

out-topping all. The forming of this figure in all individuals, out of all materials, is the formation of a "culture". But when all figures are shatterd; when no figure is able any more to dominate and shape the present human material, what is there left to form?

Nothing but the image of God.

That is the indefinable, only factual, direction of the responsible modern educator. This cannot be a theoretical answer to the question "To what?", but only, if at all, an answer carried out in deeds; an answer carried out by non-doing.

The educator is set now in the midst of the need which he experiences in inclusion, but only a bit deeper in it. He is set in the midst of the service, only a bit higher up, which he invokes without words; he is set in the *imitatio Dei absconditi sed non ignoti*.

When all "directions" fail there arises in the darkness over the abyss the one true direction of man, towards the creative Spirit, towards the Spirit of God brooding on the face of the waters, towards Him of whom we know not whence He comes and whither He goes.

That is man's true autonomy which no longer betrays, but responds.

Man, the creature, who forms and transforms the creation, cannot create. But he, each man, can expose himself and others to the creative Spirit. And he can call upon the Creator to save and perfect His image.

18

PAULO FREIRE

Paulo Freire was born in 1921 in the city of Recife. Raised and educated in Brazil, he completed his Ph.D. in 1959 at the University of Recife. He was one of the most influential educational thinkers of the 20th century, and his ideas and programs have had an impact in many countries, including the United States. While some of his early work focused on adult literacy programs among marginalized populations in Brazil, his analysis of the conditions of education and pedagogical practices vis-à-vis the conditions of oppression and exploitation were read and discussed widely by educators, philosophers, social scientists, activists, and policy makers. A close reading of classic philosophy and modern critical theory, including Marxism and postcolonial theories, as well as Catholicism and theology of liberation, has influenced his own ideas. His book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) has been translated to many languages, including English, and sold millions of copies.

His successful adult literacy programs used critical dialogues among participants about the conditions of everyday life. However, these dialogues were received with suspicion by military governments. He was exiled in the early 1960s, but his work continued in Chile and other parts of the world. He lived and taught in Africa, Mexico, Switzerland, and the United States, among other places. When he returned to Brazil in the 1980s, he became Minister of Education for the state of Sao Paulo, which includes the city of the same name—one of the largest cities in the world, with more than 20 million people. He

captured some of his reflections about that work in the book *Pedagogy of the City* (1993).

Freire offered us a reason for hope. His critiques of pedagogy, curriculum, and schooling not only name what has been wrong with systems and practices that perpetuated marginality for many students but also offer alternative visions and examples for educators, which invite them to dream and hope for change. Furthermore, he wanted us to understand teaching as a political act in the sense that teachers have the power to create or to deny opportunities for students. Teachers must question who benefits from the chosen pedagogies: who would learn what, under what conditions, how, and/or for what purposes?

His humanistic and critical writing challenges teachers to interrogate who they are and who their students are, problematizing institutional organizations, rules, content, and pedagogy. In turn, interrogation and problematization are habits of mind that prompt action. Furthermore, as some of the pages in these reading selections suggest, teaching is a humanizing act and dialogical pedagogies can lead to freedom from oppression. He encourages liberatory experience in the traditions of classical and modern thought which were designed to "read the word and the world," to question the routines of what he named "banking pedagogies" and a classrooms' "culture of silence." Critical pedagogy engages teachers, students, and others to analyze how power works in a classroom, who has power to do things, for what purposes these things are done, and who participates and in what ways. Furthermore, in Freire's view, teachers and students engage in active listening, participatory dialogues, active involvement in learning experiences, and mutual inquiry, thus gaining collective ownership in a process of gaining awareness about themselves and the multiple communities to which they belong, with the purpose of individual and social transformation. Teaching this way requires courage and daring. Freire passed away in 1997, but his ideas and practices continue to influence educators all over the world.

His publications in English also include *Letters to Cristina* (1996), *The Politics of Education* (1985), *Teachers as Cultural Workers* (1998), *Pedagogy of the Heart* (1998), and *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1993), among many other books and articles.

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UNDER THE SHADE OF A MANGO TREE

Solitude—Communion

The search that brings me to the comforting shade of this mango tree* could be of little interest to most people. I find refuge under its shade when I am there alone, secluded from the world and others, asking myself questions, or talking to myself. My talks are not always triggered by my questions.

There has to be an *a priori* reason that has been lost in the pleasure of finding refuge under the shade of this tree. What I should do is to totally let myself be taken by the feelings of being under it, to live it, and to make this experience more and more intense to the extent that I prove its existence.

To come under the shade of this mango tree with such deliberateness and to experience the fulfillment of solitude emphasize my need for communion. While I am physically alone proves that I understand the essentiality of to be *with*. It is interesting for me to think now how important, even indispensable, it is to be *with*. To be alone has represented for me throughout my lifetime a form of being *with*. I never avoid being with others as if I am afraid of company, as if I do not need others to feel fulfilled, or as if I feel awkward in the world. On the contrary, by isolating myself I get to know myself better while I recognize my limits, and the needs that involve me in a permanent search that would not be viable through isolation. I need the world as the world needs me. Isolation can only make sense when, instead of rejecting communion, it confirms it as a moment of its existence.

A negative isolation is to be found in those who timidly or methodically look to find some refuge in being alone. A negative isolation is characterized by those who selfishly require that everything revolves around them so as to meet their needs. This form of solitude is often required by those who only see themselves even when they are surrounded by a multitude of people. These individuals can only see themselves, their class, or their group due to their greed, which suffocates the rights of others. These types of people are characterized by the

From "Under the Shade of a Mango Tree" from *Pedagogy of the Heart* by Paulo Freire, 1997. Reprinted by permission of The Continuum International Publishing Group.

*An allusion to the Portuguese title of this volume. Cf. footnote page 8, in the foreword, as well as the préface, page 26.

feeling that the more they have, the more they *want* to have—and it does not matter what means they use to achieve their ends. These are insensitive people who add arrogance and meanness to their insensitivity. These are the people who when they are in a good mood, call the popular classes "those people," and when they are in bad mood, refer to them as "trashy people."

Let me first make it clear that I refuse to accept a certain type of scientific criticism that insinuates that I lack rigor in the way I deal with these issues or the overaffective language I use in this process. The passion with which I know, I speak, or I write does not, in any way, diminish the commitment with which I announce or denounce. I am a totality and not a dichotomy. I do not have a side of me that is schematic, meticulous, nationalist, and another side that is disarticulated or imprecise, which simply likes the world. I know with my entire body, with feelings, with passion, and also with reason.

I have been always engaged with many thoughts concerning the challenges that draw me to this or that issue or to the doubts that make me unquiet. These doubts take me to uncertainties, the only place where it is possible to work toward the necessary provisional certainties. It is not the case that it is impossible to be certain about some things. What is impossible is to be absolutely certain, as if the certainty of today were the same as that of yesterday and will continue to be the same as that of tomorrow.

In being methodical concerning the certainty of uncertainties does not deny the isolation of the cognitive possibility. The fundamental certainty is that I can know. *I know that I know*. In the same way, I also know that I do not know, which predisposes me to know the following: first, that I can know better what I know; second, that I can know what I do not know yet; third, that I can produce forms of knowledge that do not exist yet.

In being conscious that I can know socially and historically, I also know that what I know cannot be divorced from the historical continuity. Knowledge has historicity. It never is, it is always in the process of being. But this does not at all diminish, on the one hand, the fundamental certainty that I can know; on the other hand, it does not diminish the possibility of knowing with more methodological rigor that would enhance the level of the accuracy of the findings.

In order to know better what I already know implies, sometimes, to know what before was not possible to know. Thus, the important thing

is to educate the curiosity through which knowledge is constituted as it grows and refines itself through the very exercise of knowing.

An education of answers does not at all help the curiosity that is indispensable in the cognitive process. On the contrary, this form of education emphasizes the mechanical memorization of contents. Only an education of question can trigger, motivate, and reinforce curiosity.

It is obvious that the mistake inherent in an education that forms only in giving answers does not reside in the answer itself but in the rupture between the answer and the question. The mistake lies in the fact that the answer is given independently from the question that triggers it. By the same token, an education of answer would be wrong if the answer is not perceived as part of the question. To question and to answer represent a constitutive path to curiosity.

It is necessary that we should always be expecting that a new knowledge will arise, transcending another that, in being new, would become old.

History, like us, is a process of being limited and conditioned by the knowledge that we produce. Nothing that we engender, live, think, and make explicit takes place outside of time and history. To be certain or to doubt would represent historical forms of being.

Life Support and the World

It would be unthinkable to have a world where the human experience took place outside of a continuity, that is, outside of history. The often-proclaimed "death of history" implies the death of women and men. We cannot survive the death of history: while it is constituted by us, it makes and remakes us. What occurs is the transcendence of a historical phase for another that does not eliminate the continuity of history in the depth of change itself.

It is impossible to change the world into something that is unapealingly immobile, within which nothing happens outside of what has been preestablished, to thereby create a world that is plane, horizontal, and timeless. The world, in order to be, must be in *the process of being*. A world that is plane, horizontal, and timeless could even be compatible with animal life but it remains incompatible with human existence. In this sense, the animals usually adapt to the life-support world, while human beings, in integrating themselves to their contexts so that they can intervene in them, transform the world. It is for this reason that we

can tell stories about what happens in the life-support world, we talk about various forms of life that are formed in it. However, the history that is processed in the world is what is made by human beings.

If communication and intercommunication represent processes that speak to life about the support system, in the existential experience they acquire a special connotation. In this instance, both communication and intercommunication involve the comprehension of the world. The life-support world does not imply a language or the erect posture that permitted the liberation of the hands. The life-support becomes world and life becomes existence to the degree that there is an increasing solidarity between the mind and the hands. In other words, this change depends upon the proportion to which the human body becomes a conscient body that can capture, apprehend, and transform the world so it ceases being an empty space to be filled by contents.*

The process through which humans became erect, produced instruments, spoke, developed understanding, and began to communicate with one another represents tasks that involve solidarity and, simultaneously, imply cause and effect due to the presence of humans and their invention of the world as well as their domination over the life support. To be in the world necessarily implies being *with* the world, and *with* others. For those beings who are simply in the life support, their activities in the life support represent a mere meddling; in the world with its social, historical, and cultural context, human beings interfere more than just merely meddle with the world.

In this sense, the shift from life support to world implies technical inventions and instruments that make the intervention in the world easier. Once these instruments are invented, men and women never stop the process of creating and reinventing new techniques with which they perfect their presence in the world. All operations in the world necessarily involve their comprehension, a knowledge about the process to operate in the world, an inventory about the findings but, above all, a vision with respect to the ends proposed in these operations. The creation intensifies to the degree that the rhythm of change is accelerated by developed techniques, which become more and more adequate to deal with these challenges.

*See *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

The time period between significant changes in the world diminishes increasingly. In certain fields of science and the present technology, it takes a mere few months for the procedure to become obsolete. Sometimes, for reasons that are purely economic, these procedures have "a longer shelf life." This has to do with the resources spent in the development of a particular technological procedure or instruments that have not yet been operated, and, even though these procedures or instruments become obsolete, they continue to be considered efficient.

The ability to reflect, to evaluate, to program, to investigate, and to transform is unique to human beings in the world and with the world. Life becomes existence and life support becomes world when the conscience about the world, which also implies the conscience of the self, emerges and establishes a dialectical relationship with the world. The question between conscience/world that involves their mutual relations led Sartre to observe that "conscience and world take place at the same time." The relations between them are naturally dialectical, regardless of the school of thought and the philosophy that one studies. If one is a mechanist or an idealist, one cannot alter the dialectic conscience/world and subjectivity/objectivity. This does not mean that one mechanistic or idealistic practice is freed from its fundamental error. The plans of action that are based on the conception that conscience is the arbitrary maker of the world, and that defend the idea that before changing the world the moral conscience must be purified, will usually end up in a great failure. By the same token, projects that are based on a mechanistic vision in which the conscience is a mere reflex of the objective materiality cannot escape the punishment of history.

Many possible dreams end up not being viable due to the excess of certainty of their agents; and the capriciousness with which they pretended to mold history instead of making it with others would lead to a remaking of one another in the process. If history is not a superior entity that is above our heads and possesses us, it also cannot be reduced to an object to be manipulated.

By rejecting the dialectical tension between conscience/world, both idealists and mechanists, in their own way, become obstacles to connect intelligence of the world. This has been a theme that has always challenged me, one I have always attempted to address coherently with my

democratic dream. Rarely do I find myself under the shadow of my mango tree without feeling unquiet and not thinking about this.

I am not a being in the life support but a being in the world, with the world, and with others; I am a being who makes things, knows and ignores, speaks, fears and takes risks, dreams and loves, becomes angry and is enchanted. I am a being who rejects the condition of being a mere object. I am a being who does not bow before the indisputable power accumulated by technology because, in knowing that it is a human production, I do not accept that it is, in and of itself, bad. I am a being who rejects a view of technology as a demon's deed designed to throw out God's work.*

It is not enough for me to ask: "What can one do? Technology necessarily engenders automatism, which leads to unemployment. The unemployed must change: they should seek leisure, a fundamental theme of postmodernity." No: I do not accept this form of fatalism.

The state cannot be so liberal as the neoliberals would like it to be. It behooves the progressive political parties to fight in favor of economic development and the limitation of the size of the state. The state should neither be an almighty entity nor a lackey that obeys the orders of those who live well. The projects of economic development cannot exclude men and women of history in the name of any fatalism.

My radical posture requires of me an absolute loyalty to all men and women. An economy that is incapable of developing programs according to human needs, and that coexists indifferently with the hunger of millions of people to whom everything is denied, does not deserve my respect as an educator. Above all, it does not deserve my respect as a human being. And it is not well to say, "Things are the way they are because they cannot be different." They cannot be different because if they were, they would be in conflict with the interests of the ruling class. This cannot, however, be the determining essence of the economic practice. I cannot become fatalistic in order to meet the interests of the ruling class. Neither can I invent a "scientific" explanation to cover up a lie.

*See Neil Postman. *Technology: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.

The power of those in power always aims to decimate the powerless. But, alongside material power, there was always mother force—ideology—which is also material and strengthens the power structure. Technological advances enhance with great efficiency the ideological support of material power.

One of the most important tasks for progressive intellectuals is to demystify postmodern discourses with respect to the inexorability of this situation. I vehemently reject such immobilization of history.

The affirmation that “Things are the way they are because they cannot be otherwise” is hatefully fatalistic since it decrees that happiness only belongs to those in power. The poor people, the disinherited, and those who have been excluded, were destined to die of cold no matter if they are from the South or the North of the world.

If the economic and political power of the ruling class denies the powerless the minimum space to survive, it is not because it should be that way. It is necessary that the weakness of the powerless is transformed into a force capable of announcing justice. For this to happen, a total denouncement of fatalism is necessary. We are transformative beings and not beings for accommodation.

We cannot reject the struggle for the exercise of our capacities and our rights to decide. In this way, I insist that *history is possibility and not determinism*. We are conditioned beings but not determined beings. It is impossible to understand history as possibility if we do not recognize human beings as beings who make free decisions. Without this form of exercise it is not worth speaking about ethics.

Dialogism

I now return to the discussion of a dialogic relationship, while a fundamental practice to human nature and to democracy on the one hand, and on the other, as an epistemological requirement.

As a matter of method, I never directly focus my attention on the object that challenges me in the process of knowledge discovery. On the contrary, by taking epistemological distance from the object, I proceed to approach it by encircling it. “Taking epistemological distance” means taking the object in hand in order to get to know it; in my “epistemological encircling” of it, I seek to decipher some of its reasons for being in order to appropriate its substantiveness better. In the epistemological encircling, I do not intend to isolate the object to apprehend

it; in this operation, I try to understand the object, the interior of its relationship with others.

This is how I will work through the issue of *dialogism*. Instead of describing a profile of the concept of dialogism, I will begin by attempting to comprehend its foundation, what makes of it a strategic requirement, rather than solely the tactics of “smart” subjects toward reaching results. Dialogism must not be understood as a tool used by the educator, at times, in keeping with his or her political choices. Dialogism is a requirement of human nature and also a sign of the educator’s democratic stand.

There is no communication without dialogism, and communication lies at the core of the vital phenomenon. In this sense, communication is life and a vector for *more-life*. But, if communication and information occur on the level of life upon its support, let us imagine its importance and, thus, that of dialogism for human existence in the world. On this level, communication and information are served by sophisticated languages and by technological instruments that “shorten” space and time. The social production of language and of instruments with which human beings can better interfere in the world announce what technology will be.

Not too long ago, my grandson, Alexandre Dowbor, called me to say that his computer, connected to the Internet, had “picked up” a message from a German scholar requesting my address. He responded to her request and also provided my fax number. Fifteen minutes later, I was talking with the German professor: thanks to technology.

If my mother, who died in 1978, had been back to the earth for a moment and listened to my conversation with Alexandre, she would have understood nothing.

I have called attention to human nature as *being* socially and historically *constituted*, rather than as preexisting. The trajectory through which we make ourselves conscious is marked by finiteness, by inconclusion, and it characterizes us as historical beings.

Not only have we been unfinished, but we have made ourselves capable of knowing ourselves as such. Here, an opportunity is open for us to become immersed in a permanent search. One of the roots of education, which makes it specifically human, lies in the radicalness of an inconclusion that is perceived as such. The permanence of education also lies in the constant character of the search, perceived as necessary. Likewise, here lie

also roots of the metaphysical foundation of hope. How would it be possible for a consciously inconclusive being to become immersed in a permanent search without hope? My hope starts from my nature as a project. For this reason I am hopeful, and not for pure stubbornness.

In order for finiteness, which implies a process, a claim for education, it is necessary that the being involved becomes aware of it. Consciousness of one's inconclusiveness makes that being educable. Unfinishedness in the absence of consciousness about it engenders *domestication* and *cultivation*. Animals are domesticated; plants are cultivated; men and women educate themselves.

Consciousness of, an intentionality of consciousness does not end with rationality. Consciousness about the world, which implies consciousness about myself in the world, with it and with others, which also implies our ability to realize the world, to understand it, is not limited to a rationalistic experience. This consciousness is a totality—reason, feelings, emotions, desires; my body, conscious of the world and myself, seizes the world toward which it has an intention.

My *conscious body's* constant exercise in releasing itself *even to or from* my consciousness intending toward the world brings or contains in itself a certain quality of life that, in the human existence, becomes more intense and richer. I am referring to the need for *relational* experience on the level of *existence* and of *interactions*, the level of *living*.

There is a fundamental element in *interaction*, which takes on greater complexity in *relationship*, I am referring to *curiosity*, some sort of openness to comprehending what is in the orbit of the challenged being's sensibility. It is this human disposition to be surprised before people, what they do, say, seem like, before facts and phenomena, before beauty and ugliness, this unrefrainable need to understand in order to explain, to seek the reason for being of facts. It is this desire, always alive, of feeling, living, realizing what lies in the realm of one's "visions of depth" (see *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New Revised 20th-Anniversary Edition, New York: Continuum, 1993).

Without the curiosity that makes us beings in permanent availability for questioning—be the questioning well constructed or poorly founded, it does not matter—there would be no gnoseologic activity, a concrete expression of our possibility of knowing.

Concern with the mechanical memorization of content is curious, the use of repetitive exercises that surpass a reasonable limit

while leaving out a *critical education about curiosity* (see Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez, *Learning to Question*, New York: Continuum, 1989). We continue to discourse about answers and questions that were not posed to us, without emphasizing the importance of curiosity to the students.

Let us take half a day in Pedro's life as the object of our curiosity. Let us follow his main movements: he awakes, showers, eats breakfast. He skims the first pages of the newspaper, and since he lives near the university where he works, he walks over there. He leaves the house, greets some people, walks past others; carefree, he observes the rushed movement of those coming and going; he says good morning to some, smiles at others. At the sight of a walk sign, he walks across to the other side. He runs into a friend, detains himself. It is a short conversation, promises of meeting again, who knows, maybe next Wednesday. They know they are not going to meet then. The promises will not hurt either one. They will not expect each other next Wednesday.

Peter gets to the university. He greets some coworkers and students. He heads over to the room where the Tuesday seminars are held.

So far, from the moment of his morning shower to his arrival at the seminar room, Pedro has not once questioned himself about this or that action of his. His mind is not epistemologically operating. This is what characterizes our movement through the world of day-to-day life.

That does not mean to say that there may not be curiosity in day-to-day life. It exists and it could not not exist: there we have it, human life, existence. In this domain, however, our curiosity is *unguarded*, spontaneous, without any methodical rigor. It does not lack method, for there cannot be curiosity without method: it is methodical in itself.

There is another way to immerse ourselves pleasurably in a challenge. It is a matter of aesthetic curiosity. It is what makes me stop and gaze upon the sunset. It is what detains me, lost in my contemplation of the speed and elegance with which the clouds move across the blue depth of the sky. It is what touches me when faced with a work of art that centers me in beauty.

Unguarded curiosity must not be the way for Pedro to behave in the classroom. The seminar room is a *theoretical context*, which is in a contradictory relationship with a *concrete context*, where facts occur; thus, it demands epistemological curiosity. This curiosity, however, does not refuse to consider the aesthetic. On the contrary, it avails itself of it.

In a theoretical context, we take distance from the concrete one in order, while objectifying it, to examine what takes place in it critically. In a concrete context, there is always the possibility of its subjects' adopting a reflective-critical position; in it, spontaneous curiosity may come to be epistemological.

If, while engaged in concreteness, I could not distance myself from it in order to understand it better only because I found myself in action, the relationship between the concrete context and the theoretical one would be solely mechanical. In order to reflect theoretically upon my practice, it is not required that I change physical contexts. It is required that my curiosity become epistemological. The appropriate context for the exercise of epistemological curiosity is the theoretical one. But physical space is not what makes a context theoretical, the state of the mind is. That being, hence, how we may convert a given moment in the concrete context into a theoretical moment.

Likewise, the space of the concrete context does not necessarily make it theoretical, but the epistemologically curious posture with which we may operate in it does. In the same way, the methodological rigor indispensable to the theoretical context may be twisted, leading one to operate mechanically in that context. The *banking* model of educational practice is of this kind.

Spontaneous curiosity is not what makes it possible to take epistemological distance. This task belongs to epistemological curiosity—overcoming naive curiosity, it makes itself more methodically rigorous. It is this methodical rigor that takes knowledge from the level of *common sense* to that of scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge is not what is rigorous. Rigor lies in the method applied in an approach to the object. This rigor allows for a greater or lesser *precision* in the knowledge produced or found through our epistemological quest.

As we emphasize an epistemologically curious posture as fundamental in constituting the theoretical context, the importance of this space should be clear. Due attention to the educational space, while it is a context open to the exercise of epistemological curiosity, should be a concern of every serious educational project.

Attention should go into every detail of the school space: hygiene, wall furnishings, cleanliness of desks, the teacher's desk setup, educational materials, books, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and little by little, the introduction of projectors, video, fax, computers. By making clear that the educational space is

valuable, the administration is able to demand the due respect for it from learners. Further, this is the way to facilitating the exercise of epistemological curiosity. Without that, the progressive educational practice deteriorates.

While a practice of learning and teaching, educational practice is gnoseologic by nature. The role of the progressive educator is to challenge the learner's naive curiosity in order that they can both share criticalness. That is how an educational practice can affirm itself as the unveiling of hidden truths.

I have previously mentioned the mistake of the postmodernist, who before such contemporary demands as responsiveness to different situations, must defend a certain variety of critical education. To them, however, such education must not go beyond the administrative and technical domains, which are seen as neutral.

The pragmatic reactionary educator who teaches biology, for example, sees no reason to challenge the learner to discuss the vital phenomenon from a social, ideological, or political point of view. What is strictly necessary for them is to deposit contents about the vital phenomenon in the learner.

A technicistic vision of education, which renders it purely technical, or worse yet neutral, works toward the instrumental *training* of the learner. It assumes that there is no longer any antagonism between interests, that everything is more or less the same, and that all that really matters is solely technical training, the standardization of content, and the transfer of a well-behaved *knowledge of results*.

Within such political vision, the permanent development of educators will adhere too much to the *banking* model. The enlightened professional development committees will be interested in training front-line educators—reduced to the role of subordinate intellectuals—into using teaching techniques and materials designed to transfer the “indispensable” content (see Henry Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals—Toward a Critical Pedagogy*).

Well to the liking of the World Bank, this political vision necessarily ignores the intelligence and judgment and creative abilities of teachers. Teachers need to be respected, decently paid, called into discussions of their problems, the local, regional, and national problems woven into the problems of education. They must not be diminished and blamed for the gaps in their professional development.

Let us overcome the gaps, but not from the starting point of raising the proclaimed incompetence of teachers. It would be extraordinary if—given our historic situation of disrespect toward public problems, toward teachers, with the starving salaries that they receive—the majority of them *did not* result in desperation.

We shall overcome the gaps by redirecting public spending, eliminating wasteful spending, and eradicating contempt for public property, through an effective fiscal policy, and by revising the role of the state. From all that, the concrete possibility will result in a pedagogical policy based on the decent treatment of teachers and on the exercise of their legitimate development. Only from this point on will it be possible to demand effectiveness from teachers.

Let us return to the issue of dialogism in relation to naive and epistemological curiosity. A dialogic relationship—communication and intercommunication among active subjects who are immune to the bureaucratization of their minds and open to discovery and to knowing more—is indispensable to knowledge. The social nature of this process makes a dialogical relationship a natural element of it. In that sense, authoritarian antidialogue violates the nature of human beings, their process of discovery, and it contradicts democracy.

Authoritarian regimes are enemies of curiosity. They punish citizens for displaying it. Authoritarian power is prying, not curious or questioning. Dialogue, on the other hand, is full of curiosity and unrest. It is full of mutual respect between the dialoging subjects. Dialogism presupposes maturity, a spirit of adventure, confidence in questioning, and seriousness in providing answers. In a dialogic atmosphere, the questioning subject knows the reason for being the questioner. They do not ask questions just for asking or just to seem *alive* to the listener.

A dialogic relationship is the mark of agnoseologic process: it is not a favor or kindness. Dialogic seriousness and surrender to a critical quest must not be confused with *babbling*. To dialogue is not to babble. That is why there may be dialogue in a professor's critical, rigorously methodical exposition, to which the learners' listen as if to *eat up* the discourse, but also to understand its intellection.

Even though things are never just their atmosphere, but are things themselves, we may speak of a *dialogic atmosphere*. There is an invisible, previous dialogue where one does not need to *make up* questions. Truly democratic educators *are not* for the moment, but *are* by nature

dialogic. One of their substantive tasks in our society is to gestate this dialogic atmosphere.

Dialogic experience is fundamental for building epistemological curiosity. Dialogue also implies a critical posture; it implies a preoccupation with the *raison d'être* of the objects that mediates the subjects of the dialogue.

The growing gap between educational practice and the epistemological curiosity exercise is of concern to me. I fear the curiosity achieved by an educational practice reduced to pure technique may be an anesthetized curiosity, one that does not go past a *scientificist* position before the world.

This is what lies at the core of the "pragmatic" discourse about education. The utopia of solidarity makes way for technical training directed toward survival in a world without dreams, "which have created enough problems." In this case, what matters is training learners just so they can *manage* well.

What counts is training them so that they can adapt without protest. Protest agitates, undermines, twists the truth; it disrupts and moves against order, against the *silence* needed from those who produce.

I reject this fatalism in the name of my understanding of the human being and of history, of my ethical point of view and, because I cannot deny it, of my faith. Here and in other writings, I have spoken about how I understand the human being and history. I would like to emphasize the *finiteness* we are aware of that makes us beings inserted in a permanent search for *being more*—both the natural inclination and the risk of losing *direction* at the same time. Our historical inclination is not fate, but rather possibility. And there cannot be possibility that is not exposed to its negation, to impossibility. Conversely, something impossible today may come to be possible some day. In history as possibility we cannot be but responsible, thus ethical. Such responsibility implies an equally ethical struggle so that we can live up to it. The fact that we are ontologically responsible is not something that can be experienced without search, without fighting against those who irresponsibly prohibit us from being responsible for our own freedom. For this reason, the struggle for liberation implies a previous task, that of accepting the very struggle only as we stand for it. That is how we liberate ourselves, or fail to. Freedom, without which we cannot be, is not a gift but a conquest.

The statement, "Things are as they are because they cannot be any other way," is one of the many instruments used by the dominant in an attempt to abort the dominated's *resistance*. The more historically anesthetized, the more fatalistically immersed in a reality impossible to be touched, let alone transformed, the less of a future we have. Hope is pulverized in the immobility of a crushing present, some sort of final stop beyond which nothing is possible (*Pedagogy of Hope*).

THERE IS NO TEACHING WITHOUT LEARNING

Although my main interest in this book is to look at the kind of knowledge that is indispensable to educators who consider themselves to be critical progressives, such knowledge may be indispensable to educators who regard themselves as conservatives. I refer here to the kind of knowledge that belongs inherently to educative practice itself, whatever the political persuasion of the educator.

As the chapters unfold, the reader can make up his or her own mind as to whether the knowledge I discuss is part of progressive or conservative educative practice or is an intrinsic requirement of educational practice itself, independent of political or ideological coloring. In previous writings, I have referred to various aspects of this kind of knowledge, though not in any systematic way. Even so, it seems to me legitimate to continue this kind of reflection in the context of teacher preparation and in critical educational practice.

Let us take, for example, the practice of cooking. Cooking presupposes certain kinds of knowledge regarding the use of the cooking stove. How to light it. How to turn the heat up and down. How to deal with the possibility of fire. How to balance the ingredients in a harmonious and pleasing synthesis. With practice newcomers to the kitchen will confirm some of the things they already know, correct others that they do not know so well, and gradually open up the way to become cooks. The practice of sailing requires some fundamental knowledge about the control of the boat, the parts of which it is made, and the function of each of them. It requires, in addition, a capacity to measure and interpret the strength and direction of the winds, to gauge the interaction between the wind and sail, and to

position the sails themselves. It requires, too, some knowledge of the motor and the relationship between it and the sails. And, in the practice of sailing, all these kinds of knowledge are either confirmed, modified, or amplified.

Critical reflection on practice is a requirement of the relationship between theory and practice. Otherwise theory becomes simply "blah, blah, blah," and practice, pure activism.

But let me return to what interests me here. I want to focus on and discuss some of the kinds of knowledge that are fundamental to what I call critical (or progressive) educative practice and that, for that reason, ought to be considered essential in the teacher preparation program. Essential in their comprehension and lucid clarity. The very first of these types of knowledge, indispensable from the beginning to the teacher (that is, to the teacher who considers him- or herself to be an agent in the production of knowledge), is that to teach is not to *transfer knowledge* but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge.

If, during the time of my education, which in any case should be ongoing, I begin believing that my teacher is the "subject" in relation to whom I consider myself to be the "object" (if, in other words, he/she is the subject who forms me, and I, the object shaped by him or her), then I put myself in the passive role of one who receives quantities of accumulated knowledge, transferred to me by a "subject" who "knows." Living and understanding my educational process in this way, I, as "object," will become in my turn a false subject, responsible for the reproduction of further objects. It is essential therefore, from the very beginning of the process, that the following principle be clear: namely, that although the teachers or the students are not the same, the person in charge of education is being formed or re-formed as he/she teaches, and the person who is being taught forms him/herself in this process. In this sense teaching is not about transferring knowledge or contents. Nor is it an act whereby a creator-subject gives shape, style, or soul to an indecisive and complacent body. There is, in fact, no teaching without learning. One requires the other. And the subject of each, despite their obvious differences, cannot be educated to the status of object. Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning. From the grammatical point of view, the verb to teach is a "transitive-relative" verb, that is, a verb that requires a direct object (something) and an indirect object (to someone). In this sense, to teach is teaching

something to someone. But to teach is much more than a transitive-relative verb. And this is clear not only from the context of democratic thought in which I place myself but also from an essentially metaphysical point of view in which my comprehension of the cognitive process is grounded. In other words, simply "to teach" is not possible in the context of human historical unfinishedness. Socially and historically, women and men discovered that it was the process of learning that made (and makes) teaching possible. Learning in social contexts through the ages, people discovered that it was possible to develop ways, paths, and methods of teaching. To learn, then, logically precedes to teach. In other words, to teach is part of the very fabric of learning. This is true to such an extent that I do not hesitate to say that there is no valid teaching from which there does not emerge something learned and through which the learner does not become capable of recreating and remaking what has been thought. In essence, teaching that does not emerge from the experience of learning cannot be learned by anyone.

When we live our lives with the authenticity demanded by the practice of teaching that is also learning and learning that is also teaching, we are participating in a total experience that is simultaneously directive, political, ideological, gnostic, pedagogical, aesthetic, and ethical. In this experience the beautiful, the decent, and the serious form a circle with hands joined.

At times, in moments of silence when I seem to be lost, floating, almost disconnected, I reflect on the way that women and men are and have become "programmed for learning," in the words of François Jacob. In other words, the process of learning, through which historically we have discovered that teaching is a task not only inherent to the learning process but is also characterized by it, can set off in the learner an ever-increasing creative curiosity. What I'm really saying is this: The more critically one exercises one's capacity for learning, the greater is one's capacity for constructing and developing what I call "epistemological curiosity," without which it is not possible to obtain a complete grasp of the object of our knowledge.

This understanding of epistemological curiosity brings us, on the one hand, to a critique and a refusal of the "banking system" of education, and, on the other hand, to an understanding that, even when submitted to this system that is a deformation of the creativity of both

learners and teachers, the learners are not necessarily fated to stagnate. Not because of the "teaching" they have received but because of the very process of learning itself, learners can circumvent and outmaneuver the authoritarianism and the epistemological error of this "banking system."

What is essential is that learners, though subjected to the praxis of the "banking system," maintain alive the flame of resistance that sharpens their curiosity and stimulates their capacity for risk, for adventure, so as to immunize themselves against the banking system. In this sense, the creative force of the learning process, which encompasses comparison, repetition, observation, indomitable doubt, and curiosity not easily satisfied, overcomes the negative effects of false teaching. This capacity to go beyond the factors of conditioning is one of the obvious advantages of the human person. Of course, this capacity does not mean that it is a matter of indifference to us whether we become a "banking system" educator or one whose role is essentially to "problematize," to use the critical faculty.

Methodological Rigor

The educator with a democratic vision or posture cannot avoid in his teaching praxis insisting on the critical capacity, curiosity, and autonomy of the learner. One of the essential tasks of the teaching process is to introduce the learners to the methodological exactitude with which they should approach the learning process, through which the objects of learning are knowable. And this methodological exactitude has nothing to do with the discourse of the "banking system," something that merely touches the surface of the object or its contents. It's exactly in this sense that to teach cannot be reduced to a superficial or externalized contact with the object or its content but extends to the production of the conditions in which critical learning is possible. These conditions imply and demand the presence of teaching and learning simultaneously in the context of a rigorous methodological curiosity anxious to explore the limits of creativity, persistent in the search, and courageously humble in the adventure. In these conditions, those who are engaged in critical learning know that their teachers are continuously in the process of acquiring new knowledge and that this new knowledge cannot simply be transferred to them, the learners. At the same time, in the context of true learning, the learners will be engaged

in a continuous transformation through which they become authentic subjects of the construction and reconstruction of what is being taught, side by side with the teacher, who is equally subject to the same process. Only in this way can we speak authentically of knowledge that is taught, in which the taught is grasped in its very essence and, therefore, learned by those who are learning.

Thus it becomes clear that the role of the educator is one of a tranquil possession of certitude in regard to the teaching not only of contents but also of "correct thinking." Therefore, it becomes obvious that she/he will never develop a truly "critical" perspective as a teacher by indulging in mechanical memorization or the rhythmic repetition of phrases and ideas at the expense of creative challenge. Intellectuals who memorize everything, reading for hours on end, slaves to the text, fearful of taking a risk, speaking as if they were reciting from memory, fail to make any concrete connections between what they have read and what is happening in the world, the country, or the local community. They repeat what has been read with precision but rarely teach anything of personal value. They speak correctly about dialectical thought but think mechanistically. Such teachers inhabit an idealized world, a world of mere data, disconnected from the one most people inhabit.

It's not possible to read critically if one treats reading as if it were a similar operation to buying in bulk. What's the point of boasting of having read twenty books—twenty books! Really reading involves a kind of relationship with the text, which offers itself to me and to which I give myself and through the fundamental comprehension of which I undergo the process of becoming a subject. While reading, I'm not just a captive of the mind of the text as if it were simply a product of its author. This is a vitiated form of reading that has nothing to do with thinking or teaching correctly.

In fact, the person who thinks "correctly," even if at times she/he thinks wrongly, is the only one capable of teaching "correct" thinking. For one of the necessary requirements for correct thinking is a capacity for not being overly convinced of one's own certitudes. Taking into account the need for a rigorous ethical purity totally distinct from Puritanism (in other words, an ethical purity that generates beauty), correct thinking is in this sense irreconcilable with self-conceited arrogance.

The teacher who thinks "correctly" transmits to the students the beauty of our way of existing in the world as historical beings, capable

of intervening in and knowing this world. Historical as we are, our knowledge of the world has historicity. It transmits, in addition, that our knowing and our knowledge are the fruit of historicity. And that knowledge, when newly produced, replaces what before was new but is now old and ready to be surpassed by the coming of a new dawn. Therefore, it is as necessary to be immersed in existing knowledge as it is to be open and capable of producing something that does not yet exist. And these two moments of the epistemological process are accounted for in teaching, learning, and doing research. The one moment, in which knowledge that already exists is taught and learned, and the other, in which the production of what is not yet known is the object of research. Thus, the teaching-learning process, together with the work of research, is essential and an inseparable aspect of the gnostic cycle.

Research

Once again, there is no such thing as teaching without research and research without teaching. One inhabits the body of the other. As I teach, I continue to search and re-search. I teach because I search, because I question, and because I submit myself to questioning. I research because I notice things, take cognizance of them. And in so doing, I intervene. And intervening, I educate and educate myself. I do research so as to know what I do not yet know and to communicate and proclaim what I discover.

To think correctly, in critical terms, is a requirement imposed by the rhythms of the gnostic circle on our curiosity, which, as it becomes more methodologically rigorous, progresses from ingenuity to what I have called "epistemological curiosity." Ingenuous curiosity, from which there results, without doubt, a certain kind of knowledge (even though not methodologically rigorous) is what characterizes "common sense" knowing. It is knowledge extracted from pure experience. To think correctly, from the teacher's point of view, implies respect for "common sense" knowing as it progresses from "common sense" to its higher stage. It also implies respect and stimulus for the creative capacity of the learner. It further implies a commitment on the part of educators and teachers that respects the critical consciousness of the learner, in the knowledge that the ingenuous consciousness of the learner will not be overcome automatically.

Respect for What Students Know

For this reason, thinking correctly puts the responsibility on the teacher, or, more correctly, on the school, not only to respect the kinds of knowledge that exist especially among the popular classes—knowledge socially constructed in communitarian praxis—but also (as I've been saying for thirty years) to discuss with the students the logic of these kinds of knowledge in relation to their contents.

Why not, for example, take advantage of the students' experience of life in those parts of the city neglected by the authorities to discuss the problems of pollution in the rivers and the question of poverty and the risks to health from the rubbish heaps in such areas? Why are there no rubbish heaps in the heart of the rich areas of the city? This question is considered "in bad taste." Pure demagoguery. Almost subversive, say the defenders of democracy.

Why not discuss with the students the concrete reality of their lives and that aggressive reality in which violence is permanent and where people are much more familiar with death than with life? Why not establish an "intimate" connection between knowledge considered basic to any school curriculum and knowledge that is the fruit of the lived experience of these students as individuals? Why not discuss the implications, political and ideological, of the neglect of the poor areas of the city by the constituted authorities? Are there class-related ethical questions that need to be looked at here? A pragmatic reactionary educator would probably say that there is no connection between one thing and the other. That the school is not the Party. That the function of the school is to teach and transfer contents—packages—to the students, which, once learned, will operate automatically.

A Capacity to Be Critical

It is my conviction that the difference and the distance between ingenuity and critical thinking, between knowledge resulting from pure experience and that resulting from rigorous methodological procedure, do not constitute a rupture but a sort of further stage in the knowing process. This further stage, which is a continuity rather than a rupture, happens when ingenuous curiosity, while remaining curious, becomes capable of self-criticism. In criticizing itself, ingenuous curiosity becomes "epistemological curiosity," as through greater methodological exactitude it appropriates the object of its knowing.

In truth, ingenuous, "unarmed" curiosity, which is associated with common sense knowledge, is the same curiosity that, as it develops its critical possibilities through a more rigorous methodological approximation of the known object, becomes epistemological curiosity. It changes in quality but not in essence. The curiosity of simple rural people with whom I have been in dialogue throughout my politico-pedagogical career, whether fatalist or rebellious in the face of the violence of injustice, is the same curiosity, in the sense of a kind of awe or wonder in the presence of the "not I," common to scientists or philosophers as they contemplate the world. Scientists and philosophers, however, overcome the ingenuous curiosity of simple folk and become "epistemologically" curious.

Curiosity as restless questioning, as movement toward the revelation of something hidden, as a question verbalized or not, as search for clarity, as a moment of attention, suggestion, and vigilance, constitutes an integral part of the phenomenon of being alive. There could be no creativity without the curiosity that moves us and sets us patiently impatient before a world that we did not make, to add to it something of our own making.

In fact, human curiosity, as a phenomenon present to all vital experience, is in a permanent process of social and historical construction and reconstruction. It's precisely because ingenuous curiosity does not automatically become critical that one of the essential tasks of progressive educational praxis is the promotion of a curiosity that is critical, bold, and adventurous. A type of curiosity that can defend us from the excess of a rationality that now inundates our highly technologized world. Which does not mean that we are to adopt a false humanist posture of denying the value of technology and science. On the contrary, it's a posture of balance that neither deifies nor demonizes technology. A posture that is from those who consider technology from a critically curious standpoint.

Ethics and Aesthetics

Further, the necessary process from ingenuous to critical curiosity should also be accompanied by a rigorous ethical formation side by side with an aesthetic appreciation. Beauty and decency, hand in hand. I am more and more convinced that educational praxis, while avoiding the trap of puritanical moralism, cannot avoid the task of

becoming a clear witness to decency and purity. That is, it cannot avoid the task of being a permanent critique of the easy solutions that tempt us away from the true path that we need to construct and follow. As men and women inserted in and formed by a socio-historical context of relations, we become capable of comparing, evaluating, intervening, deciding, taking new directions, and thereby constituting ourselves as ethical beings. It is in our becoming that we constitute our being so. Because the condition of becoming is the condition of being. In addition, it is not possible to imagine the human condition disconnected from the ethical condition. Because to be disconnected from it or to regard it as irrelevant constitutes for us women and men a transgression. For this reason, to transform the experience of educating into a matter of simple technique is to impoverish what is fundamentally human in this experience: namely, its capacity to form the human person. If we have any serious regard for what it means to be human, the teaching of contents cannot be separated from the moral formation of the learners. To educate is essentially to form. To deify or demonize technology or science is an extremely negative way of thinking incorrectly. To act in front of students as if the truth belongs only to the teacher is not only preposterous but also false. To think correctly demands profundity and not superficiality in the comprehension and interpretation of the facts. It presupposes an openness that allows for the revision of conclusions; it recognizes not only the possibility of making a new choice or a new evaluation but also the *right* to do so. However, since there can be no "right thinking" disconnected from ethical principles, it is also clear that the demands of "right thinking" require that the possibility or the right to change be not simply rhetorical. In other words, to claim the right to change requires a coherence that makes a difference. There is no point in making such a claim and continuing as if nothing had changed.

Words Incarnated in Example

The teacher who really teaches, that is, who really works with contents within the context of methodological exactitude, will deny as false the hypocritical formula, "do as I say, not as I do." Whoever is engaged in "right thinking" knows only too well that words not given body (made flesh) have little or no value. Right thinking is right doing.

What are serious students to think of a teacher who for two semesters spoke passionately about the necessity for popular movements to struggle for their autonomy and who today, denying that he has changed, indulges in pragmatic attacks against these same popular classes, attributing little or no value to their utopias, and who himself fully engaged in transferring his own knowledge to his students à la banking system. What can be said of the teacher who until recently, as a member of a leftist party, defended the necessity of education for the working classes and who now, resigned fatalistically to neoliberal pragmatism, is satisfied with the simple professional training of the unemployed, while considering that he is still "progressive" pedagogically and politically?

There is no right thinking that can be separated from a kind of coherent, lived practice that is capable of reformulating contents and paradigms instead of simply negating what is no longer regarded as relevant. It is absurd for teachers to imagine that they are engaged in right thinking and at the same time to relate to the student in a patronizing way.

The attitude, which is a way of being and not just an occasional phase, of the teacher engaged in right thinking demands a seriousness in the search for secure and solid bases for his/her positions. A teacher with such an attitude, while capable of disagreeing with an opponent, does not harbor rancor against that person in such a way that the rancor assumes proportions greater than the reasons for the original disagreement. Once, one such rancorous person forbade a student who was doing a dissertation on literacy and citizenship from reading any of my works. "He is old hat," was the rigorously "neutral" way that he dismissed the "object" that was myself. "If you read his work you will end up the worse for it," was his concluding remark to the student. That is no way to be engaged in right thinking or in right teaching. Integral to right thinking is a generous heart, one that, while not denying the right to anger, can distinguish it from cynicism or unbalanced fury.

Risk, Acceptance of What Is New, and Rejection of Discrimination

Proper to right thinking is a willingness to risk, to welcome the new, which cannot be rejected simply because it is new no more than the old can be rejected because chronologically it is no longer new. The old is

capable of remaining new when it remains faithful through time to the experience of original and founding intuitions and inspirations.

It is equally part of right thinking to reject decidedly any and every form of discrimination. Preconceptions of race, class, or sex offend the essence of human dignity and constitute a radical negation of democracy. How far from these values we are when we tolerate the impunity of those who kill a street child; those who murder peasants who struggle for a minimum of justice; those who discriminate on the basis of color, burning churches where blacks pray because prayer is only white; those who treat women as inferior beings; and so on. I feel more pity than rage at the absurd arrogance of this kind of white supremacy, passing itself off to the world as democracy. In fact, this form of thinking and doing is far removed from the humility demanded by "right" thinking. Nor has it anything to do with the good sense that keeps our exaggerations in check and helps us avoid falling into the ridiculous and the senseless.

There are times when I fear that someone reading this, even if not yet totally converted to neoliberal pragmatism but perhaps somewhat contaminated by it, may think that there is no more place among us for the dreamer and the believer in utopia. Yet what I have been saying up to now is not the stuff of inconsequential dreamers. It has to do with the very nature of men and women as makers and dreamers of history and not simply as casualties of an *a priori* vision of the world.

Given my understanding of human nature, I have no option but to defend the position I have been defending all along. It's a demand about right thinking that I make on myself as I write this text. The demand, that is, that right thinking belongs intimately to right doing. In this sense, to teach right thinking is not something that is simply spoken of or an experience that is merely described. But something that is done and lived while it is being spoken of, as if the doing and living of it constituted a kind of irrefutable witness of its truth. To think correctly implies the existence of subjects whose thinking is mediated by objects that provoke and modify the thinking subject. Thinking correctly is, in other words, not an isolated act or something to draw near in isolation but an act of communication. For this reason, there is no right thinking without understanding, and this understanding, from a correct thinking point of view, is not something transferred but something that belongs essentially to the process of coparticipation. If, from the grammatical

point of view, the verb to understand is "transitive," in relation to a correct way of thinking it is also a verb whose subject is always a coparticipant with the other. All understanding, if it is not mechanistically treated, that is, submitted to the alienating care that threatens the mind and that I have been designating as a "bureaucratized" mind, necessarily implies communicability. There is no knowing (that is, connecting one thing to another) something that is not at the same time a "communication" of the something known (unless, of course, the process of knowing has broken down). The act of a correct way of thinking does not "transfer," "deposit," "offer," or "donate" to the other as if the receiver were a passive object of facts, concepts, and intelligibility. To be coherent, the educator who thinks correctly, exercising as a human subject the incontestable practice of comprehension, challenges the learner with whom and to whom she/he communicates to produce her or his understanding of what is being communicated. There is no intelligibility that is not at the same time communication and intercommunication, and that is not grounded in dialogue. For this reason, a correct way of thinking is dialogical and not polemical.

Critical Reflection on Practice

A correct way of thinking knows, for example, that the practice of critical teaching is not built as if thinking correctly were a mere given. However, it knows that without a correct way of thinking, there can be no critical practice. In other words, the practice of critical teaching, implicit in a correct way of thinking, involves a dynamic and dialectical movement between "doing" and "reflecting on doing." The knowledge produced by spontaneous or almost spontaneous teaching practice is ingenuous in the sense that it lacks the methodological rigor that characterizes the epistemological curiosity of a reflecting subject. Such knowledge is not what disciplined, correct thinking seeks. For this reason it is essential that during the experience of teaching preparation, the prospective teacher must realize that a correct way of thinking is not a gift from heaven, nor is it to be found in teachers' guide books, put there by illuminated intellectuals who occupy the center of power. On the contrary, a correct way of thinking that goes beyond the ingenuous must be produced by the learners in communion with the teacher responsible for their education. At the same time, it is necessary to insist that the matrix both of ingenuous and critical thinking is the same

curiosity that characterizes all human vitality. In this sense, the untrained teachers in rural areas around Pernambuco, Brazil, or in any of the world's "remote" places, are as curious as the professor of philosophy of education in any university. All that is necessary is that, through reflection on a given practice, ingenuous curiosity perceive itself as such so as to advance to the critical stage.

For this reason, in the process of the ongoing education of teachers, the essential moment is that of critical reflection on one's practice. Thinking critically about practice, of today or yesterday, makes possible the improvement of tomorrow's practice. Even theoretical discourse itself, necessary as it is to critical reflection, must be concrete enough to be clearly identifiable with practice. Its epistemological "distance" from practice as an object of analysis ought to be compensated for by an even greater proximity to the object of analysis, in terms of lived experience. The better this process is accomplished, the greater is the gain in intelligence and the greater the possibility of communicability in overcoming an ingenuous attitude toward knowledge. In addition, the more I acknowledge my own process and attitudes and perceive the reasons behind these, the more I am capable of changing and advancing from the stage of ingenuous curiosity to epistemological curiosity. It's really not possible for someone to imagine himself/herself as a subject in the process of becoming without having at the same time a disposition for change. And change of which she/he is not merely the victim but the subject.

It is an idealistic exaggeration, for example, to imagine that the objective threat that smoking poses to anyone's health and to my life is enough to make me stop smoking. Of course, the objective threat is contextually essential if I am to take any steps at all. But such a threat will only become a "subjective" decision to the degree that it generates new options that can provoke a break with past habits and an acceptance of new commitments: When I assume consciously the danger represented by smoking, I am then moved to reflect on its consequences and to engage in a decision-making process, leading to a break, an option, which becomes concretized, materially speaking, in the practice of "not smoking," a practice grounded on the risk to health and life implicit in smoking.

There is another fundamental element here too: the emotional one. In other words, in addition to the knowledge I have of the harm smoking

does to me, I now have, through the consciousness I have acquired of this harm, a sense of legitimate anger. In addition, I have a sense of joy that I was able to be angry because it means that I can continue to live a while longer in the world. The kind of education that does not recognize the right to express appropriate anger against injustice, against disloyalty, against the negation of love, against exploitation, and against violence fails to see the educational role implicit in the expression of these feelings. One thinks of Christ's anger against the merchants in the temple. Of those who struggle for agrarian reform against the enemies of agrarian reform. Of the victims of violence and of discrimination based on class, race, and sex. Of those whose victimization cannot be vindicated because of the perpetrator's impunity. Of those who go hungry against those who not only eat well but also waste food, as if life belonged to them alone. However, it's important to stress the "appropriateness" of this anger; otherwise it simply degenerates into rage and even hatred.

Cultural Identity

It's interesting to take a close look at the verb "to assume," which is a transitive verb and can have as its object the person who assumes his or herself. For example, I can assume the risk inherent in smoking just as much as I can assume myself (what I am) as the subject and object of that assumption. When I say that in order to stop smoking it is essential that I assume that smoking constitutes a risk to my life, what I am really saying is that I have acquired a complete and clear picture of what smoking is and what its consequences are. A more radical sense of "to assume" is when I say: One of the most important tasks of critical educational practice is to make possible the conditions in which the learners, in their interaction with one another and with their teachers, engage in the experience of assuming themselves as social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons; dreamers of possible utopias, capable of being angry because of a capacity to love. Capable of assuming themselves as "subject" because of the capacity to recognize themselves as "object." All this, while bearing in mind that the assumption of oneself does not signify the exclusion of others. Because it is the otherness of the "not I" or the "you" that makes me assume the radicality of the "I." There's another question that cannot be overlooked either, namely, the question of cultural identity in relation

to both individuals and classes among the learners and for which (in the context of forward-looking educational practice) respect is absolutely fundamental. It is connected directly to the challenge of assuming who we are, which is what a purely technical, objective, and grammatical vision of education cannot do or be.

The historical, political, social, and cultural experience of men and women can never be acquired outside of the conflict between those forces that are dedicated to the prevention of self-assumption on the part of individuals and groups and those forces that work in favor of such an assumption. Teaching preparation that considers itself to be above such "intrigues" does nothing less than work in favor of the obstacles to self-assumption. The socio-political solidarity that we need today to build a less ugly and less intolerant human community where we can be really what we are cannot neglect the importance of democratic practice. Purely pragmatic training, with its implicit or openly expressed elitist authoritarianism, is incompatible with the learning and practice of becoming a "subject."

Sometimes a simple, almost insignificant gesture on the part of a teacher can have a profound formative effect on the life of a student. I will always remember one such gesture in my life when I was an adolescent. A gesture that marks me profoundly but whose significance on my life was almost certainly not noticed or known by my teacher. At that time I experienced myself as an insecure adolescent, not at home with a body perceived as more bone than beauty, feeling myself to be less capable than the other students, insecure about my own creative possibilities, easily riled, and not very much at peace with the world. The slightest gesture by any of the better-off students in the class was capable of highlighting my insecurity and my fragility.

On this occasion our teacher had brought our homework to school after correcting it and was calling us one by one to comment on it. When my turn came, I noticed he was looking over my text with great attention, nodding his head in an attitude of respect and consideration. His respectful and appreciative attitude had a much greater effect on me than the high classification that he gave me for my work. The gesture of the teacher affirmed in me a self-confidence that obviously still had much room to grow. But it inspired in me a belief that I too had value and could work and produce results—results that clearly had their limits but that were a demonstration of my capacity, which up

until that moment I would have been inclined to hide or not fully believe in. And the greatest proof of the importance of that gesture is that I can speak of it now as if it had happened only today.

The importance of the kind of knowledge transmitted by gestures such as these, which are part and parcel of daily school life, needs serious reflection. It's a pity that the socializing character of the school, with its multiple possibilities for formation or deformation, especially in the context of the ordinary informality of the day to day, is so much neglected. What we mostly hear about is the teaching of contents, understood almost always, unfortunately, as the transference of knowledge. One of the reasons, in my view, for this negligence is a too narrow understanding of what education and learning are. Really, it has not yet dawned on us that education is something that women and men discovered experimentally, in the course of history. If it were clear to us that our capacity to teach arose from our capacity to learn, we would easily have understood the importance of informal experiences in the street, in the square, in the work place, in the classroom, in the playground, among the school staff of both teachers and administrative personnel. There is strong "witness" potential in all of these informal situations, but it is, practically speaking, unexplored territory. In "Education in the City," I drew attention to this fact when I discovered the calamitous state of the education system that Luíza Erundina encountered when she took up office in 1989 as mayor of São Paulo, Brazil. On my first visits to the city schools, I saw the calamity with my own eyes and I was terrified. The whole system was a disaster, from the state of the buildings and the classrooms to the quality of the teaching. How was it possible to ask of the children the minimum of respect for their material surroundings when the authorities demonstrated such absolute neglect of and indifference to the public institutions under their care? It's really unbelievable that we are unable to include all these elements in our "rhetoric" about education. Why does such "rhetoric" not include hygiene, cleanliness, beauty? Why does it neglect the indisputable pedagogical value of the "materiality" of the school environment?

Yet, it is such detail in the daily life both of teacher and student, to which so little attention is given, that in fact possesses significant weight in the evaluation of teaching practice. What is important in teaching is not the mechanical repetition of this or that gesture but a comprehension of the value of sentiments, emotions, and desires. Of

the insecurity that can only be overcome by inspiring confidence. Of the fear that can only be abated to the degree that courage takes its place.

There is no true teaching preparation possible separated from a critical attitude that spurs ingenuous curiosity to become epistemological curiosity, together with a recognition of the value of emotions, sensibility, affectivity, and intuition. To know is not simply to intuit or to have a hunch, though there is an intimate connection between them. We must build on our intuitions and submit them to methodical and rigorous analysis so that our curiosity becomes epistemological.

TEACHING IS A HUMAN ACT

Commitment

Another type of knowledge that I ought to possess and that has to do with almost all of the others that I have so far spoken of is the understanding that the exercise of my teaching activity does not leave me untouched. No more than I could be out in the rain with no protection and expect not to get wet. We must understand the meaning of a moment of silence, of a smile, or even of an instance in which someone needs to leave the room. Or the fact that a question was asked perhaps a little discourteously. After all, our teaching space is a text that has to be constantly read, interpreted, written, and rewritten. In this sense, the more solidarity there is between teacher and student in the way this space is mutually used, the more possibilities for democratic learning will be opened up in the school.

It is my belief that today the progressive kind of teacher needs to watch out as never before for the clever uses of the dominant ideology of our time, especially its insidious capacity for spreading the idea that it is possible for education to be neutral. This is an extremely reactionary philosophy, which uses the classroom to inculcate in the students political attitudes and practices, as if it were possible to exist as a human being in the world and at the same time be neutral.

My very presence in the school as a teacher is intrinsically a political presence, something that students cannot possibly ignore. In this sense, I ought to transmit to the students my capacity to analyze, to compare, to evaluate, to decide, to opt, to break with. My capacity to be just, to practice justice, and to have a political presence. And as a presence, I cannot sin by omission. I am, by definition, a subject "destined"

to choose. To have options. I honor truth. And all that means being ethical. It may help me or hinder me as a teacher, to know that I cannot escape the attention and evaluation of the students. Even so, it ought to make me aware of the care I need to take in carrying out my teaching activity. If I have made a choice for open-minded, democratic practice, then obviously this excludes reactionary, authoritarian, elitist attitudes and actions. Under no circumstances, therefore, may I discriminate against a student. In addition, the perception the student has of my teaching is not exclusively the result of how I act but also of how the student understands my action. Obviously, I cannot spend my life as a teacher asking the students what they think of me and my teaching activity. Even so, I ought to be attentive to their reading of my activity and interaction with them. Furthermore, we need to learn the significance of being ethical. It becomes a way of life.

Education as a Form of Intervention in the World

Another kind of knowledge whose existence I cannot doubt for a moment in my critical educative practice is that education, as a specifically human experience, is a form of intervention in the world. In addition to contents either well or badly taught, this type of intervention also implies both the reproduction of the dominant ideology and its unmasking. The dialectical nature of the educational process does not allow it to be only one or the other of these things.

Education never was, is not, and never can be neutral or indifferent in regard to the reproduction of the dominant ideology or the interrogation of it. It is a fundamental error to state that education is simply an instrument for the reproduction of the dominant ideology, as it is an error to consider it no more than an instrument for unmasking that ideology, as if such a task were something that could be accomplished simply, fundamentally, without obstacles and difficult struggles. These attitudes are serious errors, and they indicate a defective vision of both history and consciousness. On the one hand, we have a mechanistic comprehension of history that reduces consciousness to a simple reflex of matter, and on the other, we have a subjective idealism that tries to make the role of consciousness fit into the facts of history. As women and men, we are not simply determined by facts and events. At the same time, we are subject to genetic, cultural, social, class, sexual, and historical conditionings that mark us profoundly and that constitute for us a center of reference.

From the perspective of the dominant classes, there is no doubt of course that educational practice ought to cover up the truth and immobilize the classes. Conversely, these same interests are capable of being "progressive" when it suits them. Progressive by half, so to speak. They are able to bring into being technical advances that are understood and often carried out in a "neutral" way. It would be extremely naive on our part to believe that the ranchers' lobby would agree that our schools, both rural and urban, should discuss the questions of agrarian reform as an economic, political, and ethical problem of the greatest importance for the development of the country. This task falls to progressive-minded educators, both inside and outside the schools. It's a task also for nongovernmental organizations and democratic-minded unions. On the one hand, we might expect modern-minded business with urban roots to be sympathetic to the cause of agrarian reform, because its interests in the expansion of the market seem "progressive" in the face of rural conservatism. On the other hand, the "progressiveness" of modern business, welcome as it is in contrast to the retrograde truculence of the ranchers, does not have to think twice about where its loyalty lies when confronted with a clash between human interests and the interests of the market.

I continue to ponder Marx's observation about the necessary radicality that enables me to be permanently aware of everything that has to do with the defense of human interests, which are superior to those of particular groups or classes of people.

Recognizing that precisely because we are constantly in the process of becoming and, therefore, are capable of observing, comparing, evaluating, choosing, deciding, intervening, breaking with, and making options, we are ethical beings, capable of transgressing our ethical grounding. However, though transgression of this grounding exists as a possibility, we can never claim transgression as a right. And, of course, we cannot sit idly by and fold our arms in the face of such a possibility. Hence my categorical refusal of fatalistic quietude, which, instead of condemning ethical transgression, tries to absorb it as if it belonged to "right" thinking. I cannot be complicit with a perverse system, exempting it from responsibility for its malice, by attributing to "blind forces" the damage caused to human beings.

Of course (and I restate my belief), modern business leaders accept, stimulate, and support technical training courses for their workers.

What they obviously refuse is an education that both includes technical and scientific preparation and speaks of the workers' presence in the world. A human and ethical presence, debased every time it is transformed into pure shadow.

I cannot be a teacher if I do not perceive with ever greater clarity that my practice demands of me a definition about where I stand. A break with what is not right ethically. I must choose between one thing and another thing. I cannot be a teacher and be in favor of everyone and everything. I cannot be in favor merely of people, humanity, vague phrases far from the concrete nature of educative practice. Mass hunger and unemployment, side by side with opulence, are not the result of destiny, as certain reactionary circles would have us believe, claiming that people suffer because they can do nothing about the situation. The question here is not "destiny." It is immorality. Here I want to repeat—forcefully—that nothing can justify the degradation of human beings. Nothing. The advance of science or technology cannot legitimate "class" and call it "order" so that a minority who holds power may use and squander the fruits of the earth while the vast majority are hard pressed even to survive and often justify their own misery as the will of God. I refuse to add my voice to that of the "peacemakers" who call upon the wretched of the earth to be resigned to their fate. My voice is in tune with a different language, another kind of music. It speaks of resistance, indignation, the just anger of those who are deceived and betrayed. It speaks, too, of their right to rebel against the ethical transgressions of which they are the long-suffering victims.

The fatalistic philosophy of neoliberal politics of which I have been speaking is a case in point of how human interests are abandoned whenever they threaten the values of the market.

I cannot imagine, for example, a modern manager allowing one of his workers the right to discuss, during a literacy class or during an in-service training course in the factory, the pros and cons of the dominant ideology. For example, to discuss the question "unemployment today is an end-of-the-century inevitability." And, in that context, to ask: Why is agrarian reform not also an inevitability? And why not make putting an end to hunger and misery inevitable as well?

It's extremely reactionary to say that what only interests workers is achieving the highest grade of technical efficiency and that they do not want to get involved in ideological debates that, in any case, lead

nowhere. It is in the context of the work situation that the worker needs to engage in the process of becoming a citizen, something that does not happen as a consequence of "technical efficiency." It is the result of a political struggle to re-creation of a kind of society that is both humane and just.

Thus, since I cannot be a teacher without considering myself prepared to teach well and correctly the contents of my discipline, I cannot reduce my teaching practice to the mere transmission of these contents. It is my ethical posture in the course of teaching these contents that will make the difference. It is a posture made up of my commitment to thoroughness, my investment in excellence, and my competent preparation that reveals humility rather than arrogance. It is a posture of unconditional respect for the students, for the knowledge they have that comes directly from life and that, together with the students, I will work to go beyond. My coherence in the classroom is as important as my teaching of contents. A coherence of what I say, write, and do.

I am a teacher who stands up for what is right against what is indecent, who is in favor of freedom against authoritarianism, who is a supporter of authority against freedom with no limits, and who is a defender of democracy against the dictatorship of right or left. I am a teacher who favors the permanent struggle against every form of bigotry and against the economic domination of individuals and social classes. I am a teacher who rejects the present system of capitalism, responsible for the aberration of misery in the midst of plenty. I am a teacher full of the spirit of hope, in spite of all signs to the contrary. I am a teacher who refuses the disillusionment that consumes and immobilizes. I am a teacher proud of the beauty of my teaching practice, a fragile beauty that may disappear if I do not care for the struggle and knowledge that I ought to teach. If I do not struggle for the material conditions without which my body will suffer from neglect, thus running the risk of becoming frustrated and ineffective, then I will no longer be the witness that I ought to be, no longer the tenacious fighter who may tire but who never gives up. This is a beauty that needs to be marveled at but that can easily slip away from me through arrogance or disdain toward my students.

It's important that students perceive the teacher's struggle to be coherent. And it is necessary that this struggle be the subject of discussion in the classroom from time to time. There are situations in which

the teacher's attitude or practice may appear contradictory to the students. This apparent contradiction usually occurs when the teacher simply exercises authority in coordinating the activities of the class in a way that seems to the students an excess of power. At times it may be the teacher who is uncertain whether she or he overstepped the limits of authority or not.

Freedom and Authority

In another part of this text, I referred to the fact that we have not yet resolved the problem of tension between authority and freedom. Because we were dedicated to overcoming the legacy of authoritarianism so prevalent among us, we fell into the opposite error of limitless freedom, accusing the legitimate exercise of authority of being an abuse of authority.

Recently, a young university professor with democratic principles was telling me about what seemed to him an abuse in his way of handling authority. He told me, with a certain air of affliction, that he reacted to the presence of a student from another class who was standing at the half-open door gesticulating to one of the students of his class. In fact, he had to interrupt his teaching because of the disturbance. In so doing, he managed to focus attention on what was central, namely, his teaching activity and the climate necessary for its proper execution, to say nothing of his right and that of his students not to be interrupted by a clearly unacceptable expression of freedom without limits. Even so, he thought his decision had been arbitrary. Not so, in my view. In fact, not to have intervened would have amounted to a demonstration of a lack of real authority, an act of omission in the face of a clearly unacceptable and prejudicial intrusion into his teaching space.

In one of the many debates in which I have participated on the question of freedom and authority and the limits inherent in both (limits without which freedom is perverted into license and authority into authoritarianism), I heard one of the participants say that my "sing-song" reminded him of a reactionary teacher he had during the military regime. Freedom, according to my interlocutor, has no limits. It is above any and every limit. Obviously, I did not accept this position. Freedom without limit is as impossible as freedom that is suffocated or contracted. If it were without limit, it would take me outside of the

sphere of human action, intervention, or struggle. Limitless freedom is a negation of the human condition of unfinishedness.

The great challenge for the democratic-minded educator is how to transmit a sense of limit that can be ethically integrated by freedom itself. The more consciously freedom assumes its necessary limits, the more authority it has, ethically speaking, to continue to struggle in its own name.

I would like to say once again how much I believe in freedom and how fundamental it is, in the exercise of freedom, to assume responsibility for our decisions. It was this kind of freedom that characterized my own experience as a son, a brother, a student, a teacher, a husband, and a citizen.

Freedom becomes mature in confrontation with other freedoms, defending its rights in relation to parental authority, the authority of teachers, and the authority of the state. It is clear, of course, that adolescents do not always make the best decisions regarding their future. For that reason it is important for parents to take part in discussions about the future plans of their children. They cannot, ought not, deny that they must know and assume that the future of their children belongs to their children and not to the parents. In my view, it's preferable to emphasize the children's freedom to decide, even if they run the risk of making a mistake, than to simply follow the decision of the parents. It's in making decisions that we learn to decide. I can never learn to be who I am if I never decide anything because I always have the good sense and the wisdom of my mother and father to fall back on. The old arguments of "Imagine the risk you run and the time and opportunity wasted on this crazy idea," are simply invalid. What is pragmatic in our existence cannot be exalted above the ethical imperative that we must face. The child has, at the very least, the right to prove the craziness of his or her idea. However, it is essential to the learning experience of decision making that the consequences of any decision be assumed by the decision maker. There is no decision that is not followed by effects either expected, half expected, or not expected at all. Consequences are what make decision making a responsible process. One of the pedagogical tasks for parents is to make it clear to their children that parental participation in the decision-making process is not an intrusion but a duty, so long as the parents have no intention of deciding on behalf of their children. The participation of the parents is most opportune in helping

the children analyze the possible consequences of the decision that is to be taken.

The position of the mother or father is that of someone who, without any risk to her or his authority, is able to accept, humbly, the extremely important role of adviser to a son or daughter. And as an adviser, will never impose a decision or become angry because the parental point of view was not accepted.

What is necessary, fundamentally, is that the son or daughter take on, responsibly and ethically, the weight of his or her own decision, which in fact amounts to a key moment in forging on the development of the individual's autonomy. No one is first autonomous and then makes a decision. Autonomy is the result of a process involving various and innumerable decisions. For example, why not challenge the child while still young to participate in a discussion and a decision about the best time to do schoolwork? Why is the best time for homework always the parent's time? Why waste the opportunity to emphasize the duty and the right that the children have, as people, to engage in the process of forging their own autonomy? No one is the subject of the autonomy of someone else. However, no one suddenly becomes mature at twenty-five years of age. Either we become mature with each day that passes or we do not. Autonomy is a process of becoming oneself, a process of maturing, of coming to be. It does not happen on a given date. In this sense, a pedagogy of autonomy should be centered on experiences that stimulate decision making and responsibility, in other words, on experiences that respect freedom.

One thing is very clear to me today. I have never been afraid of believing in freedom, in seriousness, in genuine love, in solidarity, or in the struggle in which I learned the value and importance of indignation. I have never been afraid of being criticized by my wife, by my children, or by the students with whom I have worked down the years because of my profound conviction of the value of freedom, hope, the word of another, and the desire of someone to try and try again as a result of having been more ingenuous than critical. What I have feared, at different times in my life, is that I might, through my words or gestures, be interpreted as an opportunist, a "realist," "a man with his feet on the ground," one of those experts at balancing things who sits forever on the fence waiting to see which way the wind blows to safely follow it.

Out of respect for freedom I have always deliberately refused its distortion. Freedom is not the absence of limits. What I have sought always is to live the tension, the contradiction, between authority and freedom so as to maintain respect for both. To separate them is to provoke the infraction of one or the other.

It's interesting to note how people who are fond of being authoritarian often think of the respect that is indispensable for freedom as a sort of incorrigible taste for the spontaneous. And those who imagine freedom to have no limits are forever discovering authoritarianism in every legitimate manifestation of authority. The undoubtedly correct position, though the most difficult, is the democratic one, coherent in its utopian pursuit of solidarity and equality. Here, it is not possible to have authority without freedom or vice versa.

Education Is Ideological

What is equally fundamental to the educational practice of the teacher is the question of ideology. Sometimes its presence is greater than we think. It is directly linked to that tendency within us to cloak over the truth of the facts, using language to cloud or turn opaque what we wish to hide. We become myopic. Blind. We become prisoners of artifice. Trapped.

The power of ideology makes me think of those dewy mornings when the mist distorts the outline of the cypress trees and they become shadows of something we know is there but cannot really define. The shortsightedness that afflicts us makes our perception difficult. More serious still is the way we can so easily accept that what we are seeing and hearing is, in fact, what really is and not a distorted version of what is. This tendency to cloud the truth, to become myopic, to deafen our ears, has made many of us accept without critical questioning the cynical fatalism of neoliberal thought, which proclaims that mass unemployment is an inevitable end-of-the-century calamity. Or that the dream is dead and that it is now the era of the pedagogical pragmatism of the technico-scientific training of the individual and not of his or her total education (which, obviously, includes the former). The capacity to tame, inherent in ideology, makes us at times docilely accept that the globalization of the economy is its own invention, a kind of inevitable destiny, an almost metaphysical entity rather than a moment of economic development, subject to a given political orientation dictated by

the interests of those who hold power, as is the whole of capitalist economic production. What we hear is that the globalization of the economy is a necessity from which we cannot escape. A given aspect of the capitalist system, an instant of the productive forces of capitalism as experienced and played out in the centers of world economic power, is made universal, as if Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina ought to participate in the globalization of the economy in the same way as the United States, Germany, and Japan. It's a question of jumping on the train in the middle of the journey without discussing the conditions, the cultures, or the forms of production of the countries that are being swept along. And there is no talk about the distance that separates the "rights" of the strong and their power to enjoy them from the fragility of the weak in their attempts to exercise their rights. Meanwhile, responsibilities and duties are leveled—equal for all. If globalization means the abolition of the frontiers and the opening without restriction to free enterprise, those who cannot compete simply disappear.

For example, no one asks whether societies now at the forefront of globalization would, in a previous stage of capitalism, have been ready and willing to accept a radical opening of their frontiers—the type of opening that they now consider imperative for the rest of the world. They demand of the rest of the world now what they were unwilling to demand of themselves. One of the tricks of their fatalistic ideology is the capacity to convince submissive economies (which will be engulfed in this process) that the real world is this way, that there is nothing to be done about it except to follow the natural order of the facts. It passes off this ideology as natural or almost natural. It does not want us to see and understand the phenomenon as a product of historical development.

Globalization theory, which speaks of ethics, hides the fact that its ethics are those of the marketplace and not the universal ethics of the human person. It is for these matters that we ought to struggle courageously if we have, in truth, made a choice for a humanized world. A world of real people. Globalization theory cleverly hides, or seeks to cloud over, an intensified new edition of that fearful evil that is historical capitalism, even if the new edition is somewhat modified in relation to past versions. Its fundamental ideology seeks to mask that what is really up for discussion is the increasing wealth of the few and the rapid increase of poverty and misery for the vast majority of humanity.

The capitalist system reaches, in its globalizing neoliberal crusade, the maximum efficacy of its intrinsically evil nature.

It is my hope that the world will get over its fascination with the end of communism and with the fall of the Berlin wall. And thus remake itself so as to refuse the dictatorship of the marketplace, founded as it is on the perverse ethic of profit.

I don't believe that women and men of the world, independent of their political positions yet conscious of their dignity as men and women, will not want to reflect on the sense of foreboding that is now universal in this perverse era of neoliberal philosophy. A foreboding that one day will lead to a new rebellion where the critical word, the humanist philosophy, the commitment to solidarity, the prophetic denunciation of the negation of men and women, and the proclamation of a world worthy of human habitation will be the instruments of change and transformation.

A century and a half ago, Marx and Engels cried out in favor of the unity of the working classes of the world against their exploitation. Now, in our time, it is essential and urgent that people unite against the threat that looms over us. The threat, namely, to our own identity as human persons caught up in the ferocity of the ethics of the marketplace.

It is in this sense that I say that I have never abandoned my first preoccupation, one that has been with me since my early experiences in the field of education. Namely, my preoccupation with human nature. It is in this preoccupation that I continue to proclaim my loyalty. Even before I ever read Marx I had made his words my own. I had taken my own radical stance on the defense of the legitimate interests of the human person. There is no theory of socio-political transformation that moves me if it is not grounded in an understanding of the human person as a maker of history and as one made by history. If it does not respect men and women as beings of decision, rupture, option. As ethical beings who in their ethicality are capable of being unethical, of transgressing the ethical code indispensable for human living. Of this I have spoken insistently in this text. I have affirmed and reaffirmed the extent to which I rejoice in knowing that I am a "conditioned" being, capable of going beyond my own conditioning. The place upon which a new rebellion should be built is not the ethics of the marketplace with

its crass insensitivity to the voice of genuine humanity but the ethics of universal human aspiration. The ethics of human solidarity.

I prefer to be criticized as an idealist and an inveterate dreamer because I continue to believe in the human person, continue to struggle for legislation that would protect people from the unjust and aggressive inroads of those who have no regard for an ethical code that is common to us all. The freedom of commerce cannot be ethically higher than the freedom to be human. The freedom of commerce without limits is no more than the license to put profit above everything else. It becomes a privilege of the few, who in certain favorable conditions increase their own power at the expense of the greater part of humanity, even to the point of survival itself. A textile factory that is forced to close because it cannot compete with the price of labor in Asia, for example, not only brings down the factory owner (who may or may not be a transgressor of that universal ethical code of which I have spoken) but signals the expulsion of hundreds of workers from the process of production. And what about their families? I refuse, with all the conviction I can muster, to accept that our presence in history can be reduced to a deterministic adaptation to our socio-historical condition. As I have said before, worldwide unemployment is not a fatalistic inevitability. It is the result of the economic globalization and the scientific and technological advances that lack a form of ethics that serves the interests of all human beings and not just the unfettered greed of the power minority who control the world today. The application of technological advances, which requires the sacrifice of thousands of people, is one more example of how we can be transgressors of a universal human ethic in the name of the market, of pure profit.

One of the transgressions of a universal human ethic that ought to be considered criminal is programmed mass unemployment, which leads so many to despair and to a kind of living death. Thus, the preoccupation with techno-professional education for the retraining of those who have become redundant would have to be greatly increased to begin to redress the balance.

I would like to make it clear that I know full well how difficult it is to put in practice a policy of development that would put men and women before profit. However, I believe that if we are going to overcome the crises that at present assail us, we must return to ethics. I do

not see any other alternative. If it is impossible to have development without profit, then profit of its own accord cannot be the sole object of development in such a way that it justifies and sanctifies the immoral gain of the investor. It may be the utopia of a minority (which will also wither like the grass) to create a society robotized by highly intelligent machines that can substitute men and women in a whole range of activities, creating millions of Peters and Marys without anything to do. But such a utopia is worthless.

I also do not believe that a universal human ethic can be squeezed into the narrow confines of dictatorship, whether of the left or of the right. The authoritarian road is in itself a denial of our restless, questioning, searching nature, which, if lost, means the loss of liberty itself.

It's exactly for this reason that I, as a teacher, ought to be aware of the power of ideological discourse, beginning with discourse that proclaims the death of all ideologies. In truth, I can only put an end to all ideologies by proclaiming a new ideology, even if I am not aware of the ideological nature of my proclamation. It is a very subtle question because all ideological discourse has an immense persuasive power. It anesthetizes the mind, confuses curiosity, blurs perception.

The following statements reveal explicit and implicit ideological contents. They are often spoken uncritically. They deserve, however, a minimum of critical consciousness.

"Negroes are genetically inferior to whites. It's a pity, but it's a fact established by science."

"He killed his wife in legitimate defense of his honor."

"What can be expected of them anyway? Only a band of rabble-rousers would invade land."

"These people are always the same. Give them an inch and they will take a mile."

"We already know what the people need and want. Asking them is a waste of time."

"He is from the northeast of Brazil. But he is a good chap. Serious and helpful."

"Do you know to whom you are talking?"

"Imagine it! A man marrying a man. And a woman marrying a woman!"

"If a black man doesn't dirty the place coming in, he'll do it on the way out."

"The government ought to invest in those places where the taxpayers live!"

"There is no need for you to do the thinking. All you have to do is vote for this candidate and he will do the thinking for you."

"Even if you are unemployed, don't be ungrateful. There is a candidate who will help you. Vote for him."

"Brazil was discovered by Cabral."

In the course of the critical exercise of my resistance to the manipulative power of ideology, I bring to birth certain qualities that in turn become a store of wisdom, indispensable to my teaching practice. On the one hand, the necessity for this critical resistance creates in me an attitude of permanent openness toward others, toward the word; on the other hand, it generates in me a methodical mistrust that prevents me from becoming absolutely certain of being right. To safeguard myself against the pitfalls of ideology, I cannot and must not close myself off from others or shut myself into a blind alley where only my own truth is valid. On the contrary, the best way to keep awake and alert my capacity for right thinking, to sharpen my perception, and to hear with respect (and therefore in a disciplined manner) is to allow myself to be open to differences and to refuse the entrenched dogmatism that makes me incapable of learning anything new. In essence, the correct posture of one who does not consider him- or herself to be the sole possessor of the truth or the passive object of ideology or gossip is the attitude of permanent openness. Openness to approaching and being approached, to questioning and been questioned, to agreeing and disagreeing. It is an openness to life itself and to its vicissitudes. An openness to those who call on us and to the many and varied signs that catch our interests, from the song of the bird, to the falling rain or the rain that is about to drop from the darkening sky, to the gentle smile of innocence and the sullen face of disapproval, to the arms open to receive and the body stiff with refusal and fear. It is in my permanent openness to life that I give myself entirely, my critical thought, my feeling, my curiosity, my desire, all that I am. It is thus that I travel the road, knowing that I am learning to be who I am by relating to what is my opposite.

And the more I give myself to the experience of living with what is different without fear and without prejudice, the more I come to know the self I am shaping and that is being shaped as I travel the road of life.

THE ADULT LITERACY PROCESS AS CULTURAL ACTION FOR FREEDOM*

Every Educational Practice Implies a Concept of Man and the World

Experience teaches us not to assume that the obvious is clearly understood. So it is with the truism with which we begin: All educational practice implies a theoretical stance on the educator's part. This stance in turn implies—sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly—an interpretation of man and the world. It could not be otherwise. The process of men's orientation in the world involves not just the association of sense images, as for animals. It involves, above all, thought-language; that is, the possibility of the act of knowing through his praxis, by which man transforms reality. For man, this process of orientation in the world can be understood neither as a purely subjective event, nor as an objective or mechanistic one, but only as an event in which subjectivity and objectivity are united. Orientation in the world, so understood, places the question of the purposes of action at the level of critical perception of reality.

If, for animals, orientation in the world means adaptation to the world, for man it means humanizing the world by transforming it. For animals there is no historical sense, no options or values in their orientation in the world; for man there is both an historical and a value dimension. Men have the sense of "project," in contrast to the instinctive routines of animals.

The action of men without objectives, whether the objectives are right or wrong, mythical or demythologized, naive or critical, is not praxis, though it may be orientation in the world. And not being praxis, it is action ignorant both of its own process and of its aim. The interrelation of the awareness of aim and of process is the basis for planning action, which implies methods, objectives, and value options.

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Teaching adults to read and write must be seen, analyzed, and understood in this way. The critical analyst will discover in the methods and texts used by educators and students practical value options which betray a philosophy of man, well or poorly outlined, coherent or incoherent. Only someone with a mechanistic mentality, which Marx would call "grossly materialistic," could reduce adult literacy learning to a purely technical action. Such a naive approach would be incapable of perceiving that technique itself as an instrument of men in their orientation in the world is not neutral.

We shall try, however, to prove by analysis the self-evidence of our statement. Let us consider the case of primers used as the basic texts for teaching adults to read and write. Let us further propose two distinct types: a poorly done primer and a good one, according to the genre's own criteria. Let us even suppose that the author of the good primer based the selection of its generative words¹ on a prior knowledge of which words have the greatest resonance for the learner (a practice not commonly found, though it does exist).

Doubtlessly, such an author is already far beyond the colleague who composes his primer with words he himself chooses in his own library. Both authors, however, are identical in a fundamental way. In each case they themselves decompose the given generative words and from the syllables create new words. With these words, in turn, the authors form simple sentences and, little by little, small stories, the so-called reading lessons.

Let us say that the author of the second primer, going one step further, suggests that the teachers who use it initiate discussions about one or another word, sentence, or text with their students.

Considering either of these hypothetical cases we may legitimately conclude that there is an implicit concept of man in the primer's method and content, whether it is recognized by the authors or not. This concept can be reconstructed from various angles. We begin with the fact, inherent in the idea and use of the primer, that it is the teacher who chooses the words and proposes them to the learner. Insofar as the primer is the mediating object between the teacher and students, and the students are to be "filled" with words the teachers have chosen, one can easily detect a first important dimension of the image of man which here begins to emerge. It is the profile of a man whose consciousness is "spatialized," and must be "filled" or "fed" in order to know. This same conception led Sartre,

criticizing the notion that "to know is to eat," to exclaim: "*O philosophie alimentaire!*"²

This "digestive" concept of knowledge, so common in current educational practice, is found very clearly in the primer.³ Illiterates are considered "under-nourished," not in the literal sense in which many of them really are, but because they lack the "bread of the spirit." Consistent with the concept of knowledge as food, illiteracy is conceived of as a "poison herb," intoxicating and debilitating persons who cannot read or write. Thus, much is said about the "eradication" of illiteracy to cure the disease.⁴ In this way, deprived of their character as linguistic signs constitutive of man's thought-language, words are transformed into mere "deposits of vocabulary"—the bread of the spirit which the illiterates are to "eat" and "digest."

This "nutritionist" view of knowledge perhaps also explains the humanitarian character of certain Latin American adult literacy campaigns. If millions of men are illiterate, "starving for letters," "thirsty for words," the word must be *brought* to them to save them from "hunger" and "thirst." The word, according to the naturalistic concept of consciousness implicit in the primer, must be "deposited," not born of the creative effort of the learners. As understood in this concept, man is a passive being, the object of the process of learning to read and write, and not its subject. As object his task is to "study" the so-called reading lessons, which in fact are almost completely alienating and alienated, having so little, if anything, to do with the student's socio-cultural reality.⁵

It would be a truly interesting study to analyze the reading texts being used in private or official adult literacy campaigns in rural and urban Latin America. It would not be unusual to find among such texts sentences and readings like the following random samples:⁶

A asa é da ave—"The wing is of the bird."

Eva viu a uva—"Eva saw the grape."

O galo canta—"The cock crows."

O cachorro ladra—"The dog barks."

Maria gosta dos animais—"Mary likes animals."

João cuida das arvores—"John takes care of the trees."

O pai de Carlinhos se chama Antonio. Carlinhos é um bom menino, bem comportado e estudioso—"Charles's father's name is Antonio. Charles is a good, well-behaved, and studious boy."

Ada deu o dedo ao urubu? Duvido, Ada deu o dedo a arara. . . .⁷

Se você trabalha com martelo e prego, tenha cuidado para não furar o dedo.—"If you hammer a nail, be careful not to smash your finger."⁸

"Peter did not know how to read. Peter was ashamed. One day, Peter went to school and registered for a night course. Peter's teacher was very good. Peter knows how to read now. Look at Peter's face. [These lessons are generally illustrated.] Peter is smiling. He is a happy man. He already has a good job. Everyone ought to follow his example."

In saying that Peter is smiling because he knows how to read, that he is happy because he now has a good job, and that he is an example for all to follow, the authors establish a relationship between knowing how to read and getting good jobs which, in fact, cannot be borne out. This naiveté reveals, at least, a failure to perceive the structure not only of illiteracy, but of social phenomena in general. Such an approach may admit that these phenomena exist, but it cannot perceive their relationship to the structure of the society in which they are found. It is as if these phenomena were mythical, above and beyond concrete situations, or the results of the intrinsic inferiority of a certain class of men. Unable to grasp contemporary illiteracy as a typical manifestation of the "culture of silence," directly related to underdeveloped structures, this approach cannot offer an objective, critical response to the challenge of illiteracy. Merely teaching men to read and write does not work miracles; if there are not enough jobs for men able to work, teaching more men to read and write will not create them.

One of these readers presents among its lessons the following two texts on consecutive pages without relating them. The first is about May 1st, the Labor Day holiday, on which workers commemorate their struggles. It does not say how or where these are commemorated, or what the nature of the historical conflict was. The main theme of the second lesson is *holidays*. It says that "on these days people ought to go to the beach to swim and sunbathe . . ." Therefore, if May 1st is a holiday, and if on holidays people should go to the beach, the conclusion is that the workers should go swimming on Labor Day, instead of meeting with their unions in the public squares to discuss their problems.

Analysis of these texts reveals, then, a simplistic vision of men, of their world, of the relationship between the two, and of the literacy process which unfolds in that world.

A asa é da ave, Eva viu a uva, o galo canta, and o cachorro late, are linguistic contexts which, when mechanically memorized and repeated, are deprived of their authentic dimension as thought-language in dynamic interplay with reality. Thus impoverished, they are not authentic expressions of the world.

Their authors do not recognize in the poor classes the ability to know and even create the texts which would express their own thought-language at the level of their perception of the world. The authors repeat with the texts what they do with the words, i.e., they introduce them into the learners' consciousness as if it were empty space—once more, the "digestive" concept of knowledge.

Still more, the a-structural perception of illiteracy revealed in these texts exposes the other false view of illiterates as marginal men.⁹ Those who consider them marginal must, nevertheless, recognize the existence of a reality to which they are marginal—not only physical space, but historical, social, cultural, and economic realities—i.e., the structural dimension of reality. In this way, illiterates have to be recognized as beings "outside of," "marginal to" something, since it is impossible to be marginal to nothing. But being "outside of" or "marginal to" necessarily implies a movement of the one said to be marginal from the center, where he was, to the periphery. This movement, which is an action, presupposes in turn not only an agent but also his reasons. Admitting the existence of men "outside of" or "marginal to" structural reality, it seems legitimate to ask: Who is the author of this movement from the center of the structure to its margin? Do so-called marginal men, among them the illiterates, make the decision to move out to the periphery of society? If so, marginality is an option with all that it involves: hunger, sickness, rickets, pain, mental deficiencies, living death, crime, promiscuity, despair, the impossibility of being. In fact, however, it is difficult to accept that 40% of Brazil's population, almost 90% of Haiti's, 60% of Bolivia's, about 40% of Peru's, more than 30% of Mexico's and Venezuela's, and about 70% of Guatemala's would have made the tragic choice of their own marginality as illiterates.¹⁰ If, then, marginality is not by choice, marginal man has been expelled from and kept outside of the social system and is therefore the object of violence.

In fact, however, the social structure as a whole does not "expel," nor is marginal man a "being outside of." He is, on the contrary, a "being inside of," within the social structure, and in a dependent relationship

to those whom we call falsely autonomous beings, inauthentic beings-for-themselves.

A less rigorous approach, one more simplistic, less critical, more technicist, would say that it was unnecessary to reflect about what it would consider unimportant questions such as illiteracy and teaching adults to read and write. Such an approach might even add that the discussion of the concept of marginality is an unnecessary academic exercise. In fact, however, it is not so. In accepting the illiterate as a person who exists on the fringe of society, we are led to envision him as a sort of "sick man," for whom literacy would be the "medicine" to cure him, enabling him to "return" to the "healthy" structure from which he has become separated. Educators would be benevolent counsellors, scouring the outskirts of the city for the stubborn illiterates, runaways from the good life, to restore them to the forsaken bosom of happiness by giving them the gift of the word.

In the light of such a concept—unfortunately, all too widespread—literacy programs can never be efforts toward freedom; they will never question the very reality which deprives men of the right to speak up—not only illiterates, but all those who are treated as objects in a dependent relationship. These men, illiterate or not, are, in fact, not marginal. What we said before bears repeating: They are not "beings outside of"; they are "beings for another." Therefore the solution to their problem is not to become "beings inside of," but men freeing themselves; for, in reality, they are not marginal to the structure, but oppressed men within it. Alienated men, they cannot overcome their dependency by "incorporation" into the very structure responsible for their dependency. There is no other road to humanization—theirs as well as everyone else's—but authentic transformation of the dehumanizing structure.

From this last point of view, the illiterate is no longer a person living on the fringe of society, a marginal man, but rather a representative of the dominated strata of society, in conscious or unconscious opposition to those who, in the same structure, treat him as a thing. Thus, also, teaching men to read and write is no longer an inconsequential matter of *ba, be, bi, bo, bu*, of memorizing an alienated word, but a difficult apprenticeship in naming the world.

In the first hypothesis, interpreting illiterates as men marginal to society, the literacy process reinforces the mythification of reality by

keeping it opaque and by dulling the "empty consciousness" of the learner with innumerable alienating words and phrases. By contrast, in the second hypothesis—interpreting illiterates as men oppressed within the system—the literacy process, as a cultural action for freedom, is an act of knowing in which the learner assumes the role of knowing subject in a dialogue with the educator. For this very reason, it is a courageous endeavor to demythologize reality, a process through which men who had previously been submerged in reality begin to emerge in order to re-insert themselves into it with critical awareness.

The Adult Literacy Process as an Act of Knowing

To be an act of knowing the adult literacy process demands among teachers and students a relationship of authentic dialogue. True dialogue unites subjects together in the cognition of a knowable object which mediates between them.

If learning to read and write is to constitute an act of knowing, the learners must assume from the beginning the role of creative subjects. It is not a matter of memorizing and repeating given syllables, words, and phrases, but rather of reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing itself, and on the profound significance of language.

Insofar as language is impossible without thought, and language and thought are impossible without the world to which they refer, the human word is more than mere vocabulary—it is word-and-action. The cognitive dimensions of the literacy process must include the relationships of men with their world. These relationships are the source of the dialectic between the products men achieve in transforming the world and the conditioning which these products in turn exercise on men.

Learning to read and write ought to be an opportunity for men to know what *speaking the word* really means: a human act implying reflection and action. As such it is a primordial human right and not the privilege of a few.¹¹ Speaking the word is not a true act if it is not at the same time associated with the right of self-expression and world-expression, of creating and re-creating, of deciding and choosing and ultimately participating in society's historical process.

Notes

1. In languages like Portuguese or Spanish, words are composed syllabically. Thus, every non-monosyllabic word is, technically, *generative*, in the sense that other words can be constructed from its de-composed syllables. For a

word to be authentically generative, however, certain conditions must be present which will be discussed in a later section of this essay. [At the phonetic level the term *generative word* is properly applicable only with regard to a sound-syllabic reading methodology, while the thematic application is universal. See Sylvia Ashton-Warner's *Teacher* for a different treatment of the concept of generative words at the thematic level.—Editor]

2. Jean Paul Sartre, *Situations I* (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1947), p. 31.
3. The digestive concept of knowledge is suggested by "controlled readings," by classes which consist only in lectures; by the use of memorized dialogues in language learning; by bibliographical notes which indicate not only which chapter, but which lines and words are to be read; by the methods of evaluating the students' progress in learning.
4. See Paulo Freire, "La alfabetización de adultos, crítica de su visión ingenua; comprensión de su visión crítica," in *Introducción a la Acción Cultural* (Santiago: ICIRA, 1969).
5. There are two noteworthy exceptions among these primers: (1) in Brazil, *Viver e Lutar*, developed by a team of specialists of the Basic Education Movement, sponsored by the National Conference of Bishops. (This reader became the object of controversy after it was banned as subversive by the then governor of Guanabara, Mr. Carlos Lacerda, in 1963.) (2) in Chile, the ESPIGA collection, despite some small defects. The collection was organized by Jefatura de Planes Extraordinarios de Educación de Adultos, of the Public Education Ministry.
6. Since at the time this essay was written the writer did not have access to the primers, and was, therefore, vulnerable to recording phrases imprecisely or to confusing the author of one or another primer, it was thought best not to identify the authors or the titles of the books.
7. The English here would be nonsensical, as is the Portuguese, the point being the emphasis on the consonant *d*.—Editor
8. The author may even have added here, ". . . If, however, this should happen, apply a little mercurochrome."
9. [The Portuguese word here translated as *marginal man* is *marginado*. This has a passive sense: he who has been made marginal, or sent outside society; as well as the sense of a state of existence on the fringe of society.—Translator.]
10. UNESCO: *La situación educativa en América Latina*, Cuadro no. 20, page 263 (Paris, 1960).
11. Paulo Freire, *op. cit.*