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## The Prospect of Liberating Pedagogy in the Thoughts of Amable G. Tuibeo

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On this paper, I will explore the prospect or promise of liberating pedagogy reflected mainly in the textbooks that Tuibeo uses for his classes in philosophy. By liberating pedagogy, I refer to the educational theory rooted in the thoughts of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian philosopher, educator and activist. I will start by outlining the main thoughts of Freire's liberating pedagogy. Then, I will give a short note on who is Amable Tuibeo. After which, I will outline his main thoughts reflected mainly in the textbooks that Tuibeo is using in his philosophy classes. Then, I will discuss how these thoughts reflect the promises of Freirean liberating pedagogy.

### Paulo Freire's Liberating Pedagogy<sup>1</sup>

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) is a Brazilian educator, activist and philosopher during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> According to the Freirean scholar Jones Irwin, "Freire's influence on both theory and practice in education

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<sup>1</sup>This particular section is also part of a paper submitted for publication in *Kritike*, the official open access journal of the Philosophy Department of the University of Santo Tomas (Manila).

<sup>2</sup>For a detailed account of his life, see the following: Denis E. Collins, *Paulo Freire: His Life, Works and Thoughts* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 5-24; Paul V. Taylor, *The Texts of Paulo Freire* (Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993), 12-33; John L. Elias, *Paulo Freire: Pedagogue of Liberation* (Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 1994), 1-16.

has been monumental and, alongside John Dewey, he is perhaps the most significant educational thinker and practitioner of the twentieth century."<sup>3</sup> Then, two commentators of Freire's works, Donaldo Macedo and Ana Maria Araujo, declare the Brazilian as "the most significant educator in the world during the last half of the [20<sup>th</sup>] century."<sup>4</sup>

Even though Freire authored several works spread over a period of more than 30 years, he is basically known by many for writing *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a book that positions education in relation to the issues of oppression and domination. The book is also considered to be one of the pillars of what later on would be called as Critical Pedagogy.<sup>5</sup> There are at least five important elements of Freire's liberating pedagogy: nonneutrality, critique, dialogue, praxis and concern for transformation.

Freire contends that education is not neutral. He states: "The first proposition that I advance and the most basic one is that there is nothing like neutral education. Education is a political act. It is impossible to analyze education without analyzing the problem of power."<sup>6</sup> The American theologian Richard Shaull explains nonneutrality in these words:

There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the

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<sup>3</sup>Jones Irwin, *Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Education: Origins, Developments, Impacts and Legacies* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012), 12.

<sup>4</sup>Donaldo Macedo and Ana Maria Araujo Freire, "Foreword" in Paulo Freire, *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*, trans. Donaldo Macedo, Dale Koike and Alexandre Oliveira (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2005), vii.

<sup>5</sup>See Joe L. Kincheloe, *Critical Pedagogy Primer*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2008), 69-75.

<sup>6</sup>Paulo Freire, *Education for Liberation: Addresses by Paulo Freire* (Bangalore: Ecumenical Christian Centre, 1975), 17-18.

younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes 'the practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand Henry Giroux, a North American critical educator states that "[e]ducation represents in Freire's view both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations."<sup>8</sup> With the inherent politics of all educational processes, Freire further maintains that the educator must choose whether his politics favors the interest of the oppressor or that of the oppressed.<sup>9</sup>

If a liberating pedagogy consciously supports the interest of the oppressed and the dominated, then it must problematize the various forms of domination inside the school and in the society at large. This is the element of critique. Its aim is the emergence and development of a critical consciousness among the participants of the pedagogical process. Freire calls this process *conscientizacao*, usually translated into English as conscientization.<sup>10</sup> It is

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<sup>7</sup>Richard Shaull, foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by Paulo Freire, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: The Continuum Publishing Corporation, 1984), 15.

<sup>8</sup>Henry Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals: Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Learning* (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey, 1988), 110.

<sup>9</sup>Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1987), 46.

<sup>10</sup>Freire admits that he is not the first to use the term. He attributes its initial popularity in Europe and North America to the works and travels of Dom Helder Camara, the Bishop of Recife at that time. See Paulo Freire, "Conscientizing as a Way of Liberating," in *Third World Liberation Theologies: A Reader*, ed. Deanne William Ferm (New York: Orbis Books, 1986), 5-6. Furthermore, Taylor reports that Freire admits stopping using the term since the early 1970's "because the word was so corrupted in Latin America and in the States. It does not mean

defined as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.”<sup>11</sup> In his other writings, Freire explains conscientization as a kind of education that involves both reading the word and reading the world.<sup>12</sup> Technical expertise and political literacy go hand in hand. Freire makes it clear that in the context of classroom experience, one cannot be sacrificed for the other. In *Pedagogy of the City*, he clarifies:

What would be wrong, and what I have never suggested should be done, is to deny learners their right to literacy because of the necessary politicization there would not be time for literacy in the strict sense of the term. Literacy involves not just reading the word but reading the world.<sup>13</sup>

Dialogue is another important element of Freire’s liberating pedagogy. He describes dialogue as “the encounter between [persons], mediated by the world, in order to name the world.”<sup>14</sup> He observes that generally speaking education is suffering from narration sickness.<sup>15</sup> It is characterized by a culture of silence or mutism.<sup>16</sup> It is largely based on what Freire calls a banking education which is fundamentally monological. In glaring contradiction with the banking

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that I reject the process which the word means.” See Taylor, “The Texts of Paulo Freire,” 52.

<sup>11</sup>Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 19.

<sup>12</sup>See Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, *Literacy: Reading the Word & the World*, (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1987).

<sup>13</sup>Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the City* (New York: Continuum Press, 1993), 59.

<sup>14</sup>Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 76.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>16</sup>Freire, *Education as the Practice of Freedom*, 24. For a thorough explanation of the concept of culture of silence, see also Paulo Freire, “Cultural Action and Conscientization,” *Harvard Educational Review* 40:3 (August 1970):452-477.

education is what Freire calls the problem-posing education where the teacher does not deposit fixed knowledge to the students but reality is posed as a problem for the students to think about, question, critique and transform. "Authentic education," Freire writes, "is not carried on by 'A' for 'B' or by 'A' about 'B,' but rather by 'A' with 'B,' mediated by the world - a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it."<sup>17</sup> This education, Freire notes, "consists in acts of cognition, not transferals of information."<sup>18</sup> The "I" who can know interacts with a "You" that can also know, regarding an aspect of the world that can be known. Both the teacher and the students are *knowing subjects* reflecting on a *knowable object* which is the world.

The fourth element of Freire's liberating pedagogy is praxis. He defines praxis as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it."<sup>19</sup> Certainly, it has a mark of Marxism. Ronald Glass, another Freirean scholar, affirms that it is already a given that at the center of Freire's liberating pedagogy is Marx's philosophy of praxis.<sup>20</sup> For Freire, in order to attain genuine and meaningful social transformation, pure reflection/verbalism and pure action / activism by themselves are insufficient.<sup>21</sup> The insufficiency of one is complemented by the other so that the dialectic is what Paul Taylor calls as "active reflection and reflective action."<sup>22</sup> Praxis combines "perception of reality" and "critical intervention" upon reality.<sup>23</sup>

Transformation is another element of Freire's liberating pedagogy. It means that the concern of the critical

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<sup>17</sup>Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 82.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 67.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 36 and 66.

<sup>20</sup>Ronald Glass, "On Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Praxis and the Foundations of Liberation Education," in *Educational Researcher*, 30:2 (March 2001), 15-25, 16.

<sup>21</sup>Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 75-76.

<sup>22</sup>Taylor, *Texts of Freire*, 56.

<sup>23</sup>Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 37.

educator is to link the classroom discourse to the larger dream of creating a more just, humane and free society. Freire says in *Cultural Action for Freedom*: "As an ever calling forth the critical reflection of both the learners and educators, the [educative] process must relate *speaking the word to transforming reality*, and to man's role in this transformation."<sup>24</sup> And then, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he says:

In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform.<sup>25</sup>

Stephen Brookfield, in his article that relates the significance of ideology critique to transformative learning, says that Freire's educational theory is one among those theories that do not end with a critique of ideology but "also contains within it the promise of social transformation."<sup>26</sup> For his part, the American Jesuit scholar Denis E. Collins says that Freire's political pedagogy repeatedly pleads for an affirmation "that pedagogy can make a difference in creating a more humane world" and "that liberationist educators can continue to play a major role in attaining that goal."<sup>27</sup> Freire says in his dialogical book with Donaldo Macedo: "The progressive educator rejects the dominant values imposed on

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<sup>24</sup>Freire, "Cultural Action for Freedom," in Paulo Freire, *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation*, trans. Donaldo Macedo (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1985), 51.

<sup>25</sup>Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 34.

<sup>26</sup>Stephen D. Brookfield, "Transformative Learning as Ideology Critique," in Jack Mezirow & Associates, *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 129.

<sup>27</sup>Denis E. Collins, "From Oppression to Hope: Freire's Journey towards Utopia," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 29:1 (March 1998): 122.

the school because he or she has a different dream, because he or she wants to transform the status quo."<sup>28</sup>

But Freire is not naïve and he does not delude himself as regards the power of the school to transform the social structures. He says that conscientization (or education, for that matter) is not a panacea or a magical pill that would immediately cure the ills of the society.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the critical educator must be aware of the many limitations of the classroom even for individual transformation. Freire contends:

If teachers don't think in terms of phases, levels, and gradations in a long process of change, they may fall into a paralyzing trap of saying that everything must be changed at once or it isn't worth trying to change anything at all. Looking only for big changes, teachers may lose touch with the transformative potential in any activity.<sup>30</sup>

For Freire, education is not sufficient to transform the oppressive structures of the society. But still, education is essential for this undertaking.

To summarize, Freire's liberating pedagogy can be described as a *nonneutral* educational *praxis* that is anchored on *dialogue* and *critique* aiming for a *transformed* society which is more just, humane and free.

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<sup>28</sup>Freire and Macedo, *Literacy: Reading the Word & the World*, 126.

<sup>29</sup>Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage*, trans. Patrick Clarke (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998), 55.

<sup>30</sup>Freire and Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation*, 35.

## Who is Amable G. Tuibeo?

Amable G. Tuibeo is a professor of philosophy at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP).<sup>31</sup> His name may not be as prominent as other Filipino philosophical luminaries, but he is recognized as one of the pioneers of the discipline of philosophy in the Philippines.<sup>32</sup> In a recent conference sponsored by the Philosophical Association of the Philippines (PAP), Tuibeo was slotted to give a Legacy Lecture together with prominent Filipino philosophers such as Emerita Quito, Alfredo Co, Roque Ferriols, Florentino Timbreza, Florentino Hornedo and others.<sup>33</sup> At PUP, the Philosophy Department has paid tribute to Tuibeo, a self-proclaimed Marxist by organizing a symposium revolving on

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<sup>31</sup>Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), formerly known as the Philippine College of Commerce, is a state-owned institution of higher education located in Manila, Philippines. Just like the majority of public schools in the Philippines, it has the reputation of being the school for the poor Filipinos for those who cannot afford the high cost of private education. In an era of an apolitical studentry, PUP is still considered by some observers as one of the remaining sanctuaries of student activism.

<sup>32</sup>Tuibeo is one of the founding members and former president of the Philosophical Circle of the Philippines, a national professional organization with the original intention of organizing philosophical lectures. The other well-known pioneering members and officers include Alfredo P. Co, Romualdo E. Abulad, Teodoro Buhain and Leonardo Mercado. See Alfredo P. Co, "In the Beginning . . . A Petit Personal Historical Narrative of the Beginning of Philosophy in the Philippines," in Alfredo P. Co, *Across the Philosophical Silk Road: A Festschrift in Honor of Alfredo P. Co (Doing Philosophy in the Philippines and Other Essays)*, (España, Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2009), 37.

<sup>33</sup>The said conference is entitled "The Legacy Lectures: Engaging Our Philosophical Pioneers." It was held on October 26-27, 2012 at De La Salle University, Manila.



Marxist themes.<sup>34</sup> These events to honor the man certainly manifest the attempt of the philosophical community in the Philippines to recognize and to show appreciation to the contributions of Tuibeo in the advancement of the philosophical enterprise in the Philippines.

### **The Social Task of Philosophy**

To understand Tuibeo's notion of the social task of philosophy, one has to start with his criticism of the status of philosophy in the modern world. In his presentation on how the theory of knowledge has developed in the course of history, Tuibeo claims that this epistemological development has reached a point where the concern of some philosophers revolved around linguistic analysis.<sup>35</sup> He laments:

The tragedy is that philosophy has become under the so-called Positivistic and Linguistic schools of thought so 'bastardized' that, instead of addressing the urgent need to create a better world for mankind, it is now entrapped inside 'the fly-bottle of linguistic analysis'. ...This trivialization of philosophy into a tedious and barren discourse 'on the word rather than on the world' (Paulo Freire) that has to be transformed so that it may be made more just, more free and more compassionate, has deprived philosophy of its transformative character.<sup>36</sup>

In other words, Tuibeo takes to task the discipline of philosophy that has generally reduced itself into mere speculation of highfalutin philosophical concepts and linguistic analysis and clarification. By doing this, he believes

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<sup>34</sup>The said conference is entitled "Marx Festival 2012: A Tribute to Professor Amable G. Tuibeo." It was held on March 6-7, 2012 at Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Manila.

<sup>35</sup>Amable G. Tuibeo, *Introduction to Philosophy: A New Perspective* (Manila: FCA Printhouse, 2010) 16.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 4-5.

that philosophy has been trivialized. For many students of philosophy, the discipline has become unreasonably difficult yet empty and irrelevant. Tuibeo sees this as the tragedy of a bastardized philosophy.<sup>37</sup>

However, he does not say that the task of philosophy as analysis and clarification of language is unimportant. He maintains that the dimension of linguistic analysis and clarification is also an important philosophical enterprise but philosophers and students of philosophy must not reduce the act of philosophizing to this activity. He says:

That philosophy should clarify its language is a valid contention. But, I think to reduce philosophy into a mere 'activity' for the 'logical analysis of statements'...is to insulate and isolate philosophers from addressing issues affecting personal and private life. Philosophy must speak loud and clear about the world, its values and meaning - rather than be forever entrapped inside the 'bottle of linguistic puzzles.' To confine philosophy to the tedious discourse on the word rather than on the world is to deprive philosophy of social relevance.<sup>38</sup>

For Tuibeo, the task of philosophy mainly involves the social dimension of human reality. One of the most important reasons why students must engage in the study of philosophy is to bring into the philosophical discourse the concrete problems of the social world. It is also through philosophy as a discipline that students become more critical in understanding the root causes of social problems. He explains:

Philosophy can help us examine the kind of society we live in today. Through critical inquiry, we can unveil the root causes of social conflict or contradiction which gives rise to political turmoil and

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 16.

social unrest, and thus, we have the option to participate in the over-all struggle for social change.<sup>39</sup>

In order to stress philosophy's concern for concrete lived experiences, Tuibeo cites the German philosopher Karl Marx claiming that philosophy is not just for "interpreting the world in various ways, but for changing it," and the American philosopher and educator John Dewey declaring that philosophy's task is "to clarify man's ideas as to the social and moral strifes of their own day, and to serve as an organ for dealing with these conflicts."<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, he cites the Austrian philosopher Karl Popper, who calls for the "self-contrition" of philosophy because "it has ceased to be responsive to mankind's aspiration for a better world."<sup>41</sup> For Tuibeo, these philosophical giants have already made it clear that philosophy must not be removed from its function of always being relevant to the real world of human experiences. Thus, it is the task of philosophy to go down from the ivory tower of pure speculative thinking and to connect thinking to real living. Tuibeo maintains:

Philosophy should come down from 'the ivory-tower' so it could be heard on matters affecting the freedom and survival of mankind. Were philosophy to remain silent or aloft from controversies which rock society on the pretext that it has nothing to do with mankind's struggle for a just and free, for a humane and compassionate world republic, it would be consigned to historical irrelevance.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, Tuibeo contends that the social task of philosophy is two-fold: a critique and a project. He explains:

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 5-6.

For philosophy to have historical significance, it must resume its role to be both a critique and a project. As a critique, philosophy must be a relentless criticism of social institutions and practices which obstruct the march of mankind towards a 'shared life in a shared world.' And as a project, philosophy must provide a vision of, and struggle for, a world order that is based on justice, brotherliness and peace. What mankind needs today is a philosophy which does not end in a 'deconstructed wasteland,' but a philosophy that can help patch up 'the broken world' (Gabriel Marcel) of the Family of Man.<sup>43</sup>

In the first edition of his textbook *Introduction to Philosophy*, Tuibeo's words are stronger. He says:

The notion that philosophy has nothing to do with social concrete realities, and hence, it must rise over and above the struggle for a just and humane social order is to make it historically irrelevant . . . should philosophy refuse to be involved in societal issues which afflict mankind on the pretext that its concerns are beyond time and space, its value to man's struggle for material subsistence would be negated.<sup>44</sup>

The social function of philosophy is important to emphasize because for Tuibeo the act of philosophizing and the various discourses that this act has produced is not detached from the issue of class differentiation. He explains:

True enough, philosophies are products of individual's creative thoughts, but individuals carry the imprint of the biases and prejudices of the class to which they belong . . . the interpretation of the world

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>44</sup>Amable G. Tuibeo, *Philosophy: An Introduction* (Mandaluyong City: Academic Publishing House, 1995), 7.

and the role of man in society has always been colored by a class bias.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, Tuibeo sees the field of philosophy as also a field of power struggle between two opposing classes: the force of the oppressor and the force of the oppressed. Philosophy, for Tuibeo, has a class character.<sup>46</sup> If that is so, according to Tuibeo, then philosophy has a social and political function: "This stand of philosophy, either for or against social change is what makes it socially relevant. Otherwise it would be purely scholastic, and therefore, sterile."<sup>47</sup> More importantly, it must touch on concrete and relevant social problems. A philosophy that is detached from social relevance is a philosophy that is supportive of the preservation of the status quo. While a philosophy that aims to critique the social and political arrangements contributes to the ultimate goal of societal transformation.

It is with this social and political task of philosophy in mind that Tuibeo's textbook in introduction to philosophy is presented in such a manner that each and every discussion of the branches of philosophy is always connected to social and political critique. For example, in explaining the question of the definition of philosophy, Tuibeo does not only focus on the traditional definition. Indeed, it is important for the students of philosophy to know the classic definitions such as philosophy being "a love of wisdom," or "a rational explanation of the world and man's place in it."<sup>48</sup> But after knowing this, what's next? For Tuibeo, equally important or probably even more important is for the students to become aware that philosophy and the act of philosophizing must not be solely confined to logical, speculative and metaphysical analyses. That is why from the very etymological definition of philosophy as love of wisdom, Tuibeo already interprets it in relation to concrete human

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid..

affairs. That act of loving is not a mere speculative act and that object of loving which is wisdom is also not an object that is hanging in the clouds. Tuibeo explains:

Among the ancient Greeks, the love of wisdom meant a critical understanding of reality (man, society and nature), and the endeavor to live 'the good life.' In the Orient, particularly, in Hinduism, philosophy or 'darsana' is 'the search for the truth and living the highest kind of life.' If these notions are something to go by, philosophy was not meant to be a mere academic pursuit remote from life, nor was it simply for satisfying one's idle curiosity. Therefore, philosophy was meant to be the love of learning and the search for truth so that we may have the wisdom to live a meaningful life in relation to others and to the world.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, for Tuibeo the truth which is being pursued by philosophy and the philosophers is not also confined to theoretical investigation. The search for truth is always connected with the truth of the social world. The search for truth by the philosophers must be intimately linked with the search for justice, freedom and humanity. He says:

The truth, as the 'primary object' of philosophical inquiry, is not of reality as it is in itself, but of what it can be, what it ought to be in a given historical moment. Thus, for a philosopher who sees the need to transform society so it could be made more just, more free and more human, truth is not question of theory but an empowerment for social emancipation.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Tuibeo, *Introduction to Philosophy*, 1.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

Several pages afterwards, we find Tuibeo discussing that this perspective on truth is mainly based on Marxist epistemology.<sup>51</sup> According to Tuibeo, for Marxism in general, truth is “the property of an idea, belief or knowledge which enables us to change social reality or society so that it may be more humane and just. The truth of knowledge or of an idea is not a question of theory but a question of practice, or praxis.”<sup>52</sup>

In Tuibeo’s discussion of epistemology as one of the branches of philosophy, he does not only dwell with the traditional way of the exposition of the sources of human knowledge and the question of its validity. He extends the epistemological concern into the social sphere. He says:

The validity of knowledge must not be seen as mere conformity to facts, nor mere coherence with established thought, nor mere satisfaction of one’s private needs. Knowledge must be validated by what it can do to transform our society into a just and humane social order. The social relevance of knowledge precisely lies in this; that it must not only promote the welfare of the individual who owns it, but must also serve the interests of the vast majority of people, particularly, the less fortunate in society.<sup>53</sup>

In his discussion of the issue of ethics and morality, Tuibeo also talks about the usual themes such as Kohlberg’s stages of morality, Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperatives, Mill’s utilitarianism, James’ pragmatism, Fletcher’s situation ethics, Nietzsche’s ethics of power and Marx’s ethics.<sup>54</sup> These are topics that are ordinarily discussed in an introductory course in philosophy when the branch of ethics is touched.

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>53</sup>Tuibeo, *Philosophy: An Introduction*, 23.

<sup>54</sup>Tuibeo, *Introduction to Philosophy: A New Perspective*, 33-

However, Tuibeo also emphasizes the social demands of living a good life. He says:

Society imposes upon every person an obligation to respect the beliefs, the traditions, and practices of the people. However, should the same beliefs, traditions and practices prove to be obstructive to human development, it is the duty of every intelligent member of society to work for reforms or changes. To remain silent or acquiescent when things go wrong as to jeopardize social welfare, is to abet the reign of evil. Non-involvement in issues or even in controversies which affect the common welfare is moral cowardice.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, for Tuibeo the study of ethics and morality is not just to become experts in the discourse of the giants of ethical theories such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Mill and others. Rather, ethics is studied so that students would realize that there is always a social demand to get involved in the problems that plague the society. The study of ethics is also the formation for the development of moral courage.

In philosophy of religion, Tuibeo does not only talk about the origin of the great religions and the stages of their development. He also relates the various major religions to social concerns. He does not see religions as simply concerned with the affairs of the spiritual side of man. For him, the major religions of the world do not dichotomize the concerns of the body and the concerns of the soul.

Their agenda were not simply addressed to 'the salvation of souls,' but also to the inauguration of a new kingdom, based on justice, freedom and brotherhood. Their respective leaders fought for mankind's spiritual and material well-being. Though it appears that they laid stress on the life of the spirit, they did not in any manner disdain or ignore the

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 33.



material conditions without which the human spirit would be left in total vacuity....<sup>56</sup>

In tackling the philosophical issue in Theodicy, Tuibeo goes beyond the traditional debates on existence and essence of God. He also points to the possible agreements among the theists, atheists and agnostics if only they would focus on concrete social concerns of their fellow human beings.

[B]elievers and non-believers can still find some basic reasons for unity, solidarity and cooperation in the service of their fellowmen. For...it is not one's quest for God that matters, but one's concern for his neighbor. Our life is so short that, to debate whether God exists or not, and later on, to divide us and to make us estranged from one another is to squander much of our time and energy. Instead, we must 'canalize' our efforts to reconstruct our society on a basis which does not tolerate social inequality among the people.<sup>57</sup>

His *Introduction to Philosophy* also becomes an opportunity for students to discourse on important issues such as education, politics and human rights. Tuibeo dedicates one chapter for answering questions in education such as: "What should education aim at, or what should it accomplish? Is education a neutral institution? What role does philosophy have in education?"<sup>58</sup> Another chapter is given to the problem of politics where he discusses, among others, the various political ideologies and the state of Philippine politics. One of the conclusions that Tuibeo communicates to his students as regards the issue of politics is the following:

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 79.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 113.

Politics, as an exercise of power over a situation where conflict arises, is always vitiated by an ideological bias . . . when people have contradictory economic condition, they use politics in conformity with their interests. Those with wealth and privileges make use of politics to preserve the status quo. Those who have nothing but their deprivation and hopelessness under the prevailing social order resort to political struggle for social change or liberation.<sup>59</sup>

Then, another chapter in Tuibeo's *Introduction to Philosophy* is dedicated to a full discussion of the issue of human rights.<sup>60</sup> Here, the students of philosophy are led to become aware and to understand the nature of human rights, the development and philosophical foundations of the concept of human rights, and the various provisions of the Bill of Rights. On this chapter, Tuibeo concludes:

In societies where people are divided into rich and poor, the observance of human rights is always problematic. The reason is that it is always the rich rather than the poor who have more rights, more power and privileges. While it is said that under a democratic form of government all men have 'equal rights before the law,' the fact however remains that those who have more in life, have also less in law. The rich rather than the poor of our society have the privilege to enjoy to the full 'the right to life, to property and liberty.'<sup>61</sup>

Thus, we can see from how Tuibeo chose the topics for his philosophy class that he always insists on the social task of philosophy without of course forgetting the speculative and the conceptual analyses that students of philosophy must also experience and develop.

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 137.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 141-153.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 153.

## The Political Character of Education

Tuibeo's thoughts on education can be found in his textbook entitled *Philosophy of Education: A New Perspective* which was first published in 2005. This textbook was meant to be used primarily for the course Philosophy of Education. Tuibeo claims that the book "is an attempt to formulate a Philippine Philosophy of Education."<sup>62</sup> His main contention in connection with this attempt is that the Philippine "institution for higher education, apart from its immediate task of preparing the Filipino youth for gainful employment or for a profession, should be an empowerment for realizing a just, humane and compassionate society."<sup>63</sup> Tuibeo further claims that this aim of formulating a philosophy of education is intimately connected with his reflections on the question: *For Whom and For What is Education?*<sup>64</sup> He observes:

Depending on the philosophical assumptions of those who control its instrumentalities, education can either be for people's genuine enlightenment and liberation or for their perversion and domestication. Education can [either] be harnessed for ensuring social conformity so that society may remain as it is, or for encouraging social criticism so that there may be some reforms, and, if needs be, radical change. So subtle, yet so powerful is education that it can make a profound difference in the life of the nation.<sup>65</sup>

Tuibeo says that most people know the significant role of education for individual and social progress. In fact, education has become a universal passion.<sup>66</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>62</sup>Amable G. Tuibeo, *Philosophy of Education: A New Perspective* (Makati City: Grandwater Publications, 2005), ii.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, ii.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, i.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

Education is so important an institution that without it, society would surely lose its dynamism to grow and to prosper. It is education which gives life and vigor to society by way of developing the manpower for social development.<sup>67</sup>

But what is not really understood is that it has a political character, that education is not a neutral institution. He says:

Too little, indeed, does the school-going public suspect that the molding of the hearts and minds of the young through formal schooling presupposes some basic philosophical assumptions as to what man and society ought to be in a given historical context.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, for Tuibeo, one of the most fundamental roles of the study of pedagogical theories is to critically investigate the politics embedded in pedagogy. This critical investigation which is also a social criticism is not done for the sake of criticism. Rather, in the mind of Tuibeo, it is geared towards concrete reforms or if necessary towards radical change.<sup>69</sup>

He explains further that the partisan character of education springs from it being a concrete expression of a social arrangement protecting specific social interests. He says:

The ambivalence of education lies in the fact that education is not a mere abstraction which exists on its own apart from a social context, nor is it simply a process of transmitting the cultural heritage from one generation to another. Education is a social activity the aims and purpose of which are not fabricated in

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., i.

heaven, but crafted by real people with differing political interests.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, if education is controlled by the dominant class, then logically, that class advances its own interest. Education becomes a tool for the preservation of the interest of that class. If education is controlled by the dominated, it becomes an instrument for their liberation. Thus for Tuibeo, education seems to be “a manipulable tool which social groups would always want to control in order to advance their fundamental interests.”<sup>71</sup> He says further that “search as we may, we cannot find, given the class character of the human society, an education that is not tainted with, or vitiated by, a class bias.”<sup>72</sup>

The various instrumentalities of education such as the school, literacy, pedagogy and curriculum would also reveal the political character of education. Tuibeo discusses the neutral, conservative and radical function of the school. For the advocates of the neutral function, “the school should remain aloof from partisan strife, whether it is about politics, economics, religion, etc. The resolution of social conflict . . . is not the concern of the school.”<sup>73</sup> For the supporters of the school’s conservative function, “to save society from turmoil and disintegration, [the school] must preserve the existing social relations, regardless of whether such social relations breed inequality in wealth, power and undeserved privileges.”<sup>74</sup> For the proponents of the radical function, the school “is not a ‘convent of social conformity,’ but a free market of ideas where the students and the faculty must forever ponder and debate on how society, as it is, can be more humane, more just and free.”<sup>75</sup> In discussing these three functions of the school, Tuibeo further demonstrates the

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 26.

“varying perspectives of people with contradictory economic and social interests for whose preservation they define the function of the school.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, the differing functions of the school also demonstrate “the ideology of individuals or groups with vested interests.”<sup>77</sup> The school is an apparatus for the advancement of conflicting interests of different classes in the society.

Tuibeo also discusses how literacy, another instrumentality of education, is utilized for the interest of a specific class in the society. Tuibeo says:

Depending on the social and political positions of those who control the schooling process, literacy can be manipulated or even perverted so as to bring about a culture of docility and conformity, or a culture of mechanical efficiency and unquestioning loyalty, or a culture of critical empowerment and liberation.<sup>78</sup>

To prove his point, Tuibeo analyzes the different kinds of literacy: conventional, functional, cultural and critical literacy. The conventional literacy which simply refers to the mechanical ability to read or write “is an effective medium of ‘socializing’ and ‘integrating’ the individual into the ‘conventions of the established order’.”<sup>79</sup> Functional literacy which refers to the “ability to read, to write and to compute” in order to be prepared and to “function effectively” in the workplace is also at the same time a type of literacy that simply prepares the students “to submit to the existing social institutions regardless of whether their structures tend to degrade and to robotize him for the sake of conformity and efficiency.”<sup>80</sup> Cultural literacy includes “sufficient background knowledge of the economic structure,

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 35.

the political system and the cultural institution of the society in which [a person] lives . . . cultural literacy appears to make the individual to be merely conversant with society's cultural achievements and way of life."<sup>81</sup> But Tuibeo says that a culturally literate citizen may still bear the character of schooling from the point of view of the dominant culture. Since the "lack of critical reading and understanding of the cultural symbols (the ideas, the beliefs, the values and the practices of society) the learner is slowly fashioned and conditioned to accept the existing social relations which breed social inequalities and contradictions."<sup>82</sup> The fourth kind of literacy is critical literacy wherein "what is to be read and what is to be written must reflect social conditions which must be altered so there might be a democratization of wealth and power in society."<sup>83</sup> From this discussion of four kinds of literacy, Tuibeo concludes that those whose interest is the preservation of the unjust social order would opt to advance conventional, functional and cultural literacy while those who aspire for a more just society would prefer critical literacy. "It would thus be naïve to say that the teaching or handling of literacy has no political implications."<sup>84</sup>

Pedagogy—which strictly "refers to the method of communicating or of sharing knowledge" or to the "method and art of teaching"<sup>85</sup> – is another instrumentality of education. Tuibeo considers three types of pedagogical relationship between the teacher and the student in a classroom setting: the apprentice approach, the banking approach and the dialogical approach. The apprentice model is "a mechanical reproduction or repetition of what others know."<sup>86</sup> Tuibeo claims that while it is an effective model for the transference of knowledge and skills from the teacher to the student, it is also an effective technique for manipulation

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 42.

and adaptation to the world of the ruling elites.<sup>87</sup> The banking method which is very similar to the apprentice method is mainly characterized by “listening, memorizing and repeating what the teacher has told or narrated.”<sup>88</sup> The dialogue method considers teaching as “a process in which the teacher and the student are involved in the process of cognition.”<sup>89</sup> For Tuibeo, pedagogy as an instrumentality of education further manifests the partisan character of the educational process.

Tuibeo also talks about the curriculum as another instrumentality which can be used in order to shape the minds of the youth in the process called education. The curriculum is “the program of studies which the student has to follow in order to finish a particular course.”<sup>90</sup> He sees the formation of the curriculum as divided into one whose main concern is the fixed and tested subject-matter and another whose main concern are the themes of real interest to the student.<sup>91</sup> Tuibeo sees that the educational theory known as essentialism is reflected on a curriculum that simply focuses on “ideas, values and principles which had withstood the test of time . . . . If education is the transmission of the cultural legacy to each generation, then there is logic in the essentialist argument that the curriculum should be based on subject matter rather than on the interests and freedom of the student.”<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, the educational theory known as progressivism is mirrored on a curriculum that considers seriously the lived experiences of the students. Tuibeo says:

We have new problems which require new solutions, and therefore, the curriculum must be adjustable so it could be responsive to historical changes. In a world

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 52-53.



that is in perpetual flux and change, fixed curricula are bound to lose their relevance.<sup>93</sup>

Those whose main concern is simply the preservation and maintenance of the present unjust order would favor the essentialist curriculum while those whose interest is the challenging of the status quo would prefer the progressive curriculum. Tuibeo concludes by saying that “through the curriculum, the youth can be conditioned either to accept the society as it is, or to alter it so it could be more just and humane for all.”<sup>94</sup>

### **Critique of Philippine Educational System**

With a clear understanding of the political character of education and its major instrumentalities, Amable Tuibeo proceeds to discuss and critique the Philippine educational system. He declares: “The Philippine educational system, like any other formal education in modern society, has always been under the control of the dominant classes.”<sup>95</sup> These dominant classes include the foreign colonizers and the local elites. For Tuibeo, education laws such as the Education Act of 1982 are formulated against the backdrop of imperialism and capitalism. He says:

It may be recalled that the Education Act of 1982 upon which the DECS and CHED formulate their policies and guidelines has re-oriented and restructured the educational system in compliance with the conditionalities imposed by the World Bank.<sup>96</sup>

If this is accepted as true, then indeed education in the Philippines is reflective of the politics of neocolonialism.

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 56.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 155.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 166.

In fact, Tuibeo argues that the current orientation of education in the Philippines is very much reflective of the present character of the Philippine society itself.

If education is the handmaiden of society, then its orientation must be in consonance with the character of that society. The Philippines, contrary to some social analyses, is a neo-colonial and feudal society; hence, its educational system has a neo-colonial and feudal orientation.<sup>97</sup>

For Tuibeo, the neocolonial orientation of education is very much visible in at least two ways. First, is in the training aspect of education. He says:

An extensive analysis of the Philippine educational policies and recent curricular innovations related to manpower resource development, such as agriculture, vocational and technical courses will show that the training aspect is aligned to the country's designated role in the international division of labor as a supplier of manpower skills.<sup>98</sup>

Second, is in the level of consciousness formation wherein Tuibeo laments about textbooks and other pedagogical materials that cement and reinforce neocolonial consciousness. On this particular point, he quotes Jeremias Montemayor, a Filipino advocate of the rights of farmers and an author of various books on Philippine socio-economic problems:

From primer to composition to art, to aspiration and ideals . . . a great portion of the Filipino's education consisted in learning to despise the things that he would always have and to desire things that could never be his - to be ashamed of what he would

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 170.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 170-1.

always be, and aspire to become what he could never be.<sup>99</sup>

Even if the Americans are not anymore in the Philippines, the educational system continues to be haunted by the ghosts of American imperialism and the current trend of neoliberal globalization.

Besides the colonial and neocolonial orientation of Philippine education, Tuibeo also contends that it has a feudal and elitist orientation. This feudal and elitist orientation:

. . . consists in the fact that the system is controlled by the elites who wield either political or economic power in the Philippine society . . . It is the elites who decide on the ways by which knowledge is selected, structured, transmitted, distributed and evaluated among the school-going public in order to produce both general and differential types of consciousness supportive of, and arising from, the prevailing social order.<sup>100</sup>

The elitist orientation produces an elitist outlook even if generally speaking, the school-going public does not really reach the level of economic and political power that the elites are enjoying. Through an education controlled by the elites, an elitist mind is produced while a non-elite body remains. Tuibeo observes further: "This elitist and feudal control of the educational system cannot but engender or produce an outlook that is unquestioning, uncritical and fatalistic. This feudal control of the education system will surely promote acquiescence, servility and passivity."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid, 174;

<sup>100</sup>Tuibeo, *Philosophy of Education*, 174-175.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 175.

## **An Alternative Education in the Philippines**

If the wretched state of Philippine education consists primarily in its neocolonial and feudal orientation, then the majority of the oppressed Filipinos cannot really hope that Philippine education would lead to upward mobility and to a more just and more humane society. It is on this line of thinking that Tuibeo endorses an alternative education.

The proposal to have an alternative education system started with the perception that the present educational system has lost historical relevance. Critics argued with good reason that due to its 'colonial, feudal, elitist' and even commercialized orientation the Philippine education merely seeks to integrate the young into the logic of the prevailing social order characterized by gross inequalities in wealth, power and privileges. The clamor to have an alternative education was, therefore, an articulation of the Filipino people's desire to have a new social order that is just, humane, democratic and prosperous. Education was felt to be the best arena for developing and firming up the people's consciousness for societal transformation.<sup>102</sup>

An alternative education is a direct response to a system which proves to be not in the service of the oppressed and the marginalized in Philippine society. An alternative education aims for an egalitarian society. Tuibeo continues:

An alternative educational system must have for its goal the realization of an independent society whose development towards self-reliance and self-sufficiency redounds to the interest of the majority of the Filipinos. It should cultivate and promote values and sentiments that seek the independence of the country from the exploitative structure of foreign

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 176.

control of our economy, of our politics, and of our culture.<sup>103</sup>

Operating on the premise that education should favor the interest of the oppressed class, Tuibeo endorses an alternative Philippine educational system that mainly possesses four characteristics: nationalist, scientific, mass-oriented and democratic.<sup>104</sup>

A nationalist education “fosters a strong sense of commitment to, and identification with, the interest of the Filipinos as a nation and as a people. This sense of commitment and identification means placing the interest of the Filipino people over and above other nation’s interest, and thus implies resistance to any form of foreign interference, dictation or intervention in our economic, political and cultural life.”<sup>105</sup> This nationalist character is the conscious response to the basic awareness that the current Philippine educational system has a neocolonial orientation.

The second distinctive character of an alternative education that responds to the needs of the Filipinos is the need for a scientific education. “A scientific education is one that cultivates creativity and critical thinking toward the development of science and technology for nationalist industrialization. Such scientific orientation is essential for de-mystifying and debunking old myths, beliefs and traditions which serve to divert people’s minds from social realities.”<sup>106</sup> This character is a response to the state of “a country that has a massive school system, but the culture remains ambivalent, superstitious and fatalistic.”<sup>107</sup>

The third character of an alternative education is its mass orientation: “mass-oriented education is one that espouses the needs of the majority, and, therefore the belief that one’s knowledge must be used in the service of the

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 177.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 179.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 179-180.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 176-177.

people.”<sup>108</sup> This is a direct response to an educational system that is mainly feudal and elitist in orientation.

The fourth element of an alternative education in the Philippines that Tuibeo endorses is one that is democratic:

A democratic education is that which imbues the individual with a strong sense of commitment to the respect for and observance of human rights, to peace based on justice, and to upholding the interests of the majority of the Filipino people as against the interests of the few. It also means developing among the students a strong sense of responsibility to fight against any form of social injustice and inequity, and commitment to the struggle for the realization of a just, humane and compassionate social order.<sup>109</sup>

All in all, an alternative education is a “critique of the prevailing educational system.”<sup>110</sup> It aims for a more just and humane Philippine society characterized by “an equitable distribution of economic wealth, of political power, and of cultural opportunities.”<sup>111</sup> It is “an alternative response to the need to reconstruct Philippine society on an egalitarian foundation.”<sup>112</sup>

### **Tuibeo and Freire’s Liberating Pedagogy**

I will discuss in this section how Freirean liberating pedagogy is manifested in the thoughts of Amable Tuibeo. In one of my interviews with Tuibeo, he admits that he does not claim complete originality of thoughts. He says:

I do not claim total originality because there is no [such thing] as originality in the first place. What I do,

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 180.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 182.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 181.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 182.

metaphorically speaking, is I want to look at the world upon the shoulders of greater people so that I am in touch with their ideas and at the same time I could read the world using them and engaging them with mine. So my views of the world are not totally mine but it is enriched by what I have read, what I have seen in others' works.<sup>113</sup>

Paulo Freire is one of those "greater people" that Tuibeo would lean upon in order to read the world. Specifically, Freire is one of the main philosophers that influenced Tuibeo's thoughts on education as reflected in his textbook, *Philosophy of Education: A New Perspective*. Tuibeo said that he first read Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1989.<sup>114</sup> Tuibeo's textbooks, especially *Philosophy of Education* and *Introduction to Philosophy*, are replete with ideas, quotations and citations from Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

### **Non-neutrality of Education and Philosophy**

One of the most obvious Freirean influences in Tuibeo is the similar awareness that education is not neutral, that it has a political character. In fact, from the very preface of the textbook *Philosophy of Education*, the question that Tuibeo asks sets the tone for this claim to non-neutrality. In the said preface of the book, Tuibeo says that the question "For whom and for what is education?" propels him to reflect on the role of education in the society.<sup>115</sup> As a matter of fact, he is not the first to ask this question. This can be found in the works of many critical pedagogues including Paulo Freire.<sup>116</sup> This question is raised based on the assumption that

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<sup>113</sup>Amable Tuibeo, *Interview with Franz Giuseppe F. Cortez* (February 12, 2013).

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Tuibeo, *Philosophy of Education*, v.

<sup>116</sup>"Educators must ask themselves for whom and on whose interest they are working." Freire, *The Politics of Education*,

education always serves a particular purpose that benefits a particular group. It is a question already loaded with an answer that no education stays in the middle. Rather, education is always for the advancement of specific interest, views and aspirations of the group who is in control of the educational system. If the said question is asked inside the classroom, the teacher is already setting the stage for a critique of the power relations between the student and the teacher, between the dominant class in the society and the dominated class, and between the school itself and the society at large. Education is a tool for domination in the hands of an oppressor. It is a weapon of social change in the hands of the oppressed. Furthermore, the claim for non-neutrality or political character of education is the reason why Tuibeo painstakingly analyzes the various instrumentalities of education such as the school, curriculum, pedagogy and literacy. By discussing the various positions of different interest groups, Tuibeo also demonstrates the glaring non-neutrality or what he calls the political character of education.

Tuibeo extends the implication of non-neutrality in his discussion of the class origin of philosophy. Philosophy, being one of the fields of knowledge that usually finds its place in the world of the academe, does not also escape the net of non-neutrality and/or politics. Philosophy as a field of knowledge disseminated in the school is also not neutral because various philosophies carry their class bias. For

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103. "What kind of politics am I doing in the classroom? That is, in favor of whom am I being a teacher?" Freire and Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation*, 46. Bienvenido Lumbera, a prominent Filipino literary critique and social activist, is also involved in the discourse that preoccupies the critical pedagogues: the issue of power relations and struggles in the educational world. He says: *Mahalaga pa ring itanong kung para saan at para kanino ang edukasyon*. Bienvenido Lumbera, "Introduksyon," to *Mula Tore Patungong Palengke*, ed. Bienvenido Lumbera, Ramon Guillermo, at Arnold Alamon (Quezon City: Ibon Books Foundation, Inc., 2007), xvi.



Tuibeo, even philosophy itself exemplifies partisanship. Just like education, philosophy is reflective of the class of the one who does the philosophizing. He says:

It has been the impression of many people that philosophy, being a theoretical knowledge of reality and a method of cognizing the world, is neutral. This is a mistake. It must be remembered that the flowering of philosophy started from the time society was already divided into rulers and oppressed. Philosophical reflections cannot be totally dissociated from the social milieu or from the social realities whereof the philosophers speak. True enough, philosophies are products of individual's creative thoughts, but individuals carry the imprint of the biases and prejudices of the class to which they belong. Philosophies, therefore, cannot be impartial, neutral or nonpartisan. This is confirmed by the fact that the world and its phenomena have always been interpreted invariably by those who dominate and by those who are dominated in a class society. Thus, the interpretation of the world and the role of man in society has always been colored by a class bias.<sup>117</sup>

If a specific philosophy is a reflection of the class bias of the philosopher, then consciously or unconsciously, the teacher of philosophy who espouses a particular philosophical theory or tradition also contributes either in the preservation or transformation of an oppressive social order. It is with similar thing in mind that Freire says that the teacher may be unaware of the politics that he/she brings inside the classroom. He/she is unaware that this politics contributes in the preservation of the status quo.<sup>118</sup> A specific philosophy, just like education itself, is a weapon that

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<sup>117</sup>Tuibeo, *Philosophy: An Introduction*, 6-7.

<sup>118</sup>Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 61. See also Freire, *The Politics of Education*, 179.

changes its role depending upon the one who does the philosophizing.

On the one hand, by advancing a world-outlook which anathematizes social criticism and progress, philosophy can be used to justify and defend the status quo. By legitimizing any given political order, philosophy can serve, albeit indirectly, the interests of a particular class which seeks to perpetuate its economic and political domination. On the other hand, philosophy can be an instrument for radical change.

Philosophy's critical stance can be a powerful instrument in interrogating and challenging the status quo and at the same time provide self-critical counter offensives and alternatives that can go against the grain of the present order of things.

In challenging the established order, philosophy can be a tool for unmasking the decadent structure of the same order and to thereby propose an alternative social system. Expectedly, in the pursuit of this agenda, philosophy becomes supportive of all forms of struggles against structures which are deemed exploitative and oppressive to the majority of the people. In this case, philosophy becomes a powerful weapon for another social class whose economic survival is imperilled.<sup>119</sup>

Now, it is also clear for Tuibeo that the discovery of the non-neutrality of education and philosophy is not sufficient in order to effect significant changes in the lives of the oppressed. This discovery must lead the critical educator to endorse a particular politics, a kind of education that is at

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<sup>119</sup>Tuibeo, *Philosophy: An Introduction*, 8.

the service of the oppressed.<sup>120</sup> This thought can also be found in Freire. He also maintains that the element of non-neutrality is emphasized not only to lead the students and the teachers to an awareness of where a particular curriculum leads. Rather, the awareness of politics in education must lead one to choose his/her own politics.<sup>121</sup> From fundamental awareness of the inescapability of politics, the critical educator must consciously choose where he/she sides. Then, the classroom and the pedagogy become a reflection of his political option.

It is on this line of thinking that Tuibeo is insistent on the social task of philosophy. As a Filipino teacher of philosophy, he also asserts that philosophy must transcend its usual abstract categories and discover its social function as a critique of the social life. In the same manner, the non-neutrality of philosophy is mirrored in Tuibeo's insistence of connecting the philosophy classroom and philosophical researches to the problems of the Philippine society. Philosophy as a discipline must take a particular politics. It must be at the service of the dominated class in a Philippine society that has continued to be defined by social stratification. According to Tuibeo philosophy must be both "a critique and a project."<sup>122</sup>

The non-neutral option of Tuibeo is also reflected in his endorsement of an alternative education that he thinks would really lead to the attainment of a just and humane Philippine society. As discussed above, this alternative

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<sup>120</sup>In an unpublished paper that was supposed to be delivered in the Legacy Lectures mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Virgilio Rivas, a philosophy teacher of PUP and a former student of Tuibeo says that for Tuibeo, "philosophy is not just about scholarship of ideas, but for the most part a form of engagement." Virgilio Rivas, "Postscript to Ka Abe Tuibeo," Kafka's Ruminations, entry posted October 28, 2012, <http://veraquivas.wordpress.com/2012/10/28/on-legacy-lecture> (accessed February 5, 2013).

<sup>121</sup>Freire and Shor, *A Pedagogy For Liberation*, 46.

<sup>122</sup>Tuibeo, *Introduction to Philosophy*, 5.

education has the orientation of being nationalist, scientific, mass-based and democratic. In other words, he proposes a politics of education that subverts the interest of the dominant classes in the Philippine society. It is a politics of education that advances the interest of the dominated class. In his words, it is a reflection of the aspirations of the majority of the Filipino people.<sup>123</sup>

These characteristics of an alternative educational system can be traced back to the thoughts of Jose Ma. Sison, the founder of the new Communist Party of the Philippines. In a 1986 paper entitled "Krisis ng Kulturang Pilipino," Sison describes the crisis of Philippine culture in terms of the dominant forces in the Philippine society doing their anti-nationalist, anti-scientific and anti-people role. On the other hand, Sison also sees that there are forces that do their role of promoting a nationalist, scientific and mass-based culture.<sup>124</sup> In another lecture, Sison explains in detail the contents of this alternative culture that also penetrates the educational system.<sup>125</sup>

Bienvenido Lumbera, a prominent Filipino literary critique and an advocate of the Left, in a book entitled *Mula Tore Patungong Palengke* is also an endorser of this alternative education. In the introduction of this book, Lumbera argues that the call for a nationalist, scientific and mass-based education is a relevant response to an educational system in the Philippines that is at the mercy of neoliberal policies.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>Tuibeo, *Philosophy of Education*, 186.

<sup>124</sup>Jose Ma. Sison, *Krisis at Rebolusyong Pilipino: Serye ng mga Lektyur na Binigkas ni Jose Ma. Sison* (Manila: Amado v. Hernandez Resource Center, Inc. & College Editors' Guild of the Philippines, 1998), 56.

<sup>125</sup>Ang bagong demokratikong rebolusyonaryong pangkultura ay lumilikha ng sarili nitong mga organisasyon at paraan at kasabay nito'y pumapasok at nakikibahagi sa mga institusyong pangkultura at mga proseso na dati'y ginamit para dominahan ang mamamayan. Sison, *Krisis at Rebolusyong Pilipino*, 103.

<sup>126</sup>"Ang tuwirang panunuot ng mga pwersang pampamilyan hanggang sa pinakaubod ng teorya at praktika ng dominanteng edukasyon ang isang resulta ng pagpapatupad

Thus, it is clear that the kind of alternative education that Tuibeo endorses is the same alternative culture and education that the Philippine Left is advocating.

One may disagree with Tuibeo's endorsement of an alternative education. This is partly due to the fact that there is a tendency for many people to be suspicious of anything proposed by the Leftist camp. In fact, this tendency is even traceable to the kind of education that is given to us by the ruling power. As Tuibeo would say, when he was still studying, many teachers would only allot one paragraph for the discussion of those who opposed the establishment.<sup>127</sup> And that one paragraph is meant to devalue and demean the ideas of these oppositionists and anti-establishments. In other words, those whose ideas run in contrary to the dominant knowledge are marginalized inside the classrooms.

But even if one disagrees with what he endorses, what is clear in the project of Tuibeo is that education and its instrumentalities always take a particular position. And just like Freire, Tuibeo believes that education and politics cannot be separated. Thus, the teacher must consciously choose the kind of politics that he/she brings inside the classroom. On the part of the student, he/she must learn to read the politics embedded in the different instrumentalities of education.

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sa mga neoliberal na mga patakaran. Ang edukasyon, kaalaman at ang mismong mag-aaral ay ginagawang mga kalakal lamang samantalang pinapawalang-saysay ang lahat ng iba pang pakinabang at kabutihan na maaaring ibunga ng edukasyon maliban sa pagpapalaki ng tubo. Sa ganitong kalagayan ay patuloy na nagbibigay ng makabuluhan at matalas na perspektibang kritikal ang panawagan para sa Makabayan, Siyentipiko at Makamasang Edukasyon (MSME) sa pagsusuri ng kasalukuyang sistemang pang-edukasyon." Lumbera, "Introduksyon," in *Mula Tore Patungong Palengke*, xvi.

<sup>127</sup>"When we were taking philosophy, the critique of other systems is just one paragraph. Marxism is just one paragraph. The rest is the scholastics. Philosophia est ancilla theologiae. We were still innocent during that time. We do not question that." Tuibeo, *Interview with Cortez*, February 12, 2013.

## On the Element of Critique

It is on this line of thinking that we can also see Tuibeo being involved in an effort to awaken the critical consciousness of the students. In other words, critique which is another element of Freire's liberating pedagogy is also consciously manifested in the project of Tuibeo. He endeavors to emphasize the politics embedded in education and the social task of philosophy because he also wants the students to develop a critical consciousness understood as an ever-growing awareness of the relevant social and political issues that have concrete effects in the lives of the majority of the Filipinos. In Freirean terms, this is conscientization identified partly with the critical awareness of the socio-economic and political contradictions in the society at large.<sup>128</sup> Freire's another way of saying this is that it is an educational process that is not only concerned with reading the word but also with reading the world.<sup>129</sup> It is a literacy understood not only in its conventional sense but also in its socio-political connotation.

It must be noted that Tuibeo's contention on the social task of philosophy came at a time when philosophy in the Philippines can be generally described as uninterested with social and political concerns. Feorillo Demeterio III, a Filipino teacher of philosophy and a researcher on Filipino philosophy, describes this apolitical mode of philosophizing through these powerful words:

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<sup>128</sup>Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 19. The other important part of conscientization especially as practiced by Freire and his group of literacy educators in the 1960's and 70's is the action component wherein the participants are not only encouraged to analyze and discover economic and political contradictions but also for the participants to organize for concrete plan of action or for mobilization.

<sup>129</sup>See Freire and Macedo, *Literacy: Reading the Word & the World*, 65.

If we look at Filipino philosophy today, what we can notice easily is its characteristic shirking away from the political, the social, the historical, and the economic. It has become a philosophy that is dispassionate, cold, and devoid of libido; a philosophy that is lulled by some plenitude of innocuous things, such as the lofty tenets of scholasticism and humanism, the endless mazes of language and logical reasoning, and the exoticism of oriental thought.<sup>130</sup>

Here, Demeterio's eyes are primarily focused on the way philosophy is engaged by many researchers, scholars and teachers of philosophy. Now, in the context of classroom experience and pedagogy, this dispassionate and cold treatment of doing philosophy is reflected usually in what Demeterio, in another paper, would call as an excessive indulgence and preoccupation with Aristotelian logic.<sup>131</sup> For many Filipino college students, philosophy is usually equated and reduced to Logic.<sup>132</sup> Certainly, this cannot be blamed on the students because of the fact that many

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<sup>130</sup>F.P.A. Demeterio III, "Thought and Socio-Politics: An Account of the Late Twentieth Century Filipino Philosophy," *HINGOWA: The Holy Rosary Seminary Journal* 8, no. 2 (March 2003): 63.

<sup>131</sup>F.P.A. Demeterio III, "Defining the Appropriate Field for Radical Intra-State Peace Studies in Filipino Philosophy," *Philippiniana Sacra* 38, no. 13 (2003): 357.

<sup>132</sup>Even if Logic is traditionally considered as a branch of philosophy, it must be remembered that the debate on whether it should be part of philosophy or not is as old as the Sophists and the Peripatetics. The Peripatetics grouped together some of Aristotle's treatises (which comprised now of the topics discussed in an ordinary Logic class) and called them *Organon* or instrument as a straightforward refutation to the claim of the Sophists that Logic should be considered as part of philosophy. See Robin Smith, "Aristotle's Logic," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2012 Edition), <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-logic/> (accessed on February 3, 2013).

institutions of higher education in the Philippines offer Logic (in its traditional Aristotelian mode) as the student's first and only taste of philosophy as an academic enterprise.<sup>133</sup> Thus, the experience of philosophy (understood as traditional Aristotelian logic) for many students is simply reduced to memorization of ancient laws and principles on how the mind operates. Inasmuch as these are ancient, they may also be remote from how the Filipino mind works.<sup>134</sup>

A philosophy class that does not recognize the social function of philosophy is a sterile classroom. If a college student has only one semester to take a philosophy class in his entire college life, then this opportunity to philosophize inside the classroom must not be wasted by bombarding the students with things that are so abstract and irrelevant to their lives and to the society. In the process, philosophy loses

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<sup>133</sup>The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) requires students whose courses are in the field of Humanities, Social Sciences and Communication (HUSOCOM) to take at least 3 units of philosophy or equivalent to 1 subject. See CHED M.O. No. 59 s. 1996. Those whose courses are other than Humanities, Social Sciences and Communication (non-HUSOCOM) are required to take at least 3 units of philosophy or equivalent to 1 subject. See CHED M.O. No. 04 s. 1997.

Now, many colleges and universities offer Logic as the philosophy subject in their curriculum. Thus, it is not surprising that for many Filipino college students, the mere mention of the word "philosophy" evokes the images of the laws and principles of Logic. For many of them, to philosophize is to enter the world of terms, propositions and syllogisms.

<sup>134</sup>In a paper published in 1989, three Filipino researchers Claro Ceniza, Florentino Timbreza and Andrew Gonzales discovered that Filipino reasoning seems to defy the laws of Aristotelian logic. The team concludes their study: ". . . Filipino Value Logic is neither valid nor invalid by Western standards, neither fallacious nor illogical by Western logical principles; but it may be either functional or non-functional, operational or non-operational, appropriate or inappropriate, by the value system of the Filipinos themselves." Florentino Timbreza, Claro Ceniza & Andrew Gonzales, FSC, "Filipino Logic: A Preliminary Analysis," *Karunungan*, 6 (1989): 99.



its dignity. In the words of Tuibeo, philosophy is bastardized.<sup>135</sup> The experience of philosophy must be an experience of the fusion of the abstract and the concrete. And by concrete, the critical educators pertain to the students' lived experiences of the many faces of oppression and domination in the society and in the school.<sup>136</sup>

If philosophy is understood as having a social and political function, then the students of philosophy should not just discourse about the world of ideas hanging in the clouds and laws of correct thinking that seem to have no bearing in their lives and in the miserable condition of many Filipinos. What Tuibeo wants to point out is that philosophy as a course offered in the school must not only aim for the development of analytical and critical thinking.<sup>137</sup> More importantly, it must be used as a tool for the emergence and development of critical consciousness. By emphasizing the social and political aspect of philosophy, Tuibeo endeavors to give it more relevance in a Philippine society where social critique needs to be given more weight. The task of the philosophy teachers, syllabus-makers and curriculum planners is to evaluate whether a particular subject is leaning simply towards the development of an analytical mind or is gearing towards the emergence of a critical consciousness. That is why when I asked Tuibeo what is his stand on Logic as the philosophy subject offered in many colleges in the Philippines, without any hesitation, he says that it must be

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<sup>135</sup>Tuibeo, *Introduction to Philosophy*, 4.

<sup>136</sup>"Critical social theorists are not in the habit of justifying that oppression exists, but prefer describing the form it takes. Instead, their intellectual energy is spent on critiquing notions of power and privilege, whether in the form of cash or culture." Zeus Leonardo, "Critical Social Theory and Transformative Knowledge: The Functions of Criticism in Quality Education," *Educational Researcher* 33, no. 6 (Aug.–Sep., 2004): 11-18.

<sup>137</sup>One of the expressed aims of the subject Logic is to develop critical and analytical thinking. This aim is often found in many syllabi of the said course.

abolished.<sup>138</sup> For his part, Demeterio may not call for the abolition of the subject but he maintains that the critique of the society must be given due emphasis. He says:

One concrete move for Filipino philosophy is to dedicate its commitment to critique our deformed social structure. If we have time to indulge with the eternal verities of Aristotlean logic...it is a scandal if we cannot find time to examine the very same society we are living in. Radical criticism will strip the present social order with its mystification, prestige and symbolic power and subsequently expose its purely economic and corporate existence, making us all see the real causes of structural violence.<sup>139</sup>

Furthermore, it is with the concern for critical consciousness that Tuibeo emphasizes the basic difference between training and education. Just like Freire, Tuibeo adheres to the notion that education and training are not the same. He says: "Education should not be confused with training, as the former has to do with the development of the whole personality while the latter deals with the acquisition of skill."<sup>140</sup> As explained in the second chapter of this study, critical consciousness is not the same with critical thinking if the latter is simply understood as a skill that may still be used to further dominate the oppressed class; this time, by those who graduate effectively (and with honors) from the factory which we call the school. That is why Tuibeo takes to task an education in the Philippines that is simply geared for the development of skills for employment abroad.<sup>141</sup> A classroom

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<sup>138</sup>Tuibeo, *Interview with Franz Cortez*, February 12, 2013.

<sup>139</sup>Demeterio, "Radical Intra-State Peace Studies," 357.

<sup>140</sup>Tuibeo, *Philosophy of Education*, 3.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 170-1. This line of criticism can also be found in the writings of some Filipino educators. For example Bienvenido Lumbera observes validly that the phenomenon of neoliberalism effectively replaces the exportation of goods with the exportation of human bodies. He says: *Sa panahon ng neoliberalismo*,

that is merely concerned with the acquisition of skills may develop critical thinking but may not really help in the emergence of a critical consciousness. In fact, a one-sided classroom heavily leaning on the transference of skills may extinguish critical consciousness. If the task of education is not just to give training, then philosophy as a field of academic discipline participates in this task. Philosophy does not only help a student to have a sharp mind understood as critical thinking being one of the skills that employers are looking for in their applicants. Rather, this sharpness of mind extends into the critique of power and privilege.

But Tuibeo does not also believe that education must sacrifice the development of skills. He says: "While there is a distinction between education and training, it does not necessarily follow that they are always exclusive of each

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*samakawid, napalitan ng pagluluwas ng mga tao ang dati'y pagluluwas ng produktong agricultural* (Bienvenido Lumbera, "Edukasyong Kolonyal: Sanhi at Bunga ng Mahabang Pagkaalipin," in *Mula Tore Patungong Palengke*, 6).

Antonio Tujan, a former political detainee and the director of IBON International, also comments on the role of education in the process of globalization. He says that the government "retools the education system to fulfill the demands of globalization, ensuring the development of a well-trained, English speaking, docile labor force which is the main attraction for foreign investments." Antonio Tujan, Jr., "Transformative Education," in *Transformative Education*, ed. Antonio Tujan, Jr. (Manila: IBON Foundation, 2004), 8.

In an unpublished paper delivered in an international conference, Aquinas University administrators Jazmin Badong Llana and Fr. Ramonclaro G. Mendez also talk about the fate of liberal arts in the post-colony like the Philippines. The authors also subscribe to the idea that the general trend of even the liberal arts in many Philippine schools is "geared towards the acquisition of basic skills for the professions and trades." Jazmin Badong Llana & Fr. Ramonclaro G. Mendez, "Liberal Arts in the Post-Colony: Will the Knot ever Untangle?," paper presentation: *International Conference on the Liberal Arts* (St. Thomas University, Fredericton, New Brunswick, September 30 - October 1, 2010). Accessed September 15, 2011.

other.”<sup>142</sup> For Tuibeo, education includes training. But training does not assure that there is education. Freire himself reiterates that the acquisition of skills and aptitude must not take a back seat just to give way for social and political awareness. In Freirean terms, reading the world does not preclude the importance of reading the word.<sup>143</sup>

### **The Spirit of a Dialogical Classroom**

Any perceptive reader will not fail to see that Tuibeo’s discourse is heavily influenced by the philosophy of Karl Marx. In fact, Tuibeo admits that Marx is the most towering figure among his intellectual benefactors. In my interview with him, he says:

On my part, I am always using Karl Marx in looking at the world . . . In trying to resolve a given social issue, I think it is the Marxist philosophy that tells me: Just do not look at how things are but why things are, the why and wherefore of reality. So, that is the way I look at reality and I am happy with the Marxist paradigm. I know where to attack.<sup>144</sup>

As mentioned in the introductory part of this chapter, the Department of Philosophy at PUP honored Tuibeo by holding a conference the theme of which revolves around the philosophy of Karl Marx. Therefore, some questions may be validly asked. Is Tuibeo’s classroom a site for indoctrination? Being a Marxist, does he constrain other perspectives from

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<sup>142</sup>Tuibeo, *Philosophy of Education*, 3-4.

<sup>143</sup>In a paper written by Tristan McCowan, he says that Freire is best known for defending “the importance of ‘reading the world’ as well as ‘the word’, that is to say, developing wider understanding of society at the same time as learning technical literacy skills.” Tristan McCowan, “Approaching the Political in Citizenship Education: The Perspectives of Paulo Freire and Bernard Crick,” *Educate*, 6, no. 1 (2006): 58.

<sup>144</sup>Tuibeo, *Interview with Cortez*, February 12, 2013.

emerging and flourishing inside his classroom?<sup>145</sup> Is he not open to new discourse other than that of the Marxist method of social analysis?<sup>146</sup> Does his classroom shut the doors for meaningful and free exchange of conflicting views and opinions?

First of all, advancing a specific agenda does not mean that the critical educator would coerce openly or even subtly the students to side with the educator's agenda. It is the dialogical element of Freirean liberating pedagogy that assures that the critical classroom does not become a vehicle for coercion, indoctrination and brainwashing. As early as 1972, Jack London, a scholar from the University of California, already comments: "The focus of Freire's theory of education is upon liberation and humanization rather than domestication and indoctrination."<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup>Even if he admits of his Marxist influence, Tuibeo also realizes the excess of State Socialism. He says: "It appears that an ideal society cannot flourish nor can it be realized under either 'Monopoly Capitalism' or 'State Socialism. Both had already been tried, but found wanting, for the reason that the former has proven to be shallow, and the latter, degrading . . . Life is better lived beyond the 'Wall Street' (Capitalism) or the 'Kremlin Walls' (Totalitarianism)." Tuibeo, *Introduction to Philosophy*, 110-111.

<sup>146</sup>In an article, Jan Servaes, a development communication teacher from Cornell University in New York, affirms that participatory research, a type of research that is also developed based on the thoughts of Freire, is manipulable. "It is often a means of political indoctrination by the Right and the Left alike." Jan Servaes, "Participatory Communication (Research) from a Freirean Perspective," *Africa Media Review* 10, no. 1 (1996): 73-91 <http://san3.lib.msu.edu/DMC/African%20Journals/pdfs/africa%20media%20review/vol10no1/jamr010001006.pdf> (accessed December 7, 2012).

<sup>147</sup>Jack London, "Reflections Upon the Relevance of Paulo Freire for American Adult Education," in *Paulo Freire: A Revolutionary Dilemma for the Adult Educator*, ed. Stanley M. Grabowski (Syracuse: ERIC Clearing House on Adult Education, 1972), 34.

Then in 1975, John L. Elias, one of the most prominent Freirean commentators, aired the issue of the tendency of the Freirean method to be “indoctrinative and manipulative.”<sup>148</sup> Elias reiterates the point that Freire rejects any tendency to impose a doctrine, a method or a model. Elias says: “Freire's contention is that the purpose of conscientization is to get people to learn by having them challenge the concrete reality of their lives through discussions. No alien view of social reality is imposed upon them; but through discussing a problematic situation, they are led to see the true condition under which they live.”<sup>149</sup> Giroux also clarifies that Freire is far from elevating his pedagogy or any other doctrine into the level of absolute truth. Neither does Freire force any student or anybody for that matter to subsume himself/herself to his pedagogy. According to Giroux: “What Freire made clear is that pedagogy at its best is not about training in techniques and methods, nor does it involve coercion or political indoctrination . . . Critical pedagogy is about offering a way of thinking beyond the seemingly natural or inevitable state of things, about challenging ‘common sense.’ It is a mode of intervention.”<sup>150</sup>

In an article written about Paulo Freire, Fr. Ranhilio Aquino, a Filipino teacher of philosophy says that Freire’s “conscientization is not indoctrination.”<sup>151</sup> If ever it becomes indoctrination, then the liberating pedagogy violates itself. It becomes anti-dialogical. It becomes monological and authoritarian. It postures a monopoly of knowledge. It intimidates the students who have different and dissenting opinions. And as Freire would say, these acts belong not to

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<sup>148</sup>John L. Elias, “The Paulo Freire Literacy Method: A Critical Evaluation,” *McGill Journal of Education* 10, no. 2 (1975), 213. Accessed November 22, 2012.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., 209.

<sup>150</sup>Giroux, “Lessons from Paulo Freire,” n.p.

<sup>151</sup>Ranhilio C. Aquino, *Philosophy of Education* (Aparri, Cagayan: Lyceum of Aparri, 1990), 30.

those who work on the side of the oppressed. These actions belong to the oppressor.<sup>152</sup>

Now, it must be reiterated that Tuibeo advances a specific agenda. In fact, this is the essence of non-neutrality. As Freire would say, the teacher consciously or unconsciously promotes a particular politics.<sup>153</sup> In the case of Tuibeo, his politics is visible, conscious and deliberate. But the idea of non-neutrality does not destroy the atmosphere of dialogue inside the classroom. In other words, a conscious choice of a politics or point of view does not run in contradiction to the essence of dialogue.

For one, Tuibeo is clear that the search for knowledge does not cease. Knowledge is not fixed. Any particular standpoint is what it is: a particular standpoint. He says:

Our search for knowledge is a never-ending adventure. The world and its values and meaning can never be exhausted or contained in one's life experience. And what is fascinating is, whenever we feel that we have grasped reality, new vistas open up for further speculation and exploration. The whole of reality is too vast that we can know only too little of it; hence, to dogmatize our present knowledge is to close our minds to other possibilities.<sup>154</sup>

If one knower cannot hold by himself/herself the vastness of reality as Tuibeo would contend, it follows that another knower may be holding another piece of that vastness of reality. The awareness that one has particular limitations leads to awareness: that the other may be holding the answer to that limitation. To dogmatize the knowledge that one holds is to deny the knowledge that another possesses. Thus, to avoid dogmatism, one has to engage in an endless process of dialogue with the other. Tuibeo's conviction on the inexhaustibility of reality cannot but lead to

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<sup>152</sup>Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 121.

<sup>153</sup>Freire, *The Politics of Education*, 179.

<sup>154</sup>Tuibeo, *Philosophy: An Introduction*, 23.

an atmosphere of dialogue inside the classroom between and among various students and teachers who are holders of various truths. Tuibeo does not dogmatize a particular knowledge. If this is what he said about the nature of knowledge, then it also follows that the act of knowing inside the classroom must be done in the spirit of discourse and dialogue.

Moreover, even if Tuibeo has clear and definite convictions regarding education, philosophy and other fields of knowledge, he does not believe in the power of indoctrination. In the opening statements of his textbook on philosophy, he says that he does not aim to indoctrinate or to propagandize his beliefs but to subject ideas into the lens of critique. In fact, his aim is to start a dialogue inside the classroom. He says:

Though written from a particular standpoint, this book is not intended for propaganda or for indoctrination. Its objective, conceived in the best philosophic tradition, is to provide the students with a framework for the critical evaluation and intelligent discussion of the problems and issues which philosophers, in their endless search for 'wisdom', have entertained through the ages. It is the author's contention that when students are exposed to a variety of problematic questions, they are challenged to think, to discuss and even to debate, thereby liberating them from intellectual complacency.<sup>155</sup>

To my mind, what Tuibeo does is to open the classroom to other perspectives other than that which is cherished and propagated by the dominant class who also controls the educational system. The purpose of presenting a new perspective is to challenge the establishment's way of doing philosophy and education. It is to challenge the monologue (sometimes, disguised as dialogue) that has been systematized, institutionalized and defended. It is oppressive

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<sup>155</sup>Ibid., iii.



education that kills dialogue. By challenging this, Tuibeo opens the classroom to authentic dialogue. When an opposite point of view is presented, then the students are not anymore bombarded by a one-sided form of knowledge advanced by the oppressor. The students see another point of view – that of those who subvert the oppressor and those who fight for the oppressed. Now, the students can really choose. In fact, the students may not choose but rather conceptualize other alternatives that are not yet presented by educators advocating conflicting positions. What is important is that the site for the dissemination of knowledge is not confined to one particular view. Otherwise, it becomes a monological classroom. When another point of view is offered for discussion and critical reflection, then the students can really critique and choose for themselves. The dialogical classroom does not hinder the challenging of claims such as: “philosophies are products of individual’s creative thoughts, but individuals carry the imprint of the biases and prejudices of the class to which they belong.”<sup>156</sup> In fact, it is another perspective that challenges the student to assess carefully and to subject it to serious criticism. It is another perspective that challenges the dominant knowledge that doing philosophy is an objective enterprise simply concerned with the objective truth.

Tuibeo’s classroom is not an authoritarian classroom. He says that one of the characteristics of an alternative education in the Philippines must be its being democratic.<sup>157</sup> One who values democracy must logically be open to criticism, debate and discourse. The encouragement of criticism breeds a dialogical atmosphere. A dialogical atmosphere creates a critical classroom. Freire says that one of the main fruits of dialogical engagement is critical thinking.<sup>158</sup> Knowledge has a social dimension. It is created and re-created through meaningful interaction inside the classroom. The radical choice for the democratic process is a

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<sup>156</sup>Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>157</sup>Tuibeo, *Philosophy of Education*, 179.

<sup>158</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 80-81.

choice for dialogue. Dogmatism, indoctrination and propagandizing reflect a totalitarian and authoritarian perspective. Thus, Tuibeo does not kill dialogue. He does not intend that all his students would agree with his claims. He takes a stand but he does not coerce. It would be the height of contradiction if he is aiming for a democratic education while simultaneously denying the dialogical element of classroom interaction.

We can conclude from our discussion that Freire's liberating pedagogy is manifested mainly in Tuibeo's thoughts on the social task of philosophy and the political character of education. Just like in Freire, we can find Tuibeo valuing the concepts of non-neutrality, critique and dialogue. These are some of the main elements of Freire's liberating pedagogy.

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