to be "open to difference and the open-ended nature of texts and experiences characteristic of a general democratic tolerance and pluralism which retains the goal of universal emancipation from systems of power and domination" (p. 89) This openness and goal is shared by Transformation Theory's emphasis on the importance of critical reflection on assumptions and on diversity, trust, equality, and empathy in discourse.

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MODERN AND POSTMODERN TENSIONS IN ADULT EDUCATION THEORY: A RESPONSE TO JACK MEZIROW

I appreciate the opportunity to reply to Jack Mezirow's thoughtful response to my 1996 *AEQ* article. This provides a chance for me to clarify my perspective and to offer a different reading of my article from the one suggested by Mezirow.

Modernism and the Grand Narrative of Emancipation

In my criticism of the stages of development attributed by Mezirow to adult learners, my goal was to take issue with the modernist concept of progress inherent in Mezirow's transformative model of adult education. When Mezirow states that he believes "that adult learners are at different phases in their movement toward achieving an emancipatory understanding" (this volume, p. 65) it is precisely this assumption of some ineluctable movement toward an advanced, preferred, superior end-state that is the object of my critique. He re-iterates this later on when he claims that emancipatory values are "inherent in the process of learning." This view closely mirrors the framework established by Jürgen Habermas.

In order to reveal the modernist core of Mezirow's project—and at the risk of over-simplification—one can describe how the transformative adult learning process is supposed to take place: the emancipatory impulse is identified by the adult educator (or the impulse is always already presupposed to be there) who then attempts to release it in the adult learner. This follows a more generic modernist scenario in which the "expert" names the desired goal (to which any rational human would agree), devises a plan or strategy to accomplish this goal (including a strategy that is learner-centered and takes the authentic experience of the learner as the stock of knowledge to be used), and applies that strategy to achieve the stated goal. Even with the best of intentions this remains an essentialist approach to learning. As a result, the question that Mezirow raises to me would, I believe, be more provocatively posed to himself, namely, is it the correct role of the educator to "get learners to agree with" his or her political beliefs? If one adopts the modernist "will to emancipate," where the criteria for emancipation are defined by

the educator at the outset, does not the goal become one of getting adult learners to conform to this desired outcome (for their own good)? It is this modernist attitude to which I strongly object. There is a power relation involved in the formal education process. The power exercised by the adult educator may be repressive or constitutive but it is nevertheless a means to structure and regulate learner behavior in accordance with a set of goals chosen by the educator. Mezirow gives us the impression that the emancipatory impulse and the adult educator's role in liberating this latent desire can transcend While I am more sympathetic to the project enunciated by resistance postmodernists such as Giroux, McLaren, Aronowitz and others, I point out that they retain a conception of emancipation from systems of oppression in which power is acknowledged as a predominantly repressive force. In doing so, they neglect or minimize the effect of power relationships that are advanced *within* emancipatory discourse itself.[1]

Communicative Action Beyond Ideal Speech

I believe that a major source of disagreement with Mezirow lies in our different understandings of Habermas' theory of communicative action. This is not a minor point. The lines of demarcation between modernist and postmodern social theory and educational practice are often to be found in differences between Habermas' critical social theory and Foucault's postmodern critique. These differences are usually portrayed as stark and uncompromising. This too often has the effect of paralyzing discourse. I would like to briefly sketch a way to re-cast and thus, hopefully, to de-stabilize this dichotomization between Habermas and Foucault. In this way I hope to respond to Mezirow's conception of the ideal conditions of discourse and his request that I "prove" that a postmodern foregrounding of local—as opposed to universal—knowledges provides "better results" for adult educators.

One of the signal contributions of Habermas to a participatory educational theory and practice is to be found in his theory of communicative rationality. Habermas moves the Enlightenment (modernist) project—that of tracing a path to human freedom and emancipation from systems of coercion and repression—forward by carefully examining the basis of rational action in the world. He finds that there are two forms of human rationality: instrumental and communicative. The former is goal-oriented and predicated on explanation and control. For example, the instrumental basis for action informs and structures behavior in commerce and science. Communicative action, on the other hand, is aimed at understanding. The "goal" of understanding is thought to be implicit in the desire to communicate. What Habermas allows for with this distinction is the classification of forms of human behavior and interaction—action that heretofore would not fit the category of rational (means-ends oriented) action—as *differently* rational. This "linguistic turn" in critical social theory rescued the Enlightenment project from the iron cage of technology, bureaucracy, and instrumental action.

I think that the linguistic turn adds an important dimension to critical social theory. How Habermas actually supports his theory of communicative action is problematic. It is where Mezirow and I begin to diverge. Habermas assumed that every attempt at communicative interaction between individuals raises certain claims

about the nature of the communication: comprehensibility, truth, sincerity, and legitimacy. In other words, I choose to speak to you because I have already pre-supposed that you are capable of comprehending my words and language. You, on the other hand, choose to listen because you believe that I will be saying something that you can comprehend. The other claims—that what I say is true, that I am sincere in what I say and that I am in a legitimate position to utter the words that I speak—are raised in every act of communication and are either challenged or unchallenged. If they are unchallenged that does not mean that the listener necessarily accepts the sincerity, truth, or legitimacy of the words or the speaker. Rather, unchallenged claims can be an indication of a power imbalance that silences voices opposed to these "truth claims." Habermas sometimes refers to a utopian condition in which these claims are always and everywhere true as an "ideal speech situation."

It is, I believe, possible to retain Habermas' theory of communicative action without accepting the validity of the ideal speech situation as an emancipatory ideal. Rather, communicative claims form a part of the fluid structure of power relationships that exist in every discursive regime. By attending to the balance of power in the enforcement of these claims we can better expose and understand the micro-technologies of power as they exist in all learning environments, including those which Jack Mezirow refers to as part of the transformative learning process.

In arguing for a more postmodernized view of Habermas' theory of communicative action, I do not want to suggest that I have eliminated the critical tension between Foucault and Habermas. Indeed, I would argue, along with Mezirow, that adult learners and educators constitute fixed subjectivities. This is an essential feature of Mezirow's work.[2] Transformative learning is, at its core, an individual process involving shifting perspective and individual transformation. Yet, from a postmodern standpoint this view of the self is at odds with the concept of individuality as socially and discursively constructed. As Foucault states in his analysis of systems of control and discipline that seek to circumscribe that which counts as normal behavior by creating the categories of deviant and abnormal behavior: "The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline'" (1979, p. 194). Focusing solely on the individual subject has the effect of naturalizing a universal, homogenous emancipatory impulse. By promoting a universal ideal to which all learners ascribe, racial, cultural, and gender differences between adult learners are relegated to the background.

With Mezirow's approach, the process of tracking the achievement of perspective transformation takes place at the micro-level of personal transformation rather than the macro-level of social and political change. This has the effect of reifying the individual. From a postmodern perspective, any attempt to theorize the individual subject creates its own particular discourse of power involved in the measurement, assessment, and standardization of transformative learning. By contrast, a postmodern view of adult education offers a critical counter-poise to the emancipatory logic and relations of power inherent in transformative education.

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Notes

[1] As Aronowitz and Giroux argue, "What is at stake here is the recognition that postmodernism provides educators with a more complex and insightful view of the relationships of culture, power, and knowledge. But for all of its theoretical and political virtues, postmodernism is inadequate to the task of rewriting the emancipatory possibilities of the language and practice of a revitalized democratic public life" (1991, p. 81). I would argue that a postmodern perspective would be careful to question the authority to re-write those emancipatory possibilities. To borrow, once again, a quote from Gayatri Spivak, "We must know the limits of the narratives, rather than establish the narratives as solutions for the future" (1990, p. 18-19).

[2] Inglis has recently commented upon this in a critique of Mezirow. Inglis argues that "there is a need to take an understanding of human emancipation away from notions of liberating a pre-existing, essential self toward a more realist or structural understanding of power" (1997, p. 5).

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TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND SOCIAL ACTION: A RESPONSE TO INGLIS

In "Empowerment and Emancipation" (1997) Tom Inglis undertakes a critique of transformation theory, particularly in terms of an alleged "psychologization" of the process of emancipation. To do so he creates a straw man to make his point.

Inglis faults this theory as focusing on the individual and "the construction of the notion of self" as the locus for social as well as personal change (p. 4). I have never written on "the construction of the notion of self." He concludes that I reject a structuralist position "which argues that individuals, although constituted within structures, through their agency not only reproduce but change these structures" (p. 7). This is an erroneous conclusion. I support this position.

> The world for Mezirow is primarily shaped through individual agency. . . . It is not that social being determines consciousness, but rather human consciousness, albeit emancipated, which determines social being. (p. 8)

This is totally off the wall. I have never written about consciousness *per se* nor have I ever been so blind as to imply that it is not determined by social being. Indeed, I have tried repeatedly to explain that our received frames of reference are composed of assimilated cultural codes, social norms, ideologies, and language games. These frames of reference are the way the culture shapes the way we learn. We are embedded in these sets of assumptions and expectations.

Transformative learning is about emancipating ourselves from these taken-for-granted assumptions about social being. It involves bringing the sources, nature, and consequences of this received wisdom into critical awareness so that appropriate action—including social action—can be taken.