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BLOOMSBURY
REVELATIONS

PAULO FREIRE

**PEDAGOGY OF
HOPE**

RELIVING *PEDAGOGY OF THE
OPPRESSED*

B L O O M S B U R Y

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Opening Words

We are surrounded by a pragmatic discourse that would have us adapt to the facts of reality. *Dreams*, and *utopia*, are called not only useless, but positively impeding. (After all, they are an intrinsic part of any educational practice with the power to unmask the dominant lies.) It may seem strange, then, that I should write a book called *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

But for me, on the contrary, the educational practice of a progressive option will never be anything but an adventure in unveiling. It will always be an experiment in bringing out the truth. Because this is the way I have always thought, there are those who dispute whether or not I am an educator. It happened recently in a meeting at UNESCO in Paris—I have been told by someone who was there. Latin American representatives refused to ascribe me the standing of educator. At least I was not an educator as far as they were concerned. And they criticized me for what seemed to them to be my exaggerated “politicization.”

They failed to perceive that, in denying me the status of educator for being “too political,” they were being as political as I. Of course, on opposite sides of the fence. “Neutral” they were not, nor could ever be.

On the other hand, there must be countless individuals who think the way a friend of mine, a university professor, thinks. He came looking for me. In astonishment, he asked, “But Paul . . . a *Pedagogy of Hope* in the shameless hellhole of corruption like the one strangling us in Brazil today?”

The fact is that the “democratization” of the shamelessness and corruption that is gaining the upper hand in our country, contempt for the common good, and crimes that go unpunished, have only broadened and deepened as the nation has begun to rise up in protest. Even young adults and teenagers crowd into the streets, criticizing, calling for honesty and candor. The people cry out against all the crass evidence of public corruption. The public squares are filled once more. There is a hope, however timid, on the street corners, a hope in each and every one of us. It is as if most of the nation had been taken by an uncontrollable need to vomit at the sight of all this shamefulness.

On the other hand—while I certainly cannot ignore hopelessness as a concrete entity, nor turn a blind eye to the historical, economic, and social reasons that explain that hopelessness—I do not understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it, apart from hope and dream. Hope is an ontological need. Hopelessness is but hope that has lost its bearings, and become a distortion of that ontological need.

When it becomes a program, hopelessness paralyzes us, immobilizes us. We succumb to fatalism, and then it becomes impossible to muster the strength we absolutely need for a

fierce struggle that will re-create the world.

I am hopeful, not out of mere stubbornness, but out of an existential, concrete imperative.

I do not mean that, because I am hopeful, I attribute to this hope of mine the power to transform reality all by itself, so that I set out for the fray without taking account of concrete, material data, declaring, “My hope is enough!” No, my hope is necessary, but it is not enough. Alone, it does not win. But without it, my struggle will be weak and wobbly. We need critical hope the way a fish needs unpolluted water.

The idea that hope alone will transform the world, and action undertaken in that kind of naïveté, is an excellent route to hopelessness, pessimism, and fatalism. But the attempt to do without hope, in the struggle to improve the world, as if that struggle could be reduced to calculated acts alone, or a purely scientific approach, is a frivolous illusion. To attempt to do without hope, which is based on the need for truth as an ethical quality of the struggle, is tantamount to denying that struggle is one of its mainstays. The essential thing, as I maintain later on, is this: hope, as an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice. As an ontological need, hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness. That is why there is no hope in sheer hopefulness. The hoped-for is not attained by dint of raw hoping. Just to hope is to hope in vain.

Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns into hopelessness. And hopelessness can become tragic despair. Hence the need for a kind of education in hope. Hope, as it happens, is so important for our existence, individual and social, that we must take every care not to experience it in a mistaken form, and thereby allow it to slip toward hopelessness and despair. Hopelessness and despair are both the consequence and the cause of inaction or immobilism.

In limited situations, beyond which lies “untested feasibility” alone¹—sometimes perceivable, sometimes not—we find the why of both positions: the hopeful one and the hopeless one.

One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be. After all, without hope there is little we can do. It will be hard to struggle on, and when we fight as hopeless or despairing persons, our struggle will be suicidal. We shall be beside ourselves, drop our weapons, and throw ourselves into sheer hand-to-hand, purely vindictive, combat. Of course, the element of punishment, penalty, correction—the punitive element in the struggle we wage in our hope, in our conviction of its ethical and historical rightness—belongs to the pedagogical nature of the political process of which struggle is an expression. It would not be equitable that injustices, abuses, extortion, illicit profits, influence peddling, the use of offices and positions for the satisfaction of personal interests—all of these things that make up the reason for which, with justifiable anger, we now struggle in Brazil—should go uncorrected, just as it would not be right for any of those who would be judged guilty not to be severely punished, within the limits of the law.

It will not do—it is not a valid argument—simply to admit that none of this is a

“privilege” of the Third World, as we sometimes hear it suggested. Yes, the First World has indeed always been an example of scandals of every sort, always a model of wickedness, of exploitation. We need only think of colonialism—of the massacres of invaded, subjugated, colonized peoples; of the wars of this century, of shameful, cheapening racial discrimination, and the rapine that colonialism has perpetrated. No, we have no monopoly on the dishonorable. But we can no longer connive with the scandals that wound us in our remotest depths.

What cynicism—just to take one example among dozens—that certain politicians should seek to conceal their doings from their constituents (who have an absolute right to know what is done in Congress and why), and defend, with puritanical airs, in the name of democracy, some right to hide out in a “secret ballot” during a presidential vote of confidence! Why hide, unless there is at least some minimal risk to one’s physical well-being? Why is concealment solemnly dubbed the “purity,” “honorableness,” “unassailability” of the president? Let these politicians have the dignity to assume responsibility for their option. Let them come right out with their defense of the indefensible.

Pedagogy of Hope is that kind of book. It is written in rage and love, without which there is no hope. It is meant as a defense of tolerance—not to be confused with connivance—and radicalness. It is meant as a criticism of sectarianism. It attempts to explain and defend progressive postmodernity and it will reject conservative, neoliberal postmodernity.

The first step I shall take will be to analyze or speak of the *fabric*, the texture, the very strands, of the infancy, youth, and budding maturity in which *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which I “revisit” in this book, came to be proclaimed, first in oral form and then in writing.

Some of these strands, these threads, will end with my exile, into which I go with a soul steeped in history—the cultural marks, memories, feelings, and sentiments, doubts, dreams that never got off the drawing board but were never abandoned—and longings, of my world, my sky, the tepid waters of the Atlantic, the “improper language of the people, the correct language of the people.”* I arrived in exile, and reached the memory I bore in my soul of so many intertwined threads; there I came to be marked and stamped by new facts, new knowledge, and these wove new experiences, as in a tapestry.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed emerges from all of this, and I shall speak now of that book—of how I learned while I wrote it, and indeed, of how, while first speaking of this pedagogy, I was learning to write the book.

Then, in a second step in this present book, I shall return to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. I shall discuss some of its stages, and analyze certain criticisms leveled against it in the 1970s.

In the third and final step in this book, I shall speak at length of the threads and the fabrics whose essence, as it were, was *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* itself. Here I shall practically relive—and basically, shall actually be reliving—and as I do so, rethink, certain special moments in my journeys through the four corners of the earth, to which I was carried by *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Perhaps, however, I should make it clear to readers that, in taking myself back to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and in speaking today of the tapestry of my experience in the 1970s, I do not intend to wallow in nostalgia. Instead, my reencounter

with *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* will have the tone of one who speaks not of what has been, but of what is.

The facts, the debates, the discussions, the projects, the experiments, the dialogues in which I shared in the 1970s, all bearing on *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, seem to me to be as current as do others to which I shall refer, of the 1980s and today.

I should now like, in these opening words, to thank a group of friends, in Brazil and abroad, with whom, even before beginning to work on this *Pedagogy of Hope*, I held conversations about this project, and from whom I received such important encouragement:

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I should also like to express my thanks to my wife, Ana Maria Freire, for the excellent notes appended here, which clarify and anchor important elements in my text. Superscripts in the text refer to her numbered endnotes at the back of the book. Asterisks, on the other hand, refer to footnotes at the bottom of the page.

I am likewise aware of my indebtedness to Suzie Hartmann Lontra, who so patiently and devotedly proofread the typescript with me.

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Finally, to Marcus Gasparian, one of the finest and most sensitive publishers in Brazil today, I send a brotherly embrace and a “Thank you very much” for the taste with which he constantly discussed with me what would come to be *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Paulo Freire
São Paulo
January 1994

* Manuel Bandeira, “Evocação do Recife,” in *Poesias*, 6th ed. (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1955), p. 191.



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authentic hope.

The idea of the inexorability of a history that will necessarily come in a predetermined manner constitutes what I call “liberation fatalism” or “fatalistic liberation”—a liberation to come as a kind of gift or donation of history: the liberation that will come because it has been said that it will come.

In the dialectical perception, the future of which we dream is not inexorable. We have to make it, produce it, else it will not come in the form that we would more or less wish it to. True, of course, we have to make it not arbitrarily, but with the materials, with the concrete reality, of which we dispose, and more as a project, a *dream*, for which we struggle.

While for dogmatic, mechanistic positions, the consciousness that I call critical takes shape as a kind of epiphenomenon, a “spin-off”—an automatic, mechanical result of structural changes—for dialectic, the importance of consciousness is in the fact that, not being the maker of reality, neither is it, at the opposite pole, a pure reflex of reality. It is precisely on this point that something of basic importance turns—the basic importance of education as act of cognition not only of the content, but of the “why” of economic, social, political, ideological, and historical facts, which explain the greater or lesser degree of “interdict of the body,”* our conscious body, under which we find ourselves placed.

In the 1950s, perhaps more by way of an intuition of the phenomenon than as a critical understanding of the same, at which understanding I was then arriving, I asserted, in the university dissertation to which I have referred in this book, and I repeated later in *Educação como prática da liberdade*, that, while the advance from what I called “semi-intransitive awareness” to “transitive-naive awareness” is automatically at hand, on the strength of infrastructural transformations, the more important passage—that from “naive transitivity” to “critical transitivity”—comes only through serious educational efforts bent to this end.*

To be sure, my experiences with SESI, with which I coupled memories of my childhood and adolescence in Jaboaão, helped me to understand, even before my theoretical readings on the subject, the relations prevailing between awareness and world as tending to be dynamic, never mechanistic. I could not avoid, of course, the risks to which I have referred—those of mechanism and of idealistic subjectivism—in discussing those relations, and I acknowledge my slips in the direction of an overemphasis on awareness.

In 1974, in Geneva, Ivan Illich and I presided at a conference under the patronage of the Department of Education of the World Council of Churches, in which we took up once more the concepts of “descholarization” (Illich) and *conscientização* (I). I wrote a little document for the conference, from which I am now going to quote an extended passage instead of simply referring the reader to it. (It originally appeared in the WCC periodical *RISK*, in 1975).†

. . . Although there can be no consciousness-raising (*conscientização*) without the unveiling, the revelation, of objective reality as the object of the cognition of the subjects involved in process of consciousness-raising, nevertheless that revelation—even granting that a new perception flow from the fact of a reality laying itself bare—is not yet enough

to render the consciousness-raising authentic. Just as the gnoseological circle does not end with the step of the acquisition of existing knowledge, but proceeds to the phase of the creation of new knowledge, so neither may consciousness-raising come to a halt at the stage of the revelation of reality. Its authenticity is at hand only when the practice of the revelation of reality constitutes a dynamic and dialectical unity with the practice of transformation of reality.

I think that certain observations can and should be made on the basis of these reflections. One of them is a criticism I make of myself, and it is that, in *Educação como prática da liberdade*, in considering the process of consciousness-raising, I took the moment of the revelation of social reality as if it were a kind of psychological motivator of the transformation of that reality. My mistake, obviously, was not in recognizing the basic importance of the cognition of reality in the process of its transformation; rather my mistake consisted in not having addressed these poles—knowledge of reality and transformation of reality—in their dialecticity. I had spoken as if the unveiling of reality automatically made for its transformation.*

* Georges Snyders, *La joie à l'école* (Paris: PUF, 1986).

* Amílcar Cabral, *Obras escolhidas*, vol. 1, *A arma da teoria—unidade e luta* (Lisbon: Seara Nova, 1976), p. 141.

* Snyders, *La joie à l'école*.

* Paul Shorey, *What Plato Said: A Résumé and Analysis of Plato's Writings with Synopses and Critical Comment*, limited ed. (Chicago: Phoenix Books/University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 158.

* "Carta de Engels a Schmidt—Londres, 5.8.188," in Karl Marx, *Obras Escogidas* (Moscow: Progresso), 2:491.

* See *Relatório sobre o Desenvolvimento Mundial*, 1990, published for World Bank by Fundação Getúlio Vargas.

* *World Development Report*, 1990, p. 76.

† UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), *Situação mundial da infância*, 1990, p. 16.

* Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia do oprimido*, p. 43.

* François Jacob, "Nous sommes programmes, mais pour apprendre," *Le Courrier* (UNESCO, February 1991).

† Jacob, "Nous sommes programmes."

* Erica Sherover Marcuse, *Emancipation and Consciousness: Dogmatic and Dialectical Perspectives in the Early Marx* (New York: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1986).

* Paulo Freire, *Educação como prática da liberdade* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1969).

† In Brazil, it appears in *Ação cultural para a liberdade e outros escritos* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1976). In the United States, it appears under the title, *The Politics of Education* (Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey, 1986).

* Paulo Freire, *Ação cultural para a liberdade e outros escritos* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1987).

Chapter 4

If my position at the time had been mechanistic, I would not even have spoken of the raising of consciousness, of *conscientização*. I spoke of *conscientização* because, even with my slips in the direction of idealism, my tendency was to review and revise promptly, and thus, adopting a consistency with the practice I had, to perceive that practice as steeped in the dialectical movement back and forth between consciousness and world.

In an antidialectically mechanistic position, I would have rejected, like all mechanists, the need for *conscientização* and education before a radical change in the material conditions of society can occur.

Neither, as I have asserted above, is an antidialectical perspective compatible with an understanding of critical awareness other than as an epiphenomenon—“as a result of social changes, not as a factor of the same” (Erica Marcuse, 1986).

It is interesting to observe that, for the idealistic, nondialectical comprehension of the relationship between awareness and world, one can still speak of *conscientização* as an instrument for changing the world, provided this change be realized only in the interiority of awareness, with the world itself left untouched. Thus, *conscientização* would produce nothing but verbiage.

From the viewpoint of a mechanistic dogmatism, there is no point in speaking of *conscientização* at all. Hence the dogmatic, authoritarian leaderships have no reason to engage in dialogue with the popular classes. They need only tell them what they should do.

Mechanistically or idealistically, it is impossible to understand what occurs in the relations prevailing between oppressors and oppressed, whether as individuals or as social classes.

Only in a dialectical understanding, let us repeat, of how awareness and the world are given, is it possible to comprehend the phenomenon of the introjection of the oppressor by the oppressed, the latter’s “adherence” to the former, the difficulty that the oppressed have in localizing the oppressor outside themselves.*

Once again the moment comes to mind when, twenty-five years ago, I heard from Erich Fromm, in his house in Cuernavaca, his blue eyes flashing: “An educational practice like that is a kind of historico-sociocultural and political psychoanalysis.”

This is what dogmatic, authoritarian, sectarian mechanists fail to perceive, and nearly always reject as “idealism.”

If the great popular masses are without a more critical understanding of how society functions, it is not because they are naturally incapable of it—to my view—but on account of the precarious conditions in which they live and survive, where they are “forbidden to

know.” Thus, the way out is not ideological propaganda and political “sloganizing,” as the mechanists say it is, but the critical effort through which men and women take themselves in hand and become agents of curiosity, become investigators, become subjects in an ongoing process of quest for the revelation of the “why” of things and facts. Hence, in the area of adult literacy, for example, I have long found myself insisting on what I call a “reading of the world and reading of the word.” Not a reading of the word alone, nor a reading only of the world, but both together, in dialectical solidarity.

It is precisely a “reading of the world” that enables its subject or agent to decipher, more and more critically, the “limit situation” or situations beyond which they find only “untested feasibility.”

I must make it clear, however, that, consistently with the dialectical position in which I place myself, in terms of which I perceive the relations among world-consciousness-practice-theory-reading-of-the-world-reading-of-the-word-context-text, the reading of the world cannot be the reading made by academicians and imposed on the popular classes. Nor can such a reading be reduced to a complacent exercise by educators in which, in token of respect for popular culture, they fall silent before the “knowledge of living experience” and adapt themselves to it.

The dialectical, democratic position implies, on the contrary, the *intervention* of the intellectual as an indispensable condition of his or her task. Nor do I see any betrayal of democracy here. Democracy is betrayed when contradicted by authoritarian attitudes and practices, as well as by spontaneous, irresponsibly permissive attitudes and practices.

It is in this sense that I insist once more on the imperative need of the progressive educator to familiarize herself or himself with the syntax and semantics of the popular groups—to understand how those persons do their reading of the world, to perceive that “craftiness” of theirs so indispensable to the culture of a resistance that is in the process of formation, without which they cannot defend themselves from the violence to which they are subjected.

Educators need an understanding of the meaning their festivals have as an integral part of the culture of resistance, a respectful sense of their piety in a dialectical perspective, and not only as if it were a simple expression of their alienation. Their piety, their religiousness, must be respected as their right, regardless of whether we reject it personally (and if so, whether we reject religion as such, or merely do not approve the particular manner of its practice in a given popular group).

In a recent conversation with Brazilian sociologist Professor Otávio Ianni, of UNICAMP, I received a report from him of some of his encounters with young activists of the Left, one of them in prison, in Recife, in 1963. Ianni not only made no effort to hide his emotion at what he had seen and heard, but approved and endorsed the way these militants respected popular culture, and within that culture, the manifestations of their religious beliefs.

“What do you need,” Ianni asked the young prisoner.

“A Bible,” he answered.

“I thought you’d want Lenin’s *Que fazer?* (What is to be done?),” said Ianni.

“I don’t need Lenin just now. I need the Bible. I need a better understanding of the



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investigators, that they cannot bring themselves to terminate their discourse, any more than can authoritarian educators of the Right.

In the latter case, we have an annihilation of the teacher's authority that plunges the educands into the above-mentioned permissive climate and equally permissive practice, in which, left to their own devices, they do and undo what they please.

Devoid of limits, spontaneous practice, which shreds to pieces something so fundamental in human beings' formation—spontaneity—not having sufficient strength to deny the necessity of content, nevertheless allows it to trickle away in a never-justifiable pedagogical “Let's pretend.”

And so, when all is said and done, there is nothing the progressive educator can do in the face of the question of content but join battle for good and all in favor of the democratization of society, which necessarily implies the democratization of the school in terms, on the one hand, of the democratization of the programming of content, and on the other, of the democratization of the teaching of that content. The democratization of the school, especially when we have some say-so over the “network” or “subsystem” of which it is a part, so that we can make a contribution to governmental change in a democracy, is part of the democratization of society. In other words, the democratization of the school is not a sheer epiphenomenon, the mechanical result of the transformation of society across the board, but is itself a factor for change, as well.

Consistent progressive educators need not await the comprehensive democratization of Brazilian society in order to embrace democratic practices with respect to content. They must not be authoritarian today in order to be democratic tomorrow.

What they simply may not do, in critical terms, is look to municipal, state, and federal governments of a conservative mold, or to “progressive” governments nevertheless tinged with the *dogmatism* I have always criticized, to democratize the organization of curriculum or the teaching of content. Concretely, we need neither authoritarianism nor permissiveness, but democratic substance.

In 1960 I wrote, for the symposium, “Education for Brazil,” sponsored by the Recife Regional Center for Educational Investigations, a paper entitled, “A Primary School for Brazil” and published by the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*, no. 35 (April–June 1961). I shall cite a brief passage from this text here for the sake of its bearing on the question under discussion in this part of this book.

The school we need so urgently [I said in 1960] is a school in which persons really study and work. When we criticize, on the part of other educators, the intellectualism of our schools, we are not attempting to defend a position with regard to the school in which the study disciplines, and the discipline of studying, would be watered down. We may never in all of our history have had more need of teaching, studying, learning, than we have today. Of learning to read, write, count. Of studying history, geography. Of understanding the situation or situations of our country. The intellectualism we fight is precisely that hollow, empty, sonorous chatter, bereft of any relationship with the reality surrounding us, in which we are born and reared and on which, in large part, we yet feed today. We

must be on our guard against this sort of intellectualism, just as we must be on our guard against a so-called antitraditionalist position that reduces schoolwork to mere *experiences of this or that*, and which excuses itself from performing the hard, heavy work of serious, honest, study, which produces intellectual discipline.⁷

It is precisely the authoritarian, magical comprehension of content that characterizes the “vanguardist” leaderships, for whom men’s and women’s awareness is an empty “space” waiting for content—a conceptualization I have severely criticized in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. And I criticize it again today as incompatible with a *pedagogy of hope*.

But let me make one thing perfectly clear: it is not every conscious mind, not every awareness, that is this empty “space” waiting for content, for the authoritarian vanguardist leaders. Not their own awareness, for example. They feel they belong to a special group in society (Erica Marcuse, 1986), which “owns” critical awareness as a “datum.” They feel as if they were already liberated, or invulnerable to domination, so that their sole task is to *teach and liberate* others. Hence their almost religious care—their all but mystical devotion—but their intransigence, too, when it comes to dealing with content, their certitude with regard to what ought to be taught, what ought to be transmitted. Their conviction is that the fundamental thing is to teach, to transmit, what *ought* to be taught—not “losing time,” in “mindless chatter” with popular groups about their reading of the world.

Any concern with educands’ expectations, whether these persons be primary-school children, high-school students, or adults in popular education courses, is pure democratism. Any concern on the part of the democratic educator not to wound the cultural identity of the educands is held for harmful purism. Any manifestation of respect for popular wisdom is considered populism.

This conception is as consistent, on the Left, with a dogmatic thinking, of Marxist origin, in terms of which a critical, historical awareness is given, as I have already mentioned, almost as if it were just “put there” (Erica Marcuse, 1986); as it is consistent, on the Right, with the elitism that would have the dominant classes, by nature, knowing, and the dominated ones, by nature, ignorant. Thus, the dominant teach when and if they feel like it; the dominated learn at the price of much effort.

A dogmatic activist working in a school as a teacher is indistinguishable from her or his colleague working on behalf of a union, or in a slum, except for the material differences in their respective activities. For the former, it is imperative to “fill” the “empty” awareness of educands with content whose learning process he or she as educator already knows to be important and indispensable to the educands. For the latter, it is likewise imperative to “fill” the “empty” consciousness of popular groups with the working-class consciousness that, according to this individual, the workers do not have, but which the middle class judges and asserts themselves to have.

I can never forget what four German educators, of the former East Germany, said one evening, in the early 1970s, as we sat in the home of one of them. One spoke, while the others nodded their assent: “I recently read the German edition of your book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. I was very glad you criticized students’ absence from discussions of

programmatic content. In bourgeois societies,” he went on, dogmatically, “you have to talk about this, and fire the students up about it. Not here. We know what the students should know.”

From this point forward, after what I said to them in response, it was hard to keep up the conversation. The visit came to an end, and I retired earlier than I had expected to the home of a friend who was putting me up.

It took me a while to get to sleep. I thought not only about what I had just heard that evening in Berlin, but about what I had heard all day long there, in a group of young scientists, university scholars. The contrast was huge. The young people criticized the authoritarianism of the regime: for them it was retrograde, antidemocratic, and arrogant. And their criticism was lodged from within the socialist option, not from the outside.

The educators with whom I had just been speaking were an example of the very thing the young scientists had spoken to me about and had opposed.

It was hard to sleep, thinking of the supercertitude with which those “modern” educators wove their discourse, their declaration of unshakable faith: “Not here. We know what the students should know.”

This is the certitude, always, of the authoritarian, the dogmatist, who knows what the popular classes know, and knows what they need even without talking to them. At the same time, what the popular classes already know, in function of their practice in the interwoven events of their everyday lives, is so “irrelevant,” so “disarticulate,” that it makes no sense to authoritarian persons. What makes sense to them is what comes from their readings, and what they write in their books and articles. It is what they already know about the knowledge that seems basic and indispensable to them, and which, in the form of content, must be “deposited” in the “empty consciousness” of the popular classes.

If anyone, on the other hand, assuming a democratic, progressive position, therefore argues for the democratization of the programmatic organization of content, the democratization of his or her teaching—in other words, the democratization of curriculum—that person is regarded by the authoritarian as too spontaneous and permissive, or else as lacking in seriousness.

If, as I have declared above, the neoliberal discourse has no power to eliminate from history the existence of social classes, on one hand, and the struggle between them, on the other, then the rug is pulled out from under the authoritarian positions that characterize so-called realistic socialism and underly a vertical discourse and practice of curricular organization.

Neoliberals err when they criticize and reject us for being ideological in an era, according to them, in which “ideologies have died.” The discourses and dogmatic practices of the Left are mistaken not because they are ideological, but because theirs is an ideology that connives with the prohibition of men’s and women’s curiosity, and contributes to its alienation.

“I do not authentically think unless others think. I simply cannot think for others, or for others, or without others.” This assertion, owing to its implicit dialogical character, unsettles authoritarian mentalities. This is also why they are so refractory to dialogue, to any idea swapping between teachers and students.

Dialogue between teachers and students does not place them on the same footing professionally; but it does mark the democratic position between them. Teachers and students are not identical, and this for countless reasons. After all, it is a *difference* between them that makes them precisely students or teachers. Were they simply identical, each could be the other. Dialogue is meaningful precisely because the dialogical subjects, the agents in the dialogue, not only retain their identity, but actively defend it, and thus grow together. Precisely on this account, dialogue does not *level* them, does not “even them out,” reduce them to each other. Dialogue is not a favor done by one for the other, a kind of grace accorded. On the contrary, it implies a sincere, fundamental respect on the part of the subjects engaged in it, a respect that is violated, or prevented from materializing, by authoritarianism. Permissiveness does the same thing, in a different, but equally deleterious, way.

There is no dialogue in “spontaneism” any more than in the omnipotence of the teacher. But a dialogical relation does not, as is sometimes thought, rule out the possibility of the act of teaching. On the contrary, it founds this act, which is completed and sealed in its correlative, the act of learning,* and both become authentically possible only when the educator’s thinking, critical and concerned though it be, nevertheless refuses to “apply the brakes” to the educand’s ability to think. On the contrary, both “thinkings” become authentically possible only when the educator’s critical thinking is delivered over to the educand’s curiosity. If the educator’s thinking, cancels, crushes, or hinders the development of educands’ thinking, then the educator’s thinking, being authoritarian, tends to generate in the educands upon whom it impinges a timid, inauthentic, sometimes even merely rebellious, thinking.

Indeed, dialogue cannot be blamed for the warped use sometimes made of it—for its pure imitation, or its caricature. Dialogue must not be transformed into a noncommittal “chewing the fat”⁸ to the random rhythm of whatever happens to be transpiring between teacher and educands.

Pedagogical dialogue implies not only content, or cognoscible object around which to revolve, but also a presentation concerning it made by the educator for the educands.

Here I should like to return to reflections I have previously made about the “expository lesson.”[†]

The real evil is not in the expository lesson—in the explanation given by the teacher. This is not what I have criticized as a kind of “banking.” I have criticized, and I continue to criticize, that type of educator-educand relationship in which the educator regards himself or herself as the educands’ sole educator—in which the educator violates, or refuses to accept, the fundamental condition of the act of knowing, which is its dialogical relation (Nicol, 1965), and therefore establishes a relation in which the educator transfers knowledge about *a* or *b* or *c* objects or elements of content to an educand considered as pure recipient.

This is the criticism I have made, and still make. The question now is: will every “expository classroom,” as they are called, be this? I think not. I deny it. There are expository classrooms in which this is indeed attempted: pure transferrals of the teacher’s



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