

## THE GERMAN LOGIC OF EMANCIPATION AND BIESTA'S CRITICISM OF EMANCIPATORY PEDAGOGY

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**ABSTRACT.** Gert Biesta has criticized Anglo-American and German models of emancipatory education. According to Biesta, emancipation is understood in these models as liberation that results from a process in which a teacher transmits objective knowledge to his or her students and cultivates student capabilities. He claims that this so-called modern logic of emancipation does not lead to freedom because it installs inequality, dependency, and mistrust in the pedagogical relationship. In this article, Antti Moilanen and Rauno Huttunen analyze whether German models of emancipatory education share the modern logic of emancipation and if they can escape Biesta's criticisms. For this purpose, they interpret Biesta's critique of the modern logic of emancipation and explicate central ideas related to the German models of critical education. They also compare the modern logic of emancipation to the German one, and they then assess German models of emancipatory pedagogy from the viewpoint of Biesta's criticisms. Moilanen and Huttunen conclude that the German models of emancipatory education present at least a partial alternative to the modern logic of emancipation. Despite this, the German models are based on the idea of education as cultivation. Because Biesta criticizes the theory of education as cultivation, it is possible to conclude that he would not accept the German models of emancipatory education. However, the German models of critical pedagogy provide answers to the following question: how can students achieve independence in the pedagogical relationship? When students take part in designing educational processes, they are summoned to assess the validity of the taught knowledge, and they practice independent decision-making at school; the pedagogical relationship, based on authority, can foster student self-determination.

**KEY WORDS.** critical pedagogy; emancipation; political education; Gert Biesta; Jacques Rancière

### INTRODUCTION

Proponents of critical pedagogy have developed models of emancipatory education. According to many of these models, autonomy — i.e., the capacity for independent, reflective, and critical thinking and action related to it — is the main goal of schooling.<sup>1</sup> This idea is shared in almost all modern theories of education.<sup>2</sup> However, emancipatory educational theory differs from other branches of pedagogy by placing emphasis on the social context of education. According to the basic

1. Hermann Giesecke, "Emancipation — ein neues pädagogisches Schlagwort?" [Emancipation — A New Pedagogical Buzzword], *Deutsche Jugend* 12 (1969): 539; Klaus Mollenhauer, *Erziehung und Emanzipation* [Education and Emancipation] (Munich, Germany: Juventa, 1971), 11; and Wolfgang Klafki, *Neue Studien zur Bildungstheorie und Didaktik: Zeitgemäße Allgemeinbildung und kritisch-konstruktive Didaktik* [New Studies on Educational Theory and Didactics: Contemporary General Education and Critical-Constructive Didactics] (Weinheim & Basel, Germany: Beltz, 2007), 43.

2. Krassimir Stojanov, *Education, Self-Consciousness, and Social Action: Bildung as a Neo-Hegelian Concept* (London: Routledge, 2018), 9.

principles of critical pedagogy, freedom and humane existence are dependent on the structures of society. Consequently, education should focus on developing in students those skills required to build and sustain a just and democratic society in which citizens can exercise their freedom and live happily.

Gert Biesta has criticized the tradition of critical pedagogy.<sup>3</sup> According to Biesta, the conception of emancipation that informs the so-called modern logic of emancipation — that is, the logic characteristic of Marxist and neo-Marxist theories of emancipation — is incoherent. In light of this, he argues that critical pedagogy does not foster student freedom but instead leads to new forms of dependency. Biesta claims that this problem disappears when emancipation is understood not as acquiring objective knowledge but as summoning students to independent thinking.

In his writings on emancipation, Biesta explicitly states that he does not intend to evaluate systematically different theories of emancipation in the tradition of critical pedagogy. Instead, he wants to introduce “the particular difference that Rancière’s work installs in the discourse on emancipation.”<sup>4</sup> Despite this, Biesta claims that the modern logic of emancipation has influenced the Continental tradition of critical pedagogy,<sup>5</sup> and he sees that at least some proponents of German critical educational theory have adopted the problematic Marxist or neo-Marxist conception of emancipation. It remains unclear, however, who these critical educational theorists are, as Biesta refers only to Klaus Mollenhauer in this context and does not show how Mollenhauer understands emancipation according to its modern logic.

In this article, we take up Biesta’s claim and evaluate whether German models of emancipatory pedagogy share the modern logic of emancipation. In addition, we specifically assess whether Biesta’s criticisms challenge the German ideas on emancipation. When we refer to German models, we mean not only the theories of Hermann Giesecke, Wolfgang Klafki, Wolfgang Lempert, and Klaus Mollenhauer, but also the didactic suggestions on emancipatory teaching by Manfred Bönsch, Jörg Ramseger, and Wolfgang Schulz. All of these educational thinkers have

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3. Gert Biesta, “A New Logic of Emancipation: The Methodology of Jacques Rancière,” *Educational Theory* 60, no. 1 (2010): 39–59; Gert Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (New York: Routledge, 2016); and Gert Biesta, “Don’t Be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters: On the Role of the Teacher in Emancipatory Education,” *Policy Futures in Education* 15, no. 1, (2017): 52–73.

4. Biesta, “A New Logic of Emancipation,” 41.

5. *Ibid.*, 43–44.

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presented models either of the concept of emancipation or its consequences for educational practices.

The paper is structured as follows: In the next section, we elucidate a number of changes that have occurred in the concept of emancipation over time. Next, we describe how Biesta defines the modern logic of emancipation and criticizes it. We then move to an analysis of the German conceptions of emancipation and teaching that support freedom and liberation from illegitimate power. In the final section, we present the conclusions drawn from the theoretical analysis undertaken in this article.

#### EMANCIPATION FROM KANT TO HABERMAS

The concept of emancipation has a long history. Its etymology goes back to the legal language of ancient Rome, in which emancipation meant the release of a son from his father's decision-making power. In this act, the boy gained civil rights and became a full member of society. Later, legal emancipation expanded to cover entire groups of people. For example, serfs, women, and Jews achieved equal rights.<sup>6</sup> Many philosophers have developed more or less systematic ideas on emancipation. Most notable among these thinkers are Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, and Jürgen Habermas, whose concepts of emancipation are next analyzed and described in order to make the German models of emancipatory education, and Biesta's criticisms of them, more understandable.

Possessing an anthropological conception of emancipation, Immanuel Kant hoped that every human being will become a mature person capable of independent thinking and action, and he defined enlightened maturity (*Mündigkeit*) in the following way:

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance. ... It is so comfortable to be a minor. If I have a book that thinks for me, a pastor who acts as my conscience, a physician who prescribes my diet, and so on — then I have no need to myself. ... Thus it is very difficult for the individual to work himself out of the nonage which has become almost second nature to him.<sup>7</sup>

Kant did not really consider how one's cognitive faculties develop and what kind of social preconditions the enlightened use of one's own mind has. In his text *Über Pädagogik* (On Education),<sup>8</sup> he gives some hints about emancipatory pedagogy but does not present a clearly structured notion of education.<sup>9</sup> Although

6. Hermann Giesecke, "Jugendarbeit und Emanzipation" [Youth Work and Emancipation], *Neue Sammlung* 11, no. 3 (1971): 216–230; and Ludwig Kerstiens, *Modelle emanzipatorischer Erziehung* [Models of Emancipatory Education] [Bad Heilbrunn, Germany: Klinkhardt, 1974], 10.

7. Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" (1784), trans. Mary C. Smith, <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>.

8. Immanuel Kant, *Kant on Education* (Über Pädagogik), trans. Annette Churton (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1990).

9. Ari Kivelä, "From Immanuel Kant to Johann Gottlieb Fichte — Concept of Education and German Idealism," in *Connection and Controversies between Continental Educational Thinking and American*

Kant was well aware that power is exercised in all education, he believed that this is necessary:

One of the greatest problems of education is how to unite submission to the necessary restraint with the child's capability of exercising his free will. ... How am I to develop the sense of freedom in spite of the restraint? I am to accustom my pupil to endure a restraint of his freedom, and at the same time I am to guide him to use his freedom aright. Without this all education is merely mechanical, and the child, when his education is over, will never be able to make a proper use of his freedom.<sup>10</sup>

According to Kant, it is necessary to use power in education, but this should be done in such a way that education results in the development of an enlightened mature personality. Kant acknowledged this paradox, commonly known as a Kantian pedagogical paradox, although he never applied the term "paradox" to this quandary. Nevertheless, as is well known, Kant himself could not solve the paradox. Thus, Kant's sketch of enlightened educational theory remains imperfect. Then again, no one has really solved the pedagogical paradox on a theoretical level, and, as a consequence, it remains a challenge for every modern humanistic educational theory.

Friedrich Hegel added a social and a spiritual (*geistig*) dimension to the Kantian notion of human maturity and emancipation. Hegel noticed that individuals' economic and political conflicts in civil society — that is, in the sphere of economics and politics — prevent individual development to the point of achieving real freedom and moral maturity. Aiming at a social totality in which economic egoism and love are not in contradiction, Hegel constructed a theory of self-formation (*Bildung*) through which the human spirit develops from moral un-freedom (heteronomy) to moral freedom and maturity (autonomy), paying attention to the aspects of both love and reason.<sup>11</sup> According to Hegel, the precondition for the conflict between love and reason is the world spirit that was self-alienated in the beginning, and this fact is the ultimate reason for human heteronomy and unfreedom.

In his youth, Karl Marx wrote a lot on social emancipation, and the humanism of young Marx was influenced above all by Kant's and Hegel's ideas of self-formation (*Bildung*) and freedom, despite the fact that he wrote very critically about Kant and Hegel because of their idealism. Like other Young Hegelians, Marx interpreted emancipation and freedom critically in a social context.<sup>12</sup> However, unlike many other Hegelians, Marx took the point of view of the working class in his writings. Though the working class was the oppressed part of society, the oppressive class, Marx pointed out, also oppressed its own humanity when

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*Pragmatism*, ed. Pauli Siljander, Ari Kivelä, and Ari Sutinen (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense, 2012), 65.

10. Kant, *Kant on Education*, 20.

11. Rauno Huttunen, "Hegelians Axel Honneth and Robert Williams on the Development of Human Morality," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 31, no. 4 (2012): 339–355.

12. See Lawrence Stepelevich, *The Young Hegelians — An Anthology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

oppressing the working class. When the working class emancipated themselves, therefore, both oppressors and other oppressed groups, such as Jews, would also be emancipated. According to Marx, the proletariat in Germany at that time was the force that could put philosophical emancipation into practice: "The emancipation of the German is the emancipation of man. The head of this emancipation is philosophy, its heart the proletariat. Philosophy cannot realize itself without the transcendence (*Aufhebung*) of the proletariat, and the proletariat cannot transcend itself without the realization of philosophy."<sup>13</sup>

In Marx's theory, exploitation by the oppressive class is not the only factor that limits the subjectivity of the members of the oppressed class. The ability of workers to realize their humanity under capitalism is particularly limited by alienation (*Entfremdung*). For young Marx, *Entfremdung* means the alienation of the worker from their product and from the work process, alienation from their species-essence (*Gattungswesen*), and alienation from other human beings. Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik summarizes Marx's solution to this alienation as follows:

Only when such individuals become conscious of their alienation can they revolutionize the conditions alienating them and begin to take the shaping of such a process of becoming conscious, to lead the process as a bearer of social practice. The stringency of this dialectic of history lies in the fact that Marx sees that social production, i.e., via the individuals now conscious and acting together, to overcome the alienation caused by us ourselves. ... [O]nly through this will human emancipation be brought about.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to class conflict and alienation, according to Marx, there is another problem that limits humanity in capitalist society: an elementary opposition between the egoistic individual and human society, a contradiction that is enshrined in the "Declaration of Human Rights of the Great French Revolution." In Marx's opinion, this document divides the individual into a human being (*homme*) and a citizen (*citoyen*). On one hand, a person is a selfish member of civil society, that is, of the market economy; on the other hand, a person is a citizen of the state who respects the public interest.<sup>15</sup> Marx borrowed the meanings of "civil society" and "state" directly from Hegel, who depicts civil society as a system in which each person is a goal unto him- or herself and nothing else is alien to him or her. Civil society, in Hegel's view, is a "theater play of misery" and a "state of physical and moral decay." The highest goal of humans, however, is to lead a moral life (*sittliches Leben*), and this happens at the state level, that is, at the moral level where people reconcile their own interests with the public interest. According to Hegel, this reconciliation is succeeded by a political attitude, i.e., patriotism.<sup>16</sup>

13. Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right — Introduction* (1844), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>.

14. Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik, "Karl Marx as a Philosopher of Human Emancipation," section 2, trans. Allan Smith, <http://www.philosophicum.de/emanc.htm>.

15. Karl Marx, *On The Jewish Question* (1844), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/>.

16. Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. S. W. Dyde (Ontario, Canada: Batoche Books, 2001).

In Marx's view, this kind of solution is illusory since capitalism itself contrasts people. Only by resolving the conflict between social production and the private ownership of the means of production can social emancipation be achieved.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas wished to update Marx's theory of the social emancipation of people, a project he called a reconstruction of historical materialism. In the end, Habermas's reconstructed historical materialism contained very few of Marx's original ideas; however, he created the idea of emancipation and the related notion of communicative action, concepts that shaped the development of German critical pedagogy during these two decades. In particular, German critical pedagogy was greatly influenced by Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests. Habermas argued that knowledge and knowing are inextricably linked to the universal effort of the historical man to produce his own existence as well as to ensure renewal of the human species. For this reason, the human community or society has interests that are related to the technical control of nature, to the hermeneutic understanding of human meaning, and to social emancipation. These interests determine the specific perspectives from which we form knowledge of reality itself. In a sense, these three knowledge-constitutive interests are naturally historical, and they form three interest areas of knowledge:<sup>17</sup> technical, practical (hermeneutical), and emancipatory knowledge.

Our focus in this article is specifically the emancipatory interest of knowledge. In his theoretical work, Habermas had the same sort of difficulty with justifying the functional significance of the emancipatory interest of knowledge that he had with justifying the technical and hermeneutical interests of knowledge. It is quite clear that the empirical-analytical sciences (technical interest) and the historical-hermeneutic sciences (hermeneutical interest) have important social functions. But why is there a need for emancipatory knowledge in society? The reason is that emancipatory knowledge has something to do with emancipating persons from tradition-driven thinking and being, and that it is also related to a person's liberation from social coercion and a determined mode of being in general. This interest manifests in both self-reflection and the pursuit of Kantian enlightened maturity. The purpose of the emancipatory interest, then, is to facilitate critical self-reflection, and its goal is ultimately to foster the creation of an emancipated society that realizes the growth of its members to maturity.

Taking the concept of communicative action from the writings of young Habermas, Klaus Mollenhauer, one of the most prominent representatives of German critical pedagogy, made it the starting point for his own critical pedagogy. According to Mollenhauer, education and teaching must be understood as communicative action: "By 'communicative activity' we mean an activity to which the subjects themselves belong; it is not a production like manipulating natural

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17. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), 301–317.

objects. Instead, through communicative action an agreement is reached on the value orientation and purpose of the social action."<sup>18</sup> For Mollenhauer, education is a communicative action that aims at establishing a communication structure that fosters the communicative competence of children and youth.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the final end of education is a Kantian and Habermasian mature and critical speaker who can emancipate him- or herself from any kind of manipulation and ideological controlling.

In his 1994 article "Education as Practical Intersubjectivity," Gert Biesta presented his Habermasian educational theory, claiming that education is a process of acculturation,<sup>20</sup> yet this is not the whole truth of education. If we understand education as practical intersubjectivity in the spirit of Herbert Mead and Jürgen Habermas, then education is not merely a one-way process in which an existing culture is transferred from an already "acculturated" teacher to a "not-yet-acculturated" pupil. Pedagogical action as practical intersubjectivity describes a coconstructive process in which both teacher and pupils play an active role. Meanings are not transferred but rather coconstructed. Biesta spoke of "communicative pedagogy" in a Habermasian sense when he developed his theory of practical intersubjectivity as the core of education.<sup>21</sup> However, in his more recent work Biesta has given up this Habermasian framework, although perhaps not totally.

#### BIESTA'S CRITIQUE OF EMANCIPATORY PEDAGOGY

In his writings on emancipation from the 2010s, Biesta analyzes different kinds of logics of emancipatory pedagogy.<sup>22</sup> He assesses neo-Marxist educational thought, Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, and Jacques Rancière's ideas on emancipatory teaching. Additionally, Michel Foucault appears in Biesta's texts on emancipation. For the purposes of this article, Biesta's interpretation and criticism of the neo-Marxist modern logic of emancipation is central. The reason for this is that Biesta identifies Mollenhauer as an example of an educational thinker who represents the modern logic of emancipation,<sup>23</sup> thus raising the question of, first, whether a common thread that ties together the work of Mollenhauer and other German critical pedagogues really is the modern logic of emancipation and, by

18. Klaus Mollenhauer, *Theorien zum Erziehungsprozeß* [Theories on the Educational Process] (Munich, Germany: Juventa, 1972), 42.

19. *Ibid.*, 67.

20. Gert Biesta, "Education as Practical Intersubjectivity: Towards a Critical-Pragmatic Understanding of Education," *Educational Theory* 44, no. 3 (1994): 299–317.

21. Gert Biesta, "Pragmatism as a Pedagogy of Communicative Action," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 13 (1995): 273–290; and Gert Biesta, "Education/Communication: The Two Faces of Communicative Pedagogy," in *Philosophy of Education 1996*, ed. Alven Neiman (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1996).

22. Biesta, "A New Logic of Emancipation"; Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*; and Biesta, "Don't Be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters."

23. Biesta, "A New Logic of Emancipation," 40–41.

extension, whether Biesta's criticisms of that logic challenge the validity of German models of emancipation generally.

What, then, is the modern logic of emancipation? In his analysis of the concept, Biesta reconstructs the history of emancipation, defines how emancipation is understood in the modern logic of the concept, and examines this logic critically. In terms of the history of emancipation as a concept, Biesta discusses the legal understanding of emancipation in ancient Rome, Kant's anthropological conception of independent thought, the educational goal of independent action in reform pedagogy, the dialectical relationship of the individual and society in critical pedagogy, and the Marxist idea of critique of ideology. The last two ideas are central to Biesta's argument: based on critical pedagogy, he understands human freedom to be constrained by social structures of domination.<sup>24</sup> Marxist and neo-Marxist philosophies reinforce this interpretation by asserting that power structures are naturalized by forms of false consciousness that legitimate them. Because the consciousness of children, adolescents, and adults can be ideological, Biesta concludes that emancipation requires an educator who can liberate young people from ideological thought.<sup>25</sup>

Using his reconstruction of the history of the concept of emancipation as a foundation, Biesta explicates the modern logic of emancipation. The following attributes can be linked to this logic: first, there is an emancipator whose consciousness is not subjected to the workings of power that provides the one to be emancipated with an account of his or her objective condition; second, emancipation is something that is done to somebody; and, third, the possibility for emancipation is based upon a fundamental inequality between the emancipator and the one to be emancipated, and equality is the outcome of emancipation.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, in a pedagogical context, emancipation means that a teacher passes his or her knowledge to those students who gradually become as knowledgeable as the teacher. In addition to this, Biesta seems to think that, according to the modern logic of emancipation, a teacher is an active agent whereas students are passive objects that the teacher acts upon.<sup>27</sup> This can be concluded from the fact that, in Biesta's view, the banking mode of education, a concept developed by Freire, is typical for the modern logic of emancipation. According to this logic, a teacher makes all the decisions about the content of learning, and students are supposed to assimilate this content passively.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Biesta criticizes models of education that are based on the

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24. Ibid., 43–44.

25. Ibid., 44; Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, 78; and Biesta, "Don't Be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters," 4.

26. Biesta, "A New Logic of Emancipation," 44–45; and Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, 82–83.

27. Biesta, "Don't Be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters."

28. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York & London: Continuum, 2000), 73.



notion of “cultivation,” by which he means growth toward an educational ideal.<sup>29</sup> “According to this paradigm, the task of education is making sure that individuals can engage with the widest possible range of culture — or cultural ‘tools’ — in order to allow them to develop the largest number of capacities and capabilities in the fullest way possible.”<sup>30</sup> Because the educator defines the outcome of education, educational cultivation could be seen as counter-emancipatory.<sup>31</sup> Thus, education regresses to socialization.

Biesta criticizes the modern logic of emancipation from several perspectives. Underlying all these criticisms is the idea that emancipation, while it aims for freedom, actually contains an element of authoritarianism. This criticism is not entirely new; in fact, as early as the 1970s critics leveled the same charge against emancipatory education.<sup>32</sup> Biesta’s criticism is more varied, though, as he contends that the modern concept of emancipation is paradoxical for three reasons.<sup>33</sup> First, the modern logic of emancipation contains the idea of students’ dependency in its assumption that their emancipation requires an intervention from the outside. It is unclear how this dependence can disappear if students are seen to be dependent on the emancipator. Second, since the emancipator has to be more knowledgeable than the ones to be emancipated, emancipation relies on inequality, which reinforces the question of how students can come to achieve equality. Third, emancipatory education is based on suspicion or distrust of students’ experiences; thus, in emancipatory education, students learn not to trust themselves.

One of Biesta’s arguments is that emancipatory education cannot be based on the transmission of knowledge, a point of view that he develops by drawing on Rancière’s and Freire’s educational theories and also on Foucault’s philosophy. As Biesta interprets their theoretical work, Rancière and Freire realized the problems posed by the traditional knowledge-centered idea of emancipatory teaching. According to Rancière, explicatory teaching has the effect that students start to think that they are not able to think for themselves.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Freire explained that the banking mode of education does not lead to critical consciousness, which is a precondition of the transformation of society.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless,

29. Gert Biesta, “Cultivating Humanity or Educating the Human? Two Options for Education in the Knowledge Age,” *Asia Pacific Education Review* 15, no. 1 (2014): 13–19.

30. Gert Biesta, “Can the Prevailing Description of Educational Reality Be Considered Complete? On the Parks-Eichmann Paradox, Spooky Action at a Distance, and a Missing Dimension in the Theory of Education,” *Policy Futures in Education* 18, no. 8 (2020): 5.

31. Biesta, “Cultivating Humanity or Educating the Human?,” 17.

32. See Robert Spaemann, “Emancipation — ein Bildungsziel?” [Emancipation — An Educational Goal?], *Merkur* 29, no. 1 (1975): 11–24.

33. Biesta, “A New Logic of Emancipation,” 45–46; and Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, 82–83.

34. Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 6.

35. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 73.

whereas Rancière demands summoning students to independent thinking regarding the contents of education, Freire highlights the importance of pedagogical dialogue in which teacher and students play equal roles. Although Biesta, Rancière, and Freire do not share a common view of what constitutes emancipatory education, they all agree that explicatory education contradicts the aim of emancipation.

In Biesta's reading of Marxist thought and Freire's dialogical pedagogy, knowledge is related essentially to emancipation. According to the former, a teacher explains social ideologies and how power can be abolished while, in the latter, collective dialogue is the medium of critical analysis of social relations. Biesta draws on Foucault's concept of power/knowledge in criticizing both of these alternatives. Foucault's concept implies, in Biesta's interpretation, the following principles: first, power and knowledge are always interrelated; second, it is false to assume that knowledge is possible only where there is no power; and, third, we are always operating within power/knowledge constellations.<sup>36</sup> Biesta's conclusion from these principles is that emancipation cannot be understood as an escape from power.<sup>37</sup> In other words, because knowledge functions as power and power is related to knowledge, a total emancipation from power is not possible. In light of this, Biesta claims that emancipation should be conceived as transgression. Transgression occurs through eventalization, that is, the critique of discourses that we take as truth even when they are really contingent:<sup>38</sup> "[E]ventalization neither results in a deeper or truer understanding of how power works — it only tries to unsettle what is taken for granted — nor aims to produce recipes for action."<sup>39</sup> Consequently, when we transgress power, we take critical distance from discourses and do not act according to them any longer.

Biesta's criticism of knowledge-based emancipatory education can be explicated further in the context of his own theory of education. In his writings, Biesta differentiates between three aims of pedagogy: qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Qualification means the acquisition of knowledge and skills; socialization refers to the implicit or explicit representation of cultures, traditions, and practices; and subjectification means the summoning to subjectivity and freedom.<sup>40</sup> In his 2016 book *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, Biesta states that subjectification concerns "emancipation and freedom and ... the responsibility that comes with such freedom."<sup>41</sup> Thus, Biesta's own understanding of emancipation is closely related to the concept of subjectification.

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36. Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, 72–73.

37. *Ibid.*, 73.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Gert Biesta, "Risking Ourselves in Education: Qualification, Socialization, and Subjectification Revisited," *Educational Theory* 70, no. 1 (2020): 74.

40. *Ibid.*, 93–95.

41. Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, 4.

In his 2020 article “Risking Ourselves in Education,” Biesta explains subjectification in negative terms, asserting that it is not formation of identity, development of personality, subjectiveness, individuation, self-objectification, or being responsible.<sup>42</sup> In positive terms, the concept of subjectification refers to “our freedom to act or to refrain from action.”<sup>43</sup> In this context, “freedom” means existential freedom, that is, the freedom to make choices about our own lives. Put another way, subjectification is about leading a self-determined life. However, this does not mean that one is free to act in any way one chooses; rather, subjectification means living as a free subject in an ethical way. In another article, Biesta speaks about leading a grown-up life,<sup>44</sup> and he explains this idea by referring to the middle ground between world-destruction and self-destruction. In world-destruction, we destroy the objects that cause resistance to our aims, while in self-destruction, we escape from the object and withdraw from the world. The middle ground means being in the world in a dialogical relation that tries to do justice to all partners involved.<sup>45</sup>

Biesta has developed a conception of education that supports subjectification, the central idea of which is that subjectification is not brought about by developing children’s and youths’ skills and knowledge. “It is,” he explains, “not about the educational production of the subject — in which the subject would be reduced to an object — but is instead about bringing the subject-ness of the child or young person ‘into play,’ so to speak; helping the child or young person not to forget that they *can* exist as subject.”<sup>46</sup> Biesta’s statement here supports the interpretation that he sees the modern logic of emancipation as based on a model of education as cultivation; in addition, it makes clear his view that emancipatory education requires a different model of education.

When describing education that leads to subjectification, Biesta refers to Dietrich Benner’s theory of general education (*allgemeine Pädagogik*), or, more precisely, to its principle of summoning to self-activity (*Aufforderung zur Selbsttätigkeit*). Benner claims that summoning to self-activity is a constitutional principle of educational practice. This principle is grounded in the idea that our actions and thoughts are tied to the past, but they are still open to the future. Based on this principle of the boundedness and openness of thought and action, self-activity contains two constitutive elements: world activity (*Welttätigkeit*) and activity of thought (*Denktätigkeit*). When a person plans actions based on his or her past experiences, acts according to this plan, and reflects on the new experiences, he or she

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42. Biesta, “Risking Ourselves in Education,” 98–101.

43. *Ibid.*, 93.

44. Gerd Biesta, “What Is the Educational Task? Arousing the Desire for Wanting to Exist in the World in a Grown-up Way,” *Pedagogía y Saberes* 50 (2019): 50–61.

45. *Ibid.*, 57.

46. *Ibid.*, 59.

acts self-actively.<sup>47</sup> The summons to self-activity prompts one to take reflexive action based on one's own experiences.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, emancipatory education does not aim at the development of students but, rather, summons children and youth to ethical freedom, which can be seen as one of the core ideas of Biesta's own emancipatory pedagogy.

Biesta describes grown-upness as a state where we stay in the middle ground between world-destruction and self-destruction. In this state, we do not force our intentions upon the world and do not withdraw from worldly action. The task of pedagogy that aims at subjectification is to support the grown-upness of children, youth, and adults, which requires that the educator helps the growing person to reflect on his or her desires. Are the desired things "desirable for our own lives and the lives we live with others"?<sup>49</sup> To be able to answer this question, the person must experience resistance, that is, the person must look at his or her desires from a distance in order to evaluate and, when needed, transform them.<sup>50</sup> When this idea is connected to Benner's concept of "summoning to self-activity," one can conclude that the educator's task is not to explicate the validity of students' desires but to encourage students to evaluate these desires themselves.

#### EMANCIPATION IN GERMAN CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Now, we turn to the German theories of emancipation in order to evaluate whether they share the modern logic of emancipation and are thus vulnerable to Biesta's criticisms. In the tradition of German critical pedagogy, Hermann Giesecke, Wolfgang Klafki, Wolfgang Lempert, and Klaus Mollenhauer have developed influential theories of emancipation. All four share Kantian, Marxian, and Habermasian notions. According to these critical educational theorists, emancipation does not refer solely to the development of a person's autonomy but also to the social structures that make possible individual freedom and humane life. In this way, Kantian and Marxian interpretations are combined in their theories. Apart from Giesecke, these theorists also claim that communicative competence and action are essential for human emancipation.

Mollenhauer's conception of emancipation is not systematic but rather vague. He defines emancipation as "liberation from factors that restrict human autonomy and social action related to it."<sup>51</sup> For Mollenhauer, reason contains a political dimension; the interests of rationality are maturity, autonomy, and liberation from

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47. Dietrich Benner, *Allgemeine Pädagogik: eine systematisch-problemgeschichtliche Einführung in die Grundstruktur pädagogischen Denkens und Handelns* [General Pedagogy: A Systematic, Problem-Historical Introduction to the Basic Structure of Pedagogical Thought and Action] (Weinheim & Munich, Germany: Juventa, 1991), 70–71.

48. *Ibid.*, 68.

49. Biesta, "What Is the Educational Task?," 58.

50. *Ibid.*, 59–60.

51. Mollenhauer, *Erziehung und Emanzipation*, 11.

dogmatism, and reason strives for justice, well-being, and peace.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, education must foster in students those skills that are required for developing a just and democratic society. According to Jan Masschelein, the development of rationality has an emancipatory effect for three different reasons. First, rational subjects are able to formulate their own goals and intentions; second, they can realize these goals and develop their own possibilities and selves; and, third, they are autonomous and free subjects.<sup>53</sup> In other words, becoming a rational subject entails the development of autonomy and social judgement. In *Theorien zum Erziehungsprozeß*, Mollenhauer adds to these principles that education must foster the ability to discourse (*Diskursfähigkeit*) of students,<sup>54</sup> which requires that the aims of education are not defined in isolation from them. Instead, students should be able to take part in practical discourses about the aims and contents of education, which makes it possible that they develop their discourse ability.

Wolfgang Lempert has developed a more comprehensive notion of emancipation. In *Leistungsprinzip und Emanzipation*, Lempert describes the basic features of emancipation, its forms, and its relationship to reason and to communicative action. In general, for Lempert, emancipation means the realization of self-determination. Because final liberation is not possible once and for all, emancipation means the partial attainment of freedom:

The emancipatory interest is the interest of a person in expanding and maintaining self-determination. It aims to overthrow and combat irrational domination, to be free from all forms of restraint. Not only material power but also clinging to prejudices and ideologies functions as a restraint. If this entrapment cannot be entirely abolished, at least it can be diminished with an analysis of its genesis, with criticism, and with self-reflection.<sup>55</sup>

To express this differently, in the process of emancipation, a person is liberated from personal and social constraints that hinder his or her potential to lead an independent and a free life. Similar to Marx and Habermas, Lempert thinks that not only personal immaturity but also social factors such as ideologies, roles, norms, hierarchies, and deficient material conditions of life are forms of heteronomy. For Lempert, criticism and self-reflection are requisite skills for becoming free from restraints. Lempert understands criticism as an immanent critique that does not reject things entirely; instead, it reinforces the legitimate elements in objects of criticism and rejects principles that run counter to the internal goals of these objects. For example, the doctrine of the absolute value of the individual in Christianity makes it possible to criticize the authoritarian role of the priest and to demand a general priesthood.<sup>56</sup> In the process of self-reflection, a person

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52. *Ibid.*, 67–68.

53. Jan Masschelein, *Kommunikatives Handeln und pädagogisches Handeln* [Communicative Action and Pedagogical Action] (Weinheim, Germany: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 1991), 124–125.

54. Mollenhauer, *Theorien zum Erziehungsprozeß*.

55. Wolfgang Lempert, *Leistungsprinzip und Emanzipation* [Principle of Achievement and Emancipation] (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1971), 318.

56. *Ibid.*

becomes aware of those personal motives that he or she has rejected for one reason or another. According to Lempert, certain institutional conditions must be fulfilled for people to be able to critique and reflect on themselves. They must learn the linguistic skills required for criticism and self-reflection in educational processes, and people must have opportunities to interact freely with each other.<sup>57</sup> However, it is up to the individuals themselves how they make use of these skills. They decide for themselves those things from which they want to liberate themselves and to which they will commit themselves.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, a teacher does not emancipate students directly but creates the conditions for students to liberate themselves.

Lempert's concept of emancipation is greatly influenced by the critical theories of Habermas and Max Horkheimer, which is evident from the fact that, in Lempert's view, emancipation is a postulate of substantial reason. Substantial reason refers to the ability to identify unsatisfied human needs, to criticize conditions that prevent them from being satisfied, to formulate conditions that promote satisfaction, and to abolish barriers to communication.<sup>59</sup> In other words, emancipation not only aims at the realization of freedom but also to the satisfaction of human needs, which, of course, raises the question of what fundamental needs are. Lempert seems to think that these needs are determined in communication. According to him, free public communication about socially repressed needs and possibilities to develop society is a precondition for emancipation. From this premise, it follows that liberation from barriers to communication is also an element of emancipation.

Although Lempert does not in his theory of emancipation describe in any detail how education can foster student ability to engage in criticism and self-reflection, Hermann Giesecke does provide a pedagogical account of emancipation in his writings from the 1960s and 1970s. Giesecke describes emancipatory pedagogy mainly in negative terms, that is, he does not refer to the positive outcomes of education. In fact, according to Giesecke, the concept of emancipation can be defined coherently only in a negative sense, in which case it refers to the liberation from various constraints: "In contrast to the earlier notions of 'self-formation' (*Bildung*) and 'independence and responsibility' (*Mündigkeit*) 'emancipation' does not mean an idealized outcome of a learning or formation process, but 'merely partial' progress in the learning process under the circumstances of a particular concrete situation."<sup>60</sup> In his theory of emancipatory education, Giesecke emphasizes the openness of emancipation, but he mentions a few general goals that emancipatory teaching aims for. However, these are not unambiguously didactically operationalizable goals. According to Giesecke, children and youth

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57. Ibid., 318–319.

58. Kerstiens, *Modelle emanzipatorischer Erziehung*, 160–161.

59. Lempert, *Leistungsprinzip und Emanzipation*, 324–325, 327.

60. Giesecke, "Emanzipation — ein neues pädagogisches Schlagwort?," 539.

should be liberated from conformism and internalized fear of authority figures, and they should develop their independence and ego-strength.<sup>61</sup> Since emancipation cannot be detached from its context — that is, emancipation means different things for people from different backgrounds — Giesecke does not provide a detailed list of learning contents that will help students achieve the skills of self-determination and participation.<sup>62</sup> Teachers must plan emancipatory education in a situation-specific manner, asking themselves, “Will student X, through my actions, become more independent of me, his parents, the evaluations and habits of his social class, the role expectations of his school class, his own prejudices, etc.?”<sup>63</sup> Thus, emancipatory teaching is not a teaching package that can be given in the same manner to all students. Instead, a teacher needs to be aware of students’ experiences, characteristics, and interests so that he or she can support the students’ growth to self-determination and participation. From this, we can conclude that distrust toward students can be counteremancipatory.

Wolfgang Klafki, with his model critical-constructive didactics, provides a positive model of emancipatory education and describes what kinds of aims, contents, and methods of teaching are relevant to student emancipation. In critical-constructive didactics, emancipation means, in a negative sense, liberation from constraints and illegitimate power relations, while in a positive sense, emancipation is human development to self-determination, participation, and solidarity.<sup>64</sup> Underlying this definition is an understanding of the dialectical relationship between the individual and society. This means that the possibilities for action depend on social structures that are man-made and can thus be changed. Practical freedom is only possible in a social and democratic society, in which domination, economic exploitation, and social inequality have been abolished.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, emancipatory education must not only promote student independence, but also develop student capacity for critical social analysis. In critical-constructive didactics, the goals of emancipatory education are self-determination, participation, and solidarity.<sup>66</sup> With these capabilities, people are able to make independent decisions about their own worldview and lives, to evaluate society critically, to take part in transforming society, and to help oppressed and disadvantaged people. The sub-skills of self-determination, participation, and solidarity include critical thinking, self-confidence, empathy, frustration tolerance, responsibility, the skills of rational discourse, a developed emotional life, the capacity for action, an aptitude for

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61. *Ibid.*, 541.

62. Hermann Giesecke, *Die Jugendarbeit* [The Youth Work] (Munich, Germany: Juventa, 1980), 113.

63. Hermann Giesecke, *Einführung in die Pädagogik* [Introduction to Pedagogy] (Munich, Germany: Juventa, 1969), 96.

64. Klafki, *Neue Studien zur Bildungstheorie und Didaktik*, 276.

65. *Ibid.*, 110.

66. *Ibid.*, 52.

independent learning, and the ability to reflect on social power and interests and their underlying factors.<sup>67</sup>

Critical-constructive didactics represents *Bildung*-theoretical didactics (*Bildungstheoretische Didaktik*), which means that the concept of *Bildung* determines the nature of learning processes in the didactic model. More precisely, the structure of formative learning is understood according to the theory of categorical self-formation (*kategoriale Bildung*),<sup>68</sup> which is a dialectic synthesis of material and formal theories of self-formation with the basic intention to include the rational elements of material and formal theories of self-formation and to exclude their irrational principles. In material theories of self-formation, human development is based on the assimilation of cultural contents such as knowledge and norms, whereas in theories of formal self-formation, a person develops by learning methods and abilities that he or she can use in different contexts. Categorical self-formation is both material and formal. In categorical self-formative processes, a person assimilates material cultural contents that represent general principles, laws, phenomena, problems, etc., of physical and cultural reality, and these general material contents become formal powers that this person can use in different contexts.<sup>69</sup> For example, by learning the category, or categories, of political conflict, one is able to identify political conflicts and to evaluate them critically. All kinds of political analyses of power, conflict, and interest are therefore exemplary in the sense that their sole purpose is to provide students with the tools to form their own judgments of social reality. Thus, a teacher does not explain to students their objective condition in a material way, but instead helps them to develop the formal ability to assess it themselves.

In this article, the analysis of German theories of emancipation and emancipatory pedagogy shows that these theories provide at least a partial alternative to the modern logic of emancipation. First, emancipation is not understood as a direct effect of teaching, but rather as something that a person does by him- or herself with the help of the competencies that this person has developed through education. Second, emancipatory teaching does not explain ideologies, power, and required social reforms to students materially, but fosters their formal skills of critical thinking and social action. Third, emancipatory teaching is not a package that can be given to every student in the same form, but rather it is a process in which a teacher must be empathetic to students and reconcile the aims and contents of teaching with students' interests and interpretations of their objective social

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67. Ibid., 101, 256, 263.

68. We have translated the German word *Bildung* as self-formation. *Bildung*, in German educational theory, means a process in which a person develops him- or herself in interaction with the world, culture, and other people. In this process, the person transforms the ways he or she thinks, values, wills, and acts. Accordingly, *Bildung* can be described as self-formation.

69. Wolfgang Klafki, *Studien zur Bildungstheorie und Didaktik* [Studies in Educational Theory and Didactics] (Weinheim, Germany: Beltz, 1964), 38–45.



situations. In this way, the German logic of emancipation is not entirely based on dependency, inequality, and distrust.

In the German logic of emancipation, the point is not to remove power in society but to control it reflectively. Mollenhauer states this explicitly. For him, the critical categories are “instruments of rational analysis that do not have the aim to abolish power but to transform it into a rational and controlled form.”<sup>70</sup> Klafki refers to the same starting point by defining emancipation as liberation from unjustified power relations,<sup>71</sup> acknowledging that it is not possible to imagine a society without power relations. Yet, we are able to criticize power, identify unjustified power relations, and transform the material conditions of power. Moreover, the German logic of emancipation recognizes that the transformation of society requires power, which is understood as a capacity to affect how people act by changing social structures. Thus, it would seem that the German logic of emancipation does not separate knowledge and power totally: in the processes of emancipation, power does not vanish from society; rather, it takes new forms.

Biesta would probably argue that Lempert’s and Klafki’s models of emancipatory education are problematic because they rely on the idea of education as cultivation. For both Lempert and Klafki, the task of education is to develop those student skills that are required for leading a self-determined life and for transforming social reality to be more democratic. Therefore, Biesta could claim that students appear as objects to educators in these German models of emancipatory education. A proponent of German critical pedagogy would probably answer Biesta that formative teaching of cultural contents does not mean purely socialization. According to Klafki, a person develops when he or she assimilates culture and at the same time evaluates it critically, which entails the transformation and development of the cultural contents.<sup>72</sup> Thomas Rucker, a contemporary proponent of *Bildung*-theoretical didactics, shares this principle. Rucker claims that teaching is only formative when students are summoned to examine critically the validity, presuppositions, and social relevance of the knowledge taught.<sup>73</sup> In his work, Rucker uses the term “summoning to examine validity claims” (*Auf-forderung zur Prüfung von Geltungsansprüchen*), an idea that is reminiscent of Benner’s concept of summoning to self-activity. Thus, Rucker sees that a teacher must provoke students to independent thought related to the contents of teaching, for example, by raising open-ended questions to which students are required to give self-determined answers. In this way, the principle of summoning to self-activity is included in the German didactics.

70. Mollenhauer, *Erziehung und Emanzipation*, 165.

71. Klafki, *Neue Studien zur Bildungstheorie und Didaktik*, 276.

72. Wolfgang Klafki, *Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik: Fünf Studienbriefe für die FernUniversität in Hagen* [Humanist Pedagogy: Five Study Letters for the University of Hagen] (Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer, 2020), 273.

73. Thomas Rucker, “Teaching and the Claim of *Bildung*: The View from General Didactics,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 39, no. 1 (2020): 51–69.

## EMANCIPATORY PEDAGOGY AND ANTIAUTHORITARIAN EDUCATION

According to Biesta, the banking model of education is characteristic of the modern logic of emancipation.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate whether this claim is also true of the German models of emancipatory education, beginning with Jörg Ramseger's theory of open education (*offener Unterricht*) and then continuing to other German critical educational thinkers' practical ideas. Ramseger presents a model of open education in his book *Offener Unterricht in der Erprobung* (in English, "open education in trial"). Open education is a style of teaching that is based on the following principles: first, the methods of teaching are such that students can make independent decisions regarding their own learning; second, students can participate in decision making about general matters in the classroom; third, the interests and freedom of pupils are respected; and fourth, unnecessary teacher authority is abolished so that the relationship of students and teacher is as equal as possible.<sup>75</sup> Ramseger's model of open education represents an interpretation of these principles. He sees that open education consists of three dimensions of openness; education can be open with respect to the contents, methods, and institutions related to learning.<sup>76</sup> In his theory of open education, Ramseger defines how these dimensions of openness of education can be operationalized.<sup>77</sup> Table 1 represents in simplified form the key dimensions of his theory.

As the table illustrates, in open education students have opportunities for independent decision making about the contents, methods, and organization of learning. Moreover, open education takes into account the social reality outside the school. Ramseger legitimizes this kind of open education by referring to its relevance to emancipation, emphasizing that open education provides students with possibilities to abolish illegitimate power and to act independently.<sup>78</sup> In this context, he highlights that student ability to act independently is not only an outcome of educational praxis, but students are also summoned to independent action in the processes of education: "[Open education] does not locate student maturity in an indefinite future. It is placed at the heart of the pedagogical

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74. Biesta, "Don't Be Fooled by Ignorant Schoolmasters," 5.

75. Falko Peschel, *Offener Unterricht: Idee — Realität — Perspektive und ein praxiserprobtes Konzept zur Diskussion. Teil I: Allgemeindidaktische Überlegungen* [Open Education: Idea — Reality — Perspective and a Practically Tested Concept for Discussion. Part I: General Didactic Considerations] (Baltmannsweiler, Germany: Schneider Verlag, 2012), 76–85; and Jörg Ramseger, *Offener Unterricht in der Erprobung. Erfahrungen mit einem didaktischen Modell* [Open Education in Trial. Experience with a Didactic Model] (Weinheim & München, Germany: Juventa, 1992), 22–28.

76. Ramseger, *Offener Unterricht in der Erprobung*, 22–28.

77. Ramseger's three dimensions of open education are well in line with Huttunen's Habermasian theory of indoctrination. See Rauno Huttunen, "Habermas and the Problem of Indoctrination," in *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, ed. M. A. Peters (Singapore: Springer, 2017), 953–963.

78. *Ibid.*, 20.

TABLE I. DIMENSIONS OF OPEN EDUCATION

<i>Dimension of openness</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Examples from the criteria</i>
Openness of the contents	Contents of learning are determined not only by the internal criteria of the school, but also by taking account of the reality outside the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students can choose from a variety of options</li> <li>• students can propose and carry out their own tasks</li> <li>• learning is not assessed based on tests but based on students' activities</li> </ul>
Openness of the method	Pupils are not recipients of ready-made teaching packages, but actively participate in and shape their own learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students can use teaching materials in their own way</li> <li>• students can form groups independently and choose between individual and group work</li> <li>• students are offered a wide range of materials and tools that they can use independently</li> </ul>
Openness of the institution	The school institution opens to the reality outside it, and the reality outside the school remains open to criticism and change so that learning processes can have practical consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students are free to choose between places of work at school</li> <li>• teaching provides students with opportunities to influence reality outside school</li> <li>• schooling is not based on general curricula</li> </ul>

endeavors of open education here and now."<sup>79</sup> Accordingly, teachers must presume that students are capable of independent learning and that they must be given opportunities to make decisions about their own learning.

Many proponents of German critical educational theory have developed models of emancipatory teaching that resemble Ramseger's theory of open education. In Klafki's critical-constructive didactics, students are required to make use of the skills of self-determination, participation, and solidarity at an increasing level of demand in the form of coplanning lessons, meta teaching, and criticism of education. In other words, lessons should be planned together with students, who should be taught to understand education in a school context; in addition, students should have opportunities to criticize and develop practices at school together with teachers and other students. Regarding this, Klafki writes in the following way when referring to Mollenhauer's communicative pedagogy based on Habermas's philosophy: "All normative anticipations that educators or teachers carry out in pedagogic intentional action, initially only have the status of provisional and presumed

79. *Ibid.*, 21.

validity. Such anticipations must be subjected once again to an argumentative test in the practical discourse with the learners in the educational process itself."<sup>80</sup> Similar principles are emphasized by Manfred Bönsch who, in his critical and instrumental didactics, requires both the justification and critique of the aims and contents of teaching with students, offering of alternatives to students, and a curriculum that students can build in part by themselves.<sup>81</sup> In addition, Wolfgang Schulz sees the coplanning of lessons with students as an important principle of pedagogy.<sup>82</sup> Thus, student self-determination and participation at school is a fundamental principle of Continental critical pedagogy. In other words, students are not passive objects of the decisions of teachers, which is why Freire's concept of banking model of education cannot be used to describe Continental critical pedagogy.

As previously mentioned, Biesta could claim that because emancipation is understood as a developmental concept in the German logic of emancipation, students still appear only as objects to teachers. However, Ramseger's discussion of open education might help us to conceive a counterargument to this critique. Because student maturity is not only an aim of education but is also its starting point, teachers must treat students as self-active subjects: teachers demand self-activity from students and students use their freedom in a self-determined way. The other progressive forms of pedagogy mentioned previously also contain an element of self-activity. For example, when practices of education are criticized or planned together with students, a teacher does not try to develop student skills and knowledge — though students might develop them in the process of this activity — but the idea is to treat students as equal subjects who have something important to say about schooling. While it is not certain if Biesta would accept this counterargument, we can see that German critical educational theorists have developed ideas similar to those of Biesta even though their ideas are distinct from his concept of subjectification.

#### CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

Biesta sees that the transmission of knowledge from a teacher to students is not legitimized when student emancipation is the aim of education. When emancipation is not the aim — for example, in education that strives for qualification or socialization — teaching knowledge is inevitable or at least legitimated. It is noteworthy that Biesta does not differentiate between various ways of teaching knowledge. The proponents of Continental critical pedagogy have modeled emancipatory pedagogy in a more versatile way: they problematize one-dimensional transmission of political information and highlight that in order to be relevant for

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80. Wolfgang Klafki, "Aufgaben und Möglichkeiten der Erziehungswissenschaft bei der Bestimmung von Zielen der Erziehung" [Tasks and Possibilities of Educational Science in Determining the Goals of Education] (1998), <http://archiv.ub.uni-marburg.de/sonst/1998/0003/k05.html>.

81. Manfred Bönsch, *Beiträge zu einer kritischen und instrumentellen Didaktik* [Contributions to Critical and Instrumental Didactics] (Munich, Germany: UTB, 1975), 67.

82. Wolfgang Schulz, *Unterrichtsplanung: Mit Materialien aus Unterrichtsfächern* [Lesson Planning: With Materials from Subjects] (Munich, Germany: Urban und Schwarzenberg, 1981), 65–66.

student emancipation, education must help students to analyze conflictual social reality from many points of view.

In his theory of political education, Mollenhauer demands that power, interests, and conflicts in society are analyzed at school, where education develops student skills of participation and students learn to understand the structure of society. The aim of political education is to abolish illegitimate social power, to make the interest structure of society visible to students, and also to help students to understand the relationships between interest and conflicts, and how to regulate these.<sup>83</sup>

Giesecke has developed a broader theory of conflict-based political education, one in which the main aims are analyzing political conflicts critically, learning the history of emancipation, developing an understanding of the structure of society, learning the skills of participation, and becoming independent learners. The most interesting element of Giesecke's theory is the model of conflict analysis, which contains eleven categories, as Klafki understands the concept of the category, that are used in analyzing actual conflicts in society. These categories are conflict, concreteness, power, right, interest, solidarity, participation, functional context, ideology, history, and human dignity.<sup>84</sup> When students analyze conflicts with the help of such categories at school, they learn to use them outside of school, too, which helps them to judge different kinds of conflicts and form their own opinions about them. Klafki's theory of political education is based mainly on Mollenhauer's and Giesecke's conceptions, which he adds to by stating that students and teachers should examine key global problems at school. To these problems belong the environmental crisis, wars, inequality between and within societies, cultural conflicts, negative outcomes of technical evolution, and questions about sexuality and gender.<sup>85</sup> The aim of education is to develop a student's understanding of these problems and their history; of different, already developed solutions; and of political interests and ideologies related to these solutions. Moreover, students should learn to engage in practical discourses about key problems. To support student self-determination, political questions should be treated from many perspectives at school: "[T]he aim of education is to foster student skills of forming personal relations to various contradictory economic, social, political, cultural and religious positions and interpretations."<sup>86</sup> In order to achieve this aim, politically charged themes should be taught so that students learn to understand different positions and the interests and ideologies that stand behind these positions.<sup>87</sup>

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83. Mollenhauer, *Erziehung und Emanzipation*, 165.

84. Hermann Giesecke, *Didaktik der politischen Bildung* [Didactics of Political Education] (Munich, Germany: Juventa, 1976), 144–145.

85. Klafki, *Neue Studien zur Bildungstheorie und Didaktik*, 57–60.

86. Wolfgang Klafki, *Schultheorie, Schulforschung und Schulentwicklung im politisch-gesellschaftlichen Kontext: Ausgewählte Studien* [School Theory, School Research and School Development in a Political and Social Context: Selected Studies] (Weinheim & Basel, Germany: Beltz, 2002), 59–61.

87. Klafki, *Neue Studien zur Bildungstheorie und Didaktik*, 121.

Klafki and Giesecke have installed a normative criterion for assessment of social conflicts or problems into their models of political education. According to Giesecke, possible solutions to political conflicts are evaluated from the viewpoint of the principles of the constitution. This means analyzing how solutions to political conflicts foster the free development of personality, equality of the citizens, sovereignty of the people, the welfare state principle, freedom of speech, and peace.<sup>88</sup> Klafki, in his model of the analysis of social problems, calls for assessing already-developed solutions using the universality principle of Habermas's discourse ethics. According to the universality principle, "for a norm to be valid, the consequences and side effects of its general observance for the satisfaction of each person's particular interests must be acceptable to all."<sup>89</sup> Consequently, a teacher and his or her pupils must seek solutions that address maximally the interests of all. While Biesta does not criticize normative criteria used in the models of emancipatory education, we argue that such criteria might pose problems to emancipatory education. If students accept these standards without critical evaluation, is it possible to talk about the development of self-determination?

The analysis of critical theories of political education in this article shows that, in the tradition of German emancipatory pedagogy, political teaching is emancipatory only if it provides students with the tools to understand society and form their own views on it. A teacher cannot tell students how social conflicts or problems should be solved and what the central ideologies in society are. Instead, he or she should help students to understand general aspects of society in a way that provides students with the tools necessary tools for understanding social conflicts, problems, and political ideologies. If this condition is not met, then teaching has nothing to do with emancipation. Thus, it might be problematic to ask whether the transmission of knowledge is emancipatory or not. A more pertinent question could be when the teaching of knowledge promotes student emancipation.

In contemporary Continental educational theory, Giesecke's, Klafki's, and Mollenhauer's models of emancipatory political education have been developed further in the discipline of critical political education (*kritische politische Bildung*).<sup>90</sup> Many of the theorists in this area are committed to the same concept of emancipation as the classic proponents of German critical education.<sup>91</sup> Consequently, these new models are knowledge-based, and they highlight the

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88. Giesecke, *Didaktik der politischen Bildung*, 130–131.

89. Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 1992), 65.

90. Benedikt Widmaier and Bernd Overwien, eds., *Was heißt heute Kritische Politische Bildung* [What Does Critical Political Education Mean Today] (Schwalbach, Germany: Wochenschau, 2013); and Bettina Lösch and Andreas Thimmel, eds., *Kritische politische Bildung: Ein Handbuch* [Critical Political Education: A Handbook] (Schwalbach, Germany: Wochenschau, 2011).

91. Bettina Lösch and Andreas Thimmel, "Einleitung" [Introduction], in *Kritische politische Bildung*, ed. Lösch and Thimmel, 7–10; and Klaus-Peter Hufer, "Emanzipation: Gesellschaftliche Veränderung durch Erziehung und politische Bildung — ein Rückblick auf eine nach wie vor aktuelle Leitidee"

necessity of analyzing social problems, conflicts, and power at school. Foucault's ideas on discursive power are included in these models.<sup>92</sup> In other words, Biesta's suggestions for emancipatory pedagogy are not totally incompatible with the German logic of emancipation. Discursive power is a central form of domination today, and it must be taken into account in analyses of power. This means that a teacher and students should analyze the concepts used in discourses, assess social reality, and discuss alternatives to contemporary society.<sup>93</sup> Biesta would probably accept the conceptual and social analysis but refuse the discussion of alternatives.

When discussing Foucault, Biesta seems to object to a model of social criticism that leads to a single proposal for transformation of society. Biesta is interpreted in this way because he refers approvingly to Foucault's observation that "critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction which concludes: this, then, is what needs to be done."<sup>94</sup> The kind of social criticism that Foucault describes in this comment, however, does not represent the German logic of emancipation in its totality. For example, when students are analyzing key problems, they should assess already-developed solutions to these problems using the Habermas's principle of universalization. Such an evaluation is not intended to yield a "this is what needs to be done" conclusion. It could instead turn out that the solutions examined cannot be accepted by the different interest groups. As another example, when the method of conflict analysis is applied to social conflicts in the classroom, the teacher does not tell students how they should act. The sole purpose of normative assessment is to learn tools for normative social criticism.

#### CONCLUSION

Biesta has developed a model of existential education that is not based on an idea of education as cultivation. His concept of emancipatory education is grounded in this theory. According to Biesta, emancipation should not be understood as an aim of education in the sense that the transmission of knowledge from a teacher to students lays a path leading to student emancipation. Instead, the emancipation of students can be supported only by making the equality of students and the teacher the starting point of education; a teacher must summon students to self-activity, which can then lead to their subjectification.

The German models of emancipatory education are based on a theory of education as cultivation. Theorists such as Klafki and Lempert contend that

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[Emancipation: Social Change through Upbringing and Political Education — A Look Back at a Still Relevant Guiding Principle], in *Kritische politische Bildung*, ed. Lösche and Thimmel, 13–24.

92. Stephan Graefe, "Eine Kritik dessen, was wir sind: Foucaults Denken der 'Regierung' — eine Herausforderung für die politische Bildung?" [A Critique of What We Are: Foucault's Thinking on "Government" — A Challenge for Political Education?], in *Kritische politische Bildung*, ed. Lösche and Thimmel, 169–180.

93. *Ibid.*, 178.

94. Michel Foucault, "Questions of Method," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 84.

education must develop those student skills required for self-determination, participation, and communicative action. Thus, the German models of emancipatory education are incompatible with Biesta's conception of education as subjectification, and emancipatory education that is based on these models does not, supposedly, foster student subjectification. However, for Biesta, summoning to self-activity is a form of pedagogical action that is required when supporting student subjectification, and in the German models of emancipatory education, summoning to self-activity is implemented in two areas of education. First, a teacher summons students to examine validity claims of the knowledge taught; and second, a teacher summons students to take part in designing teaching and learning processes. Consequently, some ideas central to German emancipatory pedagogy are compatible with Biesta's aim of subjectification. Still, it is uncertain whether this kind of summoning to self-activity leads to evaluation and the transformation of one's own desires.

Even though Biesta does not accept the German logic of education because it relies on the theory of education as cultivation, his criticism of the modern logic of education does not reveal internal contradictions in the German models of emancipatory education. In these models, the starting point of education is the dependence and immaturity of children and youth. Then, when a teacher delivers cultural contents to students, the students assess these contents critically during the teaching and learning processes, and they also take a progressively more active role in designing educational activities for themselves. Consequently, the dependence and immaturity of students transforms into independence and maturity. In other words, when freedom is understood as self-determination, which is a central idea of German critical pedagogy, the Continental models of emancipatory education are not self-contradictory.

Despite the differences between German educational theorists and Biesta, there is an interesting similarity in the German models of emancipation and Biesta's educational thought. According to Biesta, emancipation is not a direct effect of teaching because it is not possible to emancipate another human being mechanically.<sup>95</sup> Schulz draws the same conclusion based on German understandings of emancipation. At its best, Schulz claims, education can only be "relevant to emancipation," as it is not a straightforward cause for the emancipation of the students.<sup>96</sup> It seems, then, that the German conception of emancipation and the conclusions Biesta draws based on his criticisms are quite similar. Education does not liberate children and youth, but it helps them to develop competencies that are required for self-liberation, or it summons them to self-determination.

In our view, the main problem of the German models of critical education lies in the normative criteria of social criticism. When a teacher gives students the standards of normative evaluation, the freedom of students could be in danger.

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95. Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, 98.

96. Schulz, *Unterrichtsplanung*, 38.



A solution to this problem can be developed using the basic ideas of Continental didactics. Based on Klafki's and Rucker's *Bildung*-theoretical didactics, we can conclude that the validity of the norms of social criticism, including their assumptions and their social relevance, should be evaluated in the educational process. If this is done, students are not socialized or indoctrinated into particular stances on politics and society, but rather a teacher helps students to develop independent judgment.

In the future, Biesta's model of emancipatory education should be studied critically. A proponent of German critical pedagogy could ask Biesta if the idea of emancipatory pedagogy without the transmission of knowledge and through only summoning students to self-activity leads to freedom. The central idea of the German concept of emancipation is that human freedom is constrained by social structures. When students are summoned to self-activity, they might not develop an understanding of power relations. Biesta adds, perhaps due to this fact, that social discourses should be analyzed at school. However, discourses are only one factor that can limit the freedom of the citizens, as a lack of material conditions of life as well as social roles, norms, and hierarchies can also function as restraining factors. Therefore, one should evaluate whether Biesta's conception of emancipatory teaching considers these factors sufficiently.