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REFLECT

THE PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED

THE OPPRESSION OF PEDAGOGY

THE PEDAGOGICAL DEBATE

During the course of the past fifty years the educational structures have been under attack from numerous critics. These critics have, only with the most meager success, been able to shake the structure's foundations. The radical questioning which Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire have aimed at educational models arrives on the scene after a long series of interrogations, all of which have attempted to invalidate the traditional educational practice. It seems, therefore, important to begin this document by situating the analyses of Freire and Illich in the context of contemporary pedagogical reflection.

A reading of the works of Illich and Freire calls forth an almost joyful response from contemporary progressive educators. And here, in a first step, concerning ourselves with the originality of the educational contribution which they offer, we hope to show that the theses and positions defended by Illich and Freire introduce us to a large field of questioning which has been only poorly explored by the leaders of the most violent attacks on traditional education.

Among the currents which mark the more recent critical advances in educational thought, we can enumerate, in a schematic way, certain dominant tendencies:

- 1.) A first tendency, centered in a concern for the child, tries to adjust the life of the school to

the life of the students. Within this perspective there is no longer an attempt to transmit knowledge or to follow an official program. Rather, there is a concern for furnishing the child with the necessary means for constructing ideas which belong to the child's own intellectual development and with ways of reacting to its own environment. This means that the act of teaching only makes sense if the teacher knows how to enter into the child's universe, adapting to the child's language and bending to the child's behaviour patterns and modes of socialization.

The so-called "active" or "new" schools, (which put into place a whole educational movement following the inspiration of

such educators as Montessori, Freinet, or Decroly), continue to be basic reference points for a good number of teachers and pedagogs.

Ideas about imagination and creativity continue to be subversive in the established school system. That system, in spite of all that has been said, re-said, and demonstrated, continues to follow the erroneous idea that learning leads to development--rather than recognizing, (with genetic psychology), that it is precisely the child's development which makes learning possible.

2.) Parallel to this educational tendency, centered on the child's intellectual development, there is, often in a complementary way, another tendency which places priority on the child's socio-emotional evolution. In the same way that the child functions mentally according to development thresholds which are at the root of his or her acquisition of knowledge, the child also lives a process of emotional growth and social growth characterized by a progression through stages which constitute personality. Behaviour in the classroom, attitudes vis-a-vis the teacher, openness toward the school work, stem from the way in which the child lives this development.

An educator's lack of sensitivity to each child's specific emotional development leads to conflict, blockage, frustration, and dependence phenomena which continually interfere with educational practice. Educators who are, on the contrary, concerned about respect

for the child's emotional and social development, tend spontaneously to change the programs and the organization of their class.

In both tendencies mentioned above, we are dealing with pedagogical perspectives which continually concern themselves with re-inventing school procedures so as to discover the needs specific to each child.

3.) Under the influences that have grown out of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, a third tendency stresses the role of the teacher and the place occupied by the adult in the educational relationship. To accept the other as he or she is, implies an ability to be authentically oneself. Hierarchical and bureaucratic stances which many educators assume in the classroom witness to the difficulty felt by most adults in trying to control the conflicts which arise from the educational relationship.

A number of studies have thrown light on the importance of the emotional investments which teachers experience in the classroom. The relational phenomena between teacher and student, (of transfer, counter-transfer, projection, and identification, to mention but a few), are most often ignored in the traditional educational relationships.

The often encountered reaction against "non-directivity", a reaction which is often quite full of passion, shows that many educators are more concerned with behaviour patterns

than with the way in which they personally relate to students.

4.) A fourth tendency which we can mention in the contemporary educational debate is that of trying to develop a "group-life" in the classroom. Educators who follow this line attribute major importance to the building of the class into a "group" or to the establishment of heterogeneous or homogeneous working groups. Within this tendency, concern for the educational relationship is enlarged to include an emphasis on the social life of the class and to put an accent on the student's social development resulting from group experience.

All the educators who have taken up such a concern know the difficulties which exist because of the child's former school experience, that is to say, because of previously imposed programs and official schedules. Hierarchical and bureaucratic controls often kill this type of experience, for it is in direct opposition to organizational patterns imposed by the school system.

5.) The aim of a fifth tendency which French speaking educators refer to as "institutional pedagogy", consists of trying to break up the bureaucratic control which limits all efforts at class-group reorganization. The establishment of "internal institutions" managed by the class could lead to resisting the external pressures and, little by little, erode the administrative rules and official guidelines concerning program, evaluation, and schedule. Such a re-structuring of school life implies and demands a pedagogical self-determination which

must continually analyze the institutions in which the experience takes place.

Within today's bureaucratic framework, such pedagogical experiments are rarely workable. That is why we find them most often limited to marginal situations where external institutional pressures are, for one reason or another, at a minimum. In its intentionality, however, such an experiment can give birth to meaningful developments which are quite obviously subversive in nature.

Having arrived at this point, we are no longer confronted with attempts to transform traditional pedagogy into a school practice for better organizing the life of the classroom. Here there is, rather, a concern for replacing the totality of the institutional school with patterns of education which escape the school's control and the school's purpose. Such an educational program is more ambitious and more dangerous than a mere interest in renewing the traditional education.

These five pedagogical orientations are, of course, in fact, often over-lapping. Even though some educators stress one aspect over another or try specifically to follow one of the trends mentioned above, the totality of the experiences, (escaping as they do from traditional educational norms), seems to indicate a kind of thread which holds them together. Concern for the child, the "client", the educatee, be it cognitive, emotional, or social, generally implies a reflection about the place of the educator and a modification of

his or her role in the life of the class. This leads, in turn, to a restructuring of the work done in the classroom. Finally one arrives at a questioning of the institutions because of the limits which they try to impose on all such experimentation. In other words, without denying a certain educational polarization in one or another of the tendencies which we described above, we feel that every educator who seeks a new and creative educational experience will be forced to deal, finally, with all of the aspects mentioned. The experience, because of the rupture with traditional practice, will create an awareness of all the different dimensions.

This is one of the reasons, in our opinion, for the interest in Illich and Freire. By transforming school practice, by trying to discover the needs specific to each student in the class, by attempting to invent new forms of class organization, by questioning established programs and administrative rulings, educators, (owing to the difficulties encountered along the road), are brought to the point of radicalizing their critique of the school. And discouraged by the minimal amount of change which they are able to bring about, many of them cease believing that a school transformation is actually possible. They dream of an alternative which would permit them to accomplish their educational aims. The break between their pedagogical practice and the traditional practice opens

them to an analysis which denounces the school's function and re-examines the function of the learning process.

We believe that Illich and Freire correspond to a new threshold in contemporary educational development. Their far-reaching critique of the school constitutes the last stage in the development we have described above. Those who have changed their concept of the school as a result of their pedagogical experience will easily admit the need for a new educational model.

With Illich and Freire pedagogical reflection leads us directly into a political realm. Their attack on the existing school challenges the sort of research which is simply aimed at a better functioning of the school system. And their insights give new understanding to the contribution which the human sciences have made to education. As a consequence, the different critical orientations which we looked at above, when confronted with Illich or Freire, are invited to define in a more explicit way the ideological and political framework on which they stand.

It is clear that behind each of these orientations can be found theoretical influences from the human sciences, most notably, psychology. The contemporary educational trends which attack traditional educational practice, find support in a conception of the student, the teacher, and the school which originates in the

human sciences.

At the same time, the raising of political questions gives a new perspective to the contributions of the human sciences. In fact, the asking of basic questions about the function of the school in society or the purpose of the learning process are absolutely necessary, for they prevent the contribution of the human sciences from being used merely for supporting a better functioning of the present school system.

Among the teachers who discover Illich and Freire with great interest, there are many who have passed by way of the different steps and stages which we spoke of above. Through the process of meeting with difficulties and struggling against an institution which cripples each of their initiatives, they are ready to receive from Illich or Freire the analytical tools for understanding the limitations, frustrations, and failures of their efforts.

Unlike many of the educators who have sought out new pedagogical direction, (be it Freinet, Rogers, or Neill), Illich and Freire propose no school alternative to traditional pedagogical practice. They lay the foundations for an educational program of political nature, but their contribution is essentially a critical one. They aim at lifting the yoke of the school system. Their writings, rather than giving clear prescriptions or offering specific universal meth-

ods, often have the feel of utopia. We must see them as an appeal to the pedagogical imagination.

ILlich: THE SCHOOL, WHAT FOR?

To understand the thought of Ivan Illich, a first effort has to be made at organizing the totality of his ideas. Although they have a certain internal coherence, they are dispersed through his various writings in a somewhat disorganized manner. His work seems to be marked by three fundamental steps or directions:

- First of all, his critique is directed at a specific institution which he has been a part of and which he knows from within, the Church.
- Next, his attention is turned toward the school system which he attacks in its very essence.
- Finally, his call to questioning is enlarged to include the entirety of industrialized society and the institutions of social control which belong to it.

HIS CRITIQUE OF THE CHURCH

In his earliest works, Illich presents the Church--that is to say, the institutionalized Church--as an enormous enterprise. He sees it as an organization which gives full time employment to a large number of people whose material needs are taken care of in exchange for their accepting a theological formation which transforms them into specialists of salvation. People's faith must pass by way of the ecclesiastical structure where the priests are the only authorized representatives and mediators.

To the progressive bureaucratisation of the Church, Illich wants to propose a growing "secularisation", a sort of "democratisation" of the ministry. This implies a gradual disappearance of the Church's monopoly on the sacred. Having become an anachronism in relation to today and today's social demands, the priesthood, according to Illich, must undergo profound changes in its structures.

An adult layman, ordained to the ministry, will preside over the "normal" Christian community of the future. The ministry will be an exercise of leisure rather than a job.

The "diaconia" will supplant the parish as the fundamental institutional unit in the Church. The periodic meeting of friends will replace the Sunday assembly of strangers. A self-supporting dentist, factory worker, or professor, rather than a church-employed scribe or functionary will preside over the meetings. The minister will be a man mature in Christian wisdom through his lifelong participation in an intimate liturgy, rather than a seminary graduate, formed professionally through "theological" formulae.

--Celebration of Awareness. p.69.

Such a process of "democratization" of the ministry implies a process of "declaricalization" within the Church. And that idea already announces, at a time when Illich was simply doing a critique of the ecclesiastical structures, the idea of "Deschooling". Just as he feels that faith must stop allowing itself to be bureaucratized and must cease to be a private garden for an institution and its employees, so knowledge must cease to be the monopoly of the school and its teachers.

HIS CRITIQUE OF THE SCHOOL

In his Deschooling Society, Illich has written that "schools are based upon the equally spurious idea that learning is the result of curriculum teaching." (page 64.) That is the basic premise which he calls directly

into question. For him, Knowledge, stockpiled and distributed by the school, is nothing more than a merchandise which has become one of the most precious legal tenders of our society.

In the appendix to the French edition of Deschooling Society, (Une Société Sans Ecole, Seuil, Paris. 1971. p. 192.), Illich has written:

What we call education today is a consumer good. It is a product, the manufacturing of which is assured by the official institution called the school...

The more a person "consumes" education, the more that person insures his or her power and climbs the hierarchical ladder of the capitalists of knowledge. Education defines a new class pyramid, the large consumers of knowledge being able to pretend to offer services of more eminent value to their society. They represent the most secure investment in the portfolios of human capital in society, and only they have access to the most powerful and least available tools of production.

And in reality, Illich says, it is always outside of the school, not inside the school, that we learn the vast majority of the things we know. From friends, from comic books, from television or from casual observations, children learn much more than they do in the "sacred" enclosure

of the school.

In spite of that, the institutional school continues to have an unquestioned prestige in society. It is able to eat up a major section of national budgets in the "developed" countries, while schooling for the masses remains the impossible dream for the "under-developed". How can this be explained? According to Illich, this prestige of the school grows directly out of a series of myths:

1. "The Myth of Institutionalized Values"

The school is an integral part and fundamental piece of a society that moves more and more toward unlimited consuming. The basic idea is simple: the productive system comes out with a good product; it must be consumed. Education is the product of teaching, and teaching is done in the school. So, obviously, one must go to school. The school becomes the only authorized institution capable of offering education.

Accepting such a premise gives birth to the frantic desire to be educated, and, on the other hand, a profound distrust is born for all learning which happens outside the "normal" circuit of the transmission of knowledge. That "normal" circuit is, of course, the school.

All personal, creative initiative in the direction of self-education or co-education outside the acceptable channels is smothered. To go to school is to follow obligatory curricula. That has become

synonymous with being educated.

2. "The Myth of Measurement of Values"

Can personal development--which must be the goal of all real education--be measured? Illich answers NO. And he denounces the criteria of evaluation applied by the school.

As he writes in Deschooling Society:

School pretends to break learning up into subject matters, to build into the pupil a curriculum made of these prefabricated blocks, and to gauge the result on an international scale. People who submit to the standard of others for the measure of their own personal growth soon apply the same ruler to themselves. They no longer have to be put in their place, but put themselves into their assigned slots, squeeze themselves into the niche which they have been taught to seek, and, in the very process, put their fellows into their places, too, until everybody and everything fits.

(page 45)

Not only, then, do we accept the idea that the school produces the "educated person". We also submit ourselves to the norms of evaluation which the school imposes. Competition becomes the rule, and success is measured against the failures of others.

3. "The Myth of Packaging Values"

The school "program", these packages of knowledge, are sold by the school. As in all modern business enterprises, it is imperative to study the demands of the consumer--in this case, the student--but also it is imperative to influence that demand. Students are conditioned to consume what is given them and to see it as being both good and necessary. And we teach the consumers to consume only that product which is put on the market.

4. "The Myth of Self-Perpetuating Progress"

To speak of consuming, which must be done when we speak of the school, is to speak of a permanent and ever-growing process. The race for diplomas and the accumulation of titles and degrees is associated with good intellectual behaviour, and that race is the pre-condition for social success. Continuing education and the education of adults, according to Illich, only expresses the school industry's need for maximum productivity and for the creation of a demand which becomes ever more and more sophisticated.

Out of these four myths which Illich describes, we can see the school as founded on the consumer principle. The institutionalized school is in itself ideological to the extent that it affirms the myth of benevolent efficiency of bureaucracies en-

lightened by scientific knowledge.

Illich concludes his indictment by suggesting that the schools are all alike, in all countries, be they fascist, democratic, socialist, large or small, rich or poor. On the basis of this indictment, he tries to imagine different educational institutions, belonging to a society which does not yet exist but which could be supported by the establishment of new educational structures. In this light, he proposes what he calls "learning webs" which would be capable of responding to the three basic objectives of a real educational system:

--All who wish to learn must be given access to existing resources at any given moment in their lives.

--Those who wish to share their understanding must have the possibility of meeting every one else who would like to acquire or examine that understanding.

--People who have new ideas which they would like to offer to the public opinion must be given a chance to be heard.

These learning webs stress the importance of what Illich calls "educational possibilities". The "educational objects", that is to say, the material supports used in education, (a laboratory, for example), would no longer be exclusively manipulated by specialists. They would be, after an elementary explanation, put at the service of the public.

In this context, the acquisition of knowledge would take place as the result of a reference service which would be available to all. Such a service would find ways of relating those who have a specific knowledge and interest in sharing it to those who, not having a satisfactory understanding of a given field, would like to discuss it in situations of "peer matching".

Illich sees his "learning webs" as alternatives to the power of the institutionalized school. They would suppress the authority founded on pre-fabricated programs, on a monopoly of knowledge, on grades and other forms of measurement, and on the everlasting progression through the world of diplomas and degrees. Their establishment would mean, according to Illich, the erosion of power vested in prestigious information and its replacement by decentralization and spontaneity.

HIS CRITIQUE OF THE INDUSTRIAL MODE OF PRODUCTION

As Illich's thinking developed, he came to a point where the school system was seen as just one example of a pattern which is repeated again and again in other areas of the industrial world. The systems of medical care and transportation are other examples. There is a point where the offering of a service, considered as a public utility, which is supposed to respond to an essential collective need, becomes an obstacle rather than a response to that need. Illich

takes education, medical care and transportation as examples. He says that beyond a certain threshold of growth the tools and instruments designed for service escape the control of the people they are designed, supposedly, to serve, turning against them and enslaving them. Institutionalized education blocks knowledge. Medical care makes people sick. And, especially in the large cities, everyone dedicates to the car the equivalent of several years of their lives so that, finally, they come to the point of being able to move slower than was possible during the Middle Ages.

"Beyond a given threshold, the whole society becomes a school, a hospital, a prison." This is the central theme of Tools for Conviviality, in which the critique of the institutionalized school is enlarged to encompass the whole industrial mode of production.

Illich writes that societies in the advanced stages of mass production are producing their own destruction. Nature is destroyed. People loose their roots and the ability to be creative and, as a result of the industrial modes of production, are changed, themselves, into tools.

Submitted to the "rational" authority of technocrats, industrial society assumes the goal of seeking optimal productivity and unlimited growth. Concrete reality is, however, quite different from the myth of "self-perpetuating progress". The continuing degradation of the material con-

ditions of living, the impoverishment of the quality of life, the wasteful destruction of natural resources, the growing feeling of discontent and powerlessness experienced by more and more people who are confronted with alienating existence in an inhuman society---all these situations call into question "the monopoly of the industrial mode of production" and open the way to "the possibility of conceptually defining other modes of post-industrial production".

Illich's purpose in his Tools for Conviviality is a double one:

--to present a picture of the decline of the industrial modes of production and to examine the metamorphoses of professions which those modes give birth to and nourish,

--and to show that two-thirds of humanity can still escape going through the industrial age if they will choose, now, a mode of production based on a post-industrial ballance, the very mode which over-industrialized nations will also have to seek so as to avoid chaos.

He does not question any specific regime or political system. He questions the totality of the industrial mode of production. Based, as it is, on a quest for productivity at any price, the entire production and profit mode of our society has gone beyond the threshold of the human scale.

Illich feels that our society has built up an environment which we can no longer understand, which we can no longer control, and

which oppresses us. People no longer recognize themselves; they are alienated. Traditional political opposition is no longer able to consider an essential fact: It does not matter whether a private or public monopoly is at issue, the destruction of nature and social relationships and the disintegration of human beings can never serve people. For Illich, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the civilization of leisure are just two variations on the same theme, the theme being the ever-expanding industrial apparatus.

In such a context human activities, such as being educated, being nourished, being healed, communicating, or moving from one place to another, are all activities which are now captive to institutions. And at the same time, creativity is progressively smothered. No one can any longer survive without depending on the institutions which offer "services". These "services", therefore, become essential goods. The institutions which hold monopolies on the services tend, inevitably, to assume the role of instruments of social control:

An over-industrialized society makes us sick in the sense that people are incapable of integrating themselves into such a society. There would be a revolt against such a society if medical doctors did not furnish us with diagnoses which explain our incapacity to adjust as though

the problem were a problem of health. (Medical Nemesis, cited in La Nouvelle Observateur, p. 91, number 520, Paris, October 20, 1974.)

Therefore, according to Illich, the industrial world is an upside-down world. Under the cover of technocratic rationality, the irrational and the absurd are the rule of the day. This point is very well illustrated by Michel Bosquet, (in his review of recent writings by Illich on the subject of medicine), where he says that if one admits that sickness is often the individual's unavoidable response to an unbearable social situation, then society is "giving medicine a task to accomplish which is complementary to the school, the army, and the prison. That is the task of producing socially 'normalized' people, which is to say, people who are adjusted, (with the help of chemical conditioning if need be), to the social role which society defines for them." (Medical Nemesis, as cited above).

Consequently, Illich proposes the re-creation of society and an "inversion of the institutions" so as to accent the value of personal energy, to rediscover creativity, to recover an area of autonomous movement which would permit a person to take control of his or her life. Such a re-invention presupposes the identification of certain critical limits beyond which tools escape the control of human beings.

And Illich writes in his Tools for

Conviviality that if we want to be able to say something about the future world, to draw theoretical contours of a society to come--a society which would not be "hyper-industrialized", we shall have to recognize the existence of natural scales and limits. He sees a society as "convivial" when the modern tool is at the service of people integrated into community rather than at the service of a corps of specialists. "Conviviality is the society where people control the tool".

Illich says that it is not a question of going back in time or rejecting scientific conquests as such. Instead, he calls for the use of scientific discoveries in such a way as to get around specialization, institutionalization of values, and the centralization of power. He proposes social reorganization based on new values: "Survival, justice, and self-defined work".

I take these values to be fundamental to any convivial society, however different one such society might be from another in practice, institutions, or rationale. Each of these three values imposes its own limits on tools. The conditions for survival are necessary, but not sufficient, to ensure justice; people can survive in prison. The conditions for the just distribution of industrial outputs are necessary, but not sufficient,

to promote convivial production. People can be equally enslaved by their tools. The conditions for convivial work are structural arrangements that make possible the just distribution of unprecedented power. A post-industrial society must and can be so constructed that no one person's ability to express him- or her-self in work will require as a condition the enforced labor or the enforced learning or the enforced consumption of another. (Tools for Conv. p. 13)

On the basis of the present failure of the industrial project, Illich calls the attention of Third World peoples to the risks which they run in imitating the "development model" of the West. He challenges the so-called "under-developed" societies, (in which technocratic rationality has not yet invaded all spheres of personal and social life), to step back, re-define priorities, and make choices of non-productivist values, preserve their natural equilibrium, and revalorize their convivial relationships.

Reconstruction for poor countries means adopting a set of negative design criteria within which their tools are kept, in order to advance directly into a post-industrial era of conviviality. The limits we choose are of the same order as those which hyper-industrialized countries will have to adopt for the

sake of survival and at the cost of their vested interest. (Tools for Conv. p. 110)

that's fine, but...

To grasp the value of Illich's thought, it seems necessary, first of all, to understand the content which he attributes to such key words as "school" and "education". When he speaks of the SCHOOL, he is not simply referring to the daily problems which teachers meet in the classrooms. The more direct object of his concern is the institutional school. He condemns the school system universally. All attempt at "reforming" or "changing" the school framework is unacceptable. For Illich, the institution itself must be destroyed.

Illich's rejection, then, is quite radical. The institutionalized schools make impossible all effort at educational renewal. In this perspective, all the changes which educators--often with great difficulty--have brought about in their classes, (here we can mention, for example, experiments in pedagogical self-determination or progressive pedagogy, etc.), are worthless because they are unable to destroy or erode the traditional school model. Finally, for Illich, educational transformation within the framework of the school structure leads only to justifying or modernizing that framework.

Such a categorical judgement on the school raises a number of very basic questions. Can one affirm, for example, in a definitive way,

that the experiments of educators who try to bring about a "critical education" through the use of creativity or of putting the educative process in the hands of the students themselves--even thought limited by the institution--are totally negative? Or might we say that such experiences witness to "free spaces" which should be used in the institutions? Are such experiences always condemned to being co-opted by the system, or can they possibly be useful in developing a "critical consciousness" which would have trouble accommodating itself to domestication in a dominated social reality?

Confronted with such questions, Illich tells us that the school

cannot lead to education and does not serve social justice. Rejecting all education understood as systematic transfer of knowledge, what he proposes is to re-discover and re-affirm the value of education which is spontaneous, which has lost its institutional baggage and its scientific specialisation. At this point we are confronted again with two of his key ideas:

- Education must not be the business of specialists.
- Systematic and continuous education is only a pretext for making the school industry function better by insuring an ever-growing demand for its product.

We are in agreement with these two points. There is, however, another factor which he neglects in his analysis and which, in our opinion, must be taken into account. One cannot deny that through the course of the years the diverse sciences, (biology, psychology, psychoanalysis, and sociology), have brought to us increased understandings which, little by little, has permitted the elaboration of a "science of education". In the light of such understandings--as, for example, Piaget's theories on child and adolescent development--a question must be asked. Is it still possible to see education as based simply on good will and spontaneity, as Illich seems to propose, or should one not try to incorporate into any alternative model of education everything we have been able to learn about the emotional and cognitive mechanisms of the child, the ado-

lescent, and the adult?

The absence in all of Illich's writings of any reference to theories of learning, push us to conclude that he is not speaking about the process of education in itself, but is concerned more specifically with formal and systematic education and its commercialization by the school system. At that level, it is clear that his protests are justified. Throughout the world, the classrooms are producing an elite capable of holding power. The school uses education for accomplishing economic ends. It imposes a stockpile of knowledge which perverts the learning capacities. Historically speaking, the school, in producing more and more specialized intellectual and manual workers to satisfy the needs of a more and more complex society, has, itself, become an industry. And this industry is directly tied to the "blossoming" of the entire industrial world.

"Destroy the school" and "De-school society" are two slogans which, for Illich, mean the same thing. In abolishing the school system and replacing it with educational means which "fit" people, one contributes to the "inverting of the institutions" and the "de-institutionalizing" of society.

The description is convincing--the denunciation is radical. Illich, however, does not seem to interest himself in constructing a coherent alternative.

He contents himself with a rejection and then works to justify that rejection. He attempts to build a blockade against the extension and development of the school system. He does not offer us a precise counter-model--even though he offers a working hypothesis, the "learning webs" and makes suggestions for stimulating the imagination of those who rally to his protest.

Nevertheless, if we examine with attention his propositions for creating the "learning webs", we find that, in the last analysis, it is only a question of reorganizing the channels of learning. One gets the impression that the only thing necessary is for people to get together to discuss a subject that interests them so that an authentic process of education can take place.

Possibly. But we cannot help wondering if this reorganization will really touch the basic problems concerning the content and the purpose of education. And, at such a crucial point, does Illich's proposal offer something in the way of real alternative? Could not his "learning webs" co-exist with the institutionalized school system? Could they not even be incorporated into that system? Contrary to what Illich seems to believe, we find no assurance that these webs will have, by their very nature, a subversive effect.

That brings us to what is probably our central point in a critical analysis of Illich: His political ambiguity, the lack of historical roots in his propo-

sitions, and the non-dialectical nature of his thought.

Obviously, for all those who have tried to make the school more attractive, who have tried to create more equality of access to education, who have tried to invent educational formulas which brought students to the point of being participants and actors in their own formation, Illich has something to say. The scepticism and doubt of these educators is such today that they can very easily see the school as a lost cause.

However, just because Illich's propositions are not based on a clearer and better elaborated theoretical framework, they risk being heard as ambiguity. In the same way, his texts can serve as ideological justification for those who would like to limit educational budgets or who, disappointed with the traditional educational system which has been administered by the state, see competition among privately owned schools as the best way to improve the quality of learning.

It must not be forgotten, in this context, that the availability of the school to all of the people with equality of education for all classes has been one of the historical demands of the working class and their political representatives, the parties and unions.

Even though the hoped for "democratization of the school" was illusory--as a result of the mechanisms of selectivity and

the ideological conditioning which the schools continued to employ--it is probable that the suppression or closing of the schools would be seen by those who have fought for access to the school as yet another step in blocking their path to education. Moreover, it is possible that the suppression of the school system could be used for just that end.

We feel it important to try to understand why this ambiguity, this lack of political clarity, these non-dialectical aspects, exist in the thought of Illich. Could the reason be that even though Illich has denounced the Church and its professionals, he continues to carry on a discourse which is basically theological?

His concern for striking formulas and the desire to address himself to a universal audience without distinction for class, race, or historical context, the constant need for exhortations...these all characterize the major portion of his writings.

He also bases his protests on such concepts as "the world" or "man". He sees the world as becoming lost because it loses more and more its human dimension. Institutions are criticized because they no longer serve "mankind". In the same way, within the industrialized society which is with us today, the machine is taking "man's" place. "The relationship between man and the tool", as Illich writes, "has become the relationship between the tool and man". But Illich's "man" and "humanity" are never

clearly defined.

The desire to "de-school" society and the image of the convivial society, as well as the perspectives for a cultural revolution, all converge, according to him, at the point of a common concern: the giving back to human beings their place, their liberty, and their creativity.

Without doubt, Illich inherits culturally the theological and humanistic tradition of Western thought, and that leads us to feeling a need to examine the meaning of the humanist references which constitute the fulcrum of his protest.

The humanity of which he speaks is a humanity disfigured by the post-industrial environment, a humanity which can no longer function because it has been turned into an object. It is a humanity which machines and institutions have robbed of creative freedom.

So, then, is it a question of Humanity in general with a capital H? Or are we dealing with a certain category of humanity, one which feels dispossessed of its cultural heritage because it has become "the plaything of scientists, engineers, and planners"? (Deschooling Society, page 111.) Who is it specifically that he describes generally?

And we must ask whether his call for a "convivial society" is able to escape a nostalgia for the past, a longing to return to a society, real or not, where it is possible to live with "authen-

tic human values". Or to pose the question in other terms: Is Illich's rejection of the present situation aimed at getting around the absurdities of industrial society, or is he offering to the people of the Third World a counter-model for development? Or both?

And, is the constant use in his language of such terms as World, Mankind, and Human needs not a metaphysical analysis which necessarily brings one to a non-dialectical position?

When Illich enlarges his field of interest from the school to the whole question of growth in the industrialized society, he spends little time examining the causes of the phenomena he denounces. With all the force of his ethical convictions, he proclaims his revolt and points out the reasons for his rejection. If the school turns the child away from understanding his or her deepest needs and destroys the capacity for any real learning, the solution, according to Illich, is the suppression of the school or the deschooling of society. If tools pervert the personal and community aspects of social living, then Illich sees control of the tool as necessary for arranging the future of such a society.

Once again, we find his criticism radical, but when he comes to the point of offering an alternative, or more modestly, perhaps, to the point of examining possibilities for changing the structures which he denounces, Illich gets caught in a vicious circle.

In a debate between Illich and Freire which took place at the World Council of Churches in Geneva, September 1974, Illich made the following statements:

The dialectical relationship between the individual, the group, and its environment, between the person and its conditions, is possible only if and when the intent of technological intervention on the environment stays within certain limits.

Politics, real politics, is possible only for the poor. The rich, beyond a certain point, cannot engage in politics.

Beyond a certain point, politics or dialectics cease to be effective.

(This debate will appear in a future issue of Risk, a publication of the World Council of Churches.)

In Illich's perspective, the "advanced" industrial societies have already gone beyond the "critical threshold" at which point institutions manipulate human beings. If it is true that dialectics and politics cease to be operative in such a reality, is there left, for those of us who live in such societies, any possible positive action? To such a question, Illich gives no answer.

He easily includes politics in his criticism of present society and its deviations, but he limits himself to repeating that polit-

cal bureaucracies are not able to escape from the society that they pretend to want to transform. At no time in his writings does he propose the creation of a movement or an organization which could transform his protests into a program or could mould his utopian vision into concrete political demands. He attacks instruments of production rather than the social organization within which they are used. He affirms that the creation of neither a party nor a school can lead to "inverting the institutions", and then limits himself to asking for "personal responsibility" on the part of those who share his analysis.

So, then, "conviviality" constitutes an ethical demand which individuals can hold in common. In the same way, de-schooling of society can become the objective of all those who want to struggle against the growing absurdity of scholarly discipline. Illich is never precise, however, about the public to whom he addresses himself and his call to concern.

Who is to carry the call and the message that he announces? What agent or agents will accomplish the social transformation that he wishes? Who, therefore, is he trying to mobilize?

He explicitly refuses to have his propositions seen as norms for utopia. At the same time, he rejects any path or method that would lead to the mobilizing of social forces capable of working toward the social change that he desires.

The lack of precision in his analysis and the essentially ethical character of his vision of social change risk condemning Illich to being co-opted. He is open to co-option by all and by any who profit from society as it is today--even though they may admit, at the same time, that they are ill at ease with the contradictions that society raises.

FREIRE: DEMASKING THE STRUCTURES

Illich began, as we have said, with the critique of an institution which he had been part of and which he knew from within, the Church. He moved from there to an examination of other institutions of social control and, finally, arrived at a critique of the entire mode of industrial production. As for Paulo Freire, he finds his roots in a very precise historical context. It was in the Northeast of Brazil--one of the regions of Latin America which is most struck by misery and exploitation--that he began his educational experiences with illiterate peasants in the early 1960s.

Since for Freire, theory did not precede action, it seems important to look at the concrete experiences from which grew his basic concepts of Conscientisation and Political Education. It was only after the April 1964 coup d'etat brutally ended his adult literacy program that Freire, first in prison and later in exile, moved to an attempt at systematizing those experiences. That attempt at systematization brought about the publishing in Brazil, in 1967, of his first written work, Educação Como Prática da Liberdade.

In the 1960s Brazil was an "underdeveloped society" passing through a profound crisis. The dominant elite of the country were no longer able to hold on to all of their privileges, and the masses of the people were waking up to forms of political and social participation which had been previously forbidden to them. In this crisis Freire began to work on problems of consciousness and ideology.

For him, the historical moment

which Brazil was experiencing constituted a "period of transition". This period was marked, on the one hand, by a crisis in traditional values and ideas, and on the other hand, by the gestation of new orientations. Up until that time the values of an "object-society" had been firmly in place. A mute, passive, and fatalistic people were kept at a distance from the elite. But in this transition and crisis a previously closed society was being marked by the birth of new options

and by the struggle between old and new ideas which got translated into hopes for "liberty", "democracy", and "participation". An essential characteristic of the time was the awakening of people's consciousness. People were finding access to a path which led from the state of passive objects to an experience of being creative subjects of their own historical future.

Within such a context, Freire's goal was to offer "an educational response to the problems posed by this phase of transition in the Brazilian society", the main problem being, according to him, "the in-experience of democracy". As an educator, his contribution to this process of historic mutation would be the setting up of a critical education. This was understood as "an education which was oriented toward the decision and practice of social and political responsibility". It was a question of helping the Brazilian people to discover democracy by practicing it, which implied moving beyond a "naive consciousness" to reach a "critical consciousness". The "naive" being the consciousness of the person who was submitted to social changes without understanding the real causes of them, who grasped only the most immediate and external causes of the social change phenomena.

These central ideas of "liberty", "democracy", and "critical participation" are at the heart of the educational process which became, under Freire's direction, the National Literacy Program for Adults.

First of all, the school was replaced by a more flexible and dynamic context: the Circles of Culture. Within these circles, often after a long day of work, came together an "animator" and a few dozen workers or peasants, having before them the common task of acquiring a language. The animator rejected the authoritarian manners of the all-powerful professor who was prepared to transfer packaged knowledge to ignorant students. His or her role was limited to giving the necessary framework for the process of learning and to bring forth from the group, through dialogue, everyone's free and conscious participation in a common effort.

The program was with, not for, the people. Words which served as the basis for the process of learning to read and write were not chosen abstractly. They were accepted according to two criteria: 1.) the degree to which they were commonly used in the life of the illiterates, and 2.) the phonemic complexity which the word contained. These key words were identified, after a long examination of the "thematic universe" of the social group to which the illiterates belonged, and were always in common usage and charged with meaning from everyday experience. This permitted the illiterates, in discussing the words, not only to acquire progressively the use of their language, but also to be involved in a reflection on their daily reality. The words, then, were no longer considered as things "given", a gift from the educator to the educatee. The

The words were essentially seen as themes for discussion, themes which grew out of the lives of the people and which had no independent existence apart from their concrete meaning. They referred to a lived situation.

Literacy and conscientisation, or we could say, learning a linguistic code and de-coding the experienced reality, are, therefore, the two inseparable and complementary poles in this pedagogy which questions the whole concept of education and overturns the traditional relationship between teacher and learner.

As soon as the immediate, daily experience of the peasant and worker becomes synonymous with the content and raw material of the educational process, education can no longer be a simple transfer of crystalized knowledge. And the knowledge can no longer be stockpiled in the school and offered to the student for consumption. The educational process becomes much more dynamic and enlarges its field to encompass a common reflection on the concrete problems of the specific social group.

The educational relationship between teacher and learner can no longer be characterized by authoritarian or hierarchical attitudes on the part of the all-powerful teacher who stands before passive students. Dialog is an essential dimension in a common effort at both the understanding of reality and the acquisition of a language. Such an

effort is taken on by all participants in the experience. Just as rigid differentiations between teachers and students tend to disappear, the school itself loses its privileged status as the "place of learning and knowledge". Much more flexible structures--the circles of culture--replace the school and take on the role of theoretic contexts where participants can gain a critical distance from their concrete context. And this concrete context becomes an object for reflection and consideration.

In spite of all the program's originality and the excellent results that it had already obtained, the Brazilian experience hardly got under way when it was suddenly ended by the April, 1964 coup d'etat. In later writings, Freire recognized that the experience was not without its ambiguities and weaknesses. To begin with, the very notions of "democracy", "liberty", and "participation" were badly defined and understood. Moreover, the belief that the act of knowing cannot be separated from the act of transforming reality was not observed in practice. On that subject, Freire recently said:

I start with some personal self-criticism for having, while considering the process of conscientisation in Education for Freedom, taken the moment when social reality is revealed to be a sort of psychological motivator for

the transformation of reality. Obviously, my mistake was not that I recognised the fundamental importance of a knowledge of reality in the process of its change, but, rather, that I did not take these two different moments--the knowledge of reality and the transformation of reality--in their dialecticism. It was as if I were saying that to discover reality already meant to transform it. (the Illich-Freire debate at the World Council of Churches)

A consequence of this break was the absence of a specific political organization of the people who had been awakened to the defense of their interests. This absence of political organization was probably partially due to a strong confidence in the reformist regime which was then in power in Brazil. Weffort sums up the situation by saying that although there was, on the educational level, a real unity between theory and practice, the same was not true on the political level.

The process of reflecting on their lives and their situations led the peasants and workers into a climate of struggle but was unable to engender organized action. Or we might say that the people's process of becoming aware of their oppressive situation and the need for changing that situation could not get translated into conscious transforming action due to a lack of political organization and pol-

itical perspective. The gap between awareness raising and action perhaps explains the incapacity to confront the military dictatorship with any meaningful resistance when that dictatorship, using repressive measures, completely dismantled their educational movement.

It is important to note that in his preface to the French edition of Educação Como Prática da Liberdade, written in 1972, Freire tries to clarify--in the light of subsequent experiences in Chile and the United States--the concept of conscientisation. He warns his readers against the "psychological and idealistic connotations" which, in retrospect, he is able to see in the Brazilian experience:

There can be no conscientisation, (which necessarily transcends a simple process of awareness), separated from radical and transforming action on social reality.

So it is that when we put the accent on the need for conscientisation, we certainly do not see it as a magical solution, miraculous, and capable in itself of humanising all people while leaving in place a world which blocks their existence as human beings. Humanisation, That is to say, permanent liberation, is not accomplished with the consciousness. It is found in history where human beings have the task of creating and transformin without interruption.

After a number of months of prison, accused by the military regime of "subversion", Freire had to leave Brazil. The paths of his exile took him first to Chile where he worked during three years in an educational project directly related to the Agrarian Reform Program, directed by Jacques Chonchol, future Minister of Agriculture of the Allende government.

In 1967, invited by Harvard, he left the familiar context of Latin America for the first time and made his initial contact with the reality of "highly industrialized societies". Two facts immediately struck him in the United States: The first was the demonstration--as seen in the revolt of the Blacks--of misery and oppression in a place which he had previously thought of as the center of material prosperity; the second was the degree of alienation and domestication which an entire series of social control institutions imposed on large sections of the American public, including the working class.

Freire became aware that Third World is not a geographic concept. It is basically a political concept. The Blacks and other racial minorities offered a very visible example of the "Third World" in the United States in the same way that the ruling class in Brazil and Chile played the role of the "First World" against the worker and peasant population in their countries.

Having seen at first hand this

use of direct repression in both Latin America and the United States, Freire's illusions about democracy gave way to a more rigorous analysis of the contradictions--existing in each society--between oppressor and oppressed.

Oppression--experienced by a social class, an ethnic group, or an entire population--and the means available to the oppressed for becoming aware of and overcoming their oppression, these are the central themes of Freire's most important work, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed. This book was written in 1968. The link between education and politics is seen much more clearly than was previously the case in Freire's thought. In a society based on relationships of exploitation, education tends to become an instrument for domination. It domesticates people's consciousness and forces on them an ideology which does not serve them but serves the holders of political power.

An education for domestication Freire calls "banking education" to demonstrate that it is limited to the educator's act of depositing a pre-packaged knowledge into the heads of the students. According to Freire, this "given" knowledge, handed out by those who think they "know" to those who are "ignorant", is no longer a confrontation with lived experience. It is recounted and transmitted experience. Freire continues:

It is not surprising that the banking concept of education

regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of the world. (Pedagogy of the Oppressed, page 60.)

To this "banking education" Freire offers the alternative of "problem posing education", in which the teacher/student contradiction must be abolished so as to make possible the relationship of dialog. This he sees as essential for the awakening of "knowing subjects" who have gathered around a "knowable object", and the "knowable object" is the world which is to be transformed.

Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the Submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality. (Pedagogy of the Oppressed. p. 68).

Thus, Freire puts down the basic foundation for what he will later call a "political pedagogy", seen as a process of demasking--through action and reflection--the oppressive situation and acquiring the capacity for conscious and creative intervention. Such a pedagogy, based on dialog and the unity between action and reflection, is Freire's response to the "process of ideologization" which the ruling classes use to manipu-

late the consciousness of the oppressed. This ideologization forces the oppressed to interiorize values which are not really their own, gives them a feeling of inferiority and powerlessness, imposes a fragmentary and categorized vision of what is real, pushes them into isolation, and creates artificial conflict between different oppressed groups.

After his stay in the United States, Freire came, in 1970, to Geneva, Switzerland to take up a work as consultant in education for the Department of Education of the World Council of Churches. This has given him the opportunity to be in touch with certain educational developments related to processes of radical social change as, for example, in Tanzania, the Chile of Allende, and the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. He also participated, in 1971, in the founding of the Institute of Cultural Action, the goal of which, is to work at translating the theory and practice of conscientisation into the socio-cultural context of so-called "highly industrial societies".

Freire's more recent writings continue to situate him in this double perspective: He is constantly occupied with understanding mechanisms by which an education for domination conditions one's consciousness and with discovering conditions for resistance to, and over-coming of, such a process through the acquisition of a critical consciousness.

The later writings are also characterized by an attempt to clarify terms which were used in pre-

vious writings. The presence of a Marxist analysis is clearly felt as, for example, in one of his references to the educational task of the Latin American Churches. Following is a key passage from Education, Liberation, and the Church, a publication of the World Council of Churches. p. 12:

By reducing such expressions as "humanism" and "humanization" to abstract categories, the modern churches empty them of any real meaning. Such phrases become mere slogans whose only contribution is to serve the reactionary forces. In truth, there is no liberation without a revolutionary transformation of the class society, for in the class society all humanization is impossible. Liberation becomes concrete only when society is changed, not when its structures are simply modernized.

More and more, Freire affirms the need for educators to have a political involvement at the side of oppressed people. This he sees as a necessary condition for authentic liberating education. So it is that he tries to deepen an understanding of the dialectical unity existing between education and social change. And this leads him to taking up an analysis of the relationship between study and action, theory and practice.

In the Institute of Cultural Action's Document Number One, he said, in answer to a question from the Institute's staff,

Cut off from practice, theory becomes a simple verbalism. Separated from theory, practice is nothing but blind activism. That is why there is no authentic praxis outside the dialectical unity between action and reflection, practice and theory. In the same way, there is no theoretic context if it is not in a dialectical unity with the concrete context. In this context--where the facts are--we find ourselves enveloped by the real, but without necessarily comprehending in a critical way why the facts are what they are. In the Theoretic context--holding the concrete off at arm's length--we seek the raison d'etre of the facts...

...Reflection is only legitimate when it sends us back, as Sartre insists, to the concrete context where it seeks to clarify the facts. In so doing, reflection renders our actions more effective. In throwing light on an accomplished, or being accomplished, action, authentic reflection clarifies future action--which, in turn, must be open to renewed reflection.

Any rupture between education and politics is, for Freire both impossible and dangerous. One cannot conceive of education independently of the power structure which constitutes it, nor detached from the concrete reality in which it takes place.

In the already mentioned debate with Illich, Freire said:

It is not education which forms society in a certain way. It is society which, having formed itself in a certain way, establishes the education to fit the values which guide the society.

However, since this is not a mechanical process, the society which structures education to meet the interests of those who hold power then finds in education a fundamental factor for the preservation of this power.

There the dialectical relationship between education and society is clearly posed. It is in beginning with that relationship that we can try to understand both the potential and the limitations of all action undertaken by educators in the school system. For Freire, the school, of itself, is neither good nor bad. He writes that "the school's political and ideological environment determines its function". (Preuves, 1973). It is also clear, as he said in the debate with Illich, that "the deep and radical transformation of education as a system can take place when, and only when, society itself undergoes a radical transformation".

However, just as Freire refuses to condemn abstractly the school, as such, all the while recognizing the limits of any educational "action", he also proposes that teachers try to find within the institution the free spaces and the specific forms of action which allow them to move as far as possible.

The fact, for example, that certain given historical circumstances in which the educator finds himself, do not allow him to participate more actively in the process of the revolutionary transformation of society does not mean that his more limited effort is worthless, since this will be the effort that, for him, is historically viable. In history one does what is historically possible and not what one would like to do. (Debate with Illich).

Education for liberation and political pedagogy are not, therefore, sufficient tools for changing the world. Radical change implies the overcoming of oppressive structures which determine education, which form ideology, and which program the consciousness of people. In spite of that, the struggle on the educational front, on the ideological front, and at the level of consciousness, is not only a necessary condition for the creation of a new society but also constitutes one of the essential elements in the global revolutionary process.

In effect, according to Freire, only a revolutionary pedagogy is capable of insuring, during a process of radical change, the autonomy and the creative participation of the masses--as both actors and receivers--in a revolutionary process which includes their own liberation.

Continuing his analysis of dialectical relationships between

education and social change, Freire examines, in his recent writings, the necessary conditions for setting up a revolutionary pedagogy. And at that point he comes to recognize clearly the need for an avant-garde which can organize the people. At the same time, faithful to his rejection of any manipulation or transfer of pre-packaged knowledge, he warns yet again:

One of the basic aspects of this task rests on the fact that the relationship between a revolutionary party and the oppressed classes is not a relationship between one side which brings historical consciousness and another side, void of consciousness, arriving on the scene with "empty consciousness". (IDAC Doc. 1. p. 10)

The pedagogical role of the party is, then, not a role of imposing an outside consciousness on the people. It is rather the role of putting things into movement so that the people, in exercising a revolutionary praxis through their action on reality, can acquire a "consciousness of their class".

During the Brazilian experience, Freire's pedagogy proposed that people should learn democracy by practicing it. Ten years later, his thought is much more radical without having lost its dialectical movement. Now he says that pedagogy will be revolutionary when it has as its goal the conscious, creative action and reflection of the oppressed masses on their own liberation.

that's fine, but...

Even while being aware of his personal involvements, (Brazil, Chile), and while knowing about his present concern for any educational situations which are open to social transformation, (Tanzania), we still must ask, in reading Freire's works, certain questions about their destination. Who does he address? With whom does he wish to speak? What is the practice which he wants to put into movement with the theoretical content of his thought?

His criticism of the school, or more generally, of the banking concept of education, and his attacks on pedagogy which reduces people to the level of social objects are applicable to almost all of the societies which we know of today. It is not difficult to apply what he has to say to the school systems and the educational programs which we know. At the same time, his perspective of a positive educational program is much more difficult to put into practice, and finally, we must wonder whether or not the education for liberation of which he speaks is not a post-revolutionary program. In a recent, (1970), writing, Cultural Action for Freedom, Freire sets up a distinction between cultural action and cultural revolution:

...Cultural action for free-

dom is carried out in opposition to the dominating power elite, while cultural revolution takes place in harmony with the revolutionary regime--although this does not mean that it is subordinate to the revolutionary power...

The limits of cultural action are set by the oppressive reality itself and by the silence imposed by the power elite. The nature of the oppression, therefore, determines the tactics which are necessarily different from those employed in cultural revolution. Whereas cultural action for freedom confronts silence both as external fact and introjected reality, cultural revolution confronts it only as introjected reality.

But what are the conditions which make possible cultural action? Freire is not very clear in answering that question, and that, it seems to us, for two reasons: First of all, there is sometimes a lack of precision in the terms which he uses, and secondly, the "highly industrialized" societies are extremely complex.

There is absolutely no doubt that his pedagogical thought is clearly political. All of The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, as well as his more recent writings, are pregnant with revolutionary intention; "conscientisation" is never seen as having strictly educational objectives. It is always seen as enabling people to take political charge of their own history. That having been said, however, we still must know what conditions permit a "liberating education". Or to put it another way: how can one speak of liberation through education when one is in a society where political power rests in the hands of oppressive forces? In our Western societies, so-called "democratic", how is it possible to speak of education for liberation in terms that are not purely pedagogical, narrow, and restrictive? And, is it possible to determine how or if an educational activity or a social movement which has an educational dimension can escape from domination by oppressive forces?

It seems to us that even the answers to these questions are rendered more difficult sometimes by a reading of Freire. When he speaks of "the people" or of "the oppressed", the terms are not defined with precision. Within the

context of the Brazilian Northeast--just as in any number of other situations in the "underdeveloped" societies, the political situation is clear enough to make it easier, even from a sociological point of view, to discover what these terms mean. That is not the case in the "highly industrialized" world.

Here in Freire we find--as we did with Illich--a thought which is deeply marked by philosophy and theology. The words which Freire uses--unlike the situation with Illich--have concrete meaning, and yet we find in Freire, just as we did in Illich, a symbolic tone and an emotional coloring which is striking. The absence of precise references to economic, sociological, or psychological "givens" is missing and only makes it more difficult to take Freire's thought and put it into practice.

Freire has a very large reader public. But the thought which one meets in his writings demands a great deal of awareness so as to be assimilated. It constitutes a synthesis which is difficult to grasp in its totality. Therefore, every reader runs the risk of retaining only those points which directly concern him or her or those issues which are understandable because of his or her points of reference. The Latin American reader understands Freire because of an experience of political struggle or an involvement in a social movement which has a socio-economic framework. The Catholic reader identifies with Freire's humanist orientation and feels familiar ground with Freire

and the philosophers who have influenced him. The Marxist reader recognizes in Freire's writings a number of contemporary currents which Marxist thinkers, (Gramsci, Lukacs, Marcuse), are used to dealing with. The reader who happens to be an educator finds the accents of liberation which characterize progressive tendencies in the contemporary pedagogical debate. Only those who are, in part, all of these people at once or who have, in their own history, passed by way of these different "stages" and been submitted to these different "influences" can grasp the totality of Freire's intellectual development.

Freire's lack of clarity, then, confronts us with the following problem: to what degree can his experiences and his theories, born, as they were, in the Third World, be translated and adapted to the industrialized society? Should one take seriously the complexity of the social texture in the industrialized world, one would find it difficult to know, in that context, just what is meant by such terms as "people" and "oppressed". What sort of a population do these terms point to? Industrial workers? The "foreign" workers of Europe? The racial minorities of the United States? Women? Youth? Teachers or social scientists? The great diversity of "liberation movements" gives us a clear indication of the complexity of the analysis which is necessary to look at oppression, a clear indication of the variety of social forces

which, among the "people", protest and struggle against their alienation.

Actually, Freire's thought is in a somewhat paradoxical situation. There is between the success of his writings and the practical development of his thinking a distance which grows larger and larger. His success is tied to the fact that more and more people, apparently from many different social groups, easily recognize themselves in his critique of alienating education and the mechanisms which program consciousness. They are attracted by his propositions which deal with liberating action. On the other hand, the whole problem of historical agents which are capable of putting into practice any radical alternative and the difficulty of determining the times and the places when struggle leads to real social change...these make difficult the passage from consciousness of the need for change to the point of concrete action for liberation.

After having raised the question about the public at which Freire aims his writings, and having examined the solitude to which the evolution of his thought can condemn him--at least temporarily--we want to ask the reader another question: Where might his thought find an anchorage and eventually be developed?

Obviously, on the pedagogical level, the impact of his analysis of the school is important

and immediate. The heavy weight of educational bureaucracy and the ideological use which is made of the school gives birth to a number of currents which, however antagonistic and diverse they may be, have in common a demand for liberation. Freire, like many educators, is part of this movement. However, for him, pedagogy can never be, of itself, liberating. He clearly rejects the position of some progressive educators at that point. For Freire, liberation is political and pedagogy only offers one fundamental dimension in that political liberation.

Every educator who reads Freire is going to be confronted with a question: The pedagogical environment, whether inside or outside of the school, since it will be determined by the dominant ideology and controlled by political forces interested in "domestication", will be, largely, a "closed" field for work; where then, are the spaces within these institutions which permit the emergence of a liberating pedagogy? Under what conditions can this liberating pedagogy take place? Must one, as many educators have already done, renounce the world of education because politics becomes the priority?

Freire, certainly, rejects this famous dilemma between a political action which is unrelated to pedagogy and pedagogical transformations conceived outside of the political struggle. His condemnation of the school is less radical than that of Illich.

He proposes, rather, that each person try to identify, and enlarge,--through their action--the free spaces which exist where they are. Nevertheless, he still fails to say clearly how he envisages these actions inside the school system which can give to pedagogical change a political direction.

Freire's thought certainly does not lack subversive power. But that only exists potentially. And this points up the need for a clarification of terms and a giving of sense to terms which can be found only in more explicit practice.

CONCLUSION

As was said at the beginning of this document, Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich place education in a debate which is political in nature. That is why their contribution is of basic importance. Our intention in presenting these two persons in the same document does not consist in attempting to put them in conversation with each other or trying to evaluate one over against the other. Freire and Illich represent, in the present time, two important sources of inspiration for educators who are not quite convinced about the possibilities of innovations in the school system. They have permitted, each in his own way, the establishment of a relationship between educational reflection and the debate around social change and revolutionary strategy. It seemed, therefore, important to us to attempt to better situate them in the contemporary educational world, to examine the lines of force in their respective thinking, and to clarify some of the difficulties which can be met in their writings.

It is more than just Freire and Illich which interests us. We are interested in the elaboration of a political pedagogy. The criticisms which we have made of their work do not mean to indicate that we have either clearer options or a better defined theoretic framework. What we want most to underline is that, thanks to Illich and Freire, pedagogy can no longer be imprisoned in the school. Education is called on to demask its own political options, that is to say, to define itself in relationship to the productive forces, the political power structure, and the dominant ideology of any given society.

Education is thus disarmed and submitted to the kind of analysis which it had too often escaped.

Both Freire and Illich point out the complicity which exists between education and political power. They denounce, in different ways, the manner in which the school system's objectives are at the service of the ideological framework of the ruling political class and chosen to minister to the demands of economic production.

In brief, both of these educators move beyond a strictly de-

defined pedagogy or a simple critique of the school system. They raise their questions in a much more universal context. For Ivan Illich, a critique of the institutionalized school, as we have seen, is just one possible approach to a system--the mode of industrial production--which imposes itself on human beings, strangling their creativity, their power to act, and their self-determination. Freire, for his part, denouncing the educational practices which are "at the service of domination", is brought to the point where he must redefine the very concept of education and of knowledge. He brings to us a theory of learning which tries to pose, in dialectical terms, the relationship between becoming aware and transforming action, between theory and practice, between study and involvement.

As a whole, their different approaches seem to us to be complementary. Illich's position is more or less "negative", in the sense that it is based on a rejection or a denunciation. He tries constantly to demonstrate the irrationality and the inefficiency of educational institutions and instruments. His aim in this is to block their continuing growth and, thus, to preserve the possibility of an alternative.

Freire, on the basis of his own experiences, already begins to draw up the lines of force for a "positive" alternative: liberating or conscientizing education.

Of course there exists differences between the two. These differences might be seen as "tactical". Illich, faithful to his radical rejection of the institutions of social control, proposes the definitive abandoning of the school system and condemns it unalterably. Freire recognizes the limits of possible action inside the school system, but then he points out the dialectical relationship which exists between school and society and proposes a search for the spaces, still free, which can serve as the beginning point for efforts destined to politicize and to by-pass the educational institutions.

Whatever the differences, it seems to us that the goals are the same: above and beyond pedagogy, they are concerned with a fundamental change in political structures and social organization. And they both, following those goals, take the educational debate to the point where education is able to seek its place in the political debate.

On the one hand, they show us clearly that a revolutionary process dare not ignore the need for fundamental changes in education. On the other hand, they serve notice concerning the risk of any radical change process being blocked and deformed by the persistence of a traditional educational practice.

It is at the point of the form and direction of radical change

that we find their differences appearing most clearly. For Illich, it is a question of putting the breaks on continued growth and then tearing down the modes of industrial production which dehumanize us. It is then a question of re-creating a society founded on convivial relationships, which is to say, putting the tool at the service of people. For Freire, on the other hand, it is a question of moving beyond the class society which is based on relationships of oppression and exploitation. For him, only a radical change in the political and ideological environment will permit men and women to assume their role of creative subjects in their historical future.

Two programs. But with a common reference to certain key words: Humanity, the oppressed, liberation, humanization. And a common lack of precise definition about the historical agents and the forms of action which will lead us to the hoped-for change. Is it because of this that both men are heard today by people from very different milieux and that their influence goes off into very different directions?

Both men are conscious of the fact that they are often interpreted, often deformed, often used for ends that are not their own. Why?

One thing seems clear. Illich and Freire arrive on the scene at a time when Western societies find themselves confronted with economic, social, and ideo-

logical crises without precedent in the highly industrialized world. The quality of life is deteriorating. The myth of progress continues to melt. The entire value system is called into question. The institutions of social control are contested. A latent malaise and a generalized discontent reach more and more levels of the population. It is to be noted that in this generalized crisis not only the value system of the dominant bourgeois ideology is falling into disrepair. The same thing is happening with the value systems of Christianity and even with the theories which are presented as radical alternatives to the established system--notably among Marxists.

Confronted with such a crisis and such a void, faced with the reality of alienation and the difficulty of finding alternatives, a feeling of perplexity and powerlessness and paralysis reaches all those who can no longer put up with daily life, who feel isolated and "compartmentalized", who do not know how to recreate autonomous space that will let them translate their consciousness into action.

Into such a climate come Freire, a believing Catholic layman, and Illich, an ex-priest, with a message that, in spite of Marxist accents and calls to revolution, remains, fundamentally, a tributary of Christian humanism. All who, like them, are marked by the Church's teaching will find themselves on familiar ground. Or, that statement can be made

even broader: Their message can be received by all those who question themselves about civilization on the basis of the values which they interiorized in the course of their education. And their message risks being deformed by any reader who desperately seeks to be convinced that all true social change depends exclusively on the values which he or she holds. Neither Illich nor Freire can escape this ambiguity.

On the other hand, Freire and Illich are received as prophets by all who, reading or meeting them, are able to perceive new horizons beyond the bottlenecks of the institutionalized universe. An encounter with Freire or with Illich leads many of these people to feel stimulated to try to invent new modes of life and new professional possibilities.

And finally, the constantly grow-

ing debate concerning the means of bringing about radical social change permits Freire and Illich to be included in a kind of questioning which a dogmatically interpreted Marxism has too often left aside. By bringing to the forefront such themes as the importance of awareness raising in a process of social transformation, the relationship between personal development and collective liberation, the struggle against alienation and the rediscovery of creative autonomy, the seeking after new forms of organization which are both effective and conducive to the exercise of people's self-determination, in all these areas Illich and Freire pose many of the questions which we are faced with in our daily experiences.

- Geneva, December, 1974.
Rosiska Darcy de Oliveira
Pierre Dominicé

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what does idac do?

The Institute of Cultural Action, (IDAC), was founded in 1971 by a group of persons who wanted to study — through research and experimentation — a political pedagogy based on conscientisation. Paulo Freire, with whom the word conscientisation is most often associated, is the chairman of our executive committee. In our work we see conscientisation as an instrument of liberation in the areas of education, development, and social change.

The IDAC team is presently concerned with three principle priorities:

- 1 RESEARCH AND INVOLVEMENT. At present four different themes are the object of our study and action:
 - a. Content and methods of political education.
 - b. Education for development.
 - c. The movement for the liberation of women.
 - d. New forms of political expression in the highly industrialized societies.
- 2 WORKSHOPS. These are seen as a moment in the process of political education, a context for critical reflection on the problems which confront the participants in the situations where they work for social change. The goal of the workshops is a return to practice with a larger vision of its problems and possibilities.
- 3 WORKING MATERIALS. We are interested in producing material which can serve as working instruments for groups or individuals who find themselves confronted with questions that rise out of their involvements. This material is seen as an invitation to dialogue and as a sharing of experiences.

In the context of working materials we have produced a series of "IDAC DOCUMENTS". Those documents which have appeared thus far are the following:

1 CONSCIENTISATION AND LIBERATION: A Conversation with Paulo Freire. This Document attempts to clarify the debate on the meaning and significance of Cultural Action and Conscientisation.

2 "AID" TO THE "THIRD WORLD", THE Impossible Development. An examination of the real nature of relationships of domination and dependence, and a consideration of the mechanisms which maintain and sustain "under-development". \$ 1.25 PER COPY

3 THE LIBERATION OF WOMEN, To change the world and re-invent Life. The process of becoming aware and of transforming reality in the Women's Movement, and a look at the role of the militant observer as an agent of social change. \$ 1.25 PER COPY

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5/6 REVOLT IN REPRESSIVE SOCIETY: The emergence of new Politics in the USA. As a result of a visit of five members of the IDAC team to the United States, an analysis of the American situation with some hypotheses and questions about the future. In this double document is also a working material on the role of a seminar in the process of political education. \$ 2.00 PER COPY

7 THE CARTOON as an instrument of political education. The pedagogical possibilities of humor seen through a selection of cartoons done by one of the members of IDAC's team. \$ 1.25 PER COPY