in the 1920s and 1930s. Marx and Lenin had contended that power is maintained via control of the state and the means of production (the economy). In his theory of hegemony Gramsci argued that in modern industrial societies, it was also necessary to control culture.

Culture is controlled not by way of coercive force but through the winning of consent. Many white fundamentalist Christians gave their consent to Reagan and Bush with the promise of particular psychic benefits. With George W. Bush in power we can remain confident, many people contended, that white, heterosexual Christians will maintain control of the nation. "With Bush we won't have gay marriage, affirmative action, feminism, or anti-Christians taking prayer out of our schools. We'll have curricula in schools that respect our national heritage and allow criticism of it. Our history, culture, language, and religion won't be diluted by multicultural information and other forms of revisionism." This elevation of the importance of culture, Gramsci argued, also increased the need for intellectuals in modern societies. Organic intellectuals, Gramsci wrote, are individuals who resist hegemony and help bring their fellow citizens a sense of historical consciousness of themselves and the society. These organic intellectuals were to be distinguished from traditional intellectuals, Gramsci concluded, whose charge is to maintain existing power relations, to create and deliver sanitized information that supports the existing hegemonic order.

One can quickly discern how important Gramsci's work is for the evolution of critical theory and especially for critical pedagogy. Of course, the role of the critical pedagogue is in part a reflection of Gramsci's characterization of the organic intellectual. By the late 1960s and 1970s, Gramsci's work was exerting a profound influence on those contributing to the critical traditions. His concepts of hegemony and organic intellectuals in particular played a central role in the development of cultural studies at the Centre for Contemporary Studies at the University of Birmingham in England. Much of the work produced at the center on the impact of popular culture in the hegemonic struggle was directly influenced by Gramsci. This work is very important to the development of critical pedagogy (Browning, 2002; Coben, 1998; Forgacs, 1988; "Gramsci Archives," 2003; Spencer, 2003).

Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934)

Vygotsky is a central figure in the development of a critical psychology, a critical learning theory that can be employed in a critical pedagogy. Born to a middle-class Jewish family in Orsha, Belorussia, Vygotsky contracted tuberculosis from his mother. His life was cut short by the disease; he died at the age of thirty-eight. Always upset with the decontextualized individualistic focus of mainstream psychology, Vygotsky called for a sociocultural psychological approach that accounted for the way individual cognition is socially and culturally mediated. By social and cultural mediation, Vygotsky meant that individual behavior cannot be removed from the context in which it takes place. Thus, psychology should always be studied in a cultural-historical context, he maintained. In this psychology scholars understand that there is a close connection between the social context in which individuals live and their psychological processes. Thus, when psychometricians administer IQ tests, they are not merely measuring individual cognitive ability but also the cultural relationship between the social context of the learner and the social context in which the test was developed. Cultural disjunctions often will be missed by the test administrators and mistakenly interpreted as a lack of cognitive ability on the part of the test-taker.

Thus, for Vygotsky the rigorous study of social context was a key dimension of his psychology. Without an understanding of the relationship between social context and cognitive behavior, psychologists were bound to make profound mistakes in studying mental processes. It was in this context that his well-known concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) emerges. In a sense, the ZPD represents the social context in which learning takes place. This social context shapes the range of potential each student has for learning. With the aid of the ZPD, critical teachers can better understand why some students might do well in a class and others do poorly. Instead of capitulating to the cognitive nihilism of a psychological theory that posits such ability levels are biological and hereditary in nature and thus unchangeable, the notion of the ZPD assures us that a large percentage of academic difficulties have little to do with innate cognitive ability. Instead, one's cultural exposure becomes profoundly important. Does the student's out-of-school life put her in contact with people who read? Does she interact regularly with individuals who value the

role of academic learning in one's life? Does she have access to people who can encourage and answer her questions about academic matters? Does she have access to resources that she can use to help her explore forms of academic knowledge? The answers to such questions help us understand the nature of particular students' ZPD.

So, in the most elementary dimension of Vygotsky's work, critical teachers learn that educators must understand the social, cultural, political, ideological, and economic forces that affect cognitive development. Appreciating this complex process, individuals can begin to see the ways their consciousnesses have been constructed, their relationship to schooling produced. Thus, understanding this dimension of Vygotsky's work, critical teachers can encourage students to see themselves and how they became themselves from the perspective of other people. In this context we all gain the benefit of self-knowledge and thus the ability to change ourselves in say, emancipatory ways—ways that empower us to resist the oppressive effects of dominant power. Here we become aware of the ways that self is constructed via relationship to others. With this knowledge we can begin to reconstruct our own ZPDs so as to become more than we are right now. This is a central dimension of critical pedagogy.

Because of his heavy emphasis on the social dimension of consciousness and learning, Vygotsky parted company with Piaget. In this context, Vygotsky was critical of Piaget's testing of the problem-solving ability of individual students working alone. Vygotsky contended that the ability a student developed working with an adult in forming concepts would be a much better barometer for revealing the present state of her intellectual abilities. Because individual ability always emerges from modes of collective living, psychological measures that neglect this social dimension are dangerous. Another way Vygotsky deviated from Piaget involved his perspective on cognitive developmentalism. For Vygotsky, developmentalism was more a research methodological concept that merely applied to the systematic evolution of cognitive functions. Vygotskian developmentalism reflected his belief that psychological or any other phenomena could only be studied and understood via a study of its origin and its history. Piaget's concept of development as the systematic movement from one discrete cognitive stage to another was dismissed by the

great Soviet psychologist. Vygotsky saw cognitive development as anything but systematic, as individuals depending on their ZPDs and social encounters experienced uneven cognitive growth characterized by potholes in the road, setbacks, drastic changes, and unexpected epiphanies.

Another key aspect of Vygotsky's psychological work involves his emphasis on the importance of artifacts, especially artifacts external to the individual, in cognitive activity. In this context, Vygotsky extended the idea that humans use tools to interact with nature and to transform themselves. Thus, what and how we learn is always dependent on the artifacts or tools available. And which tools are available to us is contingent on our social context. Thus, he argued, it is especially through our tools that cognition is socially mediated. In cognitive activity, Vygotsky noted, the most important tools tend to be sign systems—for example, language, numbers, writing, ideographs, and so on. When humans learn and internalize such sign systems, cognitive and behavioral change is facilitated. A key aspect of a modern ZPD involves an individual's access to such sign systems and to individuals who adeptly model their usage.

Thus, central to Vygotsky's psychology is the use of language in the development of thinking. It is not surprising that one of his most important books was entitled, *Thought and Language*. In this context, he maintained that higher mental functions are always connected to the mediation of language. Through linguistic mediation, individuals are able to sophisticate their self-directed thought processes. To understand Vygotsky's critical psychology, one must appreciate his efforts to study the development of language in relation to thought. Thus, because of human beings' ability to use tools such as language to change their social context and themselves, they are not simply at the mercy of social and historical processes. Through the mediation of such tools, humans gain agency (Cole and Scribner, 1978; Cole and Wertsch, 2003; John-Steiner and Souberman, 1978; Kozulin, 1997; Nicholl, 1998; Samaras, 2002; Subbotsky, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978, 1997; Wertsch, 1991).

Paulo Freire (1921–1997)

With Freire, the notion of critical pedagogy as we understand it today emerges. Born in Recife, Brazil, in 1921 Freire

learned about poverty and oppression through the lives of the impoverished peasants around whom he lived. Such experiences helped construct a devotion to work that would improve the lives of these marginalized people. Beginning his educational work in Recife, Freire became the most well-known educator in the world by the 1970s. Peter McLaren (2000) has called Freire the "inaugural philosopher of critical pedagogy" (p. 1). Indeed, all work in critical pedagogy after him has to reference his work. His work with the Brazilian poor was viewed as dangerous and subversive by wealthy landowners and the Brazilian military. When the military overthrew the reform government of the country in April of 1964, progressive activities were shut down and Freire was jailed for his insurgent teaching. After serving a seventy-day jail term, Freire was deported. He continued his pedagogical work in Chile and later, under the umbrella of the World Council of Churches, throughout the world.

Not only have scholars in education employed Freire's work, but individuals working in literary theory, cultural studies, composition, philosophy, research methods, political science, theology, sociology, and other disciplines have used it as well. In this context, Freire reconstructed what it means to be an educator, as he upped the ante of what professional educators need to know and do. After Freire a progressive educator cannot be viewed as a technician, a functionary carrying out the instructions of others. Educators in the Freirean sense are learned scholars, community researchers, moral agents, philosophers, cultural workers, and political insurgents. As discussed in Chapter 1, Freire taught us that education is always political and teachers are unavoidably political operatives. Teaching is a political act—there's no way around it. Freire argued that teachers should embrace this dimension of their work and position social, cultural, economic, political, and philosophical critiques of dominant power at the heart of the curriculum. His notion of critical praxis characterized as informed action demanded curricular and instructional strategies that produced not only better learning climates but a better society as well.

Freire used a variety of strategies to produce this ambitious undertaking. In order to help students develop wider conceptual lenses to view their lives and social situation, Freire developed what he called codifications—pictures and photographs as part

of a research process directed at the students' social, cultural, political, and economic environment. The pictures in this codification process depicted problems and contradictions in the lived worlds of students. Freire induced the students to step back from these pictures, to think about what they told them about their lives. What are the unseen forces and structures that are at work in these images, covertly shaping what is going on in the areas they depict? In this context students began to see their lives and the hardships they suffered in a new way. They began to understand that the way things presently operated was not the only option available. The possibility for positive change embedded in this understanding is the key to Freire's educational success. Students were motivated to gain literacy in order to take part in changing both their own lives and the society. The process of learning was inseparable from individual empowerment and social change. They could not achieve the goals they sought without knowing how to read and write. Because the dominant classes did not want students from the peasant class to succeed with their academic studies, Freire's students knew that they had to excel in their studies in order to overcome the oppressors.

Such experiences helped Freire understand in profoundly concrete terms the ways that schooling was often used by dominant interests to validate their own privilege while certifying the inferiority of students marginalized by social and economic factors. Understanding schools as impediments for the education of the poor, Freire sought numerous ways for students to intervene in this dehumanizing process. Freire referred to this process of intervention as liberatory action. Indeed, liberation in the Freirean articulation requires more than a shift of consciousness or an inward change. Instead, he argued, liberation takes place in the action of human beings operating in the world to overcome oppression. There is nothing easy about this process, he warned his readers. Liberation is akin to a painful childbirth that never completely ends, as oppression continuously mutates and morphs into unprecedented forms in new epochs. Thus, liberation is not merely a psychological change where an individual comes to feel better about herself. Freirean liberation is a social dynamic that involves working with and engaging other people in a power-conscious process.

Social change in the context of liberation and emancipation, according to Freire, is possible—even in right-wing times. Since

the world has been constructed by human beings, then it can reconstructed by human beings. Nothing human made is intractable, and because this is so, then hope exists. History can be made by individual human beings with radical love in their hearts and a vision of what could be. Human beings can become so much more than they are now, Freire always maintained, in the spirit of this critical hope. In many ways Freire is critical pedagogy's prophet of hope. Oppression, he understood, always reduces the oppressed understanding of historical time to a hopeless present. We are all oppressed from time to time by this hopeless presentism that tells us time and again: "things will never change." Throughout history these hopeless moments have been followed by radical changes. Such a "long view" is, of course, hard to discern in the black hole of despair. Freire's historical hope was paralleled by a pedagogical hope shared between students and teachers. In this domain of hope, Freire brought the belief to his students that in the framework of his historical hope we can learn together in the here and now. As he put it, students and teachers

> ... can be curiously impatient together, produce something together, and resist together the obstacles that prevent the flowering of our joy. ... Hope is a natural, possible, and necessary impetus in the context of our unfinishedness. Hope is an indispensable seasoning in our human, historical experience. Without its, instead of history we would have pure determinism. (1998, p. 69)

Undoubtedly, one of the most important dimensions of Freire's pedagogy involved the cultivation of a critical consciousness. Liberation and critical hope cannot be attained, he contended, until students and teachers address the nature of a naïve consciousness and the maneuvers involved in moving from a naïve to a critical consciousness. To make this complex move, Freire posited, individuals need to understand reality as a process rather than a "static entity." In this process-oriented mode teachers and students begin to understand historically how what is came to be. In this frame teachers and students can begin to imagine ways that release the future from the dictates of the past. They develop a consciousness that imagines a future that refuses to be "normalized and well-behaved." For the naïve thinker, education involves molding oneself and others to this normalized past. For the critically conscious thinker, education involves engaging in the continuous improvement and transformation of self and reality.

Again, this is no easy task. The oppressed, Freire frequently reminds his readers, have many times been so inundated by the ideologies of their oppressors that they have come to see the world and themselves through the oppressor's eyes. "I'm just a peasant, or a hillbilly, or a black kid from the ghetto, or a woman, or a man from the Third World, or a student with a low IQ; I have no business in higher education." Exposure to oppression often opens the eyes of the oppressed to its nature, but it can also, Freire cautioned, distort one's self-perceptions and interpersonal interactions. In such a context, critical consciousness is elusive because the oppressed are blinded to the myths of dominant power—the ones that oppress them and keep them "in their place." Such myths—for example, African Americans and other nonwhite peoples are not as intelligent as individuals from European backgrounds—must be confronted and exposed for what they are—vicious lies. Such confrontation and the plethora of insights that emerge in the process constitute what Freire labels "conscientization"—the act of coming to critical consciousness. In this movement from naïveté to critical pedagogy individuals grasp the social, political, economic, and cultural contradictions that subvert learning. Teachers and students with a critical consciousness conceptually pull back from their lived reality so as to gain a new vantage point on who they are and how they came to be this way. With these insights in mind, they return to the complex processes of living critically and engaging the world in the ways such a consciousness requires.

Thinking about critical consciousness, Freire talked about the inseparability of learning and being (ontology). Learning from Freire's perspective is grounded in the learners' own being, their interaction with the world, their concerns, and their visions of what they can become. In this ontological context Freire made some important points. All teachers, of course, should honor the being and the experiences of the oppressed—but they should never take them simply as they are.

How have ideology and other forms of power shaped the identity and experiences of the oppressed? Identity is always in process; it is never finalized, and as such it should not be treated as something beyond the possibility of change. Here Freire makes a pedagogical argument that has often been missed by many of his followers. Understanding the student's being and experiences

opens up the possibility for the teacher to initiate dialogues designed to synthesize his or her systematized knowing with the minimally systematized knowing of the learner.

Thus, Freire argues that the teacher presents the student with knowledge that may change the learner's identity. Freire here emphasizes the directive status of the teacher. Thus, he contends that the authority of the teacher is based on the knowledge and insight she brings to class. Freirean authority exists not simply because she is the teacher but because of what she has to offer the students. There is a vast difference between this type of authority that respects the being and experiences of students and authoritarianism. Authoritarianism views student subjectivity as irrelevant, as it attempts to make deposits of information in student mind banks. What the information means to them and how they might use it are irrelevant in authoritarian pedagogy. The student's role is to demonstrate that she learned the information and can give it back to the teacher in the same form it was provided to her. The ontological dimension of the student's being is not applicable in banking pedagogy.

In this pedagogical context, Freire injects his concept of literacy. The ability to use the printed word is essential to Freire's effort to reshape the world. As students become literate they are empowered to change themselves and to take action in the world. In this empowered literate state, learners employ generative themes (discussed in Chapter 1) around which they can organize insurgent action. As they read the word and the world, students read their reality and write their lives. Such reading by itself, Freire warned, is of little use if not accompanied by transformative action for justice and equality. His ideas on literacy struck a positive nerve with many people, as in the first decade of the twenty-first century, one can find Freirean literacy programs around the world. Many people were fascinated by the way Freire positioned literacy as a way of life where one used reading and writing skills as tools to care for other people. This critical notion of literacy as a way of life and the larger concept of education as a political act must not be lost in efforts to implement Freire's work. Ever since his initial work appeared, there has existed a tendency for teachers to tame Freirean pedagogy in ways that move to two ends of a critical pedagogy curriculum (Freire, 1970, 1972, 1978, 1985).

On one end some teachers attempt to depoliticize his work in ways that make it simply a amalgam of student-directed classroom projects. On the other end of the continuum some teachers have emphasized the political dimensions but ignored the rigorous scholarly work that he proposed. These latter efforts have resulted in a social activism devoid of analytic and theoretical sophistication. Academic work that cultivates the intellect and demands sophisticated analysis is deemed irrelevant in these antiintellectual articulations of Freire's ideas. With these problems in mind the struggle to implement a Freirean critical pedagogy should never seek some form of "purity" of Freirean intent. Indeed, Paulo insisted that we critique him and improve upon his ideas. Living up to many of his pedagogical principles without sanctifying and canonizing him and his work is a conceptual tightrope that those of us who admired him must always walk. The walk is always worth it. Few have embodied the impassioned spirit as intensely as Freire did in his pedagogy (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991; Giroux, 1988, 1997; McLaren, 2000; Peters, Lankshear, and Olssen, 2003; Mayo, 2000; Roberts, 2003; Slater, Fain, and Rossatto, 2002; Steiner, Krank, McLaren, and Bahruth, 2000).

Stanley Aronowitz

From union organizer and adult educator to a professor in college and university classrooms, Stanley Aronowitz has worked as a critical educator during the last forty years. As a union and community organizer, Aronowitz operated under the assumption that "organizing" was mainly a critical educational activity. Always concerned with raising suspicions with his students about the value of mainstream forms of intellectual labor, Aronowitz has seen his main pedagogical function as providing a good reading list to his students. In his writing, organizing, and teaching, he has remained dedicated to delineating the practical uses of theory. Theory in Aronowitz's articulation is nothing arcane or esoteric but a very straightforward activity—the attempt to provide coherence to a system of concepts and ideas while introducing students to the pleasures and benefits of philosophy, history, and social theory. In this process, he argues, students develop rigorous habits associated with learning.

It is revealing, Aronowitz argues, that this type of intellectual activity, this critique, has acquired a bad name in the United