
Reading the Text

THE CLASSROOM AS PRIVILEGED SPACE

THE CLASSROOM

- **In the classroom we encounter different personalities, cultures, experiences, and narratives. We encounter the unconscious, and it speaks.**
 - **What converges in the classroom cannot converge anywhere else.**
 - **The classroom is a container.**
 - **Safe space is another cultural artefact that has failed the system or that the system has failed.**
 - **(p.g. 128)**
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PRIVILEGED

V

SAFE

- **Holding environment**
- **Facilitative to maturational processes**
- **Ethics of Confidentiality**
- **Agency - the power to speak the word**
- **Negotiation**

- **Judgement and persecution**
 - **Designation of safe and unsafe**
 - **Censorship (“check your privilege”).**
 - **Denial**
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The objective in privileged space, therefore, is not to create an environment that society dictates but to create a space in which transference can be openly sourced and resourced. In privileged space, there is transference and countertransference; and repression is not the order of the day. Both teachers and learners are “allowed” to speak from a position of power and mutual responsibility. In a safe space, on the other hand, both teachers and learners inevitably repress their fears and negate their privilege. Safe space has become synonymous with silence and seclusion, a space in which there is no confidentiality. Without confidentiality, is it ethical pedagogy?

Both knowledge and action are critical in providing a privileged space. The teacher who can harness the desire of students in order to help them learn, then act, and acquire experience through knowledge has achieved the ultimate measure of education. This is what some might call “making a difference.”

Within privileged space love guides the focus, responses, willingness, passion, and expressions of the teacher. Within privileged space learners with their inhibiting psychopathologies encounter love that engenders hope.

WHAT CAN TEACHERS DO?

1. Listen

In *the Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, Bruce Fink (2007) states, “The psychoanalyst’s first task is to listen and to listen carefully” (p. 1). Might we state that it is also the teacher’s first task?

Additionally, Fink explains how psychoanalytic listening is different from simply listening. Our usual way of listening is centered to a great degree on ourselves, our own similar experiences, our own similar feelings, and/or our own similar perspectives. When we listen this way, we relate to the speaker, uttering phrases such as “I know what you mean!” We empathize, and we sympathize; we even feel pity, and we feel we understand (p. 2). However, what happens when we cannot understand because we cannot empathize, sympathize, or even feel pity, because we do not have similar feelings or experiences and desires? We become judgmental. We consider the speaker to be silly, obtuse, and irrational. Thus, we become baffled, incredulous, and, finally, defensive. We decide that this person needs to be taught, needs correction or direction.

2. De-Colonize

...It is important to understand a student's relation to a dominant discourse, a discourse the student is constituted by as well as has an effect on. The discourse itself is unconscious, and when the student imagines the teacher as someone in possession and mastery of knowledge, there is "transference" in effect—that is, the student attributes to the teacher the power and prestige of the entire semiotic system. (p. 752). As such, a teacher often holds the powerful position of "possessor of knowledge." This knowledge, however, can be perceived as threatening. Knowledge is better exchanged in a privileged space where no imbalance of power is perceived. Privileged space comes about through the establishment of a relationship in which the teacher's knowledge-as-power couples with the learner's empowered knowledge.

Frosh (2010) proposes that we view psychoanalytic praxis as involving “a kind of tolerance of the other that recognises it as not fully knowable, and hence resists the temptation to appropriate the other through an act of colonisation” (p. 146). Colonization in this instance refers to the forcing of one’s knowledge on to the other; and, as a demand for knowledge, it can be detrimental to both teacher and student.

3. Not-know

Teachers can emulate the psychoanalytic position of not-knowing, which allows the analysand to speak from the unconscious through the practice of free association. In the psychoanalytic situation, the analysand speaks from epistemic privilege, and the analyst takes up this knowledge for analysis, neither discrediting it nor verifying it but simply privileging it. Traditionally, however, the teacher cannot enter the classroom not-knowing. The teacher is expected to know and to act as authority over what is false or true, good or bad knowledge, all of which disprivileges the acquiring of knowledge for enlightenment.

Where subjective knowledge takes on the guise of power and tilts the scales favourably for whoever can assume that position of knowing, defense against resistance becomes necessary to safeguard that advantage. On one side of the scales are those who see the appropriation of privilege as an act of disempowerment, especially when they are expected to “check their privilege.” On the other side are those seeking to exercise their epistemic privilege but cannot do so because it is deemed objectionable (Chimbganda, 2015). Within a privileged space, these opposing affects are not silenced but drawn into the open so that students can learn by working through their insecurities, uncertainties, and radical self-criticisms.

Pedagogy should reveal lack in order to generate desire. The teacher now intervenes through teaching, not as a source of knowledge but as a speaker of truth. In other words, her position shifts from not-knowing to one-who-knows-what-is-missing. The teacher has listened carefully, to identify the learner's lack. Thus, she can begin to fill in these gaps. If the teacher speaks as the incarnation of knowledge, a regression may follow. If, however, she speaks as one who understands the learner's desire and sees where the learner lacks, there may be progress. Learning continues and both teacher and learner maintain privilege in the pedagogical situation. Adversely, should the teacher disregard this crucial aspect of teaching the student suffers.

Through privileged space, we can cultivate the capacity to speak in those who have been silenced, we can re-define power for those who have been abused, and we can provide answers to those who seek them. The best part being, in privileged space, they are actively engaged, at their own pace, and in their words. Pedagogy that is socially just can accommodate the psychopathologies society has triggered, and it is imperative that education remediates the damage it caused in the past. Education is culpable, and pedagogy complicit in dehumanising by taking away the learners capacity to produce signifiers.

LOVE ENGENDERS HOPE
