

Language, experience and pedagogy: A tribute to Paulo Freire¹

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ABSTRACT

We would like to emphasize and extend an important area of the work of Paulo Freire, an area which remains generally unproblematized in the work of Freire's followers, especially in the United States. It is a problem which is particularly troublesome in the work of Freirean-influenced classroom teachers: that of the relationship between language and experience. We want to argue that sometimes there exists a problem with certain pedagogical approaches which, like Freire's, are grounded in the concept of student experience. Whereas memories often call for interpretation, direct experience is frequently thought to speak for itself. It is not uncommon to confront a self-styled Deweyan or Freirian educator who will, for instance, insist upon privileging experience over theory. While it is true, as Giroux notes, that 'Freire argues for a notion of cultural power that takes as its starting point the social and historical particularities, the problems, sufferings, visions, and acts of resistance, that constitute the cultural forms of subordinate groups' (1985: xxi), Giroux also points out that Freire (and Dewey for that matter) neither romanticizes experience nor fails to render experience problematic.

We would like to emphasize and extend an important area of the work of Paulo Freire, an area which remains generally unproblematized in the work of Freire's followers, especially in the United States. It is a problem which is particularly troublesome in the work of Freirean-influenced classroom teachers: that of the relationship between language and experience. We want to argue that sometimes there exists a problem with certain pedagogical approaches which, like Freire's, are grounded in the concept of student experience. Whereas memories often call for interpretation, direct experience is frequently thought to speak for itself. It is not uncommon to confront a self-styled Deweyan or Freirian educator who will, for instance, insist upon privileging experience over theory. While it is true, as Giroux notes, that 'Freire argues for a notion of cultural power that takes as its starting point the social and historical particularities, the problems, sufferings, visions, and acts of resistance, that constitute the cultural forms of subordinate groups' (1985: xxi), Giroux also points out that Freire (and Dewey for that matter) neither romanticizes experience nor fails to render experience problematic.

Freire's work illuminates the essential praxis necessary for establishing a critical literacy in our classrooms and for actively contesting the power arrangements that structure our politics of the everyday. Language is understood by Freire as something that does not give us transparent access to reality but rather serves as a medium for constructing rather than discovering meaning. For Freire, language does not simply incarnate reality without implicating itself in relations of power - usually as a dominant totalizing system. In other words, language is more than an arbitrary system of

differences in which meaning is guaranteed by the linguistic system itself and the values given to signifying practices within particular linguistic communities. There is no Rosetta Stone - no privileged access to meaning in the sense of discovering a master code that explains how elements of a social text function together (which is not to claim that there exists no access to extra-textual reality or that reality is an endless deferral or deformation of meaning or an abyssal plummet into infinite semiotic regression). Rather than granting codes a transcendental status that serve as privileged referents around which other meanings are positioned, Freire puts much more emphasis on meaning as a contested event, a terrain of struggle in which individuals take up conflicting subject positions in relation to signifying practices.

Extending Freire's analysis, we could argue that meaning is material in that it is lived within and through the materiality of discourse, that is, within and through bodies. Inscription through the flesh (in the sense that metaphor is a correlate of patterns of bodily action and interaction; see Jackson, 1983) is the seat of discursive power - the founding act of culture. Freire foregrounds the fact that we can only know the real through regimes of signs, through systems of representation.

Roger Simon and Donald Dippo (1986) highlight an ongoing concern in critical pedagogy when they argue that educators must avoid the conservatism inherent in confirming that which people already know. By this they mean that experience should never be celebrated uncritically. Rather, we must encourage student voices while simultaneously encouraging the interrogation of such voices. Experience is not something that speaks for itself, but is a particular way in which individuals confront the contingency of the present and the politics of daily living. It is an understanding which is constructed largely linguistically (which is not to deny the importance of non-discursive experiences) as a particular interpretation over time of a specific concrete engagement with the world of symbols, social practices, and cultural forms. No experience is simply given as pristine and unmediated.

How we think and talk about our world through the particular languages and theories made available to us largely shapes our understanding of why things are the way they are, which images of 'that which is not yet' are possible and desirable, and what needs to be done for things too be otherwise. For instance, E.L. Doctorow believes that 'a book can affect consciousness - affect the way people think and therefore the way they act. Books create constituencies that have their own effect on history' (Trenner 1983: 43). This is not to suggest that a physical encounter such as being cracked on the head by police during a political demonstration doesn't teach you something directly (and we have deliberately chosen an example provided to us by Myles Horton of the Highlander Center in Tennessee who claims that being struck in the head by a police baton during a May Day Parade in New York City profoundly and permanently radicalized his politics) - or doesn't leave an experience directly inscribed into memory's flesh. We are suggesting that the way we understand and respond to such encounters are largely linguistically determined through whatever competing discourses are available and which discourses resonate ideologically and affectively with the individual interpreting the event. The striking police baton is transformed into a signifier of state brutality; society writes its law into the flesh of the body - a process which McLaren (1988) terms 'enfleshment' and de Certeau (1984) calls 'intextuation'². To reflectively situate ourselves in this event as the victim of the incarnation of state power is to accord it symbolic potency. At the same time as individual bodies are transformed into the body politic, we are offered a number of dominant subject positions to assume: innocent victim, casualty of state-inflicted barbarism, wounded protester, martyr, freedom fighter. Or perhaps we choose to forge some new position. But these choices are made largely on the basis of the affective and symbolic economy in which such an event is situated, the discourses available to the subject, his or her reading formation, and the selection process undertaken.

The point which we are accenting here is that the language of teaching too often serves as a coercive text by restricting or shaping the way in which both teachers and students make sense of their experience. In order to escape from an idealized liberalism and from inflicting the incarnation

of patriarchy upon feminine subjectivity, teachers especially need to recognize how much their own personal histories, ideological assumptions, and Eurocentric and patriarchal narrative forms are grounded in discursive economics of liberal capitalism and shape their ability to make sense of the world of their students. They need, for instance, to recognize that the knowledge and understanding which students are prevented from bringing to their experiences is as important as the knowledge and understandings which students are permitted to narrate with respect to their lived experiences. It is important, too, to recognize that students may reject certain forms of 'professional' adult knowledge as invasive of their own identity and meaning. Both students and teachers read experience just as they do written texts) through particular discursive formations. Texts and experience already have a coded nature; they are not stylistically or discursively arbitrary, but they are nevertheless susceptible to interpretation (see Bennett, 1986). Student interpretations of their own reality must be accorded a hermeneutical preference in the pedagogical construction of discourses designed to enable students to resist domination and oppression.

Krystyna Pomorska (1980) writes that the nature of the language we use determines, at least in part, how we make sense of our experiences and the type of social action we choose to engage in as a result of interpreting our experiences. It also determines the range of possibilities we have to organize our social world, to develop new forms of sociality, and, as teachers, new forms of pedagogy. If experience is largely understood through language, and language shapes how we see and act with and on the world, then it follows that experience itself does not guarantee truth since it is always open to conflicting and contradictory interpretations. That is, our experience is not some fixed or fluid essence, or some concrete reality that exists prior to language, waiting to be reflected by language (Brown, 1987). Rather, experience is constituted by language.

Experience - "events and behaviors occurring in social formations" (De Lauretis 1987: 42) - is highly constitutive of subjectivity. Since language enables us to interpret our experience then it follows that language is also constitutive of subjectivity, that is, of an individual's conscious and unconscious understandings. As William Gass writes, "language is ... more powerful as an experience of things than the experience of things. signs are more potent experiences than anything else, so when one is dealing with the things that really count, then you deal with words. They have a reality for exceeding the things they name" (Hutcheon 1989: 149, emphasis ours). We have noted that experience does not speak for itself, outside the frames of reference (discourses) associated with the language we select or are given in order to make sense of that experience. The serious issue here deals with the way in which we have been inserted into language both as teachers and students. To reflectively situate ourselves in discourse - in language - is to historicize our role as social agents. If we conjure only those ideas which we already have the words to express, then our presence in history remains more or less comfortably static. Part of the state of this crisis is reflected in the unavailability of subject positions in which students are permitted to practice forms of radical critique and engage in social practices informed by a commitment to establishing a more democratic social order.

Here it becomes important to understand that while experience is important in the act of knowing, it is frequently "blind". Consequently, it is in 'the political interpretation of experience that existence becomes fruitful' (Eagleton 1985/86: 104; emphasis ours).

In a similar fashion, Donald Morton and Mas'ud Zazarzadeh (1988: 163) attack the concept of direct or intuitive experience when it is presumed that such experience is 'transdiscursive ... free of all political, social, economic, and linguistic constraints ... (and outside) ... the opacities of culture.' Experience is not an 'unmediated, and direct, intuitive knowing of the body of the world.' Rather, they cite Catherine Belsey (1983: 17) who argues that 'experience itself is the location of ideology, not the guarantee of truth.'

John Shatter (1989) follows Wittgenstein, C. Wright Mills, and Bakhtin (especially the latter's notion of 'addressivity') in asserting that 'the main function of language is not the representation of things in the world, or the giving of 'outer' expression to already well formed 'inner' thoughts, but

its use in creating and sustaining social orders' (141). Experience does not speak for itself, because, as Shatter notes, all our experiences are held accountable' in terms that are intelligible and legitimate within this order' (142). If we are able to act routinely and in an accountable manner in the social order, the requirements of our everyday media of communication necessitate the reproduction of a dominant social ordering. If the ways in which we speak to each other are constrained, then it follows that 'our experience of ourselves, will be constrained also' (141). And we would add here, the choice of our actions in and on the world would be qualitatively affected. Shatter claims that there exists a great deal of pressure on us as individuals to sustain our status and that this means that we must express ourselves in ways approved by others - 'that we feel our reality must be of a certain kind' (141). Shatter is worth quoting at length on this issue:

It is not our actual experience that demands it, but our ways of talking which make themselves felt when we attempt to reflect upon our experience, and to account for it. In other words, what we talk of as our experience of our reality is constituted for us very largely by the already established ways in which we must talk if our attempts to account for ourselves - and for it - to the others around us. What we think of and talk of as our 'intuitions' about ourselves are 'forced' upon us by the ways of talking that we must use in justifying our conduct to others (and in criticizing theirs). And only certain ways of talking are deemed legitimate. (Shatter, 1989: 141)

And, of course, the point that we have been trying to make is that only certain languages (terms, vocabularies, narratives, concepts) are deemed legitimate within the communities of discourses used by educators. And often those languages are those of management and technical efficiency and smooth, easy communication. This is why many critical educators are attacked for their use of language. Often the languages sanctioned for teachers by educational officials (and later enshrined by them) are those that are deemed "conversational" and "practical" and often such vocabularies of convenience mask the power relations which more critical languages try to convey. In addition, one cannot equate being clearly and readily understood with a proper respect for the public since, as Richard Wolff (1989) notes, "To be clearly and readily understood often means resonating ideologically With the prevalent presumptions and desires of a public which has grown increasingly hostile to radical Ideas. Those who write with clarity and accessibility in mind may have, Wolff claims, "abandoned the tough work of convincing readers of politically unpopular truths." (p.139) Furthermore, Wolff notes that "major shifts in ways of thinking usually interact complexly with related shifts in ways of speaking and Writing." (p.138). This does not mean that critical educators should not attempt to make their views clear and comprehensible, but it does mean that they should increase demands on students to acquire a critical vernacular so that their students' understanding of their own experiences can be deepened and empowered. We are certainly not trying to suggest that educators and students should only converse with one another in arcane, elaborated codes, but rather that a variety of critical languages should be made available to the discerning student. And, of course, students should learn the limitations of the critical languages that are made available for helping them to understand their everyday experiences, forms of social engagement, and feelings of intuition. And we should begin to explore with more critical acumen and moral exigence how meanings and hegemonic articulations are manufactured outside of purely discursive modes and the actions of social agents (McLaren, 1989).

The important point here is that experience should be recognized as a form of cultural politics that is always historical and gendered. Furthermore, the conceptual frameworks that purport to uncover and transform the constructions of subjectivity - including feminine ones - need to be purged of their phallogentrism, Eurocentrism, and masculine ideologies. A major task for the development of Freirian pedagogy is to de-authorize and rewrite the master narratives of liberal post-industrial democracy and the humanist, individualist, and patriarchal discourses which underwrite it while at the same time undermining and reconstructing the idealized and romantic conception of the subject which is shaped by Eurocentric and androcentric discursive power relations.

Rejecting the failure of Marcuse and Adorno to provide an analysis of woman as historical actor (insofar as they consider woman to be dominated both by recognizing her difference and denying it), Patricia Jagentowicz Mills stresses the importance of articulating woman's experience. She writes that

Woman's experience is to be found in the traces of memory reformed through the process of 'naming'. Although naming can never capture the immediacy of the experience - what is articulated is never the same as the experience - we must name experience in order to understand it; without naming, experience is simply passed through or endured. When concepts are linked to experience so that experience is understood, not just undergone, we are led to a rediscovery of philosophy as critical theory ... The naming of woman's experience ... remains silent on the relations between women and on woman's self-experience of desire. In this way, woman's experience is distorted and denied. Woman's voicelessness reveals reification as silencing. By giving voice to her experience, by naming the unnamed for herself, woman challenges the reification of the name through silence and she initiates the political project. (Mills 1987: 207-8, italics original)

In Mill's view, not all dominant ways of thinking and understanding are linked to the male genitalia which, according to some radical feminists, biologically shape the logic of male domination; nor does she alternatively feel that 'the content of knowledge must come solely out of 'woman's experience' as some sanctified and truth-producing zone' (Cocks 1988: 20). Rather what needs to be stressed in order to escape a naive essentialism, is the critical nature of the theoretical discourse brought to bear on women's experiences. This means theoretical discourses which are not based on the subordination of - the female by the male, the subordination of nature by 'man' and the marginalization and oppression of the 'other' by the distinctly male 'self'.

Within progressive approaches within the United States, the privileging of experience over theory (against understanding theory and practice as mutually informing) by some educators has led to a celebration of empirical realism and an undermining of a critical theoretical approach. This state of affairs has led to reforms which generally support the present system of contradictory relations of production and class organizations. Yet, experience is never transparent to itself and always occurs within particular social and cultural forms that have been produced within specific relations of power and regimes of discourse serving particular interests.

With specific reference to feminist pedagogy, Diana Fuss (1989) writes:

the problem with positing the category of experience as the basis of a feminist pedagogy is that the very object of our inquiry, 'female experience,' is never as unified, as knowable, as universal, and as stable as we presume it to be ... The appeal to experience, as the ultimate test of all knowledge, merely subtend the subject in its fantasy of autonomy and control. Belief in the truth of Experience is as much an ideological production as belief in the experience of Truth. (p.116).

Fuss notes that the 'politics of experience' can lead to individuals and groups to itemize and rank identities, in which case certain considerations of difference can blind us to other modes of difference and delegitimize them. It can also cause us to see only one part of a subject's identity - as 'male', as 'Asian', as 'lesbian', etc. Hierarchies of identities are sometimes set up within speaking subjects as well as between them (p.116). Ranking of identities is used as a means of authorizing individuals to speak or de-authorizing them on the premise that 'some essences are more essential than others' (116). Fuss also makes the important point that 'The anti-essentialist displacement of experience must not be used as a convenient means of silencing students, no matter how shaky experience has proven to be as a basis of epistemology (117).'

Fuss, however, needs to acknowledge to a greater extent how students in classroom settings are always already inscribed in institutional cultural, and social systems of domination, oppression, and power/knowledge relations that reify and demonize the Other in essentialist ways. As bell hooks (1989) has noted, essentialism or identity politics is not something that is misused only or primarily by marginalized groups. Essentialism is abused most often by dominant groups whose subjectivities are constituted in cultural forms and practices that silence difference and which delegitimize and

devalue the personalized experiences and voices of the marginalized Other. What is important about speaking from the standpoint of experience is to understand how different knowledges become constructed on the basis of different experiences. However, it is important to engage, affirm, and problematize not just the language of experience (how knowledge gets constructed in different ways by different groups on the basis of race, class, gender, and sexual preference) but also, as hooks notes, acknowledge and make critical the passion of experience and the deep memories which constitute it. That is, how can one link a politics of experience to a politics of knowledge (see Hooks 1989; Giroux, 1988; Giroux and McLaren, 1989)?

Today feminists are often faced with the dilemma of either adhering to essentialist doctrines or fostering the dissolution of feminist struggles into localized, regional, specific struggles representing the interests of particular women. The way out of this dilemma, argues Elizabeth Grosz (1989), comes in recognizing that feminists need not take on universalist and essentialist assumptions in the same way as patriarchs. We would add to this insight bell hooks's observation that marginalized groups should not be the only groups singled out for exclusionary practices attributed to essentialism; after all, dominant groups employ essentialist strategies that produce exclusionary behavior firmly buttressed by institutionalized structures of domination that do not criticize or check it. And while it is important to oppose essentialist practices that construct identities in exclusionary, monolithic ways, it is important not to relinquish the power of naming one's experience in ways that can help to formulate theories of experience. The complexity of experience - for instance, knowledge of suffering that is often inscribed in the bodies of marginalized peoples - needs to be engaged through what hooks calls "multiple locations".

We believe that it is the task of critical pedagogy .to provide students with the discursive and conceptual means to understand the ideological dimensions of their experiences, deep memories, and passionate investments in everyday. life, and relate these to the material and symbolic structures of power that operate in the larger context of social life. Some of the work done in present day Freirian analysis leave us with impression that student experience should be accorded a privileged status and often with little consideration for the language of analysis which students use to mediate among their own reality, the lived situatedness within their own community, and their ideological and material location within the larger social order. This privileging of raw, uncritical knowledge works against the very premises of Freirian pedagogies and other critical approaches to schooling.

This, of course, does not mean that the choice of language and theoretical constructs used to analyze experience should not be open to debate, because it is important that the particular language of theory that educators endorse is able to move outside the constraints of Name-of-the-Father vocabularies and, further, is able to serve as a stronger medium for making heard the voices of people of color. It also remains undeniable that critical reflection requires a language that highlights the transparency of everyday discourse, and that calls subjectivity into question. Theoretical language must resymbolize ordinary social life in order to bring into relief its supposedly inevitable imprisonment in existing relations of power and to locate transformative 'openings'. This has, of course, never been more urgent than in this era of late capitalism or what has been termed 'the postmodern condition'.

Let us reiterate our argument. The important issue we have been emphasizing is that experience and language are intertwined. One cannot simply give primacy to experience, without taking into account how experience is structured through language whether this language refers to a tabloid editorial or a treatise on popular culture by critical theorists. In a similar fashion, one cannot simply privilege language because ideology is not only lived through language, but also through experience, that is, through the nondiscursive forms of knowing of the body. These take into consideration the events we encounter, social practices we engage, choices we make and accidents of history which befall us. Reading about racism and oppression is not the same thing as living as its victim. The issue for the development of contextual, critical knowledge is affirming the experiences

of students to the extent that their voices are acknowledged as part of the dialogue; but the issue is also not to take such experience at face value, as if it speaks romantically or even tragically for itself. The task of the critical educator is to help students empower themselves with a language that will allow them to understand themselves as active subjects in history and also provide them with a means of forging a more liberating vision of their own human capacities and how they can contribute to the transformation of existing social relations of oppression.

Freire's treatment of language is multiplex and is geared to locating the sources of interest and unfreedom in the reproduction of race, class, and gender relations. While Freire's theoretical formulations are not formally situated within the disciplinary trajectories of structuralism and poststructuralism, it remains the case that they often support advances made within these perspectives. This is especially true insofar as Freire's work continually acknowledges the relation among language, social structure, and consciousness and maintains that knowledge and meaning are always produced rather than expressed or discovered. This perspective gives Freire's work a recent affinity with poststructuralism. Whereas structuralists view language as a system of signs and view meaning as essentially the product of a system, post-structuralists are interested in the arbitrary connection of the signifier (word/letter /sound) and the signified (meaning/idea/concept) arguing that language, as a constituent aspect of identity production, has no intrinsic meaning but rather is better understood with a view to instability, innovation, and unpredictability. This is because, in this case, meaning is understood as a function of difference and relationship within a system.

Freire recognizes that critical language must not serve as a language of imposition, as a vocabulary of indoctrination that positions individuals in such a way that they are made to see the world and where they stand in it from the perspective of the critical theorist. While we may condemn the sexism of Freire's language and his phallogocentric paradigm of liberation in which freedom and the experience of patriarchal manhood are conflated, this criticism of Freire's "blind spot" - as bell hooks puts it - should not overshadow his valuable insights (hooks, forthcoming).

What does this mean more specifically for teachers? The work of Freire (1985) and Giroux (1988) consistently reminds us that student experience has to be understood as part of an interlocking web of power relations in which some groups of students are often privileged over others. Consequently, it becomes crucially important for teachers to examine in a critical fashion the cultural backgrounds and social formations out of which their students produce their own vocabularies for understanding and interpreting the routines and rituals of daily living. For teachers are not merely dealing with students whose interests are isolated and unique, they are dealing primarily with individuals whose stories, memories, narratives, and reading of the world are inextricably related to wider social, cultural, and institutional formations and categories. Narratives are culturally contingent, and bear the traces and sedimentation of historically and culturally available meanings and interpretations. The issue here, notes Giroux, is not merely one of relevance but one of power. Schools not only - teach subjects but also shape subjectivities and structure collective futures and in doing so often function to disempower students by tracking them into classes with lowered expectations, or by refusing to provide them with knowledge that is relevant and speaks to the context of their everyday lives. Giroux reminds us, for example, that many educators view different languages and backgrounds in students as deficits to be corrected, rather than as strengths to build upon. He cites the example of black, working class, and other minority children who are vastly over represented in special education classes and who make up a large share of the dropout statistics in our nation's schools. He argues that a critical approach to pedagogy gains an important emancipatory dimension when incorporating a more theoretical understanding of how experience is named, produced, sustained, and rewarded in schools. In this light, we are arguing that teachers need a critical vernacular that allows them to understand how school knowledge and classroom social relations are constructed, disseminated, and legitimated in everyday instruction and how the underlying interests embodied in them - including those shaped by Eurocentric and patriarchal metanarratives of mainstream and liberal pedagogies - function in enabling or disabling ways.

Freire's work offers us a common ground for contextualizing oppression and for transforming the effects of conditioned fear and self-defeating patterns of alienation. It provides a direct challenge to the categorical function of pedagogy as it is currently understood and practiced. It manages to bridge the relentless and incorrigible despair that exists between current political actualities and utopian possibilities.

Freire's challenge has been to bend reality to the requirements of a just world, and to create new spaces for critical activity in the home, the school, the community, and in larger public and administrative contexts. His task has been to decenter and disorient forms of authority that domesticate the Other, that lay siege to the power of the margins. His goal has been to question the tacit assumptions and unarticulated presuppositions - the unexamined faith in continuity and desire for familiarity - that make up the history of the oppressed, and to put under stress the norms these interpretations legitimate, the self-images they create, and the despair they foster. His contribution has been to breathe new life into historical agency in a world that has witnessed the apocalyptic disappearance of the subject of history.

Freire's pedagogy is one that reveals social consensus to be social difference dressed up in discourses of equality that hide the real face of domination behind it. But his interrogation of the limits of these discourses does not transcend the culture in which they are embedded in the form of a dogmatic system of thought or totalizing critique. Freire does not need to take shelter in a transcendental citadel that stands above the messy terrain of concrete struggle, lived history, and the contradiction, complexity, and paradox of enunciation in contemporary social life.

The political pedagogy of Paulo Freire, if protected from reductionist practices of liberal educators to turn it into a method, can serve as a praxis where Blacks and Latinos no longer fear and obey the white gaze of power, where bonds of sentiment and obligation can be formed among all oppressed people, where resistance can enable schools to become more than instruments of social replication, where contrasting cultural styles and cultural capital among groups (differences de moeurs) cease to remain tokens of estrangement that separate groups but rather the very impetus that brings them together in an arch of social dreaming.

Freire's words blow like strong winds through the torpor of Western liberalism and the political quiteude and apathy of generations of today's youth - generations increasingly held captive by the power of global capitalism and the structures of intelligibility and social relations such power is likely to produce. They whisper with the force of a gale, calling educators to develop pedagogies that not only establish the grounds for a critical language of imagination but also the formation of a teachable heart - a heart that invites compassion, empathy, and forgiveness through a new and revolutionary way of loving.

Notes

1. This essay appears in sections of more elaborate and detailed discussions of Freire's work. See Peter McLaren and Tomaz Tadeu da Silva, "Paulo Freire and Education Debates in the United States and Brasil," in Peter McLaren and Peter Leonard (Eds.) *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*. London and New York: Routledge. See also Peter McLaren's review of Freire in the Classroom, *Journal of Urban and Cultural Studies*, 1 (1) (1990): 113-125 and forthcoming essays in *College Literature* and the National Reading Conference's Yearbook.
2. Enfleshment refers to the mutually constitutive (enfolding) of social structure and desire; that is, it constitutes the dialectical relationship between the material organization of interiority and the cultural forms and modes of materiality we inhabit subjectively. Enfleshment is the "quilting point" that results when the radical externality of the body/subject as independent and resistant to our volition joins the pure interiority of our own subjectivity. Enfleshment, then, involves both the entextualization of desire and the embodiment of textual forms (see McLaren, forthcoming).

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