

Herbert Marcuse: one dimensional man



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This thinking paper will examine Brookfield's interpretations of the above article, and endeavour to explain from the empirical writings of Herbert Marcuse, his thoughts on emancipating Ideological beliefs and encouraging Liberation. Marcuse beliefs highlighted further what he saw was a One Dimensional Society with only a One Dimensional Thought. Their way or the high way! This predisposes challenges in these social movements to combat oppression and thus encourage Liberation, in a genuine socialist society.

Although Marcuse's writings signify he was a fan of elements to Marx's Ideology, he also found Marx, in his day, was not a true libertarian who did not consider or connect himself with the individual. As a result, if Marx's theory was to continue to remain credible, Marcuse decided to act as a catalyst for the reassessing and re-examination of oppositional social movements in combating oppression and domination.

His movement directed us through three pathways -Rebellious subjectivity, liberating toleranceandConceptual thoughtin Criticality, from the perspectives of reassessing Marxism and in the practices of Adult Education. Marcuse, found the concept of socialism, to be the most important issue, which precipitated and gave rise to his movement. He felt the concept of socialism had taken Marx's theory and developed it to become more focussed on the development of the productive forces - Capitalisation and promotion of learning as a commodity, into another higher productive society which alienated and isolated individuals. Furthering his view, this could generate critical dispositions which he termed asrebellious subjectivity.

To alleviate rebellious subjectivity, encouraging liberation of aesthetics from the demands of capitalism within classrooms, adult educators endeavour daily to create conducive learning environments - Ultimately inspiring liberation in a genuine socialist society today! Concurring with Brookfield's resonance to Marcuse's idea of repressive tolerance, diversity in education could be construed as the dominant culture appearing to be more open to the learner's voices, when in fact it is a refined way of reasserting its control over public discourse - remoulding the junior and leaving certificates and with the introduction of CAS (common awards system) in 2010, into adult education. We can, as adults be resistant to change but we also recognise manipulation. Thus surmising as adult educators, in the field, we need to critically be very carefully in our classrooms too!

In the practice of liberating tolerance, Marcuse identified to be inclusive, fair and equal to all - running discussions, listening to the voice of the learner and developing curricula to accommodate different learning styles, was of paramount importance in critical adult education. However, is this really in existence and to what level of acceptance is it? Brookfield highlighted Marcuse's disagreement for those who did possess radical opinions and rebellious perspectives and "*argued that such tolerance is repressive, not liberating.*" (Brookfield, 2002) Although concurring with the majority of the literature and Marcuse's ideas, as an advocate of listening to the voice of the learners', with the freedom to express their viewpoints, are educators allowing this to selfishly improve their own practices? However, I too am dancing to the tune of somebody else's fiddle, by issuing a disciplinary for time keeping, attendance, disruptive behaviours. Could this not subtly be

perceived as a contradiction to my beliefs, reasserting control over public discourse too, and constricting freedom more and more? “ *Unwittingly serving to reinforce an unfair status quo*” (Brookfield, 2002) concluding that dominant mainstream perspectives still overshadow the minority in practice!

Lastly, Brookfield reviewed the writings of Newman and his view on conceptual thought in Criticality. Newman(1994) states that critical thinking is about “ *laying blame and defining enemies, both are necessary precursors to informed social change*”. (Brookfield, 2002). It can be argued that to liberate learners, accountability and ownership are crucial to develop individual positive visions. Yes, criticality can be both positive and negative. Negative feedback in the classroom can motivate learners! Concurring with Marcuse, in order to truly feel great liberation, we need to get great refusal. We get knocked down, but we get back up again! Onwards, upwards and forwards – Change and liberation does not happen without the forwards. However, in general, adults are not always receiving of constructive criticism, previous experiences can cloud judgements! Brookfield states that Marcuse “ *is at odds with those adult educators who emphasize that the road of criticality begins with examining the specific experiences of adult learners*”. (Brookfield, 2002). On the other hand, it can be argued that this view is crucial in criticality in order to enable the learners to self-correct.

References

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