity to change historical context as they engage in trial and error in trying to realise the truth. This can have a profound influence in changing our context and thus educational practices. In this way the expanded history of historical agents stimulates the horizons of the society to move forward or expand. As forward thinking people they can stimulate a paradigm shift even before the collapse of the oppressive system. They also point to the reciprocal connection between new innovative educational

practices that are transformative to society and the historical context that can constrain but also create possibilities and space for educational practices to change. This is what professionalism entails which the teachers should have reclaimed.

It is important for one to note that education cannot only serve to mirror the societal practices but rather has a role to reinstate norms, social solidarity and traditions which remain with us even though the horizon moves and expands. Secondly, it creates the cultural sensitivities for innovation in society and subsequently the expansion of the societal horizon. Knowledge is therefore not just a reflection of or upon the world, but should as well lead to actions to change the world since knowledge is constantly evolving. Thus it must be clear that professionalism is empowering as it positions one to act autonomously as a true agent of transformation.

The point I have made here is that knowledge and truth are not static but rather constantly evolving which helps us to change of the society by expanding our horizon.

I want to argue that it would have been proper for teachers not to perceive the nature of oppressive schooling in deterministic terms as this led them to engage in paradoxical projects. It would have been important for the teachers to note that structural determinism as postulated by Althusser was anathema to the project of transforming schooling as required by professionalism. In their quest for relevance the teachers entrapped themselves into the system of oppression as the activist teachers appeared to be shielding their clients from the 'evils' of Bantu Education schooling.

I now want to look at how the intellectuals and professionals as educational practitioners in their quest for truth can think creatively and engage in educational practices that do not buttress the status quo but help the oppressed to ameliorate their oppression.



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CHAPTER 7

NON-STRUCTURAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION AND CRITICAL THINKING. DECONSTRUCTING APARTHEID DISCOURSE AND CREATING A NEW ONE

This chapter sets out to demonstrate that for the language of critique to be meaningful and worthwhile, it has to be balanced with the language of possibility, thereby generating the hope among the oppressed that transformation is possible in spite of the exploitative and oppressive structure. It must raise the hopes among the oppressed that as social agents they can actively be involved in creating a new discourse by raising the social imagination of the oppressed. In a nutshell the claim I wish to make here is that teaching can be politically committed in a far deeper sense than some activists and students realise, without of course taking an overt political stance. This could happen if the oppressed could rid themselves of the structural deterministic conception of society. Schooling does create space for teachers to engage in critical educational practices which could be emancipatory, despite the 'monolithic', oppressive system of Apartheid.

What this means is that not only are we to address the questions of control and administration, of learning and institutions, but also to look at the type of knowledge taught, how this knowledge is to be imparted and what is to be done to deconstruct the hegemony and the culture of the dominant class in the society. In a nutshell, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that while structural determinism had a revolutionary potential, it was nevertheless self-defeating as there were spaces within the oppressive educational and schooling system which could have been exploited to ameliorate the suffering of the oppressed. This premise is derived from the theory of dialectical materialism which I will deploy

in defending this claim.

At looking at the theory of Dialectical Materialism I wish to refer to Engels' work as it helps us develop a clear understanding of the historical events. Engels claims that:-

...According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure - political established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views, and their further development into systems of dogmas - also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form.⁵²

Engels debunks the claim that the economic situation is the sole cause of history, while everything else is only passive. What Engels asserts here is that history is made in such a way that the final results always arise from the conflicts between many individual wills of which each in turn has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces, an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant - the historical event.

According to Engels, the wills of individuals desire what he or she is impelled to by his or her physical constitution and external, in the last resort economic, circumstances (either his or her own personal circumstances or those of society in general) do not attain what they want, but are merged into an aggregate mean, a common resultant. What this means is that while economic conditions are important, political ones and indeed even the traditions which haunt the human mind also play the part in shaping historical events.

While the theory of dialectical materialism preserves the thesis of relationships between the material base of society and the superstructure, it does allow us to avoid the problem of determinism. In discarding determinism by the economic base it does not dismiss the economic as unimportant. Its conception of history is itself linked to the notions of freedom and agency and as such it can accommodate notions of critical educational practices within the context of an oppressive educational and schooling system. It therefore posits the theory that the superstructure, while constrained by the structure, can have an evolutionary effect on the structure which could accumulatively develop into revolutionary changes.

The claim that I wish to make here is that no matter what the constraints, the teachers, radical intellectuals and social movements operating in the educational terrain were strategically placed to carry out pro-active work to get the transformative process under way. The role of teachers, no matter what the constraints, cannot be reduced to that of functionally driven bureaucrats as education is a political project. The theory of dialectical materialism does acknowledge this and is therefore a viable tool of analysis.

Teachers and intellectuals are strategically placed to carry out a pro-active role in generating a new discourse and creating a new form of knowledge.

Habermas⁵³ makes a claim that knowledge is never a disinterested or depersonalised conception of reality but instead implies a particular view of the world. His claim also contends that there can never be true knowledge defined as the disinterested reflection of reality. Flowing from this view is the idea that sociological knowledge can be considered to be true only when members of society, participating in unrestrained communication, use the theorist's interpretation of their situation as a basis for their own self-reflection. Within this conception Habermas posits the view that the interest that should direct social scientific inquiry should be linked to the goal of human emancipation.

In a nutshell, in the field of education, knowledge should be linked to the possibility of instilling a critical consciousness within members of society. Education should be linked to the purpose of generating critical, non-doctrinal thinking among participants in the society. Having said this, I now wish to consider the question: What is the role of a teacher committed to emancipation? What form of knowledge does he/she have to focus upon? How is the pursuit of truth to be conducted? What form of knowledge is to be pursued? These questions make sense especially if one considers that the theory of dialectical materialism does allow space for transformation and accords human agency an active role in shaping and moulding the world around it. In giving a response to these questions I will subsume them under the question: What is to be done?

What is to be done?

The first claim I wish to make here is that education is not neutral and that the teaching is not conducted by disinterested practitioners, and no matter how hard they profess to be neutral. Teaching has to be concerned with emancipation and the quest for 'true' knowledge and therefore cannot be neutral

or apolitical. The challenge that faced the teachers and radical intellectuals was to reconstruct the notion of knowledge and truth.

The second claim I wish to make is that the teachers are professionals who possess an intellectual authority since they should have vigorous independence of mind. This intellectual virtue entails teaching learners not only to speak their minds, but also to find a way to encourage them to have their own minds. That constitutes a major contribution towards inculcating a necessary culture of informed, critical and enquiring persons to enhance the capacity of both the teachers and students to transform education. This can also generate power and action towards freedom.

Thirdly, it would have been important for teachers and students alike to realise that sycophancy towards those who hold power cannot be tolerated in institutions of learning as they exist to preserve the freedom of the mind. Those who are in charge of these institutions and are entrusted with the task of the intellectual development of the learners have to maintain a questioning environment and centre. They do this primarily by preserving and keeping alive the works of those who best addressed these questions. It would have been fruitful for teachers' and students' actions to be underpinned by this approach for which dialectical materialism has a space.

Fourthly, the teachers always have to depict a world alien to the one propagated or depicted by the dominant class because the pursuit of truth does not depend on what is politically relevant. As such, their investigations and inquiries undermine the legitimacy of the ruling class. Their teaching ought always to be approached with questions and doubts, not faith. Their teaching provides aid and comfort to no-one and always makes a distinction between the 'is' and the 'ought'. This is what makes the teaching project political in a

deeper sense and, as such, subversive. This would have been far more radical for both the teachers and the students to realise instead of engaging in counter-productive activities that were the insertion into the system of oppression.

Following from this point, one can make a claim that schooling provides for dissenting opinions to flourish. It provides an atmosphere of free inquiry and excludes what is not conducive or inimical to such enquiry. There is therefore no way, even in the presence of constraints, that learning institutions can stunt human potential or subject the minds of those in pursuance of the project of learning to the goals of any regime or state, especially if dialectical materialism as postulated by Marx is employed as a tool of analysis which our intellectuals and the oppressed overlooked in their quest for relevance.

The point here is that education is political in a deeper sense and cannot be neutral, but rather it is a political commitment without engaging in projects of overthrowing the state as the structural deterministic approach suggested. As professionals, teachers have to interrogate the text of the learning material as well as knowledge and as such have to pursue truth and transmit knowledge that are emancipatory to their clients and to those who do not enjoy intellectual and political dominance. This cannot be done in a vacuum. The teachers have to use the authority of received ideas as a basis to create knowledge that is not compatible with the interest of the ruling class. This is how the transformation process could have been initiated, rather than abandoning schooling institutions through protracted boycotts, underpinned by structural determinism.

Here I want to return to the claim advanced by Strike about the authority of received ideas. Strike claims that received ideas are not certain but are rather the tools and focus of enquiry. They provide us with tools of thought and as such they must be subjected to criticism which is a central component of the

pursuit of truth. What this means in a nutshell is that received ideas and concepts furnish us with tools with which to move forward and to generate new ideas and concepts that approximate the truth. This means that teachers are the transmitters of received ideas but not in a manner that renders them immune from criticism.

This means that we cannot start from nothing but that we have got to start somewhere. Received ideas and concepts are necessary as they can be used as a springboard to construct new ideas and concepts that approximate the truth. That is how the transformation process can take off. Because of the misguided and shallow foundation of the conceptual problem of the students and even some teachers, the concept of regarding received ideas as tools with which to move forward eluded them.

Gouldner⁵⁴ underscored this point as he talked about reflexive consciousness. Gouldner sees this as the route towards generating a better, more "human" society. According to him, such a rationality depends on people recognising that the creation of "knowledge" in society is an ongoing dialectic or dialogue in which people are led to confront their own arguments by listening to alternative opposing viewpoints and confronting the silences in their own position.

This viewpoint is echoed by Aronowitz and Giroux⁵⁵. They claim that the dialectic of social reality consists of the dialectic of human experience which is never completed because meanings and viewpoints can always be "negated" and refreshed through dialogue in society. What this means is that knowledge is contestable and as such, truth construction is inter-subjective. Radical intellectuals should have engaged in dialogue to debunk the knowledge purveyed by Apartheid institutions through a process of "reflective consciousness". This

creation of "knowledge" in society is an ongoing "dialect" or "dialogue" in which people are continually led to confront their own arguments. It is through this process of reflective consciousness that Apartheid-purveyed knowledge could have been challenged, thereby balancing the language of critique with the language of possibility.

Challenging embedded forms of knowledge would be crucial because it suggests not only that one should learn how to read messages critically, but also that critical analysis can only take place when knowledge serves as a subject of investigation and as a mediating force between two people. This would enhance the process of critical action by the students. I think that this process could have been engaged in within the spaces created by Apartheid education. This does not devalue knowledge that has been fostered or imparted and neither does it counsel starting with a clean slate. On the contrary, it means assimilating and refashioning everything of value. This means that knowledge must be critically appropriated. Lenin's view is illuminating in this regard. In his speech to the Youth Leagues, he claimed that:

Knowledge gained under the bourgeois rule must be assimilated, but critically. One can become a Communist only when one enriches one's mind with a knowledge of all the wealth created by mankind, and when one knows how to apply it. Marxism owns for itself its world-historical significance as the ideology of revolutionary proletariat by the fact that it did not cast aside the valuable gains of the bourgeois epoch, but, on the contrary, assimilated and digested all that was valuable in more than 2000 years of development of human thought and culture.⁵⁶

What Lenin meant was that we cannot start off by doubting everything. What we need to do is to appropriate received ideas and use them as the basis of our quest for knowledge. We need tools to fashion new tools. However, we must assimilate this knowledge critically so that knowledge is cleaned from this adulteration of ideology or more correctly, reflects reality or approximates more closely to objective truth. Lenin insisted on the critical de-limitation of knowledge gained under capitalism as a function of the school in socialist society. However, such also must be the objective of Marxist educators in a capitalist society. In addition to this, social relations in the learning situation need to be considered.

Gramsci⁵⁷ saw the function of the school system generally as to prepare the students to function as autonomous, creative, responsible individuals. The relations between teachers and pupils must be seen as active and reciprocal so that every teacher is also a pupil and vice versa. In a nutshell, teachers must not act like social workers dispensing welfare knowledge to helpless students.

With regard to curriculum, it is important to note that curriculum discourse in all its variations is a form of ideology that has an intimate relation to questions of power. This is so particularly as these structures of social relations revolve around gender, race and class considerations. Giroux and R. Simon claim:

We think that the value of curriculum theory and practice should be linked to providing the conditions for students to understand it as a form of cultural politics, that is, as an expression of radical social theory. But a caveat must be inserted here. By linking curriculum theory and practice to radical social theory, we are not arguing that students should learn the discourse of, let's say, a specific doctrine such as Marxism. On the contrary, the notion

of radical as we are using it in this context is much broader and more fundamental than any one version of Marxism or any other political doctrine. In fact, it suggests linking curriculum theory and practice with the deepest aspects of emancipation in which self and social empowerment are developed around the goals of fighting against all forms of subjective and objective domination.⁵⁸

The point here is that curriculum is one area where the cultural capital that is consonant with dominance and oppression is transmitted. Curriculum is therefore another area that needs to be contested and in looking at curriculum and the forms of knowledge transmitted through it, one must embrace both the language of critique and the language of possibility that fuel emancipation. Curriculum has therefore to be interrogated and constructed in such a way that it becomes consonant with the discourse of emancipation. These are very important issues internal to education.

What this means is that learning for emancipation does not only mean passing on prescriptions, but learning that takes the vision of the oppressed and exploited seriously as these visions are defined in the day-to-day economic, political and social struggles. What matters here is not to know the world but to change it, transform that world and in that process, change the people. It is the expression of the "received ideas" of the people that is ultimately translated into action and as such, for the oppressed, education is to be an instrument of liberation.

Mboya⁵⁹ captures this point by claiming that the heroic struggles of the oppressed against colonialism have received scant attention in the history of South Africa, compiled largely by White writers. According to Mboya, history must be interpreted in a way that invokes among the oppressed feelings of

solidarity and victory, as well as offering models of resistance and courage: history has to be interpreted so as to provide the foundation for social justice, equality and democracy. Transformation would demand of the oppressed to create the knowledge that affirms the oppressed.

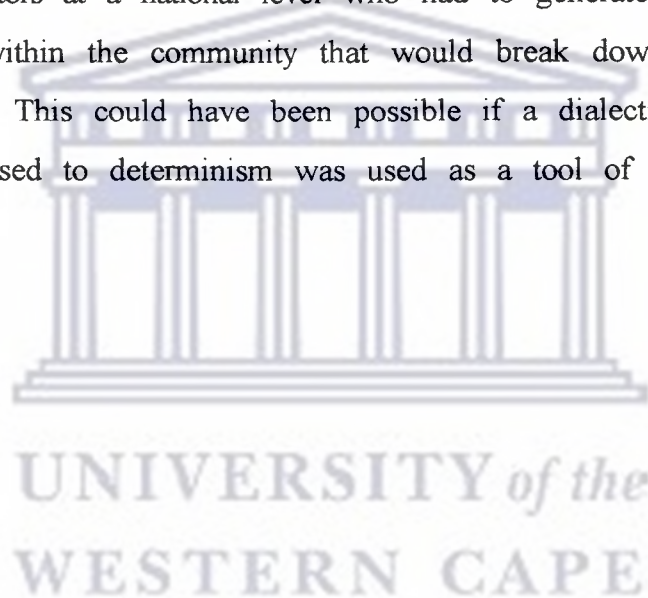
On the contrary, those who oppress always attempt to suppress or distort history and force the oppressed view, analyse and evaluate their history through the eyes of the oppressor. This is done deliberately to undermine the confidence of the oppressed in themselves and obtain acquiescence in their own subjugation. The second purpose is to subdue the authentic voice of the oppressed and dampen their spirit, dreams and hopes. So learning for liberation involves the struggle of reclaiming both that history and that humanity by critically engaging knowledge purveyed by Apartheid schooling and transforming it so as to affirm the oppressed. But, however, one needs the authority of received ideas as a springboard from which to generate a critical education programme as one cannot initiate transformation of schooling in a vacuum.

In a nutshell, central to learning for emancipation is to appropriate critically those forms of knowledge that exist outside immediate experience, and to envisage versions of a world which is 'not yet' in order to be able to alter the grounds on which life is lived. In this sense, empowerment is gained from the knowledge that provides the oppressed with the basis for defining and transforming social relations. This approach would have enhanced the struggle for transformation and as such gone a long way towards sowing the seeds of a new approach in schooling that is transformatory and emancipatory.

What is important here is to appropriate knowledge and critically evaluate and interrogate it to make sense and extend the social imagination of the oppressed. This means that schooling was not to be abandoned to the oppressors whose

interests were to exercise it to indoctrinate the oppressed against themselves. This also means that the oppressed and the students should under no circumstances become unscholarly or unscientific. Furthermore, the actions of the students should be based on properly tested information and careful analysis.

Here again Mboya⁶⁰ raises another crucial point about the radical intellectuals and educators. He claims that the oppressed needed a strong and committed leadership of educators at a national level who had to generate and sustain the kind of attitude within the community that would break down the oppressive schooling system. This could have been possible if a dialectical interpretation of history as opposed to determinism was used as a tool of analysis.



CONCLUSION

This mini-thesis has critically explored the oppositional projects launched against Bantu Education. The critique it makes is that some radical intellectuals, teachers, students and some social movements operating in the terrain of education were trapped into protest politics - that is, their language of critique was not balanced with the language of possibility. Consequently they could not attain any transcendence from the system to which they were opposed. As such, they could not evolve a culture counter to the hegemony of Bantu education.

In their struggle against Bantu Education, they overlooked the fact that the most successful tyranny is not the one that uses force to assert uniformity, but the one that removes the awareness of other possibilities; that makes it seem inconceivable that other ways are viable; that removes the sense that there is an outside. The activities of students, the attitude of some radical intellectuals, the teachers and the social movement operating in the terrain of education tended to overlook that as being important in the struggle for better education. As a consequence, they got trapped into modes of protest that were an insertion into the very system they were fighting. This was because of the ill-advised analysis they employed, namely structural determinism.

They got trapped into the mode of protest politics because their thinking was dominated by a structural deterministic model of society. This is a model which was articulated by Althusser and was influential; and according to which various institutions of society are seen as parts of one whole which makes it impossible for one component of society to change without a change in the whole society. Institutions and human agency are seen as epiphenomenal reflections of the economic base. Put simply, the social structure in terms of

this model is all-inclusive and the constraints it contains are total.

What this means is that there are no spaces or gaps for human agency to manoeuvre or initiate changes. This model cannot account for acts of resistance waged by social agents. This view influenced some radical intellectuals and still dominates some of the debate about the transformation of institutions. This view claims that the institutions are just small islands and as such they cannot be transformed as the oppressive society feeds into them. The suggestion it conveys is that one has to change the economic base if institutions are to be transformed.

The point which these radical intellectuals seem to make is that in the oppressive social structure of Apartheid South Africa, there could be no new counter-hegemonic discourse as long as Apartheid was still in place. So the focus here must be on bringing about the collapse of the entire Apartheid system in order to create conditions and possibilities for a new educational discourse and a counter-hegemonic culture and tradition. This point of view seems to be plausible and as such one can understand the grounds for it although one does not necessarily agree with it. It was quite possible for people to think in this way given the oppressive nature of the Apartheid system.

The critique which this mini-thesis gives of certain radical intellectual work against Apartheid does not detract from the fact that educational protest and oppositional projects against Bantu Education had significant influence on the course of South African history. The use of schools as "sites" of struggle brought pressure to bear on the state in ways that were difficult to counter. The major thrust of the political argument was that schooling denied the people a voice, and within its programme a "gutter education" prepared the oppressed

for exploitation. What emerged from both the political and theoretical condemnation of Apartheid education was a structural deterministic model for an understanding of South African schooling. It therefore becomes somewhat of an exaggeration to claim that schools were used as "sites" of struggle, as the tendency has been for educational politics to be propelled by issues external to the immediate educational sphere.

The major problem was that the strand of Marxism that informed the theoretical position of certain radical intellectuals and scholars and the mode of protest which they evolved against Bantu Education were deterministic. Their emphasis was on the determining power of material conditions in shaping consciousness. Althusser developed a theory of structural determinism which somehow conceived history as a process without subjects. In his "Ideology and ideological State Apparatuses" Althusser assigns to schools the structural role of reproducers of the dominant ideology. His conclusion was that schools, by their very nature, aided the dominant group in maintaining its ideological hold over the oppressed.

The structural deterministic model propounded by Althusser was seen as truth rather than as one particular theory of interpretation in competition with others. The main point is that it excludes and has no theoretical space for a concept of historical agency. This perception paradoxically excluded the language of possibility from the language of critique made against Bantu Education. Consequently radical intellectuals focused all their efforts on opposition to Bantu Education by casting themselves in the role of political activists concerned with overthrowing the 'all inclusive and encompassing system of Apartheid'. They failed to formulate concrete and viable educational policies which would begin to address major contemporary educational problems.

The claim which the mini-thesis makes is that certain activities such as those discussed in the mini-thesis utterly destroyed the culture of learning not only for those students that were involved but for some generations to come. This also created problems for the whole country in that the breakdown of the culture of learning is a problem that affected the majority and was not just a problem that affected the marginalised minority. This has a potential of creating enormous problems for the entire nation as well as the new government. These problems stretched forward into the future and have created enormous problems for the new nation.

Today we don't seem to be anywhere nearer to having effective teaching in Black schools, as our education is still reeling from the mortal blow struck to the culture of learning by the short-sighted and misguided activities discussed here. Today the Black schooling system is struggling to shrug off years of the breakdown of the culture of learning which arose partly from paradoxical projects launched against Bantu Education.

As a consequence of these oppositional projects, Blacks will struggle to avoid remaining on the periphery of the South African economy as an underclass. Such a spectre has definitely created problems for the whole country. While South Africa is an example of a paradigm shift it is, however, proving difficult to implant an attitudinal change and get students to act differently even though legal instruments are being put in place to restore the culture of learning.

One is inclined to believe that the challenge that faced social movements and radical intellectuals was to strike a balance between the struggle for critical educational practice in the Black schooling system and the sustenance of the culture of learning. Some radical intellectuals believed that these two issues were in tension and that it might be necessary to create a democratic form of

schooling in the classroom before the culture of learning and effective teaching could be restored. They seem to have lost sight of the fact that critical educational practice is an essential component of any proper schooling system.

In a nutshell, some oppositional projects which the students launched have tarnished the very concept of education, and have left South Africa with a terrible legacy that will be overcome with great difficulty. This means that the development agenda that must now be the pre-occupation of all communities in South Africa cannot be embarked upon while a major social institution like schooling is in a state of chaos.

The unremitting school boycotts have had dire consequences for Black schooling and for the oppressed in general. They sowed the seeds of an education crisis with which we still struggle to cope. They virtually destroyed the culture of learning, reduced talented teachers and educational practitioners and students to mediocrity and created a bottomless pool of chronically unemployable labour. They also denied the oppressed access to education and knowledge. This is exactly what Bantu Education schooling and Apartheid had sought to achieve.

A stubborn node of under-educated, frustrated young students as a permanent feature of our society was fostered by the consistent application of prolonged school boycotts. These students in turn tended to provide the building blocks for extremists who have a romanticised view of students as the backbone of the struggle for liberation in South Africa. This legacy threatens to defeat our most assiduous attempts at creating the culture of learning.

The struggle for human emancipation in South Africa was not just for some utopian future and as such it was the task of radical intellectuals and teachers to start building that future in the womb of the old society. The point here

is that rather than abandoning schooling as a terrain of Apartheid discourse that manipulated and used it to bolster the position of the oppressors, schooling could have been used as a terrain in which radical discourses could have been propagated. Thus schooling due to the active agency of the oppressed could have been used as a terrain upon which to contest and deconstruct the discourse of the oppressors. The oppressed must gain knowledge in order to know and change.

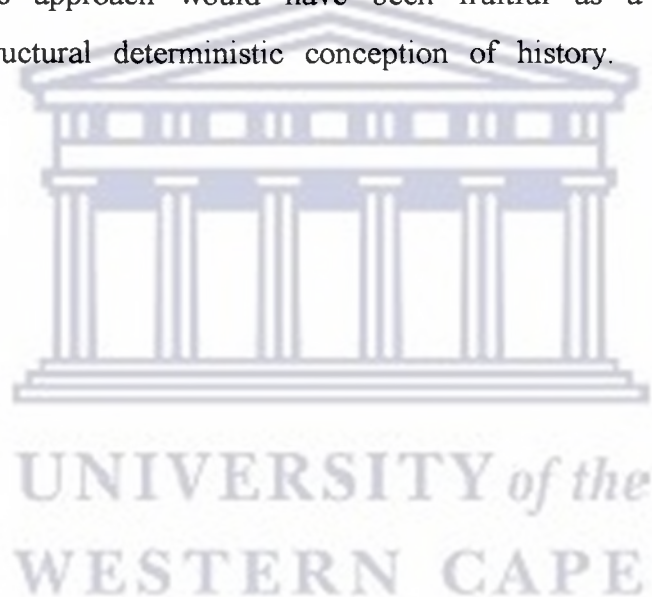
The main thrust of this critique is that engaging in oppositional activities that were not central to the project of transformation in education, schooling gradually withered and at best became a monument, the inner life of which was alien to the tourists who passed through it as they represented something they no longer possess.

There is, however, a different framework of interpretation of society which has a theoretical space for the concept of historical agency. This is the theoretical framework offered by dialectical materialism. This theory is illuminating in terms of making us understand the role and the ability of human agency to change and transform the society despite its seemingly all-encompassing and monolithic structure. According to this theory institutions that exist in the society are autonomous components which can change without changing the entire social structure. It rejects the theory that human agency and institutions are epiphenominal reflections of some deeper structure. Perhaps the anti-Bantu Education campaign could have yielded better results if they had employed the theory of dialectical materialism to underpin their approach to the struggle.

I am content that a dialectical understanding of historical materialism allows theoretical space for all concepts of education and emancipation that are conceptually linked to freedom and agency, because it is itself committed to

these notions.

This it achieves without portraying these relations as "floating free of the determinate effects of the concrete relations in which they are located". The material world sets the stage on which history unfolds, but history unfolds in contingent and impromptu ways and not according to predetermined script. Such an approach leaves space for historical agency and offers a much more desirable alternative if compared with the closed-endedness of economic determinism. This approach would have been fruitful as a tool of analysis rather than the structural deterministic conception of history.



NOTES

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