

REASSESSING SUBJECTIVITY, CRITICALITY, AND INCLUSIVITY: MARCUSE'S CHALLENGE TO ADULT EDUCATION

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For his influence on Habermas alone, Marcuse's work deserves attention by adult educators. If Habermas is a central theoretical reference point for our field, then knowledge of a precursor's ideas that Habermas found so provocative can bring us to a fuller understanding of Habermas's own work. But this is not the chief reason for reading Marcuse. In his own right, Marcuse articulates an analysis of subjectivity, criticality, and inclusivity that has powerful implications for adult education. Although Marcuse did not write as an adult educator or make explicit reference to the field, his concerns frequently intersect with those of adult educators concerned with how adults learn their own liberation.

This article seeks to insert the ideas of Herbert Marcuse, the Frankfurt school critical theorist, into adult educational discourse. As a major philosopher working in the critical theory tradition, Marcuse's influence on adult educational discourse influenced by that tradition has been negligible. When adult education scholars turn to critical theory, they typically draw on Habermas's ideas of communicative action, collapse of the public sphere, decline of civil society, and invasion of the lifeworld (see, e.g., Collins, 1991, 1998; Mezirow, 1981; Newman, 1994, 1999; Welton 1991, 1995, 2001). But crucial though Habermas's work is, it is far from being the whole story of critical theory's relevance for adult education scholarship. In fact, Habermas (1983, 1992, 2001) himself repeatedly acknowledged his affinities with Marcuse and the influence of the latter's thought on his (Habermas's) own ideas. Habermas (1992) declared his "special affinity with the existentialist, i.e. the Marcusean, variant of critical theory" (p. 150), which he believed reaffirms the

Portions of this article were previously presented at the 2001 Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA) conference, *Travelers' Tales: From Adult Education to Lifelong Learning and Beyond*, held at the University of East London, July 3-5, 2001.

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ADULT EDUCATION QUARTERLY, Vol. 52 No. 4, August 2002 265-280
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possibility of reason serving the creation of a humane democracy. Marcuse beckoned to Habermas because Marcuse “made appeals to future alternatives” (Habermas, 1985, p. 67), “spoke a straight, affirmative language, easy to understand” (p. 69), and constantly displayed “one of his most admirable features—not to give into defeatism” (p. 76).

In seeking to make Marcuse more visible, I review three themes (subjectivity, criticality, and inclusivity) addressed at different points in Marcuse’s English-language texts that call into question any automatic adult educational embrace of the inherent desirability of dialogic, collaborative modes of practice in which a diversity of perspectives is elaborated. The four Marcusean texts I emphasize (*The Aesthetic Dimension* [Marcuse, 1978], *One Dimensional Man* [Marcuse, 1964], *An Essay on Liberation* [Marcuse, 1969], and his essay in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* [Marcuse, 1972]) contain analyses that are the most provocative and pertinent for adult educational practice.

I begin my analysis by positioning Marcuse in relation to Marx, stressing his critique of Marxist aesthetics and, in particular, his belief that stylized, formal art—far from being a repressive reflection of bourgeois ideology—could trigger subjective critical impulses, which he called “rebellious subjectivity.” Subjectivity in this analysis does not lead to a misguided preoccupation with self or to a falsely skewed vision of life that leaves one unable to see broader oppressive realities. Rather, subjectivity is rebellious, particularly when it is associated with artistic creation or expression. Marcuse believed that individual artistic experiences could induce a revolutionary estrangement from everyday life, a distancing from normality that nurtured the tendency to political critique. According to this logic, a truly critical adult education would be concerned not just with locating itself within existing social movements but also with creating intense aesthetic experiences that trigger a rupture with present-day reality.

I then turn to two areas of Marcuse’s thought that have relevance for adult education theorizing—criticality and inclusivity—and argue that Marcuse’s analysis of these themes can be extended to challenge prevailing interpretations of adult education as a force for critical thinking and increased diversity. First, in his analysis of criticality, Marcuse argued forcefully that developing a critical perspective on life was best assisted when people removed themselves from the familiarity of daily experience. He regarded critical thinking as grounded first and foremost in abstract thought, not in an immediate turn to the analysis of everyday problems and concerns. In this regard, he is at odds with a tradition in adult education represented by the work of Lindeman, Freire, Horton, and others who have emphasized that the road to criticality always begins with the analysis of specific experiences of adult learners caught in specific situations. Second, in his analysis of inclusivity and the importance of learners engaging with more diverse perspectives, Marcuse’s idea of repressive tolerance can help us realize how an apparently tolerant embrace of a diversity of perspectives can be subtly coopted and controlled so that it ends up legitimizing the very domination and repression it seeks to challenge. The

possibility that opening up the field to many alternative voices can simultaneously be manipulated to marginalize those very voices is one that critical adult educators clearly need to consider.

REBELLIOUS SUBJECTIVITY: MARCUSE'S REASSESSMENT OF MARXIST AESTHETICS

Like all the thinkers in the Frankfurt school, Marcuse drew heavily on Marxist analysis and that of Marx's precursor, Hegel (Marcuse, 1941). But his was a truly critical reappraisal of Marx, whom he regarded as overly optimistic and idealistic. In Marcuse's (1965b) view, "Marx underrated the extent of the conquest of nature and of man, of the technological management of freedom and self-realization" (p. 112). In addition, Marxism had been coopted and distorted by the Soviet Union to justify repression. In Communist societies, "the theory that destroyed all ideology is used for the establishment of a new ideology" entailing "planning for the retention of government above and against the individuals" (Marcuse, 1958, p. xiv). Marxism had become one more tool in the total administration of thought that characterized technologically advanced societies in East and West alike.

Perhaps the most significant contribution Marcuse (1978) made to critical debate on Marxism was his questioning of the predominant orthodoxy of Marxist aesthetics. This orthodoxy, drawing on the idea that the material base of society determined the ideological, cultural, and artistic superstructure, held that "art represents the interests and world outlook of particular social classes" (p. ix). Marcuse rejected such a deterministic equation, arguing that

in contrast to orthodox Marxist aesthetics I see the political potential of art itself, in the aesthetic form as such . . . by virtue of its aesthetic form, art is largely autonomous vis-a-vis the given social relations. In its autonomy art both protests these relations, and at the same time transcends them. (p. ix)

Marcuse (1978) argued in *The Aesthetic Dimension* that the stylized, formal aspects of "high" art could produce an estrangement with reality and that this estrangement was potentially revolutionary. If this is true, then adult educators influenced by critical theory who see adult education as primarily a social movement must reappraise any automatic tendency they might have to dismiss as a form of privileged self-indulgence programs intended to deepen learners' aesthetic sensibilities. The logic of Marcuse's argument is that aesthetic education is a valid and crucial component of critical adult education practice and that a powerful, private, estranging response to a work of art is a transformative moment for adult learners.

In defending individual creativity that produced art containing no explicit political message or intent, Marcuse (1978) broke with those who believed that the content of art should always serve a predetermined revolutionary purpose. He criticized the way that "Marxist aesthetics has shared in the devaluation of subjectivity,

the denigration of romanticism as simply reactionary; the denunciation of 'decadent' art" (p. 6). For him, overtly political art explicitly dedicated to raising adults' consciousness of oppression and igniting the fires of change—agit-prop theater, socialist realism, the theater of the oppressed—was actually less revolutionary than some forms of introspective poetry. This was because "the more immediately political the work of art, the more it reduces the power of estrangement and the radical, transcendent goals of change" (Marcuse, 1978, p. xii). The films of Ken Loach, plays of Dario Fo, or techniques of Augusto Boal (1985) would not be strongly revolutionary art, according to Marcuse, because their direct critiques of current social conditions were framed within an existing discourse of political reform. Although the discourse may be focused on revolutionary change, participating in this discourse did not produce the experience of estrangement, of an altered sense of reality. As Marcuse (1978) acknowledged, the logic of his critique meant that "there may be more subversive potential in the poetry of Baudelaire and Rimbaud than in the didactic plays of Brecht" (p. xiii).

If we take seriously Marcuse's argument that aesthetic immersion has the power to trigger a revolutionary estrangement from everyday existence, then we need to acknowledge the possibility that adult education that concerns itself with liberating the senses through creative, artistic expression is potentially revolutionary. This is a switch for many critical adult educators who may be tempted to regard this kind of adult education as elitist dilettantism. Continuing education courses in recreational art, sculpture, or music are about as far as one can get from critical theory for many on the Left who find it hard to think of these classes as potential crucibles for the development of revolutionary consciousness. But Marcuse's analysis challenges us to reconsider any instinctive condemnation of aesthetic education as a privatized, political luxury far removed from the struggle to create a more humane world. The key point, though, is that for aesthetic adult education to instigate a rupture with everyday experience, its programs would have to focus on fostering the isolation and privacy Marcuse urged as necessary for an authentic immersion in aesthetics. Music or art appreciation would not be taught as a group process in which people were introduced to the canon over a period of several weeks. Instead, the adult learner would receive minimal initiation into the criteria for judging artistic power and maximal immersion in an extended private engagement with art.

This still seems like a politically correct rationalization for the elitist enjoyment of an individualized program of artistic study. To understand its political import, we need to examine Marcuse's contention that individual artistic experience represents rebellious, liberating subjectivity. Again and again, Marcuse (1978) asserted that "the flight into 'inwardness' and the insistence on a private sphere may well serve as bulwarks against a society which administers all dimensions of human existence" (p. 38). Because they instigate a separation from the routinized, unthinking life, "inwardness and subjectivity may well become the inner and outer space for the subversion of experience, for the emergence of another universe" (p. 38). It is the

tasting of a new form of experience that is inherently revolutionary and the power to initiate this is “the critical, negating function of art” (p. 7). Art can induce “the transcendence of immediate reality,” which “shatters the reified objectivity of established social relations and opens a new dimension of experience: rebirth of the rebellious subjectivity” (p. 7).

Although he does not draw explicitly on Marcuse’s theory of aesthetics, Australian adult educator Michael Newman’s (1999) provocative meditation on images of adult learning contains several examples of how immersion in the different language of artistic experience is inherently emancipatory. As an example, he described attending a production of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* with Patrick Stewart (better known as Captain Jean Luc Picard in the television show *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) as Prospero. Newman wrote that “Prospero uses conflict openly to generate learning and promote change” (p. 175) and saw him as

an eccentric and passionate learner and educator, driven by anger at injustice, a belief that the world could be a better place, and a readiness, given the opportunity, to intervene in order to shift people towards his view of the world. (p. 175)

In Marcuse’s (1978) terms, Prospero, like other dramatic protagonists, restructures our view of life “through concentration, exaggeration, emphasis on the essential, reordering of facts” (p. 45) and other dramatic devices. In the hands of Shakespeare and Patrick Stewart, “the aesthetic transformation turns into an indictment—but also into a celebration of that which resists injustice and terror, and of that which can still be saved.”

Another adult educational illustration of the connection between privacy and the development of rebellious subjectivity (and one that directly acknowledges the influence of Marcuse’s thought) is Cale and Huber’s (2001) analysis of two attempts to create in adult learners a critical perspective on dominant, racist ideology. As part of this study, Huber summarized a distance teacher education course focused on understanding diversity and promoting antiracist practice. She recorded the surprising fact that “the assignments students completed that were most thoughtful and critical of their own positions of power were the ones that were completed alone” (Cale & Huber, 2001, p. 15). In these assignments, students “discussed openly the racism and sexism that they experienced in their families, their lack of contact with people of color, and their own passive racism” (p. 15). However, when these same learners formed an informal study group to work collaboratively on confronting racism, “the autonomous learning and thinking that manifested itself during their self-study disappeared after they completed the next two assignments together” (p. 18). As a consequence,

students who openly addressed the inherent racism in their classrooms and expressed a desire to end the racist practices that were a part of their hidden and overt curriculum did not complete a significant plan for change within their classrooms. (p. 45)

Huber suggested that dominant ideology reproduced itself automatically in the informal group setting, whereas it could be kept temporarily at bay when participants inhabited the private space of autonomous, distanced thought. Both Newman and Huber prompt a reappraisal of the role of isolation in developing a critical perspective. If distance, separation, and individual privacy are necessary conditions for adults to detach themselves from dominant ideology, then we must take more seriously the idea that self-directed learning can be a crucible for critical adult education (Hammond & Collins, 1991) rather than a compromised exercise in technical reductionism (Collins, 1991).

CRITICALITY AS NEGATIVITY: ADULT EDUCATION FOR CRITICAL THINKING

In his most famous book, *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse (1964) argued that we live in a society characterized by “a non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests” (p. 3). These needs are created by the dominant capitalist order and then internalized by us until they are indistinguishable from our most basic desires. We come to define ourselves and the attainment of a fulfilled life in terms of these needs. In this society, it is hard to identify revolutionary forces, because to be dissatisfied is taken as a sign of inadequacy or psychological disturbance. When “the administered life becomes the good life of the whole” (Marcuse, 1964, p. 255), then “the intellectual and emotional refusal ‘to go along’ appears neurotic and impotent” (p. 9). Thought that protests the given order of things is effectively anaesthetized by rejecting it as irrational or simply redefining it to fit the prevailing worldview.

Marcuse hypothesized that if we live in a society in which thought is circumscribed within certain limits that justify the correctness of the existing order, then critical thought must by definition exist outside of and in opposition to these limits. This is Marcuse’s position on what it means to be a critical thinker, and it is very far from the kind of positive cheerleading for critical thinking as a productive activity that sometimes emerges within adult education (Brookfield, 1987). Just as Marcuse believed that rebellious subjectivity could only develop at a distance from everyday experience, so he argued that true critical thinking is necessarily distanced from the false concreteness of everyday reasoning. In his view, “an irreducible difference exists between the universe of everyday thinking and language on the one side, and that of philosophic thinking and language on the other” (Marcuse, 1964, p. 178). The latter is conceptual in nature and deals with abstracts: “Abstractness is the very life of thought, the token of its authenticity” (p. 134), and such abstraction is enhanced by a “dissociation from the material practice” (p. 134) of everyday life. Marcuse’s equation of criticality with a learned capacity for abstract analysis and philosophical speculation challenges us to rethink our dismissal of conceptual analysis as an irrelevant game played only by ivory tower academics distanced from

revolutionary struggle. For Marcuse (1964), "critical philosophic thought is necessarily transcendent and abstract" (p. 134), subversive of the pragmatic opportunism that rules in everyday language and thought. In connecting philosophical analysis with social change, Marcuse believed that "the intellectual dissolution and even subversion of the given facts is the historical task of philosophy" (p. 185).

Not only does critical thinking operate at a necessary level of abstractness for Marcuse, it is also in an important sense negative. As articulated by three of Marcuse's students, negative thinking is first and foremost critical thinking "because it opposes the self-contentment of common sense which is so ready to embrace the given and to accept the established fact" (Leiss, Ober, & Sherover, 1967, p. 424). Critical thinking starts with what is wrong with what currently exists by illuminating omissions, distortions, and falsities in current thinking.

In Newman's (1994) terms, critical thinking is about laying blame and defining enemies, both necessary precursors to informed social change. A negative appraisal of contemporary patterns of reasoning is the first step in developing a positive vision of the kind of thought that could replace what now exists. So what in the short term seems negative is, in the long term, positive. Marcuse argued that before we have the great liberation and the creation of what is to be, we need the great refusal, the rejection of what is. Those participating in the great refusal "reject the rules of the game that is rigged against them, the ancient strategy of patience and persuasion, the reliance on the Good Will in the Establishment, its false and immoral comforts, its cruel affluence" (Marcuse, 1969, p. 6). Saying no to a culture of domination is a positive act of hope.

In stressing the universal, conceptual elements of critical thinking, Marcuse is at odds with those adult educators who emphasize that the road to criticality begins with examining the specific experiences of adult learners. Although Newman (1994, 1999) cited Marcuse only briefly in his critiques of contemporary adult education, he provided a contemporary illustration of a Marcusean line of analysis. In Newman's (1994) view, an overemphasis on helping people to analyze their experiences—"a kind of holy writ in adult education" (p. 94)—leads inevitably to "the voluntary suppression of organized action" (p. 108). The focus on self-understanding can lead members of oppressed groups to divert their attention from the real problem of defining the enemy into a preoccupation with their experiences as victims. He states his case as follows:

Rather than helping learners look at themselves, we should help them look at the thugs and the bigots, the people who do not care, the people who intrude, the people who misuse their authority . . . by doing this we can encourage people to be outward-looking, to be active and activist. We can help them focus their anger on the cause of their anger. And we can set up situations in which we and the people we are working with think, plan, learn and decide action. (p. 144)

What kind of adult education can prepare adults to think critically in the necessarily abstract and negative manner proposed by Marcuse? Based on his analysis, it will be first and foremost a conceptual education. Marcuse was certainly very ready to give all kinds of strategic advice on direct political action, but he never left behind his fundamental conviction that learning to think conceptually was as much a part of the revolution as creating new political and economic structures. In the administered society of one-dimensional thought, any kind of conceptual abstract reasoning that challenges the emphasis on false concreteness is by definition critical. Hence, a fundamental task of education (and by implication adult education) is to "provide the student with the conceptual instruments for a solid and thorough critique of the material and intellectual culture" (Marcuse, 1969, p. 61).

As with his emphasis on the importance of isolation and privacy in the development of rebellious subjectivity (Marcuse, 1978), Marcuse's insistence on people learning to think conceptually challenges practices lionized in progressive adult education. In particular, his position seems to stand against the celebratory aspects of adult experiential learning. In Marcuse's view, living in a one-dimensional society means that most adults' experiences are falsely concrete, that is, focused chiefly on the acquisitive pursuit of material luxuries via short-term, instrumental action. Celebrating and dignifying these kinds of experiences—even integrating them directly into the curriculum—only serves to legitimize the existing society. Following a Marcusean line of analysis, experiential learning would have meaning only if it focused on deconstructing experiences and showing their one-dimensional nature and if it avoided the uncritical celebration of people's stories. Experiential learning conducted in a Marcusean vein would be learning to recognize how the ways we perceive and construct experience have been colonized by the dominant language of consumerism. Echoing Newman's critique of adult educators' preoccupation with analyzing personal experiences, Marcuse implicitly questioned the wisdom of "starting where the students are," long a prized tenet of the progressive adult education canon. If "where the students are" is living a falsely concrete existence, then we need to get as far away from where they are as possible, chiefly by insisting on conceptual analysis. The struggle to think conceptually is always a political struggle to Marcuse, not just a matter of intellectual development. Political action and cognitive movement are partners here in the development of revolutionary consciousness.

An adult educational practice that developed the capacity for negative critical thinking would also, in Marcuse's view, exhibit a clear distinction between adult educators and adult learners. This analysis of teaching and learning departs somewhat from the andragogical and collaborative traditions of adult education to emphasize that educators cannot be as one with learners and that people cannot liberate themselves without participating in formally planned programs of education. For Marcuse (1972), "self-liberation is self-education but as such it presupposes education by others" (p. 47). This is because society is organized to keep people

away from disturbing ideas and to promote a state of happy stupefaction. Those lucky enough to have access to knowledge and information “have a commitment to use their knowledge to help men and women realize and enjoy their truly human capabilities” (p. 47).

A program of adult education designed to reverse years of induced stupefaction would need to be highly organized and staffed by well-trained activists. Those who reach adulthood with little capacity for conceptual thought and without access to a language untainted by metaphors and connotations of domination will not have their sensibilities changed or imaginations awakened by a few workshops or courses. Instead, “the intensive indoctrination and management of the people call for an intensive counter-education and organization” (Marcuse, 1972, p. 47). This leadership will work to help those involved in community and oppositional movements learn skills of organization, advocacy, and tactical planning. In declaring that “the function of this leadership is to ‘translate’ spontaneous protest into organized action” (Marcuse, 1972, p. 47), Marcuse comes close to Gramsci’s (1971) notion of the educator as an organic intellectual who exhibits an “active participation in practical life as constructor, organizer, permanent persuader” (p. 10).

The directive, mobilizing role of adult educators is taken up within contemporary critical adult education by Baptiste (1998, 2000) in two provocative papers outlining pedagogies of disempowerment and coercive restraint. Baptiste did not cite Marcuse directly, but I contend that his analysis captures very much the “intensive, counter-education and organization” devoted to “organized action” proposed by Marcuse. Drawing partially on Newman’s work mentioned earlier, Baptiste argued that adult educators must practice an ethically grounded pedagogy of coercion in which they help learners identify their “true enemies”—those who “intend, *on principle*, to frustrate the goals of their opponent because their opponent’s goals stand in opposition to theirs” (Baptiste, 2000, p. 29). To Baptiste, adult educators already use forms of justifiable coercion (what Marcuse would call a liberating or discriminating tolerance) but are queasy about admitting to that fact. He argued that a pedagogy of measured coercion is justifiable if it uses “force sufficient to stop or curb the violence or injustice. The aim is not necessarily to annihilate the perpetrators but rather to render them incapable of continuing their pillage” (p. 43).

Baptiste believed that in situations where there is a clear imbalance of power (a situation that exists, in Marcuse’s view, throughout an alienated, commodified society), adult educators should take uncompromising stands on the side of those they see as oppressed. An inevitable consequence of doing this will be the necessity for them “to engage in some form of manipulation—some fencing, posturing, concealment, maneuvering, misinformation, and even all-out deception as the case demands” (Baptiste, 2000, pp. 47-48). Baptiste pointed out that if adult educators do admit that manipulation is sometimes justified, then an important learning task becomes researching and practicing how to improve one’s manipulative capacities. Through studying ethically justified manipulation, adult educators can “build a

theory that can legitimize and guide our use of coercive restraint" (p. 49). This is a contemporary adult educational illustration of Marcuse's call for an ethically justified censorship of mainstream ideology, explored in the next section.

Marcuse's highly directive concept of what it means to be an educator, and Baptiste's elaboration of this stance within contemporary adult education, stands in stark contrast to the field's traditional andragogical and self-directed emphasis on the wisdom of allowing students to decide for themselves what they wish to learn. The most disturbing (to adult educators) aspects of his analysis are perhaps in his critique of an idea close to the hearts of many in the field—the idea that respectful and equitable practice rests on educators' willingness to consider a range of diverse viewpoints and traditions. This might be a form of tolerance, in Marcuse's view, but it is a flawed and misguided tolerance.

ADULT EDUCATION AS THE PRACTICE OF LIBERATING TOLERANCE

As a practicing educator, Marcuse often returned to the dynamics of teaching and learning, particularly the tendency of dialogically inclined teachers to embrace diverse perspectives in the name of democracy. In one of the essays that is truly unsettling to contemporary adult education sensibilities, he argued that an all-embracing tolerance of diverse views always ends up legitimizing an unfair status quo (Marcuse, 1965a). Marcuse mistrusted educators' instinctive preference for presenting students with a diversity of perspectives and then letting them make up their minds about which makes most sense to them.

On the face of it, teachers' willingness to run discussions and develop curricula, in which a variety of mainstream and dissenting perspectives are present, hardly seems like a problem. Indeed, a broadening of curriculum to include a diversity of radical ideas and traditions seems an important and obvious part of building a critical practice of adult education. In one of his most famous essays, however, Marcuse (1965a) argued that such tolerance is repressive, not liberating. Broadening the perspectives we review makes us feel like we are giving equal weight to radical ideas, when in fact placing them alongside mainstream ones always dilutes their radical qualities. The central thesis of his essay—that "what is proclaimed and practiced as tolerance today, is in many of its most effective manifestations serving the cause of oppression" (Marcuse, 1965a, p. 81)—extends the concept of hegemony and has important implications for the practice of adult education. Repressive tolerance ensures that adults believe they live in an open society characterized by freedom of speech and expression while in reality their freedom is being constricted further and further.

Marcuse defined repressive tolerance as the tolerance, in the name of impartiality, fairness, or even-handedness, of intolerable ideologies and practices and the concurrent marginalization of truly liberating perspectives. Those who proclaim tolerance for all viewpoints unwittingly serve to reinforce an unfair status quo. In

Marcuse's (1965a) words, "the conditions of tolerance are 'loaded' . . . determined and defined by the institutionalized inequality. . . i.e., by the class structure of society" (p. 85). When "false consciousness has become the general consciousness" (p. 110), repressive tolerance ensures that alternative, oppositional perspectives are rendered ineffectual. When we have a "passive toleration of entrenched and established attitudes and ideas even if their damaging effect on man and nature is evident" (p. 85), then the apparently benign "ideology of tolerance . . . in reality, favors and fortifies the conservation of the status quo of inequality and discrimination" (p. 123).

How does repressive tolerance work? Essentially, it ensures the continued marginality of minority views by placing them in close, comparative association with dominant ones. When an adult education curriculum is widened to include dissenting and radical perspectives that are considered alongside the mainstream perspective, the minority perspectives are always overshadowed by the mainstream one. This happens even if the radical perspectives are scrupulously accorded equal time and space. As long as the dominant, mainstream perspective is included as one of several possible options for study, its presence inevitably overshadows the minority ones, which will always be perceived as alternatives, as others—never as the natural center to which one should turn. Irrespective of the educator's viewpoint (which may be strongly opposed to dominant ideology), the mere inclusion of that ideology as one option ensures its continued dominance. This is because the mainstream ideology has so seeped into our "structures of feeling" (Williams, 1977) so that it operates at a preconscious level, shaping our responses to alternatives that are proposed to it. The only way to promote real tolerance—liberating or discriminating tolerance in Marcuse's terms—is to deny learners the chance to consider mainstream perspectives as one possibility among many. Instead of exposing people to a smorgasbord of mainstream and radical perspectives, educators practicing true tolerance will allow students exposure only to alternative views, to dissenting traditions.

One reason repressive tolerance works so well is because it masks its repression behind the facade of open even-handedness. Alternative ideas are not banned or even censored. Critical texts are published and critical messages circulated. Previously subjugated knowledges and perspectives (e.g., Africentrism or queer theory) are inserted into the curriculum. The defenders of the status quo can point to the existence of dissenting voices (such as Marcuse's) as evidence of the open society we inhabit and the active tolerance of a wide spectrum of ideologies. But the framing of meaning accomplished by hegemony is all. Sometimes the meaning of radical texts is diluted by the fact that the texts themselves are hard to get or incredibly expensive. More likely, the radical meanings are neutered because our previous ideological conditioning means they are subtly framed as the expressions of obviously weird minority opinion. As Marcuse (1965a) wrote,

other words can be spoken and heard, other ideas can be expressed, but, at the massive scale of the conservative majority . . . they are immediately "evaluated" (i.e. automati-

cally understood) in terms of the public language—a language which determined “a priori” the direction in which the thought process moves. Thus the process of reflection ends where it started: in the given conditions and relations. (p. 96)

Marcuse cited Orwell’s analysis of language in illustrating how the meaning of peace is redefined so that “preparing for war *is* working for peace” (p. 96).

The contemporary discourse of diversity, of opening up the field of adult education to diverse voices, perspectives, and traditions, can be analyzed quite effectively using the idea of repressive tolerance. An honorable and emancipatory position to take is that adult education research, theorizing, and practice needs to include alongside the grand narrative of Eurocentric rationality work that draws on other cultural traditions and represents different racial perspectives. Providing an array of alternative perspectives and sensibilities seems to be a major step in moving away from a situation in which White, male, European voices dominate. Yet Marcuse alerted us to the possibility that this apparent broadening of voices can actually reinforce the ideology of White supremacy that it purports to undercut. By widening curricula to include a variety of traditions, we appear to be celebrating all positions. But the history of White supremacy and the way that language and structures of feeling frame Whiteness as the natural, inevitable conceptual center means that the newly included voices, sensibilities, and traditions are always positioned as the exotic other. Adult educators can soothe their consciences by believing progress is being made toward racial inclusivity and cultural equity and can feel they have played their small but important part in the struggle. But as long as these subjugated traditions are considered alongside the dominant ideology, repressive tolerance ensures they will always be subtly marginalized as exotic, quaint, other than the natural center. The logic of liberating or discriminating tolerance would require an immersion only in a racial or cultural tradition that diverged radically from mainstream ideology, for example, an adult education graduate program that allowed only the consideration of Africentric ideas and perspectives. The logic of repressive tolerance holds that as long as Africentrism is considered as one of many possible perspectives, including Eurocentrism, it will always be positioned as the marginal alternative to the White supremacist center.

A crucial component of repressive tolerance according to Marcuse is the metanarrative of democracy, such a strong narrative in the field of adult education. The democratic narrative is evident in the adult educational preoccupation with the discussion method, where the intent is to honor and respect each learner’s voice. As the subtitle of a recent book on discussion methods contends, many adult educators believe the discussion method provides “tools and techniques for democratic classrooms” (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999). But the implicit assumption that all contributions in discussion deserve and carry equal weight can easily lead to a flattening of conversation. Dignifying each adult’s personhood can result in a refusal to point out the ideologically skewed nature of particular contributions, let alone saying some-

one is wrong. In Marcuse's (1965a) view, the ideology of democratic tolerance when applied to discussion groups means that

the stupid opinion is treated with the same respect as the intelligent one, the misinformed may talk as long as the informed, and propaganda rides along with falsehood. This pure tolerance of sense and nonsense is justified by the democratic argument that nobody, neither group nor individual, is in possession of the truth and capable of defining what is right and wrong, good and bad. (p. 94)

In addition, the airing of a radical perspective as one among many possible perspectives in a discussion always works to the detriment of that perspective, because repressive tolerance and participants' ideological conditioning disposes them to view that perspective with skepticism or hostility. Thus,

persuasion through discussion and the equal presentation of opposites (even where it is really equal) easily lose their liberating force as factors of understanding and learning; they are far more likely to strengthen the established thesis and to repel the alternatives. (Marcuse, 1965a, p. 97)

An interesting adult educational case study of repressive tolerance in action is Cale's (2001; Cale & Huber, 2001) analysis of his attempt to work critically and democratically in an adult freshman composition class teaching writing through the analysis of race, class, and gender in contemporary America. Cale and his coauthor Huber drew on Marcuse to illustrate the danger of providing an array of philosophical and ideological perspectives and assuming that these have rough parity in students' eyes. Hence, despite his giving lectures critiquing the concept of meritocracy and outlining capitalism's deliberate creation of an underclass, Cale noted that "once I allowed the 'common sense' of the dominant ideology to be voiced, nothing could disarm it" (Cale & Huber, 2001, p. 16). It did not matter that a disproportionately large amount of time was spent in criticism of this ideology. As long as Cale allowed his White students (the majority in the class) to voice their own opinions regarding racism—opinions based on their own experiences as adults—the focus was continually shifted away from White privilege and toward discussions of reverse discrimination and Black "problems." Cale refreshingly and courageously admitted that his past efforts to work democratically by respecting all voices and encouraging the equal participation of all learners "has in many cases actually helped to silence some of my students, to reinforce the dominance of the status quo, and to diminish my own ability to combat racism, sexism, and classism" (Cale & Huber, 2001, p. 16). He concluded that his use of "democratic" discussion achieved little effect other than to provide "opportunities for students to attack and silence oppositional thinkers, including myself" (p. 17).

In Marcuse's view, the only way to break the sort of logjam Cale confronted is to practice liberating tolerance. The educator must try to "break the established

universe of meaning (and the practice enclosed within this universe)" so that people are "freed from the prevailing indoctrination (which is no longer recognized as indoctrination)" (Marcuse, 1965a, pp. 98-99). In a society living under false consciousness, people "are indoctrinated by the conditions under which they live and think and which they do not transcend" (p. 98). To help them emerge from this, they need to realize that truth is manipulated, that the "facts" are "established, mediated, by those who made them" (p. 99). They need to shed the tolerance for multiple truths, each of which are presumed to have their own integrity and internal validity, and realize instead that "there *is* an objective truth which can be discovered, ascertained only in learning and comprehending that which is and that which can be and ought to be done for the sake of improving the lot of mankind" (p. 88). This objective truth is a liberatory truth concerning the need to overthrow the dominant ideology of capitalism and White supremacy, and it must always take precedence over a supposedly respectful but ultimately repressive tolerance of all viewpoints. To Marcuse, "tolerance cannot be indiscriminate and equal . . . it cannot protect false words and wrong deeds which demonstrate that they contradict and counteract the possibilities of liberation" (p. 88).

The key point for Marcuse (1965a) is that a necessary rupture with the appearance of facts and truth "cannot be accomplished within the established framework of abstract tolerance and spurious objectivity because these are precisely the factors which precondition the mind *against* the rupture" (p. 99). Providing a smorgasbord of alternative perspectives in the name of a pluralist tolerance of diversity only ensures that the radical ones are marginalized by the dominant consciousness. The only way to break with the face of spurious impartiality is to immerse adults fully and exclusively in a radically different perspective that challenges mainstream ideology and confronts the learner with "information slanted in the opposite direction" (Marcuse, 1965a, p. 99). After all, "unless the student learns to think in the opposite direction, he will be inclined to place the facts into the predominant framework of values" (p. 113). This rupture with mainstream reality will inevitably be castigated as undemocratic censorship, but this criticism is to be expected as the predictable response of organized repression and indoctrination: "The ways should not be blocked on which a subversive majority could develop, and if they are blocked by organized repression and indoctrination, their reopening may require apparently undemocratic means" (p. 100).

Here, Marcuse is proposing a kind of community-sponsored intellectual affirmative action in favor of leftist perspectives: "withdrawal of tolerance from regressive movements, and discriminating tolerance in favor of progressive tendencies would be tantamount to the 'official' promotion of subversion" (p. 107). For him, the end of learners' access to objective, liberatory truth justifies the means of censorship of dominant, mainstream ideas and of discrimination in favor of outlawed knowledge. Realizing the objective of tolerance calls "for intolerance toward prevailing policies, attitudes, opinions, and the extension of tolerance to policies, attitudes, and opinions which are outlawed or suppressed" (Marcuse, 1965a, p. 81).

CONCLUSION

Adult educators of a progressive and critical cast such as Lindeman, Horton, and Freire ideally envisage teachers and learners engaged in a dialogic, collaborative, cocreation of knowledge through the analysis of diverse experiences. I position my own practice in this tradition. Marcuse added some useful dissonance and counterpoint to this progressive symphony of tolerance, diversity, and collaboration and challenges some of the practices it suggests. He reclaimed the area of aesthetic education as one in which critical practice can be located and emphasized the importance of distance, isolation, and privacy to the development of rebellious subjectivity in learners. He emphasized and justified a clear difference between educators and learners and argued that the development of abstract, conceptual thought is itself a revolutionary act. He challenged the self-evident truth that a tolerant embrace of diverse views is inherently humanistic and democratic and confronted us with the uncomfortable proposition that an apparent engagement with diversity can be manipulated to reinforce dominant ideology. Furthermore, he argued that true tolerance calls for a total immersion in a completely different perspective that is not widely accessible and the denial of learners' opportunity to engage with mainstream ideas. In line with his contention that "critical theory is, last but not least, critical of itself and of the social forces that make up its own basis" (Marcuse, 1968, p. 156), adult educators who read Marcuse are forced to reexamine some practices that they might have thought were beyond reproach.

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