

Piotr Stańczyk
University of Gdansk

Critical Pedagogy and Engaged Research: Ideology, Interests and Naivety

Ideology is an illusion consistent with interest,
but a well-grounded illusion.
P. Bourdieu, *Distinction*¹

The starting point for this article, which addresses the issue of the conditions for the possibility of engagement or non-engagement in empirical research, with a particular emphasis on pedagogical research, is a problem which Tomasz Szkudlarek points out with reference to the concept of empty signifiers by Ernesto Laclau. I am referring here to the “paradoxical quest to assess the *significance of the variety of emptiness*”² – as T. Szkudlarek puts it. Although the difficulties with the concept of empty signifiers are an inspiration for this article, I will not discuss the concept of E. Laclau at length, but I will limit myself to a mere statement that the assessment of empty signifiers means differentiating and evaluating signifiers that reflect the precarious balance of power, mobilisation of social groups, permanent conflict and makeshift universalism that is inevitably bound to lead to hegemony³. Bringing political life down to the transient life of successive populisms that gain legitimacy⁴, the issue of evaluating empty signifiers actually boils down to evaluating populisms, and to evaluating social orders. This task of assessing populisms, which is crucial for pedagogy, falls perfectly within the scope of the debate between E. Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, in which the former ridicules S. Žižek’s intransigence as “waiting for the Martians”⁵, while the latter responds to E. Laclau that from the point of view of thinking about a radical transformation

¹ P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, transl. Richard Nice, Harvard University Press 1984, p.74.

² T. Szkudlarek, *Dyskursywna konstrukcja podmiotowości („puste znaczące” a pedagogika kultury)* [Discursive Construction of Subjectivity (Empty Signifiers and Cultural Pedagogy)], Forum Oświatowe, special issue 2008, p. 132.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 125.

⁴ See E. Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, Verso 2005.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 232.

of social existence, it actually matters what kind of social order or “populism” we are dealing with⁶. Therefore, from the point of view of pedagogical research and action (if a meaningful distinction can be drawn between research and action at all), there remains the question of assessing the empty signifiers that affect such research and action, the question of populism that represents the founding moment of a particular school or educational practice, and the founding moment of the construction of the theory of such practices.

The “prototype” of the dispute between S. Žižek and E. Laclau over the evaluation of empty signifiers and populisms is the dispute over the concept of ideology between Karl Mannheim⁷ and Max Horkheimer⁸. A certain similarity to these discussions also exists in the classification introduced by Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux, who, when analysing the role of postmodernism in pedagogy and education, coined a series of distinctions, which were to enable them to evaluate the theoretical achievements of postmodernism for the pragmatics of emancipation. These distinctions are as follows: “right-wing postmodernism” *v.* “emancipatory postmodernism”⁹, “reactionary postmodernism” *v.* “progressive postmodernism”¹⁰, while a positive variant of postmodern thinking (and within postmodernism) about education is the “postmodernism of resistance”¹¹. Noting the impact of postmodern thought on the methodology of research, it is necessary to make the reflections of S. Aronowitz and H. A. Giroux the focal point of my analysis of engaged research (with a particular focus on qualitative research) in education. The ending point will be to develop the theory of interests into a criticism of naivety made by P. Freire¹², but ultimately to develop a positive concept of cognitive naivety, as a technical proficiency that can be applied in the postulate of presuppositionlessness in conducting qualitative research. First of all, however, I will present the dispute between K. Mannheim and M. Horkheimer because, although it is oversimplified and, above all, of historical value, it contains all the structural elements of the issue of the relationship between research and reality that I am interested in.

K. Mannheim *versus* M. Horkheimer: ideology and interests

It was owing to K. Mannheim that the concept of Marx’s ideology, which in his opinion is inextricably linked to the reflection on socially determined forms of

⁶ Cf. S. Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, Verso 2008, pp. 264–336 and Cf. E. Laclau, *On Populist...*, pp. 65–172.

⁷ See K. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, Routledge Classics in Sociology, Routledge 2013.

⁸ See M. Horkheimer, *A New Concept of Ideology?*, [in:] N. Stehr, R. Grundman (eds.), *Knowledge: Critical Concepts*, Taylor & Francis 2005.

⁹ S. Aronowitz, H. A. Giroux, *Postmodern Education. Politics, Culture & Social Criticism*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London 1991, p. 19.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 67–80.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 110–121.

¹² I will also draw upon A. Gramsci’s views on ideology and the role of intellectuals.

knowledge in the context of diverse social conditions¹³, began to be appreciated academically. One may say, which will later be used by M. Horkheimer to criticize K. Mannheim, that the distinction made by the author of *Ideology and Utopia* between “particular ideology” and “total ideology” made it possible, by giving the concept of ideology a more universal, objective and neutral meaning, for this notion to be recognized by a wider circle of researchers than only those who directly (as representatives of the Frankfurt School, for example) declared their attachment to Marxist thought. Thus, although it is K. Mannheim himself who finds the sources of his sociology of knowledge in Marx’s radical thinking on the origins and functions of forms of knowledge, the modifications introduced by the author of *Ideology and Utopia* have made the category of ideology acceptable, as a category potentially cognitively fertile in academic circles. This moment can be considered an institutionalisation of the concept of ideology. The modifications in question did not consist merely in developing Marx’s vision by adding certain advances in sociology, but also deprived it of a radical dimension in thinking about emancipation and emancipatory action.

In any case, as K. Mannheim puts it, the basic assumptions of the sociology of knowledge are as follows:

The principal thesis of the sociology of knowledge is that there are modes of thought which cannot be adequately understood as long as their social origins are obscured. It is indeed true that only the individual is capable of thinking. There is no such metaphysical entity as a group mind which thinks over and above the heads of individuals, or whose ideas the individual merely reproduces. Nevertheless it would be false to deduce from this that all the ideas and sentiments which motivate an individual have their origin in him alone, and can be adequately explained solely on the basis of his own life experience¹⁴.

This starting point, the founding moment of the sub-discipline of sociology, which focuses on forms of knowledge and thought, gives rise to a multitude of consequences in the form of the detailed problems of the sociology of knowledge, which include the historical variability of knowledge and thought, their dependence on social conditions, the relationship between knowledge and thought in the relations between individuals and society, and the relationship between the language system and forms of knowledge and thought. However, the driving force behind the sociology of knowledge, which is a kind of relativism, is the “contemporary predicament of thought”¹⁵, as K. Mannheim puts it, i.e. problems with the broad category of mobility. It is about a certain implication resulting from the changes in society and the changes in the forms of knowledge and thought, which represent “a significant and visible fact for us”, as well as have “impelled

¹³ K. Mannheim, *Ideology...*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

us to reflect about the social roots of our knowledge"¹⁶. The mobility at issue here is linked to the social transformations that have taken place since the industrial revolution throughout the 19th century, and therefore to the historical impermanence of knowledge and thought, to migrations, and therefore to the creation of a certain sense of non-obviousness that certain forms of knowledge or thought will necessarily reflect the truth and that some universal truth is possible at all, and finally to the movement of individuals within a social structure in which new classes or social strata emerge and others lose their significance or disappear¹⁷. In the end, K. Mannheim, while also expressing the basic premise of the sociology of knowledge, points out that, in contrast to a "reasonably stable society", the democratising society in which he lives is, just as the Greek society in the period of Athenian democracy, an ideal place for reflection on the conditions for thinking and the formation of knowledge¹⁸. Searching for historical analogies, the author of *Ideology and Utopia* finds similar traits of thinking in sceptics, making a connection between this kind of thought and the historical moment in which the unambiguous interpretation of the world, as well as axio-normative structures, are disintegrating due to the growing social conflict resulting from unresolved contradictions within the society itself¹⁹. Here we come full circle: internal tensions, coming to light along with the rising awareness of the members of society, become the cause of the disintegration of the unambiguity and the prerequisite for asking questions about the roots of thinking, and consequently the cause of the crisis of knowledge and thinking, or the disintegration of the "monopolistic type of thought"²⁰. No one needs convincing that this is reminiscent of the "collapse of the grand narrative"²¹ announced by Jean-François Lyotard, and therefore an even more radical return to the questions that have become problems of the sociology of knowledge.

What are those questions, or in other words, when we ask about ideology as a form of knowledge, what are we asking about? It can be assumed that all the problems of the sociology of knowledge are compounded in communication processes, thus adopting the descending order (from language practice to material conditions of existence). Thus, following the scepticism of the sociology of knowledge one should: (1) ask about the genesis of the language system and its social dimension, since the individual "speaks not a language of his own but rather that of his contemporaries and predecessors"²²; therefore (2) also ask about the relationship between thought and language, as well as the autonomy of thinking and communicating, since "only in a quite limited sense does the single individual create out of himself the mode of speech and of thought we attribute to him. He speaks

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 5–7.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²¹ See J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester University Press 1984.

²² K. Mannheim, *Ideology...*, p. 2.

the language of his group; he thinks in the manner in which his group thinks"²³; and finally (3) ask about the basis of the collective experience, as "in every concept, in every concrete meaning, there is contained a crystallisation of the experiences of a certain group"²⁴, as well as a "particular style of thought", resulting from their "common position"²⁵. The last (4) question, which is of particular importance from the point of view of educational theory, is a question about forms of knowledge and thought in the context of the process of "inculcating the same meanings of words, the same ways of deducing ideas"²⁶.

Questioning the forms of knowledge, demonstrating their fragmentariness, changeability or inadequacy, but above all, showing their dependence on "politics"²⁷, seems to be an ideal instrument for critiquing monopolistic types of thinking whose social agenda is school. If we add, citing K. Mannheim, that in an antagonised society "consensus can be established only with reference to the formalized elements of the objects"²⁸, i.e. language, then, theoretically, it is still possible to find tools within the sociology of knowledge that are potentially effective in deconstructing forms of knowledge that enable the stabilisation of dominance relations. In other words, this is the moment when the author of *Ideology and Utopia* is very close to the orthodox, almost Marxist, interpretation of the concept of ideology, where the main issue is the collective unconsciousness naturalising, and thus preventing the abolition of asymmetrical social relations. The problem is, however, the concept of interest as a condition for the creation of forms of knowledge and thought, especially in the context of the "total conception of ideology", coined by K. Mannheim, which must imply also a total concept of interest, which – as a consequence – leads us to the conclusion that all forms of knowledge and thought are at the same time ideological, because they come to the succour of particular interest. To put it with maximum logical accuracy, if all forms of knowledge and thought are ideological, there can be no non-ideological forms of thought, and therefore by the very impossibility of adding a negation, it is impossible to distinguish between forms of knowledge and thought in terms of the criterion of ideology. Thus, the concept of ideology, which in Marx and Engels' *German Ideology*²⁹ clearly had the potential to "differentiate" between ideologies, by extending its deconstructive scope in Mannheim's interpretation, loses its critical and therefore emancipatory potential.

The assertion and the ramifications of this assertion that each social group, including the disadvantaged ones, has its own interests and ideologies, is met with criticism by M. Horkheimer, in the spirit outlined above. The author of *A New Con-*

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²⁹ See K. Marx, F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, [in:] Christopher John Arthur (ed.) *Volume 1 of German Ideology & Selections from Pts 2 & 3*, International Publishers Co., 1972.

cept of Ideology notes that the consistent implementation of K. Mannheim's postulate, built upon the existential conditions of all knowledge and thought, that "there is no reason why we should not apply to Marxism the perceptions which it itself has produced, and point out from case to case its ideological character", without addressing the problem of social divisions, leads ideology to become "devoid of content"³⁰. As M. Horkheimer puts it:

Wherever in history nations or classes have secured their position other than with cold steel, by relying on moral, metaphysical or religious ideas, the dominated sooner or later launched an attack against these conceptions. The struggle against the cultural pillars of the prevailing social conditions usually leads to and accompanies political opposition, and often in such a way that the division of parties during the spiritual struggle generally corresponds to their interests in regard to the outcome of the political and economic struggle³¹.

In other words, it does matter what ideology we are dealing with, because it matters whether certain interests that determine forms of knowledge and thought are the interests of the privileged or the social strata in the process of emancipation. Meanwhile, the criticism of ideology, applied "equally" to all forms of knowledge and thought, may be more "scientific", but most of all it is an unashamed surrender to the confessed claim about the existential conditions of knowledge and thought: a supposedly neutral academic disarms the tool of emancipation of the socially disadvantaged. As argued by M. Horkheimer:

For that reason, the devaluation of certain ideas which justify, support or transfigure a hated condition is as old as these struggles themselves. Such an attack is best characterised not so much by the Renaissance saying cited by Mannheim – that ideas are different in *piazza* than they are in *palazzo* – than by the speech attributed by Machiavelli in his *History of Florence* to the leader of the revolt of the masses: "Observe the way in which people act", we are told, "and you will see that all those who attain great wealth or great power owe them to force or fraud. What they have seized through deceit or violence they then gloss over with the false labels of conquest and achievement in order to conceal the reprehensible nature of their acquisition"³².

Using the rhetoric of M. Horkheimer, or rather Niccolò Machiavelli, to express the strategy of differentiation of ideologies more accurately than casting all forms of knowledge and thinking into a single set marked by the notion of ideology, one has to say that "wealth", identified with "power", which has its origins in "force", "deceit" and "fraud", has its reverse. The other side of the relationship, which is reflected in the difference in thinking between "palazzo" and "piazza", is poverty and deprivation of rights, being a victim of violence, deceit and fraud. Although it may be scientifically unbiased and neutral, K. Mannheim's approach

³⁰ Cf. M. Horkheimer, *A New...*, p. 36.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

is mistaken, because it is ideological, but not merely for this reason. The total concept of ideology can be approached from the perspective of much more recent disputes, which may be foreshadowed by the following argumentation. If, in an excessive simplification, we consider ideology to be an existentially conditioned unconsciousness, or even a false one, constituted by interests, then the socially disadvantaged groups (in any respect) have the “least” falsified consciousness in terms of ideology, which justifies their discrimination, abuse or exploitation. To put it in the categories defined by Jürgen Habermas, when analysing and interpreting (and also evaluating) ideology, it is relevant whether a given ideological construct or knowledge is founded upon technical and practical interest, or rather upon emancipatory interest³³.

Returning to the dispute between E. Laclau and S. Žižek, and the valuation of populisms, it would not be a matter of emancipatory interest in general, but of the fact that a certain particularism raised in the process of imposing hegemony by a certain populism is the cause of the exclusion of some part of the society. According to E. Laclau, some form of exclusion is necessary, also because there is no reason to regard any form of discrimination as fundamental, which S. Žižek disagrees with, considering that the purely material consequences of domination are at its stake, just as they are at stake because of emancipation. Thus, following S. Žižek’s rationale, it is possible to find a common ground for all emancipatory movements, and thus to think in terms of some kind of universalism in relation to emancipatory processes. Again, expressing this in the language of J. Habermas, we are dealing with “emancipatory-reconciling” and “repressive-alienating” aspects of societal rationalisation³⁴, and thus: E. Laclau may well be focused on emancipation, but at the same time excludes reconciliation, since every emancipatory movement ends in a “repressive-alienating” form of hegemony; K. Mannheim, in turn, does not offer the possibility of distinguishing between the “emancipatory-reconciling” and “repressive-alienating” ideology. Therefore, while trying to answer the question about the conditions enabling engaged research, despite the additional complication associated with the question about the conditions for neutral research, we have reached an attempt to define the limits of scepticism in the face of the “grand narrative” of emancipation. Thus, we will have to deal with the assessment of the value of postmodernism in the context of what J. Habermas describes as the “normative content of modernity”³⁵, as well as Gregory Ulmer’s claim that pedagogy “has always positioned itself in this ‘postmodern’ way”³⁶, but above all because it is applied science.

³³ Cf. J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Polity Press, 1972.

³⁴ J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, transl. Frederic Lawrence, John Wiley & Sons, 2015.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, Polity Press, 1998, pp. 336–385.

³⁶ G. Ulmer, *Teletheory. Grammatology in the Age of Video*, Routledge, Chapman & Hall Incorporated, 1989, p. 13.

Critical pedagogy and the valuation of postmodernisms

The attempt to distinguish types of postmodernism, the attempt to evaluate the theoretical solutions it provides, is organized in the work of S. Aronowitz and H.A. Giroux according to whether “we are to benefit politically and pedagogically”³⁷, since the perspective in which education is treated as a political project is their starting point³⁸. In this essentially modernist approach, the authors of *Postmodern Education* construct binary oppositions differentiating postmodern ways of thinking about education, but also propose a classification involving additional assumptions.

The first categorisation – right-wing postmodernism v. emancipatory postmodernism – also implies, according to Saussure’s principle of language as a system of oppositions, the existence of left-wing postmodernism (the emancipatory one) and counter-, or non-emancipatory postmodernism (the right-wing one). This division reflects two major assumptions, the first of which is that S. Aronowitz and H.A. Giroux think in traditional terms about the shape of the political scene and the disputes between the right and left. The authors of *Postmodern Education* manifest this traditional division by thoroughly criticizing the conservative ideas of Allan Bloom and Eric D. Hirsch for the “restoration of Western culture” in education and through education³⁹. However, S. Aronowitz and H.A. Giroux, tend to place only conservative educational theorists within this long-established division due to the traditional nature of their views, choosing “emancipation” as a label for their own variant of postmodernism instead. This is why they must therefore assume that such a thing as emancipation exists and is even achievable, and if emancipatory movements encounter difficulties, it is because of what we can describe as anti-emancipatory movements.

The second of the binary oppositions expressing the evaluative attitude of S. Aronowitz and H.A. Giroux in relation to postmodern forms of thinking about education, is probably even more rooted in modernist lines of thought, but it can certainly be shocking in Polish conditions. What I mean by this is the division into reactionary postmodernism, in relation to its progressive form. This pair of opposing concepts implies – which is crucial for the earlier disputes between E. Laclau and S. Žižek, as well as K. Mannheim and M. Horkheimer – a vision of history as a process that has both direction and some, perhaps distant, but still a finale: emancipation. In other words, the authors of *Postmodern Education*, trying to assess the merits of postmodernism for education, inevitably become entangled in difficulties resulting from the desire to maintain theoretical purity while not wasting the pragmatic values of education theories. The problem with the educational

³⁷ S. Aronowitz, H.A. Giroux, *Postmodern...*, p. 59.

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 117.

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 24–56.

modernism of critical pedagogy may arise only in the context of postmodern discourse, but initially it is possible to make the following declarations:

Educational theory and practice have always been strongly wedded to the language and assumptions of modernism. Educators [...] have shared a faith in those modernist ideals that stress the capacity of individuals to think critically, to exercise social responsibility, and to remake the world in the interest of the Enlightenment dream of reason and freedom⁴⁰.

However, in view of the postmodern criticism of totality, the arbitrary claims to universal truth and some fixed, universal and unchangeable meanings in general, and everything that makes up the arbitrary closures that E. Laclau writes about, one cannot continue to indiscriminately revel in “the Enlightenment dream of reason and freedom”. If, as J. Habermas puts it, “the radical critique of reason exacts a high price for taking leave of modernity”⁴¹, then the price we need to pay for postmodern variations of thinking about education includes the loss of hope for ultimate emancipation, because this can always be seen as a tyranny of some sort of universalism and a kind of imposed, arbitrary closure. The problem, however, is that, in the opinion of the representatives of critical pedagogy, we are already dealing with an arbitrary closure, as “culture is about the production and legitimation of particular ways of life, and schools often transmit a culture that is specific to class, gender, and race”⁴². On the one hand, “the various discourses of postmodernism have provided a powerful new language that enables us to understand the changing nature of domination and resistance in late capitalist societies”⁴³, while on the other they lead us to be cautious about educational processes that may be challenged using arguments about their arbitrariness.

Critical pedagogists try to reconcile radical criticism of reason with maintaining a modern belief in its emancipatory power:

We believe that by combining [...] modernism and postmodernism, educators can deepen and extend what is generally referred to as critical pedagogy. We need to combine the modernist emphasis on the capacity of individuals to use critical reason in addressing public life with a critical postmodernist concern with how we might experience agency in a world constituted in differences unsupported by transcendent [...] or metaphysical guarantees⁴⁴.

And further:

⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴¹ J. Habermas, *The Philosophical...*

⁴² S. Aronowitz, H.A. Giroux, *Postmodern...*, p. 50. Cf. H.A. Giroux, *Resisting Difference: Cultural Studies and the Discourse of Critical Pedagogy*, [in:] *Cultural Studies*, ed. by L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, P. Treichler, Routledge, New York – London 1992, p. 201.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Postmodernism radicalizes the emancipatory possibilities of teaching and learning as part of a wider struggle for democratic public life and critical citizenship. It does this by refusing forms of knowledge and pedagogy wrapped in the legitimizing discourse of the sacred and the priestly; rejecting universal reason as a foundation for human affairs; claiming that all narratives are partial; and performing a critical reading on all scientific, cultural, and social texts as historical and political constructions⁴⁵.

The benefits of postmodern discourses include the appreciation of language, which for critical pedagogy implies a focus on language as a medium of power, or rather as the power of texts over the individual and his or her thinking⁴⁶, which must culminate – if we are oriented towards the process of emancipation – in generating the possibility of creating “counter-texts”⁴⁷. These counter-texts are the product of the pedagogy of voice and may be interpreted as a policy of the voice of the *fait accompli*⁴⁸. The mere fact that a student from a disadvantaged group takes the floor is in itself an act of taking the voice away from the dominant discourse. H.A. Giroux cites bell hooks, who recognizes “moving from silence into speech as a revolutionary gesture”⁴⁹ – a gesture impossible to theoretically grasp without a post-structural affirmation of language.

Another positive aspect of postmodern discourses in education is a critical approach to culture as a whole⁵⁰ – this is the “deconstructive trail in radical pedagogy”⁵¹ as defined by L. Witkowski, combining critical pedagogy with its Derridian inspirations. Deconstruction in its practical application means “challenging the commonsense assumptions that are inscribed in the dominant ideology”⁵², which is to lead, through the transformation of the framework of language and thought, to the redefinition of one’s own role and the position of those involved in the educational processes. Ultimately, it is about empowering both teachers and students, and this is done by constructing the sense, need or even the necessity of social change, by means of discursive measures that somehow minimize the demobilizing power of hegemonic discourse⁵³.

The third focal aspect of postmodern discourses in thinking about education is recognizing the problems of difference and identity, and although appreciation of the concept of difference has some democratizing potential:

⁴⁵ H.A. Giroux, *Border Crossings. Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*, Routledge, New York – London 1992, p. 134.

⁴⁶ Cf. S. Aronowitz, H.A. Giroux, *Postmodern...*, pp. 24–56.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 118–121.

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 100–103.

⁴⁹ bell hooks [after:] H.A. Giroux, *Resisting Difference...*, op.cit. p. 205. Here we can also see the intertwining of discourses and inspirations of critical pedagogy, postmodernism and cultural studies.

⁵⁰ Cf. S. Aronowitz, H.A. Giroux, *Postmodern...*, p. 72.

⁵¹ Cf. H.A. Giroux, L. Witkowski, *Edukacja i sfera publiczna. Idee i doświadczenia pedagogiki radykalnej* [Education and the public sphere. Ideas and experiences of radical pedagogy], Impuls, Kraków 2010, pp. 339–349.

⁵² Cf. S. Aronowitz, H.A. Giroux, *Postmodern...*, p. 93.

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 297.

There is in this discourse the danger of affirming difference simply as an end in itself without acknowledging how difference is formed, erased, and resuscitated within [...] asymmetrical relations of power⁵⁴.

Here we have reached the boundaries of postmodern discourse, in the thinking of radical education theorists marked by modernism. The famous “celebrating difference”⁵⁵, as a result of the postmodern emphasis on the fragmentation and criticism of universalism, has its limitations in relation to the issue of identity. The problem of S. Aronowitz and H.A. Giroux consists in defining the limits of the affirmation of difference in the sense that they cannot get rid of the evaluative attitude towards the ethical aspects of the difference. In other words, the difference is related to power and not simply to the difference itself. By this I mean the process of aestheticizing the difference, which is connected with disregarding the primacy of the relations of power⁵⁶. The point is that one cannot simply describe the difference in the identity or lifestyles and demand that people from marginalised groups “remain themselves”, because it also implies that the representatives of dominant groups also remain themselves, and moreover, have the right to pursue their aestheticized lifestyle. This type of postmodernism is helpless in the face of social asymmetry (only the difference exists) and, as S. Aronowitz and H. A. Giroux put it: “there is little or no theoretical attempt to illustrate how dominant and subordinate voices are formed in the ideological and material contexts of real conflict and oppression”⁵⁷. Meanwhile:

The political economy of the sign does not displace political economy; it simply assumes its rightful place as a primary category for understanding how identities are forged within particular relations of privilege, oppression, and struggle⁵⁸.

Two key issues have thus returned: political economy and interests, which by “forging identities” translate into forms of knowledge and thought, but also into the question of the claim to be able to somehow assess these “forgeries”. If we go down the path of E. Laclau and K. Mannheim, we do not possess the instruments for such an assessment, since either everything is just a “provisional suture” of society through an affective investment in some identities that always mean the exclusion of a non-hegemonic group, or everything is an ideological “forgery” and in this respect the “relations of privilege, oppression, and struggle” are irrelevant. Therefore, it is only the “theory of interest” that in some way distinguishes reactionary postmodernism from its progressive counterpart, or reactionary education from emancipatory education in general. However, as explained by L. Witkowski, there is a problem with the theory of interest:

⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 72.

⁵⁵ H. A. Giroux, *Resisting...*, p. 207.

⁵⁶ Cf. S. Aronowitz, H. A. Giroux, *Postmodern...*, pp. 72–73.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

Well, the theory of “interest” in macro-sociology and social philosophy seems to be the most sensitive and troublesome point of each concept and is usually the most questionable, just as it was in the case of the concept of “class interest”. The variant of the theory of interest invoked by P.L. McLaren, referring to the reflections of H. A. Giroux, does not seem to be sufficiently developed as yet, thus any attempt at “materialistic” improvement of the deconstructionism strategy for the use in critical theory remains more a project and a prelude than a ready-made intellectual construct⁵⁹.

However, this theoretical problem needs to be overcome in practical terms, or rather, it is being overcome and, from a pragmatic point of view, it is inconceivable not to be overcome. By this I mean a situation which makes it possible to distinguish, for example, sexism from feminism⁶⁰, since, whether from the perspective of the extremely consistent postmodernism of campuses or academic neutrality in research, male domination simply implies a gender difference, which can be described and shown as being discursively created and it can be proved that some other form of relationship will also be based on an arbitrary closure. Therefore, some form of assessing the difference is necessary so that postmodern discourses do not become a factor in preserving social relations in their asymmetry. In order to become engaged in social processes, also as a researcher, it is necessary to affirm ideological forms of knowledge and thought, including one’s own, on an equal footing with the need to affirm the “empty signifiers”, i.e. the values to which we devote ourselves due to an affective investment.

P. Freire and A. Gramsci: on intellectuals, criticism and naivety

At its best, critical pedagogy enables teachers and others to view education as a political, social, and cultural enterprise. That is, as a form of engaged practice, critical pedagogy calls into question forms of subordination that create inequities among different groups [...]. Likewise, it [...] refuses to subordinate the purpose of schooling to narrowly defined economic and instrumental considerations. This is a notion of critical pedagogy that equates learning with the creation of critical citizens, rather than merely good ones⁶¹.

Critical pedagogy advocates a radical form of democracy that constantly pursues equal rights for disadvantaged groups, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the inclusion of all manifestations of social practice within the framework of its thinking – no group or practice must remain undemocratic⁶². Fostering the

⁵⁹ H. A. Giroux, L. Witkowski, *Edukacja...*, p. 349.

⁶⁰ Antiracism, antisexism and anticapitalism are recognised by S. Aronowitz and H. A. Giroux as democratic struggles. Cf. S. Aronowitz, H. A. Giroux, *Postmodern...*, p. 123.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁶² See, inter alia, *ibid.*, pp. 122–126, H. A. Giroux, *Resisting...*, pp. 199–212.

development of critical civic competences is one of the objectives of critical pedagogy, while, at the same time, shaping competences that make a citizen, albeit critical, “not merely good”. Considering that the effects on which the authors of *Postmodern Education* are focused relate to forms of knowledge and thought, or rather deconstructive thinking in relation to forms of knowledge, the postulate formulated by them also refers to the proposed features of the researcher investigating social reality. To sum up, a critical researcher is not a “good” researcher, and a “merely good” researcher is not a critical researcher, as critical researchers are insubordinate, focusing their attention on inequalities.

Criticism and insubordination follow, in a sense, the formula of making social reflection (also on education) political⁶³, whose emphasis on power relations legitimized by arbitrary closures of discourse, will boil down to the understanding of theoretical work as an ultimate disruption of the dominant discourse and its subsequent reopening⁶⁴. In a nutshell, critical pedagogy is a counter-hegemonic project⁶⁵. On the other hand, we must have a “correct” discourse that does not address the voice of disadvantaged groups, a hegemonic discourse. In the American context and in relation to social theory in the broad sense, the authors of *Postmodern Education* observe a lack of classical tradition-oriented theories such as those of K. Marx, M. Weber or É. Durkheim. What you get instead is “antitheoretical statistical or ethnographic empiricism”⁶⁶. Furthermore and more importantly, this anti-theoreticality leads to the accumulation of data and their interpretation, which, according to S. Aronowitz and H.A. Giroux, does not offer greater insight into social phenomena, but in some way protects the authors of anti-theoretical research against the allegation of non-neutrality⁶⁷. Nevertheless, also in seemingly disengaged, presuppositionless, or even anti-theoretical and neutral research, “metacategories are tacitly employed but rarely if ever acknowledged”⁶⁸.

Why is there this ignorance of meta-categories, which represent the presuppositions for research procedures? From “affective investment”, as E. Laclau would put it. After all, all forms of knowledge and thought are, by necessity, ideological, as K. Mannheim notes. T. Szkuclarek, in turn, talks about “ideological commitment” or, which comes down to the same issue, but sounds “better” – “herme-

⁶³ See T. Bennett, *Putting Policy into Cultural Studies*, [in:] *Cultural Studies*, op. cit. pp. 23–37.

⁶⁴ Cf. S. Hall, *Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies*, [in:] *Cultural Studies*, op. cit., pp. 278–282, S. Aronowitz, H.A. Giroux, *Postmodern...*, p. 43.

⁶⁵ H.A. Giroux, *On Critical...*, p. 59.

⁶⁶ Cf. S. Aronowitz, H.A. Giroux, *Postmodern...*, p. 18. D. Silverman, in turn, uses the “analytic induction” category, which consists in separating the practice of qualitative research from social theory. Cf. D. Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interaction*, SAGE 2006, p. 399.

⁶⁷ Cf. S. Aronowitz, H.A. Giroux, *Postmodern...*, pp. 18.

⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 18. Alfred Schütz is of a similar opinion, and says that “All our knowledge of the world, in common-sense as well as in scientific thinking, involves constructs, i.e., a set of abstractions, generalisations, formalisations, idealisations. [...] Strictly speaking, there are no such things as facts, pure and simple”. A. Schütz, *Common Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action*, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 1953, p. 2.

neutic pre-understanding”⁶⁹. In order to be able to study something, one needs to know how to do it, and to know how to do it, one needs to know what it is, but in order to know what it is, it is necessary to study it – a vicious circle of presumptionlessness closes, and researchers are forced to apply knowledge whose standards deviate from those adopted and adhered to by the positivists and which can hardly be deemed “objective”. This does not mean, however, that positivist-oriented researchers or qualitative researchers assuming the possibility of presumptionlessness actually conduct genuinely neutral research. All research is a form of social engagement; the problem that arises here is that it matters whose side we take.

The problem of engagement and impossible neutrality in research is formulated emphatically by P. Freire, who talks about the historical and social context of thought and action:

For this reason, to me, the taking of a naive, or worse, an astutely neutral position on the part of someone who studies, be it a physicist, a biologist, a sociologist, a mathematician, or the thinker of education, does not seem either possible or acceptable. Nobody can be in the world, with the world, and with others in a neutral manner. I cannot be in the world, with gloves on my hands, apprehending only⁷⁰.

The author of *Pedagogia da indignação* considers presumptionless and neutral methodology to be naive, in the sense that it is impossible. It is easy to proclaim neutrality from the height of academic pulpits, but, following P. Freire’s metaphor, apprehending the world in “white gloves” so as not to dirty one’s hands with research work is unrealistic. In other words, each study is entangled in some kind of power relations, each has political value, each concerns specific people and is conducted by a researcher who is also a specific person. Thus, P. Freire recognizes that it is impossible to conduct research for the sake of research itself, as this always inevitably implies engaging in social practice by making the decisions and choices underlying research procedures, as well as by making interpretations. Interpretations, on the other hand, are the domain of discourse, i.e. intervention in the sphere of culture, because, as S. Aronowitz and H. A. Giroux aptly point out, “people are mobilized or demobilized by discourse”⁷¹. Therefore, it is not surprising that P. Freire proposes a series of questions researchers need to ask themselves: “In favour of what do I study? In favour of whom? Against what do I study? Against whom do I study?”⁷²

The strongly employed theory of conflict in the thought of the Brazilian educator on the one hand enables P. Freire to fill a gap resulting from “antitheoretical empiricism”, and on the other hand, by focusing on social asymmetries and

⁶⁹ Cf. T. Szkudlarek, *Radyczna krytyka, pragmatyczna zmiana* [Radical criticism, pragmatic change], [in:] *Alternatywy myślenia o/dla edukacji* [Alternatives of thinking about/for education], ed. by Z. Kwieciński, IBE, Warszawa 2000, pp. 277–278.

⁷⁰ P. Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation*. Routledge, New York 2016, p. 60.

⁷¹ S. Aronowitz, H. A. Giroux, *Postmodern...*, p. 151.

⁷² P. Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation...*, p. 60.

dominance relations, enables educational intervention. Research is not an end in itself, but a key element of social change, be it adult literacy or democratisation. Moreover, and more importantly, according to P. Freire these two processes cannot be considered separately because literacy brings political effects and political changes are of educational value. Consequently, according to P. Freire, it is difficult to perceive education only in narrow technical teaching categories, because each of the educational undertakings should be regarded and planned as an action to increase conscientisation (i.e. social awareness, in Portuguese: *conscientização* – P.S.)⁷³. On the other hand, political processes have an educational value and bring cognitive effects, an example being the agrarian reform⁷⁴. The author of *Extensão ou Comunicação* draws attention to the excessively narrow and naive perception of parcelling out the fazendas in strictly legal and organisational terms, when these actions actually entail major social changes, the most important of which is the rise of the “new mentality”⁷⁵, where the world may no longer be perceived as “given, static, unchangeable”⁷⁶. P. Freire’s view in this respect is fundamentally Marxist: the change in the means of production and the relations of production leads to a change in the established forms of knowledge and thought, but more importantly it leads to a loss of conviction that if things are the way they are, they must always be so. The process of studying the world (reflection, learning, but also of action) at different levels can bring about potentially revolutionary social changes.

In any case, the category of naivety has three facets in Freire’s theory of education: (1) it concerns learners who remain in the area of “pure doxa” or “magic thought” and are therefore “simple forms of pre-scientific knowledge”⁷⁷; (2) it concerns teachers who, seeing the world as unchangeable, lead their students to an indiscriminate adaptation to it, which P. Freire considers an “indictment” of their teaching duties⁷⁸; (3) it concerns researchers – including, of particular interest to us, researchers of education, who, under the guise of neutrality, study the world as if it were given, static and unchangeable, or at least unchangeable under the influence of research. Combining threads related to the naivety, at the research level we will have to deal with such naivety, which, while implying neutrality and impartiality of research, will ignore the issue of social asymmetry, and the fact that the researcher is entangled in this asymmetry. It will also be a pure doxa or, as S. Aronowitz and H. A. Giroux would say, antitheoretical empiricism, whose flywheel is, be it as it may, “magic thought” about pure, independent and neutral

⁷³ Cf. *idem*, *Extension or Communication*, transl. L. Bigwood and M. Marshal, p. 69 [http://www.seedbed.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Freire-Extension-or-Communication.pdf].

⁷⁴ In his Chilean “period”, P. Freire makes the approach to agricultural reform an example of two types of consciousness: naive and critical. Cf. P. Freire, *Extension...*, p. 41, Cf. *idem*, *Educação e Mudança*, Paz e Terra, São Paulo 1979, pp. 10–11.

⁷⁵ P. Freire, *Extension...*, p. 45.

⁷⁶ P. Freire, *Educação...*, p. 11.

⁷⁷ P. Freire, *Extension...*, p. 18.

⁷⁸ P. Freire, *Educação...*, pp. 9–11.

research work. More importantly, however, from an ethical point of view, what implicates us in the paradox of disengagement is that one's "disengagement" is actually tantamount to one's engagement on the side of the dominant discourse; it is what P. Freire describes as a compromise with an alienated and alienating society, and therefore a disgrace⁷⁹. Using Freire's category of "anaesthetic education", which leaves educated people uncritical and naïve about the world they live in⁸⁰, naïve researchers are similarly anesthetized, dormant, unaware of social inequalities and the forms of knowledge and thought associated with them.

This brings us to two key issues that were relevant to A. Gramsci and which, through Gramscian inspirations of critical pedagogy, are still relevant today. What I mean here is the role of intellectuals and the relationship between popular and scientific forms of knowledge and thought. The central point here is the issue of "common sense" and the attitude of intellectuals towards it, also when it comes to their own "common sense", if we may say so. Gramsci asks:

[...] whether the philosophy of praxis excludes ethico-political history, whether it fails to recognize the reality of a moment of hegemony, treats moral and cultural leadership as unimportant and really judges superstructural facts as "appearances"? and answers: "One can say that not only does the philosophy of praxis not exclude ethico-political history but that, indeed, in its most recent stage of development, it consists precisely in asserting the moment of hegemony as essential to its conception of the state and to the 'accrediting' of the cultural fact, of cultural activity, of a cultural front as necessary alongside the merely economic and political ones⁸¹.

A. Gramsci refers thereby to the popular understanding of the metaphor of the base and superstructure, challenging the supporters of economism characterised by the one-sided determination of ideological forms of knowledge and thought through material and social conditions. At this point we are getting closer to the problems and solutions proposed by K. Mannheim (subject to M. Horkheimer's polemics), namely that hegemony is a form of domination that employs forms of knowledge and thought, as well as language, in other words, purely cultural media. What we are dealing with here is the "reality of human knowledge relationships", which lie at the core of the recognition of dominance relations and form an element of political hegemony⁸². Moreover, and more importantly, the researchers themselves are stuck in these hegemonic relations, which are their "reality of knowledge relationships". Socially-conditioned learning and popular knowledge are perceived by A. Gramsci as forms of knowledge that are in constant dialectical contact with knowledge of higher methodological standards:

⁷⁹ In the original text P. Freire uses a wordplay that is based on the fact that the terms "compromise" and "disgrace" in the Portuguese language have a common etymological origin. Cf. P. Freire, *Educação...*, pp. 7–13.

⁸⁰ Cf. P. Freire, *Extension...*, p. 64.

⁸¹ A. Gramsci, D. Forgacs (ed.), *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916–1935*, NYU Press, 2000, p. 194.

⁸² Cf. *Ibid.*

Every social stratum has its own 'common sense' (*senso commune*) and its own 'good sense' (*buon senso*), which are basically the most widespread conception of life and of man. Every philosophical current leaves behind a sedimentation of 'common sense': this is the document of its historical effectiveness⁸³.

The same is true of the stratum of academics, but perhaps more importantly, they are the ones creating "philosophical currents" which leave behind a "sedimentation" in the form of, as A. Gramsci puts it elsewhere, the "folklore of philosophy"⁸⁴. In any case, it is "common sense" or "good sense", as a shared view of the world, that becomes the greatest problem connected with hegemony, because, for one, it is an expression of the relations of domination and a barrier to emancipation, and, secondly, it also defines the forms of knowledge and thought of the people who reflect on social existence. Therefore, A. Gramsci proposes:

To criticise one's own conception of the world means therefore to make it a coherent unity and to raise it to the level reached by the most advanced thought in the world. It therefore also means criticism of all previous philosophy, in so far as this has left stratified deposits in popular philosophy. The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is "knowing thyself" as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. The first thing to do is to make such an inventory⁸⁵.

K. Mannheim argues in the same vein, as for both these researchers of social relations "self-evaluation" or "self-clarification of our orientation in the everyday world" are a *sine qua non* for the accuracy of the research process. As the author of *Ideology and Utopia* puts it:

It is clear, furthermore, that every social science diagnosis is closely connected with the evaluations and unconscious orientations of the observer and that the critical self-clarification of the social sciences is intimately bound up with the critical self-clarification of our orientation in the everyday world. An observer who is not fundamentally interested in the social roots of the changing ethics of the period in which he himself lives, who does not think through the problems of social life in terms of the tensions between social strata, and who has not also discovered the fruitful aspect of resentment in his own experience, will never be in a position to see that phase of Christian ethics described above, to say nothing of being able to understand it⁸⁶.

He adds that one must "continue to live with the unconscious uncovered"⁸⁷, leaving us with a "self-control" and "self-criticism" that should lead to a "new

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁸⁶ K. Mannheim, *Ideology...*, p. 41.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

conception of objectivity”⁸⁸. Thus, following this line of thought, a more honest research strategy would be to define the limits of one’s own thinking and knowledge, or leaving the assumptions that underpin our research, to the assessment of the readers or interpreters thereof. For the concept of neutral research not only ends once one goes out into the field, but the very idea of postulating such an approach is a voice supporting naive empiricism, and more importantly, it is a voice that petrifies the *status quo*. The only problem with Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge, when one tries to argue with it from a critical pedagogy position, concerns the category of interest. Expressing this in the terms of J. Habermas, if it is interests that constitute knowledge and the communication of findings, we should re-examine our position and adopt a “hermeneutic severity in relation to [...] [our] own presuppositions”⁸⁹, in order to determine whether, as researchers, we can recognize the interest that guides us as an emancipatory interest. Objectivity in research will then represent certain solidarity with disadvantaged groups⁹⁰.

A positive notion of naivety: conclusion

At this point I could ask if such a detailed analysis of the relationship between interest, knowledge, researcher status and naivety, in the context of engaged research, and in the context of research located in the critical and radical paradigm of pedagogy, was necessary. After all, this kind of research approach has been officially recognised in textbooks, which means it has reached the moment of positive interpretation, rather than being problematized⁹¹. Maybe I should have resorted to simpler solutions, which would have been limited to a short overview of the critical paradigm in qualitative research, in terms of its features and what differentiates it from the positivist and constructivist paradigm.⁹² Perhaps I should have commenced by stating that I assume the historicity of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender conditions, and that I acknowledge the axiological mediation of results, and that I consider the questioning of forms of knowledge and thought, which may result in “revelation” and, consequently, in social action and change⁹³, to be an asset to research. It should also be added that this is one of

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁸⁹ J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1*, transl. Thomas McCarthy, Beacon Press, 1984, p. 109.

⁹⁰ Cf. Ch. Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, SAGE, 2007, p. 32.

⁹¹ See Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, SAGE, 2005.

⁹² I am referring to the typology and classification introduced by Egon G. Guba and Y. S. Lincoln. Cf. Guba, E. G. and Lincoln, Y.S. *Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences in: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S., Eds., The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd Edition, SAGE, 2005, 191–215.

⁹³ Cf. *ibid.*

the paradigms, and that although it differs from the functioning of the paradigms in the natural sciences, this is how research is done, although it is also possible to do research differently⁹⁴. In reality, however, the stakes are much higher, and this is about the legitimacy of the voice and, if not a claim to the truth, at least to making the interpretations acceptable.

Yet, as K. Mannheim puts it, “The disregard of qualitative elements and the complete restraint of the will does not constitute objectivity but is instead the negation of the essential quality of the object”, but, at the same time, “the reverse of the greater the bias, the greater the objectivity, is not true”⁹⁵. Therefore, “taking a shortcut” on the issue of engaged research involving interest-based presuppositions, which I continue to believe to be the only viable kind of research, would be to ignore the key problem when it comes to conducting social research in Poland, and especially when it comes to conducting qualitative research. This is the same type of problem encountered by L. Kopciwicz, who, while placing herself in the perspective of radical and critical feminist pedagogy, and considering qualitative strategies to be the most appropriate research strategies for the subject she has chosen, is simultaneously faced in Polish conditions with two possible charges, undermining the validity of her procedures, and thus of the findings and their interpretation⁹⁶. The charges in question here include, first of all, questioning qualitative research as such, because such qualitative inquiry, from the viewpoint of “hard” scientists, is regarded as unscientific critical journalism, simply because it is not free from subjective evaluation⁹⁷. Secondly, although equally important, the objections raised by those qualitative researchers, who, believing that it is possible to refrain from evaluation and presupposition, treat such actions as raising, probably only in the eyes of researchers who still believe in scientism, the “scientific” rank of qualitative research. Meanwhile N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln describe the latest phase (since 2005) of qualitative research in these words:

The eighth moment [in the development of qualitative research – P.S.] asks that the social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalisation, freedom, and community⁹⁸.

In Polish conditions, feminist research, of which L. Kopciwicz is a key representative in pedagogy, is a good, if not the best example of socially engaged research. By “good example” I mean not only that it is an accurate exemplification, but above all that it is an exemplification of accuracy, a good example of good prac-

⁹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, See T.S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: 50th Anniversary Edition*, University of Chicago Press, 2012.

⁹⁵ K. Mannheim, *Ideology...*, p. 349.

⁹⁶ L. Kopciwicz, *Nauczycielskie poniżanie. Szkolna przemoc wobec dziewcząt* [Degrading Treatment by Teachers. School Violence against Girls], Engram-Difin, Warszawa 2011, pp. 98–105.

⁹⁷ N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, *Introduction. The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research*, [in:] N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook...*, p. 2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

tice in socially engaged research. In keeping with the issues raised in the eighth moment of qualitative research development, we can focus on social asymmetries, so we can deal with research engaged in hegemonic relations constructed on the basis of race, gender and class criteria. The choice of research topic is followed by the selection of methods and strategies of engaged research⁹⁹, which in Polish pedagogy are as follows: critical ethnography¹⁰⁰, feminist research¹⁰¹, critical discourse analysis¹⁰², queer theory¹⁰³, participatory research¹⁰⁴. These are specific examples of “biased” research within a “neutral” academic culture, as Joe L. Kincheloe and Peter McLaren put it¹⁰⁵.

The problem of bias returns, but it would be naive to assume that impartiality is achieved by means of some academic guarantees, certificates or degrees. So how to conduct qualitative research? If the central category for these considerations was the category of naivety, which included thinking about neutrality before the concept of ideology was invented, or before this category entered the world of academia through Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge, is it possible to establish even a minimum dose of naivety, and thus a minimum dose of impartiality, while maintaining bias in research by opting for the emancipatory interest (also self-interest)? Although the issue is presented in a complex way, the solution is quite straightforward, but with a limited scope. What I have in mind is naivety (and impartiality, and therefore, in a sense, objectivity in qualitative research), which Steinar Kvale describes as “deliberate naïveté”¹⁰⁶ when referring to the researcher’s attitude in conducting a qualitative interview. S. Kvale proposes a certain technical solution, namely that “rather than the interviewer having pre-formulated questions and ready-made categories”¹⁰⁷, they should employ “deliberate naïveté and

⁹⁹ N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, *Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research*, [in:] N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln, *The SAGE Handbook...*

¹⁰⁰ In Poland, a successful application of Philip F. Carspecken’s concept is the study by M. Boryczko, *Między oporem a adaptacją. Szkoła wobec procesów globalizacyjnych* [Between Resistance and Adaptation. School in the Face of Globalisation Processes], UG, Gdańsk 2012.

¹⁰¹ Cf. L. Kopciewicz, *Rodzaj i edukacja. Studium fenomenograficzne z zastosowaniem teorii społecznej Pierre’a Bourdieu* [Gender and Education. Phenomenographic Study Applying Pierre Bourdieu’s Social Theory], Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, Wrocław 2007; Joanna Ostrouch-Kamińska, *Rodzina partnerska jako realizacja współzależnych podmiotów: studium socjopedagogiczne narracji rodziców przeciążonych rolami* [Partnership-based Family as the Fulfilment of Interdependent Entities: Sociopedagogical Study of the Narrative of Parents Overburdened with their Roles], Impuls, Kraków 2011.

¹⁰² See the articles by K. Stary and L. Stankiewicz in this collection.

¹⁰³ See Marcin N. Welenc, *Konstruowanie znaczeń coming out w prywatnej i publicznej przestrzeni doświadczeń homoseksualnych mężczyzn* [Constructing the Meanings of Coming Out in a Private and Public Sphere of Homosexual Experience for Men], Uniwersytet Gdański, Gdańsk 2012.

¹⁰⁴ See H. Červinkova, B. D. Gołębiak, *Badania w działaniu. Pedagogika i antropologia zaangażowane* [Action Research. Engaged Pedagogy and Anthropology], Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, Wrocław 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. J.L. Kincheloe, Peter McLaren, *Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research*, [in:] N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook...*, pp. 303–342.

¹⁰⁶ S. Kvale, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, SAGE, 1996, p. 33.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

absence of presuppositions”, which “implies an openness to new and unexpected phenomena”¹⁰⁸. In other words, in order for the answer not to include what the researcher wants, and to include what the researcher “does not want” and does not expect instead, they should not ask about it, because using a certain category in the question will cause it to appear on the signifying side, i.e. in the statement of the interviewee. Moreover, one should allow oneself a certain amount of deliberate naivety, when the subject of follow-up questions is the understanding of the terms used by the interviewee, or the relationship between the terms used. Therefore, deliberate naivety finds its practical realisation in the follow-up questions. In this case, however, we are dealing with a technical procedure and only a technical procedure which, even if performed with exceptional proficiency, does not relieve the researcher from the necessity to articulate the meta-categories underlying the research project, because this technical proficiency does not allow the researcher to place himself outside the social existence. Nothing, apart from the cognitive dissonance triggered by work in the field, exempts the researcher from the obligation to prepare a research project and interpret the findings to the best of their knowledge, the knowledge that precedes the research. However, neither does anything release the researcher from criticizing their own presuppositions.

Summary

Critical Pedagogy and Engaged Research: Ideology, Interests and Naivety

The article deals with the problem of engagement in social research. Although this problem seems to have been solved (Aronowitz, Giroux 1991; Denzin, Lincoln 2009, 2010; Fairclough, Wodak 2007; Rogers 2011), it is far from obvious in Polish conditions, especially among quantitative researchers and, more importantly, among qualitative researchers who are trying to establish a certain neutral, ideology-free and transcendent point of view. Thus the most important thing is to deconstruct ideologically-based critiques of ideology parallel to the apotheosis of the social neutrality of the social sciences, especially educational theory.

Critical pedagogy’s ethical orientation in the area of social action as well as in the area of research procedures is based on the theory of ideology and interests (Aronowitz, Giroux 1991; Marx, Engels 1973; Habermas 1973). Awareness of necessary ideological involvement, however, is partly due to the postmodern awareness of the arbitrary imposition of meanings, which is the main problem for established emancipatory strategies (Laclau 2005). The author considers the discussion on the notion of ideology between Horkheimer and Mannheim to be a “prototype” of the latest dispute between Žižek and Laclau. In keeping with the distinction developed by Aronowitz and Giroux (1991), it is a problem of progressive and reactionary postmodernism.

Finally, the naive neutral point of view is faced with questions posed by Freire (2000) – in favour of what and whom do you study? Against what and whom do you

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

study? Attempting to establish some kind of neutrality in social research which will not be an instrument of petrifying social relations, the author supports the concept of naivety as a technical skill rather than as a serious devotion to the positivist vision of “objective” empirical procedures.

English translation: Anna Moroz-Darska

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