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The PAULO FREIRE READER

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CONTINUUM • NEW YORK

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EDUCATION FOR CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Education and Conscientização

My concern for the democratization of culture, within the context of fundamental democratization, required special attention to the quantitative and qualitative deficits in our education. In 1964, approximately four million school-age children lacked schools; there were sixteen million illiterates of fourteen years and older. These truly alarming deficits constituted obstacles to the development of the country and to the creation of a democratic mentality.

For more than fifteen years I had been accumulating experiences in the field of adult education, in urban and rural proletarian and subproletarian areas. Urban dwellers showed a surprising interest in education, associated directly to the transitivity of their consciousness; the inverse was true in rural areas. (Today, in some areas, that situation is already changing.) I had experimented with—and abandoned—various methods and processes of communication. Never, however, had I abandoned the conviction that only by working with the people could I achieve anything authentic on their behalf. Never had I believed that the democratization of culture meant either its vulgarization or simply passing on to the people prescriptions formulated in the teacher's office. I agreed with Mannheim that "as democratic processes become widespread, it becomes more and more difficult to permit the masses to remain in a state of ignorance."[1] Mannheim would not restrict his definition of ignorance to illiteracy, but would include the masses' lack of experience at participating and intervening in the historical process.

1. Karl Mannheim, *Freedom, Power, and Democratic Planning* (New York, 1950).

Experiences as the Coordinator of the Adult Education Project of the Movement of Popular Culture in Recife led to the maturing of my early educational convictions. Through this project, we launched a new institution of popular culture, a "culture circle," since among us a school was a traditionally passive concept. Instead of a teacher, we had a coordinator; instead of lectures, dialogue; instead of pupils, group participants; instead of alienating syllabi, compact programs that were "broken down" and "codified" into learning units.

In the culture circles, we attempted through group debate either to clarify situations or to seek action arising from that clarification. The topics for these debates were offered us by the groups themselves. Nationalism, profit remittances abroad, the political evolution of Brazil, development, illiteracy, the vote for illiterates, democracy, were some of the themes which were repeated from group to group. These subjects and others were schematized as far as possible and presented to the groups with visual aids, in the form of dialogue. We were amazed by the results.

After six months of experience with the culture circles, we asked ourselves if it would not be possible to do something in the field of adult literacy which would give us similar results to those we were achieving in the analysis of aspects of Brazilian reality. We started with some data and added more, aided by the Service of Cultural Extension of the University of Recife, which I directed at the time and under whose auspices the experiment was conducted.

The first literacy attempt took place in Recife, with a group of five illiterates, of which two dropped out on the second or third day. The participants, who had migrated from rural areas, revealed a certain fatalism and apathy in regard to their problems. They were totally illiterate. At the twentieth meeting, we gave progress tests. To achieve greater flexibility, we used an epidiascope. We projected a slide on which two kitchen containers appeared. "Sugar" was written on one, "poison" on the other. And underneath, the caption: "Which of the two would you use in your orangeade?" We asked the group to try to read the question and to give the answer orally. They answered, laughing, after several seconds, "Sugar." We followed the same procedure with other tests, such as recognizing bus lines and public buildings. During the twenty-first hour of study, one of the participants wrote, confidently, "I am amazed at myself."

From the beginning, we rejected the hypothesis of a purely mechanistic literacy program and considered the problem of teaching adults how to read in relation to the awakening of their consciousness. We wished to

design a project in which we would attempt to move from naïveté to a critical attitude at the same time we taught reading. We wanted a literacy program which would be an introduction to the democratization of culture, a program with men and women as its Subjects rather than as patient recipients,[2] a program which itself would be an act of creation, capable of releasing other creative acts, one in which students would develop the impatience and vivacity which characterize search and invention.

We began with the conviction that the role of men and women was not only to be in the world, but to engage in relations with the world—that through acts of creation and re-creation, we make cultural reality and thereby add to the natural world, which we did not make. We were certain that people's relation to reality, expressed as a Subject to an object, results in knowledge, which men and women could express through language.

This relation, as is already clear, is carried out by men whether or not they are literate. It is sufficient to be a person to perceive the data of reality, to be capable of knowing, even if this knowledge is mere opinion. There is no such thing as absolute ignorance or absolute wisdom.[3] But men and women do not perceive those data in a pure form. As they apprehend a phenomenon or a problem, they also apprehend its causal links. The more accurately men and women grasp true causality, the more critical their understanding of reality will be. Their understanding will be magical to the degree that they fail to grasp causality. Further, critical consciousness always submits that causality to analysis; what is true today may not be so tomorrow. Naive consciousness sees causality as a static, established fact, and thus is deceived in its perception.

Critical consciousness represents "things and facts as they exist empirically, in their causal and circumstantial correlations . . . naïve consciousness considers itself superior to facts, in control of facts, and thus free to understand them as it pleases."[4]

2. In most reading programs, the students must endure an abysm between their own experience and the contents offered for them to learn. It requires patience indeed, after the hardships of a day's work (or of a day without work), to tolerate lessons dealing with "wing." "Johnny saw the wing." "The wing is on the bird." Lessons talking of Graces and grapes to men who never knew a Grace and never ate a grape. "Grace saw the grape."

3. No one ignores everything, just as no one knows everything. The dominating consciousness absolutizes ignorance in order to manipulate the so-called "uncultured." If some men are "totally ignorant," they will be incapable of managing themselves, and will need the orientation, the "direction," the "leadership" of those who consider themselves to be "cultured" and "superior."

4. Álvaro Vieira Pinto, *Consciência e Realidade Nacional* (Rio de Janeiro, 1961).

Magic consciousness, in contrast, simply apprehends facts and attributes to them a superior power by which it is controlled and to which it must therefore submit. Magic consciousness is characterized by fatalism, which leads men to fold their arms, resigned to the impossibility of resisting the power of facts.

Critical consciousness is integrated with reality; naïve consciousness superimposes itself on reality; and fanatical consciousness, whose pathological naïveté leads to the irrational, adapts to reality.

It so happens that to every understanding, sooner or later an action corresponds. Once man perceives a challenge, understands it, and recognizes the possibilities of response, he acts. The nature of that action corresponds to the nature of his understanding. Critical understanding leads to critical action; magic understanding to magic response.

We wanted to offer the people the means by which they could supersede their magic or naïve perception of reality by one that was predominantly critical, so that they could assume positions appropriate to the dynamic climate of the transition. This meant that we must take the people at the point of emergence and, by helping them move from naïve to critical transitivity, facilitate their intervention in the historical process.

But how could this be done?

The answer seemed to lie:

(a) in an active, *dialogical,* critical and criticism-stimulating *method;*
(b) in changing the *program content* of education;
(c) in the use of *techniques* like thematic "breakdown" and "codification."[5]

Our method, then, was to be based on dialogue, which is a horizontal relationship between persons.

DIALOGUE
A with B = communication
intercommunication

Relation of "empathy" between two "poles" who are engaged in a joint search.

MATRIX: Loving, humble, hopeful, trusting, critical.

Born of a critical matrix, dialogue creates a critical attitude (Jaspers). It is nourished by love, humility, hope, faith, and trust. When the two "poles"

5. "Breakdown": a splitting of themes into their fundamental nuclei. See *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* p. 101ff. "Codification": the representation of a theme in the form of an existential situation. See *Pedagogy,* pp. 95–96 and pp. 102–3.—Translator's note.

of the dialogue are thus linked by love, hope, and mutual trust, they can join in a critical search for something. Only dialogue truly communicates.

> Dialogue is the only way, not only in the vital questions of the political order, but in all the expressions of our being. Only by virtue of faith, however, does dialogue have power and meaning: by faith in man and his possibilities, by the faith that I can only become truly myself when other men also become themselves.[6]

And so we set dialogue in opposition with the anti-dialogue which was so much a part of our historical-cultural formation, and so present in the climate of transition.

ANTI-DIALOGUE

A

over

B = communiqué

Relation of "empathy" is broken.
MATRIX: Loveless, arrogant, hopeless, mistrustful, acritical.

It involves vertical relationships between persons. It lacks love, is therefore acritical, and cannot create a critical attitude. It is self-sufficient and hopelessly arrogant. In anti-dialogue the relation of empathy between the "poles" is broken. Thus, anti-dialogue does not communicate, but rather issues communiqués.[7]

Whoever enters into dialogue does so with someone about something; and that something ought to constitute the new content of our proposed education. We felt that even before teaching the illiterate to read, we could help him to overcome his magic or naïve understanding and to develop an increasingly critical understanding. Toward this end, the first dimension of our new program content would be the anthropological concept of culture—that is, the distinction between the world of nature and the world of culture; the active role of men *in* and *with* their reality; the role of mediation which nature plays in relationships and communication among people; culture as the addition made by men and women to a world they

6. Karl Jaspers, *op. cit.*
7. See Jaspers, *op. cit.*

did not make; culture as the result of people's labor, of their efforts to create and re-create; the transcendental meaning of human relationships; the humanist dimension of culture; culture as a systematic acquisition of human experience (but as creative assimilation, not as information-storing); the democratization of culture; the learning of reading and writing as a key to the world of written communication. In short, the role of man and woman as Subject in the world and with the world.

From that point of departure, the illiterate would begin to effect a change in his or her former attitudes, by discovering himself or herself to be a maker of the world of culture, by discovering that he or she, as well as the literate person, has a creative and re-creative impulse. He or she would discover that culture is just as much a clay doll made by artists who are his or her peers as it is the work of a great sculptor, a great painter, a great mystic, or a great philosopher; that culture is the poetry of lettered poets and also the poetry of his or her own popular songs—that culture is all human creation.

To introduce the concept of culture, first we "broke down" this concept into its fundamental aspects. Then, on the basis of this breakdown, we "codified" (i.e., represented visually) ten existential situations. These situations are presented in the Appendix, together with a brief description of some of the basic elements contained in each. Each representation contained a number of elements to be "decoded" by the group participants, with the help of the coordinator. Francisco Brenand, one of the greatest contemporary Brazilian artists, painted these codifications, perfectly integrating education and art.

It is remarkable to see with what enthusiasm these illiterates engage in debate and with what curiosity they respond to questions implicit in the codifications. In the words of Odilon Ribeiro Coutinho, these "detemporalized men begin to integrate themselves in time." As the dialogue intensifies, a "current" is established among the participants, dynamic to the degree that the content of the codifications corresponds to the existential reality of the groups.

Many participants during these debates affirm happily and self-confidently that they are not being shown "anything new, just remembering." "I make shoes," said one, "and now I see that I am worth as much as the Ph.D. who writes books."

"Tomorrow," said a street-sweeper in Brasília, "I'm going to go to work with my head high." He had discovered the value of his person. "I know now that I am cultured," an elderly peasant said emphatically. And when

he was asked how it was that now he knew himself to be cultured, he answered with the same emphasis, "Because I work, and working, I transform the world."[8]

Once the group has perceived the distinction between the two worlds—nature and culture—and recognized the individual's role in each, the coordinator presents situations focusing on or expanding other aspects of culture.

The participants go on to discuss culture as a systematic acquisition of human experience, and to discover that in a lettered culture this acquisition is not limited to oral transmission, as is the case in unlettered cultures which lack graphic signs. They conclude by debating the democratization of culture, which opens the perspective of acquiring literacy.

All these discussions are critical, stimulating, and highly motivating. The illiterate perceives critically that it is necessary to learn to read and write, and prepares himself to become the agent of this learning.

To acquire literacy is more than to psychologically and mechanically dominate reading and writing techniques. It is to dominate these techniques in terms of consciousness; to understand what one reads and to write what one understands; it is to *communicate* graphically. Acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words, or syllables—lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe—but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context.

Thus the educator's role is fundamentally to enter into dialogue with the illiterate about concrete situations and simply to offer him the instruments with which he can teach himself to read and write. This teaching cannot be done from the top down, but only from the inside out, by the illiterate himself or herself, with the collaboration of the educator. That is why we searched for a method which would be the instrument of the learner as well as of the educator, and which, in the lucid observation of a young Brazilian sociologist,[9] "would identify learning *content* with the learning *process*."

Hence, our mistrust in primers,[10] which set up a certain grouping of graphic signs as a gift and cast the illiterate in the role of the *object* rather

8. Similar responses were evoked by the programs carried out in Chile.

9. Celso Beisegel, in an unpublished work.

10. I am not opposed to reading texts, which are in fact indispensable to developing the visual-graphic channel of communication and which in great part should be elaborated by the participants themselves. I should add that our experience is based on the use of multiple channels of communication.

than the *Subject* of his learning. Primers, even when they try to avoid this pitfall, end by *donating* to the illiterate words and sentences which really should result from his own creative effort. We opted instead for the use of "generative words," those whose syllabic elements offer, through recombination, the creation of new words. Teaching men and women how to read and write a syllabic language like Portuguese, means showing them how to grasp critically the way its words are formed, so that they themselves can carry out the creative play of combinations. Fifteen or eighteen words seemed sufficient to present the basic phonemes of the Portuguese language. The seventeen generative words used in the State of Rio are presented in the Appendix.

The program is elaborated in several phases:

Phase 1: Researching the vocabulary of the groups with which one is working. This research is carried out during informal encounters with the inhabitants of the area. One selects not only the words most weighted with existential meaning (and thus the greatest emotional content), but also typical sayings, as well as words and expressions linked to the experience of the groups in which the researcher participates. These interviews reveal longings, frustrations, disbeliefs, hopes, and an impetus to participate. During this initial phase the team of educators form rewarding relationships and discover often unsuspected exuberance and beauty in the people's language.

The archives of the Service of Cultural Extension of the University of Recife contain vocabulary studies of rural and urban areas in the Northeast and in southern Brazil full of such examples as the following:

"The month of January in Angicos," said a man from the backlands of Rio Grande do Norte, "is a hard one to live through, because January is a tough guy who makes us suffer." *(Janeiro em Angicos é duro de se viver, porque janeiro é cabra danado para judiar de nós.)*

"I want to learn to read and write," said an illiterate from Recife, "so that I can stop being the shadow of other people."

A man from Florianópolis: "The people have an answer."

Another, in an injured tone: "I am not angry *(não tenho paixão)* at being poor, but at not knowing how to read."

"I have the school of the world," said an illiterate from the southern part of the country, which led Professor Jomard de Brito to ask in an essay, "What can one presume to 'teach' an adult who affirms 'I have the school of the world'?"[11]

11. "Educação de Adultos e Unificação de Cultura," Estudos Universitários, *Revista de Cultura*, Universidade de Recife, 2–4, 1963.

"I want to learn to read and to write so I can change the world," said an illiterate from São Paulo, for whom to *know* quite correctly meant *to intervene* in his reality.

"The people put a screw in their heads," said another in somewhat esoteric language. And when he was asked what he meant, he replied in terms revealing the phenomenon of popular emergence: "That is what explains that you, Professor, have come to talk with me, the people."

Such affirmations merit interpretation by specialists, to produce a more efficient instrument for the educator's action.[12] The generative words to be used in the program should emerge from this field vocabulary research, not from the educator's personal inspiration, no matter how proficiently he might construct a list.

Phase 2: Selection of the generative words from the vocabulary which was studied. The following criteria should govern their selection:

(a) phonemic richness;

(b) phonetic difficulty (the words chosen should correspond to the phonetic difficulties of the language, placed in a sequence moving gradually from words of less to those of greater difficulty);

(c) pragmatic tone, which implies a greater engagement of a word in a given social, cultural, and political reality.

Professor Jarbas Maciel has commented that "these criteria are contained in the semeiotic criterion: the best generative word is that which combines the greatest possible 'percentage' of the syntactic criteria (phonemic richness, degree of complex phonetic difficulty, 'manipulability' of the groups of signs, the syllables, etc.), the semantic criteria (greater or lesser 'intensity' of the link between the word and the thing it designates), the greater or lesser correspondence between the word and the pragmatic thing designated, the greater or lesser quality of *conscientização* which the word potentially carries, or the grouping of sociocultural reactions which the word generates in the person or group using it."[13]

Phase 3: The creation of the "codifications:" the representation of typical existential situations of the group with which one is working. These representations function as challenges, as coded situation-problems containing elements to be decoded by the groups with the collaboration of the coordinator. Discussion of these codifications will lead the groups toward a more

12. Luis Costa Lima, Professor of Literary Theory, has analyzed many of these texts by illiterate authors.

13. "A Fundamentação Teórica do Sistema Paulo Freire de Educação," Estudos Universitários, *Revista de Cultura,* Universidade do Recife, No. IV, 1963.

critical consciousness at the same time that they begin to learn to read and write. The codifications represent familiar local situations—which, however, open perspectives for the analysis of regional and national problems. The generative words are set into the codifications, graduated according to their phonetic difficulty. One generative word may embody the entire situation, or it may refer to only one of the elements of the situation.

Phase 4: The elaboration of agendas, which should serve as mere aids to the coordinators, never as rigid schedules to be obeyed.

Phase 5: The preparation of cards with the breakdown of the phonemic families which correspond to the generative words.

A major problem in setting up the program is instructing the teams of coordinators. Teaching the purely technical aspect of the procedure is not difficult; the difficulty lies rather in the creation of a new attitude—that of dialogue, so absent in our own upbringing and education. The coordinators must be converted to dialogue in order to carry out education rather than domestication. Dialogue is an I–Thou relationship, and thus necessarily a relationship between two Subjects. Each time the "thou" is changed into an object, an "it," dialogue is subverted and education is changed to deformation. The period of instruction must be followed by dialogical supervision, to avoid the temptation of anti-dialogue on the part of the coordinators.

Once the material has been prepared in the form of slides, filmstrips, or posters, once the teams of coordinators and supervisors have been instructed in all aspects of the method and have been given their agendas, the program itself can begin. It functions in the following manner:

The codified situation is projected, together with the first generative word, which graphically represents the oral expression of the object perceived. Debate about its implications follows.

Only after the group, with the collaboration of the coordinator, has exhausted the analysis (decoding) of the situation, does the coordinator call attention to the generative word, encouraging the participants to visualize (not memorize) it. Once the word has been visualized, and the semantic link established between the word and the object to which it refers, the word is presented alone on another slide (or poster or photogram) without the object it names. Then the same word is separated into syllables, which the illiterate usually identifies as "pieces." Once the "pieces" are recognized, the coordinator presents visually the phonemic families which compose the word, first in isolation and then together, to arrive at the recognition of the vowels. The card presenting the phonemic families has been called the

"discovery card."[14] Using this card to reach a synthesis, men discover the mechanism of word formation through phonemic combinations in a syllabic language like Portuguese. By appropriating this mechanism critically (not learning it by rote), they themselves can begin to produce a system of graphic signs. They can begin, with surprising ease, to create words with the phonemic combinations offered by the breakdown of a trisyllabic word, on the first day of the program.[15]

For example, let us take the word *tijolo* (brick) as the first generative word, placed in a "situation" of construction work. After discussing the situation in all its possible aspects, the semantic link between the word and the object it names is established. Once the word has been noted within the situation, it is presented without the object: *tijolo.*

Afterward: *ti-jo-lo.* By moving immediately to present the "pieces" visually, we initiate the recognition of the phonemic families. Beginning with the first syllable, *ti,* the group is motivated to learn the whole phonemic family resulting from the combination of the initial consonant with the other vowels. The group then learns the second family through the visual presentation of *jo,* and finally arrives at the third family.

When the phonemic family is projected, the group at first recognizes only the syllable of the word which has been shown:

(ta-te-*ti*-to-tu), (ja-je-ji-*jo*-ju), (la-le-li-*lo*-lu)

When the participants recognize *ti,* from the generative word *tijolo,* it is proposed that they compare it with the other syllables; whereupon they discover that while all the syllables begin the same, they end differently. Thus, they cannot all be called *ti.*

The same procedure is followed with the syllables *jo* and *lo* and their families. After learning each phonemic family, the group practices reading the new syllables.

The most important moment arises when the three families are presented together:

14. Aurenice Cardoso, "Conscientização e Alfabetização—Visão Prática do Sistema Paulo Freire de Educação de Adultos," Estudos Universitários, *Revista de Cultura,* Universidade do Recife, No. II, 1963.

15. Generally, in a period of six weeks to two months, we could leave a group of twenty-five persons reading newspapers, writing notes and simple letters, and discussing problems of local and national interest.

Each culture circle was equipped with a Polish-made projector, imported at the cost of about $13. Since we had not yet set up our own laboratory, a filmstrip cost us bout $7–$8. We also used an inexpensive blackboard. The slides were projected on the wall of the house where the culture circle met or, where this was difficult, on the reverse side (painted white) of the blackboard.

The Education Ministry imported 35,000 of the projectors, which after the military coup of 1964 were presented on television as "highly subversive."

ta-te-ti-to-tu
ja-je-ji-jo-ju
la-le-li-lo-lu

THE DISCOVERY CARD

After one horizontal and one vertical reading to grasp the vocal sounds, the group (*not* the coordinator) begins to carry out oral synthesis. One by one, they all begin to "make" words with the combinations available:[16] *tatu* (armadillo), *luta* (struggle), *lajota* (small flagstone), *loja* (store), *jato* (jet), *juta* (jute), *lote* (lot), *lula* (squid), *tela* (screen), etc. There are even some participants who take a vowel from one of the syllables, link it to another syllable, and add a third, thus forming a word. For example, they take the *i* from li, join it to *le* and add *te: leitre* (milk).

There are others, like an illiterate from Brasília, who on the first night he began his literary program said, *"tu já lê"* ("you already read").[17]

The oral exercises involve not only learning, but recognition (without which there is no true learning). Once these are completed, the participants begin—on that same first evening—to write. On the following day they bring from home as many words as they were able to make with the combinations of the phonemes they learned. It doesn't matter if they bring combinations which are not actual words—what does matter is the discovery of the mechanism of phonemic combinations.

The group itself, with the help of the educator (*not* the educator with the help of the group), should test the words thus created. A group in the state of Rio Grande do Norte called those combinations which were actual words "thinking words" and those which were not, "dead words."

Not infrequently, after assimilating the phonemic mechanism by using the "discovery card," participants would write words with complex phonemes (*tra, nha,* etc.), which had not yet been presented to them. In one of the Culture Circles in Angicos, Rio Grande do Norte, on the fifth day of discussion, in which simple phonemes were being shown, one of the participants went to the blackboard to write (as he said) "a thinking word." He wrote: *"o povo vai resouver os poblemas do Brasil votando conciente"*[18]

16. In a television interview, Gilson Amado observed lucidly, "They can do this, because there is no such thing as oral illiteracy."

17. In correct Portuguese, *tu já lês.*

18. *Resouver* is a corruption of *resolver; poblemas* a corruption of *problemas;* the letter *s* is lacking from the syllable *cons.*

("the people will solve the problems of Brazil by informed voting"). In such cases, the group discussed the text, debating its significance in the context of their reality.

How can one explain the fact that a man who was illiterate several days earlier could write words with complex phonemes before he had even studied them? Once he had dominated the mechanism of phonemic combinations, he attempted—and managed—to express himself graphically, in the way he spoke.[19]

I wish to emphasize that in educating adults, to avoid a rote, mechanical process one must make it possible for them to achieve critical consciousness so that they can teach themselves to read and write.

As an active educational method helps a person to become consciously aware of his context and his condition as a human being as Subject, it will become an instrument of choice. At that point he will become politicized. When an ex-illiterate of Angicos, speaking before President João Goulart and the presidential staff,[20] declared that he was no longer part of the *mass*, but one of the *people*, he had done more than utter a mere phrase; he had made a conscious option. He had chosen decisional participation, which belongs to the people, and had renounced the emotional resignation of the masses. He had become political.

The National Literary Program of the Ministry of Education and Culture, which I coordinated, planned to extend and strengthen this education work throughout Brazil. Obviously we could not confine that work to a literacy program, even one which was critical rather than mechanical. With the same spirit of a pedagogy of communication, we were therefore planning a post-literacy stage which would vary only as to curriculum. If the National Literacy Program had not been terminated by the military coup, in 1964 there would have been more than 20,000 culture circles functioning throughout the country. In these, we planned to investigate the themes of the Brazilian people. These themes would be analyzed by specialists and broken down into learning units, as we had done with the concept of culture and with the coded situations linked to the generative words. We

19. Interestingly enough, as a rule the illiterates wrote confidently and legibly, largely overcoming the natural indecisiveness of beginners. Elza Freire thinks this may be due to the fact that these persons, beginning with the discussion of the anthropological concept of culture, discovered themselves to be more fully human, thereby acquiring an increasing emotional confidence in their learning which was reflected in their motor activity.

20. I wish to acknowledge the support given our efforts by President Goulart, by Ministers of Education Paulo de Tarso and Júlio Sambaquy, and by the Rector of the University of Recife, Professor João Alfredo da Costa Lima.

would prepare filmstrips with these breakdowns as well as simplified texts with references to the original texts. By gathering this thematic material, we could have offered a substantial post-literacy program. Further, by making a catalog of thematic breakdowns and bibliographic references available to high schools and colleges, we could widen the sphere of the program and help identify our schools with our reality.

At the same time, we began to prepare material with which we could carry out concretely an education that would encourage what Aldous Huxley has called the "art of dissociating ideas"[21] as an antidote to the domesticating power of propaganda.[22] We planned filmstrips, for use in the literacy phase, presenting propaganda—from advertising commercials to ideological indoctrination—as a "problem-situation" for discussion.

For example, as men through discussion begin to perceive the deceit in a cigarette advertisement featuring a beautiful, smiling woman in a bikini (i.e., the fact that she, her smile, her beauty, and her bikini have nothing at all to do with the cigarette), they begin to discover the difference between education and propaganda. At the same time, they are preparing themselves to discuss and perceive the same deceit in ideological or political propaganda;[23] they are arming themselves to "dissociate ideas." In fact, this has always seemed to me to be the way to defend democracy, not a way to subvert it.

21. *Ends and Means* (New York and London, 1937), p. 252.

22. I have never forgotten the publicity (done cleverly, considering our acritical mental habits) for a certain Brazilian public figure. The bust of the candidate was displayed with arrows pointing to his head, his eyes, his mouth, and his hands. Next to the arrows appeared the legend:

You don't need to think he thinks for you!
You don't need to see, he sees for you!
You don't need to talk, he talks for you!
You don't need to act, he acts for you!

23. In the campaigns carried out against me, I have been called "ignorant" and "illiterate," "the author of a method so innocuous that it did not even manage to teach him how to read and write." It was said that I was not "the inventor" of dialogue (as if I had ever made such an irresponsible affirmation). It was said that I had done "nothing original," and that I had "plagiarized European or North-American educators," as well as the author of a Brazilian primer. (On the subject of originality, I have always agreed with Dewey, for whom originality does not lie in the "extraordinary and fanciful," but "in putting everyday things to uses which had not occurred to others." *Democracy and Education*, New York, 1916, p. 187.)

None of these accusations has ever wounded me. What does leave me perplexed is to hear or read that I intended to "Bolchevize the country" with my method. In fact, my actual crime was that I treated literacy as more than a mechanical problem, and linked it to *conscientização*, which was "dangerous." It was that I viewed education as an effort to liberate men, not as yet another instrument to dominate them.

One subverts democracy (even though one does this in the name of democracy) by making it irrational; by making it rigid in order "to defend it against totalitarian rigidity"; by making it hateful, when it can only develop in a context of love and respect for persons; by closing it, when it only lives in openness; by nourishing it with fear when it must be courageous; by making it an instrument of the powerful in the oppression of the weak; by militarizing it against the people; by alienating a nation in the name of democracy.

One defends democracy by leading it to the state Mannheim calls "militant democracy"—a democracy which does not fear the people, which suppresses privilege, which can plan without becoming rigid, which defends itself without hate, which is nourished by a critical spirit rather than irrationality.

Postscript

Today, the task of overcoming our lack of democratic experience through experiences in participation still awaits us, as does the task of superseding the irrational climate which prevails in Brazil.

It is too soon to say to what extent this climate can be overcome without provoking larger explosions and even more severe forms of retreat. Possibly the intense emotionality generated by irrational sectarianism can open a new way within the historical process which will lead less rapidly to more authentic and human forms of life for the Brazilian people.

Appendix

The following drawings represent the "situations" discussed in the cultural circles. The originals, by Francisco Brenand, were taken from me; these were done by another Brazilian artist, Vicente de Abreu, now in exile.

FIRST SITUATION
People in the World and with the World, Nature and Culture

Through the discussion of this situation (page 96)—man or woman as a being of relationships—the participants arrive at the distinction between two worlds: that of nature and that of culture. They perceive the normal situation of man as a being in the world and with the world, as a creative and re-creative being who, through work, constantly alters reality. By means of simple questions, such as, "Who made the well? Why did he do it? How did he do it? When?" which are repeated with regard to the other "elements" of the situation, two basic concepts emerge: that of *necessity* and that of *work;* and culture becomes explicit on a primary level, that of subsistence. The man made the well because he needed water. And he did it because, relating to the world, he made the latter the object of his knowledge. By work, he submitted the world to a process of transformation. Thus, he made the house, his clothes, his work tools. From that point, one discusses with the group, in obviously simple but critically objective terms, the relations among men, which unlike those discussed previously cannot be either of domination or transformation, because they are relations among Subjects.

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LEARNING TO QUESTION: A PEDAGOGY OF LIBERATION

Learning to Question

António Faundez: I think that in this conversation of ours we could take as our starting point either particular themes or our actual experience. In the first case, we would discuss particular concepts, how they can be applied to actual situations, how they in fact change as they are applied to different situations, etc. In the second case, we could speak of our experiences in Africa and Latin America, experiences which are common to us both, or even those which are not.

Paulo Freire: Or it could be a combination of the two. Let's accept both possibilities and so give ourselves freedom of scope so that each of us will spontaneously make our particular contribution to the development of the themes. I think it's a good idea.

Why a "Spoken" Book?

Anyway, I think that we ought to give a sort of introduction in dialogue form to this book that we are beginning to "speak," an introduction in the course of which we would not only indicate the themes or experiences we are going to deal with, but already engage in some reflection on them.

I also think, for example, that it would be interesting to tell our readers that the idea of making this book together, even if it didn't actually come to birth, was revived one evening in your home, about six months ago, accompanied by some good Chilean wine, and some equally good *empanadas* as well.

So here we are again today in Geneva, in your office, to begin the task we set ourselves. And I have the impression that at the outset of this shared task we should tell those who tomorrow will pick up this book to read it something about the reason for a book like this, the reason for a "spoken" book, rather than a book written by us both—some chapters by you, and some by me—or two books, one written by you and the other by me. And so we shall both begin our conversation. I shall say my piece and then you will say yours. In that way we shall draw each other out in this first session, and at the same time prepare ourselves for the experience of "speaking" the book so as to bring our project to fruition.

I would venture to tell our readers at this stage something about the reason for a book like this.

First of all, I don't know whether you will agree with me but I believe that this is an interesting intellectual experience, a rich and truly creative experience. An experience which is, in fact, not unknown to me. I have been working in this way for two years and nothing has happened to suggest to me that I should stop doing it.

In fact, "speaking" a book with one or two others instead of writing it alone represents to some extent at least a break with a certain individualistic tradition in the production of books, and—why not admit it?—by taking us out of the pleasant cosiness of our study, it opens us up to each other in the adventure of thinking critically.

In our case now, thinking about the practical work, with its many different aspects in which we were involved, sometimes together and sometimes separately. And this thinking, which is basically a rethinking, has to do on the one hand with what I did together with others directly in Africa and other parts of the world when I was working here with the World Council of Churches, and which I often discussed with you; and, on the other hand, it has to do with what you went on to do when you took over from me in the Education Department of the Council when I returned to Brazil in June 1980.

I can remember, for example, some work we did together, although not in the dialogue form in which we are doing this book. I am thinking of the texts for the literacy campaigns and post-literacy campaigns in São Tomé e Príncipe—which we wrote separately, but submitted to each other for discussion.

I have no intention at all of denying the value of writing a book alone, and both of us, as will countless intellectuals, will continue to write individually. But I am convinced of the value of our producing a book together in

dialogue form, and so here we are seated at this table "speaking" our book. And, in so doing, we are consenting, responsibly, to expose ourselves to the meaningful experience of sharing in a common task.

This does not mean, however, in any way that this shared commitment will deny or cancel out what is distinctively mine or yours, as an expression of our deepest selves, in the final joint product. I find this shared work, this dialogue experience, immensely interesting. As I said just now, I am doing it in Brazil, and I have just experienced something similar in Canada, in Vancouver, where I "spoke" a book with an outstanding North American intellectual, Ira Shor. In it we attempted to respond to some of the issues which he and I have picked up in our visits to various university centres in the USA and Canada. I must say that this sort of experience has enriched me, but I must also say, repeating what I've just said, that being involved in it does not mean giving up writing by myself. And this is what is happening to you, too. But I do think that committing ourselves from time to time to the task of creative work together in an attempt to overcome the temptation to be always alone, to write alone, is a meaningful and valuable intellectual exercise. The experiences we talk about, discuss critically, and which are now being recorded on tape will come out in a lively, free, spontaneous and dynamic conversation. It's important, nonetheless, to stress that the liveliness of the conversation, the lightness of the spoken word, the spontaneity of the dialogue are not in themselves a denial of the serious intent of this work or its requisite intellectual rigor. There are people who have the naive idea that rigorous analysis can only take place when you shut yourself up within four walls behind a door securely locked with a large key! Only there, in the silent intimacy of library or laboratory can serious scientific work go on! No, I think that here, in privacy, yes, but at the same time open to the world, including the world of nature outside your office, we can engage in serious and rigorous thought—and are doing so. The style is different, because the language is spoken—with a more colloquial touch, more feeling, more freedom.

Well, those are my first thoughts which I would like to share with the probable readers of this book on the reasons for a "spoken" book. I don't know whether you would like to add anything to what I've said by way of a continuation of this sort of informal joint introduction.

Faundez: I agree with your analysis, particularly with what you say about this break with intellectual cosiness, I mean, the attempt to make intellectual work a joint activity. And the method which best lends itself to this attempt

is, without doubt, dialogue. In fact, you and I have been engaged in dialogue ever since we first met in November 1979, and the dialogue which began then has gone on ever since. And what we are doing today is simply a further stage in the history of our dialogue. As you will remember, it was through an interview with our friend Lígia Chiappini that we got to know each other and began our dialogue.

Freire: That's right. That interview with Lígia in which you took part was in a way a short trial run for what we are doing today.

Faundez: In that way our dialogue began at our very first meeting. After our interview with Lígia you invited me to work together with you, and from that time onward in the course of our work we have kept up a constant dialogue, particularly in connection with our experiences in São Tomé e Príncipe. Among these ongoing conversations, I remember one in particular, when the actual idea of a book, a recorded conversation, first came up. We were walking back from lunch at the ILO in Geneva, when in the middle of our conversation on conceptualization and the meaning of the power of intellectuals, you stood still and said to me: "Antonio, we should put all this on tape, because this conversation shouldn't be a conversation just between you and me: we should make it possible for others to share in it and share in conversation with us through our conversation." Do you remember?

Freire: Very well. Actually, that is where the earliest roots of the project for this book are to be found. Then, six months ago, I passed through here on my way back to São Paulo from the United States and we committed ourselves to begin "speaking" our book today. In fact, we have had within us the desire to hold this conversation, the interest in this project, as you rightly said, since 1979, when, through Lígia, our friendship began. Our openness to dialogue—which does not mean that we are always in agreement with each other—has been a constant feature of our friendship. It never ceased during the last part of my time here in Geneva, which coincided with your arrival, and it has been kept alive since then when I have been passing through Geneva. And so I agree with you when you say that our conversation is still going on even when we are a long way from each other. We only need to meet up again and we can take up the conversation more or less where we left off the last time. It's as if we were saying to each other: "As I was just saying . . ." I think, Antonio, as we continue