Pedrinho A. Guareschi

THE CONTEXT AND
CHARACTER OF

PAULO FREIRE'S
THEORY OF
SOCIAL
CHANGE

THE CONTEXT AND CHARACTER OF

PAULO FREIRE'S THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Pedrinho A. Guareschi

THE CONTEXT AND CHARACTER OF
PAULO FREIRE'S THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Graphic Production and Printing

Evangraf - evangraf@terra.com.br

55 51 3336-2466

Printed in Brazil

I'm paying off a fifty-year debt. Since I finished writing this thesis on Paulo Freire, many people have insisted that I should publish it. Looking back now, I am surprised to see that the deep insights of his thought, especially the insistence on a critical conscience and an ethics intrinsic to all our actions, were already there. I am now preparing a deeper and more critical reflection on the unfolding of his thought, which, starting from pedagogy, passes through politics and ethics, to arrive at an action-reflection as an inseparable unit.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to AffonsoMattye, Rubens Prá, IldoGuareschi from Brazil, and Alexis Luzzi from Milwaukee. They made my stay in the United States possible.

I want to acknowledge here those who helped me in my work, especially Austin Schlaefer, Donald Haydon, Dr. David O. Moberg, the members of my committee Dr. Donald Herron, Richard Knudten, and the director Dr. Jaber Gubrium who stimulated and challenged me, and became a close personal friend.

Preface

It is a basic contention of this study that theories do not simply emerge full-blown out of the minds of thinkers. Rather, the character of theories is influenced by both the social and personal contexts of the lives of theorists. In the following chapters, we will show how the social and personal context of Paulo Freire's Latin American experience influenced the character of his theory of social change.

The first Chapter, "Inequality and Economic Dependence in Latin America," is an attempt to set the larger scene, to discuss the social context within which Freire worked and how this influenced his work in a general way. The Chapter is divided in two main parts: internal inequality and external dependence. Latin American lives are affected greatly by the wide internal gaps in income inequality. They are also affected by economic dependence on more developed countries.

With the second Chapter, "The Personal Context of Freire's Theory," we come closer to Freire's world. We examine his life, his action, his work, and Brazil's Northeast because Freire is a "nordestino." It was there that Freire worked for many years, and it was in that place that his theory was born and his method implemented.

The third Chapter, "Freire's Conceptual World," is indispensable for understanding Freire's thought. Freire uses a great number of new words, created by himself. They have a special meaning. He tends to avoid the traditional connotations attached to some words. Because of this, he has been accused of pedantism (Friedenberg, 1971:378–380). However, this is a risk every pioneer has to run if he wishes to avoid being misunderstood.

Chapter Four centers on Freire's Theory of Social Change. The characteristics of Freire's thinking about revolutionary action are discussed. His delineation of the distinct language of oppression and of revolution is outlined. Finally, the relationship between Freire's ideas and that of other social thinking similar to his is examined.

In Chapter Five, we describe Freire's technique of conscientization. To understand his influence in Latin America and in the whole world it is necessary to know how his method and technique function.

With Chapter Six, we come full circle, and analyse Freire's- influence in the social transformation of Latin America and other countries We show how attempts to change the situation of domination and cultural slavery are all impregnated by Freire's ideas.

I
Inequality and economic dependence in Latin America

There is a very real desire for liberation, development, and political independence among Latin Americans. "Awareness" by masses of Latin Americans of the inequalities of their lives and its source in external economic dependence represents a new and decisive force in social changes occurring all over the continent. It is impossible to understand the quality of Latin American social life without studying its dependence upon foreign economies, politics, and culture. The social order is characterized by conditions of underdevelopment dramatized by the imposing phenomena of marginality and poverty. This is largely influenced by economic, political and cultural structures dependent upon the industrialized countries and metropolises which monopolize technology and science.

INEQUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA

Latin America is obviously undergoing major political transformations and economic development. Taking place with extraordinary speed, this has come to touch

and influence every level of human activity: work, leisure, and religion. This seems to indicate that Latin America is on the threshold of a new epoch in its history.

> It appears to be a time full of zeal for full emancipation, of liberation from every form of servitude, of personal maturity and of collective integration (Colonnese, 1970a:48).

These are the first signs of the painful birth of a new kind of society.

But, even if there are signs of transformation and development, most Latin Americans still live beneath tragic underdevelopment which not only separates people from the enjoyment of material goods, but from their proper human fulfillment. In spite of the efforts being made, there is hunger and misery, illness on a massive scale, and high infant mortality. There is extensive illiteracy and marginality, profound inequality of income, tension between social classes, outbreaks of violence, and rare popular participation in decisions affecting everyone.

About the middle of the 19th century, demographic growth intensified the urban trend in migration. Towns became poles of development; they became constant centers of migration, making satellites of their surroundings, culturally, economically and politically. The exodus of peasants from the land and to the cities in search of work, education, and amusement caused the formation of "poverty belts" around the biggest ones. People who live in these belts are called "marginados" (marginals or dependents), i. e., people who cannot support themselves.

Comblin (MacEoin, 1971:121) states that inequality in Latin America is far greater than the simple inequality of social classes. There are two cultures which have not yet interpenetrated each other. The aristocracy finds the extraordinary social or socioracial inequality normal.

Latin America consists of colonies in which conquerors (later, aristocrats) established themselves. They were not driven out by wars or revolutions of independence. On the contrary, their power has increased. The clergy identifies itself with the dominating group. It consists exclusively of persons who have been assimilated into this group. Its education is along the same lines as that of the upper classes and its social relations are linked to them. The culture of the marginados faces the aristocracy. The marginados"are social groups which, although they live in society, do not take part in its structures" (Desal, 1967:49).

Marginados

The marginados are men

> whose state of poverty permeates every sector of their lives, destroying even what is still human in them and at the same time causing the most diverse problems (Vekemans, 1966:218).

In some Latin American countries the marginal population constitutes from 70 to 80 percent of the total population (Education and Development, 1972:11).

These people, who are neither organized nor integrated in their activities, feel frustrated and powerless. They organize themselves only under external pressures and

react only in order to survive and satisfy their vital needs. Once these needs are satisfied, they lose their cohesive force. The pattern of these movements is nearly always centered on a paternalism of domination-subordination expressed in terms of asking and giving.

Owing to the social oppressions which surround him, the marginal endures his own poverty without knowing how to manifest it in words or social actions. He is incapable of seeking a solution for himself and remains totally submerged in what Freire (1969:3) calls "the culture of silence." In a certain way he is a man like everybody else with his values, his actions, and his own aspirations. But he endeavors to realize them with inefficient means incapable of giving these values their right place. He is less man, not with regard to his own moral values, which are very often heroic, but with regard to his incapacity to act individually or with a group to realize his humanity. He is a totally oppressed person, either through economic pressure which manipulates him through sterile demagogy, through cultural oppression which represses or does violence to his most profound values, his outlook on the world, his way of life and even his popular customs, and finally, sometimes even through religious pressure which imposes on him a god, a code of norms, and cultural expressions which are foreign to him.

Millions of men find themselves on the fringes of society, prevented from fulfilling their humanity, due to the existence of inadequate and traditional structures. But we cannot forget, as Colonnese (1970a:223) affirms, that many of these people are becoming aware of the need to undertake or activate a process of integration at all lev-

els; from the integration of marginal populations into the benefits of social life, to the economic and cultural integration of Latin American countries.

The Middle Class

The existence of middle classes in Latin America is negligible. According to MacEoin (1971:68) the people at the bottom constitute 90 percent of the 290 million inhabitants of Latin America, and will constitute at least as large a proportion of the 600 million people projected for the start of the 21st century. Latin America never had a clear class concept. The peasants and lower class have been amorphous, without organization or class consciousness. They are being incorporated into a movement of ideas and beginning to recognize that they have common cause, "but there is not a Middle Class identified "MacEoin, 1971:83). There is only 5 to 10 percent of the population immediately subordinate to the aristocracy.

The Aristocracy

The upper class in Latin America shows little or no social conscience and does not question inequality. In general it is primarily concerned with preserving its privileges, which are identified with the "established order." The community action of the aristocracy takes the character of paternalism and alms-giving, with no concern for changing the status quo. Some conservative leaders act under the influence of international economic power with some interest in economic development.

This lack of social conscience is found in profession-al circles, in the socio-economic sectors, and within es-tablished governing bodies. It explains why government agencies act to benefit traditionalist and conservative groups, often giving rise to corruption and accounting for the absence of a sound program directed at the human-ization and social participation of the populace. In those countries where military powers are not directly govern-ing, they tend to support the foregoing interests in various areas and often intervene to reinforce these decisions.

Some parts of the upper class advocate develop-ment and concern themselves with the particular means of production which they believe must be improved in quantity and quality. They attach great value to techno-logical development and planning. They hold that mar-ginals must be integrated into the mainstream of society as producers and consumers. They place greater empha-sis on economic progress than on the social betterment of the common people in their economic and political decisions. This is the mentality commonly found among technocrats and the various development agencies.

DIMENSIONS OF INEQUALITY

Origins

The roots of inequality are located in the 16th century, when Spain and Portugal threw themselves into the con-quest of the new world. Other European countries had absorbed the mentality of the Renaissance, but Spain and Portugal remained culturally feudal. The feudal men-

tality is oriented to landed relationships and finds its expression in masters and servants, lords and slaves (Freyre, 1966).

Those who emigrated to conquer the new world were motivated by dual interests: the conquest of land, which was synonymous with wealth; and the possibility, even though remote, of offering their descendants an elite education, in other words a-higher status.

The first dream, the conquest of land, was realized by force of arms. The second was obtained peacefully by colonization, with the help of religious orders. Schools could only be "elite schools," Educational principles imported from the Iberian peninsula emphasized literary and artistic training. After independence the architects of the new schools were the oligarchy of the "latifundios."

> Having its own interpretation of the meaning of man and the world this oligarchy imprinted on its school system certain characteristics such as verticalism, an anti-dialogue attitude, paternalism, elitism and selectivity, imitation by means of importation and copying of foreign patterns (Anon.,"Education and Development," 1972:16).

Many of these characteristics still exist.

Ethnicity and Ideology

The highest stratum of society is formed by the whites, and the lowest by the blacks, "mestizos," and other indigenous peoples. The color of one's skin betrays cultural affiliations and systems of values which are totally different from one another. As vertical mobility is virtually nonexistent, racial integration is very difficult.

The educational structures are oriented toward supporting rather than transforming dominant social and economic structures. Education is oriented towards sustaining an economy based on the desire "to have more." Course content is, in general, too abstract and formalistic. Didactic methods are more concerned with the transmission of knowledge than with the creation of a critical spirit.

Professional formation, especially at the intermediate and higher levels, frequently sacrifice human excellence on the altar of pragmatism and immediacy in order to adjust itself to the demands of the labor market. This type of education is responsible for placing men at the service of the economy and not the economy at the service of men, as Colonnese (1970a:4) would say.

There are various forms of oppression by dominant groups. Not excluding willful oppression, these forms manifest themselves most frequently in a lamentable insensitivity of the privileged classes to the misery of marginados. Dominant groups characterize as "subversive activities" all attempts to change a social system which favors the permanence of their privilege.

As a natural consequence of the above-mentioned attitudes, some members of the dominant group occasionally resort to the use of force to repress drastically any attempt at opposition. It is easy for them to formulate such ideological justifications as suppressing communists, or practical ones such as keeping "order" to give forceful action an honest appearance.

But there is a growing awareness of injustice among the oppressed, inequality becoming more and more in-

tolerable as these oppressed people become increasingly conscious of their situation. The future of this situation appears grim. Growing inequality and injustice increase the potential grounds of awareness, and the demographic explosion will multiply problems and tensions.

MacEoin (1971:60) summarizes the main characteristics of inequality in Latin America. Land ownership is highly concentrated. Land is exploited inefficiently, with high inputs of unskilled labor, and a minimum of capital and technology. The benefits are concentrated within the class of landowners. Workers are allotted small plots of the poorest land to grow subsistence crops for their families and themselves. Employment is largely seasonal, and unemployment levels are high. A rate of unemployment is in fact an integral element in the system, protecting the landlord against demands for better labor conditions. Most of the people, in consequence, live in poverty, hunger, illness, and ignorance. At the same time, the external direction of the economy maintains the country in industrial and technological backwardness. It creates a psychological atmosphere in which the export sector is regarded as the sole contributor to the national well-being, entitled to monopolize capital and technology, and to determine political and social policy.

The Culture of Silence

Freire (1967:3 and 4) presents a cultural analysis of the Latin American situation. According to him, the cultural situation of Latin America during the colonial period can be referred to as a culture of domination. It was the time

of kings and viceroys, or representatives of the crown, of repression of education. The masses were forbidden to say their word. It was the period of the "culture of silence." This culture of silence existed in colonial times and continues today, especially in the rural areas of Latin America.

The organized emergence of masses intent on revolutionizing the present social structure is recent in Latin America. As this emergence progresses, economic elites, compromised with external interests, become antagonistically opposed to the masses. With the intensification of suppression, efforts by the masses to organize begin. The power elite, feeling more and more threatened, has no other alternative but to stop the process. By denying the masses a political voice and by offering them an education that is "mythical" in character, they are reactivating the old traditions of the "culture of silence."

According to Freire (1967:4) the apathy of the masses (especially the peasants, but also urban peoples) follows the termination of the political process. The peasants have a "fear of liberty." This develops to full strength after a "failure" in any attempt to gain political participation. Fatalistic attitudes are characteristic of the fear of liberty.

ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE IN LATIN AMERICA

A common assumption of many policy planners is that Latin America's social and economic development has nothing to do with other countries. But the fact is that most Latin American countries have neocolonial economies, dependent upon and controlled by foreign interests, particularly those with multinational corporations.

The colonial nature of their economies makes them particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in world markets, constricts their economic and social development, and is a basic source of political instability. The ruling oligarchies as well as foreign interests pay lip-service to reform, but the fact is that the Latin American poor become poorer and the rich, including the foreign rich, get richer. Meanwhile, the growing unemployment of the lower classes is a potential basis for revolution; social movements emerge that cannot be contained within the existing equilibrium.

Development of Economic Dependence

Freire (1967:2 and 3) describes the growth of economic dependence in Latin America. He states that one can say that since its conquest Latin America has been an oppressed land. Its populations were crushed by colonizing powers. National economies were formed around natural resources which were almost always exploited and transported to European markets. Economic, social, political, and cultural domination by Spain and Portugal led to the formation in Latin America of societies that were basically agrarian and dependent on external interests. Oligarchies were superimposed on populations which were disparagingly called "natives." This type of economic domination created a culture of domination, that, once present, conditioned submissive behavioral patterns in its populace.

Even though the Latin American mind has been described as feudalistic, its economic structure always has had a capitalistic character (Vitale, in Petras and Zeitlin, 1968:32). This capitalistic character is located in the exploi-

tation of colonial raw materials for international markets. The ruling economic classes, while fond of noble titles and feudal pomp, are essentially new capitalist classes made up not only of exporters of agricultural commodities, but also of mine owners, cattle ranchers, and traders. They have been unable to move beyond their successful movements of independence from Spain to make structural changes in their societies precisely because they have been dominated by export capitalists with no interest in internal development. With the ascendance of foreign capital in their economies, not only did they not manifest interest in doing so, but they were incapable of it.

Maurice Halperin (in Betras and Zeitlin, 1968:44) shows how the excessive vulnerability of Latin American societies to external markets is the basic source of their dependence on the export of raw materials and the importation of manufactured goods. The interlocking factors responsible for stagnation, land tenure and utilization, basic industrialization, and external vulnerability are aspects of the fundamental problem. The control of Latin American economies themselves, as well as control of the terms and conditions of export markets, resides with foreign economic interests.

Merle Kling (in Petras and Zeitlin, 1968:76) analysed the political implication of this situation. The fundamentally colonial nature of Latin American countries' economies not only constricts the economic bases of their dominant classes, but also is a basic source of political instability. A close relationship exists between the economic dominance of American or foreign capitalistic corpora-

tions and Latin American patterns of politics. As Johnson (Cockcroft, Frank, and Johnson, 1972:102- 111) explains very well, modern imperialism systematically generates and shapes dependent national classes and power structures. International "gran capital" does not always usurp the position of dominant class from the oligarchies. But, international "gran capital" is an influential interest group within the uppermost circles of national class and power structures. National multisector oligarchies happily accede the larger and more risky investments to the multinational corporation and cooperate with foreign capital in joint ventures, while still retaining control of key sources of national economic and political power. At the international level "gran capital" is dominant. At the national level, "gran capital" is highly integrated into national structures, but national oligarchies are dominant in most institutional spheres. Imperialism could not sustain itself as a dominant force in the world were it not for the support among client classes in underdeveloped countries. And oligarchies would fall one by one to national revolutions if they did not get international backing.

New Forms of Control and Domination

It is important to note that colonial economies are changing in some countries of Latin America. A new type of vulnerability and control is emerging, according to Dos Santos (in Petras and Zeitlin, 1968:94-98). Foreign investment has increasingly been flowing into the industrial manufacturing sectors of the more advanced Latin American economies rather than the mining and agricul-

tural sectors. In place of the foreign investment "enclaves" that were merely part of their countries in a geographical sense, foreign capital has now become substantially integrated with the basic sectors of the economy as a whole and is determining their patterns of development in even more fundamental ways than was true in the past and is still true of the least-developed Latin American countries. In his large and recent study, Johnson (Cockcroft, Frank, and Johnson, 1972: 102) shows how recent foreign investment in Latin America is changing some countries. The trend is toward investment in manufacturing and other urban activities: department stores, retail outlets of corporate subsidiaries, chain markets, banking, and the communication media. By 1971, foreign capital owned 70.2 percent of all industry in Brazil, 58.3 percent of the commerce. In other areas, the domination was even greater: in advertising, for example, it was 99.0 percent (Anon., "As Brazil goes, so goes Latin America," 1972:2).

"Much of the economic life in Latin America is dominated by foreign business, mostly American" (Myrdal, 1970:455). Directly or indirectly, through joint enterprise and other arrangements, American corporations now control or decisively influence between 70 and 90 percent of the raw resources in Latin America, and probably more than half of its modern manufacturing industry, banking, commerce, and foreign trade, as well as much of its public utilities (Myr-dal, 1970:455). MacEoin (1971:149) states that taking Latin America as a whole, 85 percent of its sources of raw materials are controlled by United States interests.

The sophistication of modern imperialism continues to forge ahead, Murray (in Petras and Zeitlin, 1968:99-119)

shows how the United States has tried, since the Cuban Revolution, to devise new policies to fulfill old and consistent purposes--the protection of the interests of what are termed "investor classes" of the United States, and of the Latin American countries themselves. The Alliance for Progress is one such device. It is an attempt to make the dominant classes of Latin America make just such reforms as are necessary to perpetuate the reign of capitalism. Thus, while talking of reforms and development, the Alliance itself imposes conditions on countries recipient of "aid" that make it well nigh impossible for these countries to realize national development programs (cf. Hayter, 1972; Magdoff, 1969).

The dependence of Latin American societies on foreign interests has a number of economic consequences. These range from a distorted international balance of commerce to progressive debt (Colonnese, 1970:73-75).

Because of the relative depreciation and deterioration of terms of exchange, the value of raw materials is increasingly depressed in relation to the cost of manufactured products. This means that the countries which produce raw materials - especially if they are dependent upon one of two major exports -always remain poor, while industrialized countries enrich themselves. This fact nullifies the eventual positive effect of external aid and constitutes a permanent menace to peace, because Latin American countries sense that "one hand takes away what the other hand gives" (Paul VI, 1967:61).

The search for security and individual gain leads many members of the upper classes of Latin American countries to invest their money in foreign countries. To this can

be added the loss of technicians and other professionals, which is at least as serious and perhaps more so than the loss of capital, because of the high cost of training these people and because of their ability to teach others and help the development of the whole country.

Some foreign companies and multinational corporations in Latin American countries often evade the established tax system by subterfuge. At times they send their profits and dividends abroad, without reinvesting in the progressive development of Latin American countries.

It is not surprising to find that in the system of international credits, the true needs and capabilities of Latin American countries are not taken into account. They thus run the risk of encumbering themselves with debts whose payment absorbs the greater part of their profits.

It is obvious that all these factors have political consequences, given the interdependence of political and economic activity. The most important fruit of this situation is the imperialistic flavor of much political discussion and action exercised in Latin America.

MacEoin (1971:1) summarizes well the economic character of Latin

American countries when he states:

> The 1960s was the most disastrous decade in the entire history of Latin America. Instead of narrowing, the gap between rich and poor countries grew significantly wider. Foreign aid from governments had been used, not to develop Latin America, but to achieve the political purposes of the donors. Repayments of principal and interest will soon exceed new loans, if they don't already do so. In another ten years, the mountain of debt will smother us [Latin American countries]. As for foreign pri-

vate investment, the impact is even more negative. The proportion of working population employed in manufacturing has remained practically stationary at under 15 percent for forty years. Foreign firms are more interested in buying out local competitors than in building new factories. Profits and royalties exported far exceed the importation of new capital. Latin America no longer has a voice in the most basic economic decisions.

There is a growing belief today that Latin American countries are the victims of an international system of inequality and injustice. The existence of such a belief is itself a fact of enormous significance.

It means that the assumptions on which world policy is formulated, assumptions still proclaimed to be valid by the developed countries, are no longer shared by Latin Americans. In some countries a majority of persons is rejecting capitalism and opting for socialism. We see then that in relation to external dependence, there is a growing awareness of a situation of domination and injustice. This is likely to bring instability and social change in Latin American countries.

In Latin America today there is also a growing awareness among many sectors of the population of what the real obstacles are to socio-economic growth and to democratic development (Stavenhagen, in Petras and Zeitlin, 1968:31). There is less and less concern with single factors such as "lack of resources", "traditionalism of the peasantry", "overpopulation" and "cultural and racial heterogeneity." Intellectuals are increasingly conscious of the internal structure and dynamics of the total society, and, of course, of the relationship of dependence that this society has with industrial ones, i.e., with imperialists and neo-colonialists.

II
The personal context of Freire's Theory

The following information comes from Freire's work, Conscientizacion (Freire, 1972b), which describes his life and his work. Paulo Freire was born September 19, 1921, in Recife, the capital of the State of Pernambuco, in a suburb called Casa Amarela, Estrada do Encanamento. His father, Joaquim Temistocles Freire, was an officer in the Military Police. He was a spiritist but not a member of any religious sect, a "good, intelligent man, capable of loving." His father died when Freire was a teenager. His mother was Edeltrudes Neves Freire, whom he describes as "Catholic, docile, good and just."

From his parents, Freire learned the art of dialogue. This skill he strove to retain and to develop with all men, with God, with his wife, and his children. The respect that his father had towards his mother's religious beliefs taught Freire from early childhood to respect the opinions of others. Freire chose his mother's religion, a choice which she helped him to make effective in his life. Freire says that his father's hands were not made to strike children but rather to teach them to do things.

The economic crisis of 1929 forced the Freire family to

move to Jaboatão where it was, according to their judgment, less difficult to survive. In April, 1931, they arrived at their new home where the young Paulo lived out experiences which were to affect him deeply throughout his life.

It was in the town of Jaboatão that Freire lost his father. It was there he realized the meaning of hunger personally experienced. It is at this point in his life that he began to understand the hunger of other people.

> He found himself sharing the plight of the 'wretched of the earth.' This period had a profound influence on his life since he had come to feel the gnawing pangs of hunger and its debilitating effects on an experiential level. He fell behind in school because of the listlessness it produced; it led him to make a vow, at the age of eleven, to dedicate his life to the struggle against hunger in order that other children would not have to suffer the agony he was then experiencing (Shaull, in Freire,1971a:10.

Yet this did not succeed in bringing him to despair. At the age of ten, he began thinking that in this world there were many things that were not going well. And in spite of being such a young boy, he began asking himself just what he could do in order to help people.

After some difficulty, he was approved for high school at the age of fifteen. When he was twenty, he was already studying at the Law School of the University of Recife and teaching Portuguese in high school. In this way he helped to support the family.

At that time, because of the big gap between his experiences, the dedication it demanded, and the sermons

he heard from priests on Sundays, Freire abandoned the Church, though not his belief in God, for a year. He returned to the Church through his readings of Tristão de Atayde, for whom he had deep admiration and who, he once said, he would always remember. The writings of Maritain, Bernanos, Mounier and others also influenced him.

Since marriage he became interested in educational problems. For this reason he studied more in the fields of education, philosophy and sociology than he did in the field of law. When he graduated in law from the University of Pernambuco, he began working with two colleagues of his. But, he abandoned that profession after his first lawsuit involving a man's unpaid debts.

Working in the Department of Social Service provided him with further opportunity for dialogue with people, despite his judgment of the Department's severe deficiencies. As Director of the Department of Education and Culture of the SESI (Social Service of Industry) of Pernambuco, later at the "Superintendência" from 1946 to 1954, he had the first experiences that later brought him to the method which he developed in 1961.[1] That happened in the "Movement of Popular Culture of Recife" which he helped to found. He continued this same work in the "Service of Cultural Extension" at the University of Recife. In fact, he was its first director.

---

1   Freire's literacy method became famous all over the world in a few years. It is based on the conviction that every human being, no matter how ignorant or submerged in the "culture of silence," is capable of looking critically at his world in a dialogical encounter with others, and that provided with proper tools for such and encounter he can gradually perceive his personal and social reality and deal critically with it. We will present the method with more detail in Chapter V.

PRISON AND SUBVERSION

The 1964 coup d'état in Brazil not only stopped all efforts that he had been making in the field of adult education, but it brought Freire to prison along with many others who were committed to the same effort. For four days he was interrogated. This treatment later continued in the IPM (Political and Military Court of Inquiry). Freire escaped prison and asked for asylum at the Bolivian Embassy in September, 1964.

In almost all of the interrogations to which Freire was submitted, the purpose was the same: to prove his "absolute ignorance" and the extreme danger of his ideology.

He was considered an "intentional subversive," a "traitor to Christ and to the Brazilian people." One of the judges asked Freire, "Can you deny that your method is just like those used by Stalin, Hitler, Perón, and Mussolini? Can you deny that what you want to do with your pretentious method is to make Brazil a Communist country?"

Freire went to Chile in 1964, where he spent five years working with UNESCO and the Chilean Institute for Agrarian Reform. During these years of involvement in adult education, he refined his theory and applied it to literacy campaigns begun by Eduardo Frei's Christian Democratic government. At the same time, the Ministry of Public Education in Chile published a set of materials implementing his pedagogical ideas. It was called a "psychological-sociological method of teaching adults."

After two years, the Chilean program drew the attention of international organizations. From UNESCO Chile received a special distinction designating Chile as one of

the five nations that had best dealt with the problem of adult illiteracy. The Office of Planning for Adult Education for which Freire was now working, did not deal only with illiteracy but with all programs which allowed illiterates to take part in the entire social life of the nation.

In 1969 and 1970 Freire acted as a consultant to the Harvard University School of Education. He worked in close association with various groups engaged in new educational experiments in both rural and urban areas. He taught courses at the Intercultural Center of Documentation (CIDOC) of Cuernavaca, Mexico, a Center directed by Ivan Illich. Freire is presently serving as a special consultant to the Office of Education of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland.

His thinking on the philosophy of education was first expressed in 1959 in his doctoral dissertation at the University of Recife. His theories were later elaborated in his work as professor of the history and philosophy of education in the same university. This reflected his early experiments in teaching illiterates in that same city. The methodology he developed was widely used by Catholics and others in literacy campaigns throughout the Northeast area of Brazil. His ideas were considered such a threat to the old order that Freire was jailed immediately after the military coup of 1964.

THE NORTHEAST EXPERIENCE

To understand thoroughly Freire's work and theory, it is necessary to study not only the general Latin American historical, cultural and religious situation, but also and

more especially Brazil's Northeast area. It is important to understand that Freire is a "nordestino" and it was there that he worked for many years. Recife was the center of his operation when his method was being implemented throughout Brazil. It was here that the refinement of his thought and theory and his educational leadership took root. As Furtado (1962:47) says,

> Any discussion of the Northeast should begin with an objective and dispassionate description, insofar as that is possible, of the socio-economic reality of that vast region where more than twenty-five million Brazilians live.

Northeast Brazil today is one of the poorest regions in the world and certainly the poorest in the country of Brazil. In the 17th century, this region was one of the richest in the world, a fact noted by many specialists in economic development. Besides the history of droughts which contributed so heavily to the region's decline, Frank (1969) cites other causes leading to its impoverishment. He says that the subsistence economy was generated and rooted in the gradual decline of the sugar industry in the 17th century.

The Northeast's population growth and economy had been shaped chiefly by the sugar industry of the Portuguese colonizers, an industry which, at its best, was perhaps "the most profitable colonizing and agricultural business of all time" (Furtado, 1962:71). Frank (1969:152-153) calls this phenomenon "the development of underdevelopment":

> The socio-economic structure of the region in its golden years merits examination. Business was concentrated in the hands of a few owners of land and sugar mills,

and, in the merchants who mostly were not residents in Brazil and often not even Portuguese, but Dutch. They were entirely tied to and dependent on the metropolis. The concentration of wealth in their hands, the transfer of much of it to the metropolis, and the structure of production whose greatest profit lay in producing a single product for export led to little domestic investment and production, and to the importation...of equipment for the sugar mills and of luxury consumer goods for their owners. The structure of underdevelopment [was] in essence the same structure which is still in evidence in Latin America in our days...

After 1680, Northeast Brazil, one of the richest regions of the world, began to fall into decadence. The relative weakening of its ties with the more heavily metropolitan areas forced the Northeast into a kind of isolationism; the development of the rest of the country's economic system gradually transformed Northeast Brazil into a kind of "satellite" of the growing coastal cities. Furtado (1962:80-81) states:

> There occurred a process of economic involution... The Northeast was progressively transformed into an economy in which a large part of the population produced only what was necessary to subsist...The development of its population and its precarious subsistence economy - basic elements of the problems in later days -are thus linked to this slow process of decadence of the large sugar industry, which in its best years had made possible the most profitable colonial agricultural business of all times.

The history of Northeast Brazil provides a major example of how the capitalistic development of a country can

generate underdevelopment. An age-old but persistent myth states that an underdeveloped country suffers from a dualistic division because of its very nature. The dualism, in this myth, refers to the polarization that exists between a modern, urban, integrated segment of a country and a rural, backward, and isolated one. It has been said traditionally that the rural or "feudal" segment constitutes a block to a country's progress, to modernization and economic development. In actual fact, it is the contrary. These rural areas were not isolated since the beginning of the industrial-capitalistic age, but rather were those that had the closest ties to the metropolis of the past. Parallel examples would be the mined-out regions of Minas Gerais in Brazil, the Highland of Peru, Bolivia, Czacatecas, Guanajuato and San Luiz Potosi in Mexico.

The sugar economy generated a satellite economy of its own in the Northeast in regard to cattle raising. Ranchers were exploited by sugar mill operators as if they were some kind of subservient satellite of this industry. With the decline of the sugar economy, the growing cattle raising industry attracted more and more people from the declining sugar processing and export industry to cattle raising, which was less lucrative. Thus, workers' living conditions declined (Simensen, 1962:145-148). In this Northeast region of Brazil today "coronelism" rules: the kind of all-powerful local economic, political, social, and police authoritarian leadership that the so-called "feudal" landowner represents (Nunez Leal, 1946).

There is another important factor in Freire's Northeast experience. Droughts in the area have been recorded for two hundred and fifty years, the worst of which was a

three year drought from 1877 to 1880. It was the most severe ever to hit the region. The entire region was burned black. All of the cattle were wiped out and 200,000 "sertanejos" (people living in the backwoods) starved to death. Since that disaster, the major drought years occurred in 1888-89, 1900, 1915, 1919, 1930-32, 1951-53, and 1958. The drought, with its resultant misery and hunger, is vividly described by Josué de Castro, author of *Geography of Hunger* (1947), which has been translated into nineteen languages. It brought sufficient attention to de Castro that he was elected President of the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization. His much more recent *Death In The Northeast* (1969) is a frankly partisan and passionately written account of the austere and critical life-situation of the great majority of his fellow "nordestinos." Josué de Castro calls the Brazilian Northeast, "600,000 square miles of suffering" (1969:22). In this area live 25,000,000 people.

POPULAR EDUCATION

In this context, Freire began his Movement of Popular Education. Its political repercussions were tempestuous. The SUPRA (Superintendency for Agrarian Reform), in spite of its brief life, succeeded in organizing the peasants for the defense of their interests. The many groups of peasants, to the extent that were being organized, were taught to read and write according to Freire's method. They became active units participating in many social activities.

After these first pedagogical experiences (300 peasants were taught to read and write within 45 days), it was

decided to apply the Freire method in all of Brazil, and this with federal support. Therefore, between July, 1963 and March, 1964, training sessions were given to future coordinators in most of the capitals of the Brazilian states. The plan for 1964 was to begin 200,000 cultural groups having the total capacity of teaching 2,000,000 people. A teaching campaign was begun which first focused on urban areas, later to be applied to country districts.

Reactionary groups could not understand how a Catholic educator could possible speak for the oppressed. It was even harder for them to admit that teaching people to write and read was synonymous with implanting in them serious doubts about the worth and legality of their "privileges".

In the early 1960s the hatred of Communism was very strong. The oligarchy preferred to accuse Freire of ideas that were really not his, and to attack his trust towards the democratization of culture in which they discovered a germ of rebellion. The basis for their accusation was that a pedagogy of liberty was in itself sufficient cause for rebellion.

The "Movement of Popular Education" was a real menace to the maintenance of the status quo because of the political activism of almost 40 percent who became new voters. According to Brazilian electoral laws, illiterate people cannot vote. With the conquering of illiteracy in 1964, the number of voters increased very fast. In the state of Sergipe, for example, the number rose to 170,000 compared to only 90,000 a year before; in the state of Pernambucco, the number of voters increased from 800,000 to 1,300,000.

Because of his active ideology regarding the free-dom of men and governmental reluctance to provide this freedom, Freire is now in exile. There is a fundamental consistency between the principles and the action of this educator. According to his concept of education, education must be a reflection of concrete history, not merely an idealization of it. This concretization, thus, clamors for human liberty.

III
Freire's conceptual world

Freire has been accused by some readers of pedantry because he has created some new concepts as part of his theory. He was not the first to be so accused. Many pioneer sociologists and those in other fields found themselves with the same theoretical problem as Freire. In order to aptly name certain ideas, they had to "invent" new words so as to avoid connotations attached to existing words with shades of meaning which did not apply in their cases.

Freire's theory is built around three main concepts: Conscientization, Praxis, and Utopia. Related to them, though not of parallel importance, are other ideas such as: the Culture of Silence, Overdetermination, Myth, Right, Humanism, and Ideology. Let us examine the meaning of each in its turn.

CONSCIENTIZATION

It is generally assumed that Freire is the author of this word. He considers it the central concept of his theory of education and of cultural action for freedom. Actually, this word was created by a group of professors at the Bra-

zilian Institute of Higher Studies; among these were the philosopher Alvaro Pinto and Professor Guerreiro.Freire (1972b:29) states:

> When I first heard this word, "conscientization," I immediately realized the depth of its meaning.Since then, this word has been in my vocabulary. But it was D. Helder Camara who spread this word, translating it into French and English.

Conscientization is a many-faceted concept. It is, as Freire describes it, primarily a process that is on-going. It is a progression of increasingly intensive reflection and action. As a process, it has many levels and phases. We can distinguish two main levels: the psychological (personal) and the social (interpersonal) level.

Psychologically, the process comprises the increasing awareness of one's own dignity: a praxis of liberty (Sanders, in Freire, 1973a: Socially, conscientization is this growth process present in a group or in a society. It is at the social level that Freire discusses in depth the concept of conscientization, citing examples from history, and from the present state of various societies, especially of Latin America (Freire, 1967:2-4; 1969:56-70; 1970:16; 1971a:146-49;1971b:51-58; 1972a:59-71; 1972b:67-68; 1972c:82; 1973a:59-96.

In its social evolution, the process of conscientization has three analytic stages. It begins with a magical consciousness (semi-intransitive, submerged consciousness), passes on to a naïve consciousness (transitive consciousness), and finally comes to a critical or political consciousness. The second stage, naïve consciousness, does not necessarily develop into a critical consciousness, howev-

er. It may take various spurious forms such as fanatic consciousness (mass), ambiguous consciousness (populism), or reactionary consciousness (coup d'état). By examining the meaning of these social stages of consciousness, we shall show the meaning of the general concept of conscientization.

I. Magical Consciousness

This state of awareness is characteristic of people who live in a closed society. Such a society is characterized by a rigid hierarchical social structure; a dearth of local marketing since the economy is controlled from outside the country; the exportation of raw materials and the importation of manufactured goods, both imposed without the common people having a voice in the process; a slanted educational system for the elite in which the chief objective is to maintain the status quo of the rich and powerful; widespread illiteracy and disease, the latter often simply labeled "tropical diseases" as if from natural causes, but which more often is the result of total economic dependence and unjust oppression; alarming rates of infant mortality; malnutrition with its irreparably debilitating effects on mind and body; a very low life expectancy; and a high rate of crime (Freire, 1972a:61-62).

The mode of consciousness which corresponds to this reality is "immerged consciousness" or "magical consciousness." It is sometimes called "immerged" because it is so dominated psychologically by oppressors that the masses who have this cannot be critically objective in making judgments about social realities. The chief

characteristic of this kind of consciousness, dependent as it is upon the oppressive society to which structure it conforms, is its very limited vision of reality and its almost unlimited immersion of thought and judgment in the thoughts and judgments of the oppressive elite. Yet it holds the seed of a vague kind of consciousness that "all is not right" (Freire, 1973a:52; 1972a:62).

Persons characterized by magical or immersed consciousness fail to perceive many of the challenges of their social reality. Its intransitivity or semi-intransitivity provides a kind of blindness to objective conditions. Total immersion of mass consciousness in the realities of an elite prevents the transition of mass awareness beyond itself. The masses think *of* their world, but not *about* it. Therefore the only facts which the dominated consciousness grasps are those which lie within the orbit of personal experience - living experiences. This very limited consciousness obviously cannot be greatly aware of the facts and sources of the problematic situations of daily life. Persons feel pain and suffer, but they are not aware of the social roots of their feelings.

Men whose consciousness exists at this level lack what Freire calls "structural perception",[2] that is, understanding of the social constraints and imperatives that bind both themselves and their oppressors. Because they lack such structural perception, men with this kind of social consciousness explain their oppression and its consequences with various kinds of superstitions such as mystical and mythological forces outside of or within themselves. The

---

2   Cf. Mills (1961), The Sociological Imagination. "Structural perception" is the popular equivalent of Mills'"sociological imagination."

cause of their suffering is tied to something outside of social realities.

It is not difficult to discover the oppressive utility of this magical, fatalistic kind of causal thinking which men claim in certain situations. Since the cause of human misery allegedly lies in a superior power (fate) or in man's own natural weakness (destiny), it is obvious that no action can be directed towards transforming a negative social reality, but rather only towards those mysterious forces which are claimed to be responsible for misery. Their appeal to cause, therefore, is a kind of defensive magic with therapeutic value.

While a new social structure may do away with the phenomenon of mystical explanation, modernization could proceed merely to mythologize technology. In that case, the myth of technology would replace magical practices as ways to solve social problems. There is another danger in mythologizing technology in that it is looked upon, not as a substitute for the magical forces which continue to influence people's lives and society, but as something added to and superior to mystical or magical forces. Technology is projected as all-powerful, beyond the intellectual capacities of most men and accessible only to a few (Freire, 1972a:63-64; 1973a:56-58; 102).

II. Naive Consciousness

Freire also calls this "transitive consciousness." He intends it to be only mildly transitive; from the initial position of intransitivity in immerged consciousness, men

begin to acquire a certain vague awareness having some of the characteristics of transitivity. At its beginning, it is extremely naive.

Its main characteristics are: naïveté in the explanation of problems and their proposed solutions; a tendency to believe that the best time was the past time; underestimation of the personal worth of the ordinary man; herding together rather than living together; looking upon common people not as individuals but as undifferentiated (which Freire calls "massification"); a reluctance to deeply probe social problems. All of these are paralleled by a penchant for simplistic explanations of complex problems; weakness of rational discussions and rational arguing; strong emotional tones; the practice of polemics instead of dialogue (Freire, 1973a:54). It predominates in the urban centers.

In the transitional process, the prevailing static character of a closed society slowly gives way to a new dynamism in all aspects of societal life. Glaring inequities and injustices are exposed, thereby provoking collisions in which the consciousness of the common people becomes more and more demanding and, of course, evoking violent and reactionary alarm on the part of the privileged elite. As the lines of this historical transition become more sharply etched, progressively exposing the contradictions inherent in a dependent society, groups of students and intellectuals, most of whom themselves belong to the privileged elite, desire to become involved in the "reality" of existing society. They tend to reject solutions to problems proposed by outsiders who have not experienced the situations personally. The fine arts gradually

stop being the expression merely of the easy life of the affluent bourgeoisie. They begin to find their inspiration in the hard life of the common people. At this stage, poets speak of the worker and the peasant not as dreamy abstractions but as concrete men with concrete lives (Freire, 1972a:66).

As transitive naïve consciousness develops, there are four possible forms to which it may pass: fanatic, ambiguous, reactionary and critical. Goldmann (1969) calls the latter the "maximum (optimum) of potential consciousness." Critical consciousness is a new phase of development after transitive naïve consciousness. It is the evolution of consciousness at its fullest. Since this kind constitutes consciousness at its best, we shall first consider the three possible developments of transitive naïve consciousness before dwelling at greater length on critical consciousness.

A. Fanatic Consciousness: This is a pathological form of the development of transitive consciousness. Gabriel Marcel (1962) in his work *Man Against Mass Society* describes it as irrational or fanatic consciousness.

This form has a mythical character which replaces the magical character of the naive or semi-intransitive states of consciousness. "Massification," the psychology which views large segments of a society as one mass, begins at this level. Mass society is not to be equated with the emergence of the masses in the historical process, as the aristocratic elite may view the phenomenon. True, the emergence of the masses with their claims for their human rights and their demands for the recognition of these rights, makes them highly visible in the historical

process, however naive their consciousness--a phenomenon which accompanies the opening up of closed societies under the impact of the first infrastructural changes. Mass society, however, occurs much later. It clearly appears in highly technologized, complex societies. In order to function, these societies which are so technologized, develop extremely complex networks of interdependence because of the necessity for specialization, all of which actually degenerates into a myth creating an irrational mechanism. Distinct from the development of specialized skills, which are functional, specialism narrows the field of knowledge in such a way that so-called "specialists" generally become incapable of reflective thinking. Because they have lost the vision of the whole of which their own specialty is only one small dimension, they cannot even think correctly in their own limited area of specialization. They are transformed either into "robots" or into "square-minded" individuals.

Similarly, the rationality basic to science and technology disappears under the negative effects of technology itself; its place is taken by myth-making irrationalism. The attempt to explain man as a superior type of robot originates in such irrationalism. This mythologizing technology is related to necrophilic attitudes, that is, the tendency towards dead things, material objects, and consequent opposition to people and living creatures (Freire,1972a:79-80; 1973a:54-58, 102).

B. Ambiguous Consciousness: Another direction that can be taken in the evolution of naive consciousness is the phenomenon of ambiguous consciousness, also called

Populism. Although the emergence of the masses from silence does not allow the political style of the formerly closed society to continue, that does not mean that the masses are now able to speak on their own behalf. Populist leadership might seem to be an adequate response to the new presence of the masses in the historical process. But this leadership is still a manipulative leadership, manipulative of the masses. It obviously does not have the power to manipulate the elite.

Populist manipulation of the masses may be considered from two different perspectives. On the one hand, it is undeniably a kind of political opiate which maintains not only the naïveté of emerging consciousness, but also the common people's habit of letting themselves be directed. On the other hand, to the extent that it uses mass demands and public protest, political manipulation paradoxically accelerates the process by which the people unveil reality. This paradox sums up the ambiguous character of populism; it is manipulative, yet at the same time a factor in democratic mobilization. Although it is a kind of manipulative paternalism, populism offers the possibility of a critical analysis of the manipulation itself. Within the whole play of contradictions and ambiguities, the emergence of the popular masses in this transitional society prepares the way for the masses to become acutely aware of their dependent status.

The increasingly critical consciousness of these progressive groups, arising from the naïve transitivity of the emerging masses, becomes a challenge to the consciousness of the power elite. Societies which find themselves in this historical phase, which cannot be clearly under-

stood outside the critical comprehension of the totality of which they are a part, live in a climate of pre-revolution, the dialectical contradiction of which is the coup d'état.

C. Reactionary Consciousness: In many societies, especially in Latin America, the coup d'état has become the response of the economic and power elite to the crises of popular emergence. This response varies with the relative strength and influence of the military. Depending upon the degree of its violence and subsequent repression of the people, the coup d'état reactivates older patterns of behavior in the people, patterns which were characteristic of their former state of quasi-immersion. For instance, the culture of silence is reactivated (cf. Culture of Silence, pp.45-46). Only this reactivation can explain the passivity of the people when faced with the violence and arbitrary rule of military coups.

These societies in transition are faced with two contradictory possibilities: revolution or coup d'état. In regard to the latter, the stronger its ideological foundation, the more impossible it is for a society to later return to the same political style which created the very conditions that caused the coup. The coup d'état qualitatively alters the process of a society's historical transition, and marks the beginning of a new transition. In the original transitional stage, the coup was the antithetical alternative to revolution; in the new transitional stage, the coup is defined and confirmed as an arbitrary power used against the common people. Its tendency in the face of the continuing possibility of a revolution is to become more and more rigid (Freire, 1972a:69-70; 1973a:101).

III. Critical Consciousness

Critical or critical-transitive consciousness, the third and final stage in the process of true conscientization, is achieved through active and dialogical education, oriented firmly to political and social responsibility. It is characterized by a profundity in the interpretation of problems; by the replacement of magical explanations for social events by socially causal principles; by the willingness to acknowledge situations and their structural causes and the readiness to help change those causes; by the effort to judge without prejudice when analyzing problems, attempting to avoid exaggerations and distortions of truth; by refusing to falsify responsibility through transference; by refusing to accept a socially quietist position; by confidence in argumentation; by the practice of dialogue instead of polemics; by openness to the new, not merely because it is new nor the acceptance of the old only because it is old, but the eclectic acceptance of both according to their worth (Freire, 1973a:54-55.)

This transitive critical position goes back to the roots of true democracy. Critical transitivity, therefore, is characteristic of authentic democratic regimes, and reflects a way of life which is keenly perceptive and questioning, one that is dialogical. It stands in contrast with a way of life which is mute, quiet, and mildly discursive. It is opposed to a life which is rigid and militarily authoritarian.

The word "critical" is used deliberately by Freire, for with its use, he implies that men understand their own positions within a larger context of society. It implies that a man has analytically absorbed social reality and gained

an ability to objectively reflect upon it (Freire, 1973a:55; 101).

It is important to note that this step, that is, the passage from naïve to critical consciousness, does not happen automatically, but only by being educated to awareness (Freire, 1973a:56). Conscientization is not something stable or well defined. Rather, conscientization is a process, a program (Freire, 1972a:75). Conscientization is a joint project in that it takes place in a man among other men, men united by their actions and by their deep reflections upon that action and upon the world (cf. Praxis, Chapter III). It is in this way that men together achieve the state of perceptive clarity.

Freire asserts that there must be a political dimension to the process of conscientization. A man who experiences the process of liberation, or discovers his liberated consciousness (the psychological level of conscientization), can continue the process only to the extent that he involves himself, commits himself, to social change (Freire, 1970:11). And more: men cannot liberate another man, nor can they liberate themselves alone. Men can only liberate themselves together, responding as a unit to the reality which they must transform. So, the process of liberation is not a gift which someone gives to the rest (Freire, 1970:12). Union with people, accessible only to those with a utopian vision (cf., Utopia, Chapter III), is one of the fundamental characteristics of the process of conscientization (Freire, 1972a:75).

Conscientization is more than a simple "prise de conscience." While it implies overcoming false consciousness, that is, overcoming an intransitive or naïve state of

consciousness, it further implies the critical insertion of the conscientized person into a demythologized reality. That is why conscientization is an attainable goal for the Right (cf. Right, Chapter III) (Freire, 1972a:75). There can be no conscientization of people without a radical denunciation of dehumanizing structures, accompanied by the proclamation of a new social reality to be created by men (cf. Utopia Chapter III) (Freire, 1972a:76).

Freire calls the process of educating people by conscientizing "Cultural Action for Freedom," or "The Theory of Revolutionary Action" (cf. Chapter IV). The characteristics of this process of cultural action for freedom are those of conscientization. As there is a cultural action for freedom, however, so there is a cultural action for domination. Cultural action for freedom is characterized by dialogue, and its preeminent purpose is to conscientize the people. Cultural action for domination is opposed to dialogue and serves to enslave people. The former analyzes problems for the sake of corrective action; the latter merely provides justifying slogans (Freire, 1972a:76; 1971a:57-74). Since cultural action for freedom is committed to the scientific unveiling of social structure, to the exposé, that is, of myths and false ideologies, it must clearly separate ideology from science.[3] Cultural action for freedom can be achieved neither by crediting a mystique to any ideology nor even with a simple moral denunciation of myths and errors. It is achieved only by undertaking a thoroughly rational and rigorous critique of ideology.

---

3   Ideology, in Freire's theory, is that doctrine or theory which is administratively preserved and transmitted. See Freire, 1972a:10.

The Practice of Conscientization

Critical consciousness is not brought about through intellectual effort only, but through praxis - through the authentic union of action and reflection (cf. Praxis Chapter III). Such reflective action is not to be denied the common people (Freire, 1972a:42).

After the liberating process is inaugurated, continuing conscientization is indispensable to critical consciousness. It remains the instrument for rejecting the cultural myths which people retain despite their new awareness of reality. Further, conscientization is a defense against threat, that of the possible mythification of technology required by the new society to transform its backward internal structures (Freire, 1972a:78-79.

Freire warns, however, that one should not attribute to conscientization any magical power which would only make it a myth itself. Conscientization is not a magic charm for revolutionaries, but a basic dimension of their reflective action. If men were not "conscious bodies," capable of acting and perceiving, of knowing and re-creating, if they were not conscious both of themselves and of the world, the idea of conscientization would not be reasonable (Freire, 1972a:81). Since men's consciousness is conditioned by existing reality, conscientization is, first of all, the effort to enlighten men about those obstacles which prevent them from transcending their perception of reality. In this role, conscientization affects the ejection of cultural myths which serve to confuse men's awareness and which makes them ambiguous beings (Freire, 1971a:112). The initial "prise de conscience" is not yet con-

scientization because conscientization results from the critical development of the "prise de conscience. Conscientization implies, then, that one must transcend the sphere of "instant apprehension" of reality to come to the sphere of critical apprehension in which reality is given as a known object, and in which man assumes an epistemological position, that is, a knowledge with reference to its validity and limitations. Conscientization is, in this sense, a test of living reality. To the extent that conscientization grows, reality "unveils" itself, so that one plunges into the phenomenological essence of the object in order to analyze this essence. For this same reason, conscientization does not consist of "being ahead of reality," that is, taking a falsely intellectual position. Conscientization cannot exist outside of praxis, that is, without the action-reflection process. This dialectical unity constitutes, in a permanent way, the mode necessary to transform the world that conforms to man's nature (Freire, 1972b:30).

For this reason, conscientization is an historical commitment. It is historical consciousness; it is a critical insertion into history. It assumes that men should play the role of subjects that build and rebuild the world. It requires that men create their own living with the material that life gives them. Conscientization is based upon the relation "consciousness-world."

The process of conscientization, to the extent that it is men's critical outlook within history, never ends. If men, as human beings acting in history, remain statically attached to an unchanging world, they will find themselves submerged in a new kind of confusion. Conscientization that presents itself as a process in a given time, should

continue to be such a process in the next moment during which the transformed reality changes form, as it constantly does (Freire, 1972b:31).

Conscientization implies taking possession of reality; for this reason and because of the utopian radicalization that enlivens it, it is a tearing apart of a given reality. It produces the de-mythologizing of realities and causes. Oppressors can never, merely by oppression, provoke a conscientization for liberation. Because they oppress, they try to mythologize reality. The humanizing work cannot be different from the work of demythologizing. For this reason, conscientization is the most critical look at reality, a look that "unveils" reality in order to know it better, and in order to recognize all the myths that deceive the masses while the elite try to maintain the present structure because they dominate.

Definitions of Conscientization as Perceived by Freire's Critics

In order to clarify the concept of conscientization, we will present some definitions and analyses of the concept as viewed by Freire's translators, critics, and students who have studied his works.

Thomas G. Sanders (in Freire, 1973a:14) provides this description of conscientization:

> It means an awakening of consciousness, a change of mentality that implies the understanding in a real and complete way of the place of someone in nature and in society; the capacity of critically analysing their causes and consequences and to establish comparisons with other situations and possibilities; and ef-

ficient and transforming action. Psychologically the process implies the consciousness of one's dignity: a praxis of liberty. The stimulus of the process of conscientization derives from an interpersonal dialogue, through which one discovers the meaning of the humane in establishing a communion through encounters with other human beings, but one of the almost inevitable consequences of conscientization is the political participation and the formation of groups of interest and pressure.

The translator of <u>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</u> gives this definition (Freire, 1971a:19):

The term conscientization refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contra-   dictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.

The editor of <u>Cultural Action for Freedom</u> definesconscientization this way (Freire, 1972a:51):

Conscientization refers to the process in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the sociocultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality.

Julio Barreiro (Freire, 1973a:14) defines the process of conscientization as,

the liberation of one's consciousness for later integration into a national reality as a subject of his own history and of the history of the world.

Gregory Smutko (1973:1 and 2) draws a descriptive analysis of the process of conscientization. He states that,

conscientization is a liberation process by which a person recognizes his own dignity and capacity to forge his own destiny and reform society. Conscientization leads one to a critical insertion into history, thereby transforming society with greater justice, liberty, love and unity.

In his description of conscientization, he says that its elements are the following: awareness, awakening of critical judgment, demythification, love, dialogue, prophecy, and commitment and action. Conscientization is an ongoing process.

PRAXIS

Another key concept in Freire's theory of change is Praxis. In many of his writings he says that "Conscientization is a Praxis; liberation is a Praxis" (Freire, 1971a:66). The definition Freire gives of praxis is always the same: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it (Freire, 1971a:36, 52, 66, 119-23).

In explaining the concept of praxis, Freire, in many passages of his writings, speaks about the dialectical relationship that this concept implies (Freire, 1970:8-12; 1971a:35-36; 75; 1972a:50-55). This is generally the first point he makes.

Freire asserts that praxis is the combination of apparent dichotomies, or the dialectic between action and reflection, world and consciousness, verbalism and activism, subjectivism (idealism) and objectivism, subjectivity and objectivity. There is praxis only when action and reflection work together. Freire (1971a:75) sometimes calls

this "work and word." He says that within the "word" we find two dimensions: reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed, even in part, the other immediately suffers. There is no true "word" that is not at the same time a praxis. Therefore, to speak a true "word" is to transform the world. When the dichotomy is imposed upon its constitutive elements we have an unauthentic word, unable to transform reality. When there is a sacrifice of action, we have mere verbalism; when the sacrifice is of reflection, we have mere activism.

Freire (1970:11) says that in order to understand what conscientization really is, it is necessary to avoid two kinds of mistakes. First, there is the mistake of idealism, also called subjectivism, in which consciousness would be the creator of the world, that is, of reality; that we create reality in our consciousness and that the consciousness itself creates that reality. The second mistake implies that objectivism is the most important contribution in creating and conditioning consciousness. According to Freire (1970:11) consciousness appears in the relationship between man and the world of reality. Nevertheless, it is only the appearance of reality because it is purely reflective.

Freire states explicitly that only when we understand the "dialecticity" between consciousness and the world – that is, when we know that we do not have a consciousness here and the world there, but on the contrary, when both of them, the objectivity and the subjectivity are "fleshed" together dialectically, is it possible to understand the meaning of conscientization. Reflection alone is not enough for the process of the liberation of men because we need action; in the same way, action by itself

cannot do it, precisely because man is not only action but reflection. What Freire (1971a:35) proposes is "subjectivity and objectivity in constant dialectical relation."

UTOPIA

In many places Freire asserts that the process of conscientization is utopian, that is, the pedagogy of conscientization is utopia-oriented. By utopia, Freire (1972a:11) means not something that is unattainable, but something in which are united in a single perspective both the denunciation of dehumanizing reality and the announcing of a hopefully more human one. Thus the process is directed primarily towards the future.

Denouncing and announcing in Freire's utopian theory are not meant to be empty words, but an historic commitment. Denunciation of a dehumanizing situation demands precise scientific understanding of that situation. Likewise, the annunciation of its transformation requires a well-conceived theory and plan for transforming action. However, neither the denunciation nor annunciation by itself implies the transformation of the denounced reality or the establishment of the new order which is announced. Rather, it is a phase in a historical process; the announced reality is already present in the act of denunciation and annunciation (Freire, 1972a:40).

Freire (1972a:72) summarizes the main characteristics of utopia in this fashion. Real utopia cannot:

(1) denounce present reality without thoroughly knowing it;

(2) proclaim a new reality without having a well-defined project which, although it emerges in the denunciation, becomes a viable project only when reduced to praxis;

(3) know reality without relying upon the observations and judgments of people as well as upon direct acquisition of facts as sources of its knowledge;

(4) denounce and announce without action;

(5) make new myths out of the very denunciation and annunciation. Denunciation and annunciation by themselves must be anti-ideological insofar as they result from a scientific study of reality (cf. Ideology Chapter III).

(6) put itself above common people, not only during the time between the dialectic of denouncing and announcing and the concretizing of a viable project, but also in the very act of giving that project its concrete reality.

In conclusion, Freire states:

> Revolutionary utopia tends to be dynamic rather than static; tends to life rather than death; to the future as a challenge to man's creativity rather than as a repetition of the present; to love as liberation of subjects rather than as pathological possessiveness; to the emotion of life rather than as cold abstractions; to living together in harmony rather than mere gregariousness; to dialogue rather than silence; to praxis rather than 'law and order;' to men who organize themselves reflectively for action rather than men who are organized for passivity; to creative and communicative language rather than empty verbosity; to reflective

challenges rather than enslaving slogans; and values which can be lived rather than to myths which are imposed.

OTHER CONCEPTS

Freire uses other concepts which are not as central as the foregoing to his theory of social change. But, the way that Freire uses them and the particular shades of meaning which he gives to them are sufficiently different from other usages as to warrant brief elaboration.

Culture of Silence

This mode of culture is an expression of something super- structural; an expression that describes a special form of consciousness. Freire refers to Althusser when he says that the Culture of Silence "overdetermines" (cf. Overdetermination ahead) the social infrastructure in which it originates (Freire, 1972a:57).

Culture of Silence is the culture of those who do not have a voice for themselves, who cannot say and present their opinions, and who cannot fulfill their wishes. They are completely dominated by oppressors.

The Culture of Silence is a relative concept. Understanding it is possible only if it is considered as part of a greater societal totality. In this greater whole we must also recognize the culture or cultures which determine the voice of the Culture of Silence. It does not emerge by spontaneous generation. The fact is that the Culture of Silence is born out of the relationship between the Third World and the Metropolis. It is not the dominator who

constructs a culture and imposes it upon the dominated. This culture is the result of the structured relations between the dominated and the dominators. Thus, understanding the Culture of Silence presupposes an analysis of dependence as a relational phenomenon which gives rise to different forms of being, of thinking, of expression: those of the Culture of Silence and those of the culture which have a voice (Freire, 1972a: 57-58).

Those who are dependent tend to be socially silent. Whatever voice they have in dependency is not an authentic one, but merely an echo of the voice of the metropolis; whenever the metropolis speaks, the dependent social order listens (Freire, 1967:3; 1972a: 59, 10, 25; 1972b:36, 68-78; 1971b :51-58).

Overdetermination

Freire borrows this concept from Althusser (1969:89-128). It means the impact of culture (made by man), through socialization upon man. Professional men, specialists of all kinds, whether university graduates or not, are men who have been "determined" from above by a culture of domination which has constituted them as dual beings: the natural man and the dominated or conditioned man (Freire, 1972a:9 1971a:156; 1972b:69).

Freire recognizes this dimension of conditioning imposed upon man. Its influence loses importance in inverse proportion to man's awareness of its influence and his stand against it. "Culture, as an interiorized product which in turn conditions men's subsequent acts, must become the object of men's knowledge" (Freire, 1972a:35).

Myth (also mythologize, demythologize)

Myth, in Freire's writings, is something which is in reality a relative thing but to which one attributes absolute value (1973a:42). To mythologize is to attribute characteristics and properties to concepts which "mystify" them. To demythologize is to "unveil" reality in a critical sense, unloading concepts of all properties falsely attributed to them. Magical consciousness is one full of myths. The process of conscientization involves the process of demythologizing reality (Freire, 1970:15-16; 1972b:32; 1972a: 35, 39, 63; 1973a:42, 102).

Right

Freire sees Right as in opposition to Utopia. Right, for Freire, represents the legalistic, juridical, and static mentality that asserts something must be the way it is because of law and tradition. There is some similarity between the concept "right" as employed by Freire and the "academic," or "priestly" sociology, as described by Gouldner (1970:23-24). At the same time, the "prophetic" sociology is related to Freire's concept of "Utopia." He says that Right makes neither proclamation nor denunciation, except for the denouncing of whomever denounces it and the proclaiming of its own myths (Freire, 1972a:72). The Right is necessarily opposed to all subjects in the challenging, yet precarious, task of transforming and recreating the world.

> The Right, in its rigidity, prefers the dead to the living; the static to the dynamic; the future as a mere repetition of the past rather than a creative venture; pathological

forms of love rather than real love; rigid systematization rather than the emotion of living; mere herding rather than authentic living together; organization men rather than men who organize; imposed myths rather than natural human values; directives rather than creative and communicative language; and empty slogans rather than real challenges (Freire, 1972a:72-73).

Humanism

Throughout his writings Freire often uses such terms as humanism, humanization, humanistic, "to be more human," etc. He discusses these terms in one of his books (1972c:58), and the definition he presents is the one employed by Furter (1966:165):

> Humanism is the possibility of a 'prise de conscience' of our full humanity, as a condition and obligation, as reality and project.

Freire's definition of oppression is a corollary: "An act is oppressive only when it prevents men from being more fully human" (Freire:1972a:10)

Ideology

"Ideology is a doctrine or theory which is preserved and transmitted administratively" (Freire, 1972a:10).

MAN

For Freire, man is a being with spatio-temporal roots. He exists and lives in the concrete, not in the abstract. Man is fundamentally a subject, not an object.

Man becomes subject through true reflection about his situation, his concrete environment. The more he reflects about reality the more he "emerges," fully conscious, committed, ready to act upon reality in order to transform it; in a word, he is conscientized.

To the extent that man is integrated with his surroundings, reflects upon them critically, and commits himself to work for the betterment of humanity, he builds up his own person and becomes a subject. Man creates culture to the extent that he integrates himself with the conditions of his life environment, reflects upon these conditions, and tries to answer the challenges these conditions present to him. Culture is the contribution which man makes to nature.

Through the relationships he establishes with others and the answers he gives to problems, man is not only the creator of culture but also the creator of history. To the extent that human beings create and freely make decisions, history is built and rebuilt (Freire, 1972b :37–42.)

IV
Freire's theory of social change

A growing number of sociologists are now asserting that sociology cannot be value-free. Since Gouldner (1971) and Friedrichs (1971), it has become clear that value-free sociology is a fiction, and that the assumption of neutrality often signifies support for existing institutions. Background or domain assumptions underlie every theory in the social sciences.

Similarly, in his writings Freire repeatedly reminds his reader that there is no such thing as a value-free literacy program, there is no culturally or politically-neutral education, and there is no value-free theory of revolutionary action (Freire, 1972a:22;1971a:15; 1970:7). Freire does not remain secret about his own commitment. At issue are divergent images of man, or more concretely, an already established image which its keepers are attempting to prescribe for others and a new image which is struggling to come into being. There is a struggling Cultural Action for Freedom which faces a Cultural Action for Domination (Freire, 1972a:51-83). One cannot remain neutral in the fact of this dilemma. As Coutinho (in Freire,1972a: 1) says: "The debate carries us to the very sources of our humanity,"

In all of his writings, Freire appears to be a committed author. In a meeting in Geneva (May, 1973) he said that one of the first naïvetés he overcame was his naïveté about the possibility of a "neutral method of education." His exile is concrete proof of his affirmation. One cannot separate reflection and action. Praxis implies commitment and values. Conviction about the impossibility of a neutral science affects the methods one employs. As Freire (1970:7) stated:

> ...I think it is very important to make clear the different forms of action...in order to make possible our true option or choice. If my choice is a liberating one, a humanizing one, it is necessary for me to be absolutely clear concerning the methods, the techniques, the processes, which I have to use... Generally, we think that we are working for men, and that is with men, for their liberation, their humanization; nevertheless we are using the same methods through which we prevent men from becoming free....So it is not only necessary to know that it is impossible to have neutrality of education, but it is absolutely necessary to define both these different and antagonistic actions.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FREIRE'S THEORY OF REVOLUTIONARY ACTION

Freire s theory is always dialectical. He is aware of the dialectic present in the social moments and realities he considers. With the presentation of his ideas, he brings to mind the existence of their antithesis. In explaining the Theory of Revolutionary Action, for example, at the same

time he analyzes the Theory of Oppressive Action. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* he denounces the pedagogy of the oppressors.

In considering social change, Freire delineates the dimensions of revolutionary and oppressive action as conceived by the oppressed and by oppressors. The following (on next page) represent their "theories" of oppression, respectively. They are schematized as follows (Freire, 1971a:130-131; 1971b:70):

"Theory" of Revolutionary Action
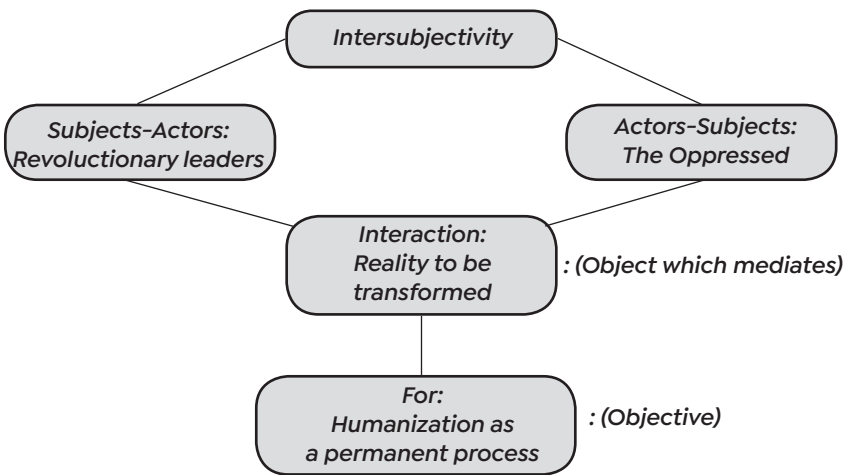
In the "Theory" of Revolutionary Action, actors (the oppressed and their leaders) intersubjectively direct their action toward an object (reality, which mediates them), the humanization of men (to be achieved by transforming that reality) being their objective. These actors see the

world as a seedbed of change with their human potential lying dormant within it. It is a conception of reality and personal human existence that is antithetical to those who oppress. It is a dialogical conception.
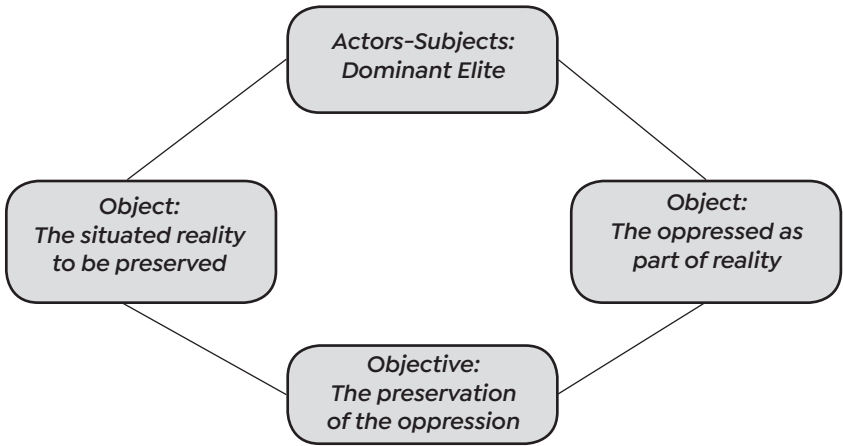
"Theory" of Oppressive Action

```
              ┌─────────────────┐
              │ Actors–Subjects:│
              │  Dominant Elite │
              └─────────────────┘
```

Object: The situated reality to be preserved	Object: The oppressed as part of reality

```
         ┌─────────────────┐
         │    Objective:   │
         │ The preservation│
         │  of the oppression│
         └─────────────────┘
```

In the "Theory" of Oppressive Action, actors have as simultaneous objects of their action both situation-reality and the oppressed people. Their considered objective is the preservation of the oppressed through the preservation of oppression. They see the world through a "theory" that conceives of social reality as a vertical entity which is antidialogical. The sustenance of a vertical social world depends on oppression.

Cooperation versus Conquest

In revolutionary action, subjects meet in cooperation in order to transform the world. From Buber (1958), Freire borrows the concepts of "*I*," "*Thou*," and "*It*." He says (Freire, 1971a:167):

> The antidialogical, dominating *I* transforms the dominated, conquered *Thou* into a mere *It*. The dialogical *I*, however, knows that it is precisely the *Thou* (not-*I*) which has called forth his own existence. He also knows that the *Thou* which calls forth his own existence in turn constitutes an *I* which has in his *I* its *Thou*. The *I* and the *Thou* thus become two *I*'s.

Cooperation, which occurs only among people considering themselves as subjects, can only be achieved through communication. Dialogue, as an essential form of communication, must underlie all cognitive effort.

Conquest, on the other hand, is the imposition of the oppressor's stamp on the vanquished. The latter internalize this image so that their self-image is that of ambiguous beings "housing" another person. It is necessary for oppressors to approach the people by means of subjugation, in order to keep them passive. Memmi (1967:81) refers to the image the colonizer constructs of the colonized:

> By his accusation the colonizer established the colonized as being lazy. He decides that laziness is constitutional in the very nature of the colonized.

We will develop this point later when we discuss the relationship between Symbolic Interactionism and Freire's theory (see pp.58–61).

Unity versus Divide-and-Rule

From a dialogical conception of the social world, there should be an untiring effort for unity among the oppressed themselves, and unity of the leaders with the oppressed, in order to achieve liberation. Since the unity of the oppressed involves solidarity among themselves, regardless of their particular social status, this unity unquestionably requires "class consciousness." Freire mentions, but does not explain further, that the submersion in reality means that consciousness of being an oppressed class must be preceded by, or at least accompanied by, achieving consciousness of being oppressed individuals.

On the contrary, as the oppressor minority subordinates and dominates the majority, it must divide it and keep it divided in order to remain in power. The oppressors halt by any method (including violence) any action which even in an incipient fashion, could awaken the oppressed to a need for unity. Concepts such as "unity," organization," and "struggle" are immediately labeled as dangerous. All- the actions of the dominant class show its need to divide in order to facilitate the preservation of its position: interference in unions, promotion and co-optation of individuals who reveal leadership capacity and could signify a threat if they were not "softened up," use of black lists, etc. It is, moreover, essential for oppressors to keep the oppressed from perceiving these as the tactics of an overall strategy of oppression. Rather, oppressors define their actions as reprisals for anti-social acts.

Organization versus Manipulation

Organization is not only directly linked to unity, but is a natural development of that unity. Accordingly, revolutionary leaders' pursuit of unity is necessarily an attempt to organize the people. For revolutionary leaders, organization means organizing themselves <u>with</u> the people. Organization constitutes the disciplined practice of freedom. Organization requires guidance, so it cannot be authoritarian; it requires true freedom, so it cannot be an excuse for license. Organization is an educational process in which leaders and people together experience true "authority" and freedom, which they seek to establish in society by transforming the reality which mediates them.

By means of manipulation, on the other hand, the dominant elite tries to force the masses to conform to their objectives. People are manipulated by a series of myths created in order to keep them suppressed. The most sophisticated myth is the model of upward mobility which the bourgeoisie presents to the people. This perpetuates the belief that the only road to success is the imitation of bourgeois behavior and the acceptance of their values.

Cultural Synthesis versus Cultural Invasion

Cultural action either serves domination (consciously or unconsciously) or it serves the liberation of men. As these dialectically opposed types of cultural action operate in and upon the social structure, they create dialectical relations of both permanence and change.

Antidialogical action can accept reforms which do not affect the power of decision over the oppressed. Hence, this modality of action involves the conquest of people, their division, manipulation, and cultural invasion. It is necessarily and fundamentally an induced action. Dialogical action, however, is characterized by the supercedence of any induced action. The incapacity of antidialogical cultural action to supercede its induced character results from its objective: domination. The capacity of dialogical cultural action to do this lies in its objective: liberation.

In cultural synthesis, actors who come from "another world" to the world of the people, do so not as invaders. They become integrated with the people, together becoming co-authors of the action they both perform upon the world. Cultural action, as historical action, is an instrument for superceding the dominant, alienated, and alienating culture. In this sense, every authentic revolution is a cultural revolution.

The situation is very much different in cultural invasion. Here, oppressors penetrate the cultural context of another group, with total disregard for the latter's potentialities. They impose their own views upon those they invade and inhibit their creativity by curbing freedom of expression. Cultural conquest leads to a cultural inauthenticity among those who are invaded. The conquered begin to respond to the values, the standards, and the goals of the invaders. It is essential to oppressors that those who are invaded come to see reality with the outlook of the invaders rather than their own. It is essential also that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FREIRE's THEORY AND THREE PARALLEL MODES OF SOCIAL THINKING

The most important intellectual influences on Freire's thinking are, according to his own testimony (1971a:11): Sartre, Mounier, Eric Fromm, Louis Althusser, Ortega y Gasset, Mao, Martin Luther King, Che Guevara, Unamuno, and Marcuse. Others, whose ideas have affinities with some of Freire's thinking are Marx, Hegel, Husserl, Mead, Blumer, Lichtman, and Szasz. Freire does not explicitly name the latter as being influential in his thinking. Rather than comparing the ideas of each of these social theorists with those of Freire, we will consider the parallels between Freire's ideas and three academic perspectives on social order: Symbolic Interactionism, Conflict Theory, and Phenomenology.

Symbolic Interactionism and Freire

Symbolic Interactionism is an approach to social life that is built around the following propositions:

(a) Individuals, living together in society, are viewed as reflective and interacting beings possessing selves.
(b) Men's selves grow out of their communications in interaction.
(c) The individual and society are inseparable, interdependent units.
(d) Knowledge of the individual's own interpretation of situational characteristics is indispensable for understanding his behavior (Meltzer and Petras, in Manis and Meltzer, 1972:43-45).

Mead (Meltzer, in Manis and Meltzer, 1972:17-18) is the pioneer representative of Symbolic Interactionism. The main points of his theory are that the human individual is born into a society characterized by symbolic interaction. The use of significant symbols by those around him enables him to pass from the conversation of gestures--which involves direct, non-meaningful responses to the overt acts of others-- to the occasional taking of the roles of others. This role-taking enables him to share the perspectives of others. Concurrent with role-taking, the self develops, i.e., the capacity of acting toward oneself. Action toward oneself gradually takes the form of viewing from the standpoint, or perspective, of the generalized other (the composite representative of other, of society, within the individual), which implies that one defines his behavior in terms of the expectations of others.

Since Mead, Symbolic Interactionism has taken two different directions, called generally the Chicago and the Iowa Schools. Blumer and the Chicago School developed a processual image of human conduct, repudiating the structuralist image of the Iowa School.[4] Blumer refers to the self as a process of interaction between the I and Me and not merely a summation of the two aspects nor an organization of attitudes. Action is considered to be built up, or constructed, in the course of its execution, rather than "merely being released from a preexisting psychological structure by factors playing on the structure" (Blumer, 1966:536).

---

4   Kuhn (the Iowa School) describes both the self and human interaction as structures. The organized set of self-attitudes serves as a system of preestablished plans of action. Human associations take the form of fairly stable, ready-made patterns of role and counter-role prescriptions (Meltzer and Petras, in Manis and Meltzer, 1972:53).

When Freire says that education is a process of helping people think clearly, critically, and imaginatively, and not limiting students to role-learners, not only training students for specific roles, but helping them gain some understanding of the meaning of their lives, Freire is thinking in Symbolic Interactionist terms. Freire stresses the importance of dialogue, through which men can unveil new realities for themselves. By dialogue, conscientization occurs and meaning is given to everyday situations.

Perhaps the most significant similarity appears when Freire explains how oppressed people interiorize the images of their oppressors, and act in accord with them:

> The relationship between dominated and dominator... implies the introjection by the dominated of the cultural myths of the dominator (Freire, 1971a:59).

This concept of the interiorized self appears also in the larger social context that exist between societies:

> Similarly, the dependent society introjects the values and life style of the metropolitan society, since the structure of the latter shapes that of the former (Freire, 1971a:59).

The description which Freire gives of the self characteristics of oppression call to mind Garfinkel's (1956:420-424) discussion of the conditions and process of what he called "Degradation Ceremonies." Freire (1971a:49) says:

> Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their interiorization of the opinion held of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything-- that they are sick lazy, and un-

productive--that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness.

Oppressors deal with people in such a way as to keep them passive. This does not involve bein with people, and does not require true communication. It is accomplished by sowing myths indispensable to the preservation of the status quo. A whole set of myths are internalized and are acted upon as if they were true. There is a high degree of similarity between how oppressors construct a special "Weltanschauung" for the oppressed and how some ideologies define "insanity" for their own purposes (Szasz:1970). In both cases, the aim is the manipulation of men (Freire, 1971a:50).

Conflict Theory and Freire

Although Freire's theory has affinities with some Symbolic Interactionist notions, it is by no means, distinctly a Symbolic Interactionist theory of change. Marxist thinking and Conflict Theory have strongly influenced Freire's thoughts.

Lichtman (1970:75-94) asserts that Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, Blumer) and Phenomenology (Husserl, Berger and Luckmann, Seeley, Winch) lack an awareness of historical concreteness, are naïve in

their account of mutual typification, and ultimately abandon the sense of human beings in struggle with an alien reality which they master but to which they are subordinate. Explaining these points, Lichtman (1970:77) states that

> ...human action can be understood neither independently of the meaning which the actor gives it, nor simply identified with his own interpretation. Recognition of the false consciousness of the actor is necessary to comprehend the nature of his acts. Activity has an objective structure which is often productive, free and equal when the opposite is the case.

In Freire's terms, we would say that these human beings may be acting in a semi-intransitive, or in a transitive-naïve consciousness.

Going further, Lichtman (1970:79) explains that there is a fatal lack of substantive class analysis in the writings of Mead, Husserl, and Schutz. This myopia prevents them from seeking the critical self-awareness they themselves appear to advocate. They forget that:

> ...the channelling of interpreted meaning is class-structured. It is formed through lived engagement in the predominant class-controlled institutions of the society.

Lichtman adds:

> Do the exploited and the exploiter play each other's roles?

Freire, in his pedagogy, uses a dialogue similar to the Socratic Method to awaken the consciousness of the individual to cultural and class realities (Rivera, in Grabowski, 1972:57). Freire contends that class needs are not sufficient for the emergence of a critical consciousness. There is an essential necessity of class analysis and class consciousness.

Conflict theory is a constant background in Freire's thinking. He assumes a dialectical image of man; an al-

ready established image which its keepers are attempting to prescribe for others which is the seedbed of new images which are struggling to be. As Coutinho (in Freire, 1972a:8) mentions, the thought of Paulo Freire finds its link with what has been described as "the making of a counter-culture." Freire considers his man "as men oppressed within the system" (Freire,1972a :29). Lloyd, with Dahrendorf's (1973) conflict-consensus dichotomy in mind, says (in Grabowski, 1972:131):

> Conscientization presupposes a conflict model of society: most American adult education presupposes a consensus model...I may want to try to demonstrate the usefulness of a conflict model--and therefore conscientization--if social change rather than individual enrichment is the goal of adult education.

In a recent meeting in Geneva (May, 1973) Freire stated that he was convinced of the absolute necessity of class analysis and class consciousness to bring about social changes. He said that the acceptance of this approach was an overcoming of one more of his naïvetés.

Phenomenology and Freire

Freire's technique of generating social awareness among oppressed people is constituted by what he calls "codification" and "decodifiction" processes. Codification refers to the image-making, or the image itself of some significant aspect of the learner's concrete reality (a slum dwelling, for example). As such, it becomes both the object of teacher-learner dialogue and the context for the introduction of "the generative word" (See Chapter V)

(Freire, 1972a: 32-34). Decodification refers to a process of description and interpretation, whether of printed words, or pictures of other codifications. As such, decodification and decodifying are distinct from the process of decoding, or word-recognition. The aim of decodification is to arrive at a critical level of knowing, beginning with the learner's experiences of his situation in the world of real everyday living.

To Freire, men are conscious beings not only in the world, but *with* the world, together with other men, transforming, grasping, and expressing the world's reality in their own creative language (Freire, 1972a:51). Freire's pedagogy focuses on problems which are painfully real to his subjects. As Freire would say, the educator should grasp the illiterate's point of view, his situation, and his world. Spiegelberg (in Strauss, 1964:105-127) speaks in a similar way when he says that "the investigator should imagine himself as occupying the real place of the other..." Or that "to explore the other's world it is necessarily a prolonged and extended dialogue involving the sympathetic probing."

Freire refers many times to the Gospel's concept of Easter when he explains the role of leaders in the process of conscientization. He affirms that the true leader should make his "Easter," that is, die in order to resurrect as identified with students or with the people (1971a:127; 1973b:2). Freire's leader is always a group participant. He becomes a member of the group and performs a role within it, identifies with the group, and assumes the attitude which Strauss (1964:118) attributes to the phenomenological method. This consists "in the actual conversion

of the phenomenologist into the other or at least in his adoption of the other's frame of mind."

Although Freire thinks to some degree in Symbolic Interactionist terms, his actor is, however, always a subject, (the phenomenological "I"). Freire's critical individual is a role-maker rather than a role-player or role-taker. But Freire adds a new dimension in his social individual to the extent that he is conceived as growing in critical and political consciousness: the dimension of class-analysis and class-consciousness. It seems that Freire would agree with Lichtman in that both consider a Marxist perspective as necessary in Symbolic Interactionism and phenomenology.

THE UNIQUENESS OF FREIRE'S THEORY OF CHANGE

We have noted some of the affinities between Freire's theory of change and three other sociological perspectives. Freire's theory has elements of Symbolic Interactionism, Phenomenology, and Conflict Theory. His theory is also unique, however.

Berger and Luckman (1967:147) affirm that changes in self result from a process of "re-socialization." Carl R. Rogers (1969:303f) would state that this process is a result of self-direction." Change, for him means an increased sense of personal authority, self-direction, and cooperative ability. Dollard and Miller (1950:61f), in a more behavioristic fashion, attribute change in the individual to the "re-learning of drives." David McClelland (1971:43) says that change is due to a reorganization of "affectively toned

associative networks." Erik Erikson (1968:16) states that change is due to "identity crises." Now, what causes the redefinition of the self in society, according to Freire?

Some authors, such as Rivera (in Grabowski, 1972:56) call Freire's thinking a theory of "reemergence" (Freire, 1972a:29) or "re-birth." According to Dunn (1971:212-13), Freire's method is a kind of "paradigm shifting." It is a re-definition of total systems boundaries,, It is a re-creation of its "self-images," a remaking of its own boundaries. Individuals, as opposed to machines, are capable of paradigm shifting, or in Freire's terms, "to be conscientized."

Freire deliberately sets out to bring about "self-perpetual changes." His innovative approach and Christian-Marxist objectives are what differentiate him from other outstanding theorists of change who work to bring about psycho-sociological changes.

Freire may be distinguished from "change agents" in that the latter primarily promote changes in person's habits through the transfer of knowledge and skills concerning new techniques. Change agents minds, but they start with "things" or "events" first. Freire, on the other hand, begins with the conscious mind and provokes new self- perceptions and attitudes that then influence behavior. Freire begins with the person. Some programs for change congregate persons for achievement motivation, sensitivity training, or psychotherapy. Freire, on the contrary, strives for political action and cultural awareness. His subject matter is, at once, both the self and the self's environment.

There are programs today that seek to enhance social adjustment or economic advancement, including psychomotor, conditioning, vocational and other physical

skill improvement programs implemented within and for the maintenance of social stability. These programs assist the advance of technological change and are usually not concerned with socio-political change. Freire's program, on the other hand, advocates and pursues the implanting of cultural identity and the cultivation of socio-political change. This cultural identity and change entail a more radical redefinition of self in society than do so-called "adjustment" programs. This redefinition is variously referred to in Freire's books as "rebirth," "liberation," "conversion," "mindshift," "alternation," and "re-emergence" (Freire, 1972a:29, 16; 1971a:33). This mind-shift is not non-rational, such as a religious experience. It is rational, in that it involves a political or cultural consciousness of self in society.

Freire's aim is to demythologize and revolutionize the individual's reflection and action in the world by generating a critical consciousness of the facts regarding ownership, labor, and the individual's class background. Such transformation can only occur by way of a transformation of the individual. Consequently he must first concern himself with getting the individual to connect the names of things and processes with personal reality. Thus, according to Freire, teaching men to read and write no longer is an inconsequential matter of memorizing an alienated word, but a different apprenticeship in "naming" the world. Not an irrational or religious conversion, but a rational, conscious mind-shift is what Freire seeks to provoke. By elimination of an individual's "reality-gap," Freire hopes to spur him to greater and more culturally meaningful intentionality in his life (Freire, 1972a:28 fl; 1971a: 8 fl; 76 fl).

Freire's purpose is not achievement-motivation pro-

grams to accelerate production (McClelland, 1971:43) nor to help people learn to cope with life and adjust to the social norms as some therapy programs propose. Freire denounces the man oppressed by values, attitudes, and goals that are not of his own making nor in agreement necessarily with his place a property in society. His approach to social change announces the re-birth and liberation of a fully human situation.

It is obvious that the major redirections that take place as a result of the change-experience certainly affect society. Those who experience adjusted or revitalized drives tend to look within the status quo for their self-actualization and, thereby, contribute to the existing political and economic structure while promoting the functional maintenance of social norms. On the other hand, those who become aware of injustices, oppression, or indignity in their lives tend to strive to change the existing political, economic, and social structure.

The import of Paulo Freire, as London (in Grabowski, 1972:27) says, is that

> ...he seeks to develop an educational theory which operates upon a theory of radical social change through the medium of an imaginative literacy program devoted to the raising of the level of consciousness of the oppressed and disadvantaged.

Essentially, for Freire, individuals need to conceive of themselves anew, be reborn. It is a perpetual self-renewing. In a meeting in Syracuse, Freire suggested that he also was in need of re-birth because he still harbored middle-class values (Rivera, in Grabowski, 1972:61). This is the "man" within his own theory.

V
Freire's technique of conscientization

In a recent session of an Adult Teaching Credential course at UCLA, a member of the class reported that he was an ex-priest and had worked as an adult educator with Paulo Freire in South America. He described Freire's approach to adult education, by which the adult educator assists persons to make transition from a state of oppression, through conscientization, to a state of increased personal freedom (in Grabowski, 1972:1-2):

> Freire would go to a village and enter into conversation with people. He would have them help him to observe the village life. He would have them help him take pictures of scenes of the villagers. The villagers would then come together to see the pictures. Freire would ask them to describe what they saw in detail, writing words under the pictures as they reflected on what they were seeing and feeling.

> ...Then Freire would question the villagers about the contradictions in the explanations which they were giving about why things were the way they were. For example, in one village, the people described the harvest as being very poor. Freire asked them "Why?" Some of the villagers said: "Because the land is tired."

Freire then asked them why some of land seemed tired. They explained that the rich farmers had fertilizer and they didn't. Freire then asked them how that was the case. The questions and answers continued, leading to issues related to their life situation. The topics discussed ranged from those which were primarily theological, political, or economic in nature to those which were basically philosophical in nature.

Frequently, villagers gave fatalistic [magical consciousness] answers. Freire would always come back to the contradictions which the people themselves had exposed. The people then began, as a result of this process, to think for themselves and to become aware of alternative ways of viewing and coping with what has seemed to be insurmountable problems for themselves and their communities.

In the process, people learned to read, to care, and to have a sense of worth. Freire called what happened to them conscientization.

This ex-priest's description seems to capture the essence of the approach to adult education for the oppressed described by Freire in his writings.

Conscientization goes to the concrete man, who is oftentimes illiterate. It attempts to capture his "Weltanschauung," his world view. It is a way of helping persons to fulfill their ontological vocation, to engage in the construction of society and be oriented to social change, and to substitute magical with a more critical consciousness.

For the illiterate man, Freire saw as indispensable an awareness of some fundamental conditions in order to execute his transformation. There are:

(1) The existence of two worlds: the world of nature and the world of culture.

(2) The active role of man in the transformation of reality from within.

(3) The role of mediator that nature plays in the relationships and communication among men.

(4) The culture as a result of man's work and man's creative and re-creative effort.

(5) The culture as a systematic acquiring of human experience.

(6) The culture as incorporation - critical and creative - and not as mere external accretions of existing knowledge and formulas.

(7) The democratization of culture as dimension of the fundamental process of democratization.

(8) The learning of reading and writing as keys by which the illiterate begin their introduction into the world of written communication.

(9) The role of man, which is a role of subject and not of object only (Freire,1972b:56-57).

TRAINING EDUCATORS

In training sessions for educators, the explanation and discussion of the foregoing conditions take about two weeks, but may continue during the whole course. With this as background, the basic components of Freire's literacy method are the following (Goulet, in Freire, 1973c:VII):

(1) Participant observation of educators "tuning in" to the vocabular universe of the people.

(2) Their arduous search for generative words at two levels: syllabic richness and a high charge of experiential involvement.

(3) A first codification of these words into visual images which eventually will be used by educators to stimulate people "submerged" in the culture of silence to "emerge" as conscious makers of their own "culture."

(4) The decodification of language by a "culture circle" under the self-effacing stimulus of a coordinator who is not a "teacher" in the conventional sense, but who has become an educator-educated.

(5) A creative new codification, this one explicitly critical and aimed at action, wherein those who were formerly illiterate now begin to reject their role as mere "objects" in nature and social history and undertake to become "subjects" of their own destiny.

Due to the conventional connotations attached to some concepts, Freire eschews the use of traditional words related to education. So, instead of "school" he calls the unit of education "culture circle;" instead of "teacher" he uses "coordinator;" instead of "lecture" he uses "dialogue;" instead of "student" he uses the word "group participant" (Freire, 1973a:98).

Freire's method begins with the people, dialogue with the people, in order to gain knowledge of their world. There are different ways to "tune in" to the reality of the people, and to discover "generative words", representative of "generative themes." Generative words are chosen due to their usefulness either in creating new words through the decodification of their syllables and as representative of emotional and ideological themes leading to discussion in the culture circle. The most common way to

"tune in" is the participant observation of coordinators in the lives of the people for a period of time and their subsequent meetings where they specify and choose generative words. Freire himself is continually improving his method. When a group of people working in Cuernavaca with Freire's method presented and explained to him a new experience, Freire (1970:13) said:

> ...they had made at least one thing differently to me, and I think that it is better than mine. I said in my works, in my articles and books, that in the process of literacy, if your choice is a liberating and humanizing one, we cannot start from our words, the generative words, but, on the contrary, we have to make a research with the people in order to get their words [cf.Cicourel, 1964].

> You have to start from the words of the people and not from your words - but they made something very, very good. Instead of making a search in order to discover the words of the people before a process of literacy, they started the process without the investigation! Now, how? They proposed to the team of illiterates some pictures, and I used also these pictures, in order to discuss precisely the relationships between culture and nature etc., the action of men on reality, transforming reality, creating the world of men, which is the world of culture and history etc. And, through the discussion of the first picture, which they taped, they took the first word. That is, in discussing the first picture, which concerned the relationships between men and reality, they took the first generative word from the people. And the second day they discuss the first generative word without knowing the second. In the discussion of the first generative word, they captured the second word and so on.

EDUCATING THE ILLITERATES

Generative words, in a syllabic language like Portuguese or Spanish, are those which make possible, through the varied combinations of their syllables, the creation of other words. But this is only the external and material aspect of the word. Beginning with a key-word, full of ideological content and phonetic meaning, representative of a crucial reality for the people, Freire tries to present to illiterates a "thematic universe" (Freire, 1971a:86-87). Parallel to the discovery of a generative word goes the discovery of generative themes and the creation of a "thematic universe" through the process of codification and decodification. For example, the word "favela" [codified] (slum) consists of three syllables: fa-ve-la. From these syllables we can make [decoding] many other words: fa-la (speaking); fé (faith); fada (fairy); etc. The person, through the analysis of the syllabic content of the word explores (decodifies) the content and reality underlying the word. In the "culture circle," educators and learners, by means of the codified objective slum reality, engage in dialogue about the causes of slum reality. The deeper this act of knowing goes, the more of his reality the learner unveils. This cognitive operation enables the learners to transform their interpretation of reality from a simple collection of disparate thoughts to more critical knowledge.

The discussion group is a specialized environment where facts found in the concrete context, the slum, are submitted to critical analysis. The codification, representing those facts, are known objects. Decodification, or breaking down the codified reality and putting it together again (retotalizing it), is the process by which illiterate

subjects seek insight. The dialogical relationship is indispensable for this (Freire, 1972a:85-86).

The entire process is constituted by the problematization of a oppressed situation, i.e., the coding and decoding of this situation. This problematizing employs generative words chosen by specialized educators preliminary to working with illiterates, or sometimes chosen after a discussion with the illiterate as the team did at Cuernavaca. The coding of an existential situation is the short-hand verbal representation of that situation, showing some of its constituent elements. Decoding is the critical analysis of the coded situation (Freire, 1971a: 96).

Chapter II of Freire's most important book, *Pedagogy of theOppressed* (1971a:57-74), is concerned with the importance of problematization. There Freire presents the main distinctions between what he calls "banking" education, on the one hand-education that transforms the student into a storehouse full of patent knowledge and formulas, and "problem-posing" education, on the other. Banking education transforms the person by making him able to use the language associated with certain knowledge and ideas. Problem-posing education provides a language by which to *consider* existing knowledge and ideas (Freire, 1971a:67).

Freire's method appears simple, but it goes to the roots of social living, i.e., it requires the student to consider how he considers phenomena. When carried out within a methodology of conscientization, the methods of codification, problematization, and decodification bring men to a full understanding of their destiny, their role in history, their dignity, and the possibilities of the unending fulfillment of their humanization.

VI
The influence of Freire's theory

It would not be an exaggeration to say, quoting Goulet (in Freire, 1973c:VII) that Freire has the whole world as his classroom "notwithstanding the totally Brazilian flavor of his emotion, his language, and his universe of thought." The worldwide impact of Freire's ideas is evidenced through reports from many countries on the use of his method. Freire's method is employed in Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica (Smutko, 1973:1); in Panama, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia (MacEoin, 1971:35: 44-46); in Uruguay, Paraguay, Germany, France, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Belgium (Grabowski, 1972:133-136); in Canada (Grabowski, 1972:111, 114); in South Africa (Grabowski, 1972:124-125); El Salvador (Grabowski, 1972:117); and Tanzania (Grabowski, 1972:105). I personally visited many groups working with Freire's method in Switzerland, England, France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal; and I talked with people working with Freire's method in Yugoslavia, Holland, and Sweden. In the United States there are many colleges and universities with courses about Paulo Freire, his method, and his theory.

The applicability of Freire's method and theory is not always the same. In some places his acceptance is easy and immediate. In other places, it is used only in a clandestine way. Sometimes his theory is accepted, but its

activation is violently suppressed. We will describe some of the ways in which Freire has influenced the growth of consciousness in various countries.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPACT ON ILLITERATES

The greatest influence, of course, has been in Brazil. As Weffort (in Grabowski, 1972:127) says, the Popular Education Movement in Brazil was the fullest attempt ever made to democratize culture. The experiment was completely successful as a test: tens of thousands of workers learned to read and write in a few months; several thousand young people and students became skilled coordinators of the method.

After Brazil, Freire moved to Chile, and there his method was supported by government agencies, the only place in the world that happened. A number of concrete, if limited, changes brought about by the application of the method are presented in a book by MacEoin (1971), the most dramatic of which is the militant organization of slum dwellers and squatters in Santiago. There is a documentary movie about the seizure of power by landless workers in Chile (Anon., "Latin America: power and poverty," 1973:596). It is the story of 1,700 families who squatted on unused Church land and thereby forced the government to provide them with their own "Campamento" or settlement - a new suburb of Santiago. The point of the film is the discovery of power, in community, among the poor and disenfranchised masses. It is one example of how the ideals of self-government, working-class consciousness, and equality are being used in a communi-

ty to build up a sense of dignity and destiny among the poor. Perhaps this is the best example of the application of Freire's Theory of Action.

The effectiveness of the technique is widely recognized and is confirmed by its rapid adoption throughout Latin America. Ivan Illich of the Cuernavaca Institute, and one of today's most illustrious educators, (Illich calls Freire "his master and his teacher" - Grabowski, 1972:108) asserts that Paulo Freire proved in Brazil that

> about 15 percent of the illiterate adult population of any village can be taught to read and write in six weeks, and at a cost comparable to a fraction of one school year for a child. An additional 15 percent can learn the same but more slowly (Illich, 1971:146).

Illich believes that those who succeed are the ones with a political potential, and that they become involved because they recognize that literacy is a tool to facilitate greater political participation, Illich says (in MacEoin, 1971:21):

> I will never forget an evening with Freire's pupils, hungry peasants in Sergipe, in early 1964„ One man got up, struggled for words and finally put into one utterance the argument I want to make...:'I could not sleep last night...because last evening I wrote my name...and I understood that I am I... this means that we are responsible.'

Freire's method also is employed in Cuba. Ham (1973:1) states that if it is true that in Cuba there is no necessity for preparing the people for a revolution, at least the coming of a revolution, it is certainly true that Freire's method is

necessary to make the people more and more conscious of the existing revolution. Revolution is not only the inspiration of a group of leaders, but the people must realize its meaning and give to revolution its dynamics and its radicalism. Freire's method is used in factories when proposed changes of national or regional laws are submitted to the workers for preliminary discussions. It is also employed in the teachings of Protestant churches and in the Sunday Schools.

But Freire's work may be applied in other circumstances too. It is too deeply rooted in critical theory to be limited to Latin American situations. For example, the basic framework and methodology are open to adaptation to the urban United States. The fact that it offers to people a chance to become aware of the structuring of their lives, to recognize socially and historically unnecessary modes of authority, exploitation, alienation, and repression, and thus to act in a liberating way are too great to leave his method untried. Many have suggested (Hyland, 1971:23-24) that a conscientization program would be valuable for labor unions to experience. Rank-and-file movements within the unions would probably be the only hope, since established unions, with few possible exceptions, are as manipulative of their members and as desirous of their "semi-intransitive" state of consciousness as are corporations.

Illich's criticisms of educational institutions which forms the background for his proposals for de-schooling society point the way toward a "conscientizing" educational program. School, the great socializer for a consumer society, the ritualizer of progress, is nevertheless a possible

site for a certain degree of "problem-posing" education. We know (Hyland, 1971:24) that already the Board of Education of New York City has a committee working on the use of Freire's techniques in bi-lingual programs. But such sponsorship if not divested of the traditional structural implications of the system could only produce a diluted version of this program, ultimately diverting or negating its real impact. Organizations of radical teachers, working individually, grounded in its basic philosophy and social analysis, would come closer to realizing its goals. The best situation for the realization of Freire's approach would be the political education of community controlled organizations, such as day care centers, free clinics, alternative schools, food co-ops, ecology groups, welfare rights groups, tenant associations, and student organizations.

INFLUENCE IN SOCIAL CHANGE

Freire's movement represents a very important contribution to the understanding of social change in Latin America, as Sanders (1970:62) points out. Social changes and reforms began in 1968, when the Popular Unity won in Chile and the Peronist Movement won in Argentina. Peru with the Nationalist Movement, as well as Panama with the support of the military, and to a certain extent Equador are all following the same path. With "conscientization" as methodology, these movements advanced social reforms and social changes (Comblin, 1973:4).

The most urgent and important point to be attacked in order to transform Latin America is a change of the superstructure and values of the bourgeoisie, and the ac-

commodation and passivity of the masses (Assmann, 1972:10). This is what Freire emphasizes in his theory of social change: to raise the consciousness of the oppressed and to demythologize the statements taken for granted which are imposed by the oligarchy upon illiterates.

So far, Freire's greatest impact in Latin America is his contribution to and strong support of the Conflict-Dependence Model of Social Development. This model is centered on conflict, a projection into international relations of the class-war concept.

The traditional concept of development is full of myths and biased interpretations. Freire and many other theorists and researchers helped to demythologize this concept providing a new explanation and interpretation for the phenomenon of underdevelopment (Freire, in Colonnese, 1970:162–179; Cardoso and Faletto, 1972; Cockroft, Frank, and Johnson, 1972; Goulet, 1971; Santos, 1968; Petras and Zeitlin, 1968). The main myths of traditional theorists are:

(1) Underdevelopment is an original state, characterized by backwardness" or traditionalism; underdeveloped countries have no long history of change.

(2) Underdeveloped countries suffer from being divided into dual societies, one modern, urban, and integrated, the other rural, backward, and isolated, with the rural or feudal constituting a block to global modernization and economic development.

(3) Diffusion of the capital and/or culture of developed capitalist countries is necessary for industrialization to occur.

(4) The pre-capitalist state of sectors of Latin American societies accounts for underdevelopment.
(5) Import substitution is the generator of economic development.

Demythologizing these realities, Freire and the above authors have shown that dependence (underdevelopment) is a situation in which a certain group of countries have their economy conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy, to which the former is subjected. Dependence is a "conditioning situation" in which the specific histories of development and underdevelopment transpire in different regions and countries. What the new concept of development *emphasizes* is that there is development due to the underdevelopment of other countries. Underdevelopment is *due* to the exploitation exercised by developed countries. Development is dynamically linked with underdevelopment.

In the discussion and analysis of his concept of development, as in many other important issues, Freire uses critical thinking to demythologize reality. According to Goulet (in Freire, 1973c:VII) no contemporary writer more persistently explores the many dimensions of critical consciousness than Paulo Freire. Freire never tires of looking for new forms of critical consciousness, unearthing new links between expression in a variety of settings and the liberating effects of conscientization. The unifying thread in his work is critical consciousness as the vehicle of cultural emancipation. To think dialectically is to decree the obsolescence of cherished concepts which explain even one's recent past. One of the marks of the true dialec-

tician, however, is the ability to "move beyond" the past without repudiating it in the name of new levels of critical consciousness presently enjoyed.

FREIRE'S INFLUENCE ON THE CHURCH

Freire's influence is not limited to economic, political, and educational institutions. His influence on the Church has been very strong. Freire's method was first employed by the bishops in Brazil in the Movement of Basic Education (MEB). This movement was a church-sponsored program of education by radio, and was initiated in Natal, in Northeast Brazil. It was expanded to a national level by the bishops in 1961. The movement aroused one of the most stirring disputes in the cultural history of that country (MacEoin, 1971:46).

The program is similar to that of Radio Sutatenza of Colombia. Programs were transmitted from a network of radio stations blanketing the entire country. Volunteer class leaders manned 7,500 receiving posts which were soon bringing together for organized instruction a total of 200,000 pupils of all ages, most of them dispersed in the countryside, the rest in city slums.

There was, nevertheless, according to MacEoin (1971:46-47) and Vaz (1968:578-581), a major difference from Colombia, and this was what caused some conflict. MEB used the Freire method of political conscientization, the method that can make a peasant literate in six weeks of evening classes. Its first reader was entitled "To Live is to Struggle," words taken from a popular poet. The five bishops responsible for MEB had read the text and approved.

But, the right- wing politicians saw it, ruled it subversive, and had the edition seized at the printshop. Eugenio Gudin, a prominent economist and former finance minister, explained why in the conservative newspaper *O Globo* (in MacEoin:1971:47):

> 'To Live is to Struggle': how is that for a loaded title? Even more loaded are the illustrations on every page – scenes of violence, undernourished children, back-breaking work. And what about the text? 'He works to support his family. But Peter's family is hungry. Is it according to the law of justice that Peter's family should be hungry? Is it just that the people be hungry?'

It was more than Professor Gudin could stand. "To say that everyman has a right to a decent life is a proposition worth of a conkey."

Bishop Távora, President of MEB, explained the bishops' position to the chief of police (in MacEoin, 1971:47):

> If I had made a collection of the expressions which I have found by the hundred in the papal documents, condemning a historic situation in which man is crushed by an unjust economic and political system, and if I published the results in a pamphlet, this would, on the same grounds, run the risk of being ruled subversive.

But it was not the papal encyclicals that worried the police. It was different when they were reformulated in terms meaningful to the peasants of the Northeast. So the MEB, as all Freire's programs, were banned immediately. The whole process of stirring up the people had to stop. Many schools were closed down immediately and leaders arrested. MEB activities were limited mainly to the

Amazon region and some other areas which were socially and politically less explosive. In addition, the "subversive" content of its teaching was thoroughly filtered out. What Ivan Illich calls "the emotion-loaded key words" of Freire's political vocabulary have disappeared, and with them the motivation that spurred peasants to become literate with six weeks of evening classes. Under the pressure of the oligarchy, MEB was obliged to water down its program into a traditional sort of basic education with none of the explosive revolutionary character of conscientization. This happened because Freire's method not only taught reading and writing but aimed at changing people's outlook, their way of life, and the community's collective attitude and behavior.

But Freire's influence in Latin America through the Church is still continuing, and the Church is now the only organism able to confront military dictatorships and reactionary consciousness. Every year Freire gives a seminar at "Lumen Vitae" Institute of Brussels, Belgium, where many young leaders who work in the Church in Latin America are trained. Freire's conscientization course is one of the most appreciated, and he personally goes to Brussels to teach it.

Freire's influence in the "Theology of Liberation," a radical theology born in Latin America based on the social situation of the Continent, is definite (Gutierrez, 1973:91-92; 213; 233-235). The "Theology of Liberation" uses many of Freire's concepts and ideas, such as Conscientization, Praxis, Utopia, etc. Freire's influence in the "Black Theology" of the United States and Africa is not less important. He wrote the preface of Cone's (1970) book *A Black Theology of Liberation* (cf. Freire, 1973d:I-2).

Freire states that the role of the Church must be the role of liberation, of the humanization of man. Some of his ideas about theology are expressed in an article at *Risk* (Freire, 1970:17):

> Precisely because of this I am more and more interested in working with theologians. In my point of view, theology today has many things to do. That is, from my point of view, theology which starts from anthropology, which is engaged historically in order to discuss, for example, the Word of God...because God, too, in a certain way, is mythologized by us.

His criticisms of theology, and how traditional theology has been used to maintain and reinforce the status quo, appears in many of Freire's writings (McCarthy, 1972:A5):

> As a child in Northeast Brazil, I knew many priests who went out to the peasants saying, 'Be patient. This is God's will. And anyway, it will earn heaven for you.' Yet the truth of the matter is that we have to earn our heaven here and now, we ourselves. We have to build our heaven, to fashion it during our lifetime, right now. Salvation is something to achieve, not just to hope for.

The Catholic Church in Latin America in the Medellin Conference and in many subsequent episcopal conferences recommended conscientization as part of the role of the Church in Latin America (Smutko, 1973:2). The "Theology of Liberation," which is the first authentic Latin American theology, is specifically oriented towards conscientization. The Latin American Pastoral Institute of CELAM in Quito now has a special course on conscientization for all students. It looks like conscientization will

be in the front lines of pastoral students for a long time to come in Latin America.

The Church is playing a large and ever increasing role in conscientization since Medellin, perhaps far more than any other institution. It called attention to the essential spiritual aspects of conscientization, such as, that conscientization requires sincere love, something often overlooked in various programs; that conscientization requires that we liberate ourselves from our own egoism and anything that is dehumanizing and unjust in our lives. The Church provides a tremendous motivating force for conscientization efforts and deeply imbues its pastoral work with conscientization. Almost all the present theologians, Catholic or Protestant, believe that a true Evangelization is not possible in Latin America today without conscientization.

THE REPRESSION OF FREIRE'S METHOD

The consequences of the application of Freire's method are not always peaceful or without tensions. Freire's method is radical. That means it goes to the very roots of problems. It shakes their whole structure. It is obvious, then, that when an oligarchy has full knowledge of the implications involved in applying his method, it tries to stop the movement and suffocates it. The real danger and the real importance of Freire's method, as Bezerra (1967:2) says, is that it does not consist only in learning and writing. Its goal is the political, social, and economic advancement of the oppressed. The reason why success has been limited is explained by Illich (in MacEoin, 1971:21):

> The program teaching such reading and writing skills, of course, must be built around the emotion-laden key words of their vocabulary. Understandably, this fact has gotten it into trouble.

The ruling classes have always thought of the common people as animals. Yet this privileged minority always lives with the subliminal fear that "they" will come down one day out of the mountains "and kill us all." Nothing is more terrifying for the wealthy than the idea that the urban and rural poor, totally proletarianized for centuries, are suddenly acquiring a class consciousness. One of the first things the right-wing military dictatorships do, when they seize power, as happens in Latin America, is to proscribe all methods based on conscientization. The Pentagon and the CIA have participated with local armed forces in the repression of movements sparked by the propagators of Freire's method in Brazil, Guatemala and elsewhere (MacEoin, 1971).

One of the reasons why Freire's method is repressed is the political influence it exercises when it is applied. Politics is one of the realities it demythologizes. Freire knows that his work has political implications and knows moreover that these implications support the people's interests and not those of the elite. But he also knows that his field is education, not politics, and that he cannot as an educator, substitute for the revolutionary politician interested in knowing and transforming structures. Rejecting the traditional ideal of education as the "lever of progress" it would make no sense to substitute for it the equally naïve thesis of education as the "lever of revolution." Education for freedom can support popular politics, for conscientization is openness to understanding social structures as

means of domination and violence. But the task of orient-ing this awareness is a specifically political direction, as Wefford (in Grabowski, 1972:127) states, belongs not to the educator but to the politician.

Brazil was only beginning a long list of troubles that Freire's followers encountered. In Mexico the reaction-ary army acted the same way. Cesar Jerez (in Grabows-ki,1972:116-117) speaking about the assessment of Freire's contribution in Latin America, mainly Central America, says that a friend of his, a Mexican university professor, who used Freire's methodology at the Universidad Au-tonoma de Mexico, told him that

> there they were, the students, conscientized...They launched the most serious challenge to the PRI (the all powerful Institutional Party of the Revolution) in the Summer and Fall of 1968. Then came Tlatelolco. They were machine-gunned by the army, nobody knows how many. I had initiated the process of conscientiza-tion. But I was not massacred. I, as Freire, was 'encour-aged' to leave the country. The students, the workers, and so on, they were not encouraged to leave. They are now dead and I am alive. It is more difficult to have to live with the deaths of others than to die oneself.

Political strategy and a position towards revolution-ary violence, one way or another, are unavoidable if con-scientization isto be effective. As Thomas M. Gannon (in Grabowski, 1972:115) says

> a sure sign of the impact that conscientization has had is that the repressive regimes have tried to put it down. Because it has effectively mobilized people, it is a threat to the power structure.

Martin D'Arcy (in Grabowski, 1972:120) describes the repression Freire's method suffered in Bolivia. He was applying Freire's methodology and philosophy in Oruro, and a magazine published something about the experience. Immediately this magazine was closed down by the Banzer regime when Torres was overthrown from government.

Here is one explanation of the present "slaughterhouse" in Chile. Freire's method had been employed by the government since 1967. People were being conscientized. Then, after Allende, for the reactionary consciousness to succeed in dominating the country, it was necessary to kill and massacre thousands of people. The reign of terror was and is worse than anyone can imagine. A *Newsweek* reporter in Santiago (Anon., "Slaughterhouse in Santiago," 1973:53-54) describes what he personally saw:

> I was able to obtain an official morgue body-count from the daughter of a member of its staff; by the fourteenth day following the coup, she said, the morgue had received and processed 2,796 corpses. No one knows how many have been disposed of elsewhere... But the morgue count alone sets the regime's kill rate at an appalling 200 Chileans a day - just for the capital.

But who are these people?

> They were all young and, judging from the roughness of their hands, all from the working class...

With hardly an exception, the victims came from the slums that encircle Santiago and house half the city's four million inhabitants. Presumably the junta believes that since the "poblaciones" provided the former govern-

ment's main support, they must be terrorized. So the local leaders who were working through conscientization to promote these people (MacEoin, 1971:54–83) are now paying with their lives.

The future of Latin American countries, as Johnson (1973:33) points out, is not a choice between democratic reform leading to modernization and violent revolution ending in totalitarianism - a view promulgated in a vast literature on "political development" by many American political scientists that in turn is fashioned by the mass media into conventional wisdom for the consuming public. Rather, the basic alternative for much of the Third World is popular revolution or authoritarian reaction. In Paulo Freire's terms, these societies will become real democratic societies through popular revolution, or remain in a stage of "fanatic," "ambiguous," or "reactionary consciousness." What happened in Chile in September 1973, in Uruguay at the beginning of 1973, and in Brazil in April, 1964, are vivid examples of control by authoritarian reaction: a military coup d'état, and the installation of a reactionary regime.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most powerful attraction Freire's writings have is in the authentic humanitarian passion that vitalizes and unifies them. As young reformers know, Freire has practiced what he advocates. That practice is the flowering stalk rising from the root of his theory, and it illustrates and activates the philosophy.

Nobody can stop the process of conscientization. That belongs to the inner essence of man's vocation: to overcome semi-intransitive and naïve consciousness in order to become fully human, the subjects of our own destiny, making history and not being manipulated by oppressor minorities or oligarchies. No one can stop a conscientized man. Conscientization is dynamic and utopian. It never ends, and it is never satisfied. Its aim is the full humanization of all mankind.

Bibliography

Althusser, Louis
1969   For Marx. New York: Vintage Books.

Anonymous
1972   As Brazil goes so goes Latin America." (mimeographed). New York: Orbis Books.
1972   Education and Development in Latin America. Brussels, Belgium: Pro Mundi Vita.
1973   "Latin America: power and poverty." America 128 (24):569.
1973   "Slaughterhouse in Santiago." Newsweek, October 8, 1973:53-54.

Assman, Hugo
1972   "El aporte Cristiano al processo de liberación de America Latina." CIDOC, Cuernavaca, I/I 72/347.

Berger, Peter L., and Luckmann, Thomas
1967   The Social Construction of Reality. Garden City, New York: Doubleday.

Bezerra, Aimeri
1967   Metodo Paulo Freire de alfabetización en Brasil." CIDOC Cuernavaca, 67/9.'

Blumer, Herbert
1969   Symbolic Interactionism. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice- Hall.

Buber, Martin
1968   I and Thou. New York: Charles Schribner's Sons.

Cardoso, Fernando Henrique and Faletto, Enzo.
1973   Dependencia y Desarollo en America Latina. Mexico: SieloVeintuno Editores.

Castro, Josué de
1947 Geography of Hunger. Boston: Little Brown.
1969 Death in the Northeast. New York: Vintage Books.

Cicourel, Aaron
1964 Method and Measurement in Sociology.N.Y.:Free Press.

Cockroft, James D.; Frank, Andre Gunder and Johnson, Dale L.
1972 Dependence and Underdevelopment. Garden City, New York-Doubleday.

Colonnese, Michael (ed.)
1970a The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council, Vol. II. Bogota, Colombia: CELAM.
1970b Human Rights and the Liberation of Man in the Americas. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

Comblin, Jose
1973 " Medellin cinco anos despues." PASOS, Santiago, Chile. August 20, 1973.

Cone, James
1970 A Black Theology of Liberation. Philadelphia: Lippincott.

Dahrendorf, Rolf
1973 Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society. Stanford California: Stanford University Press.

DESAL
1967 La Marginalidad en America Latina. Barcelona: Herder and Herder.

Dollard, John and Miller, Neal E.
1950 Personality and Psychotherapy: an Analysis in Terms of Learning, Thinking, and Culture. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Dunn, E. S.
1968 Economic and Social Development - A Process of Social Learning. Baltimore: John Hopkins

Erikson, Erik H.
1968 Identity: Youth and Crisis. New York: W.W. Norton.

Frank, Andre Gunder
1969   Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America. New York– Monthly Review Press.

Freire, Paulo
1967   "Cultural liberty in Latin America." (mimeographed). New York: Orbis Books.
1969   Extensión o Communicación? Santiago, Chile: Icira.
1970   "Education for awareness: a talk with Paulo Freire." RISK 6(4): 1–22. World Council of Churches: Geneva.
1971a Pedagogy of the Oppressed New York: Herder and Herder.
1971b Conscientisation: Recherche de Paulo Freire. Paris: INODEP.
1972a Cultural Action for Freedom. Baltimore: Penguin Books.
1972b Concientización. Bogotá: Colômbia: Associación de Publicaciones Educativas.
1972c   Sobre La Acción Cultural. Santiago, Chile: Icira.
1973b "Education, liberation and the Church." Study Encounter IX(1), Geneva.
1973c Ecucation for Critical Consciousness. New York: Seabury Press.
1973d "Prólogo de Paulo Freire al libro de James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*.1973 Santiago, Chile: PASOS, January 29.

Freyre, Gilberto
1966   The Master and the Slaves. New York: Knopf.

Friedenberg, Edgar Z.
1971   "Review of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*." Comparative Education Review 15(3):378–380.

Furter, Pierre
1966   "Educaçãoo e vida." Vozes de Petrópolis, Petrópolis, Rio.

Furtado, Celso
1962   The Economic Growth of Brazil. Berkeley: The University of California Press.

Garfinkel, Harold
1956   "Conditions of successful degradation ceremonies." The American Journal of Sociology 61:420–424.

Goldmann, Lucien
1969   The Human Science and Philosophy. London: Cape.

Gouldner, Alvin W.
1970   The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology. New York: Equinox
        Books

Goulet, Denis
1971   The Cruel Choice. New York: Atheneum.
        Grabowski, Stanley M. (ed.)
1972   Paulo Freire: A Revolutionary Dilemma for the Adult Educator.
        Syracuse: Syracuse University Publications.

Ham, Adolfo
1973   "La pedagogia de P. Freire y la educacion Cristiana de las
        Iglesias Evangelicas Cubanas." Santiago, Chile: PASOS, March
        5, 1973.

Hayter, Teresa
1972   Aid as Imperialism. Baltimore: Penguin Books.

Hyman, John
1971   "Critical theory in practice - Paulo Freire's conscientization
        process. (Mimeographed) Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community
        College.

Illich, Ivan D.
1971   Celebration of Awareness. Garden City, New York: Doubleday.

Johnson, Dale L.
1973   The Sociology of Change and Reaction in Latin America.
        Indianápolis, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill.

Lichtman, Richard
1970   "Symbolic interactionism and social reality: some Marxist
        queries. Berkeley Journal of Sociology 15:75-96.

MacEoin, Gary
1971   Revolution Next Door - Latin America in the 1970s. New York:
        Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Magdoff, Harry
1969   The Age of Imperialism. New York: Modern Reader Paperback.

Manis, Jerome G. and Meltzer, Bernard N.
1972   Symbolic Interactionsim. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Marcel, Gabriel.
1962   Man Against Mass Society. New York: Regenery Gate.

McCarthy, Colman
1972   "Paulo Freire and common man." The Austin Statesman: 08/10/72:A5/

McClelland, David C. and Winter, David G.
1971   Motivating Economic Achievement: Accelerating Economic Development Through Psychological Training. New York: The Free Press.

Memmi, Albert
1965   Colonizer and the Colonized. Boston: Orion Press.

Mills, C. Wright.
1961   The Sociological Imagination. New York: Grove Press.

Myrdal, Gunnar
1970   The Challenge of World Poverty. New York: Pantheon Books.

Nunez Leal, Victor
1947   Coronelismo, Enxada, e Voto. Rio de Janeiro: Civilizacão Brasileira.

Petras, James and Zeitlin, Maurice (ed.)
1968   Latin America - Reform or Revolution? Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications.
Pope Paul VI
1967   On the Development of Peoples. Glen Rock, New Jersey: Paulist Press.

Rogers, Carl
1969   Freedom to Learn. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill.

Sanders, Thomas G.
1970   "Paulo Freire." Convergence 4(3):62–68.

Santos, Theotonio dos
1968   "La Crisis de la teoria desarrollo y las relaciones de dependência en America Latina." Boletin del Centro de Estudios Socio-Economicos 3:26-270

Simonsen, Roberto
1962   Historia Econômica do Brasil (1500-1820). São Paulo:
        Companhia Editora Nacional.

Smutko, Gregory
1973   Conscientization. (mimeographed.)

Strauss, Erwin W.
1964   Phenomenology: Pure and Applied. Pittsburgh: Duquesne
        University Press.

Szasz, Thomas S.
1970   Ideology and Insanity. Garden City, New York: Doubleday.

Vaz, Henrique de Lima
1968   The Church and Conscientização. America (April 27): 578-581.

Vekemans, Roger and Venegas, Ramón
1966   "Marginalidad y promoción popular." Mensage 149:218:228.

I'm paying off a fifty-year debt. Since I finished writing this thesis on Paulo Freire, many people have insisted that I should publish it. Looking back now, I am surprised to see that the deep insights of his thought, especially the insistence on a critical conscience and an ethics intrinsic to all our actions, were already there. I am now preparing a deeper and more critical reflection on the unfolding of his thought, which, starting from pedagogy, passes through politics and ethics, to arrive at an action-reflection as an inseparable unit.