

HACER ESCUELA: INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON INVENTING THE PEDAGOGIES OF A GLOBAL SOUTH OTHERWISE¹

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Since its inception close to ten years ago, the Latin American Philosophy of Education Society (LAPES) has sought to share with academics, teachers, and activists canonical education theory from Latin America that has often been obscured or suppressed in education settings dominated by colonial logics. Concomitantly, we have worked tirelessly to carve out the time and space for contemporary scholars and activists from the Global South to invent, often in collective fashion, education theories and practices capable of uncovering and overcoming multiple forms of oppression. To put this another way, one which will become clearer to the reader who makes her way through this special edition of *Lápiz*, by engaging with education theory from across the Americas, and practicing pedagogies often relegated to the margins, we have striven to *hacer escuela*: to invent the spacio-temporalities hospitable to thinking and practicing education otherwise.

In 2016, Samir Haddad, a long-time LAPES collaborator and supporter, reached out to Ariana González Stokas and myself, both LAPES members, asking if we would be interested in participating in a project being coordinated by Penelope Deutscher. The Critical Theory in the Global South project, funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, is an initiative of the International Consortium of Critical Theory Programs, and has as its mission the development of new critical theory curricula integrating intellectual traditions from the Global South.² As part of this project, our aim was to bring together scholars and activists writing from the Global South and on Global South critical theory pedagogies. The main objective of our work was not to research and write on critical theory of the Global South, though inevitably we would have to take up the task of thinking critical theory produced by Global South scholars and activists, but instead, to focus on the ways in which Global South critical theory was being taught, and put into educational praxis, in both the Global South and North. Samir, Ariana, and I settled on a plan to organize two workshops that would bring together Latin American thinkers working on philosophies of education influenced by critical

2 → For more information about the Critical Theory in the Global South project see: "Critical Theory in the Global South," Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, Northwestern University, 12/7/2020, <https://criticaltheory.northwestern.edu/mellon-project/critical-theory-in-the-global-south/>.

theory traditions, with professors and graduate students teaching and studying critical theory in U.S. universities.

Our plan was inspired by the fact that in the last two decades, new innovations in pedagogy have been developing across Latin America, often produced through creatively combining elements of European critical theory with a rethinking of Latin American traditions and Indigenous knowledges. These pedagogies have emerged in contexts as diverse as the introduction of Philosophy for Children programs in the periphery of Rio de Janeiro (inspired in part by theories of Rancière, Deleuze, and Freire), the Zapatistas in Chiapas (reworking anarchist, Marxist, and postcolonial principles through the recuperation of Indigenous knowledges), the Movimento Sem Terra in Brazil (a grassroots movement mobilizing ideas from Marxism, liberation theology, and critical pedagogy), the Mujeres Creando Comunidad collective in Bolivia (an autonomist feminist movement engaged with *el pueblo* and social movements in the struggle against patriarchy, racism, neoliberalism, and other forms of oppression), and a renewed theoretical interest in the philosophy of Simón Rodríguez who, as one of the first modern "popular" educators in Latin America, not only constructed physical school buildings around the world for impoverished and often marginalized populations, but also sought to "*hacer escuela*" by creating the conditions for events of education to happen. Our project asked how, notwithstanding increasing impositions of neoliberal measures, these movements, as well as countless others, have given rise to new understandings of pedagogical relations, of what it means to be a subject of education, and of how educational practice can refigure public space and education temporalities.

Before moving to some brief ruminations inspired by the articles that make up this issue of *Lápiz*, I want to acknowledge two important aspects of our work that might otherwise remain invisible. Not all the workshop presentations that were offered over the course of the last few years are represented here. Nor do we encounter in the pages that follow the voices of workshop audience participants. But undoubtedly, the workshops given by Melissa Rosario ("It's in Our Hands: The Depths of Decolonizing Praxis"), Doris Sommer ("Pre-Texts: Literacy, Innovation, Citizenship"), Frances Negrón-Muntaner ("Che in the Barrio"), Arnaldo

Cruz-Malavé (“The Founding of Latinx Studies and the Pedagogy of the Jesuit Historian Fernando Picó”), Marlène Ramírez-Cancio (“HilariOUCH: Satire as Critical Tool”), Floridalma Boj Lopez and Sandy Grande (“Decolonizing in Unexpected Places: Red Praxis in Teacher Education”), and Rónké A. Òké (“Decentered Disciplines: Thinking Critically about the ‘Work’ We Do”), as well as the numerous contributions to the dialogues by academics, students, activists, K-12 teachers, and the general public, have had an influence on the final drafts of our published pieces.³ The original workshops were presented in three languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese), and this special issue of *Lápiz* mirrors the trilingual aspect of our work, with essays appearing in their original language and translations in the other two languages available online. I would suggest that during the *Hacer Escuela* encounters a process that the French feminist philosopher Michèle Le Doeuff calls “polygenesis” played a role in shaping the essays we encounter here. Following Le Doeuff, we can understand the thoughts expressed in the pages that follow as dynamic, in motion, and in many ways collectively created and constituted of variegated upstream influence and diverse downstream diffusion that converged at our events and that nurtured our authors’ writing. The streams of thought that we encounter here were fed by, and feed into, a great variety of communities of thinkers.⁴

It is just as important to note that both during our workshop encounters, as well as here in our journal issue, there is no singular ideological stream that runs through or dominates discussion and thought. Rather, what we found in our workshops, and what we see throughout the essays that follow, is more akin to what Chela Sandoval calls in her landmark work, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, “differential oppositional consciousness.”⁵ Differential consciousness can be conceived

3 → Boj Lopez and Grande’s article, “Decolonizing in Unexpected Places,” *International Journal of Human Rights Education* 3, no. 1 (2019), <https://repository.usfca.edu/ijhre/vol3/iss1/9>, provides an excellent overview of the presentations of the second workshop, and also develops further the reflections that they presented there.

4 → For more on Le Doeuff’s notion of polygenesis, see: Michèle Le Doeuff, *Hipparchia’s Choice: An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, etc.*, trans. Trista Selous (Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1991), 170-172.

5 → Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

as an always changing tapestry of consciousness constituted by oppositional ideologies that constantly weave between and among each other. The “differential,” in Sandoval’s view, enables movement between and among ideological positionings. And it functions “like the clutch of an automobile, the mechanism that permits the driver to select, engage, and disengage gears in a system for the transmission of power.”⁶ What the reader will encounter here then is not a set of essays all originating from one hegemonic ideology, but rather a series of oppositional modes of consciousness in dialectic relation to one another. As such, they are transformed, Sandoval might say, into a tactical pedagogical weaponry for intervening in shifting currents of power in dispersed educational spaces.

As the reader makes her way through the current issue, she may benefit from keeping in the back of her mind some key conceptual hinges that motivated the work of our project. I begin with one conceptualization of the Global South. Without any pretension to try to determine the geographical contours of the Global South, and resisting the urge to construct some sort of geocultural identity that our panelists and authors would have to conform to, we invited project participants who spoke in multiple ways to Boa de Sousa Santos’ well-known notion of the Global South:

The global South is not a geographical concept, even though the great majority of its populations live in countries of the Southern hemisphere. The South is rather a metaphor for the human suffering caused by capitalism and colonialism on the global level, as well as for the resistance to overcoming or minimising such suffering. It is, therefore, an anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, anti-patriarchal, and anti-imperialist South. It is a South that also exists in the geographic North (Europe and North America), in the form of excluded, silenced and marginalised populations, such as undocumented immigrants,

6 → Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 58.

the unemployed, ethnic or religious minorities, and victims of sexism, homophobia, racism and islamophobia.⁷

The authors you will encounter in the present volume have lived in and through the human suffering caused by capitalism and colonialism, amongst other oppressions, but they have refused to let themselves, or others, and especially their students and activist colleagues, be silenced and marginalized. Their resistance documented here is a pedagogical resistance, and it is partly through their pedagogies that they themselves and countless others have overcome such suffering.

This has been done in part by our authors' ability to incorporate critical theory, another concept worthy of brief comment, into their daily lives as well as into their teaching and learning. Throughout the essays presented here the reader will notice what we might describe as the rhythmic movement of critical theory. They repeat, with difference, theoretical moves, sometimes their own, sometimes others', that reveal negations of human potentiality, negate said negations, and offer alternative paths towards liberation. To put this in different terms with the help of Enrique Dussel, the essays included in this issue of *Lápiz* take up the task of engaging in the negative process of deconstructing what is given, and the positive process of creating of something new.⁸ The rhythmic ebb and flow between these negative and positive processes is potentially formative, giving shape to new thought, new ways of practicing education, and new ways to imagine social relations and the realities we live.

Critical theory thought of this way is inventive. It is a form of rhythmic erring (wandering) and essaying (experimenting) that opens up the possibility for something to come, to arrive. Conceptualized this way, critical theory becomes a way to *hacer escuela*. A formal translation of *hacer escuela* would be, "to make," or "to produce," school. But here, inspired by Walter Kohan's interpretation of Simón Rodríguez's decolonial

7 → Boa de Sousa-Santos, "Epistemologies of the South and the future," *European South* 1 (2016): 18-19, <http://europeansouth.postcolonialitalia.it/>.

8 → Enrique Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation: In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion*, trans. Eduardo Mendieta, Camilo Pérez Bustillo, Yolanda Angulo, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 206.

dictum: "inventamos o erramos,"⁹ and keeping in mind the etymological ancient Greek roots of "school": *scholē* as free time, suspension, and contemplation, a more fitting translation of *hacer escuela* is "to invent school." This is to say that through rhythmic ruptures produced in the process of teaching and learning critical theory, aspects of daily life are suspended temporarily, offering one a chance to contemplate the world we live in, and the world that might be. Inventing school brings into being a moment for the otherwise to come, both inside schools and social movements (see Barbosa on the MST, and Anderson and Crawford on BLM in this volume), but also in prohibitive punitive spaces like prisons (Belausteguigoitia Rius).

The pedagogies discussed in the essays that follow invent time-space in which repressive apparatuses of the state and racial-patriarchal-capital are exposed and negated, albeit on many occasions only temporarily. And they highlight educative experiences in which liberatory anti-capitalist and decolonial social relations that form cross-cultural bonds of resistance and hope (Morales and Yang) are brought into being, and curriculums are born that begin to undo centuries of state-sponsored epistemic white-supremacist violence and suppression (Anderson and Crawford).

Another key concept animating our work was that of "pedagogy." In their truly fascinating book, *Oculto nas palavras: Dicionário etimológica para ensinar e aprender (Hidden in the words: An etymological dictionary for teaching and learning)* Luis A. Castello and Claudia T. Márisco teach us that the word "pedagogue" originates from the Greek "*paidagogos*," which means "one who conducts a child." From this same word derives "pedagogy," which roughly stated means to *conduct* or guide a child's *conduct*.¹⁰ The pedagogue of ancient Greece, often a slave, was considered, more so than the child's master who primarily transmitted objective knowledge, to be the moral and spiritual guide of the child under care. In a different context, albeit one that was

9 → Walter Omar Kohan, *The Inventive Schoolmaster: Simón Rodríguez*, trans. Vicki Jones and Jason Wozniak (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2015).

10 → Luis A. Castello and Claudia T. Márisco, *Oculto nas palavras: Dicionário etimológico para ensinar e aprender*, trans. Ingrid Müller Xavier (Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2005), 67.

pedagogical, the notion of conduct was raised by Michel Foucault in a lecture where he develops a notion of what he calls “counter-conduct.”

For Foucault, counter-conduct is a “form of resistance to power as conducting,”¹¹ and it is not a chaotic practice that seeks to elide any form of direction, objectives, or conduction. Rather, counter-conduct is a material manifestation of oppositional consciousness that resists particular power relations: “We do not wish to obey *these people*. We don’t want *this truth*. We don’t want to be held in *this system* of observation and endless examination that continually judges us, tells us what we are in the care of ourselves.”¹² Put positively, and in interrogative form, counter-conduct refuses one form of conduction in favor of another, one that is individually or collectively determined: “By whom do we consent to be directed or conducted? How do we want to be conducted? Towards what do we want to be led?”¹³ In sum, counter-conducts always contain “an aspect of the pursuit of a different form of conduct: to be led differently, by other men, and towards other objectives than those proposed by the apparent and visible official governmentality of society.”¹⁴

If I had to suggest any prevalent commonality between the pieces presented in the pages that follow, it would be that they all point to pedagogical practices that nurture counter-conducts within the Global South. This is to say that both implicitly and explicitly the practices enunciate and embody resistance and insurgency against imposed rule by (neo)colonial, neoliberal, patriarchal, and racist forces. They reject many of the imposed truths of the Global North, and invent new forms of collective and individual care. And their responses to the counter-conduct questions posed above all imply a clear rejection of being governed and conducted according to hegemonic logics and ethics that lead to forever war, exploitation, and environmental catastrophe, amongst other negations of human life. The pedagogues—and here I count as a pedagogue any individual who guides someone

11 → Michel Foucault, *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, trans. Graham Burchell, (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 195.

12 → Foucault, *Security, territory, population*, 201. Emphasis added.

13 → Foucault, *Security, territory, population*, 197.

14 → Foucault, *Security, territory, population*, 199.

else towards forms of conduct that counter the imposition of oppressive hegemonic norms—who write the essays contained below cultivate educative experiences in which it becomes possible to be led differently, to different ends, collectively decided on.

Such pedagogues, with their pedagogies, like those of the Black Lives Matter Week at School teachers and students (Anderson and Crawford), prison inmates (Belausteguigoitia Rius), participants in the Zapatista inspired *intercambios* (Morales and Yang), rural revolutionary teachers in Brazil (Barbosa), and the *pregontones* (Kohan), all teach us that other educations that inspire other ways of being in, and being with, the world are possible. To practice pedagogies that nurture forms of living that counter centuries of colonial, capitalist, patriarchal and racist exploitation and oppression is to not only negate negations, but also to invent educational possibilities that give shape to ways of being otherwise. They are forever incomplete attempts of experimenting with freedom and solidarity. Perhaps we might suggest, borrowing from Saidiya Hartman’s recent work, that the pedagogies one reads about below are “beautiful experiments in how-to-live,” an example of a social *poiesis* that is “the practice of a social otherwise.”¹⁵ Whether such practice, carried out over extended amounts of time, locally as well as transnationally, has the force to play a role in bringing down centuries’ old systems of domination, or whether all they can ever do is grant us just a moment of essaying, that is to say, a moment of experimentation that gives us a taste of what egalitarian liberation might feel and look like, I’ll leave to the reader to decide. ■

15 → Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward lives, beautiful experiments: Intimate histories of social upheaval* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2019), 227-228.