Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Freirean critical pedagogy's challenge to interfaith education: what is interfaith? What is education?

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Interfaith education has been boosted recently by the imprimatur of current and previous political world leaders. However, a critical analysis of what makes good interfaith education is yet to emerge. Indeed the attention may distract from the effort needed to ensure positive outcomes. This paper questions whether the uncritical nature of some interfaith education initiatives encourages the continuation of cultural and theological bias. Critical social theorist Paulo Freire viewed education as an opportunity for social evolution. His pedagogy of freedom relied on the idea that no knowledge is out of bounds and that such freedom nurtured the security to greet difference with humility. This paper examines some Australian approaches to interfaith education in light of Freire's challenge. It questions the persistence of an Abrahamic skew and calls for a more critical approach to differences of belief.

Keywords: critical education; Australian interfaith; Paulo Freire; hegemony

A note on terms and context

By 'interfaith education' I mean learning about any position of faith – its beliefs, practices, cultures, philosophies, cosmologies and institutions – in relation to one's own perspective (religious or not). This is similar to the academic 'studies of religion' but emphasises the duality (of mine and other), highlighting the opportunity and responsibility of the educative process to create a bridge to understanding difference.

In Australia, secular government (public) schools account for 66% of students (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008). The remaining 34% attend private schools which are generally (if only historically) religiously affiliated and largely Catholic. There is very little multi-faith study of religions until senior high school. Both religious and government schools emphasise single-faith instruction. Elective studies of religion courses can be taken by senior students from public or private schools for matriculation. In New South Wales

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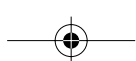
(NSW), popularity of this subject has grown by 70% since 2004. It was the fifth most popular subject in the Higher School Certificate in 2009 (ahead of physics, chemistry and history) with 20% of students (NSW Board of Studies 2010).

This recent popularity raises the question of how teachers are trained to deliver perspectives of religious otherness. For the past half century, schools of education in Australian universities have been either extensions of religious institutions or focused on delivering secular, distinctly non-religious subjects (Bouma 2007). Teachers specialising in religion have mostly been trained in Christian institutions. Despite the subject's popularity, religion is not considered a teaching major by the NSW Institute of Teachers. Only one of the 12 public universities in NSW has a dedicated school of religious studies and it is not pedagogically focussed. Students wishing to learn about and teach religion from a non-Christian-centric perspective are somewhat restricted to training and careers within the Christian system.

Freire's education – a conscious, critical, construction praxis

Paulo Freire saw education as the heart of civil society. Inextricable from social justice, he claimed education as a tool for social construction and human evolution, since it both formed and transformed social character, values and ideologies (Coleman 2007). Freire entwined theory and reflective practice as praxis. He claimed that a society's potential for ethical development lay in the degree of awareness of education's potential to *recreate* rather than merely *replicate* society. He noted that educators either maintain or challenge the dominant ideology and that this stance should be conscious. He called for an approach to education that recognised its political, constructive nature.

In an effort to empower the marginalised, Freire challenged the industrial-age view of education as a preparation-for-work factory and aimed to move beyond the 'banking model' of education which delivered socially acceptable information from teacher to student (1993, chap. 2). He claimed this model gave the appearance of political neutrality and indemnified both teacher and institution from their roles in the construction and protection of accepted norms. Instead, in the footsteps of Mann and Dewey (Cohen 1998, 446), Freire (1998) argued that education must challenge entrenched ideas and values to expand the realm of knowledge and urged educators to be conscious of their roles as gatekeepers in the dominant social order. He argued that *replication* is a limiting, unethical imposition, since it robs the student of the freedom to examine information impartially.

For Freire, the construction of knowledge required that teacher and student (in partnership) approach learning by making comparisons, doubting and criticising. He elevated 'the right to question' (Freire and Faundez 1989, 89) above the provision of mere answers and listed the virtues of a teacher as: 'respect, tolerance, humility, openness to what is new …, love of adventure,

nurturing of curiosity, [and] honouring disciplined, methodical enquiry'
(Freire 1998, 108).

The location of knowledge – in self and other

Freire's pedagogy contained the notion that knowledge is historically, cultur-
ally and politically bound to points of reference. These points may be
summarily described as 'self' and 'other'. He saw education as a life-long and
repeating journey between the two. Importantly, he did not equate 'self' with
the 'known'. Freire saw the discipline of education as including an essential
self-criticism as a precursor to learning and he charged educators with the
responsibility to interrogate their own assumptions, especially if they stood in
a privileged position.

Such preparatory reflection requires diligent honesty, so that the journey to
the 'other' may be seen in relationship to the 'self' and any privilege that self
may hold. Without such introspection, Freire noted the ethical limitations of
education. He spoke of the irony of liberal colonialist educators who 'prosely-
tise about empowering minorities while refusing to divest from their class and
whiteness privilege – a privilege that is often left unexamined and unproblem-
atized and that is often accepted as a divine right' (1998, xxx). In Australia,
Christianity is similarly privileged (Kameniar 2005; Byrne 2009).

Freire argued that dialogue can only be achieved when educators are 'ideo-
logically committed to equality, to the abolition of privilege' (1998, x). He
claimed that awareness of conditioning is a 'pre-cursor to living an authentic
life' (53), since this awareness brings the hopeful idea that we can make
choices, and have the capacity 'to evaluate, to decide, to opt to break with …
habit, tradition or dominant notions' (90).

Black feminist educator bell hooks, a Freirean theorist, took this idea a step
further when she argued that the location of privilege be explicitly 'decon-
structed by collective critical practice' (1994, 84). She noted that issues of
difference require both theoretical and practical interventions and that a demo-
cratic approach is not enough when representation is limited. hooks placed
responsibility on the teacher to raise non-present voices as a way to interrogate
otherness. She noted that, 'when unexpected perspectives are heard, this
subverts the tendency to focus only on the thoughts, attitudes and experiences
of the privileged' (185). In addition, it is in discovering their lack of knowledge
that privileged or unquestioning students are taken aback. hooks claimed that
'the moment of not understanding, [the moment] of difference … [is] a space
to learn … when boundaries are crossed, differences are confronted, discussion
happens, [and] solidarity for the learning process emerges' (130, 172).

If these boundaries are not exposed, Freire theorised that 'the dominant
culture, associated with economic and political power, tends to impose its
superiority on other cultural expressions [by trying to] make everyone believe
that its ideas are the ideas of the nation' (Freire and Faundez 1989, 74). In so

far as ideology has a theological component, Freire's analysis may explain why Australians believe that 'our' values are 'Christian' values and the broad acceptance of the idea that Australia is a Christian nation (Ahmed 2006).

hooks also noted that representatives of the dominant culture may 'essentialise and misrepresent the perspective of the other in a monolithic, exclusionary and perhaps even naively mischievous way' (1994, 90). She highlighted these concerns when courses on black history and literature in the USA were being taught solely by white people, 'not because … they cannot know these realities but … they know them differently' (90). She noted that 'white people have yet to get a critical handle on the meaning of whiteness and [can be] … ignorantly complicit' (104). Similar concerns may be raised when interfaith education develops from within the dominant tradition. As purveyors of the dominant theology in Australia, Christians may not be best placed to identify a Christian agenda.

A note on scope and method

This paper is not a detailed critique of Freire's work. Others, notably Taylor (1993), Gibson (1999), Schugurensky (1998) and the exchanges between Facundo (1984) and Mackie (1988) address such charges against Freire as: simplistic dualism, elitist Marxism, sexism and eclectic plagiarism. In an attempt to apply his pedagogy, Ellsworth (1989) struggled with the limitations of the classroom. She argued that it is both necessary but impractical to extend dialogue beyond the school and impossible for teachers to transcend their role-authority and personal histories. She claimed Freire's assumed interactions between rational, autonomous individuals created an 'illusion of equality' (306). She did agree, however, that 'the voice of the pedagogue [cannot go] unexamined' (312) and that knowledge is always only partial.

Freire's posture of questioning has its own ideological basis which may unfairly pressure conservative or strongly religious students. This difficult element of Freire's terrain requires navigation by teachers in their class settings. Indeed Freire's theory might be differently applied in most instances, making teacher resources more significant as starting points in standard curricula. Freire emphasised the importance of language and literacy. The emphasis in this paper is also textual. It examines two Australian interfaith education texts. Teaching professionals, in reflexive interactions, may be able to use these texts to positive effect. However, this assumes they are capable of identifying bias and interrogating the texts critically.

The Charles Sturt University's (CSU) Graduate Certificate in Religious and Values Education introductory unit, Teaching Philosophy of Religion, was chosen because the course is the only pedagogically focused studies of religion course offered by a public university in Australia. Engebretson's *In your shoes – Interfaith education for Australian schools and universities* (2009b) was chosen because it was highly publicised on Australian national

radio (Engebretson 2008a), launched by the Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology at Monash University (a public university), endorsed by a prominent Catholic interfaith scholar (Hall 2008) and carried the acknowledgement to and implied endorsement of leading religion education scholars in England and Australia. It has sold into Australian and New Zealand schools and is used by the Australian Catholic University as a training resource.

This is not a detailed review of interfaith education in Australia. Other texts (though limited in number) may provide a different picture. However, my findings echo some from the recent and far more comprehensive survey of *Materials used to teach about world religions in schools in England* (Jackson et al. 2010) and suggest there is a need for a similar resource review in Australia.

Can interfaith education develop from within the dominant tradition?

A hint of olde theology school baggage can be found in the current CSU teacher training course in Religious and Values Education. The university website (Charles Sturt University 2009) claims the course offers grounding in 'philosophical, ethical, and multi-faith disciplines [in] world religions' [plural]. The first unit of the course, Teaching Philosophy of Religion [singular], draws content from a distinctly Western, rationalist and Christian heritage. The unit Study Guide noted that 'it is inevitable and desirable that discussion of questions about God and God's action [which presupposes his existence] will draw on biblical insight'. There is limited exploration of non-biblical and non-theist philosophies. Students are referred to the Old and New Testaments in study exercises. However, there is not a single reference to the scriptures of any other tradition and no Buddhist, Hindu or Taoist philosophy readings. The course provides a very Western view of philosophy itself.

The unit presents both theist and atheist viewpoints, though one reading describes atheism as 'parasitic' (Hall 2003a, 15) and claims that the entire Eastern religious tradition is pantheist, which it describes as having 'gotten rid of the transcendent' and 'exemplified in what we call hinduism' [lower case in original]. Byrne (2007) examined a variety of Hindu theologies, including a transcendent monotheism and a panentheism which combines immanence and transcendence. The CSU course rarely steps outside of its Christian genesis and does not reflect on its limitations. Its monolithic misrepresentation and dismissal of Hinduism is an example of what Freire and hooks voiced warning about – where educators (perhaps unconsciously) act as accomplices to socially structured prejudice.

The CSU course Study Guide recommends the texts of Kirkwood (Hall 2003b, 1–3) who argued that 'since God is the foundation on which all values are built, … morality (without God) is entirely negative' (Hall 2003a, 6, citing Kirkwood 2002). Ethical Humanists and Buddhists may find this analysis lacking. Through the course, Eastern religious perspectives are filtered by Christian voices. For example, to explore Buddhist ideas about identity, the

Study Guide recommends reading Kirkwood (Hall 2003b, 71). The very
Eastern concept of reincarnation, central to the course theme of identity, is not
explored in arguments for and against – as Christian concepts had been.
Instead, the chosen reading all but dismisses the doctrine – because 'no one
has offered a sound argument to prove that we have a soul' (Hall 2003a, 212)
and there remain questions as to 'what happens to the soul between incarna-
tions?' (216). Hall claimed these problems indicate the possibility that 'rein-
carnation is a myth' and argued that the 'burden of proof … as to why we
should believe this doctrine' is yet to be met (216). Perhaps spin can be
forgiven, but critical analysis is lacking.

A similarly Christian focus can be found in Dialogue Australasia Network
(DAN), Australia's only curriculum support and in-service training organisa-
tion for public and private school teachers. This organisation aims to develop
'Values, Philosophy & Religious Studies with intellectual rigour' (Dialogue
Australasia 2009). It supports a 'five strands' model for multi-faith religion
education. The first strand is dedicated to Bible study. There is no strand dedi-
cated to any other scripture. The organisation is yet to establish a focus for
Eastern traditions in conferences or curriculum materials. One DAN-
promoted seminar on the model was spent reading children's Bible stories.
There was no exploration of their legitimacy amidst other revered texts. The
only mention of Eastern religions was tokenistic and on Christian terms; 'the
Buddha, like Jesus, spoke of kindness and compassion' and a picture of an
Asian monk was shown with the encouragement to 'show children what a
Buddhist looks like', in the context that 'other traditions practice silence and
prayer too' (Wills 2008). Such Christian-centrism risks engendering an
attitude of superiority.

What does 'education' mean for interfaith?

The challenge of critical pedagogy for interfaith education can also be found
in Engebretson's book: *In your shoes – Interfaith education for Australian
schools and universities* (2009b). Echoing Freire, Engebretson (2006, 2008b,
2009b) has argued for an open, critical, constructivist model for interfaith
education. She noted that 'critique can take place in an informed way … that
doesn't discriminate' (2009a).

In your shoes appears to maintain this liberal stance, stating that learning
about the other is the 'first task' of interfaith activity on educational, sociolog-
ical and theological grounds. Engebretson encourages constructive empathy –
trying to see the world through the eyes of the other and noted that such effort
should not 'mock' or 'judge', but rather 'seek understanding and build rela-
tionships' (70), and that 'good interfaith education … weigh(s) up a diversity
of views' (63).

However, Engebretson's intent for a 'just classroom … and just nation', in
which educators encourage 'getting to know and working with [the other] for

the common good' (11), is undermined by an uncharacteristic closing of doors
to some beliefs. Engebretson claims that 'the natural outcome of relativism is
agnosticism'. She equates this with atheism and brands these perspectives as
'lazy' (40). This equivalising dismissal needs unpacking.

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Engebretson's approach – is it critical, is it interfaith and is it education?

Russell (1953) described an agnostic as one who 'suspends judgement …
(and) think(s) out questions of conduct for himself'. While the atheist does *not
believe* in God, the agnostic does *not know* God and therefore does not take a
positive or negative position. As such, an agnostic need not, as Engebretson
claims, have the view that 'God, gods, the afterlife and other belief proposi-
tions *cannot* be known' (2009b, 40). There is significant difference between 'I
don't know' and 'nobody can ever know'. Similarly there is room to move
from a position of 'I don't know yet'.

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Saul defended the agnostic position as part of a 'virtuous … examined life'
(1995, 195). Freire, a Catholic sometimes criticised for being too Christian
(Taylor 1993), endorsed methodological agnosticism as a posture of openness
and maximum potential for learning. Freire claimed that understanding comes
through a process of 'epistemological encircling' (1997, 92) – a continual
rebuilding of perspectives, requestioning of assumptions and reinvention of
knowledge. He claimed that doubt led to an acceptance of the 'unfinishedness'
of human knowledge (1998, 120) and saw this as the positive 'force of educa-
tion' (1974, 137).

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For Freire, respect for the process of education lay in thinking critically. He
claimed that such thinking 'recognises not only the possibility of making a new
choice … but also the right to do so' (1998, 39). This right, to explore without
judgement or limitation, was the foundation for Freire's *Pedagogy of freedom*
(1998). hooks also highlighted 'the need for critical thinkers to … address
diverse standpoints, to … gather knowledge fully and inclusively' (1994, 91).
She noted that the root meaning of 'respect' is 'to look again', to re-inspect.

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Supporting Freire's thesis that teacher attitudes determine how ideas are
presented, Hobson and Edwards (1999, 171) argued that the most essential
attitude for a teacher of religion would be 'one of openness to new perspec-
tives and … a desire to … share one's doubts'.

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In contrast, Engebretson writes that relativists and, by her own inference,
agnostics and atheists are simply 'reluctant' and 'lazy' (2009b, 40). In a review
of teacher education programmes, Ensign (2009) noted that blaming lack of
engagement on a student's 'laziness' is a common response of educators who
take a simplistic view of diversity. Ensign argued that this tactic indicates a
lack of awareness of social justice. Kung (2007), from whom Engebretson
draws inspiration, raised the issue of laziness when discussing the need for a
global ethic in interfaith education. However, he assigned blame to a lack of
institutional courage rather than to the world view of individual students.

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Engebretson's justification for the laziness label is the claim that 'relativism, agnosticism, atheism and indifference removes the need to deconstruct, critique and evaluate' (2009b, 40). I would suggest that relativism's emphasis on complex socio-political constructs requires much analysis. These perspectives are as capable of exploring religious claims as any theist viewpoint and can be equally philosophically engaging – especially since they are unclouded with a historically privileged sense of rightness (Dawkins 2006; Hitchens 2007).

O'Grady (2005) highlighted Smart's (1968) principle that generous understanding must precede scrutiny and assessment. Such understanding requires effort and rules out indifference. Engebretson does not explain how exploration of religion from outside the dominant tradition promotes bad interfaith education. Nor does she provide evidence for her claim that atheism is a Western, minority phenomenon. Theravadan Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism are non-theist Eastern traditions (Harvey 1990). In addition, Mason, Singleton, and Weber's survey of young Australians showed that 17% did not believe in God and 32% were unsure. Almost half 'do not belong to or identify with any religion' (2007, chap. 12).

Freire warned teachers of the risk of sending students a message 'that there is something deeply wrong with them that needs fixing' (1998, 68). In an Engebretson-style class, an atheist or agnostic child might (to please the teacher or pass the exam) dishonestly assimilate. By Freirean standards, this is replicating domination which 'neutralises the capacity for knowledge, skirts the problems … and encourages naivete' (Freire and Faundez 1989, 139). Freire argued that 'the teacher who truncates the full spectrum of a curriculum … hampers both the freedom and the capacity for adventure of the student' (1998, 57). If a student's interest is piqued by the idea of 'no God', then that is their point of engagement to learning. Engebretson's apparent bias against the uncommitted position removes the Freirean opportunity to continue to learn.

In addition, Engebretson presents only the negative view of the contested term relativism (Baghramian 2004). It might be argued that interfaith respect requires some degree of relativism in which, according to Baghramian, 'judgements are context dependent' (4). A religious person who sincerely respects the differently religious (in other traditions and outside tradition altogether), must be relativist to a degree, and yet, is not at all agnostic. Engebretson does not explore the conundrum she presents. As such, her denouncement of several world views (in the context of critical education) is confusing.

Why is pluralism not the best approach?

Engebretson described the basic philosophical stances people can have towards religion and judged them as inhibiting or enhancing 'good interfaith education' (2009b, 37). Engebretson presents Hick's (1989) pluralism as a stance in which all religious paths have the same purpose … (and) lead to the same destination (42–3). Engebretson claims this approach denies ultimate

differences and requires that students 'forsake their convictions (about the) superior Revelation of their own religion' (44). On this basis, she dismisses the pluralist approach as inadequate for religious schools. Skeie (2006) and Eck (2001) point out that pluralism honours the plural, the many, the different. It does not deny difference nor define religions as functionally similar. It is possible that good interfaith education can operate on the pluralist premise that diversity is beneficial, that there are different world views that we can learn about and critically assess. A pluralist approach need not relativise or trivialise an individual's commitment to their own faith, it simply removes the need for the hegemonic 'best' path to God.

Over pluralism, Engebretson prefers 'hierarchical inclusivism' (Cush and Francis 2001, 53) and adopts Rahner's (1975) position of anonymous Christianity (the idea that we are all Christians but may not know it). She noted that 'for people who have been brought up in various religious traditions, the redemptive grace of Christ, in some mysterious way, comes through those traditions' (2008a). Her demand for immersion in the home tradition and learning about other religions as secondary (61) runs counter to critical pedagogy. For Freire, identifying too strongly with a particular stance limits the possibility for new knowledge to emerge. The idea that *interfaith* education must start with *single-faith* education is problematic, especially when the student's tradition differs from the school's. This highlights Freire's concern of unethical imposition from the privileged place of dominance.

Cush and Francis (2001) raised the importance of applying positive pluralism to religious education as part of the quest for justice in a diverse society. O'Grady (2008) concurred by noting that Freire's philosophy reversed the customary practice of having pupils first learn officially sanctioned knowledge. He argued that Freire's pedagogy was 'counter-cultural', that by resisting the dominant ideology it 'invited young people to investigate the self, freely and intuitively' (364).

Skeie (2002) reinforced Freire's theory that ideology determines pedagogy by arguing that opposition to pluralism may be hegemonic. He said that 'we are always … marked by our attitudes towards plurality … (particularly when) we feel that the only way out is to choose one truth against the others' (48–9).

Freire on pluralism

Freire, like Merton (1997) and Dewey (1956), valued diversity as an educative tool. For him, the critical educator's posture was in 'knowing that I am learning to be who I am by relating to what is my opposite' (Freire 1998, 119). Provision of such radical perspective is difficult from within institutions used to operating in authoritarian, hegemonic ways. Freire noted that 'the authoritarian … imposes unity … by eliminating diversity rather than by discovering the Other as an enriching element' (Freire and Faundez 1989, 72). He defined the authoritarian teacher as one who, by avoiding otherness, 'suffocates the

natural curiosity and freedom of the student' (1998, 59) and noted that a teacher 'cannot help students to overcome their ignorance if (they) are not engaged permanently in trying to overcome (their) own' (89). He argued that teachers who deliver learning within a multicultural space (such as Australian interfaith education) and who proclaim openness (as Engebretson does) 'must exclude reactionary, authoritarian, elitist attitudes … (and) under no circumstances … discriminate' (90).

Freire's challenge as a contribution

Freire's distinct contribution to religion education was his insistence that exploration of the unknown should not be simply an outward looking exercise, but one which equally demanded self-reflection and the challenging of authority. This is a difficult issue. Freire offered a positive perspective on this dilemma with the idea that exploration of otherness is part of the journey to knowing self. He saw opportunity in stepping outside of the known without fear of 'losing faith' but with the hope of building something stronger. Such a spirit of adventure demands the courage and freedom to challenge the 'one true God' doctrine.

Moulin (2009) identified this doctrine as a distinct problem and paradox in religion education. As a solution, he also focused on freedom. Moulin (2009, 157) proposed adapting a Rawlsian social contract model in which the 'free, equal, reasonable and rational' citizenry (Rawls 2001, 7) nominate an approach in which no particular theology could dominate. Moulin argued that 'a pedagogy which is based upon only one method will … exclude other approaches, thus limiting students' experience' (153). In the spirit of Freire, Moulin argued that 'the individual has the right to liberty of belief (which) assumes access to different points of view' (154).

For Freire, the idea of religious superiority works against critical education. In his words:

> If … my thinking is the only correct (way) … I cannot listen to anyone who thinks or elaborates ideas differently … If I view their ideas as … somehow inferior to my own … then I cannot speak with them, only to or at them. I forbid myself from understanding them. In which case I remove the possibility of seeing myself from their viewpoint and of learning more about myself. (1998, 107–8)

Freire pointed out that 'true listening (to difference) does not diminish the right to disagree, to oppose, to take a position, but it does demand being open to the ideas, words and gestures of the other' (1998, 107).

In the context of interfaith education, this *other* cannot be limited to *the similar.* The Christian's other must include the internally diverse perspectives of atheist Humanists, non-theist Buddhists, all variety of polytheist, monist and panentheist Hindu, idolising animists, syncretising spiritualists, indifferent Laodicians and ever-undecided agnostics. This requires a radically expanded recognition of otherness and a large dose of humility to alert us to the risks of

overvaluing our identity. Lack of humility, expressed as a false superiority, was, for Freire, a transgression of our human vocation to learn.

Such inclusivism is difficult, especially when relying on limited input to produce teaching resources. The culturally myopic approach is not limited to majority Christian nations. For example, a recent Indian publication (Vaswani 2010) which aims to be a 'companion (to the) friendly study of world religions' favours Hinduism. The Hinduism chapter is twice the size of any other and written in effusively romantic language: 'India built a civilisation of light … in this glorious land' (82). The chapter argues that Hinduism is 'the Eternal Religion … rightly considered the mother of all religions' (70–3). It notes that while 'other religions have their protectors and propagandists, Hinduism is scientific in its approach' (74) and that all other ancient religions have been 'wiped away without a trace' (79). It also claims that the 'central doctrine of Judaism (is) the promise of land' (135), that all Christians have an obligation to proselytise and convert (67) and that 'no religion has ever been persecuted here (in India)' which is not entirely true. This example shows how, regardless of what the majority tradition is, developing critical interfaith materials may benefit from an outsider's perspective.

Conclusions

For Freire, the only authentic aim of education was to liberate. As such, he claimed that educators have no right to prescribe, limit or impose particular belief options for others. He equated such prescription with manipulation and domination.

If, as Puett claims, the ultimate task of interfaith educators is 'cultivating and sustaining social cohesion and a culture of peace' (2005, 265), then respect can only be realised when it is sincerely and fully extended. A Freirean commitment to open, critical learning would encourage interfaith educators to examine the entire spectrum of beliefs and include authentic voices of the other rather than the dominant culture's representations.

Some Australian initiatives show how both interfaith and educative aims can be undermined without critical analysis. Resources and training programmes which aim to be interfaith should perhaps also be interfaith-authored and reviewed. This may at least move depictions of otherness beyond caricature. In honour of Freire's love of questioning, the aims of *a just classroom* and *a just nation* may be well served by asking: What is 'interfaith'? What is 'education'?

Acknowledgements

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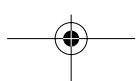
Association for the Study of Religions Conference on the theme of Religion and Difference, Melbourne, December 2009.

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