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PAULO FREIRE AND THE CULTURE OF JUSTPEACE

The perspective of Washington *versus* The perspective of Angicos

by Moacir Gadotti¹

The word "perspective", in Portuguese, is rich with meanings. It originates in the late Latin "*perspectivus*", which derives from two verbs: *perspecto*, which means "to look to the end, to examine attentively", and "*perspicio*", meaning "to look through, to see well, to look attentively, to examine with care, to recognize clearly".² According to the *Dictionary of Philosophy* by the Italian Philosopher Nicola Abbagnano, "perspective" is "any kind of anticipation of the future: project, hope, ideal, illusion, utopia. The term expresses the same concept of possibility, but from a more generic and less compromising point-of-view given that things may appear as perspectives which do not have sufficient consistency to be authentic possibilities".

According to the *Aurelio Dictionary*, very familiar to Brazilians, "perspective" is the "art of representing objects on a plane as they are seen by the eye; painting which depicts landscapes and buildings in the distance; the aspect of objects seen from a certain distance; panorama; appearance; aspect; aspect under which a thing is

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²Ernesto Faria, in the *Scholastic Dictionary of Latin and Portuguese*.

presented; expectation; hope". Perspective can also mean *approach*, when we speak, for example, of political perspective and *possibility*, belief in circumstances considered probable and good. To speak of perspectives is to speak of *faith in the future*.

These definitions seem to me to be complementary and very appropriate when speaking of Paulo Freire's work in this Third International Meeting of the Paulo Freire Forum, in the United States, in an era of uncertainty and, therefore, of paradigmatic transition.

Perspective means "point of view" which is the view from a point, from a place. From here we will choose as current perspectives those of Washington and Angicos. am going to explain, later, why I chose these places, these points, to define two perspectives of education and of "the future of humanity" so as to limit myself to the general theme of this Forum.

Paulo Freire impelled us to read the world. We read the world from the space, from the place where we are located. It is by no means a fixed point since we are always on the go, in motion. Our **viewpoint** always determines our vision of the world. It is small wonder that our points of view are so diverse and even antagonistic. We are located in many places. This diversity is the wealth of humanity. Without it, there would be no change; the world would be static, eternally the same, senseless, without perspective. To respect diversity is not merely an ethical demand. It is a condition of humanity. It is the condition *sine que non* for the advancement of humanity itself.

Paulo Freire made us dream because he spoke from the point-of-view of the oppressed, the excluded, a point from which we can invent a new **humanitarian paradigm**, one which is pro-civilization, the dream of another possible, necessary and better world. So why, then, do I speak of the Washington perspective *versus* that of Angicos? Why not speak of the perspective of the oppressor and of the oppressed, as Paulo Freire did, of the colonizer and the colonized, the globalizer and the globalized?

I don't know the city of **Washington**. I hope one day to know it. It must be a beautiful city, where millions of people live, work and try to make sense of their lives.

I have nothing against it. I have nothing against them. I speak of Washington as a metaphor, a symbol of power, of a certain politics, of a vision of the world, of a point-of-view. This is not about provocation.

I do know the city of **Angicos**. I went there with Paulo Freire in 1993 along with my good friend, Carlos Alberto Torres. It is a small town, located in the poorest part of the suffering northeast of Brazil. For us Freireans, it is as famous as Washington because it was there that Paulo Freire made the most important experiment of his pedagogical method. Starting with the success of Angicos in 1963 that he became known in the world.

Angicos and Washington can be taken today as metaphors of a **paradigm of civilization**. Even analyzing dialectically-- unity and the opposition of contrary forces --these two points-of-view are fundamentally irreducible, like war and peace, military and utopian power, fundamentalism and dialogue.

Contradictions exist in everything. That is why changes exist. In proposing this reflection about these two **opposite paths of humanity**, we are not attempting to defend their non-reducibility. On the contrary, we are trying to overcome it dialectally so that in the "other possible world" there won't be so much hunger and so much poverty as exists today, sustained by wars and fundamentalist beliefs. The beauty of diversity must not be confused with the brutality of misery in the face of wealth.

We must make a choice between dialogue and war. And Paulo Freire can help us find a safer path. Opposed to the **necrophilic vision** of the world which pits one fundamentalism against the another, which leads to environmental depravation, to violence, which arouses and nourishes political, economic, religious, military and State terrorism, there exists another vision, a **biophilic vision**, which promotes dialogue and solidarity. As difficult as this path may be, it is the only one capable of avoiding war, barbarity and extermination.³ Terrorism cannot stop us to thinking clearly.

³"To dialogue with them until exhaustion sets in, to negotiate to the ultimate limit of reasonableness, may perhaps lead the fundamentalist to recognize the "other", his/her right to exist and the resulting contribution of a minimal convergence in the diversity." Leonardo Boff, *Fundamentalismo: a globalização e o futuro da humanidade*. Rio de Janeiro, Sextante, 2002, p. 48.

1. The Fundamentalist Point of View

Paulo Freire distinguished himself as an educator and intellectual through the radical affirmation of dialogue. He taught us to distinguish **radicalism** (to go to the roots, all the way, to the truth) from **sectarianism**, attachment to a part, to an idea, to a creed). Fundamentalism is the very expression of sectarianism. It is linked to intolerance, to principalism, to conservatism. According to Leonardo Boff,⁴ the term derives from a collection of books entitled *Fundamentals*, written by Princeton University theologians at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which defended a literal interpretation of the Bible, which is why it was also called "literalism". Christian culture, however, already had a long history of fundamentalism before the word was invented. We frequently find in Christian literature the words "heretic", "infidel", and "traitor" which clearly manifest fundamentalist thought and practice. There is no more exacerbated fundamentalism than the affirmation: "I am the way, the truth and the life", which tolerates no other truth, which closes the doors on human history as possibility.⁵

The religious fundamentalism which is part of our Western culture is just one kind of fundamentalism. Another kind exists, which is **politico-economic fundamentalism**. As Leonardo Boff says, "the first and most visible of all is the fundamentalism of the political ideology of neoliberalism, by way of capitalist production and its finest expression, the integrated world market. It is presented as the sole solution for all countries and for all of the needs of humanity",⁶ even when all evidence is to the contrary. The logic of the market on which it is based ignores the needs of humanity in favor of profit. As Edgar Morin says, "development the way it is conceived, ignores that which is neither calculable nor measurable: life, suffering, happiness, love, and the only criterion by which satisfaction is measured is the growth of production, productivity and monetary receipts. Uniquely defined in quantitative

⁴*Ibid*, p.12

⁵I am going to limit myself here to Christian fundamentalism. Islamic fundamentalism is already too well-known. With the reservation that not every Christian, or every Muslim, is fundamentalist and that not every fundamentalist is a terrorist.

terms, it ignores the qualities of existence, the qualities of solidarity, the qualities of the milieu, the quality of life.”⁷

The most flagrant characteristic of the current fundamentalism is the “globalization of the enemy” which became visible after the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. In the vision of the neoliberal ideology, “the terrorist attack was not against the United States but, rather, against humanity, in the supposition that they are humanity itself,” declares Leonardo Boff.⁸ The barbarity perpetrated in New York on September 11, 2001, was utilized politically to manipulate people’s consciousness. The political use is inevitable, but it is cowardly, given the unprecedented tragedy. This tragedy would be vehemently condemned by Paulo Freire, if he were alive, according to what he wrote in the forward of his last book, *Pedagogy of Autonomy*, published in 1997, four years before the attacks on New York; “My viewpoint is that of the ‘wretched of the earth’, the excluded ones. I do not, however, accept, in the name of anything, terrorist actions, because from these come the death of innocent people and the insecurity of human beings. Terrorism negates what I have come to call the universal ethics of the human being.”⁹

It is necessary to restate the matter of violence and terrorism in its proper terms. Today, the **promoters of war** pass for teachers of peace. The theme of peace is being tactically appropriated today by those principally responsible for the planet’s wars. Commenting on the crimes of September 11, 2001, the Brazilian sociologist Emir Sader claims that this situation “is the fruit of the polarization in which liberal globalization is trying to confine humanity: the violence of liberal globalization and the globalization of the violence. If we remain enclosed by the terms that the North American hegemony is attempting to impose on the world, it will be increasingly insecure for all of us and unjust for the great majority. Overcoming the present situation will only be possible if we render these terms moot and replace the matter of violence, war and terrorism within their true parameters. It means fighting against the

⁶*Op.cit.*, p. 38

⁷Edgar Morin, “por uma globalização plural”. In the newspaper “Folha de S. Paulo”, 31st of March, 2002, p. A-17.

⁸Leonardo Boff, *op.cit.*, p. 41

⁹Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia da autonomia: saberes necessários a prática educativa*. Sao Paulo, Paz y Terra, 1997, p. 16.

war, understanding it as the opposite of peace. Fighting against all kinds of violence, including religious and State terrorism.¹⁰

The lucid analysis of the North American professor of linguistics, Noam Chomsky, moves in the same direction. He sees in the terrorism the “fury” and the “desperation” of peoples and nations historically massacred by the political economy of the United States, the only superpower with the capacity for strategic intervention in any part of the planet. The Americans were astonished by how much they were hated and asked themselves why. Their president responded that it was because they were the guardians of democracy in the world and the hatred came from those who did not respect the democratic freedoms. But this is a false explanation. Recalling and paraphrasing Bertold Brecht, those who are shocked by the power of the river which topples the banks and destroys the leafy trees (buildings), forget the fury of the banks which compress and oppress the gentle river’s waters.

As Noam Chomsky maintains, effectively combating terrorism would imply a revision of North American **external politics** which nourish world terrorism through all kinds of support for armed groups in democratic regimes, support for authoritarian regimes and despotic leaders. The American war against terrorism, in the manner in which it was conceived, merely feeds the hatred toward Americans and strengthens terrorism itself, because it is motivated only by the desire for vengeance. As Chomsky states, the United States “officially opposes the dominion of the law, every time that the law hurts its interests.”¹¹

An opinion poll conducted by the Pew Research Center, Princeton Survey Research Associates and the *International Herald Tribune* in December 2001 was very edifying. According to the December 21, 2001 edition of the newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo*. The poll revealed that “for 58% of those surveyed in twenty-three countries, it was North American politics which ‘caused’ the attacks. In the Middle Eastern and Islamic countries this percentage reached 80% against 18% in the United States. The research question was this: “Does the majority of the population of our country believe that American politics caused the terrorist attack of September 11?”

¹⁰Emir Sader, “Guerra e Paz”, in *Folha de S. Paulo* October 8, 2001, p. 3.

¹¹Noam Chomsky, In *Folha de S. Paulo* September 22, 2001, Caderno Especial, p. 8.

People can like American as people but hate the external politics of the United States which enlarges the distance between rich and poor countries. The poll clearly showed the ignorance of the American people in relation to what the rest of the world thinks of them. On this people the American people are being very badly instructed, used as they are to looking only at themselves and their pragmatic interests. Contrary to what they believe, they are not hated because they defended democracy, but because they do not respect it outside their territory. The United States is not going to be any less powerful, less competent, or less intelligent when it succeeds in becoming more solidary, more generous, and more humble.

Really there is neither hate for the American people nor for the United States. What is growing in the world is hatred for what the United States represents today: a nation whose economic and military leadership is oppressing other nations and peoples. It is the hatred of the oppressed for their oppressors, hatred toward a nation which, **in the name of peace**, and for so-called "humanitarian" reasons, intervenes militarily in other nations' affairs, killing thousands of innocent people and, what is more, demanding that everyone keep quiet. Paulo Freire would say: "I do not join my voice to those who, speaking of peace, demand the resignation of the oppressed and wretched of the earth. My voice has another semantics, another music. I speak of resistance, of indignation, of the "just wrath" of the betrayed and the deceived. Of their right and their duty to rebel against the ethical transgressions which increase their victimization and suffering."¹²

All of us must vehemently condemn the terrorist attacks, just as we must condemn the Empire which found an unhappy pretext to impose its worldly interests without limits and without borders. Bush took advantage of the crimes against the symbols of capitalism in order to "globalize the enemy", as Leonardo Boff writes. He "interpreted the barbarities of September 11 as a war against humanity, against good and evil, against democracy and the global market economy which (in his presupposition) had brought so many benefits to mankind. Whoever is against such a reading is an enemy and, an 'other' and a 'foreigner' who must be fought and eliminated. Such a strategy can lead to violence within the United States and the four

¹² Paulo Freire, *op.cit.* pp. 113-114.

corners of the earth. It is the total violence of the system against all its critics and Opposers.”¹³

Paulo Friere’s speech at UNESCO in Paris in 1986, when he received the “Educator for Peace” prize is extremely illustrative: “From anonymous people, suffering people, exploited people, I learned above all that peace is fundamental and indispensable but that peace implies a struggle. Peace is created, is constructed, in the incessant construction of social justice. It is because of this that I do not believe in any effort called education for peace which, instead of uncovering the world of injustices, makes it opaque and calls its victims short sighted.”¹⁴ Peace can only exist with justice; Peace is the fruit of justice. That is why we speak of “**JustPeace**” (Justice and Peace).

To put the blame on the United States would be very convenient, if only because there are as many oppressed people in the United States as anywhere else in the world. In the era of globalization, the “Nation-state” has a different meaning than it had two centuries ago. Today the rich and powerful of any nation have a say in the choice of the American president because they finance his campaign. In other words, when Shell Oil financed the electoral campaign of George W. Bush, it wasn’t only North American capital which was made available for his election. It was international capital. Today international business elects the president of the Empire’s greatest power. Don’t confuse the Empire with the United States. It is international.¹⁵

What must be fought is the Empire which oppresses, terrorizes and kills and not a single people or a nation. What must be combated is the model of globalization which divides the world into globalizers and globalized, rich and poor, a combat which is also implied in the proposal for “another possible world”, of alternatives to this world of capitalist terror. Our combat must be proposal.

2. The Earth as a Point of View

¹³ Leonardo Boff, in *Folha de S. Paulo*, November 26, 2001, p. 3.

¹⁴ Paulo Freire. In Moacir Gadotti (org.), *Paulo Freire: uma biobibliografia*. São Paulo, Cortez/IPF, 1996, p. 52.

¹⁵ According to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (*Império*. Rio de Janeiro, Record, 2001), the Empire is “a network of powers and opposing powers structured on an unlimited and inclusive architecture” (p. 185), oriented by the “cold logic of capitalist profit” (p. 11).

But the Empire is also a “contra-power”. It is contradictory. Inside it we find antagonics paradigms of the future: a) the capitalist paradigm of **globalization**, which divides, exploits and terrorizes, sustained by Nation-states, capital and by a dominant *military-industrial-religious complex*, and b) the paradigm that believe in planetary possibilities, the paradigm of **planetarization**, which conceives the humanity as a singular community and diverse, currently represented by non-governmental organisms, “organisms of the people”, which form a borning *global civil society*. What we call “planetarization” (planetary possibilities), Edgar Morin calls “world-society” whose constitution, according to him, still lacks of principles: “What is missing for a world-society to be constituted not as the end of the planetary hegemonic empire but as the basis of a civilized confederation, is not a program or a project, but the principles which would allow a path to be opened.” To do this, according to Morin, it is necessary to “reform Western civilization and all civilizations” as well as “to radically reform all systems of education.”¹⁶

The new paradigm also thinks in terms of inclusion, but not inclusion-submission as in the Empire. Inclusion as self-identity, as participation in global citizenship. “Global citizenship is the power of the people who re-appropriate the control over space and, thus, of designing the new cartography”,¹⁷ guaranteed by a “social salary” and an “income for all”¹⁸ the inhabitants of the planet, the authors of *Empire* maintain.

We need to develop this new human **intelligence of the Earth**, without which human beings could not develop this new and necessary **paradigm for sustainable life on the planet** and that should lead us to “educate for a simple life”, for this “voluntary simplicity” about which our great Freirean comrade, the anthropologist Carlos Rodrigues Brandao, one of those “earthly pedagogues”, speaks to us: “To learn to share ideas, to place goods at the service of others, to lend what is ‘mine’ so it can be seen as alive in the happiness of another. To create ever-expanding networks of people willing to live together and to lend, barter and give. To make sure that all

¹⁶ Edgar Morin, “Por uma globalização plural”. In *Folha de S. Paulo*, March 31, 2002, p. A-17.

¹⁷ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Império*. Rio de Janeiro, Record, 2001, p. 424.

¹⁸ *Idem, ibidem*, p.427.

that is good is always good in circulation.” This he wrote in a “note” which he shared with me in Porto Alegre, in December 2000, in a meeting of the MOVA-RS (Movement for the Education of Youth and Adults of the State of Rio Grande do Sul). He told me that in that year he had learned to feel the “living universe” of which he felt himself an inseparable and eternal part.

A passage from Leonardo Boff’s book, *Know to Care* (Saber cuidar), made me think to what extent our culture is dualistic “It was not the struggle for survival of the fittest which guaranteed the persistence of life and of individuals until now, but the cooperation and coexistence among them.”¹⁹ Malthus, Darwin and some readings of Marx are questioned by this new vision of “evolution.” It points toward a symbiosis: the individual and the species gaining through the exchange, the association with one another, not needing to destroy others in order to evolve and transform themselves. With the anxiety to dominate the Earth, human beings became distanced from it, from their home, their ship, breaking the ties of coexistence with other beings, sacrificing the interdependence and the solidarity.

Leonardo Boff confronts the dualistic model (person/nature; man/woman; body/spirit) of the classic paradigms with the new paradigm, the **Earth Paradigm**, which sees Earth as a single community. After all, everything and everyone is a product of a long and unique cosmic process of fifteen billion years of evolution. And he adds in another book: “We refuse to reduce the Earth to a group of natural resources or to a physical-chemical reserve of primal matter. She possesses its identity and autonomy as an extremely dynamic and complex organism. It presents itself, basically as the Great Mother who nourishes us and carries us. She is the great and generous Pacha Mama (Great Mother) of the Andean cultures or the living super-organism, Gaia, of Greek mythology and modern cosmology.”²⁰

The Earth and the universe were made for human beings. We are still not sure about the existence of other intelligent, conscious and loving beings inhabiting other planets. Everything makes us believe that the universe was made for human beings, everything converges and points to the humanization of the universe. Guided by this,

¹⁹ Leonardo Boff, *Saber cuidar: ética do humano, compaixão pela terra*. Petropolis, Vozes, 1999, p. 115.

²⁰ Leonardo Boff, *Principio-Terra: a volta à Terra como pátria comum*. Sao Paulo Atica, 1995, p.34.

our responsibility is unimaginably vast. To be able to assume such responsibility we need to construct a **solidary planet**, starting immediately.

With this book, Leonardo Boff is negating an entire religious tradition based on the limitless exploitation of the Earth for, as Astrid Cabral writes in her introduction to the book of the North American thinker, Henry D. Thoreau (1817-1862), "the roots of the domination over nature and consequent environmental pollution must be sought in religions which, like the Hebraic, dissociate the idea of God from the idea of Nature, reserving for man an independent role as a superior being destined to govern the world."²¹ Religions sustain themselves on an anthropocentric vision of the individual who turns to the world to dominate and possess it; the conception of calculating man who objectifies, accumulates and merchandises everything, including life itself.

"More than ever I feel that the human species is truly one. There are differences of color, language, culture and opportunities, but people's feelings and reactions seem very similar", wrote Sebastiao Salgado in the introduction to *Exodus*, his voluminous book of photographs, after circling the planet in search of its deepest identity. The human species is unique, but it is a species which knew how to "dominate the land" without yet succeeding in becoming "truly one" with it²², divided and fragmented as it is into territories, powers and interests, etc.

The Earth Paradigm is still being constructed as a group of principles, knowledge and new explanations, not just about our planet, but about the very sense of our lives in the universe. Earth must no longer be understood as just an astronomical phenomenon, but as a historical phenomenon too. James Lovelock, one of the founders of this paradigm, defined Earth as Gaia: "We define the Earth as Gaia", he said, "because it presents itself as a complex entity encompassing the biosphere, the atmosphere, the oceans and the soil; in their totality, these elements constitute a cybernetic system or one of re-nourishment which seeks the best physical and chemical means for life on this planet."²³

²¹ Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden ou a vida nos bosques e a desobediencia civil*, São Paulo, Aquariana, 2001 p. 13.

²² Sebastiao Salgado, *Exodus*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2000, p.15

²³ James E. Lovelock, *Gaia, um novo olhar sobre a vida na Terra*, Lisbon, Edições 70, 1989, p. 27

The paradigm of the oppressed as a paradigm of civilization has a new name today: "Earth Paradigm", because the dominating way human beings today produce and reproduce their existence on the planet has made Earth as the largest of all the oppressed.

3. Educate to build the dream

In its etymology, the word education means to conduct. We can conduct by dragging, manipulating or carrying, seducing for a cause, or constructing a **new path**, dialogically and collectively, a better way for everyone. Thus we serve ourselves from a particular curriculum which is not a curricular grade or a group of contents but, as the word indicates, a way of life. To educate is always to indicate paths, to point toward a possible future. Thus there is no education without **utopia**.

For the educator, the dream, the utopia is not something unrealizable. It is his/her real reality, that which must be done. Utopia is not something which is added to an educators training as a personal choice. Utopia forms an essential part of the training itself. An educator who does not dream is incompetent because, really, you can only educate around the dream of a type of society which you want to watch be born and grow. The educator sees the future first, a better future, and then turns to the present and the past. The educator's ethical-political engagement is part of his/her technical competence.

What matters, however, is to **educate to build the dream**. As the writer Frei Betto said in one of his talks during the Second World Forum in Porto Alegre, in February 2002, capitalism privatized capital and socialism privatized the dream. The capitalist dream can be summed up as "the I without the we" and the socialist as the "we without the I." Frei Betto criticized current socialism not only for the privatization of the right to dream but also for its lack of sensibility to men and women as the subjects of history. The dream continues to be the construction of a society of "the I with the we."

In an interview in the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, on March 26, 1991, the historian Eric Hobsbawn, one of the greatest Marxist intellectuals of the twentieth

century, declared that "Communism did not know how to reform itself." This explains its "fall". The dream and the utopia spilled blood too, provoking huge tragedies in history's most violent century. Hobsbawm criticizes the utopia of the "new man", as the birth of an "entirely good" man, as if it were possible to transform human nature: "Everything is part of human nature. Human beings are not entirely good or entirely bad, they are exactly as we know they are. I do not believe that any regime is capable of changing them. It was a big mistake of the ideological regimes to claim that they were transforming human nature. This is one of the reasons that people no longer believe in them. The people of China, the Soviet Union and other places knew that human nature was not being changed. But this does not mean that the regimes should not try to improve the human condition, that they should not be based on reason and morality. To say that we are returning to human nature is an excuse not to fight all the barbarities which are now appearing. On the contrary, we have the obligation to fight them."²⁴ It is from inside this critical vision that we understand the notion of utopia as very far from the dogmatic, bureaucratic or authoritarian vision which certain political regimes believe it to be.

Education for dream construction can contribute to the enlargement of spaces of non-statist public administration necessary for the construction of a new democracy in which citizens appropriate public space, govern it, overcome their isolation and begin to become part of the greater sphere, a sphere of universal citizenship, a **planetary sphere**. To educate for the construction of the dream of a "new civilization"²⁵ thus becomes a positive response that education can give to the crisis of values generated by neoliberal pedagogy and market society. This was also Paulo Freire's dream, as we can tell from reading his final book. Innovative experiments are emerging, like those linked to the **citizen school** movement and **ecopedagogy**. These movements are built on great faith in the renovation of future education.

4. Educate for Humanity

Faced with the possible extermination of the planet, the **culture of peace** and the **culture of sustainability** offer alternatives. Sustainability is not only about biology, economy and ecology. Sustainability has to do with the relationship we maintain with ourselves, with others and with nature. The pedagogy ought to begin by teaching how to read the world, as Paulo Freire tells us, the world which is the universe itself, for it is our first educator. This primary education is an emotional education which places us face to face with the mystery of the universe, in its intimacy, producing the emotion of our feeling part of this sacred living being and in permanent evolution.

Education is confused with the very **process of humanization**. Responding to the question of "how the teacher can become an intellectual in contemporary society", the great Brazilian geographer Milton Santos, who died in 2001, answered: "When we consider possible history and not just existing history, we come to believe that another world is viable. No intellectual works without an idea of the future. To be worthy of man, that is, of man seen as a project, intellectual and educational work must be founded on the future. That is the way that teachers can become intellectuals: by looking at the future."²⁶

Teachers need to constantly question themselves about the sense of what they are doing. If this is fundamental for all human beings, as beings always in search of meaning, it is also a professional duty for teachers. It is part of their professional competence to continually inquire about the meaning of what they are doing in the school, along with their colleagues and students. A teacher is always in the **process of constructing meaning**. As Celso Vasconcellos says,²⁷ "meaning is not someplace ready and waiting to be discovered. Meaning does not arise from a transcendent sphere, nor from the immanence of the object, nor even from a simple logical-formal game. It is the construction of the subject!" Celso Vasconcellos, a student of Paulo Freire's, insists in his beautiful book that the teacher's role is to "educate through

²⁵ Guillermo Williamson C. *Paulo Freire, educador para una nueva civilizacion*. Temuco, Universidad de la Frontera, 2000.

²⁶ Milton Santos, "O professor como intelectual na sociedade contemporanea". In *Anais do IX ENDIPE--Encontro Nacional de Didática e Prática de Ensino*, vol. III, Sao Paulo, 1999, p. 14.

²⁷ Celso Vasconcellos, *Para onde vai o professor? Resgate do professor como sujeito de transformação*. Sao Paulo, Libertad, 2001, pp. 51-52.

instruction.”²⁸ He/she may only teach multiplication tables, but they are only educating through instruction when the meaning of the tables is constructed along with its learning because, as Celso Vasconcellos says, to teach (in portuguese, “ensinar”) comes from the Latin *insignare*, which means “to mark with a sign”, to act in the construction of the meaning of what we do. Everything we do we need to do with meaning, everything we study has to have meaning.

The two greatest educators of the last century, John Dewey and Paulo Freire, each in his own way, attempted to respond to this matter and centered their analyses on the relationship between “education and life”, reacting to the technological pedagogies of their times, as much from the left as from the right, which were only concerned with teaching methods and techniques. “I would like to be remembered as someone who loved life”, said Paulo Freire two weeks before his death. Education only makes sense as life. It is life. School loses its sense of humanization when education becomes merchandise, when it stops being the place where people learn to be people and becomes the place where children and young people go to learn to compete in the marketplace.

It is symptomatic how Ladislau Dowbor ends his book, *Technologies of Knowledge*²⁹ with data from a United Nations Report from 1998 which show the negligence, the indifference and the cynicism of the neoliberal ideology to people’s needs: “It was not possible to raise the \$6 billion necessary to put in the schools everyone who belonged there, nor to raise the \$13 billion necessary to insure basic health and nutrition for all. But \$8 billion were spent on cosmetics in the United States, \$11 billion were spent on ice cream in Europe, \$17 billion on pet food, \$50 billion on cigarettes in Europe, \$400 billion on narcotics and \$780 billion spent on the military throughout the world.” What are the world’s priorities? The United Nations Report does not even need to respond.

This is why it is necessary to make critical, social and economic analyses. But that is still not enough. It is necessary that the rigorous analysis of the situation not end there but, rather, point the way and indicate **how we should proceed**. Otherwise,

²⁸ *Idem*, p.55.

²⁹ Ladislau Dowbor, *Tecnologias do conhecimento: os desafios da educação*. Petropolis, Vozes, 2001, pp. 79-80.

no matter how rigorous and correct they are, these sociological and political analyses merely serve to maintain educational immobility and lack of perspective.

Paulo Freire insisted that the **transformative school** was a "school of companions." That is why his pedagogy is a pedagogy of dialogue, of exchanges, of meetings, of solidary networks. "Companion" comes from Latin and means "one who shares bread." Consequently, it is a radical posture and, at the same time, a critical and solidary one. Sometimes we are only critics and lose the sympathy of other people through lack of companionship. And the present state of teaching will not be overcome without a deep feeling of companionship. Struggling on our own, we will come to feel frustrated, discouraged and full of complaints. Whence the deeply ethical sense of this profession. Fundamentally, Marx's thesis still holds true when confronting neoliberal cruelty in education: "the educator must be educated." The alternative to neoliberal pedagogy, which fragments and divides, is education for humanity.

5. The point of view of the oppressed: neither the culture of war, nor terrorism. JustPeace (Justice and peace).

Let us return to the general theme of this Third International Meeting of the Paulo Freire Forum: *The possible dream. Paulo Freire and the future of humanity.*

It is necessary to end with the question: what are the new perspectives for the future, for the future of humanity?

The future, Freire said, cannot be foreseen, but can be invented. Thus, his thesis of the "possible dream" which confronts "neoliberal cruelty."³⁰

We will attempt to design, for didactic ends, **two antagonistic alternatives**, two possible paths, even without wanting to dichotomize reality which is always in process:

³⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia da autonomia: saberes necessários a prática educativa*. São Paulo, Paz e Terra, 1997, p. 15.

-- one is based on the ethics of the market while the other is based on the ethics of the human genus;

-- one sanctifies competition and demonizes solidarity while the other preaches compassion and affection;

-- one combats fundamentalism with fundamentalism while the other combats fundamentalism with dialogue;

-- one sees the world as a battlefield of competing interests while the other sees it as a symbiosis of development with cooperation;

-- one defends the capitalist model of globalization and divides the world into globalizers and globalized while the other defends a "world society" and considers the Earth as a single community;

-- one considers education as merchandise, forming consumers while the other considers education as a right whose objective it is to form citizens.

The first we call, metaphorically, the "Washington Perspective" and the second we call the "Angicos Perspective."

Which of the two points of view is the truest one?

The **point of view of the oppressed** is truer than the point of view of the oppressor because the oppressed have nothing to hide while the oppressor needs to hide his game, his cunning and his tricks, to continue oppressing. Nevertheless, Paulo Freire warned that the oppressed will not liberate themselves without liberating their oppressors. The alternative for a better future for humanity is not the elimination of the enemy, but overcoming the contradiction between the two.

Paulo Freire also insisted that dialogue between antagonists is impossible. Conflict is the only possibility. The most they can hope for is a pact. How, then, to speak of dialogue? Is it possible to dialogue with a terrorist? No, there is no dialogue with terrorism because terrorism is the very negation of dialogue. That is why dialogue must be established first, to be able to act on things early on and not *a posteriori*. We must prevent the terrorisms, acting on its causes. **Dialogue** must be established before the acts of terrorism happen. It must be radical; going to the root. Terrorism must be prevented. We need to rest assured that it will not prevail over dialogue.

For this reason, the "Washington Perspective" is wrong again: because it does nothing to prevent, to act on the causes of terrorism. It waits for terrorist acts so it can make war on them afterwards. Because its culture is the culture of war -- as present in the great majority of national anthems -- and not the culture of dialogue, which Paulo Freire defended, the culture of JustPeace (justice and peace), as we call it today. The dialogical thinking of Freire points toward a new civilizational platform, a new spiritual period for humanity.

Faced with the state of the world today, dialogue is no longer just another political option. Dialogue is today an **existential and historical imperative**. The dialogue is the alternative of terrorism. The two possibilities are both present in the current situation: on one side, democratic legitimacy and, on the other, the legitimacy of power.

Moreover, it is necessary to **widen our point of view**. We need to see the Earth from a distance, in its totality, in its planetary condition, as a single community. We are still thinking in terms of blocks of nations against other blocks of nations: European Community, Japanese block, United States block, China: characteristics of the fragmentary, neoliberal model. These blocks stimulate competition without solidarity and the machinery of war against life. On the contrary, we need to think of a culture of peace and sustainability, to think globally, in terms of the planet, in favor of the whole community of life.

Finally, we must abandon the **anthropocentric vision** so as to cultivate a **holistic vision**, founded on a planetary ethics above orders, species and kingdoms. Paulo Freire spoke to us in his final book of an "ethics of the human gender", pointing to the possible dream of humanity united around a common objective of justice, of peace and of prosperity for all. This is the dream. It must be made historically viable.

Translation by **Peter Lownds**, Olinda, 17/vii/2002.