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11 The political economy of the emotions

Individualism, culture and markets, and the administration of the self in education

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To get the whole world out of bed
And washed and dressed, and warmed, and fed
To school, and back to bed again,
Believe me Saul, costs worlds of pain.
Adapted from 'The Everlasting Mercy' with apologies to John Masefield (1945)

There can hardly be anyone in the Western world, who, whether they lived through the 60s and 70s or not, is unfamiliar with the image of a young Vietnamese girl running naked towards the camera, her face contorted by pain and shock as her back is burnt by napalm. There can be few of us who do not share a visceral emotional sympathy for her as well as revulsion at such 'collateral damage' inflicted in our name.

However, whether the pain and suffering of Phan Thi Kim Phuc was 'collateral' or not, they can be seen as an outcome of considerable administrative effort. The production processes involved in making the napalm demand both technical and administrative effort. The mining, transport, and processing of the petrochemicals that are the material base of napalm demand further administrative effort. The construction and management of the fleet of tankers as well as the maritime administration that guides their passage to factories are further networks of administrative expertise. The planes that carry the napalm and the navigational systems that ensure effective delivery are both administrative achievements of considerable sophistication. The programmes that trained and disciplined the men who flew the planes and the logistics that supported them in the field also demand considerable administrative effort. The political and economic systems that required that the napalm be dropped in that particular place at that particular time are also articulated through vast networks of administration. And so on.

In short, the burning girl is, indeed, an administrative achievement.

And so, of course, is our emotional response. The camera itself was the
product of administrative effort as, indeed, was the presence of Nick Ut of Associated Press in that particular place at that particular moment; as was the circulation of the image to the world’s media and its publication through innumerable print and electronic outlets which themselves also involved sophisticated administrative processes of organisation and decision making.

The point here is that administrative processes both produce and communicate emotions. While administrative structures may demand ‘rational’ rather than ‘emotional’ decision making, and while they may well be populated, as Weber suggested, by sensualists without heart who end up in a sort of mechanical petrification, this does not mean that administrative structures and actions do not have emotional consequences.

Traditionally in Western thought the rational and the emotional have been seen as opposites. Classical social theorists, such as Weber (1922/1968), distinguished between ‘rational’ and ‘affectual’ action. Parsons (1951) similarly distinguished between action seen as ‘instrumental’ and that seen as ‘expressive’. More recently, however, the development of a sociology of emotions has suggested that such a clear distinction is a mistake. Turner and Stets, for instance, argue that

All sociological theories ... begin with the assumption of human rationality — that is, people seek to realize profits in the exchange of resources. All sociological theories, however, see individuals as making decisions ... that are guided by and have consequences for emotions. Rationality and emotions are ... so intricately connected at all levels — the biological, the cognitive, and the behavioural — that it is probably not useful to separate them in analysis, as several hundred years of philosophy and a hundred years of sociology have tended to do.

(2005: 22)

This reconnection of rationality and emotions has clear consequences for the study of organisations and administrative processes. For the most part, such study has been focused on the study of ‘...the emotional lives of persons in their social contexts’ (Lutz and White 1986: 427) or organisational culture and ‘Cultural forms [that] are a means of expressing emotions in organizations [where] the effective use of cultural forms hinges on their ability to generate emotions’ (George 2000: 1046). In particular, the coincidental shift of focus in organisation theory from administration to management and management to leadership has emphasised the role of leaders in symbolic management where ‘the success of symbolic management is largely dependent upon the evocation of emotion’ (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995: 111).

As a consequence, several theoretical approaches to leadership and leadership research have developed on the basis of symbolic management, among them: visionary leadership (House 2004); a revisiting of Weberian concerns with charismatic leadership (Gardner 2003); and more broadly with transformational leadership (Bass 1998; Bass and Riggio 2005).
Inevitably, such approaches raise the question of the integrity of such symbolic management: its authenticity or inauthenticity. Luthans and Avolio (2003) argue that authentic leaders are guided by values that allow them to operate at higher levels of moral integrity. Price (2003) suggests, however, that inauthentic leaders may also declare such higher moral values but do so simply to exploit their organisations or followers, making espoused values difficult to use in distinguishing between authenticity and inauthenticity. Harter (2002) suggests that authenticity derives from the consistency of thoughts and feeling with actions.

Such positions raise again the supposed conflict between rationality and emotion. Michie and Gooty return to such a position, pointing out the challenge inherent in 'the conflict between behaving effectively and behaving ethically' where effectiveness may be driven by rational, calculative behaviour, and ethical concerns might require moral/emotional concern for organisational members, stakeholders, communities, or other organisations (2005: 443). In each of these cases, the issue is framed by various conceptions of leadership and their emotional effects on leaders and led. Where administrative structures are considered, it is almost always within the framework of a supposed antipathy between the rationality of administration and the emotions of individuals. Seldom are structural effects considered in the administrative production of emotion unless they are considered as a conflict between rational administrative demands for effectiveness and emotional responses to the coercive nature of such demands.

In education, as in the literature more generally, such issues have been taken up largely in the study of principals and their interactions with teachers. Beatty, for instance, has studied 'the emotions of leadership – their provocations, origins, qualities – and some of their effects on the working lives of educational leaders' (2000: 331). Blackmore (1996; 1999) explored the emotional work of female principals faced with the 'rational' demands of market liberal management demands. Leithwood and Beatty (2007) argue that principals' consideration of teachers' emotional well-being can lead to higher morale, self-efficacy, commitment, and motivation among teachers and improved school climate and achievement for students. Hargreaves has, focused on understanding 'why teachers' emotions are configured in particular ways in the changing and varying organizational life of schools' (2001: 1075; 2004).

Much current work relating administration to emotions is based on current notions of transformational leadership (Bass 1998; Leban and Zulauf 2004; Tichy and Devanna 1986) and its importation into education (Hallinger 2003; Leithwood and Jantzi 2005a; 2005b; Silins, Mulford, and Zarins 2002). Transformational leadership essentially argues for the exercise of charismatic authority within rational legal administrative structures. But what is missing from most of these analyses is what Weber was acutely conscious of – the fact that these contrasting forms of authority are based upon contrasting forms of power.
Zorn and Boler make this point, emphasising that the traditional separation of private and public, rational and emotional, male and female are cultural constructions that celebrate particular forms of domination. Moreover:

The cultural and historical legacies that have dismissed or privatised emotion, depicted as feminised weakness, and excluded emotion from the rational political arenas continue to persist as an ever present ghost of cultural disdain.

(2008: 138)

Whilst acknowledging Hargreaves' and Beatty's groundbreaking social and organisational analysis and their recognition of emotions as being socially and organisationally situated, Zorn and Boler argue, however, that

[Their] views ... are founded on a mistaken assumption about how individuals and social settings interact and how emotions are formed. Unfortunately, emotions and social settings are understood as individual forces that act upon each other, rather than interact with each other.

(2008: 140, italics added)

The result of this mistake is to consider the role of the principal, for instance, as mediating the public cultural/emotional life of the organisation with the private personal/emotional life of the teacher. In contrast, Zorn and Boler argue that '... emotions are neither public nor private, but rather must be understood as collaboratively formed' (2008: 142).

In order to remedy this theoretical defect Zorn and Boler suggest two important concepts. The first idea, that of 'economies of mind', suggests that emotion and affect constitute part of the currency of social relations that embody and facilitate the negotiation of power relations. The second is that of 'inscribed habits of inattention' which, while avoiding theories of the unconscious, allows the analysis of power relations through the emotional regard (attention) or disregard (inattention) implicit in social relations (2008; Boler 1999). Further, following Bartky (1990) and Campbell (1997), they suggest that emotions can be either recognised through 'social uptake' that accepts them as legitimate, or 'blocked' through dismissal as illegitimate through the exercise of social/emotional power.

It is this incorporation of power relationships into the examination of emotions and the processes of social interaction that allows a significantly new approach to the study of emotions, administration, and leadership.

It is only by foregrounding relations of power that define emotional experience and communication that new research can resist the tendency to individualize or universalise emotional experiences. It is not enough that educational leaders show consideration for emotions and their social and organizational dimension. Within education, as in the wider
culture, emotions are a site of control and a mode of political resistance. Emotion matters in educational leadership because leaders, teachers and learners understand and enact their roles of subordination and domination significantly through learned emotional expressions and silences.

(Zorn and Boler 2008: 148)

Harding and Pribram (2002) reach similar conclusions in their study of the power of feeling, where, following Foucault (1991), they argue that the construction of the self is the outcome of cultural processes/regimes of power, through which various definitions of the self are accumulated and through which individuals are positioned (and position themselves) emotionally and socially. Various 'technologies of power' (Foucault 1979), including emotional technologies, are employed and resisted in order to produce, reproduce, and resist particular definitions of the self. Such processes produce a 'structure of feeling' (Williams 1975; 1979), but within conditions of 'emotional hegemony' (Jaggar 1989) through an interactive process that sees

... the process of emotional experience in interaction with cultural practices and social relations as the constant construction, solidification and renewal of structures of feeling, just as the ongoing constitution of emotions prescribes and proscribes the construction of cultural practices and social and personal relations.

(Harding and Pribram 2002: 424)

Such structures of feeling are intimately tied both to individual identities and to social structures. For instance, some of these identities are the result of social categories that precede individuals, many of which are defined in contrast to each other (black/white, male/female, principal/teacher, teacher/pupil) and that are endowed with more or less power, prestige, status, etc., along with various emotional valences. Other identities are chosen through identification with particular social groups and realised through acceptance by those groups via the effective performance of particular roles (Stets and Burke 2000). Both ascribed and chosen identities are emotionally laden and are constantly in the process of negotiation as alternative identities are constructed through processes of social negotiation and change. As Taylor suggests, 'my own identity crucially depends upon my dialogical relations with others' (1991: 48). Such dialogue is both socially and historically constructed: a dialogue that provides for sources of the self (Taylor 1989).

Arendt (1958), similarly, argued that power is the result of communicative struggle, mainly directed towards the reorganisation of relations between people and groups. This is a theme taken up by Bourdieu (1989) who argues that 'world-making' is the result of both 'objective' classification and reclassification of social groups (for instance, through official categorisation) and of 'subjective' and individualised processes involving insults, innuendo, slander,
and gossip. Such struggle over 'world-making' is both communicative and evaluative: 'At the heart of any struggle is not just communication but a communication that classifies people and things into particular social categories and provides an evaluation of those categories' (Fleming and Spicer 2007: 56, italics added).

Struggles over such classifications are not only evaluations of categories, but also evaluations of individuals and the categories that they inherit, choose, and construct and the selves that they negotiate. This is both a political and a frequently highly emotional process, one that is both a struggle over dignity and a struggle over equity, and one expressed through 'selfhood, ethics, identity, self-transformation, re-enchantment and emotions' (Fleming and Spicer 2007: 186, 187).

Fleming and Spicer argue strongly for the notion of 'struggle' over such issues as a key and in-eradicable feature of work organisations, suggesting that struggle is a more frequent condition than harmony.

... [W]e ought to approach workplace struggle and political contestation as a constitutive feature of work organizations rather than as an aberration that can simply be managed away. The problem with most mainstream management thinking is that it views politics, contestation and resistance as deviations from the default option of a harmonious norm. We are not suggesting that harmony cannot be attained in work organizations. But such a vision of work is merely ideological if it is prescribed within or superimposed upon the current structure of employment relations, domains whereby asymmetrical power relations are taken for granted and the managerial prerogative a natural right. Indeed, work in today's society is fundamentally permeated by differing interests, factions, contradictions and power/resistance relations.

(2007: 184)

Much recent management literature, in education as elsewhere, seeks to resolve such struggles by the manipulation of emotions through charismatic or visionary leadership or through the 'culturing' and 'reculturing' of organisations such as schools (Deal and Peterson 1999; Fullan 2001). The result is a personalising and individualising of struggle, of power, and of emotional relationships in ways that focus on the micro-politics of organisations and ignore broader issues. But the micro-politics of organisations 'are not hermetically sealed off from society when it comes to power, politics and resistance' (Fleming and Spicer 2007: 188).

Stuart Hall makes a similar point:

Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories ... [and] far from being eternally fixed in some essentialist past, ... are subject to the continual play of history, culture and power ... [I]dentities are the
names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.

(1993: 394)

Currently two major narratives compete as the contexts within which identities can be constructed. Moreover, while these narratives may have been associated historically within the integrated social orders of the nation state, they are currently breaking apart. 'Two worlds are being dissociated: the world of technologies and markets and the world of cultures, the world of instrumental reason and that of collective meaning, that of signs and that of meanings' (Touraine 2000: 25). Touraine argues that the capacity of globalised technologies and markets to break free of the social relations of production produces a paradox within which personality and identity are no longer bound together by existing social relations of production, nor by coherent projections of identity into the future, but seek support either in an idealised notion of past harmony or through retreat into communities that provide alternative sources of identity and support.

At a personal and emotional level, therefore, the difficulty of locating oneself securely within a constantly changing market economy produces the temptation to define oneself in relation to a cultural community constructed around pre-determined and 'stable' ideas of race, religion, gender, belief, or a mode of behaviour. The difficulty here is that although cultures built on such foundations may confer a sense of self and emotional identification, they also open up the possibility of authoritarian demands for unquestioning loyalty and belief. This is particularly the case where the communitarian identity is defined in terms of the discrimination suffered by its members (Touraine 2000: 33).

Principals, teachers, and students, no less than parents, are caught both instrumentally and emotionally within this paradox of competing demands. Schools, being mostly subject to the governance of an economically directed state, are predominantly charged with the inculcation of technical knowledge and skills among students, thus privileging the economic identities provided by the market. On the other hand, under the rubric of 'choice', the state is in many cases not only allowing, but also supporting 'faith' or 'charter' schools through which particular notions of 'virtue' can be articulated along with cultural and religious identities of a quite different kind (Beckett 2007; Guardian 2001; Gillard 2007; Times 2007).

The emotional impact of these conflicting demands for loyalty and commitment, to the instability of markets on the one hand and to authoritarian communities of belief on the other, creates a significant problem for schools, principals, teachers, and students alike. This conflict, which often expresses itself as burn-out among staff and disaffection and alienation among students, cannot be resolved by siding with either economy or community, although schools typically attempt to do so. It is a conflict that reflects both the increasing integration and unity of the market and the increasing fragmentation of communities (Touraine 2000: 166ff).
If there is to be a resolution of this issue at the level of personal identity as well as at the level of social integration, Touraine argues, it must be based upon both recognition of difference and a commitment to communicate across social and cultural difference. This is only possible if ways can be found to develop individual autonomy from both markets and communities, sufficient emotional resilience to manage communication across difference, and an acknowledgement of the importance of the freedom to build a personal life without coercion, for

The call for freedom to build a personal life is the only universalist principle that does not impose one form of social organization and cultural practices. It is not reducible to laissez-faire economics or to pure tolerance, first because it demands respect for the freedom of all individuals and therefore a rejection of exclusion, and secondly because it demands that any reference to a cultural identity be legitimised in terms of the freedom and equality of all, and not by an appeal to a social order, a tradition or the requirements of public order.

(Touraine 2000: 167)

This principle of self-determination within the context of communication across cultural boundaries is fundamental to Touraine’s argument. But it demands significant changes in the instrumental, cultural, and emotional order of schools. First, it demands that schools cease to define themselves solely in terms of curriculum, ‘the knowledge they transmit to their pupils … and the exams they use to evaluate the acquisition of knowledge’ (Touraine 2000: 275). Second, it demands that schools shift from an emphasis on the broadcasting of messages and information towards an emphasis on communication about the real issues facing pupils, parents, teachers, and administrators. Only by doing so can the subject (pupil, parent, teacher, administrator) achieve the conditions that ‘will allow him to become the actor of his own history’ (Touraine 2000: 56). This inevitably introduces into the school the emotions attached to those issues that are central to subjects’ lives and which emphasis on the formal curriculum excludes.

... [It] is impossible to speak of a school for the Subject unless we defend schools that communicate, and it is at this point that we encounter the greatest resistance. Whenever this topic comes up, both parents and teachers refuse to talk about it. They are afraid that if the uncontrollable disorder of affective relations is allowed into schools, they will be unable to carry out their primary mission, which is to teach children and prepare them for the examinations that open the door to employment.

(Touraine 2000: 275)

A second reason why communication about real issues across boundaries is so threatening is pointed to by Stephen Law in his discussion of The
War for Children's Minds (2006): that is, that open communication across boundaries may threaten both the dominant emphasis on skills and vocation on the one hand, and the cultural traditions and authoritarian imposition of values and 'character' (which so many seem to require of schools) on the other. In advocating a critical liberal education, Law suggests that fundamental to such an education is inculcation of 'the habit of thinking carefully and critically about our own beliefs and attitudes' (2006: 129). This, in itself, requires a particular kind of discipline where children get into the habit of listening to different points of view calmly and carefully considering them in ways that respect others before making moral judgements (2006: 128).

While Law deals mainly with the liberal answer to religious authoritarianism, his arguments apply to all kinds of authoritarian imposition of values and beliefs and are entirely consistent with Touraine's advocacy of the communicative school. But such deliberative principles need also to be coupled with a particular, scientific, conception of knowledge. This is necessary in that it allows pupils to distinguish between truth and falsehood (between evolution and creationism/intelligent design for instance) as well as being a defence against arbitrary power and authoritarian communitarian traditions. It also provides the ground upon which to communicate in a 'world that is retreating into private experience' (Touraine 2000: 279).

So, on one hand, we have the demands of the market for the exclusion of emotions from the curriculum and a concentration on skills and aptitudes required by the world of production and consumption. On the other, we have the demands of authoritarian communities for emotional compliance with unquestioned values and beliefs. Both articulate characteristic forms of administration designed to produce particular educational, social, and personal identities. That these conflicting demands are borne out in the daily emotional lives of principals, teachers, and students should be no surprise. That the functionalist requirements of capitalist markets and the authoritarian requirements of communities of belief are sometimes combined in ways that have unfortunate outcomes should also be no surprise. Indeed, in that Western society where fundamentalism in both markets and religions is most highly developed, such conflicting demands are associated with high rates of social disorder (Paul 2005).

This is partly because, as Bernstein suggests, the contradictory demands of such institutionalised messages and identities are commonly kept apart by systems of strong classification — that is, they are separated and insulated from each other by distinct forms of discourse (e.g. different classifications within the curriculum). As the principles of classification are institutionalised and insulated from each other 'the contradictions, cleavages and dilemmas which necessarily inhere in the principle of classification are suppressed by the insulation' (2000: 7). Social order is in part the result of the successful insulation of such categories as market and culture from each other. Where the insulation breaks down, social disorder may increase.
Such dialogical and institutional classifications present individuals with the possibility of assuming multiple, different (and perhaps conflicting) identities as they simultaneously locate themselves and their identities within different, insulated, social positions. The principle of insulation then becomes, inwardly,

a system of psychic defences against the possibility of the weakening of the insulation which would then reveal the suppressed contradictions, cleavages and dilemmas ... The internal reality of insulation is a system of psychic defences to maintain the integrity of a category.

(Bernstein 2000: 7)

The emotional consequences of a weakening insulation between categories can be quite significant - as, for instance, when the categories of 'good son' or 'macho worker' conflict with the category of 'gay partner' or 'queer' (Morris 2003). They can also lead to public questioning of categories and attempts to redefine the power that maintains such categories and keeps them separate: the 'world-making' that Bourdieu suggested was integral to changes in the principles of social order. This, and the struggle that it involves, is highly emotional work. But it is work that may be fundamental to an alternative pedagogy: that of discomfort.

Boler and Zembylas articulate a pedagogy of discomfort as a way of challenging '... the inscribed cultural and emotional terrains we occupy less by choice and more by virtue of hegemony' (2003: 111). Such hegemony, they suggest, produces for many of us a comfort zone that needs to be opened up to critical enquiry at both cognitive and emotional levels. For some, such hegemony is challenged by the crossing of borders (e.g. immigrants), where displacement challenges existing and available identities, producing an ambiguity in the sense of self. In such situations, what Dewey (1985) saw as 'habits' are challenged when individuals are confronted by alternative ways of thinking and feeling.

Dewey saw such challenges as a fundamental pedagogical process through which habits might be opened up to scrutiny; habits, which are both '... the building up and solidifying of certain desires; an increased sensitiveness and responsiveness', as well as 'an impaired capacity to attend to and think about certain things' (1985: 171). As habits are both cognitive and emotional, a critical pedagogy of discomfort opens up both territories for educator and student alike. They introduce risk and uncertainty into the pedagogical process. But they also open up territories upon which alternative visions of both self and society can be inscribed. In this way

... a pedagogy of discomfort becomes an approach to understanding the ways in which something new is created, how difference is introduced into history. A greater sense of comfort and positive emotional labor comes with examining the ways in which this creativity and invention
arise out of how educators and students engage in discourses and practices that open up new possibilities.

(Boler and Zembylas 2003: 132)

Moreover, such pedagogies are capable of challenging the xenophobias of class, race, gender, religion, and nationality by seeing difference as a point of departure for the exploration of new forms of identity and social organisation, within both schools and the wider society. They are, indeed, fundamental to what Wrigley calls Schools of Hope (2003). They are also fundamental to answering the question that Touraine poses: Can We Live Together? (2000). As Boler and Zembylas put it:

A pedagogy of discomfort invites educators and students to engage in critical thinking and to explore the multitude of habits, relations of power, knowledge, and ethics through which the conduct of educators and students is shaped by others and by themselves. Within this culture of critical thinking (which is not separated from feeling), a central focus is the recognition of the multiple, heterogeneous, and messy realities of power elations as they are enacted and resisted in localities, subverting the comfort offered by the endorsement of particular norms.

(2003: 131)

And this takes us back to a question I have asked before: what would a truly educational administration look like? It would certainly not look solely to embrace the competitive academic skills curriculum required by markets. Nor would it solely embrace the (however genteel) authoritarian curriculum of communities of belief. It would not embrace the didactic pedagogy of either system. Neither would it embrace the formal hierarchical and exclusionary tests for compliance offered by the market model; nor the tests of loyalty and obedience demanded by closed cultures. It would not separate rationality from emotion. Nor would it see transformational leadership simply as the engagement of the emotions in the pursuit of compliance with 'rational' organisational goals and cultures. But it might well embrace a curriculum concerned with the variety of sources of the self and their negotiation within a context of respect. It might embrace a pedagogy of discomfort through which alternative identities might be considered, justified, and chosen without coercion. And it might just embrace a form of evaluation that was concerned with the emotional health of both the administered and the administrators. It might, indeed, be an administration that could

... recognize that the goal of education is not to train and prepare young people for society, still less to train them for their future economic roles. Its goal is to train and educate them to be themselves, to enable them to become free individuals who can discover and preserve the unity of their
experience throughout the upheavals of life and despite the pressures that are brought to bear upon them.

(Touraine 2000: 284)

By developing such a truly educational administration it might just be possible to reduce the collateral damage that is currently one outcome of our administrative production of emotion in education, as well as the invisibility of the administrative processes involved.

Note
1 That this is the case is pointed out by Paul (2005) whose study of religiosity and indicators of social disorder such as homicide, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, suicide, life expectancy, and pregnancy in nations across the developed, democratic world, found that such social pathologies generally correlate with 'higher rates of belief in and worship of a creator'. Moreover, in this respect, 'The United States is almost always the most dysfunctional of the developed democracies, sometimes spectacularly so, and almost always scores poorly.'

References


Times (2007) 'More Faith Schools are Planned in an effort to Integrate Minorities', 8 September.