

Power: Its Role in Society and Education

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Introduction

In any society power, social power, intellectual power, political power, economic power, and personal power differentiate the social strata. Social institutions and bureaucracies formalize uses of power in various manifestations. In any society, schools, the social institution responsible for public education, carry out as their primary task social reproduction. Changes to the societal structure put additional burdens on schools— institutions with less interest in developing citizens than in training subjects. The source of this disconnection between the goals of schools as a social institution and the social reality is that power is applied in such a way as to at least maintain, if not increase, social reproduction's dominance. This essay represents my investigation into the role of power in society, the consequences of its use and misuse, and responses of public education to power shifts. Using Bertrand Russell's (1872–1970) focus on power as the driving force in society and social science as a postulate, I follow the thinking of Eric Hoffer (1898–1983) and Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), piggyback on the theory of Paulo Freire (1921–1997) and Vaclav Havel (1936–2011), and stand on the shoulders of John Dewey (1859–1952) in order to argue that the contemporary use of power is leading toward an increasingly authoritarian, if not totalitarian, society and that government actions are becoming more limiting (the movement for marijuana legalization notwithstanding) and dehumanizing. I begin my argument by couching my argument in the thought of Marx and Weber, the influence of the Frankfurt School and the New School for Social Research on social critique and power relations, and the impact of progressivism and progressive education. Finally, I examine the disturbing trend toward an increasingly authoritarian and totalitarian society given virulent increases in racism, classism, white nationalism, ethnocentrism, and violence. While hope certainly exists among various equity-focused organizations whose members push toward tolerance, allyship, social justice, living in truth, and intelligent involvement, given the design of social institutions, I argue much is left to do to reclaim the values of a more perfect union.

Bertrand Russell notes that “of the infinite desires of man, the chief are the desires for power and glory.”¹ This rings true in our time, whether his words refer to a person running a nation or those using personal status,

wealth, and power to get their children into the “right” schools. Wealth can clearly result in power and glory. Those who have wealth can become powerful and those who have power can obtain glory—and much more. Russell believes power to be the fundamental concept in social science. He writes “that the love of power is the cause of the activities that are important in social affairs.”²² The analysis of power relationships defines Russell’s work in sociology and history. He dissects power’s psychological and social aspects. He examines the personal impulse to power as well as the varieties of leader-follower relationships: physical, coercive, and influential. He identifies different forms of power as priestly power, kingly power, naked power, revolutionary power, economic power, and power over opinion. Russell also outlines the source of power as creeds, organizations, governments, and competition. He analyzes power by investigating philosophies, moral codes, ethics, and the taming of power. In writing *Power*, he hoped to create a new social-science methodology, believing the love of power is not evenly distributed, but “limited by love of ease, love of pleasure, and...love of approval.”²³ He recognizes the exercise of power requires submission of one’s followers and fellow travelers. James Comey, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2013–2017), notes how this process works in the extreme case of a particular, former occupant of the White House: “accomplished people lacking inner strength can’t resist the compromises necessary to survive...and that adds up to something they will never recover from.”²⁴ If able, experienced individuals can be so compromised, what does that indicate about the mass of followers whose ease, pleasure, and approval are necessary for continued support? Policy differences reduce governmental individuals to squabbling adversaries and create the specter of constitutional crisis as the branches of government try to dominate or overrule each other. Lost is the concept of loyal opposition. Demands of loyalty, if ignored, result in at least marginalization, and often dismissal. On a recent *PBS News Hour*, *New York Times* op-ed columnist and *PBS News Hour* correspondent David Brooks offers the appraisal,

The Democrats are having a debate: Is he a racist? Is he a white supremacist? And...I think, well, he’s a sociopath. He’s incapable of experiencing or showing empathy. And, politically, it’s helpful for him to target that lack of empathy and fellow feeling toward people of color. But how much have we seen him show empathy for anybody?²⁵

Power, however, means much more than empathic capacity or capability. Power bestows upon its holders the ability to command and coerce others, to control the social, political, or economic relationships of those close to and subordinate to its holders. In this context, domination is an integral aspect of power. Opposition to power, speaking truth to power, and the power of the powerless all are ways the powerless resist the powerful. It therefore becomes increasingly important to recognize the role of power

among society's powerful. We seem to be living in a time in which power is arbitrarily used to soothe the egos of the powerful and its use is primarily focused on maintaining their powerful positions. Government policies are not well-defined. Administrative decisions are confusing and contradictory. Rule is increasingly by executive order rather than political process. One political party has sold out and the other has become divided in its effort to conceive of an operational strategy. Meanwhile, international relations become random with annulled agreements, voided treaties, and minimized organizations; diplomacy is but a distant dream. Environmental protection crumbles, national parks are at risk of corporate grift, endangered species are on their own, and the economy is all over the place with threats of tariffs, boycotts, and the like.

Marx, Nietzsche, and Weber

Karl Marx's (1818–1883) theory focuses on dialectical materialism, the role of economic relations, the plight of the proletariat and the struggle between social and economic classes. For Marx, power is found squarely within control of the means of production. "Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another."⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) finds the "will to power" or "instinct for freedom"⁷ to be a fundamental life force though which one's first use of this power is power over oneself, this power being closely akin to self-actualization. Max Weber (1864–1920) investigates power as it exists within bureaucracy and rationalization. Weber's most important work describes the rise of capitalism and the development of an economy based upon consumption.⁸ In *The Protestant Ethic and the Rise of Capitalism*, Weber sees the end of bureaucratic organization as "the pursuit of wealth... external goods... [being] an iron cage... stripped of meaning"⁹ In such an environment, power becomes an end in itself, the goal of and the reward for success. Weber also contributes a sociology of power and authority in his study of human societies, identifying three types of power—traditional, rational, and charismatic—which give the powerful responsibility for motivating those whom they control.¹⁰ Such motivation can take both positive and negative forms: economic or status rewards or demotion or dismissal based on the perceived legitimacy of an organization.¹¹ For Weber, power relations evolve from charismatic and traditional power to rational-legal bureaucracies through a process he calls "routinization," in which a bureaucracy becomes increasingly complex with well-established behavioral rules and norms.¹² His interest in the impact of power relations on a society's political, economic, and personal behavior would go on to influence subsequent generations of social theorists and social philosophers.

Power, Critical Theory, and Hegemony

Marx's body of thought, especially his behest to change the world, not just interpret it;¹³ Weber's analysis of capitalism, bureaucracy,

and domination;¹⁴ and the increasing importance of popular culture, consumerism, and mass communication laid the groundwork for the Frankfurt School and Critical Theory. First housed at the Institute for Social Research, and subsequently at the New School for Social Research established in New York City by Frankfurt School immigrants, Frankfurt School members critique philosophy and its role in modern societies. They produced what has become known as critical theory: social analysis focused on change. Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) writes in 1937, critical “theory never aims simply at an increase of knowledge as such. Its goal is man’s emancipation from slavery.”¹⁵

Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), also of the Frankfurt School and the New School for Social Research, expands the critique of power relations in society where “domination by the most powerful economic groups is effected [sic] by means of the delegation of power to prototypical leader personalities in which the interests of these groups are concealed.”¹⁶ Marcuse uses these words to describe the rise of National Socialism in Germany; they ring true even now. For, if we compare the Nazi agenda with the reactionary populism that dominates today’s politics (reacting to political correctness, pluralism, multiculturalism, alternate lifestyles, etc.), we find striking similarities. First is the establishment of an unwelcome minority, a minority suddenly considered superfluous to the needs of a nation. During National Socialism this group was the Jews, and in Reactionary Populism it is Hispanic and Muslim peoples.¹⁷ Next there comes repudiation of the idea of a “loyal opposition.” Opponents are thereafter vilified, given pejorative nicknames, belittled, berated, and blamed for all problems or failures, while credit is taken by the would-be state for any successes or positive accomplishments. Josef Goebbels (1897–1945) developed and implemented this process, this management of information, for Germany’s National Socialist regime. However, it has applications in the present.

By way of evidence I offer a select dozen tenets of state information control: 1. Controlling intelligence of official events and opinions (e.g., “it is no one’s business what the president discusses with other officials”); 2. Control sources of information (dismiss opposing viewpoints); 3. Consider appearance consequences for each action; 4. Consider effect of actions on opponents; 5. Evoke interest of supporters; 6. Credibility alone determines the use of information, not truth or falsity; 7. Use opponents’ own information against them; 8. Time information for maximum effectiveness and repeat as necessary; 9. Label events and people with distinctive phrases or slogans; 10. Create anxiety about opposition views and programs; 11. Specify targets for hatred; and 12. Offer action, diversion, or both.¹⁸ So does our prototypical official orchestrate the ways in which the privileged social and economic groups exercise power or do we see the creation of a new political phenomenon?

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) theorizes the concept “cultural hegemony” to describe the role of class-based power on society. He is interested in how hegemonic power and dominance function in society, thinking it necessary to combat the influences of the socioeconomic elite through counter-hegemonic activities.

Cultural hegemony is most strongly manifested when those ruled by the dominant group come to believe that the economic and social conditions of their society are natural and inevitable, rather than created by people with a vested interest in particular social, economic, and political orders.¹⁹

Hegemony also depends upon the dominated group’s agreement, at least to a significant extent, to their own domination. Gramsci writes, “Every relationship of ‘hegemony’ is necessarily an educational relationship.”²⁰ Critical pedagogy, derived from the tenets of critical theory, enlarges the role of class hegemony; its theorists call for transformative action in education toward liberation from oppressive social structures and the development of what Paulo Freire calls *conscientização*, or “critical consciousness.”²¹ Interaction between the dominator and dominated is complex. Often the goal of the dominated is to become the dominator. Reactionary populists are the exemplars, it seems, of what Freire calls “fanaticized consciousness”:²² the loyal, gullible subjects who believe the tweets, blaming, misrepresentations, name-calling, and lies. Can critical theory illuminate the issues and recommend action to relieve the hegemony of the privileged on the one hand and the reactionary populists on the other? The conflict continues.

Power, Progressivism, and Pluralism

As critical theory developed during the interwar period in Germany, progressive thought became increasingly important in the U.S. John Dewey, who opposed anything smacking of absolutism, idealism, or dogmatism, writes,

Recourse to monistic, wholesale, absolutist procedures is a betrayal of human freedom no matter in what guise it presents itself. An American democracy can serve the world only as it demonstrates in the conduct of its own life the efficacy of plural, partial, and experimental methods in securing and maintaining an ever increasing release of the powers of human nature, in service of a freedom which is co-operative and a co-operation which is voluntary.²³

As a response to the excesses of the Gilded Age, progressives sought to expand pluralist ideas of social justice, democracy, and egalitarian society through changes in the economy, government, and political power. Dewey’s identity as a progressive in education is well known but his influence in

progressive politics is also notable. He writes that, “The essential problem of government...reduces itself to this: What arrangements will prevent rulers from advancing their own interests at the expense of the ruled? ...by what political means shall the interests of the governors be identified with those of the governed?”²⁴ Dewey was not naïve about the complexity of the modern state nor the necessary need for people with expertise to make it work. Dewey sees the problem as the disconnect between competent specialists, on the one hand, with the politics and policies (when they exist) produced by those most interested in election or reelection.²⁵ The politically powerful depend on swaying the opinions of the public. Traditionally the means for communicating opinion had been newspapers. All that began to change in the '20s when radio use became more widespread. “The radio,” writes Dewey, “is the most powerful instrument of social education the world has ever seen,”²⁶ lamenting that “the radio lends itself to propaganda in behalf of special interests...used to distort facts and mislead the public mind.”²⁷ Today we grapple in much the same way with social media in all its forms, used to sway through sophisticated (and often not-so-sophisticated) misinformation, misdirection, and sensationalism. Dewey argues “a public...arrives at decisions only through the medium of individuals. They are officers; they represent a Public, but the Public acts only through them.”²⁸ However, “The idea of democracy,” writes Dewey, “is a wider and fuller idea than can be exemplified in the state even at its best. To be realized it must affect all modes of human association, the family, the school, industry, religion.”²⁹

Dewey did more than write about the misuses of power in society, though. In 1928 he and Benjamin Marsh established The People’s Lobby with Dewey as President, a post he held until 1940. Later that year at a meeting to discuss the “unreality of the prosperity boom,”³⁰ and of the “sense of necessity; first of the necessity for economic change and then of the necessity of corresponding political change,”³¹ delegates formed the League for Independent Political Action (LIPA, 1928–1936), naming Dewey to its Provisional Executive Committee.³² LIPA supported the creation of a third party at first to engage the economic excesses of the 1920s, then to oppose President Hoover’s pro-business policies. After Franklin Roosevelt was elected, LIPA members questioned New Deal programs, and attempted to bring to light the “dearth of ideas, the total unconsciousness of even the need for any ideas, and the deliberate dependence upon the silliest and most stereotyped emotional appeals.”³³ Dewey contributed essays to LIPA’s *News Bulletin* (1930–1933) and the *People’s Lobby Bulletin* (1931–1950),³⁴ commenting extensively on government activities and policies from taxation, inflation, and banking to unemployment, debt relief, and birth control. In his 1939 book, *Freedom and Culture*, he observes that, “the democratic tradition, call it dream or call it penetrating vision, was so closely allied with beliefs about human nature and about the moral ends

which political institutions should serve, that a rude shock occurs when these affiliations break down.”³⁵ Dewey argues psychological motivations change as a culture evolves and that, in the late 1930s, “the favorite ideological psychological candidate for control of human activity [was] love of power.”³⁶ The tendency of any government is toward increased control. He therefore observes, “The serious threat to our democracy is not the existence of foreign totalitarian states. It is the existence within our own attitudes and within our own institutions of conditions similar to those that have given a victory to external authority, discipline, uniformity and dependence upon The Leader.”³⁷ The central role of public education was obvious to Dewey. The ideological control of education and literacy, entertainment, the press, and publishing made Nazi propaganda even more efficient and effective. Even science and technology have ideological components. So, Dewey asks, “Can society, especially a democratic society, exist without a basic consensus and community of beliefs?” A relevant question since, it seems, reactionary populism represents a breakdown in the fundamental assumptions of integrity, loyalty, and what Dewey calls sociality.³⁸

Progressive Education

Progressive education has a controversial past. Often loosely based on the educational philosophy of John Dewey, progressive education varies as much as those trying to implement their conceptions of it. Although they did not call themselves progressives, James McClellan argues members of other movements in education, like critical pedagogy, share progressive characteristics. He says,

An educational program is to be rated Progressive in proportion to its satisfaction of three criteria: (i) it is directed toward the fullest self-development of each young person entrusted to its care, (ii) it is fully social—i.e., organized into activities that require and teach skills of cooperative effort and democratic decision-making, [and] (iii) it is permeated throughout with the faith and practice of scientific inquiry.³⁹

Among progressive educators, Dewey notably is interested in the role of democracy in society. For Dewey everything originates in philosophy and philosophy originates in experience and its reconstruction. He writes “that, while I seem to have spread myself out over a number of fields—education, politics, social problems, even the fine arts and religion—my interest in these issues has been specifically an outgrowth and manifestation of my primary interest in philosophy.”⁴⁰ In *Democracy and Education*, he develops the idea that schools could serve as the proving ground for democratic society, but not schools dominated by rote learning disconnected from students’ day-to-day experiences. For Dewey, experience is the source of learning: social experience from the community and school experience structured by the

teacher in concert with broader society. He laments that, “Conformity, not transformation, is the essence of education.”⁴¹ This reduces education to training but, claims Dewey, if “a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education.”⁴² He continues, saying “that the object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth.”⁴³ The two decades that separate “My Pedagogic Creed” and *Democracy and Education* did not change Dewey’s views on the importance of democracy, community, experience, reconstruction, and the application of the scientific method in teaching and learning. Two decades after *Democracy and Education* he wrote *Experience and Education*, proposing development of a theory of experience, responding to criticisms and “conflicts and controversies.”⁴⁴ These conflicts and controversies arose from the excesses of dogmatic progressivism whose members applied their own, rather lockstep, schema for schools. He foresaw a movement away from the psychological, sociological, and scientific nature of schooling. Equating education with democracy, Dewey writes,

Democracy is an educative process; ...the act of voting is in a democratic regime a culmination of a continued process of open and public communication in which prejudices have the opportunity to erase each other.... This educational process is based upon faith in human good sense and human good will as it manifests itself in the long run when communication is progressively liberated from bondage to prejudice and ignorance.⁴⁵

Authoritarian and Totalitarian Tendencies

Hannah Arendt agrees with Dewey about the problem of “bondage to prejudice and ignorance,” and the growing authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies in government and society. Dewey warns that members of any democratic society should “beware of supposing that totalitarian states are brought about by factors so foreign to us that ‘It can’t happen here’;—to beware especially of the belief that these states rest only upon unmitigated coercion and intimidation.”⁴⁶ Arendt especially notes the indifference of officials whose personal enrichment, agendas, perception, and longevity are based on the “gullibility and cynicism of the masses.”⁴⁷ The first casualty is the truth. Arendt writes,

The totalitarian mass leaders based their propaganda on the correct psychological assumption that, under such conditions, one could make people believe the most fantastic statements one day, and trust that if the next day they were given irrefutable proof of their falsehood, they would take refuge in cynicism; instead of deserting the leaders who had lied to them, they would protest that they had known all along that the statement was a lie and would admire the leaders for their superior tactical cleverness.⁴⁸

Mass leaders persuade their followers that theirs is the correct path to take in defining and meeting a society's problems. Arendt realizes that manipulation of facts is problematic. She writes,

The historian knows how vulnerable is the whole texture of facts in which we spend our daily lives; it is always in danger of being perforated by single lies or torn to shreds by the organized lying of groups, nations, or classes, or denied and distorted, often carefully covered up by reams of falsehoods or simply allowed to fall into oblivion.⁴⁹

Propaganda, whether by means of controlled mass media or more informal social media, conveys the point of view of the mass' leader—true or not. That “propaganda and terror present two sides of the same coin,” argues Arendt, “is only partly true.”⁵⁰ She adds, “more specific...than direct threats and crimes against individuals is the use of indirect, veiled, and menacing hints against all who will not heed its teaching.”⁵¹ Sanctioned groups do not perpetrate such terror, but pass it off as “excesses of the lower ranks,”⁵² often cast as unstable, maladjusted, or mentally ill, they are useful for deflecting attention away from official policy and blaming victims for violating the norm. As a regime gains power it replaces propaganda with indoctrination. A mass movement needs a target. Arendt focuses on National Socialism's victims, the Jews, who were named a superfluous minority, “having lost their power and influence, and were left with nothing but their wealth.”⁵³ Anti-Semitic hatred served as the convenient, racist ruling device in the early days of the Nazi movement. Once it became state policy, hatred expanded into the Final Solution of the Holocaust. Supremacist and anti-emigrant policies held sway over the reactionary populism that formed the new base for national politics. Dewey describes such means as,

...‘idealistic’ factors...contradicted by the cruel persecutions that have taken place, things indicative of a reign of sadism rather than of desire for union with others irrespective of birth and locale.... But history shows that more than once social unity has been promoted by the presence, real or alleged, of some hostile group [through] the effect of powerful and unremitting propaganda. For the intention has been to indicate some of the conditions whose interaction produces the social spectacle.⁵⁴

Eric Hoffer observes that “there is no doubt that the leader cannot create the conditions that make the rise of a movement possible.”⁵⁵ He argues that mass movements would be impossible without the presence of “an outstanding leader.”⁵⁶ In discussing what attributes an “outstanding leader” should have, Hoffer lists,

Exceptional intelligence, noble character and originality seem neither indispensable nor perhaps desirable. The main

requirements seem to be: audacity and a joy in defiance; an iron will; a fanatical conviction that he is in possession of the one and only truth; faith in his destiny and luck; a capacity for passionate hatred; contempt for the present; a cunning estimate of human nature; a delight in symbols (spectacles and ceremonials); unbounded brazenness which finds expression in a disregard of consistency and fairness; a recognition that the innermost craving of a following is for communion and that there can never be too much of it; [and] a capacity for winning and holding the utmost loyalty of a group of able lieutenants.⁵⁷

Mass movements appeal to certain disaffected groups. Hoffer names these as: “(a) the poor, (b) misfits, (c) outcasts, (d) minorities, (e) adolescent youth, (f) the ambitious, (g) those in the grip of vice or obsession, (h) the impotent, (i) the inordinately selfish, (j) the bored, [and] (k) the sinners.”⁵⁸ Of these, he identifies the newly poor as most vulnerable. He says, “It is usually those whose poverty is relatively recent...who throb with the ferment of frustration. The memory of better things is as fire in their veins. They are the disinherited and dispossessed who respond to every rising mass movement.”⁵⁹ Changes in the economy can create this new poor. The loss of manufacturing and industrial jobs, the increase of automation, and the rise of the casual-work/gig-economy model, part-time as opposed to full-time jobs with benefits, all add to this, the rise of passionate hatred. Hoffer argues, “Hatred is the most accessible and comprehensive of all unifying agents. It pulls and whirls the individual away from his own self, makes him oblivious of his weal and future, frees him of jealousies and self-seeking.”⁶⁰ Hatred for immigrants of color, those of Islamic faith, and the poor have augmented anti-Semitism. This phenomenon is not just a U.S. phenomenon, but exists in Europe as well. Madeline Albright, in *Fascism*, describes the anti-immigrant regimes, political parties, and fascist tendencies of European Union governments: what she calls “an important test of where extreme nationalism will lead.”⁶¹

While Dewey, Arendt, and Hoffer view movement toward authoritarian and totalitarian societies from afar, Vaclav Havel theorizes the evolution of totalitarianism from the inside. He describes the power relations of a society whose members must become political to the point of banality, “a post-totalitarian system...totalitarian in a way that is fundamentally different from classical dictatorships, different from totalitarianism as we usually understand it.”⁶² It was Havel’s view that totalitarian dictatorship with what he called “revolutionary excitement, heroism, dedication and boisterous violence,”⁶³ had given way to bureaucracy and an “extremely flexible ideology.”⁶⁴ “Ideology,” he continues, “is always subordinated ultimately to the interests of the structure. Therefore, it has a natural tendency to discourage itself from reality, to create a world of appearances, to become ritual.”⁶⁵ Havel uses the example of the ubiquitous slogans seen everywhere

in the Soviet bloc before 1989 and the requirement that signage's text, such as "Workers of the World Unite," be prominently displayed. These signs and slogans become part of the environment, much like "In God We Trust" being required in many U.S. schools. The Czechs have always been masters of the art of minimal capitulation, doing what is necessary to survive. For Havel what is important is our response to the "dictatorship of the ritual."⁶⁶ We choose either to live a lie, going along with the ritual, or living "within the truth, . . . any means by which a person or a group revolts against manipulation."⁶⁷ He explains,

Between the aims of the post-totalitarian system and the aims of life there is a yawning abyss: while life, in its essence moves toward plurality, diversity, independent self-constitution, and self organization, is short toward the fulfillment of its own freedom, the post-totalitarian system demands conformity, uniformity, and discipline.⁶⁸

Pre-totalitarian political change like that described by Dewey, Arendt, and Hoffer resembles the post-totalitarian environment described by Havel. The focus is on conformity, uniformity, and discipline. To this we should add loyalty, for nothing less is acceptable.

Conclusion

So, we can look at some sources mentioned herein, consider their take on the state's response to power in society and in schools. Paulo Freire describes three options: naïve, critical, or fanatical consciousness.⁶⁹ Hannah Arendt suggests that a state of detached awareness would allow one to analyze adequately life's events with a view to personal action resisting external control.⁷⁰ John Dewey refers to the application of intelligence as opposed to living out of habit.⁷¹ Eric Hoffer's goal appears to be the creation of independent, skeptical, lifelong learners able to detect manipulation and fanaticism. To quote Hoffer,

The central task of education is to implant a will and facility for learning; it should produce not learned but learning people. The truly human society is a learning society, where grandparents, parents, and children are students together. In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.⁷²

Finally, Vaclav Havel suggests that living in the truth, resisting alienation, and regaining personal responsibility allows one to resist the state's dogmatic ideology.⁷³

Power relations are of great importance and educating young people to understand the workings of power relationships is an important aspect of schooling. The historical and sociological developments of thinking on power, the development of critical theory, the concept of class-based

hegemony, and the role of progressivism all contribute to this education. Students need clearer understandings of international relations, economic interdependence, environmental issues, and animal rights. The confluence of progressivism, critical pedagogy, and hegemonic studies and their application have resulted in the development of social justice education and the Ally movement. While social justice is a broad concept, the National Council of Teachers of English version of social justice education seeks to establish equity as “a fundamental tenet of professional practice... [through] systematic and intentional attention to ‘fairness, opportunity, and social good.’”⁷⁴ Development of a social justice-focused curriculum is challenging. NCTE Standard 6⁷⁵ and the National Council for Social Studies Standard 5⁷⁶ both address teacher education. The Southern Poverty Law Center’s *Teaching Tolerance* curriculum provides cross-curricular standards for implementing the socially just domains of “identity, diversity, justice and action.”⁷⁷ Allyship can be just as important, by teaching students to be more aware of social issues and empathetic to those who experience intolerance, oppression, or inequity.

Tamara Winfrey Harris writes that, “Conspiring with marginalized people to beat back bigotry requires five things of would-be allies[:] learning, listening, speaking up, taking action, and being brave.”⁷⁸ Curricula produced by ally.org notes that “members of targeted groups should be able to expect certain things from allies: respect, support, recognition; that they use their power to promote social justice; [and] that they will ‘do their own work [...]and learn more about issues].”⁷⁹ There is no reason that allyship, like social justice, cannot be part of school curricula. Students need a clearer understanding of international relations, economic interdependence, environmental issues, and animal rights. Educational programs that investigate the impact of human activities on the social, political, and physical environment might provide such understanding.⁸⁰

In this essay I began with Bertrand Russell’s take on power, so I would like to end with his concluding remarks on the importance of the task of education, which is,

To give a sense of the value of things other than domination, to help to create wise citizens of a free community, and through the combination of citizenship with liberty in individual creativeness to enable men to give to human life that splendour which some few have shown that it can achieve.⁸¹

Better than that, we cannot do.

Endnotes

- ¹ Bertrand Russell, *Power: A New Social Analysis* (London, UK: W. W. Norton, 1938), <https://epdf.tips/power-a-new-social-analysis.html>
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid., 5.
- ⁴ James Comey, “How Trump Co-opts Leaders Like Bill Barr,” *The New York Times*, May 1, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/01/opinion/william-barr-testimony.html>
- ⁵ David Brooks, “Transcript of Remarks,” *PBS News Hour*, anchor and managing editor Judy Woodruff (August 9, 2019; Washington, DC: Public Broadcasting System), television news program, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/david-brooks-and-jonathan-capehart-on-trumps-mass-shooting-response>
- ⁶ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, original trans. Samuel Moore (London, UK: Global Grey eBooks, 2018), 24, <https://archive.org/details/communist-manifesto/page/n1/mode/2up>
- ⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 1968), 523.
- ⁸ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2014).
- ⁹ Ibid., 103–104.
- ¹⁰ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1947), 215, <https://ia801604.us.archive.org/33/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.276724/2015.276724.Max-Weber.pdf>
- ¹¹ Ibid., 213–214.
- ¹² Ibid., 246.
- ¹³ Marx’s direct quotation from his famous “Eleventh Thesis” translates as, “Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.” Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Eleven Theses on Feuerbach*, trans. W. Lough (Moscow, USSR: Progress Publishers 1969), 13; original publication date 1888. This phrase is also Marx’s epitaph.
- ¹⁴ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*.
- ¹⁵ Max Horkheimer, “Postscript,” *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell and others (New York, NY: Continuum, 1972), 246; Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse, “Philosophie und kritische Theorie,” *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 6 Jahrgang 1937, <http://raumgegenzement.blogspot.de/2012/02/05/zeitschrift-fuer->

- sozialforschung-1932-1941/; Horkheimer's "Postscript" appears as the first section of Marcuse's essay. The original, "...kritischen Theorie... zielt sie nirgends bloss auf Vermehrung des Wissens als solchen ab, sondern auf die Emanzipation des Menschen aus versklavenden Verhältnissen" can also be translated as, "...critical theory... aims never simply to increase knowledge as such, but on the emancipation of people from enslaving circumstances."
- ¹⁶ Herbert Marcuse, "The Concept of Essence," *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (London, UK: Penguin, 1968), 46.
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- ²¹ Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1973), 23.
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- ²³ John Dewey, *Freedom and Culture* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1939), 176.
- ²⁴ John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Chicago, IL: Gateway Books, 1946), 93.
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- ³⁴ John Dewey, “People’s Lobby Bulletin: Unemployed and Underpaid Consumers Should Not Pay Billion Dollar Subsidy to Speculators” *Later Works of John Dewey, 1925–1953*, vol. 9, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 249.
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- ³⁶ Ibid., 17.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 49.
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