



## So Now What? Collaborative Learning through Dialogical Praxis

“I need you so that I can know more. For me to know more, I need another  
subject of knowing”

(Freire, 1974 in Allman 2001)

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This workshop is inspired by my reading of critical Marxist thinkers who highlight the significance of participatory, dialogical, activist forms of inquiry that seek not only to scrutinize and oppose exploitative social relations but also to prefigure the transformed relations to which we aspire. In particular, I draw on the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, and Paula Allman, who both work from Marx’s dialectical conceptualization of consciousness (praxis) to elaborate the possibility for class-conscious collective action, which draws strength from diversity and does not entail the sacrifice of freedom. Allman builds on the thinking of Freire and Gramsci, in addition to Marx, to develop the *practice* of revolutionary social change through critical education based in a rigorous, experiential understanding of capitalist relations.

In this workshop, after a brief introduction to Sartre’s *progressive-regressive method* and Allman’s elaboration of Freire’s *dialogical praxis*, I wish to invite participants to engage in and explore a process of collaborative inquiry-through-dialogue, based on the following broad questions:

1. *What now, what next?* In this historical moment, what is working or not working in our efforts to realize social and environmental justice; what have we learned from this? What are our common questions, challenges, and opportunities? Is there something we can work on together and/or with others?
2. *What is the value of this praxis?* Does this process of collaborative inquiry strengthen our work? Why or why not? How? What can be learned from our experiences of dialogue (here or elsewhere)?

Sartre suggests our everyday experiences of *seriality* within capitalism produce alienation, isolation, and a sense of powerlessness wherein no individual action can change the situation. However, he also outlines the possibility for collective praxis, when awareness of common purpose can lead to mutual engagement in concerned action. Allman’s account of Freirean dialogical education illustrates how each person enters the learning experience with different types of knowledge (practical, experiential, and theoretical) which (s)he places before the group so that it can be tested and (as appropriate) “refined, rejected, or changed and developed into a deeper and richer or more complex version.”. As in Allman’s description, each of us will come to this proposed dialogue with our own personal and collective histories, sensibilities, and intellectual and political projects. It is my hope that, within this brief workshop, co-participants might begin to collaboratively forge a process of dialogical inquiry in which we assist one another to mutually explore our experiences and to develop our understandings of *what to do next?* and *how to engage with others?* in meaningful collective struggles for social and environmental justice.