

What Would it Mean to Decolonize Pedagogy?: Enrique Dussel's Pedagogics of Liberation

Linda Martín Alcoff

City University of New York

What if the schools in our communities are not, in fact, failing? What if the massive drop-out rates, poor test scores, and poor skills sets that even graduating students sometimes leave school with are the actual systemic goal?

In a remarkable series of essays spanning the last 45 years (now collected and translated for the first time in English,¹ the influential Argentinian-Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel develops a pedagogics of liberation. We need first and foremost, he argues, a thorough and deep critique of those existing pedagogical practices and curricula - Dussel calls them "educational praxes of domination" - that attempt to assimilate the poor of the global south or of first nations by schooling them in the dominant westernized culture, its high art, its mainstream ideology, and its ethos of individualism and competition. The major result of such praxes is to impart a sense of failure among the poor, who of course constitute the majority of children and youth sitting in classrooms across the globe. And after inducing failure in these students, these "educational praxes of domination" then inculcate feelings of guilt and shame for having failed to successfully assimilate the dominant cultures of their exploiters.

Dussel's focus is on the pedagogy of Latin America, where, for example, even today less than half of low-income children complete nine years of school.² But his analysis of the effects of poverty and oppression and the persistent influence of colonialism will apply to the global south in general as well as to many communities, neighborhoods, and schools in the global north. Dussel's account applies everywhere that the children of laborers, of the racially oppressed, and of colonized cultures are forcibly subjected to the pedagogies of the dominant class, until they become so alienated that they leave school with, as he says, "a bitter taste of failure."³

In this article I will offer an analytical overview of Dussel's account that situates his contribution to the philosophy of education within his philosophy of liberation and within decolonial theory today. His writings on pedagogy have included both a critical and a reconstructive aspect. He is critical of much of the canonical theory that is still practiced in colonial settings and settler contexts, and offers the contours of a reconstructed pedagogy that draws mainly from Latin American social theory, but also engages with radical European philosophy, particularly the work of Emmanuel Levinas. But what Dussel primarily offers, I'll suggest, is a philosophical scaffolding or grounding for a decolonial pedagogy.⁴

The decolonial turn is a relatively recent development in social theory so I begin with a brief account of the three major ways in which it is distinct from the older and more familiar postcolonial rubric that emerged in the 1970s. Dussel's work has been a major influence in the decolonial turn, and so this will also help to introduce what is distinctive about his approach.⁵

Decolonial theory has emerged today in some measure as a reaction against what theorists saw as weaknesses in postcolonial thought. Postcolonial thought was and continues to be revolutionary in many of our disciplines in making the case for subaltern studies, in reaching beyond the nationalist narratives of colonial and even comprador elites, in putting the history of colonialism into the center of analysis in everything from literary theory to the European Enlightenment, and in mobilizing new thinking about the nature of domination and resistance that departs from or at least goes beyond Marxist categories.

Yet postcolonial thought had limitations, one of which was to continue to rely too much on European radical social theory, and on poststructuralist and postmodernist theory in particular. The critique often made, that postcolonial theorists were mostly working in institutions of the global north, is less important than the issue of where their theoretical resources were coming from. As Dussel has argued, the liberatory theories that enlivened the transformative hopes of much of the world throughout the 19th and 20th centuries developed from basically five countries, all from the global north. These theories were borne of that local experience. Social conflict was not given a racial or ethnic cast, nor was the international division of labor a central analytic. Capitalism was not explained as a development out of, or alongside, colonialism, but as a replacement for European feudalism. As a result, liberatory social theories, including Marxism, developed no theory of race, no conceptualization of xenophobia, no critique of Eurocentrism, no concept of indigeneity, no analysis of the deep ties between culture and colonialism, and no analysis of the ways in which geographical hierarchies affect the making of theory itself.⁶

A few of the late twentieth century post-structuralist theorists began to attend (in a limited way) to race and colonialism but retained serious limitations in their understanding of colonial categories of identity and histories of resistance: their theories and concepts are grounded in European experiences, textual traditions, and local histories. Foucault's own analysis of the development of disciplinary techniques, for example, is seriously compromised by his focus on France as a nation emerging from inter-ethnic European conflicts rather than as a colonial empire. The European radical tradition is not only limited but its analyses have been flawed in ways decolonial scholars are now thinking through.

The debate that occurred over Edward Said's *Orientalism* when it was first published in 1978 is instructive.⁷ Critics (from the global north) charged Said with being too loose with Foucault, not being faithful, as it were, to Foucault's account. Said was daring to consider the subject position of the orientalist, i.e. their national and racial identities. His analysis was quite nuanced but this still went against the grain of the early postmodern catechisms about the "death of the author." While making a discursive analysis, Said was also raising questions about the epistemic status of orientalist claims, another move that placed him outside the Foucauldian circle. In other words, Said was not allowed to make his own use of Foucault, to take what he found helpful and leave behind the rest: he was enjoined to be a loyal subject. Certainly there are legitimate questions that can be raised when one makes use of an author's approach, and legitimate concerns about theoretical eclecticism,

but Said was not writing a scholarly interpretation of Foucault's ideas but a critical analysis of orientalism.

Theoretical work on coloniality should make use of every available tool, but also be aware of the hierarchies of citation that track the colonial world even in our current academic circulations. Quoting the latest European theorist continues to get more traction, and signify more theoretical sophistication, than quoting theorists from the colonial world who may be relatively unknown in the academies of the north. Implicit bias works in the field of radical social theory.

A second major distinction between the decolonial and the postcolonial concerns the time frame of analysis. Postcolonial scholarship began with the 17th century understandably as a project of subaltern studies in south Asia. Their focal point for colonialism was the British incursions that involved the creation of new colonial governments over territories that were not nationally unified, the importation of a class of administrators who would become overseers and bring their own European families with them rather than intermarrying with local people, and the particularity of British ideas about everything from common law to education and Protestant values. The experience of colonization in the Americas that began two centuries earlier took quite a different form, involving sanctioned intermingling (from Cortes on), educational institutions as extensions of Catholic missions, relatively independent colonial governments with systems of land distribution and tributes organized as *gamonales* and *encomiendas*, and most importantly, a racialization of the labor force. From Columbus's journals we can chart the beginnings of a conversation about the labor potential of various groups that began to connect emerging ideas about human difference with behavioral dispositions and intellectual potential, not to mention social and even human status, all developed within a project of colonizing a labor force. Columbus did not encounter societies with racial concepts; the Europeans began to create the modern world racial system still in place today.⁸ Hence, the constructions of racial difference preexisted the emergence of capitalism in the Americas, making it harder, if we start here, to dodge the fact that capitalism has been a racial capitalism since day one.

Clearly, colonialism in the Americas had temporal priority in the grand scheme of European empires, putting into place techniques of bureaucratization, population management, governmentality, bio power, religious education, standardized time, and social reproduction that became the foundation for colonizing practices in Asia and Africa.⁹ European colonialism was not monolithic: the Spanish and British styles sharply diverged over the question of intermarriage, for example. Yet the point remains that 18th century colonialisms built on and learned from the 16th century.

Most importantly, by beginning an analysis of the effects of coloniality with the conquest of the Americas rather than the incursions into South Asia, we have an altered understanding of the role of emerging ideas about race and the status of Europe as the vanguard of the human race. By the 18th century the Europeans understood themselves to have a distinct racial identity from those they colonized, and this understanding is apparent in both the liberal and the radical traditions, from

Locke, Kant, Hegel, Mill, and Marx. Contemporary radical European thought has yet to put either race or colonialism on its agenda.

The third difference between decolonial theory and postcolonial theory follows from these first two differences. Given the lacunae in radical European theory on many important topics, decolonial theorists today have a renewed interest in the theoretical developments that came along with the national liberation movements of the 20th century. Postcolonial theory in some ways had to differentiate itself from the tradition of anticolonial writing by Césaire, Fanon, Cabral, Senghor, Nkrumah, C.L.R. James, and others who had produced the main canon of theory up until the 1970s. Much of this tradition was itself engaged with radical European social theory and made good use of liberalism, existentialism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. Later postcolonial theorists were deeply skeptical about these particular 19th and mid-20th century European traditions of thought, mainly due to their subject-centered nature, and inflated ideas about individual agency and historical progressivism. So for some decades this rich canon of mid-century anti-colonial thought fell out of favor and was rarely taught or debated.

Decolonial theorists today are taking a new look at this canon. The point is not to revive and revere it intact: its omission of gender and sexuality, weak intersectional analysis, and assumption of subject-centered nationalist projects merits ongoing criticism. And yet the texts themselves belie simplistic readings. So there is an attempt today to repair the broken links between different periods of anticolonial thought, to take a larger historical frame of reference on the coloniality of power, to be wary of the idolatry of European theory, and to recognize the heterogeneity of European colonialisms.¹⁰

Dussel's work has been a crucial influence in the decolonial turn due to his global framing and his focus on the conquest of the Americas as the critical starting point. His own philosophical training was heavily European, but I would argue that his work on the philosophy of liberation, emerging from the theology of liberation, itself represents an approach indigenous to the Western hemisphere. Before turning to his writings on pedagogy I will begin with some remarks on his philosophy of liberation.

Dussel points out that the colonies were a central, causal, and constitutive feature of modernity, including the European Enlightenment, and that the colonized parts of the world actually had some intellectual and political advantages over the myopic tendencies of the Europeans.¹¹ Turning the tables on Hegel's assessment of the colonies as historically static and philosophically sterile, Dussel presents Hegel's errors - his rush to judgment about peoples and cultures he knew little about and his overly confident characterization of the German epistemological standpoint - as prime evidence that Hegel's own geographical location in fact presented epistemological obstacles, a classic case of what some call the epistemology of ignorance.¹² But on Dussel's view, Hegel is in no way absolved on the grounds of these contextual considerations: Hegel's is a willful ignorance and his invention of developmental modernism served to justify a lack of investigation. Hegel himself believed history and culture to have philosophical relevance; but for him this fact did not support relativism but rather an absolutist justification of his own epistemological standpoint. It was only because

Hegel wrote *from* Europe that he could write *of* Man. A major task Dussel takes up is to show how this idea has been maintained in Western-influenced philosophies from Weber through Habermas.

In contrast, Dussel acknowledges the non-universal nature of his own context of enunciation. Like every other Latin American philosopher since El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Dussel has been forced to contemplate how his context is situated with respect to the regime of European truth. Dussel accepts Hegel's view about the relevance of location and the necessity of reading the history of philosophy in light of the history of the world. Hence, historical location is inevitably a part of philosophical thought, and philosophical thought is advanced via a dialectic. But crucially, Dussel drops Hegel's developmentalism and redefines the local in a more global frame. Europeans largely denied that European modernity was dependent on the transnational flows of ideas and goods that colonialism intensified, and instead characterized their Enlightenment as "self-caused," to mimic Aquinas's characterization of God. In contrast, Dussel maintains that modernity has always been a decentralized, global phenomenon. As a result, there is no local that can proclaim itself to be the vanguard: there is only domination and a plethora of global victims. Dussel replaces the Hegelian perspectivism grounded in an imagined developmentalist trajectory of time with a materialist perspectivism grounded in the geography of place, both literal and structural: how the world looks depends on who is doing the looking.

From his own spatial location (in exile in Mexico since the right wing military coup in Argentina forced him to leave the country in 1975), Dussel deconstructs not only Hegel's colonial developmentalism but also his central thesis: that the story of human history is the story of the advancement of freedom. Dussel rejects Hegel's claim that freedom is the central criterion that establishes whether progress has been achieved. For Hegel, freedom is the central concept for both history and philosophy since it alone drives the dialectic and explains historical ruptures and motivates the cunning of reason and the ongoing growth of human understanding. The freedom to move, to grow, to expand, to create the conditions for autonomy, and also, we might silently think, the freedom to vanquish anyone who stands in the way. Because, for Hegel, freedom is the story of human history, the development of freedom countermands every other consideration, ethical or otherwise. In contrast, for Dussel the central concept is life, material life. The ultimate ethical criterion is not freedom but the "reproduction or development of the life of each human subject in the community."¹³ Systems - whether philosophical, political, or economic - that thwart and inhibit the reproduction or development of material life are invalid.

Yet, in a sense, to value life is to value the creative capacity: human beings being what they are, the nature of life can never coexist with stasis or the cessation of movement and development. Citing the Chilean biologist and philosopher Humberto Maturana, Dussel puts this as follows: "We are a moment of autopoietic life."¹⁴ Hence, the protection of life is the protection of the capacity to continue the open-ended movements of history. Hegelian freedom, at least in some of its iterations, has served as an alibi for the destruction of life, even whole cultural communities. For Dussel, Hegel doesn't understand freedom; by making freedom more important

than material life he in fact diminishes freedom. In Dussel's rendering, the protection of material life will maximize the creative capacity of the species.

Dussel suggests that the struggle of victims (defined as all those excluded from the very ability to maintain and secure their lives¹⁵) is to discover non-truth, non-validity, and non-efficacy. Echoing Adorno here, Dussel holds that to make sense of the fact that the impoverishment of the majority of the world's people and the imminent danger of eco-suicide are not on the agenda of dominant systems of thought, we need to cultivate a skepticism toward the intelligible, the valid, and the true. Only through discovering the fundamental lack in currently dominant systems, processes, and values can the community of victims reach toward creative, reconstructive formulations.

And so, for Dussel, the agenda of a philosophy of liberation must include a commitment to a critique of vanguardism in all forms and an enactment of a democratic epistemology in which the source of knowledge is understood to be communal rather than technocratic and elitist.¹⁶ He argues that the central role in liberation is always played by the excluded and the victims who have proven over and over their capacity for insight and creativity. Liberation is driven by the social movements, counter-discourses, and reconceived institutions that communities of the activist oppressed continuously create: "The subject of the praxis of liberation is the living, needy, natural, and thus, cultural subject, and in the last instance the victim, the community of victims, and those who are co-responsibly articulated with it."¹⁷ Non-truth, non-validity, and non-efficacy cannot be found without acknowledgment of the epistemic resources of everyday existence in the lives of victims: the true agents of ethical criticism and reconstruction.

This brings us to the task of decolonizing the sphere of education. These core elements of the philosophy of liberation - the central focus on material life, the creative capacity of victims, and the need for a democratic epistemology in order to reach the exteriority of the current system - can be discerned in Dussel's writings on education. For Dussel, to decolonize pedagogy, I want to suggest, would involve making two major methodological shifts: a shift to a naturalized theoretical approach to education; and a shift from ideal to non-ideal approaches. Though related, these shifts are distinct. A naturalized philosophy of education would base descriptive analysis on the actual practice of teaching as it is embedded in the inter-generational work of community reproduction, while the non-ideal approach would then take real-world conditions as the basis to craft pedagogical norms or prescriptions. Both of these methodological approaches are enacted in his writings on education.

The naturalized approach Dussel advances begins not with the prescriptive question about what kind of work force our educational institutions today should be preparing for the future, and what assortment of skills our economy needs right now. Rather it begins with the question of how a given community of adults interacts with a given community of children and youth in material and concrete ways given their different positionality with respect to the temporal dimension of collective life. In other words, the naturalized approach takes the perspective of the most fundamental and material aspect of education: the inter-generational encounter. Dussel

calls this the question of the *pedagogical*, as distinct from pedagogy, to distinguish “the science of teaching or learning” - pedagogy - from “that part of philosophy that thinks through the face to face relationships.” In this context the face to face relationships occur across differences of status but within relationships of care, such as father/son, teacher/disciple, doctor/patient, and politician/citizen. Each of these relationships defies the expectation of equality, are enacted through difference, and are guided by the dictates of care as well as by the material necessity of communal reproduction and regeneration.

Thus the question of the pedagogical begins with the child in a household and concludes with an adult who shares responsibility for their community. The young have a different relationship to the future, and a larger set of needs and vulnerabilities. The encounter between individual teachers and students occurs with these differences of temporality and condition always already in place, which affects the nature of the interaction, its stakes, and its outcome. Dussel reminds us that inter-generational encounters between human beings involve, in the first instance, bodies and breasts, the provision of sustenance, comfort, and safety, and that the face-to-face-encounter between generations always occurs against a backdrop of impassable differences. This does not entail that children are never empowered *vis-à-vis* adults, but that the temporal differences cannot be set aside as tangential or something that can be transcended.

Dussel’s naturalistic language should be read as a feature of his Levinasian-inspired phenomenology. But unlike Levinas, Dussel’s naturalism is paired not with decontextualized generalities about the existential grounds for ethics, but rather with a political analysis of the concrete and material histories of the present. To take a naturalistic view requires an analysis of material realities in all their variation. Thus, for Dussel, the question of inter-generational encounters cannot be approached in terms of global generalities alone, but in relation to actual cultural communities who are attempting to provide sustenance, comfort, and safety, as well as to ensure their communal regeneration under very specific conditions.

Dussel’s approach here parallels a similar move that was made some decades ago in the sub-disciplines of philosophy of science and epistemology, a shift from an attempt to rationally reconstruct the process of justifying theories after the fact, to a project of describing how scientists actually pursue their inquiries in the moment, in the laboratory, in the process of collective work.¹⁸ Idealized portrayals of scientific determinations that occluded sociological and non-rational influences were then replaced in this naturalized approach by more accurate characterizations that involved, for example, instances of negotiation. Naturalizing the philosophy of science made it possible to provide better assessments, evaluations, and eventually prescriptions, based on actually existing practice. Hence, a naturalized approach considers science not in the idealized terms of “Man’s Journey of Discovery,” but as consisting of actual research teams created through the vagaries of racist and sexist institutions controlled by capital interests with quite specific practical aims. Science can then be seen for what it is: grounded in human need and both enabled and challenged by every social dynamic in its context, including political and economic ones.

Thus I suggest first of all that we read Dussel as performing a similar function by naturalizing philosophy of education, moving theory into the temporal, generational reality of human social reproductions under quite specific conditions. On the one hand, this brings to the fore the general condition of community survival and continuation as the constituting motive of pedagogical practice, while on the other it allows for a re-contextualization of specific schoolrooms in specific social moments, with actual faculties created through the vagaries of hierarchical social structures rather than imagined in their ideal state. In other words, the naturalistic frame is what produces both Dussel's expansive outlook on education as well as his focus on actual practices within contexts of domination. The general charge of continuity must be adduced within actually existing conditions.

The second methodological shift Dussel makes is the move to non-ideal theory. To repeat what I said earlier, this move is related yet distinct from the naturalistic move. The point of a naturalized philosophy of education is to argue that descriptive analysis should be based in the practices embedded in the inter-generational work of community reproduction. The point of the non-ideal approach is primarily prescriptive, taking real world conditions in local contexts to craft pedagogical prescriptions.¹⁹ This is a recent push in social theory and philosophy, and comes from a number of critical race philosophers and feminists in particular. The tradition of European political philosophy has been shaped by texts such as Plato's *Republic*, Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Thomas More's *Utopia*, and John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, all of which put forth ideals out of imagined generic thought experiments unconstrained by sociological realities. One must have such decontextualized ideals, it has been argued, before one can identify specific shortcomings in a current society or justify projects for redress. The ideal precedes the non-ideal. Against this, non-ideal theorists hold that the work of developing political and ethical norms requires before anything else an assessment of real world, non-ideal conditions. Norms of practice will emerge from an understanding of the obstacles we encounter now, the challenges we face in this context. This means our norms are no longer universal, timeless, generic.

Dussel's anti-pedagogy is grounded in an awareness of poverty and colonialism, racism and sexism, and new forms of oppressions that are constantly articulated in social movements. On Dussel's view, the activist oppressed are not in need of ideal theory crafted through the thought experiments of elites in order to mount campaigns or develop new theory.

In *Emile, or on Education*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau himself offered a pedagogy of liberation grounded in the European Enlightenment ideals of a universal culture that would nurture the creative capacity of free minds and noble hearts. This idea of a universal culture legitimated the ideal theory approach to the philosophy of education, with no need for contextually specific norms. Dussel turns to Rousseau repeatedly as a foil, a contrast, an exemplary mistake. His principle criticism is that the ideal of universal culture advocated by Rousseau trades on the destruction of actually existing cultures. And so Rousseau instructs the teacher that it makes no difference whether the child has a father or mother: in any case, their particular genealogy has no bearing on the universal culture to which they should assimilate. The condition

of the child's actually existing cultural community is irrelevant. Rousseau's utopian vision of a universal culture is thus no amalgamation or sublation of what exists and has existed; it is a substitution based on erasure. The child's own culture of origin (or their people's culture) can be justifiably ignored.

Given this overall orientation, the teacher is then positioned not as the generational equivalent of the parent, or as the parent's partner or collaborator in pursuing the inter-generational work of survival. Rather, in Rousseau's approach, the teacher is the anti-parent: the pure, unsituated representative of universal or transcendental value pitted against the particular way of life of the child's own community.

Educators have often been presented as *correctives* to community conventions in this way and, hence, as oppositional to the other influences being exerted on children and youth, especially those coming from parents and communities. Such teachers are then understandably eyed with suspicion by the community and with defensiveness or outright antagonism by the parent. For impoverished parents with little formal education, this may be a competition they lack the confidence to engage in, with no hope of winning. Rousseau insists that the student should observe a unilinear command structure, obeying *only* the teacher. His is a pedagogy that commands rather than inspires. To the extent it is followed without challenge, Dussel holds that it cannot but ensure the further subordination of oppressed communities; not their survival, but their eradication. It is ideal theory that enacts colonization and oppression.

As an alternative, Dussel argues for an "anti-Emile" that would reverse the power relations presented by Rousseau. In reality, the teacher is never a representative of universal culture coming to enlighten with a prior grasp on the truth. In real world contexts today, such narratives only provide cover for pedagogies that are Eurocentric and colonizing. The teacher and the parent are, in actuality, correlative in their generational relationship to the child and youth: both are involved in the process of the inter-generational encounter. In Rousseau's view, the parent represents stasis, while the teacher represents advance, as if only the teacher/student relation has a temporal orientation toward the future. But both are engaged in a face to face relation to students/children as the harbingers of a future.

Dussel departs from Rousseau's authoritarianism in the name of enlightenment to insist on the relationality of the teacher/student and parent/child encounter. Because it is always a relationality across temporal distance, it resists the stasis that worries Rousseau and contains inherently creative possibilities. This temporal distance makes the child or youth an "Other": "The child cannot be a possibility for the parents because his [or her] being is not founded in their project, rather it transcends them." The child reaches "beyond the most extreme possibility of [the parents'] world", constituting "another world, another human."²⁰

Moreover, teachers are also in material relations with their students: the teacher cannot imagine himself, as Rousseau would have it, as an "aseptic preceptor, identified with the gods nor nature. The teacher is *such*, of a certain sex, a determined moment, a community and State, a nation, a social class, an era of humanity, with its doctrines and theories...He therefore does not have the right to present himself

before the disciple as if he had all the rights, and especially the right to be obeyed without limit, like the preceptor in *Emile*."

Hence, the teacher/student relation is a temporal relation between two materially specific beings, and is therefore subject to the ethics of self-Other relations. The inter-generational encounter can neither be a one-way process of imparting Truth, nor one that abdicates the responsibility of the older generation or denies their influence. It must evolve as a relationship through the praxis of mutual listening, which he calls the *conditio sine qua non* of *agape* or moral love.

Such mutuality is negated and rendered impossible by Rousseau's commandist pedagogy that mistrusts the child, as well as the parents and their community, and so renders impossible a praxis of dialogue and mediation. Yet for Dussel, the role of the teacher is far from passive, but also involves active intervention. How, then, is the praxis of mutual listening coordinated with - how does it enable - intervention on his account?

Consider the real world context of cross generational engagements with students from subordinated communities that face colonialism. In these scenarios, teachers are generally hired to teach the "truths" of the current system, with the system's self-legitimation implicitly (or sometimes explicitly) integrated into a curriculum and practice designed to impart the belief that the current social order is "natural, eternal, and sacred," the best of all possible worlds. Yet, the higher or superordinate task of the teacher is a perpetual striving to discern truth, and not to simply parrot existing regimes of accepted doxa. In the case of relating to a subordinated student sitting in a colonized classroom, this will necessarily involve constructing an *exteriority* to the system, Dussel argues. Such an exteriority provides an outlook upon which the current situation in which the student is positioned can be rendered subject first to observation and then to evaluative analysis.

Constructing an exteriority will then involve what Dussel has called "analectical reasoning," or the reasoning that reaches beyond the simple dialectics of response and reaction to a space on the far side of what is intelligible within the terms of the current thought and practice. Subordination itself can be rendered almost invisible within an orientation such as Rousseau's, which portrays commandist education as the gift of enlightenment rather than the destruction of difference and the threat to a community's survival. To animate the students own critical faculties in such a situation requires the teacher to reach beyond the sphere of the currently imaginable, reaching toward an exteriority in which the child or youth is conceptualized as coming from a particular culture with something to offer, in which the child or youth is seen to have the capacity to think creatively and not simply obey. Hence, the teacher must *actively* intervene in order to reveal the exteriority that lies outside of a colonizing curriculum for the analectical reasoning in which mutual listening between student and teacher then can occur.

In this sense, the child becomes an anti-Emile. Dussel writes that it is "Malinche's child," who says "We are not orphans. Let us simply recognize our real and humble origins."²¹ Whereas Rousseau proposes to transform the student into someone

able to transcend his/her humble origins, Dussel insists, with Martí, Gutiérrez, Paz, Mariátegui, and others in this tradition, that those origins neither can, nor should be, denied or denigrated. When young radical activists in colonized communities find it impossible to identify with the *imago patris* or state or patriarch in power, this is continually misread as a manifestation of Freudian Oedipalism or the inevitability of generational revolt. Such frames obscure the contextual conditions of resistance. For Dussel, resistance in colonial contexts is a claiming of exteriority, a decolonial consciousness.

Dussel reminds us that, originally, indigenous teachers were also doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists, artists, and priests. That is, they performed a variety of roles in communities and with the young, including protecting, advocating for, adjudicating, analyzing, serving, and inculcating into religious life. There was no posture of neutrality or of being the transcendent representative of a universal truth that existed beyond communal life. Rather than passive servants, they were *tlamatinés*, or wisdom leaders.

How does a teacher enable a student to imagine the impossible? The first task must be to address the teacher's own imaginary representations of the epistemic condition of the student. If the teacher imagines the child as a *tabula rasa*, as the modern Europeans did, or, conversely, imagines the task of teaching as a process of animating the child's existing memory, as the Ancient Greeks did, a pedagogy of liberation will be beyond reach. Neither erasure of the child's past nor mere repetitive reinscription of that past correctly represents the inter-generational relation in which the student is recognized as an agential subject. If, on the other hand, the teacher/student relation is correctly understood as an encounter between subjects, then students must be conceptualized as active epistemic agents, neither empty vessels nor merely the unthinking stewards of prior cultural knowledge. Dussel describes the pedagogy that can emerge from a inter-generational relation in which students are recognized as epistemic subjects as a "creative revelation." He says:

the teacher cannot simply deposit a certain amount of knowledge as acquisitions ... rather he must transmit what is acquired, but from the existential situation of the student and from the way in which his creative revelation arrives to confound itself with the proper problematizing invention of the student.

This is what he calls the pedagogical analectic.

In reality, the universal culture that educational institutions imagine themselves to be imparting to students still today emerges without imaginative work since it is a mirror of elite culture. Dussel says: "The praxis of pedagogical domination is based on the postulate that there is no other possible speech than that which expresses the meaning of the established world." In this case the teacher/father/state is in a relation of domination, not dialogue, with the student/child/community, as Freire argued.²² In the colonial context, this means that only the cultural national elite is accorded the role of active subject. To the extent that creative intelligence is nurtured, it is only that creativity that conforms to the current system's needs and goals.

Decolonial approaches to pedagogy have rightfully insisted that colonized cultures have rich resources of knowledge that should be acknowledged in the curriculum.

This can lead to the concern that a decolonial approach is mainly intended to conserve existing conventions of thought and practice in subjugated communities and are thus counterposed to critique and transformation. Dussel's writings on pedagogy offer an answer to this concern.

To decolonize pedagogy, for Dussel, is not about conserving intact any system or culture as they exist today, but about recognizing the analectical need to think exteriority in order to enable a critical analysis of existing doxa. Only in this way can what he calls "ontological novelty" be interjected into the system, beyond what is today the true, the valid, and the efficacious. But constructing exteriority requires dialogue, reaching across the generational chasm, and thus an ethics of relationality that acknowledges the full historical condition and materiality of all participants. For this, teachers need a collaborative approach that recognizes their own need to learn about the child's or student's actual reality. The teacher is not pitted in perpetual opposition to the subordinated communities of their students, but to the national cultures of empire that incapacitate material life and ethical relationships of all sorts. For this the teacher may indeed run the risk of persecution and exile.²³

1. Enrique Dussel, *The Pedagogics of Liberation: A Latin American Philosophy of Education*, trans. David I. Backer, Cecilia Diego (New York: Punctum Books, forthcoming). At the time of writing this volume was still in progress and, hence, no page numbers can be provided.

2. See, for example, the Inter-American Development Bank's 2015 Report "High School Graduate Rates in Latin America" at <http://www.iadb.org/en/topics/education/infographic-high-school-graduation-rates-in-latin-america,7110.html>. There is variation across countries yet a persistent lack of progress among poor children in rural areas.

3. All the quotations from Dussel's pedagogical essays come from the forthcoming collection.

4. A decolonial pedagogy is aiming for decolonizing effects; this is distinguishable from a decolonized pedagogy which implies that it has become entirely free of any vestige of colonial influences.

5. See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking Through the Decolonial Turn: Post-continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy and Critique: An Introduction," *Transmodernity* 1, no. 2 (2011): 10-15.

6. See Linda M. Alcoff, "Educating with a (De)Colonial Consciousness," *Proceedings from the 2013 Lapas Symposium, LÁPIZ: Latin American Philosophy of Education Journal* 1 (2014): 4-18.

7. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).

8. See Ramón Grosfoguel, "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn," *Cultural Studies* 21 No. 2-3: 211-223.

9. See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

10. Besides those already cited, see e.g. Lewis Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Walter Dignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument," *The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257-337.

11. Enrique Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation: In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion* trans. Eduardo Mendieta and Alejandro Vallega (London: Duke University Press, 2013). This argument is elaborated in the "Introduction."

12. See e.g. Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, ed., *Race and the Epistemologies of Ignorance* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007).

13. Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 128. Also 95 and 289-290.

14. Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 58.

15. Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 279-284.
16. Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 240.
17. Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 385.
18. See e.g. Ronald N. Giere "Naturalized Philosophy of Science," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/naturalized-philosophy-of-science>.
19. See Charles Mills, "Ideal Theory as Ideology," *Hypatia* 20 no. 3 (2005): 165-184.
20. Dussel, *The Pedagogics of Liberation*.
21. This and all following quotations from Dussel, unless otherwise identified, come from the forthcoming translation that will appear in *Lápiz*.
22. See Dussel's discussion of Freire in Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation*, 311-320.
23. My thanks to Jason T. Wozniak and David Backer for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.