

OTHER BOOKS BY PAULO FREIRE
FROM BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC

Education for Critical Consciousness

Pedagogy of the City

Pedagogy of Hope:
Reliving *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Pedagogy of the Heart

PAULO
PEDA
of
OPPR

• 30TH ANNIV

Translated by

With an Introduction

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For

Over the years, the thought of Paulo Freire have spread from one continent, and have made a profound impact on education but also in the overall culture. At the precise moment when the Americas are awakening from their long slumber, as Subjects of their own history, Paulo Freire has perfected a pedagogy that has contributed, in an extraordinary way, to those who, in learning to read and write, begin to look critically at the society that has denied them their humanity. Education is once again a subject.

In this country, we are grateful to have Paulo Freire, but thus far we have not seen the full of its contribution to the education of the Third World. If, however, we take a serious look at his methodology as well as his educational philosophy for us as for the dispossessed, we can become free Subjects and to their society is similar, in many ways, to the blacks and Mexican-American people in this country. And the struggle in the developing world may vary in form, but the models, and a new hope as well as a reason, I consider the publication of an English edition to be some

Paulo Freire's thought represents the response of a creative mind and sensitive conscience to the extraordinary misery and suffering of the oppressed around him. Born in 1921 in Recife, the center of one of the most extreme situations of poverty and underdevelopment in the Third World, he was soon forced to experience that reality directly. As the economic crisis in 1929 in the United States began to affect Brazil, the precarious stability of Freire's middle-class family gave way and he found himself sharing the plight of the "wretched of the earth." This had a profound influence on his life as he came to know the gnawing pangs of hunger and fell behind in school because of the listlessness it produced; it also led him to make a vow, at age eleven, to dedicate his life to the struggle against hunger, so that other children would not have to know the agony he was then experiencing.

His early sharing of the life of the poor also led him to the discovery of what he describes as the "culture of silence" of the dispossessed. He came to realize that their ignorance and lethargy were the direct product of the whole situation of economic, social, and political domination—and of the paternalism—of which they were victims. Rather than being encouraged and equipped to know and respond to the concrete realities of their world, they were kept "submerged" in a situation in which such critical awareness and response were practically impossible. And it became clear to him that the whole educational system was one of the major instruments for the maintenance of this culture of silence.

Confronted by this problem in a very existential way, Freire turned his attention to the field of education and began to work on it. Over the years, he has engaged in a process of study and reflection that has produced something quite new and creative in educational philosophy. From a situation of direct engagement in the struggle to liberate men and women for the creation of a new world, he has reached out to the thought and experience of those in many different situations and of diverse philosophical positions: in his words, to "Sartre and Mounier, Erich Fromm and Louis Althusser, Ortega y Gasset and Mao, Martin Luther King and Che Guevara,

Unamuno and Marcuse." He led men to develop a perspective of his own and which seeks to reshape America.

His thought on the philosophy of education was developed in 1959 in his doctoral dissertation in his work as Professor of the Philosophy of Education in the same university, as well as in his teaching of illiterates in that same university. His work developed was widely used by Catholic educators throughout the North East of Brazil. He was a threat to the old order that Freire was overthrown by a military coup in 1964. Released to leave the country, Freire spent years working with UNESCO and the World Bank. He was a Reform in programs of adult education at Harvard University's School of Education and an association with a number of experiments in rural and urban education. He was a Special Consultant to the Office of Churches in Geneva.

Freire has written many articles and books. His first book, *Educação como prática da liberdade*, was published in Brazil in 1967. His latest book, *The Oppressed*, is the first of a series of books on the country.

In this brief introduction, though, in a few paragraphs, what Freire has said in many pages. That would be an offer of a glimpse of the complexity of his thought. But perhaps that is not enough here—a personal witness as to the power of the thought of Paulo Freire and an example of the thought of the abstractness and sterility of the academic circles today, I am excited to see his thought set in a thoroughly historical context.

midst of a struggle to create a new social order and thus represents a new unity of theory and *praxis*. And I am encouraged when a man of the stature of Paulo Freire incarnates a rediscovery of the humanizing vocation of the intellectual, and demonstrates the power of thought to negate accepted limits and open the way to a new future.

Freire is able to do this because he operates on one basic assumption: that man's ontological vocation (as he calls it) is to be a Subject who acts upon and transforms his world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively. This *world* to which he relates is not a static and closed order, a *given* reality which man must accept and to which he must adjust; rather, it is a problem to be worked on and solved. It is the material used by man to create history, a task which he performs as he overcomes that which is dehumanizing at any particular time and place and dares to create the qualitatively new. For Freire, the resources for that task at the present time are provided by the advanced technology of our Western world, but the social vision which impels us to negate the present order and demonstrate that history has not ended comes primarily from the suffering and struggle of the people of the Third World.

Coupled with this is Freire's conviction (now supported by a wide background of experience) that every human being, no matter how "ignorant" or submerged in the "culture of silence" he or she may be, is capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with others. Provided with the proper tools for such encounter, the individual can gradually perceive personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his or her own perception of that reality, and deal critically with it. In this process, the old, paternalistic teacher-student relationship is overcome. A peasant can facilitate this process for a neighbor more effectively than a "teacher" brought in from outside. "People educate each other through the mediation of the world."

As this happens, the word takes on new power. It is no longer an abstraction or magic but a means by which people discover them-

selves and their potential as the
As Freire puts it, each individ
her own word, to name the wo

When an illiterate peasant p
experience, he or she comes to
sense of dignity, and is stirred
peasants have expressed these
few hours of class: "I now realiz
"We were blind, now our eye
words meant nothing to me; n
them speak." "Now we will r
cooperative farm." When this l
read, men and women discover
that all their work can be creat
the world." And as those who
are so radically transformed, th
objects, responding to change
more likely to decide to take up
the structures of society, whic
them. For this reason, a distin
development recently affirmed
among the people represents a
opment, "a new instrument o
which it can overcome traditio
world."

At first sight, Paulo Freire's
America seems to belong to a
find ourselves in this country.
that it should be copied here
the two situations that shoul
technological society is rapidl
subtly programming us into co
the degree that this happens,
a new "culture of silence."

The paradox is that the sam

creates a new sensitivity to what is happening. Especially among young people, the new media together with the erosion of old concepts of authority open the way to acute awareness of this new bondage. The young perceive that their right to say their own word has been stolen from them, and that few things are more important than the struggle to win it back. And they also realize that the educational system today—from kindergarten to university—is their enemy.

There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes “the practice of freedom,” the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. The development of an educational methodology that facilitates this process will inevitably lead to tension and conflict within our society. But it could also contribute to the formation of a new man and mark the beginning of a new era in Western history. For those who are committed to that task and are searching for concepts and tools for experimentation, Paulo Freire’s thought will make a significant contribution in the years ahead.

RICHARD SHAULL

Pro

These pages, which introduce from my observations during si which have enriched those pr activities in Brazil.

I have encountered, both in role of *conscientização*¹ and in liberating education, the “fear chapter of this book. Not infre call attention to “the danger of their own fear of freedom. Cri chic. Others add that critical Some, however, confess: Why d no longer afraid!

In one of these discussions, *conscientização* of men and wor might not lead them to “destr of total collapse of their world person who previously had be spoke out: “Perhaps I am the o I can’t say that I’ve understood I can say one thing—when I when I found out how naïve I v discovery hasn’t made me a f either.”

1. The term *conscientização* refers economic contradictions, and to take reality. See chapter 3.—Translator’s n

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Doubt regarding the possible effects of *conscientização* implies a premise which the doubter does not always make explicit: It is better for the victims of injustice not to recognize themselves as such. In fact, however, *conscientização* does not lead people to "destructive fanaticism." On the contrary, by making it possible for people to enter the historical process as responsible Subjects,² *conscientização* enrolls them in the search for self-affirmation and thus avoids fanaticism.

The awakening of critical consciousness leads the way to the expression of social discontents precisely because these discontents are real components of an oppressive situation.³

Fear of freedom, of which its possessor is not necessarily aware, makes him see ghosts. Such an individual is actually taking refuge in an attempt to achieve security, which he or she prefers to the risks of liberty. As Hegel testifies:

It is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; . . . the individual who has not staked his or her life may, no doubt, be recognized as a Person; but he or she has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness.⁴

Men and women rarely admit their fear of freedom openly, however, tending rather to camouflage it—sometimes unconsciously—by presenting themselves as defenders of freedom. They give their doubts and misgivings an air of profound sobriety, as befitting custodians of freedom. But they confuse freedom with the maintenance of the status quo; so that if *conscientização* threatens to place that status quo in question, it thereby seems to constitute a threat to freedom itself.

2. The term *Subjects* denotes those who know and act, in contrast to *objects*, which are known and acted upon.—Translator's note.

3. Francisco Weffort, in the preface to Paulo Freire, *Educação como Prática da Liberdade* (Rio de Janeiro, 1967).

4. Georg Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (New York, 1967), p. 233.

Thought and study alone did not *press*; it is rooted in concrete conditions of laborers (peasant or urban) whom I have observed directly in my educative work. Continued opportunity to modify or to corroborate was proposed in this introductory work.

This volume will probably arouse the interest of readers. Some will regard modern human liberation as purely ideological, a vision of ontological vocation, love of the pathy as so much reactionary wish to) accept my denunciation of the oppressors. Accordingly, the radicals. I am certain that Christians disagree with me in part or in end. But the reader who dogmatically positions will reject the dialogue. Sectarianism, fed by fanaticism, nourished by a critical spirit, mythicizes and thereby alienates, thereby liberates. Radicalization of the position one has chosen, and the effort to transform concrete reality into idealism, because it is mythicizing the false (and therefore unchangeable).

Sectarianism in any quarter is a threat to mankind. The rightist version of it, notably, call forth its natural counter-reactionary. Not infrequently, reactionaries by falling into sectarianism, to the sectarianism of the Right, not lead the radical to become reactionaries in the process of liberation, he face of the oppressor's violence.

On the other hand, the radical is never a subjectivist. For this individual the subjective aspect exists only in relation to the objective aspect (the concrete reality, which is the object of analysis). Subjectivity and objectivity thus join in a dialectical unity producing knowledge in solidarity with action, and vice versa.

For his or her part, the sectarian of whatever persuasion, blinded by irrationality, does not (or cannot) perceive the dynamic of reality—or else misinterprets it. Should this person think dialectically, it is with a “domesticated dialectic.” The rightist sectarian (whom I have previously termed a *born sectarian*⁵) wants to slow down the historical process, to “domesticate” time and thus to domesticate men and women. The leftist-turned-sectarian goes totally astray when he or she attempts to interpret reality and history dialectically, and falls into essentially fatalistic positions.

The rightist sectarian differs from his or her leftist counterpart in that the former attempts to domesticate the present so that (he or she hopes) the future will reproduce this domesticated present, while the latter considers the future pre-established—a kind of inevitable fate, fortune, or destiny. For the rightist sectarian, “today,” linked to the past, is something given and immutable; for the leftist sectarian, “tomorrow” is decreed beforehand, is inexorably preordained. This rightist and this leftist are both reactionary because, starting from their respectively false views of history, both develop forms of action that negate freedom. The fact that one person imagines a “well-behaved” present and the other a predetermined future does not mean that they therefore fold their arms and become spectators (the former expecting that the present will continue, the latter waiting for the already “known” future to come to pass). On the contrary, closing themselves into “circles of certainty” from which they cannot escape, these individuals “make” their own truth. It is not the truth of men and women who struggle to build the future, running the risks involved in this very construction. Nor is it the truth of men and women who fight side by side and learn together

5. In *Educação como Prática da Liberdade*.

how to build this future—which is not received by people, but is rather created by them. Both types of sectarian, treating education in this fashion, end up without the people against them.

Whereas the rightist sectarian sees education as no more than fulfill a natural role, the leftist and rigid negates his or her involvement about “his” truth, feels threatened. Thus, each considers anything that might challenge from a journalist Marcio Moreira Alves as an absence of doubt.”

The radical, committed to liberation, is not the prisoner of a “circle of certainty” but is imprisoned. On the contrary, the radical, the more fully he or she enters into the struggle, the more he or she can better transform the world. To confront, to listen, to see the world is not afraid to meet the people or to risk. The person does not consider himself or herself for or of all people, or the liberator. The radical must commit himself or herself, with the people.

The pedagogy of the oppressed is not one which are presented in the form of a lecture cannot be carried out by sectarianism.

I will be satisfied if among the people there is sufficiently critical to correct the errors and to deepen affirmations and to point out what is possible that some may question. The cultural action, a subject of work, is not a means. The fact that I have not perceived the cultural action, however, does not negate the

6. “As long as theoretic knowledge is not shared by the ‘technicians’ in the Party, the latter will face the danger of *Reform or Revolution*, cited in C. W.

this theme. Furthermore, in my experience as an educator with the people, using a dialogical and problem-posing education, I have accumulated a comparative wealth of material that challenged me to run the risk of making the affirmations contained in this work.

From these pages I hope at least the following will endure: my trust in the people, and my faith in men and women, and in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love.

Here I would like to express my gratitude to Elza, my wife and "first reader," for the understanding and encouragement she has shown my work, which belongs to her as well. I would also like to extend my thanks to a group of friends for their comments on my manuscript. At the risk of omitting some names, I must mention João da Veiga Coutinho, Richard Shaull, Jim Lamb, Myra and Jovelino Ramos, Paulo de Tarso, Almino Affonso, Plinio Sampaio, Ernani Maria Fiori, Marcela Gajardo, José Luis Fiori, and João Zacarioti. The responsibility for the affirmations made herein is, of course, mine alone.

PAULO FREIRE

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of
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