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後現代主義、超現代主義與美國 帝國：教育上的蘊義

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摘 要

本文首先引述英國著名的後現代主義者Robert Cooper的觀點，說明後現代主義的主要特徵，並檢視Cooper對於現代帝國主義的辯護。其次，本文檢視了美國帝國主義的現實，並分析帝國主義的源起及發展現況，進而評估超現代主義的貢獻。隨後，本文從馬克斯主義的觀點來批判現代主義與超現代主義，並提出一些教育上的啟示歸結之。

關鍵詞：後現代主義、超現代主義

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Postmodernism, Transmodernism and the United States Empire: Some Educational Implications

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Abstract

In this paper, I begin by looking at what one leading British postmodernist, Robert Cooper, argues the main characteristics of postmodernism are. I then examine Cooper's defence of modern imperialism. I go on to look at the reality of US Imperialism before assessing the contribution of transmodernism in analysing both imperialism's current manifestations, and its genesis. Next I critique both postmodernism and transmodernism from a Marxist perspective. I conclude with some educational implications.

Keywords: postmodernism, transmodernism

Postmodernism and the State

According to Robert Cooper, the main characteristics of the postmodern world are as follows (Cooper, 2002: 2):

- The breaking down of the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs;
- Mutual interference in (traditional) domestic affairs and mutual surveillance;
- The rejection of force for resolving disputes and the consequent codification of self-enforced rules of behaviour;
- The growing irrelevance of borders: this has come about both through the changing role of the state, but also through missiles, motor cars and satellites;
- Security is based on transparency, mutual openness, interdependence and mutual vulnerability.

For Cooper (2002), the European Union is the most developed example of a postmodern system, where lack of emphasis on sovereignty is the rule. In the wake of the demise of ‘the Ottoman, German, Austrian, French, British and ... Soviet Empires’, there are now, in addition to the postmodern states, ‘two new types of state’. These, Cooper describes as ‘premodern’ and ‘traditional modern’ states. An example of the former is Somalia, ‘where in some sense the state has almost ceased to exist ... and a Hobbesian war of all against all is underway’. Examples of the latter are India, Pakistan and China, ‘who behave as states always have, following Machiavellian principles and *raison d’être*’.

While ‘[w]ithin the postmodern world, there are no security threats’ ... ‘that is to say, its members do not consider invading each other’, that world,

according to Cooper has a right to invade others. The ‘postmodern world’ has a right to pre-emptive attack, deception and whatever else is necessary. As he puts it:

Among ourselves we operate on the basis of laws and open cooperative security. But when dealing with more old-fashioned kinds of states outside the continent of Europe, we need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era – force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary to deal with those who still live in the nineteenth century world of every state for itself. Among ourselves, we keep the law but when we are operating in the jungle, we must also use the laws of the jungle (Cooper, 2002: 3-4).

The New Imperialism: a postmodern fantasy¹

I have argued at length elsewhere about the dangers of postmodernism (in academia), specifically about the way in which it acts as an ideological support for global capitalism (e.g. Cole, 2003, 2004b, 2004c; Cole & Hill, 2002). Now firmly in the public, as well as the academic domain (and therefore more dangerous), postmodernism is particularly pernicious in its protagonists’ advocacy of ‘the New Imperialism’. Thus Cooper (2002: 5) argues,

¹ The following two sections of the paper draw heavily on Cole, 2004a. These sections consider the arguments of Cooper with respect to ‘postmodern imperialism’. I acknowledge that Cooper’s interpretation of postmodernism may be viewed as unorthodox and that he may not be considered postmodernism’s best representative. Leading British (academic) postmodernist, Elizabeth Atkinson, for one, would totally distance herself from Cooper’s position on imperialism (her comments on this paper).

what is needed is a new kind of imperialism, one which is acceptable to what he refers to as ‘a world of human rights and cosmopolitan values’: an imperialism ‘which, like all imperialism, aims to bring order and organisation’ [he does not mention exploitation and oppression] ‘but which rests today on the voluntary principle’.

Postmodern imperialism, he argues, takes two forms. First the voluntary imperialism of the global economy, where institutions like the IMF and the World Bank provide help to states ‘wishing to find their way back into the global economy and into the virtuous circle of investment and prosperity’. If states wish to benefit, he goes on ‘they must open themselves up to the *interference* of international organisations and foreign states’ (italic, my emphasis).

The second form of postmodern imperialism Cooper calls ‘the imperialism of neighbours’, where instability ‘in your neighbourhood poses threats which no state can ignore’. Cooper is referring here to the European Union. As he explains:

Misgovernment, ethnic violence and crime in the Balkans poses a threat to Europe. The response has been to create something like a voluntary UN protectorate in Bosnia and Kosovo. It is no surprise that in both cases the High Representative is European. Europe provides most of the aid that keeps Bosnia and Kosovo running and most of the soldiers (though the US presence is an indispensable stabilising factor). In a further unprecedented move, the EU has offered unilateral free-market access to all the

countries of the former Yugoslavia for all products including most agricultural produce (Cooper, 2002: 5).

It is not merely soldiers that come from the international community, he argues, 'it is police, judges, prison officers, *central bankers* and others' (italic, my emphasis). 'Elections are organised and monitored by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Local police are financed and trained by the UN' (Cooper, 2002: 5).

The European Union is, of course, engaged in an ongoing programme of expansion which is leading to massive enlargement. If this process is a kind of voluntary imperialism, Cooper (2002: 5-6) suggests, 'the end state might be describes [sic] as a cooperative empire. "Commonwealth" might indeed not be a bad name'. He concludes that '[t]hat perhaps is the vision', but, in the context of 'the secret race to acquire nuclear weapons' and, in the premodern world, the growth of organised crime, including international terrorism, there may not be much time left [for the establishment of this empire].

So what is the background of this leading advocate of postmodern new imperialism; of the legitimacy of a 'pre-emptive attack' on 'old-fashioned' non-European states? Between 1999 and 2001, he was Tony Blair's Head of the Defence and Overseas Secretariat, in the British Cabinet Office. Now posted to Brussels in the capacity of what the Daily Telegraph (25 October, 2003) describes as 'right-hand man to Javier Solana, Europe's foreign and security policy supremo', 'he retains close links with Downing Street, where his ideas are held in great respect' (Robert Cooper, Tony Blair's foreign policy, 2003).

Blair is, of course known for his belief in a benign globalisation (for a critique of this position, see, for example, Cole, 2005a). However, while Blair is widely known to work 'hand in glove' with President Bush, he does not *openly*

at least advocate (postmodern) new imperialism.

Julie Hyland (2002: 4) argues that Cooper's thesis is fundamentally flawed. This is because central to it is an insistence that there is no longer any real conflict of interests between the major powers. While Cooper places certain reservations with respect to the United States and Japan, he is confident that they all have a vested interest in collectively policing the world. Hyland cites Lenin who argued that all alliances between the major powers 'are *inevitably* nothing more than a "truce" in periods between wars'. As Lenin put it:

Peaceful alliances prepare the grounds for wars, and in their turn grow out of wars; the one conditions the other, producing alternating forms of peaceful and non-peaceful struggle on *one and the same* basis of imperialist connections and relations within world economics and world politics (Lenin, 1975, cited in Hyland, 2002: 4).

Cooper argues throughout, Hyland goes on, as if the major powers can simply decide to set aside their differences in order to pursue a common political agenda. However, in reality, imperialism is not a policy, but 'a complex set of economic and social relations characterised by an objective conflict between the major powers over who controls the world's markets and resources' (Hyland, 2002: 5). The struggle for oil, the source of power, Hyland concludes, has not only been the major factor in Western imperial intervention, but is likely to be the key focus of potential conflict between the major powers.

That a conflict of interests remains firmly on the agenda is not merely the province of the Left. Leading historian of Empire, Dominic Lieven, for example, who believes that 'the ideology of US empire is democratic and egalitarian' cites

‘bringing 1.25bn Chinese into the first world’ as an indication that the “‘the great game’ of empire is far from over’ (Lieven, 2004: 25).

The New Imperialism: the US reality

The key player in the New Imperialism is, of course, not the ‘European Commonwealth’, but the United States. The notion that the USA is engaged in a major imperial enterprise is nothing new. Indeed that this is the case is being recognised by a wide spectrum of political opinion, with wide support from neo-Conservatives, and condemnation from liberals and Marxists (see, for example, Cole, 2004a; Ferguson, 2004; Hyland, 2002; Lieven, 2004; Lind, 2004; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005; Smith, 2003; Young, 2002; see Cole, 2004a for information on the political affiliation of these various writers).

As *Guardian* columnist and liberal, Hugo Young states unequivocally:

the problem that Mr. Cooper ignores and that seems not to even trouble Mr. Blair any more is that the only [new world order] currently on offer is for the rest of the globe to be remade in America’s image and in the interests of the security of the US and its corporations. If there is any such thing as an acceptable postmodern imperialism, this most certainly is not it (Young, 2002, cited in Hyland, 2002: 8).

This statement underestimates (even in 2002) Blair’s allegiance to US capitalism. In concluding that any new imperialist agenda needs to recognise that ‘America is a threat to global order too’ (Young, 2002, cited in Hyland, 2002: 8), Young also understates the very real threat posed by the United States

to the very existence of the world.

Epitomising the essence of the actually existing new Imperialism is the Project for the New American Century. Proudly and explicitly Reaganite, it sets out its principles as follows:

- we need to increase defense spending significantly if we are to carry out our global responsibilities today and modernize our armed forces for the future;
- we need to strengthen our ties to democratic allies and to challenge regimes hostile to our interests and values;
- we need to promote the cause of political and economic freedom abroad;
- we need to accept responsibility for America's unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles.

Such a Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity may not be fashionable today. But it is necessary if the United States is to build on the successes of this past century and to ensure our security and our greatness in the next (Project for the New American Century, 1997).

‘Increasing defense spending’; ‘challenging regimes’; ‘promoting political and economic freedom’; ‘extending an international order’ makes it abundantly clear that as long as the New Imperialism continues to exist, so too will (imperialist) wars.

As McLaren and Farahmandpur (2005) argue,

The United States was willing to put the whole world at risk of nuclear obliteration in order to carry out its Cold War anticommunist strategies; and now that communism has fallen onto global hard times that threatens its very existence, the United States places the world at a different – but no less execrable – risk by attempting to push through its neoliberal imperialist agenda that includes preemptive military strikes against any country that is deemed a threat to U.S. corporate or geostrategic interests.

Globalisation and the US Empire

Globalisation is often used *ideologically* to justify the New Imperial Project. Globalisation is championed as the harbinger of free trade and is heralded by some as a new phenomenon. It is, in fact, as old as capitalism itself, but it is a phenomenon that alters its character throughout history (e.g. Cole, 1998)². Ellen Meiksins Wood has captured succinctly its current manifestations:

Actually existing globalization ... means the opening of subordinate economies and their vulnerability to imperial capital, while the imperial economy remains sheltered as much as possible from the adverse effects. Globalization has nothing to do with free trade. On the contrary, it is about the careful control of trading

² Globalisation is also universally heralded as inevitable (Cole, 1998, 2004c, 2005a). Thus Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* writer who has become America's official explainer of globalisation, likes to compare the process to the dawn: there is no escaping it; objecting to it is futile; and it shines alike on the just and the unjust (Purdy, 2004: 28).

conditions in the interest of imperial capital (cited in McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005)

On 17 September 2002, a document entitled *National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSSUSA)* was released which laid bare US global strategy in the most startling terms (Smith, 2003: 491). The Report heralds a 'single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy and free enterprise'. Europe is to be kept subordinate to, and dependent on, US power, and NATO is to be reshaped as a global interventionist force under US leadership, and American national security is claimed to be dependent on the absence of any other great power. The Report also refers to 'information warfare', whereby deliberate lies are spread as a weapon of war. Apparently, a secret army has been established to provoke terrorist attacks, which would then justify 'counter attack' by US forces on countries that could be announced as 'harboring terrorists' (The Research Unit for Political Economy, *RUPE*, 2003: 67-78, cited in Smith, 2003: 491-492)³.

While the *NSSUSA* states that American diplomats are to be retrained as 'viceroys' capable of governing client states (*RUPE*, 2003, cited in Smith, 2003: 491), the New US Empire, in reality, no longer seeks direct territorial control of the rest of the world, as did British Imperialism for example, but instead relies on 'vassal regimes' (Bello, 2001, cited in Smith, 2003: 494) to do its bidding. This is because capital is now accumulated via the control of markets, rather

³ To describe this process, David Geoffrey Smith (2003: 488-489) has coined the phrase, 'enfrauding the public sphere'. As he explains, special circumstances require the coining of new language and new terminology. He has created the phrase to describe 'not just simple or single acts of deception, cheating or misrepresentation' (which may be described as 'defrauding'), but rather 'a more generalized active conditioning of the public sphere through systemized lying, deception and misrepresentation'.

than by sovereignty over territories. The New Imperialism does not require invading forces to stay for lengthy periods of day. It is, therefore an imperialism *in absentia*. President Bush was thus partly right when he stated, in his 2003 state of the union address that America seeks to ‘exercise power without conquest’. He was right in the sense that America does not seek British Imperialist-type *long-term colonial conquest*. What it seeks is what Benjamin Zephaniah (2004: 18) describes as ‘cultural and financial imperialism’. This can involve sending in the troops in the short-term, or it can be done without armies⁴. As Zephaniah puts it, ‘they send in men in suits and they colonise the place financially’.

Writing from a liberal perspective, Michael Lind (2004: 5) points out that this does not stop many neo-Conservatives in the United States hankering after British Imperialism (and in particular the young Winston Churchill) as their model. Popular historian and TV presenter Niall Ferguson, for whom the British Empire was relatively benevolent, seems to have similar views. In a recent speech, he argued that the American Empire which ‘has the potential to do great good’ needs to learn from the lessons of the British Empire. First it needs to export capital and to invest in its colonies; second, people from the United States need to settle permanently in its colonies; third, there must be a *commitment* to imperialism; fourth there must be collaboration with local elites. Success can only come, he concludes, if the Americans are prepared to *stay* (Ferguson, 2004). Wall Street Journalist, Max Boot has gone so far as to state that ‘Afghanistan and other troubled lands today cry out for the sort of enlightened foreign administration provided by self-confident Englishmen in jodhpurs and pith helmets’ (cited in Smith, 2003: 490). This will not, of course,

⁴ It seems that John Howard is pursuing the same policy in the South Pacific, sometimes with troops, sometimes without (Pilger, 2004: 13-14).

happen. There are three reasons for this. First, this is not necessary (for reasons outlined above). Second it is not cost-effective. Paul Kennedy refers to this as ‘the problem of imperial overstretch’ which results in the dissipation of resources (economic, military and administrative) (cited in Smith, 2003: 498). Third, such actions would fail to achieve majority popular support, and would lead to what Waldon Bello describes as a ‘crisis of legitimacy’, the inability to convince others of one’s moral right to rule (cited in Smith, 2003: 498).

Bush’s ‘War on Terror’: an enantiomorphic analysis⁵

Smith (2003: 489) argues that the Bush Administration’s ‘war on terror’ is being used to veil long-standing, but now highly intensified, global imperial aims. Under these practices, he suggests, following McMurtry (1998: 192), knowledge becomes ‘an absurd expression’ (Smith, 2003: 489). Again, following McMurtry (2002: 55), Smith (2003: 493-494) argues that the corporate structure of the global economy (dominated by the US, particularly through its petroleum corporations) ‘has no life co-ordinates in its regulating paradigm’ and is structured to misrepresent its indifference to human life as ‘life-serving’. Thus we have terror in the name of anti-terrorism; war in the name of peace-seeking. Accordingly, US Secretary of State, Colin Powell (2003) is able to declare with a straight face and in a matter-of-fact tone that the ‘Millennium Challenge Account’ of the Bush administration is to install ‘freely elected democracies’ all over the world, under ‘one standard for the world’ which is ‘the free market system ... practiced correctly’ (cited in Smith, 2003: 494). This provides the justification for the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children since

⁵ The rest of the paper draws heavily on Cole, 2004d.

1990 through NATO bombing and the destruction of the public infrastructure (water, healthcare, etc.). This slaughter has, of course, taken on a new dimension since the current invasion of Iraq. Such justification is also given for the destabilisation of democratically elected governments throughout Latin America, Africa and Asia (Smith, 2003: 494)⁶.

This enantiomorphic process – whereby a claim is made to act in a certain way, when one actually acts in the opposite way – reached its zenith, I would argue, in the absurd claim nurtured by Bush and Blair that the invasion and occupation of Iraq was necessary because Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, which he was going to use on the West. This was accompanied by *reasonable* claims that Hussein tortured his people and was anti-democratic. The Americans and their allies were going there, we were told, to find the weapons of mass destruction, stop the people being tortured and bring democracy. The reality is, of course, that not only did Hussein have no weapons of mass destruction (it is the Americans who have such weapons, and remain the only country that has dropped atomic bombs in warfare); the Americans have continued the torture and have upheld the lack of democracy.

Since it is the declared US aim to install ‘freely elected democracies’ all over the world, it is worth dealing with the processes of the appointment of the Iraqi interim prime minister Ayad Allawi in some detail. As Peter Symonds (2004) explains, in order to defuse the growing Iraqi hostility to the US-led occupation, the US had called on the services of the UN and its special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi to bring together an interim Iraqi administration. When Brahimi was due to announce the new government for approval by the US and the UN Security Council, the plan rapidly fell apart as a result of sharp

⁶ There are encouraging signs of a backlash in South America, epitomised most clearly perhaps by the ongoing success of Chàvez in Venezuela.

differences over the choice of prime minister. Brahimi had made clear all along that he was seeking a technocrat, who was not aligned with any of the political factions in the Bush administration's handpicked Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). Washington, however, was not prepared to consider anyone in the key executive post who was not wholly subservient to US interests.

At the bidding of the US proconsul in Baghdad, Paul Bremer III, the IGC voted in favour of appointing Ayad Allawi to the position. Bremer was called into the meeting in order to give his formal blessing and the result was subsequently announced to the press. The move preempted any decision by Brahimi, who was left with little option but to declare that he welcomed the choice of Allawi (Symonds, 2004).

Allawi was broadly despised by the Iraqi population. According to fieldwork by the Iraqi Centre for Research and Studies (April, 2004), he was the least popular of 17 prominent Iraqi political personalities. Nearly 40 percent of Iraqis poll were 'strongly opposed' to Allawi. The reasons for Allawi's unpopularity are not difficult to find. He has a long and intimate association with Western intelligence agencies. In December, 2003, he flew to CIA headquarters in the US to meet with CIA director George Tenet over the creation of a new Iraqi intelligence service to counter the armed anti-US resistance (Symonds, 2004).

According to an article in the *New York Times*, Allawi received the green light to recruit ex-members of the hated Mukhabarat intelligence service, which was responsible for much of the torture and killings under the Hussein regime (Symonds, 2004).

Allawi has long been associated with the CIA and other intelligence agencies, and was one of the main sources of the 'intelligence' that was used to justify the invasion of Iraq. In particular, he was responsible for the claim,

notoriously used by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction could be operational in less than 45 minutes. As Symonds concludes,

[t]he installation of this long-time CIA ‘asset’ as head of the interim government in Baghdad will only further alienate the Iraqi people, who have had no say whatsoever in determining the composition of the [new] regime ... It confirms that the new Iraqi administration, ... will be completely dependent on Washington economically, militarily and politically, ... [and] at the beck and call of the White House (Symonds, 2004).

In the January 30th 2005 elections, Allawi’s Coalition Party netted a mere 13% of the vote.

Dussel and the Origins of US Imperialism

Smith draws on the Argentinean philosopher, Enrique Dussel, to explain the enantiomorphism of US rhetoric, what Smith (2003: 494) describes as ‘[t]he deep origins of [this] great inversion’. Dussel is one of the most eloquent and trenchant contemporary intellectuals hailing from the South. He is well known for his dedication to a scholarly ongoing reading of Marx. His work has been strongly influenced by a number of other European writers, such as Gramsci, Adorno, Heidegger, Ricoeur and Levinas. From Gramsci Dussel learned to be wary of determinism; from Adorno he gleaned the ‘mythical’ feature of Western modernity and took on board Adorno’s scepticism of the totalising ambitions of Hegel’s conceptual dialectics (Dallmayr, 2004: 8).

Dussel is particularly influenced by Heidegger, with whom he shares an emphasis on concretely situated human existence, on finite *Dasein* as ‘being-in-the-world’, where ‘world’ is not external to, but co-constitutive of human beings (Dallmayr, 2004: 8). As Mills (1997) explains:

The world is a world in which one shares with others in communal proximity. Thus, *Dasein*’s communal structure lends itself to a participation that cannot be annulled, namely, that of *theyness*. By virtue of *Dasein*’s communal character, we cannot *not* participate in a world determined by the pragmatics of society and the everyday concerns that structure *Dasein*’s activities. For Heidegger, the question of authenticity becomes intimately associated with the existential character of *Dasein* as concern and solicitude. He states, ‘[i]f *Dasein*-with remains existentially constitutive for Being-in-the-world, then ... it must be interpreted in terms of the phenomenon of *care*.

Like Ricoeur, Dussel is committed to hermeneutics, and like Levinas, he is interested in the debunking of egocentrism, that is ‘the insistence on non-totality in the sense of an openness to the ethical demands of the “Other”, especially the marginalized and disadvantaged (Dallmayr, 2004: 8).

For Dussel the birth date of ‘modernity’ was 1492, the European ‘discovery’ and ensuing conquest of the Americas (Dallmayr, 2004: 9), which marked a shift of the centre of global power from Islamic Central Asia to Europe with the rest of the world henceforward marked as periphery (Smith, 2003: 494).

While Dussel acknowledges the foreshadowing by some tendencies of the later Middle Ages, he writes, modernity

came to birth in Europe's confrontation with the Other. By controlling, conquering and violating the Other, Europe defined itself as discoverer, conquistador, and colonizer of an alterity likewise constitutive of modernity. Europe never discovered ... this Other as Other but covered over ... the Other as part of the Same: i.e. Europe. Modernity dawned in 1492 and with it the myth of a special kind of sacrificial violence which eventually eclipsed whatever was non-European (Dussel, 1995: 12).

According to Dussel, Euro-American modernity extends from the late fifteenth century to the present, and is underwritten by a two-sided myth. This is 'the myth of modernity, as Dussel names it, and has for its dominant surface side the 'myth of emancipative reason'; and for its underside it has the 'myth of sacrificial reason' (Smith, 2003: 494). The 'myth of emancipative reason', according to Dussel, is defined not so much by liberty, as it pretends, but by *subjectivity*, or, most importantly, by an elision of liberty into subjectivity. This ensures that self-enclosure, in the sense of a strong personal identity, becomes the character of the modern Western person. It is this basic narcissism that is the source of Western violence, 'because under the assumption of its inherent superiority, the myth of emancipative reason is actually incapable of registering the experience of those falling outside of its own operating paradigm, and most especially those suffering under it' (Smith, 2003: 495). Accordingly, the myth of sacrifice means that any refusal of the myth of emancipative reason, or even ignorance of it, is a cause for subjugation, or, in its starkest terms, a just cause for genocide.

Genocide, as the practice of modernity's underside, is affected indirectly or directly. Indirectly, it operates out of neglect, resulting in, for example,

environmental degradation in the name of progress, or in ignoring the tragedies of human displacement that inevitably ensue from policies of market deregulation. Directly, the myth of sacrifice means ‘play it our way’ or we will kill you because you stand in the way of what we know to be universally true, and of which truth we are the bearers (Smith, 2003: 495-496) (see the reference to the interview with Colin Powell above; see also Note 2).

Dussel’s work is thus important in understanding the New American Imperialism because it reveals how the imperialism that contemporary US foreign policy is currently engaged in has a specific and long-standing genealogy⁷.

Postmodernism, and Transmodernism: a Marxist critique

Smith argues that the ‘critiques or apologies for modernity today (Habermas, Rorty, Taylor, etc.) are still inexorably Eurocentric’ (Smith, 2003: 497). They fail, he argues, on three counts. First, the work is not located within

⁷ Smith (2003: 496) points out that not all empires are the same, and that the US Empire, as the remaining binary of the logic of the Cold War, ‘may be the last empire in human history to be constructed not just around territorial, tribal, monarchical, oligarchical or natural resource claims’. I have two comments to make on this assertion. First, I would agree that the new American Empire differs from other imperialisms in that New Imperialism no longer seeks direct territorial control of the rest of the world, as did British Imperialism for example, but instead relies on ‘vassal regimes’ to do its bidding, as argued above. Second, I am not sure what Smith means by his statement that the US Empire ‘may be the last empire in human history to be constructed not just around territorial, tribal, monarchical, oligarchical or natural resource claims’. However, I do not believe that, assuming that, by its aggressive actions, it does not succeed in destroying the world (which is a distinct possibility), this new Empire is likely to be the last. I have already cited the imperialist potential of China.

an understanding of the Euro-American global ‘order’ (or disorder), the way in which the North is complicit in the underdevelopment of the South. Second, the utter violence of that legacy is not acknowledged formally within the West’s dominant philosophical paradigms. Third, there is no dialogue between the North and the South. Following Dussel, Smith sees the modern and postmodern agendas as trapped within a mutually self-serving antagonism, and hence helpless to address the massive violence against human well-being perpetrated in the name of a parochial truth claim. He goes on to suggest that this entrapment can be easily observed in the Western academy in the tension between the universalistic logic of the sciences and technology and the celebration of particularity by the postmodern humanities, which has ‘rendered a collapse of concern for anything beyond what individual experience can express, whether in the name of autobiography, story, nation, tribe, personal therapy, or phenomenology (Smith, 2003: 497).

Having rejected both modernism and postmodernism, Smith makes the case for Dusselian *transmodernism*.

Transmodern ideas are relatively new to academia in the North. Indeed, it is still relatively difficult to get copies in English of the publications of its leading advocate, Enrique Dussel. Elsewhere (Cole, 2005b) I have listed what are, for me, transmodernism’s defining features:

- Not so much a way of thinking as a new way of living
- Anti-Eurocentrism
- Anti-(US) Imperialism
- Analogic Reasoning: reasoning from ‘OUTSIDE’ the system of global domination
- Analectic Interaction: listening to the voices of ‘suffering Others’ and interacting democratically with suffering Others

- Reverence for (indigenous and ancient) traditions of religion, culture, philosophy and morality

- Rejection of totalising synthesis⁸.

For Dussel (1996: 53), the ‘myth of sacrificial reason’ is irrational. There is, therefore, a need to transcend modernity itself. As he puts it, ‘[o]ur project of liberation can be neither anti-nor pre-nor post-modern, but instead trans-modern’. Dussel’s exploration of the aforementioned philosophical legacies led him to an ‘ethical hermeneutics’ (putting oneself in the position of the oppressed and taking on their interests, Barber, 1988: 69); or, to put it another way, a ‘philosophy of liberation’, particularly attentive to the needs of ‘the developing world’ (Dallmayr, 2004: 8). This, of course parallels liberation theology. Thus, for Dussel, liberation of the oppressed does not involve a brute struggle for power, which it is felt would merely replace one type of oppression by another⁹. In line with ‘ethical hermeneutics’, Dussel’s aim is not only to liberate the oppressed and excluded, but also to liberate the oppressor from their desire to oppress – thus ultimately appealing to a latent ethical potential (Dallmayr, 2004: 9).

In restricting modernism to ‘the universalistic logic of the sciences and technology’, Smith fails to acknowledge the contribution of Marxism per se (rather than selected Western individuals who draw on Marxist theory) both to

⁸ What follows should in no way be seen as a personal critique of Dussel, or of Smith. My intention, as a Marxist, is to engage in comradely debate with the protagonists of transmodernism, in the pursuit of that in which we all believe: a socially just world.

⁹ An important caveat to note here is that Dussel (2004) has recently argued, following Bartolome de las Casas, that violence against the oppressor can be justified in certain situations. Thus, just as for las Casas, armed struggle against the Spanish conquistadors was eternally justified, so, for Dussel, such struggle was and is justified at other historical periods. Dussel gives the example of Washington in Boston in 1776, Che Guevara in Cuba in 1959, and currently Hamas in Palestine, and the Iraqi people against the invaders of their country.

the ongoing and extremely important (academic) critique of postmodernism and to addressing, explaining *and providing solutions to* the massive violence perpetuated in the name of ‘inevitable’ neo-liberal capitalist imperialism. This is the strength of Marxism. While chronologically and geographically, it is, of course, part of modernism, Marxism is, as Sartre (1960) noted, a ‘living philosophy’, continually being adapted and adapting itself ‘by means of thousands of new efforts’. To Sartre’s observation, Crystal Bartolovich (2002: 20) has added, Marxism is a living *project*, ‘neither simply a discourse nor a body of (academic) knowledge’. That Marxism is not Eurocentric is attested to by the ‘fact that many of the most brilliant, prominent, and effective anticolonial activists have insistently pronounced themselves Marxists’ (Bartolovich, 2002: 15).

Moreover, Smith should exempt Marxism from the charge directed at modernism of being helpless to address the massive violence against human well-being, since Marxists are the first to acknowledge and indeed delineate such violence (including acknowledging the violence perpetrated by Stalinism). ‘What moderns and postmoderns have in common’, Smith goes on, citing Robert Goizueta, is that they ‘silence the cries of the victims; the first by ignoring them and the second by relativizing their universal claims’ (Smith, 2003: 497). While the second claim is true, with respect to postmodernism, it is not the case with Marxism. Indeed, Marxism’s primary project is the *liberation* of the victims: the international working class.

Marxism and Postmodernism

I will deal, in turn, with the respective Marxist critiques of postmodernism, on the one hand, and its analysis of capitalism and imperialism, on the other. Postmodernism has a high profile in educational theory, and in many ways, it

may be viewed as the dominant paradigm in this field in the UK (e.g. Atkinson, 2002, 2004) and in the US (e.g. Lather, 1991, 2001). Postmodernism, however, has been subject to sustained critique in recent years from Marxist educators (e.g. Cole, 2003, 2004b, 2004c; Cole & Hill, 2002; Cole, Hill & Rikowski, 1997; Cole, Hill, Rikowski, & McLaren, 2001; Green, 1994; Hill, McLaren, Cole, & Rikowski, 2002; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2002a, 2002b).

The Marxist critique of postmodernism relates to its rejection of the metanarrative, that is to say of an over-arching theory about society, such as Marxism (or indeed neo-liberalism); its rejection of duality, thus failing to acknowledge the existence of class struggle; its plural view of truth, such that all accounts have equal worth, rather than privileging some accounts over others (related to this is the concept of multivocality (multiple voices) where everyone's opinion has equal worth); its stress on deconstruction alone, rather than deconstruction and reconstruction; and its concentration of the local at the expense of the national and the global, thus rendering major structural change non-viable.

Marxism, Capitalism and Imperialism

With respect to the Marxist critique of (neo-liberal) capitalism, such critique is the essence of the whole project of Marxism. As far as liberating 'the oppressor from their desire to oppress' is concerned, Marxists do not believe that this is possible. On the contrary, Marxists argue that all progressive gains for the working class have been gained by workers' struggle. Marxists believe that, in essence, capitalism is about the relentless extraction of surplus value from workers labour¹⁰. It is in the interest of capitalists to maximise profits and

¹⁰ For a discussion of surplus value, see, for example, Cole, 2003: 494-495.

this entails (in order to create the greatest amount of new surplus value) keeping workers' wages as low as is 'acceptable' in any given country or historical period, without provoking effective strikes or other forms of resistance. Notwithstanding certain benign tendencies (philanthropic capitalists or certain social democratic governments for example), benefits which accrue to workers in capitalist societies have, throughout history, in general, been won by workers' struggle, rather than capitalist kindness.

Transmodernism can provide useful insights into the nature of imperialism (as in its genesis and genealogy as noted above). In addition, as Smith (2003: 499) points out, transmodernism goes beyond postmodern deconstruction, and actively seeks out not just Others, 'but ... suffering Others'. It is thus theoretically and practically more progressive than postmodernism. However, according to Dallmayr (2004: 10), like postmodernism, transmodernism and its attendant 'philosophy of liberation' 'rejects all forms of totalising synthesis'. Marxism is thus ruled out, as is the naming of democratic socialism as a viable future. This rejection is based on a reified conception of Marxism, as a 'theory of universal truth that can become yet another hammer in the hands of the self-righteous' (Smith, 2003: 500). Marxists have learnt major lessons from undemocratic dictatorial 'state socialism', practiced in the name of Marxism in the former Stalinist states. Once all metanarratives are rejected, the very real metanarrative of capitalism is aided in the retention of its hegemony.

Moreover, the agenda of transmodernism is ultimately a moral one, which, in calling 'for a simple acceptance of the impossibility of ... a theory [of universal truth]', turns for guidance to Confucianist moral virtue, Buddhist rejection of ego-driven manias, monotheist appreciation of what they are appealing to when they invoke the name of God, and Amerindian traditions of consensus making, based neither on logic, nor solely on compromise, but on

‘sitting together’, ‘until that truth is found which can be held in common’ (Smith, 2003: 500). Dallmayr (2004: 9) favours an ‘analectical’ mode of interaction. This is a manner of reasoning from the outside the system of global domination, a dialogue which begins with the revelation of the Other as part of a philosophy of liberation of the oppressed. While such *interaction* can have progressive implications, it does not, in itself lead to social change¹¹. Whereas for Dussel, as noted above, ‘the liberation of the oppressed does not involve a brute struggle for power’ (but see Note 9), for Marxists liberation comes about through such struggle. Marxists believe that social change comes about via a *dialectical* process, whereby progress in societies occurs, via thesis, antithesis and synthesis¹².

Dussel states the pre-conditions for such a non-imperialist dialogue at the present time. Dialogue should not fall, he argues, into ‘the facile optimism of

¹¹ I would like to make a couple of personal comments here with respect to my own involvement in analectical interaction. First I must point out that I, for one, have a great respect for, and have learnt much from aboriginal peoples. Indeed, one of the ways in which the living project of Marxism needs to grow is, for me, to accept spirituality, as opposed to much organised religion, as an important component of the human condition. Having lived for a year in Canada, and also for a year in Australia, I have spent long periods in informal conversation with friends, who are members of indigenous communities. I have also engaged in more formal conversation with Australian Aboriginals (e.g. Cole, 1986; Cole & Waters, 1987) and Native Canadians (e.g. Cole, 1988). In Cole, 1988, p. 9, I describe the work of one hundred Native Canadian Women in establishing ‘a worker-owned co-operative run in harmony with traditional beliefs’ (this was an interview, but, to my disgust, the magazine decided to publish it as an article, with the name of the Native Canadian woman I interviewed obliterated – a fact that will not surprise transmodernists). Marxists support all progressive reforms in capitalist societies, with a view to a longer term project of transformation to democratic socialism.

¹² Marxists argue that societies progress dialectically, as a result of struggle between opposing forces. Thus, feudalism arose out of the struggles between slaves and masters; capitalism arose out of the struggles between serfs and vassals; and socialism is to arise out of the struggles between workers and capitalists.

rationalist, abstract universalism that would conflate universality with Eurocentrism' (Dussel, 1995: 132). At the same time, it should not 'lapse into the irrationality, incommunicability, or incommensurability of discourses that are typical of many postmoderns' (Dussel, 1995: 132). 'What is needed instead is the fostering of an alternative or analectical reason open to the traumas of exclusion and oppression' (Dallmayr, 2004: 9), an outlook which must 'deny the irrational sacrificial myth of modernity as well as affirm (subsume in a liberating project) the emancipative tendencies of the enlightenment and modernity within a new transmodernity' (Dussel, 1995: 132).

These are fine moral sentiments¹³. However, given what Dallmayr (2004: 11) himself describes as 'the intoxicating effects of global rule' and the 'corresponding levels of total depravity and corruption among the rulers' (a depravity being constantly revealed at the time of writing (May/June/July/August, 2004) in the form of torture and other abuse of Iraqi and Afghanistani detainees by US troops in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, respectively), this remains an utopian dream. For Marxists, the logic of the brute force of neo-liberal imperialism must be met, as we have seen, with the logic of the dialectic and with the brute force of organized workers.

Some Educational Implications

In contemporary societies, we are in many ways being globally *miseducated*. The Bush and Blair administrations' propaganda war about 'weapons of mass destruction', aimed at masking new imperialist designs and capital's global quest for imperial hegemony and oil, is an obvious example.

¹³ Dussel has vehemently denied that he is 'a moralist', and has stated that transmodernity is primarily a philosophy of culture (personal correspondence).

As we have seen above, ‘information warfare’ is a key imperialist strategy. How then does this relate to schooling? Tied to the needs of global, corporate capital, ‘education’ worldwide has been reduced to the creation of a flexible work-force, the openly acknowledged, indeed lauded (by both capitalists and politicians) requirement of today’s global markets (e.g. Cole, 2005a). Business is in schools, both in the sense of determining the curriculum, creating the right kind of workforce for capitalism, and exercising burgeoning control of schools as businesses (Allen, Benn, Chitty, Cole, Hatcher, Hirtt, & Rikowski, 1999; Cole, 2006; McLaren, 2003; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 1999a, 1999b, 2005).

An alternative vision of education is provided by McLaren. Education should, he argues following Paulo Freire, put ‘social and political analysis of everyday life at the centre of the curriculum’ (McLaren, 2003: xxix)¹⁴.

Smith (2003: 489, 498) has argued correctly that ‘[w]hen the lines between knowledge and misrepresentation become completely blurred in the public mind, education as a practice of civic responsibility becomes very difficult’. One of the most disturbing aspects of the New American Imperialism, he goes on, is ‘the complete disregard it shows for its lived effects on the lives of ordinary citizens, perhaps especially young people’. How can we teach in the name of democratic pedagogy (participatory action research, dialogical education (Smith uses the term ‘instruction’) and discussion work, Smith goes on, when the new politics is moving in the exactly opposite direction? If lying, duplicity and intentional misrepresentation are the order of the day, what can teachers do?

¹⁴ Education, for Dussel, is less important than the exercise of power through the state. I would agree about the importance of the power of the state. For Marxists, however, capitalist states are not neutral states and need to be overthrown rather than reformed. Dussel agrees that the state must be ‘transformed’ rather than ‘reformed’ (personal correspondence). However, I would argue that, for Marxists, education, as an ‘ideological state apparatus’ (Althusser, 1971), is a crucial terrain where intervention is possible.

All this, I would argue, makes the role of Marxist educators ever more crucial. I have argued elsewhere at length (Cole, 2004e; see also Cole, 2005b) of the form education might take, so I will merely summarise my views here. Drawing on four aspects of popular ‘radical education’, identified by Richard Johnson, namely, *a critique of the existing system; alternative educational goals; education to change the world; and education for all*, I argued that each of these has considerable relevance today. Here I will address myself to their relevance, more generally, in the light of the foregoing analysis in this paper.

Johnson was referring to a period in Britain, when knowledge was produced and exchanged, but, for these radicals, its use value was to the working class – this being its paramount purpose. I would urge readers of this paper to consider each with respect to *how reasonable they are as democratic principles* rather than to what extent they are imminently realisable in the context of the current world order. World education is becoming more and more merely a selfish process of (intended) self-advancement. Smith’s (2003: 499) notion of ‘[l]earning solely for oneself’, which ‘may make you successful within the dominant scheme of things’ has surely been exacerbated by the individualism fostered by the excessive debt into which university students are forced to enter; itself a major component of the current neo-liberal capitalist enterprise.

First, Radicals conducted a running critique of all forms of ‘provided’ education, which, in later phases of the period, involved a practical grasp and a theoretical understanding of cultural and ideological struggle in a more general sense (Johnson 1979: 76). Schools and other educational institutions could be, sometimes have been, and sometimes are, centres of critical debate, involving the local trade unions, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents/carers and pupils/students (relative to age). Discussion forums could include the effects on

the world of the US Imperialist project and its relation to previous imperialisms, perhaps especially the British Empire (see Cole, 2004a for a detailed discussion) Questions about cultural and ideological struggle would arise naturally from such discussions.

Second, Radicals were involved in the development of alternative educational goals: this entailed notions of how educational utopias could actually be achieved and a definition of ‘really useful knowledge’, incorporating a radical content – a sense of what it was really important to know (Johnson, 1979: 76). What knowledge is ‘really useful’ in the promotion of social justice and equality? The school curriculum has for too long been structured to exclude, repress and prevent certain issues being addressed. While clearly, it is important for all to be literate and numerate, to what extent are working class children denied access to a critical debate about areas of concern, such as American manifestations of global imperialism (Cole, 2004a)? What are the central equality issues that confront us?

Third, radicals incorporated an important internal debate about education as a political strategy or as a means of changing the world (Johnson, 1979: 76). Richard Hatcher (1995) argues that three developments can help in this context of popular self-activity. First, information technology can allow the pupil much greater choice and undermine the role of the teacher as gate-keeper of knowledge, and at the same time enhance the latter’s role as *facilitator* of the learning process. Second, there must be an increase in the rights of pupils. Effective citizenship in a democracy must begin at school. Third, the school’s isolation must be challenged. We must take seriously the concept of a ‘learning society’ and open up all aspects of social, business and industrial life to educational enquiry (Hatcher, 1995: 3-4) (this makes an interesting counterpoint to the opening up of schools to business and industry, including business

values – see Allen et al. 1999; Rikowski, 2001, 2003). The combination of these three developments, Hatcher concludes, can place the classroom and the school at the centre of a complex learning network and help create a new popular culture about education (Hatcher, 1995: 4). Such a learning network must surely include an evaluation of the United States Empire.

Essential to a new popular education is the replacement of the attempted inculcation of ‘facts’ to be learnt and tested (where knowledge has been commodified) (Cole, 2004e), with a genuine dialogic education. Such a dialogic process needs to be differentiated from the postmodernist notion of multivocality where ‘anything goes’ and all that is on offer is deconstruction. It also needs to go beyond the laudable transmodern seeking out of the suffering of Others. Such dialogue needs not only to locate the oppressed, but to work out the possibilities of a transformative programme of action.

This is not to say that schools and other educational institutions should replace capitalist propaganda with socialist propaganda. Rather, it means that that pupils/students be provided with alternative interpretations of why and how things happen and be constantly urged to ask whose world view is conventionally taught in schools and whose is left out; from whose point of view is the past and present examined. Education from this perspective invites pupils/students not only to become thinking citizens but also to be social critics and change agents. The Blair/Bush agenda is given constant media; but where is that of Castro/Chàvez?

Finally, radical movements developed a vigorous and varied educational practice, which was concerned with informing mature understandings and on the education of all citizens as members of a more just social order. In this conception, no large distinction was made between the education of ‘children’ and ‘adults’ (in contrast to middle-class conceptions of childhood) (Johnson

1979: 77). Such an education should serve all citizens throughout their lives; should promote a democratically controlled and accountable education service at all levels. Schooling should not be totally divorced from politics and economics; rather, such issues should be sustained to *critical* analysis and should inform everyday school practice. With respect to ‘education’ outside school, politics and economics, suitably enantiomorphically processed principally via the media, are, of course, everywhere abundant.

If such an education sounds implausibly idealistic, it might be worth reiterating the point made earlier: how *reasonable* are these suggestions of a democratic education system, rather than to what extent they are likely to happen in the immediate future.

Smith (2003: 500-501) concludes his paper by stressing that ‘unless the rules of engagement for human procedure can be rethought in ways that are more equitable, fair and just, what lies ahead may be unthinkable’. However, he has already rejected theories of universal truth as impossible and thus, since he (wrongly) implicitly equates such theories with Marxism, rejects Marxism itself. Despite his denial of romanticism, he has espoused a romanticised moralism, based on Confucious, Buddha and Amerindian philosophy. An equitable, fair and just world can be foreseen through neither postmodernism nor more enlightened transmodernism. For Marxists, the choice is quite simple: that choice is barbarism – ‘the unthinkable’ – or democratic socialism.

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