RoSE
Research on Steiner Education

Volume 13 Number 1
pp. 49-65

Hosted at www.rosejourn.com

Paolo Freire's "Conscientization"

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ABSTRACT. This article surveys several of the key educational concepts forwarded by Paolo Freire, one of the founders and main proponents of the critical pedagogy movement. Freire's concepts are compared and contrasted with those of Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Waldorf school movement. After a brief survey of Freire's philosophical, psychological, and political propositions, the article explores various key Freirian educational concepts including his three states of consciousness, his advocacy of problem-*posing* over problem-solving educational models, and the importance of dialogue in learning. The article concludes with an exploration of Freire's use of generative themes and coding/decoding strategies, which may be of particular interest to Waldorf educators. The article is not an exploration of Steiner's critiques of Marx, nor is it a Marxist analysis of Waldorf pedagogy. Rather, it proceeds from the author's belief that Freire's overall humanistic outlook, the loving and creative gestures evident in his methods, and his belief in the inviolability of the individual supersede any purely class/identity/group-based, materialistic, or power-relations framing of human consciousness or activity. It is hoped that Freire's methods and language provide a thought-provoking lens through which to contemplate Waldorf education, especially in terms of the ongoing efforts in many schools to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Keywords. Paolo Freire, critical pedagogy, Rudolf Steiner, Waldorf education, conscientization, banking model of education, problem-posing model of education, dialogue in education, generative themes

Zusammenfassung. Dieser Artikel bietet einen Überblick über einige der wichtigsten pädagogischen Konzepte, die von Paolo Freire vorgelegt wurden, einem der Gründer und Hauptvertreter der kritischen Pädagogik. Freires Konzepte werden denen von Rudolf Steiner, dem Begründer der Waldorfschule, gegenübergestellt. Nach einem kurzen Überblick über Freires philosophische, psychologische und politische Thesen untersucht der Artikel verschiedene Schlüsselkonzepte der Freirianischen Bildung, darunter seine drei Bewusstseinszustände, sein Eintreten für das Problemstellen gegenüber problemlösenden Bildungsmodellen und die Bedeutung des Dialogs beim Lernen. Der Artikel schließt mit einer Untersuchung von Freires Verwendung generativer Themen und Codierungs-/Decodierungsstrategien ab, die für Waldorfpädagogen von besonderem Interesse sein könnten. Der Artikel ist weder eine Auseinandersetzung mit Steiners Marx-Kritik noch eine marxistische Analyse der Waldorfpädagogik. Vielmehr geht sie von der Überzeugung des Autors aus, dass Freires humanistische Gesamtanschauung, die liebevollen und kreativen Gesten seiner Methoden und sein Glaube an die Unantastbarkeit des Individuums alle reinen Klassen-/Identitäts-/Gruppen-, Material- oder Machtverhältnisse des menschlichen Bewusstseins oder Aktivität ersetzen. Wir hoffen, dass Freires Methoden und Sprache Nachdenken der Waldorfpädagogik anregen, insbesondere im Hinblick auf die laufenden Bemühungen in vielen Schulen, Vielfalt, Gerechtigkeit und Inklusion zu fördern.

Stichworte. Paolo Freire, kritische Pädagogik, Rudolf Steiner, Waldorfpädagogik, Bewusstsein-Schaffung, kritisches Bewusstsein, Bankmodell der Erziehung, problemorientiertes Modell der Erziehung, Dialog in der Erziehung, generative Themen

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> "The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves."
>
> ___ Paulo Freire

> "Apart from inquiry, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other."
>
> ___ Paulo Freire

> "When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist."
>
> ___ Archbishop Hélder Câmera

Internationally renowned and revered Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire is best known as one of the main pioneers and proponents of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy seeks to awaken and expand the consciousness of poor and oppressed peoples around the world. Freire (2010) termed this consciousness-raising process *conscientização* in his native Portuguese. *Conscientização*, translated as "conscientization" in English, is the process of moving from naive or passively received understandings of self, others, and the world to more critical and active understandings, of moving from partialized or focalized views of reality to a more total and contextual view of reality. Although following in the tradition of neo-Marxist critical theory, Freire's critical pedagogy and the process of conscientization are not, as some critics may believe, a standardized Marxist curriculum, "politically correct" program of studies, or an exclusively class- or identity-based theoretical framing; critical pedagogy is rather a consciousness-raising methodology. Critical pedagogy is not a prescribed set of beliefs or interpretive lenses; it is rather a philosophy of education that seeks to provide the conditions for individuals to "awaken" in their thinking, and – as Freire (2010), Rudolf Steiner (2011a), and others have understood – to be awake in our thinking is to create the possibility for true freedom. Paulo Freire's conscientization concerns the process of *becoming* (Lambert, 2015), and, as such, it offers a colorful and multi-paned window through which to explore Waldorf education.

This article is not an exploration of Steiner's critiques of Marx, nor is it a Marxist analysis of Waldorf pedagogy. While Freire did interpret human relations, including education, through a Marxist lens, this article proceeds from the author's belief that Freire's overall humanistic outlook, the loving gesture evident in his methods, and his belief in the inviolability of the individual supersede any purely class/identity/group-based, materialistic, or power-relations framing of human consciousness or activity. Freire's methods and language are a thought-provoking lens through which to contemplate Waldorf education, especially in terms of the ongoing efforts in many schools to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion. After a brief overview of some of the propositions underlying Frieire's critical pedagogy and the process of conscientization, the article explores several aspects of Freire's pedagogy that I think are relevant and correlative to Waldorf education. These include Freire's descriptions of three states of consciousness, his advocacy of problem-*posing* over problem-solving educational models, and the critical importance of dialogue in learning. The article concludes with an exploration of Freire's use of generative themes and coding/decoding strategies, which I think may be of particular interest to Waldorf educators.

Freire's Psychological, Philosophical, and Political Propositions

The basic notion, emotion, or motion propelling both Freire's and Steiner's educational approaches is – love. Love senses the singularity and potential of each human being. The gesture of love is to humanize, while the gesture of love's opposite is to dehumanize. With regard to education, love seeks to create the conditions under which human singularity and potential may "unfold," as the gardener creates the conditions under which the flower may unfold. It will hopefully become clear by the end of the article that "creating conditions" involves a very thoughtful, active, structured approach, the opposite of a laissez faire permissiveness that allows children to simply "express themselves." Because human beings unfold, love reveres and privileges freedom. Freire (2010) wrote that love seeks to create the conditions for "acts of freedom" (p. 90), and Steiner (1997) described Waldorf education again and again as an education in service of freedom.

The philosophical or, we might say, spiritual proposition necessitating the expansion of consciousness per se is Freire's belief that humans are unique in our ability to transform ourselves and our world through *conscious activity.* The conscious transformation of self and world in Freire's belief system and as described in his major work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2010), is not simply a unique feature of humanity, but our very reason for being. We are fully human only to the extent that we consciously create, transform, or act, which in a Freirean sense does not consist solely in action (in this sense, animals create), but in conscious action, reflective action, or *praxis*. In his major philosophical work *The Philosophy of Freedom*, Steiner (2011a) wrote that truly free and uniquely individual human activity proceeds from a fully awakened consciousness, a consciousness that recognizes both natural impulses (e.g., instincts, biological imperatives) and cultural dictates (e.g., societal mores, religious doctrines). It follows that freedom, which for Freire consisted in the right of every human to "unfold" and become more human, is truly possible only to the extent that we are conscious of our own agency, of our own unfolding qualities. Freedom is therefore not only a material condition (e.g., a political or legal right), but a state of mind or soul. For example, in the Latin American adult literacy programs Freire pioneered, he discovered his farm-worker students were largely unable to differentiate between immutable natural laws, such as the rising and setting of the sun, and mutable culture, such as the economic, political, and cultural organization of 1950s and 60s Brazil and Chili. Freire's educational efforts centered on helping his students not only learn to read, but develop a more critical consciousness, which in part entailed the ability to better understand which aspects of reality were alterable or transformable through conscious human agency and activity. Fast-forwarding 50 years to the present day, American high school and college math teachers working in the milieu of critical mathematics pedagogy find that many students, particularly their poorer and more marginalized students, believe math has no possible relevance to their lives or to the improvement of their material conditions. Modern, critical math education seeks to help students apply mathematics to their actual, lived situations, to utilize math as an act of expression and freedom.

The political or historical proposition necessitating conscientization particularly (but not exclusively) for the poor and oppressed is the dehumanizing nature of modern economic, political, and cultural life, which extraordinarily affects the most subjugated among us. Modern economic, political, and cultural models alienate all humans, largely through dehumanizing efforts to flatten or diminish human consciousness and acts of freedom, but they are particularly devastating to the poor and oppressed (Ordóñez, 1981). Freire's critical pedagogy was not alone in the 1960s in its efforts to address poverty and its systemic roots. Think of Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty," MLK's change in emphasis in the late 1960s from race to poverty and worker's rights, and, in Freire's own backyard, the Catholic liberation theology movement, led in part by Brazilian Archbishop Hélder Câmera. Both Freire and Steiner recognized and sought to countervail the dehumanizing gesture of modern society and its negative material effects through their own efforts to educate the working poor, Freire through his adult literacy programs,[1] and Steiner through his efforts to educate German factory workers and their children in the second and third decades of the 20th century.[2] Even

1. In 1946, Paolo Freire directed and oversaw literacy programs for a state department of education in his native Brazil. He was appointed director of the University of Recife's extension department in 1961, which gave Freire the opportunity for the first large-scale application of his literacy programs. In 1964, after a military coup put an end to Freire's efforts to combat illiteracy in Brazil, he further developed his literacy programs working with agricultural workers in Chili (Freire, 1974).

2. In 1919, the director of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart, Germany asked Rudolf Steiner to offer lectures to the factory's workers. Steiner's lectures on the organization of society emphasized human interdependence as well as the need for

though Steiner did engage in efforts to re-envision and reorganize society – namely, through his advocacy of a Threefold Social Order[3] – he understood that efforts to overcome alienation and dehumanization could never simply involve structural change, but must seek to awaken and expand human consciousness (Usher, n.d.). That Freire understood this too is the very reason for this article. His conscientization process is testament to his belief in the inviolability of the human being and the potential of each individual. Freire (1974) wrote, "The answer does not lie in rejection of the machine, but rather in the humanization of man" (p. 31).

Three States of Consciousness – Magical, Naive, and Critical

Freire (1974) described three states of consciousness, three different modes or "styles" of thinking he encountered in the adult population of his native Brazil and South America. Interpreted through the lens of developmental psychology, Freire's three states of adult consciousness – magical, naive, and critical – are consistent with Steiner's (1996) willing, feeling, and thinking stages and Piaget's (1950) preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational stages of consciousness in childhood, which roughly correspond to ages two-six, seven-adolescence, and adolescence and beyond. For the sake of clarity, I'll continue to use Freire's term "naive," but I'll couple it with the less judgmental and more descriptive term "narrative." The term "narrative" captures the more positive elements of Freire's second, naive stage of consciousness, which, as we will see, involves understanding the world through stories. Freire's stages further align with Wilber's (2000) preconventional, conventional, and postconventional stages of consciousness, which index the developmental stages of consciousness identified by many different psychological schools of thought and religious traditions into three archetypal levels. And, as we'll explore below in an investigation of dialogue, Freire's stages align with three evolutionary stages of human cognition or consciousness – mimetic, mythic, and theoretic (Donald, 1991). In very simple terms, the three stages in all the classification systems mentioned above refer to: (1) sensori-motor, experiential, body-based thinking, (2) narrative, artistic, feeling-based thinking, and (3) abstract, theoretical, thought-based thinking.

Freire (2010) was particularly interested in what he termed the "transitivity" of each state of consciousness, and he described magical, naive/narrative, and critical states of consciousness as semi-intransitive, naive transitive, and critical transitive respectively. The transitivity of each stage indicates the extent to which an individual's consciousness is "permeable" to mutable and changeable causal factors such as culture or history (Freire, 1974, p. 13). Of course anyone not raised by wolves, adult or child, is subject to culture. However, the extent to which an individual is *consciously* aware of culture's influence, as opposed to that of some fixed, natural order, indicates her transitivity. An individual exhibiting a semi-*in*transitive state of consciousness, for instance, has difficulty discerning between which aspects of her life are governed by Mother Nature's laws and which are governed by human-created culture or human-authored history. Put another way, a semi-intransitive consciousness is largely unable to discern which aspects of life are changeable or transformable through conscious human activity – their own or that of others. Because it struggles to apprehend true causality, the semi-intransitive consciousness falls prey to magical explanations. Again, unless they were raised by wolves, it would be hard to imagine complete intransitivity in any individual, hence Freire's use of the term *semi*-intransitivity. Semi-intransitivity describes the state of consciousness Freire (1974) initially found in many South American agricultural workers.

Naive transitivity describes the state of consciousness Freire found dominating in urban centers. A naive or narrative transitive consciousness is "transitive" in the sense that it is permeable to cultural factors; it

individual freedom, which Steiner integrated and brought into balance through his ideas of a Threefold Social Order (see below). The lectures were so well received, the workers asked Steiner to develop an education for their own children, and the result was the first Waldorf school, originally a school for the children of the factory's workers (Davey, n.d.; Sloan, 2015).

3. The Threefold Social Order is a form of social organization developed by Rudof Steiner between the years 1917 to 1922. It recognizes three spheres of human activity and posits that each sphere has its own, unique domain of activities as well as its own governing principles. It further declares that each sphere should properly enjoy autonomy and independence from the other spheres. The three spheres of activity include: the *economic*, which Steiner said should be characterized by a spirit of brother and sisterhood; the *political* (AKA the rights or legal sphere), which should be organized around a spirit of fairness and justice; and the *cultural*, which should be organized around the spirit of freedom or liberty (Usher, n.d.).

recognizes the difference between immutable physical laws and mutable culture. However, naive transitivity is "naive" because it is trapped in traditional, conventional, or prescribed cultural and historical – we might say, mythic – explanations, i.e., stories. Whereas semi-intransitivity is given to magical explanations, naive/narrative transitivity is given to conventional, orthodox explanations. Conventional stories are not necessarily false or maladaptive, but they may be. And they may encompass not only mythic or religious, but scientific explanations. For example, "trickle down" economics is a compelling and widely accepted "story" that bears only a little resemblance to economic realities.

Critical transitivity, on the other hand, is a state of consciousness Freire (1974) did not find predominating in any one population. A critical consciousness, or what Freire (2010) alternatively termed "criticality," does not indicate the wholesale abandonment of religious or other conventional explanations, but the ability to make them the object of thinking, to be both "in" and "outside of" them at the same time. Neither does critical thinking necessarily forsake intuitive and other feeling-based modes of thinking. A critical consciousness is characterized by the individual's ability to consciously locate physical laws or biological necessities as well as cultural or historical dictums and "rise" above them, i.e., make them the object of a fully individualized consciousness. This is in part the fully awakened consciousness alluded to above and described by Steiner (2011a) in *The Philosophy of Freedom*.

Freire associated each of his three stages of consciousness with a different mode of reasoning. Because individuals exhibiting a magical or semi-intransitive state of consciousness struggle to identify true causality, they are predominantly illogical in their thinking (Freire, 2010). Individuals exhibiting a naive/narrative transitive state of consciousness are largely analogical in their thinking. In a Piagetian (1950) concrete-operational sense, the naive/narrative consciousness is trapped in given analogs, concrete examples, or explanations. Critical transitivity indicates the employment of logic, the ability to abstract, theorize, and hypothesize, the ability to think "outside of" or "above" concrete examples, the ability to think about … thinking. Freire (1974) offered the following comparison of naive and critical states of consciousness:

> Naive transitivity ... is characterized by an over-simplification of problems; by a nostalgia for the past; by underestimation of the common man; by a strong tendency to gregariousness; by a lack of interest in investigation, accompanied by an accentuated taste for fanciful explanations; by fragility of arguments; by a strongly emotional style; by the practice of polemics rather than dialogue; by magical explanations. [Although magical explanations dominate in the earlier, semi-intransitive consciousness, they persist to some extent in the naive consciousness]. (p. 14)

> The critically transitive consciousness is characterized by depth in the interpretation of problems; by the substitution of causal principles for magical explanations; by the testing of one's "findings" and by openness to revision; by the attempt to avoid distortion when perceiving problems and to avoid preconceived notions when analyzing them; by refusing to transfer responsibility; by rejecting passive positions; by soundness of argumentation; by the practice of dialogue rather than polemics; by receptivity to the new for reasons beyond mere novelty and by the good sense not to reject the old just because it is old – by accepting what is valid in both old and new. (p. 14)

In one sense, Freire aptly captured the differences between the natural, developmentally appropriate, naive/narrative thinking of a typical nine- or 12-year-old, and the type of critical thinking we aspire to as adults and imagine for that same nine- or 12-year-old twenty or thirty years in their future. In another sense, writing in 1967 – with seeming clairvoyant access to present-day American TV, radio, and internet – Freire encapsulated the general state of economic, political, and cultural discourse in 21st-century America.

In terms of Steiner's (1996) "thinking" and Piaget's (1950) "formal operational" stages of child development, we may recognize in Freire's (1974) descriptions of critical consciousness a level of criticality unattainable in childhood. We might say that what Freire described above is a "fully-realized" critical consciousness. In other words, if we imagine that the attainment of a critical consciousness has multiple stages or levels, the description given above would represent a fairly mature stage. Alternatively, in its attempts to avoid "distortion," preconceived notions, and passivity, we might say that Freire described, in part, a "super" critical consciousness or fourth stage of consciousness. Nonetheless, the achievement of the level of criticality described above is the ultimate goal of Freire's critical pedagogy, the focus of which is

not any academic content or political program per se, but the act of thinking itself. For Steiner (1994) and others, the achievement of criticality indicates an important but preliminary stage in the future development of even higher levels of consciousness.

One of the longstanding challenges of Freire's pedagogy has been translating the developmentally-conscious methods he developed working with adults to children, and I would argue that part of this challenge is the resistance of traditional educational approaches to truly developmental understandings of human consciousness and activity. Traditional pedagogies understand that humans develop, but they do not understand *how*; specifically, they do not understand the transformational process that fuels learning and development. *I* do not claim to understand the transformational process, except to say that it is a uniquely individual, dynamic, constructive, mysterious process. In terms of math, I don't know if transformation can be modeled geometrically, exponentially, or chaotically, but it is most definitely not linear. Steiner (2003) often referred to the transformational process as "imponderable." To be more precise, traditional educational models fail to understand the constructive or "sculptural" nature of transformation and, as such, they hesitate to submit material to learners that is not pre-finished, i.e., material begging to be transformed by the learners themselves. Freire and Steiner understood that a developmental, transformational, or sculptural education does not consist in the act of handing students pre-formed sculptures, but lumps of raw clay. Several of Freire's "transformational" teaching and learning methods are explored below, including dialogue and the use of generative themes.

Although the focus of this article is the development of more "awake," self-reflective, or critical levels of consciousness, it is perhaps important to pause and acknowledge what Steiner understood and Freire did not, or, at least, acknowledge in his writings. Steiner (2003) understood that the process of gaining new levels of consciousness and new cognitive capabilities often entails the loss of former capabilities, and, as such, the process may be bittersweet, if not detrimental. For instance, a magical consciousness is often accompanied by an overwhelming sense of wonder and "oneness" with the natural world. The oneness sensed, felt, experienced by the magical consciousness is not illusory; it is real! A naive consciousness, for example, is heuristic, practical, and concerned with actual, lived experience – it searches for meaning. Hopefully we continue to sense our interconnectedness with the cosmos and search for personal meaning as we progress into more critical states of consciousness, but this is not automatically the case. Ideally, for instance, the ability to think abstractly, logically, rationally, does not involve "setting aside" a sense of oneness or meaning; ideally rationality unfolds "out of" a sense of interconnectedness and meaningfulness. Ideally rationality is an "appendage" to wonder and our lived experiences, not the other way around. Understanding the world magically/experientially or naively/analogically is not in itself a problem. Magical and naive ways of knowing provide the infrastructure for understanding the world in other, more critical ways. The problem, especially for the poor and oppressed, is falling prey to the magical or naive explanations of others.

Not only did Steiner acknowledge the possible loss of former capabilities, again, unlike Freire, he was able to recognize many of the shortcomings and challenges of a modern, critical, techno-rational consciousness (Sloan, 1996), which often insists upon the obliteration of, for instance, feelings of interconnectedness and the search for meaning. In large part, Waldorf Education's holistic and developmental approach to learning is intended to be both transformational *and* incorporative. For instance, with regard to the development of logic, it is important to acknowledge that Waldorf schools seek to create the conditions under which logic may unfold without becoming "cold," in ways that allow thinking to become increasingly critical while retaining the sense of wonder, connection, and meaning – that is to say, warmth – so fundamental in previous stages. Although Freire doesn't explicitly acknowledge the incorporation of former stages of consciousness in new stages, he does this implicitly through his emphasis on *perception* and his deemphasis of *preconception*, and, as we'll explore in subsequent sections, through his understanding of the active, constructive, sculptural nature of learning. Some of the strategies Waldorf education employs to incorporate former stages of consciousness and retain warmth are also explored below in the section on dialogue.

Problem-*Posing* vs. Problem-Solving Models of Education

Freire followed in a long line of educational thinkers who properly understood that the purpose of education is to teach individuals not *what* to think, but *how* to think. We might for the purposes of this distinction differentiate training from education. The term "training" implies transferring an existing body of knowledge or skill set from institution to individual, or from one individual to another. Expanding on the gardening metaphor (i.e., the gardener creates the conditions under which the flower may unfold), the term "train" is more applicable to gardening techniques such as bonsai, in which the tree is "trained" or shaped by the gardener. The term "education," from the Latin *educere*, on the contrary, means to "bring out" or develop something latent or potential in the individual. The role of the teacher-gardener, then, is to "create the proper conditions," and the proper educational conditions are those that stimulate unfolding or encourage "bringing out." As alluded to above, bringing out does not mean getting out of the way. Philosophers, educators, religious leaders, and great thinkers have long understood that (1) a critical objective of education is the expansion of human consciousness, and that (2) consciousness expands through an internal, awakening, developmental, transformational, unfolding process that is stimulated from the outside. Socrates: "Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel." William Butler Yeats: "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." Rudolf Steiner: "[Thinking] powers, deep within human nature, cannot be developed by institutions, but only through what one being calls forth in perfect freedom from another being." John Dewey: "[T]he quality of mental process, not the production of correct answers, is the measure of educative growth." And Paulo Freire: "What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves."

In Socrates' metaphor, the vessel (i.e., the learner) is a noun, a thing, an object into which other objects (e.g., concepts, ideas, facts, knowledge, data) may be placed. The flame represents a verb, a dynamic fire burning within the learner that actively and continuously creates, constructs, transforms, develops, etc. Freire (2010) contrasted what he called a "banking" model of education with a problem-posing model. In the banking model, the student vessel is a bank, and society – through its teacher avatars – is a depositor who makes deposits and withdrawals. By contrast and following in the footsteps of John Dewey (1997), Freire's pedagogical version of Socrates' "kindling a flame" was posing problems. Problem-posing, or what Freire (1974) also termed "problematizing," is not to be confused with the problem-*solving* approach found in many traditional forms of education. Problem-solving approaches involve bestowing students with an array of ready-made solutions (read: pre-formed sculptures) conceived by experts, scientists, historians, professional artists, etc., and delivered by core curricula, standards, and textbooks. Conversely, problematizing involves presenting students with problematic, "puzzly," unfinished source material (read: lumps of raw clay). The process of problematizing does not preclude holistic methods of teaching and learning such as artistic, experiential, or social/collaborative approaches; it does not throw developmental considerations out the window and demand overly mature or developmentally inappropriate themes; nor does it require intellectual or abstract analyses. Anticipating the exploration of generative themes and coding/decoding strategies below, the fairy tale told to Waldorf first-graders, for instance, is a problem to be considered, chewed on, mulled over by students and teachers alike. *What is the solution? What is the answer?* The answer is meaning, engagement, struggle, wonder, creativity, dialogue, imponderable other stuff, transformation, and eventually, as consciousness awakens, *intentionality*. Freire (2010) wrote:

> "Problem-*posing*" education, responding to the essence of consciousness – *intentionality* – rejects communiqués and embodies communication. It epitomizes the special characteristic of consciousness: being *conscious* of, not only as intent on objects but as turned in upon itself… consciousness as consciousness *of* consciousness. (p. 79)

Intentionality is conscious/reflective action, or what Freire (2010) and other critical theorists called *praxis*. It is not thinking. It is not doing. It is thinkingdoing. And problematizing is a pedagogy or teaching methodology that creates the conditions for thinkingdoing.

Many traditional models of education *do* acknowledge that an important task of education is teaching students *how* to think, and we see this evidenced in the centrality of the language of "higher order thinking skills" and the use of terms such as "evaluate" in core curricula and standards. An example of such language is

this from the National Science Teaching Association's (2014) high school standard for making an argument based on evidence: "Evaluate the evidence behind currently accepted explanations or solutions to determine the merits of arguments." Learning to think is a central and stated goal of most schools, academic programs, and disciplines. What is *not* central, as alluded to above, is a developmental understanding of how, exactly, thinking is developed or where it comes from. Many traditional forms of education *do* recognize that learning is a constructive, sculptural act and that students must be given "raw clay." What they don't always understand (or choose to ignore) is the difference between concrete and abstract forms of "clay." In the standard provided above, the clay is highly abstract. The standard asks 14- and 15-year-olds not only to perceive multiple systems of thought, but generalize (i.e., further abstract) between those various systems, an ability which, according to many developmental psychologists including Steiner himself, emerges only slowly starting in the late teens and early twenties. If, in our analogy, we imagine giving the students "bread" instead of clay, the "nutrition" in the standard provided above is simply indigestible to most high school students. In simple terms, what many traditional educational models struggle to understand vis-á-vis Socrates' flame is not the process of combustion itself, but exactly what substances are combustible and to whom.

In Steiner's (1996) metaphorical and metabolic language, every *thing* we as educators submit to students – be it speech, text, narrative, picture, image, object, artifact, movement – every *thing* must contain within it a dynamic, living, we might say, combustibility or digestibility; everything must kindle the flame. Everything must be combustible/digestible, and, as such, re-absorbable and transformational. Each act of cognition, thinking, or learning in a truly educational sense is an act of combustion. Digestion involves breaking down substances through combustion – its mental, cognitive, or thinking corollary is *analysis*. Reabsorption involves retaining nutrients and eliminating waste – its corollary is *evaluation*, the assignment of value, the retention of what is meaningful and useful and the elimination of everything else. And transformation involves the release of energy or the building up of blood, bone, or tissue – its corollary is *synthesis*, the application of what is useful, the creation of something uniquely meaningful and individual. Of course, whether transformational in a metabolic/body-building or mental/consciousness-raising sense, the whole process is largely unconscious and imponderable. Steiner (1996) believed that giving students pre-formed concepts or solutions, AKA non-combustible, non-digestible material, is tantamount to feeding them stones. *When our students ask for bread, who among us would give them stones? When they ask for clay, who would give them a pre-formed sculpture?* In Freire's critical pedagogy, one of the practices or methods by which teachers ensure they are giving their students bread and not stones, clay and not sculpture, is dialogue.

Dialogue

A problem-posing or problematizing model of education is inherently dialogical. Students and teachers stand together in dialogue, side by side, facing problems, stories, objects, the world, the future, together (Freire, 1992). Underlying dialogue, propelling dialogue, insisting upon dialogue, is a more elemental notion/emotion/motion wanting to express itself – love. Dialogue is an expression of love, as anti-dialogue is the opposite of love (Freire, 2010). I mentioned above that one of the main challenges of Freire's pedagogy has been translating the methods he developed while working with adults to children. Exploring dialogue with children – even putting the words 'dialogue' and 'children' together in the same sentence – may be experienced by some (Waldorf teachers?) as tantamount to playing with fire. We perhaps sense that there is something beautiful, good, or true to be explored through dialogue with pre-adolescent children, if only we kindle it, but in the process we risk burning down the house. Specifically, we risk unleashing developmentally inappropriate dialogue, or preferencing verbal, abstract, or intellectual forms of dialogue over non-verbal forms. On the contrary, true dialogue does not allow for speaking above, around, or beyond another, nor does it insist upon only verbal forms of communication or intellectual analyses. Dialogue may just as easily consist in movement, art, or shared experience as in conversation. In one sense, "dialogue" represents an attitude, gesture, or "flavor."

The centerpiece of Freire's dialogical method with adults was the co-creation of generative themes – topics, motifs, challenges, problems, etc – that provided the source material for dialogue (Freire, 1974).

These generative themes (explored further in the next section) necessarily must stand at the cusp of student consciousness. For an adult displaying, for instance, a magical or semi-intransitive consciousness – i.e., an adult who has difficulty differentiating between Mother Nature's laws and culture's dictates – the idea of culture itself is a major generative theme. Culture then necessarily becomes a fundamental topic of dialogue between teachers and students. I would argue that the same is true for children. The dialogical method is developmentally appropriate, generative, imperative for themes that stand at the leading edge of the child's consciousness. For instance, a school-aged child exhibiting Steiner's (1996) "feeling" stage of consciousness, Piaget's (1950) concrete operational stage, or Freire's (1964) naive/narrative stage, tends to relate to others and make sense of relationships through a self-interested, one-to-one, one might say, arithmetic, framing. Consequently, possible topics for dialogue with nine-year-olds might be some slightly more geometric themes such as mutuality, respect, or trustworthiness. Conversely, dialogue seems developmentally inappropriate, possibly even damaging, for topics and themes beyond the students' consciousness. Obviously, for a magical-thinking adult, specific economic, political, and cultural generative themes are out of bounds for dialogue until such time as the thinker can locate these topics outside of some natural, fixed, immutable order. Themes *not* at the cusp of the school-age child's consciousness and therefore not possible topics for dialogue (at least the type of pedagogical dialogue being considered here) would be those that call forth independent judgment or psychological independence. Possible topics for dialogue with a nine-year-old therefore would *not* be – maintaining a bedtime that ensures the proper amount of sleep, eating healthy food, or needing to be supervised when surfing the internet.

In addition to love, which is the underlying or overarching gesture that properly binds us human to self, human to human, and human to world, is our uniquely human need for praxis, our need to create, to act consciously or reflectively, to be intentional, to thinkdo. True dialogue is an example of thinkingdoing. Lectures, communiqués, instructions, all have their place, but they do not represent dialogue. True dialogue involves thinking *and* doing. In fact, dialogue provides more than just an opportunity for socializing or communicating information, wants, or needs; it is a methodology for knowing and learning (Freire, 1996). For example, just as the scientific method is one of the ways through which we may understand ourselves, others, and the world, so the dialogic method is yet another way in which we may know and learn. True dialogue is not simply an exchange or transfer of extant knowledge or information, a deposit as one might make in a banking model of education. True dialogue is generative; it creates something new, something beyond what any one participant contributes to the dialogue. In addition to thinking – to the extent that it addresses reality and discusses generative themes – true dialogue *acts*. Freire (2010) wrote, "to speak a true word is to transform the world" (p. 87). A word is true to the extent that it truly emanates or "unfolds" from the individuality and is spoken in response to the individual's own, unique, lived experience; a word transforms to the extent that it names the world, and in so naming expands the consciousness of both speaker and listeners.

Dialogue is not ultimately or only a method for learning content, or for solving shared problems, but a pathway for transformation, for initiation, we might say, into higher levels of consciousness. The ultimate purpose of dialogue, as Freire (2010) understood in his literacy programs for Latin American farm workers, was not simply to teach adults to read, but to transform, awaken, and expand human consciousness. Steiner (1985) also understood that dialogue is one of the main pathways to the development of our thinking and the expansion of our consciousness. He understood, as Freire did, that modern human consciousness is no longer fully nurtured or developed through institutions such as schools or churches, but through individual-to-individual connections and communication, through dialogue between free-thinking individuals. As such, true dialogue has, as we might have described it in former historical ages, a ritualistic or sacramental character. In prehistoric periods, humans did not experience their own thinking or their consciousness as separate or apart from nature (Steiner, 1985). In a sense, we could say that in our distant, shared past individuals were in direct dialogue with nature. In our more recent, shared past, individuals recited given religious texts or spoke magical words, and the act of speaking these holy words or incantations was experienced as having transformative power. However, in Freire's and Steiner's 20th century and in our own 21st century, much of humanity *does* experience our thinking as separate from, "outside" of, or apart from, nature. In fact, locating not only natural but cultural causal agents "outside" of our individualized consciousness defines

both Freire's (2010) criticality and Steiner's (1965) *Consciousness Soul*,[4] his name for humanity's current state of consciousness. Consequently, belief in prescribed worldviews or the participation in holy rituals or sacraments no longer holds transformative power for much of humanity (Steiner, 1985; Freire, 2010). In our current age, many experience former magical, mythic, religious, or legendary powers as residing within individuals and in individual powers of thinking. One of the ways this power is unleashed or activated is through dialogue.

A developmental and evolutionary conception of human consciousness begs several important questions. One concerns direction and the question of where human consciousness is headed in the future. Steiner (1965), unlike Freire, *did* point to future stages of consciousness beyond our current, modern, critical, individualistic, materialistic, techno-rational patterns of thinking. Steiner (1965) further identified tensions within current modes of human thinking that seek resolution, current struggles that may become shadows or "ghosts" in future, that may become heightened stages of consciousness. Although Freire did not explicitly point to future levels of consciousness or acknowledge the shortcomings of the critical level of consciousness he aimed to achieve, his conscientization process is nonetheless a "growth" or evolutionary model that presupposes the attainment of even higher levels of consciousness.

The other important question that a developmental conception of human consciousness begs concerns the proper relational or pedagogical gesture, and it asks how humans at different levels of consciousness and utilizing totally different styles of thinking – adults and children, for instance – should properly relate to each other. In part, the second question asks: *how should we engage in dialogue with children?* Asked yet another way, if the expansion of consciousness is nurtured in part through dialogue between free-thinking individuals, how does this translate to working with six-, nine-, even 16-year-olds, whose thinking, by the developmental and evolutionary criteria laid out in this article, is not free? The answer to this question may also shed light on our national economic, political, and cultural discourse, which is defined not by differences in content as much as by different ways of understanding and engaging with reality, by different modes of consciousness. In large part, Waldorf's loving gesture and its holistic and developmental methods point the way: we must engage in dialogue lovingly, holistically, and developmentally. We must converse, in a sense, with freedom itself.

Love must be the underlying or overarching gesture in any dialogue, be it with children, or with other adults. Love acknowledges the singularity and potentiality of each human being. If each human possesses a unique possibility, then love seeks to create the conditions under which that possibility may unfold. Love is not just a feeling; it acts. Love is not simply a sympathetic, congenial, or warm attitude; love, like true education, seeks to "bring out." Love acts from the knowledge that every individual is born into the world with something they need to express and something the world needs. Neither of these "somethings" are actually things (language is so frustrating!), but they nonetheless emerge through the free and conscious action of the individual. Consequently, as Freire (2010) wrote, love must generate "acts of freedom; otherwise, it is not love" (p. 90).

Approaching dialogue holistically – not solely through thinking and action, but also through feeling (e.g., imagination, art, play, creativity – is intimately related to approaching it developmentally. This article has so far attempted to establish that true dialogue consists in praxis, intentionality, or thinkingdoing. What, then, is the role of *feeling* in dialogue? The transformational, constructive, unfolding quality of development was explored a bit above. Educational material cannot reach some inner, transforming, imponderable "space" in the child if it is prefinished, if it is not combustible. Abstract concepts, it so happens, have a prefinished, noncombustible nature. Accordingly, if material is to be potentially transformative – if it is submitted in hopes of stimulating thinking or awakening consciousness – it cannot be abstract! Concepts are vitally important to thinking and the development of a critical consciousness. However, in terms of

4. Owen Barfield wrote that Steiner's Consciousness Soul (AKA Spiritual Soul) refers to "the maximum point [in the evolution of human consciousness] of self-consciousness, the point at which the individual feels himself to be entirely cut off from the surrounding cosmos and is for that reason fully conscious of himself as an individual" (Barfield, 2012; Steiner 2011b). In the context of this article, the Consciousness Soul refers, at its best, to the sphere of human freedom and, at its worst, to a propensity to an overly positivist or materialistic outlook.

human "unfolding" and the transformational process, conceptual understandings must be constructed by the individual if they are to have transformative power. On the contrary, abstract concepts are by definition pre-constructed; they are more pre-formed sculpture than raw clay. The transformational/developmental process is largely imponderable, but it more closely resembles acts of *feeling* than of the intellect. The internal, transformational process is more akin to imagination, play, creativity, and artistry than analysis, evaluation, or synthesis. In turn, the educational materials that most inspire these acts of feeling have a living, complex, puzzly, problematic quality. Educational materials possessing these qualities include stories, art, dialogue, and raw experience. Stories, for instance, represent abstract concepts-in-action, embodiments or living representations of abstract concepts; they are combustible. As such, stories kindle flames. Abstract concepts, on the other hand, fill vessels. Presenting abstract concepts is tantamount to feeding the emerging consciousness non-combustible and indigestible stones.

The twin understandings that (1) consciousness unfolds from within the individual, and that (2) love consists in creating the proper conditions for the unfolding process, *demand* a developmental approach to dialogue. A developmental approach, like a womb or "protective sheath," must be both protective *and* stimulating (Steiner, 1996). As mentioned above, true development cannot emerge through "filling a vessel" with concepts, nor through "kindling the flame" with so much fuel that it smolders. If we want to "kindle the flame," we can never really tell a child, or anyone for that matter, what to think. At best, it doesn't work. At worst, it saddles the learner with conceptual stones they must lug around, stones that act as roadblocks to the unfolding process, roadblocks to the emergence of something new in the individual and unique in the world. Neither is development stimulated by presenting students with situations, problems, or dialectical tensions that fall outside the limits of their consciousness, as bread-like or raw-clay-like as they might be. How, then, can dialogue be both protective and stimulating? How should we properly engage in dialogue with children? Well … critically … consciously … conscientiously.

According to Steiner (2003), we must ask ourselves, "What must I do to enable this child the fullest consciousness of human freedom at maturity?" (p. 102). In other words, dialogue with children must involve an imaginative, almost meditative "conversation" with their future, potential, or ideal selves. Even more impossibly, we must ask ourselves, "What must I do to eliminate as far as possible my personal self, so I can leave those in my care unburdened by my subjective nature?" (Steiner, 2003, p. 103). In plain English, not only do we want to leave children unburdened by conceptual "stones," including culture's, history's, and even science's ideological stones, we want to leave them unburdened by the force of our own subjectivity, i.e., the stones of our own experience, personality, or ego.

The topic of the subjectivity of individuals employing different levels of consciousness relates to authority, which was a huge theme for both Freire and Steiner. Both paid much attention to the role of authority and its relationship to the development of freedom, and, as alluded to above, freedom for both Steiner and Freire was as much a state of consciousness as it was a material condition. Freire (2010) wrote, "Authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it" (p. 80). This has several important meanings. First, from a teacher standpoint, our subjectivity must be expressed in the service of freedom, not in the service of any particular end or personal agenda, even in service of a particular concept or understanding. Authoritarian measures, coercion, trickery, gaslighting, etc., are the antithesis of true authority. Authoritarianism seeks to dehumanize, to flatten or diminish the "unfolding" process, to fill vessels; authority, conversely, seeks to humanize, to "bring out," to kindle flames. Second, from a student standpoint, authority is that which is given by the student in freedom. So, in the case of children whose freedom is "in utero," the teacher must, again, "converse" with the student's future, potential, or ideal self. Our own experiences as teachers, our personality, ego, etc., are "stones" to students to the extent that they involve lecturing, proselytizing, moralizing, scolding, etc., to the extent they are reduced to pre-formed, predigested objects. They are "bread" to students to the extent that they create the conditions for unfolding or bringing out, to the extent that they are unfinished, combustible, or *generative*.

Generative Themes and Coding/Decoding

Generative themes in Freirean critical pedagogy represent the multiplex of ideas, motifs, challenges, etc. that characterize human consciousness and activity in a particular time and/or place (Freire Institute, 2020). Two generative themes introduced in the previous section were culture and mutuality. After themes have been identified, they are codified or "coded" into concrete, symbolic representations such as stories, movements, images, artifacts, etc. (Freire, 1974). Generative themes may apply to individuals, to families, to communities, to nations, to stages in childhood, to generations, to periods of time, to historical epochs, extending outwards in space or through time in concentric circles. 20th- and 21st-century epochal themes already alluded to include alienation and dehumanization. Each generative theme is in dialectical tension with its opposite. For instance, forces of dehumanization stand in contrast and opposition to forces of humanization. This dialectical relationship represents a tension or problem existing within a particular time and space, or within an individual or group continuously struggling for resolution. The resolution of a particular struggle never indicates the end of struggle itself, but the birth of a new and qualitatively different struggle. For instance, with regard to the nine-year-old for whom mutuality is a generative theme, the resolution of his self-interested framing of relationships indicates the birth of a new struggle to maintain his psychological independence within a newly realized mutuality. In the context of education and Socrates' "vessels" and "flames," generative themes kindle flames.

Generative themes and the dialectical tensions they contain are "generative" precisely because they stand at the limits of consciousness, be it the individual's, a particular group's, or a particular historical epoch's. Generative themes are like signposts locating and naming different levels of consciousness upon a continuum of both time and space, and indicating a particular direction. For instance, Freire (1974) located both magical and naive/narrative levels of consciousness existing side by side in space in the rural and urban landscapes of 1960s Latin America. The naive-consciousness "signposts – e.g., nostalgia for the past, fanciful explanations, polemical arguments – both give the naive style its name but also point in a particular direction; in the case of naivité, the arrow on the signpost points towards increased criticality.

Different levels of consciousness, each with their own complex web of generative themes, exist not only in space but across time, both across humanity's historical evolution and across individual lifetimes. Steiner (1996) and others (including Freud and Jung) have posited that humanity's evolution of consciousness across history – that is, the qualitatively different modes of consciousness or "styles" of thinking evident in different historical periods – is recapitulated by each individual in childhood and beyond (Gould, 1977). While modern science has not confirmed the neurological or cognitive mechanisms by which, say, the child progresses through different stages of consciousness, it has confirmed similarities between the progression of developmental stages demonstrated by children and those evidenced in humanity's cognitive evolution (Donald, 1991; Langer, 2004). In the coarsest, most simplistic terms, young children, like our very distant human ancestors, learn predominantly through direct experience and think primarily through physical, mimetic reenactment or practice. School-age children learn predominantly through narrative or artistic representations of experience and think concretely, analogically, imagistically. And adolescents gradually gain the ability to learn directly through the mental manipulation of abstract concepts and think, as Bruner (1986) described, theoretically or paradigmatically. [See Thompson (2009) for a more thorough and fascinating exploration of the evolution of human consciousness and its curricular and pedagogical implications for the development of thinking in childhood and the expansion of human consciousness generally.]

Generative themes stand at the cusp, leading edge, or limits of the learner's consciousness and point in the direction of future levels. As such, generative themes represent the source material – the raw clay – that students actively work to transform and sculpt; they represent the problems posed. From an educational standpoint, generative themes create the conditions for consciousness to unfold or be "brought out"; they kindle flames. Generative themes provide not only the source material for learning content – be it learning to read, learning math, history, science, etc – but for learning how to think. In terms of teaching and learning, the overall process of working with generative themes involves three steps: (1) the identification of the themes themselves by teachers, (2) the "coding" of the themes into stories, movements, images, artifacts,

"raw clay," living material, etc., by teachers, and (3) the active decoding "sculpting," or transformation of themes by students.

In his adult literacy programs, Freire and his teaching associates identified generative themes by conducting field research with farm workers in their native agricultural communities. Research methods included talking circles, interviews, and observations. The educators worked through a repeated process of capturing themes, reflecting them back to the community, and then revising the themes based on community feedback (Freire, 1974). Once the generative themes had been identified, Freire and his teachers coded the themes into stories, images, drawings, artifacts, etc. These codes, or what Freire also termed "situations," constituted the puzzles, problems, tensions, "lumps of raw clay" that were presented to students. Importantly, codes or situations are not explicit representations of the themes themselves, but crystallizations of the themes-in-action, embodiments or living representations of the themes. After the codes or situations were presented to students, the students "decoded" the stories, images, drawings, artifacts, etc., through various forms of dialogue with each other and their teachers. The accompanying drawing (see top of next page) by de Abreu and collected in Freire's (1974) *Education for Critical Consciousness*, represents one of the original "coded situations" Freire and his teaching associates developed as part of a Chilean adult literacy program (p. 56). The generative theme contained within this specific coded image is "culture." Students decoded this image specifically to differentiate between which elements in the drawing represented nature and which represented culture.

If these descriptions of Freire's methods seem overly complex, I sympathize. It all sounds like something out of an ethnographic study or spy novel. I wonder sometimes if it is not the ideas but the language of critical pedagogy that is off-putting to some (and irresistible to others). Literary style notwithstanding, what I have just described as Freire's process of identifying generative themes and of coding and decoding when working with adults is essentially what Waldorf educators do with children every evening in our nightly lesson preparations and every next-day in Waldorf classrooms around the world. The process of coding and then decoding generative themes is akin to the expansion-contraction-expansion process Waldorf teachers employ to plan and execute their daily lessons. The process works something like this: the Waldorf teacher identifies some concept that she wants the students to grapple with, which is essentially a process of expansion or abstraction. Every chosen concept ideally challenges the students developmentally; in other words, the concept not only adds to an existing knowledge base or skill set, but challenges thinking itself. How does the teacher identify this or that concept? She does this both through her study and understanding of the developmental stage and level of consciousness of her students, and from her daily "field research," i.e., through her day-to-day interaction and dialogue with students.

What I've just described vis-á-vis Freire is the first step of a three-step process, that of identifying generative themes.

After the Waldorf teacher has settled on the targeted concept, she then "contracts" or concretizes it into a story, picture, poem, movement, experience, mental image, etc., that embodies, encapsulates, or instantiates the concept. Stories, pictures, poems, movements, experiences, mental images, etc., all constitute living representations of the concept, and as such they are more flame than object, more bread than stone, more verb than noun. In terms of Freire's preparatory process, the teacher has just coded the generative theme, which is the second step in his three-step process. Then the teacher hopefully goes to bed and gets eight hours of sleep. The next day, after a good breakfast and a strong cup of coffee, she presents the students with the story, picture, poem, movement, experience, mental image, whatever she came up with the night before (or in the preceding weeks and months). Then, over the course of the next few days and weeks, students and teachers engage in various experiential, artistic, social, and cognitive activities that work the material, chew on the material, kindle the material, break down and digest the material. Experiential activities might include field trips, building or crafting projects, and various opportunities for application; artistic activities might include drawing, painting, modeling, making music, or putting on skits or plays; social activities might include discussion, small or large group activities, and playing games; and cognitive activities might include sequencing, comparing and contrasting, or converting. And all of this student work represents the third of Freire's three-step process of working with generative themes. It represents both decoding and dialogical processes and, in terms of expansion and contraction, a larger expansion process, in which the student "expands" the concretized example into a more generalized or abstract concept. It also points to inner-realm, transformational, constructive processes, AKA Steiner's (2003) "imponderables." In terms of a developmental or sculptural education, the coded story, image, or movement is the "raw clay," and the various experiential, artistic, social, and thinking activities represent some of the mysterious ways in which the clay is transformed by students.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude this exploration of Freire's critical pedagogy and the process of conscientization by considering the role of "field research" in identifying generative themes and determining how they are coded. Generative themes intersect with all the different aspects of Freirean pedagogy considered in this article: generative themes are the "signposts" locating different stages of consciousness; they comprise – in coded form – the "problems" in a problem-posing model of education; and they provide the topics for various forms of dialogue. Waldorf teachers identify generative themes in part through their study and understanding of the students' level of consciousness, the so-called developmental profile that so informs our work. This developmental profile includes the defining characteristics, developmental milestones, or learning goals of that particular stage in childhood. Teachers also identify generative themes through "field research," which encompasses our day-to-day experiences with students, the content of our dialogues, and our observations.

What may already have been apparent to readers, and what I'm certain is apparent to Waldorf teachers, is that developmental profiles and the day-to-day information we gather from our field research don't always line up. I could provide 1,001 examples of this, but I'll share just one. Recently a kindergartner in our school told another kindergartner that she couldn't play with her anymore because of her brown skin. Race is not a generative theme that fits anyone's ideal developmental profile of a five-year-old. And yet … there it is. For me, the tension between an ideal, developmentally protective yet stimulating unfolding process, and reality's developmentally disinterested (neutral at best, harmful at worst) incursions into that ideal, represents one of the most intriguing "problems" facing Waldorf education. The ideal/real tension has existed since the founding of the first Waldorf school in 1919, and it continues to be an important generative theme – a consciousness-raising conundrum – for Waldorf Education as it moves further into the 21st century. The most compelling, exciting, and illuminating topics currently driving dialogue in Waldorf schools, after all,

are diversity, technology, and the question *"What are these children trying to tell us?!"* all of which epitomize the tension between ideal and real.

Idealistic and "realistic" positions represent the extreme poles of Waldorf practice. On one extreme, teachers seek to externalize the real experiences of students, waiting until adolescence, for instance, to address themes such as race, gender identity, or the real challenges that technology poses to growing up in the 21st century. On the other hand, diversity and social justice initiatives in Waldorf schools may run the risk of trying to replace older forms of orthodoxy or convention with new ones. A more balanced approach might involve trying to overcome the ideal/real dichotomy altogether by attempting to find solutions that both maintain our holistic and developmental ideals *and* address the real, lived experiences of our students, that align developmental profiles with field research. For instance, there must be ways for Waldorf kindergartens to grapple with race in a manner that both addresses the real, lived situations of our students, while at the same time awakening or expanding five-year-old consciousness in a developmentally appropriate, generative manner, in a way that teaches children not *what* to think, but *how* to think.

If you're a teacher, you've probably already imagined ten ways you might address the above-mentioned kindergarten situation. Pause. And now you're up to twelve. Later, your 20 or 30-some ideas will be taken into your prayers, your meditative practice, and your sleep. You might also garden or bake, go for a run, or play banjo. Maybe you will conduct a dialogical experiment (i.e., phone a colleague). You might also think about the situation consciously and critically à la Freire and Steiner and some of the themes explored in this article: love, freedom, the awakening of consciousness, problematizing, the transformational process, thinkingdoing, feeling, etc. By the way, one of the ways our kindergarten teachers have addressed race is by not making it a generative theme at all, but by examining how other generative themes such as goodness and beauty are *coded*. Specifically, kindergarten teachers sometimes code their stories to more explicitly describe the physical characteristics of the characters in the stories they tell. This character has "beautiful, dark brown skin and gleaming, curly hair." That character has "beautiful peach skin and straight, yellow, flaxen hair." Etc. In large part, efforts to align developmental profiles with field research, the ideal with the real, will involve not the generative themes themselves so much as the way those themes are coded or instantiated.

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