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WORKING TITLE

PAULO FREIRE : The Iowa Papers

Volume I

The Qualities of an Educated Person

- Carmen Montecinos
- Peter MacLaren
- Ana Maria Araújo Freire
- Roger Sell
- Jerry Stein
- Moacir Gadotti
- Donaldo Macedo (to be invited)
- Henry Giroux (to be invited)
- Programa de Supervisão e Currículo -
PUC Pontifícia Universidade Católica de
São Paulo
- Walter de Oliveira (Organizador)

Paulo Freire and the Scholarly Coalition on Education and Social Justice: A Dialogue at the University of Northern Iowa

March 25, 1996

PF: The questions presented to examine in this working group are a text in themselves. I have found it fantastic, a very good proposal for discussion. It would be too optimistic to think that we can have an exhaustive discussion of all of the issues that we have listed. But, while it is not possible to exhaust the discussion, it will be useful to try to discuss some ideas related to these issues in a way that will lead ourselves and others to deepen the examination of these and other related questions. Possibly I never had such an experience like this. It is very good.

WO: The idea is to examine the questions in a dialogical form, stimulating ourselves and the readers into participating, examining, clarifying and providing perhaps a few answers to the questions. We have three basic themes that have been developed into discussion topics:

- I. The educated person in educational communities.
- II. Youth and the future.
- III. Spirituality and vocation.

It seems to me that to a great extent these themes interconnect, they are not separated from each other. On the other hand, we can topicalize or examine each one separately, for the sake of a more focused discussion. For each of the three general themes, sets of questions have been formulated by the working group. For the first theme, the first question refers to "quality of education." I will read the question:

- Which quality or qualities you consider most important for educated persons to possess in the twenty-first century? Part of what we want to address here is how we think about education and how we think and act on the main goals and purposes that education serves.

PF: In being asked this question I have some reactions, some answers. I insist on saying that I will tell you how I see the question, that is, how I react to the question; but I am also convinced that this is not the answer. Because I believe in the accepting totality of the answers and the possibility of different answers.

First of all, its not easy for me to think about the questions which relate to a tomorrow not near to me. What I want to say is that I prefer to think of them in terms of today, because the more I think of today the more I assert myself, the more it is possible to see tomorrow. We can foresee some of the qualities, some of the challenges which we have already. Some of the qualities in the last and in the next century have been experienced by us centuries ago. It did not come from the point of view of chronology just it is 1996 but we are already living in the next century.

For example, let us think of the speed with which technology establishes or creates change. Two to three centuries ago the changes happened between the time distance of one century. We could stay living one century more or less in the same way, with not many changes in lifestyle, overall. Today technology changes almost everyday and proposes new habits, new answers. In the field of computers and communications, for example, what is being done in the last few years is incredible. With a globalized economy, it is true that technological revolutions or changes are being done in ways that affect deeply the process of education. Because of the speed of technological change, which constantly promotes life changes, I am sure that one of the qualities that we have to be concerned in education is the quality of getting or creating the ability to answer the different challenges with the same speed that things change. This is one of the demands of contemporary education. We need to form and not to train.

There is a very radical difference between training and forming, it is not just a semantic question. Forming is something deeper than just training. Forming is needed precisely to change the great and beautiful critical mind of ours: to increase intuitive curiosity which characterizes us as human beings. Where there is life there is curiosity- among the trees, among the other animals. But, in our case, curiosity has gone to another level. [EXPAND] From the point of view of education, one of the more serious questions regarding the immediate present and the morrow is how to form people in order not to get lost in the changes which technology creates. [EXPAND]

WO - The process of technology, as well as the demands imposed to students by a system that emphasizes training over formation may interfere seriously in the ability of promoting such qualities as improved critical abilities. The current system emphasizes, for example, quantity over quality. For example, students may be

called to assimilate an enormous amount of information in a certain period of time, against being stimulated to examine very well certain issues, which could help them to develop their critical abilities. By the same token, class discussions, and even discussions in professional meetings have to be curbed, because it seems that there is never time enough to discuss in-depth a certain issue. Students have to constantly rush over the themes presented by educators.

PF - And now I ask, can we think of an education or process of education in which the educators call the students not to read in one semester three hundred books, but instead to read very well one book, to the point that the student feels that s/he is able to rewrite the book that was read? Is it possible to educate while forcing the students to read three hundred books in one semester? The results of this kind of educational process is that students live under tension, which undermines their ability to learn. This tension is so great that some students commit suicide. This phenomenon happens all over the world. Is it possible through a practice of education in which students are trained instead of being formed to reach knowledge instead of producing knowledge? [EXPLAIN]. How can educators help to create opportunities for the students to answer the challenges presented by technology? In the particular case of Latin America other questions can be asked to our education. Is it possible for example to expect good results from an education centered in the blackboard?

In my point of view, education has the responsibility of creating critical minds, and this responsibility is manifested in the educator challenging at the same time the student's curiosity and creativity. How can one be a critical mind if one is not able to create and recreate?

In my point of view there is no evolution without a strong desire, a will to do new things. And my question again, is general education all over the world an experience of creativity or the conquering experience of repetition? For example, what does it mean to commit mistakes? If we take the perspective of an education that works with the responsibility of challenging curiosity and creativity on an everyday basis, we have to have respect for mistakes. From this educational perspective a mistake is not a sin but an integral part, an important moment in the process of knowledge, or, to be more precise, of the process of creation of knowledge. From the perspective of an education that promotes creation of knowledge I cannot be afraid of committing a mistake because I commit a mistake to the extent that mistakes are consequences of risks, and risking is an absolutely necessary part in the process of confronting the challenges of technological society. Therefore, another quality for the educator of the 21st century is the vision that risking must be encouraged and a desirable consequence of risking is committing mistakes. The educator must, then, be prepared to work with risk and to deal with mistakes in a positive, encouraging and challenging way.

When I was Secretary of Education at the city of São Paulo I brought up the topics of risking and mistakes to my discussion with the teachers. I used to ask first grade teachers to "please don't underline in red the grammatical errors of the students because the more you do that the more you inhibit, the more you create fear. Instead of creating fear, talk to the student and explain how to go beyond that, talk to all students about that." The educator must find practical forms of practicing this promotion of creativity, and this is just one example. We must re-create constantly our praxis as educators, challenging students to be aware and not to be sleeping, that is, to have voice instead of receiving the voice of the teachers, to develop their autonomy, to be themselves and not to be the reflex of the teachers.

CM: Do you think that that kind of education is in the best interest of the state, when we think of the state as an apparatus of controlling and reproducing society? I don't think teachers do what they do just because they don't know how to do it better. I think that teachers are compelled to do what they do because it is in the best interest of the state that is controlled by politicians.

PF: Your question is a very good example to demonstrate how education cannot be neutral. That is, there is a dimension in the matrix of educational practice which I call "politicity." Politicity is nothing but the quality of being political. When I speak about the politicity of education I am not referring to party politics, in the case of the United States, to the Republicans or the Democrats. The parties, of course, have the right and the duty to have their conception of education. Political platforms coming from the political parties should reflect their understanding of education. In this country, I don't know whether it is possible because, in my point of view, the parties here are just one. But this is not the case in Brazil. The conception of education is very different for the different parties.

But here, when I am speaking about the politicity of education, I am not talking about party politics, in spite of considering the parties' right to their own conceptualizations of education and their right to fight for putting it into practice.

Among other things your question has to do with the government's political decision to work within the perspective of a democratic education. It is a political decision. Once again, when I was secretary of education in São Paulo I fought for a much less elitist education. Brazilian education is deeply elitist. My goal, considering the constraints of time in my term, was not to do away with elitism because we would not have enough time, but I fought to diminish the elitization of education. That was a political decision. Secondly, I fought for diminishing the utilitarianism of Brazilian education. **Expand.** I fought for improving the democratic experience

of education and also fought for forming the teachers. Because of that I established arguments [check tape] at University of São Paulo, University of Campinas, and the Catholic University of São Paulo. They offered us about 60 excellent professors of different branches of philosophy, linguistics, political science and sexology. We developed programs for formation and worked with 35,000 teachers responsible for children's literacy. Without these kinds of political initiatives, and without investing in formation, not merely training of educators, it is very difficult to promote an education that promotes critical thinking, one that prepares students and teachers to respond to the challenges posed by life changes. In the Brazilian case there is still another issue of no less importance, the salary of the teachers. It is not possible to expect a teacher earning USD\$100 a month to have a good performance, because with USD\$100 s/he cannot even buy newspapers to read. It is therefore imperative that we show the educators that we respect them and demonstrate, in practice, our commitment to help the teachers in their process of permanent formation. To finish examining your question, in many cases governments are not at all interested in issues which are intrinsically political, that is, when these issues reflect what I call the politicity of education,. Governments are usually not interested in forming teachers, they are interested in training them. Governments are not interested in developing an education able to stimulate critical minds.

Essentially, the construction of my response to the question is that one of the duties and one of the rights of progressive teachers has been, and will continue to be, in the next century, to fight, to struggle, to mobilize and to organize themselves to fight. If we live in a true democracy, the struggle of the teachers for a better education cannot be stopped, as well as the struggle of the workers, the doctors, and other professionals for better work conditions which lead to a better society. Without such a struggle I have to tell you that I don't believe in good results.

I believe that the struggle to change reality is part of the nature of human beings. To achieve humanization we must struggle to change reality instead of just adapt ourselves to reality. I always say that I personally did not come to the world in order to adapt myself to the world, I came to change. Maybe I won't change but at least I need to know that I could change and that I must try. If I did not change it might have happened for some reason but not because God did not want me to. Do you see, then, the original question leads to another question. How is it possible to fight? Okay this is a question for all of the teachers all over the world. This is also a question of the peoples: How to struggle? I am making reference to political struggle. But I agree with you that your question pushes us to lots of other questions.

Q: I like to think of the concept of struggle as renewal and I'd like to think that in the United States renewal is a part of our institutions. We have put into effect institutions, and I'm not talking only about government

institutions and educational institutions, but even the business community, as an institution that can be committed to a sense of renewal. How do you see struggle as contrasted with renewal?

PF: I think that struggle implies renewal although I am not convinced that every time we struggle we renew. I believe strongly that we, women and men, become able to interfere in the world which we did not make, to the extent that we achieve consciousness of ourselves, which in turn is acquired through getting consciousness of the world. In my point of view, it is the consciousness of the externality of myself which makes it possible to get my consciousness in the world, in a way that I will work for change it instead of adapting to the world. This is the way to renewal. Organizations constantly state that it is necessary to change, but not always this commitment to change is shown in the organization's everyday practice. There is a moment in which change is no more happening, in this moment the organization stagnates and can die. It is necessary to recognize the moments in which renewing is no longer being made, so those who are involved in the organization can struggle for the necessary changes. In that sense I don't see opposition between the struggling and the renewing. On the contrary I see intervening as a way for renewal.

WO: A second topic in the first question that we have discussed a little bit is a pedagogy of neighborhoods. The essence of the question is: What would a sustained pedagogy of neighborhoods look like? I think we can get a flow from one topic to another without losing the first one on the quality of education. We are talking about how do we go about integrating the question of a pedagogy of neighborhoods and its transformation starting from the perspective of teaching of schools.

PF: If we keep in mind the first question concerning some qualities of an educated person, and the following topic of struggling in order to create, I would add solidarity as another desirable quality. Solidarity goes side by side with a critical mind. I cannot imagine the world getting any better if we really don't adopt the feeling and immediately become a great mass of solidarity, if we don't struggle for solidarity. These questions are on the side of history, the questions have to be wet by historical waters. When we are very far away from the completeness of history, the questions do not work and the answers do not work either.

Some years ago, for example, Abol Among (?) left the people. He sought to discuss, to seek just to pronounce his solidarity, it was a kind of sin for the people in the left.

Sometimes it seems that we speak about solidarity but we really do not want solidarity to be realized. The idea is, from the perspective of certain people in the left, that first of all we would have to change radically the

material structures of society in order to get into the superstructure, and only by performing these structural changes we could see the realization of solidarity in the society. In this kind of dream, the mechanistic dream to transform the material condition of reality, it is assumed that after the promotion of these deep structural changes, in the next day we would have a new man and a new woman, and we could have the installation of solidarity in the society. History demonstrates that it is not like this. Solidarity has to be shaped in our bodies, in our behaviors, in our convictions.

In speaking about local power, which in other words is neighborhood power, we need to confront the process of globalization, to see how globalizing is implying suppressing freedom and creativity. Globalization is killing the locality. We need to restore and to invent the local power again. Restoring and reinventing local power means to create different possibilities that make possible the experience of solidarity.

The idea of educating cities is very interesting, and it seems that suddenly a lot of people grasped this idea. At the same time here we are called to discuss the issue of educating neighborhoods. In a certain way it contains the same idea inside of it. The issue has to do with the character of educators, being therefore a moral issue. For example, when you visit a city that was characteristically developed in the last century, what you see is predominantly sculptures, homages to soldiers, generals, mostly riding horses, in positions of command. In this way the city teaches the younger generations. I do not think that we should demolish those sculptures, destroy those teachings. We have to keep history. But, why not now do we start using art, giving examples of the kinds of solidarity we envision for the city. Why not convocate artists, singers, painters (like in Chicago the painters did murals on the city)? Why not ask these artists to become effective educators as well? This pedagogic work could also be manifested in its different dimensions for example in the theater.

The artists in the streets are telling the people stories of how to survive with solidarity, with a critical mind, because the neighborhood as a concept is an abstraction (**Explain**). We must conquer the abstraction and apply it to human beings in action. In this way we could have, not in the bureaucratic understanding of the world, the neighborhood becoming a school without the schooling, a school without imposing and asking the students to read three hundred books. The books are not enough. Maybe what is wrong is not to read three hundred, but the way in which it is asked, as if reading were consuming knowledge.

CM: I hear you talking about this occurring in the neighborhoods. Do you think it is naive too think that this can happen within the school systems in the United States, because the public school teachers are dependent on the universities and I am not sure the universities are teaching teachers how to teach critically?

PF: No, maybe they are not. But look, somebody once asked me how to teach critically if universities don't do that. First of all, I am awfully naive because the relationship between naiveté and good reason is more dialectical than mechanistic. But, then, I know that it is not easy, that it is very difficult, but it is possible. The issue for us is not to lose this struggle, but to experiment with different ways of struggling to say it is possible.

I will try to tell you something about the question. Let us suppose for a moment that I am invited to stay here at this University. I can say that because there is not any reason for me to be invited and no way for me to tolerate the cold. Of course, my intention would be not to just give classes, but to work here in favor of solidarity, of change. My first step should be to work in something what I call the ideological map of the institution in which I am now. What do I mean by working on, or creating, or making the ideological map? It means that I need to know who I can count on, with whom I am alike, and against whom maybe I have to be. If I don't know the levels of power of the opposite of me I cannot fight. It is suicide. That is, I have to be militaristic without being or without wanting it. Let us suppose that, after making a special research about that, there are three professors and five students in the department I am with whom I can have conversation about the dreams. And then I begin to work with them about the dreams. At a certain point it would be possible to go beyond the level that we are now with these eight people. Possibly we could discover one month later another couple of people and one day maybe it is possible for us to make it to eighty people thinking together and maybe we can then start something. This kind of work constitutes a virtue which I call patience in the impatience, that is, I never accept to be only patient and never only impatient. In order to work productively in the world one has to be either patiently patient or patiently impatient. If you are only impatient you destroy your dream before it should be destroyed. But, if you are only patient, the other people destroy your work. You have to be patiently patient to do things, and if thousands of people would do that this could transform society.

Changing is difficult but it is possible. If at any moment I would start to believe that changing is impossible there would be no reason for me to continue to work, there would be no hope. If change is not possible and there is no hope, the only thing that remains is cynicism. If we fall into cynicism, into fatalism, we die even though we are alive.

NS: Getting back to the question of forming and training, I work with college students and younger children. I ask them: What are the most important forming experiences that you have had in your whole life? They usually tell me four or five but they almost always talk about experiences which did not happen in schools. And many of the things they talk about are failures, what we call failures, big mistakes in their lives, maybe things that

happened that weren't supposed to have happened, but it made them who they are. The things that make people who they are mostly don't happen in schools. And those of us who are interested in this neighborhood pedagogy are trying to build on that and learn from that and we believe that the neighborhood is at the center, much like the sun is at the center of our solar system.

PF: I agree. I think that at some moment in history the schools began to become necessary. In a certain moment, it may have happened that the schools started to obstruct the normal process of development of persons. In my point of view, the question for us today is not to abolish the schools. I never agreed with Ivan Illich, a great friend of mine (Who says . . .). For me, what we have to do is not to close the schools, but to make them better, that is, to reorient categorically, politically the schools. This is one of the tasks the neighborhood can choose. That is, the neighborhood could try to exercise the role of educating the schools inside of it. They could assume the responsibility of forming and reforming the schools which are in its geography. But, for the neighborhood to do that, it is first of all necessary to get the real meaning of solidarity, of being solidary. Individualism is the antithesis of solidarity. Under the individualistic perspective each one thinks of his/her own personal interests and the tendency is for us is to close ourselves in ourselves. But, I agree with you in this aspect that the neighborhood should have to change the premises and not the schools, change the school but not abolishing the schools.

Q: What kinds of experiences formed you in your childhood? How did you become a critical thinker?

PF: This question is very good and very important philosophically speaking. Because until now I have emphasized the need for formation, but in my speeches, even though this is not my way of understanding forming, it was nevertheless as if there was no responsibility of us in the process of our formation. And your question puts this question on the table. We are and can be and can have a strong role in the process of our development through assuming our identity and even struggling against the external elements which should prevent us from being who we are being. Because of that, I am sure that in the process of forming, in a democratic way we should emphasize to the students since the beginning the duty and not only the right they have to be themselves. This is the question of the autonomy of the being, it is absolutely important.

You asked me about my own formation. Today I was telling Walter during breakfast that my father died when he was 52 years old. It is for me very strange today that I am 75 years old and older than my father at his death. He died in 1934, and I feel his presence almost as if he were here now. Such was his influence and

his presence in my childhood, because I was 13 years old when he died. In our short experience my father gave me very much. He gave me a serious testimony of respect for others. For example, he experienced very well his opportunity as father, but he never went beyond the level he could go. In other words, he always respected our freedom. He helped us to be free, to accept the necessary limits without which freedom gets lost. I learned tolerance with him. For example, he was a spiritualist, a follower of Alan Kardeck, the French philosopher who created, organized and systematized a spiritualistic doctrine. My mother was Catholic. Of course he was not a church goer, he did not believe in the bureaucracy of the church. He did not accept the ways in believing in God offered by the Catholic Church. This was in the first part of the century, constituting a fantastic example of his openness and his courage. I remember when I was seven years old there was a one-week mission in the parish we lived in which I participated and I was trained for my first communion in the church. I went to him not to ask his permission but to tell him that in the following Sunday I would go to the church to have my first meeting with God. And he said to me "I will go with you." You cannot realize how that speech marked me until now. That was a deep understanding of tolerance, of respect for the different. Here was a father in a very particular society, a very conservative one. He could say, "No it is a lie, I cannot leave you free to commit a lie, to participate in such a lie." On the contrary, he went to the church and gave me a fantastic example of the absolute and fundamental importance of solidarity, of how respect for the other is absolutely indispensable, how to discuss changes and how to discuss transformation with respect. In comparison, my mother was less strong than him, her example is a strongly loving example. I don't know how to make the distinction between the two testimonies, but they were fundamental for my life. They are more important than the testimony of the schools, even the testimony of the neighborhood.

After those first years I kept working on this idea of respect for the different and I think this was crucial in forming a critical mind. Since I was very young I learned that I also should act, should do things. I am a student who could not just cross life; I had to create life through my own experience of life. In creating these experiences I had good testimonies of good people and bad testimony, and these testimonies contributed more or less to my formation.

Many of these things cannot be thought, but we can challenge these students in order for them to grasp the meaning of these things.

Q: Is there oppression when there is hope?

PF: This is a crucial question. I am absolutely convinced of the importance of hope, but maybe I have to say something about how I understand hope.

First of all I never saw with good eyes any kind of philosophy or proposal or historical understanding of our presence in the world which does not take into consideration the essence of human beings, the nature of human beings. Of course there are different ways of conceiving the nature of human beings. I go with the ones which understand the nature of human beings as being shaped, being constituted in history. This may be one of the reasons why many Christians don't accept that I am also a Christian because I agree with Marx in some aspects. For example, when he says that it is not possible to deal with our lives prior to history, anything before history. My understanding of human nature starts with history and not before history. I think that we did not or do not have an abstract definition of the nature of history, that we created it here, that we are creating history everyday. And precisely because the nature of human beings is historical and has historicity, it means that it is not immobilized, it means that the nature changes. This is one of the principles that orients my understanding of education for change. Because if I starts from an orientation in history grounded on a metaphysics, I start by accepting the principle that our nature has been shaped historically. If our nature has been shaped historically it is possible to change it historically.

Secondly, I defend the idea that in some moment of our historical journey in the world as unfinished beings we acquire the ability of recognizing ourselves as unfinished beings. Trees are also unfinished beings, lions are also unfinished beings, but maybe they don't know. We, human beings, know that we are unfinished beings. And precisely because we know, because we have the consciousness of being uncompleted beings, it becomes a contradiction to recognize our uncompletedness without engaging in a permanent process of searching for our completeness. It does not mean that the insertion in the process of searching means that we will find the things we are looking for. One of the beauties in the struggle of life, of existence, is precisely the possibility of getting or not getting. Even in those conditions when we know what we are trying to get it does not mean that we will get it. It means that the holistic understanding of history, i.e., the understanding of history as a whole process including the things we are looking for, is not a mechanistic understanding. In this perspective instead of just thinking about a future we must problematize it.

I think of the future as a possibility. Then for me future is not something that will have to be like it's been said it will be. To accept that future is a possibility implies that there are different possibilities for the future, and that we have to realize that we have to mobilize ourselves to organize ourselves in order to dream. We have dream about the future. The conceptualization of future as a possibility brings the idea that the future is not something beyond our ability to influence, some entity waiting for us to arrive. At the contrary, according to this profile, of being a possibility, the future is nothing but transformation - the transformation of today.

The question now is, how could I assert myself in this permanent process of searching without hope? Then hope is not just a crazy idea, a foolish dream of the people. Hope has its foundation.

The business of questioning is always fascinating. And as questions always lead to other questions, then the question of responsibility comes up. I came to the world not to adapt myself but to assume the responsibility for being here; and being here means to interfere in this today, in this here. And without hope, how could I do that? If we follow this line of thought we may be led to understand, for example, why the ideology of oppression always injects a certain fatalism in the oppressed. This fatalism is instilled by having the oppressed believe that no solution for them can become a reality, that reality is unchangeable. By the same token, the more the oppressor discovers that reality is not unchangeable the less the oppressor sleeps well. As a consequence, one of the things to do for the oppressed people is to work on the question of hope. Is to increase hope, hope in spite of it all. Because without hope there can be no struggle.

I also could say to you that for me there is hope, because God does not lie. But this question satisfies only those who believe in God. I respect all those who don't believe in God, then I have to try to give them an answer that they may accept. From my perspective, one of the reasons I have hope is because I believe in God. I am convinced that I am more than my body.

A great friend of mine who did not believe in God died recently. A little before he died he said to me, "Paulo, how is it possible for you to believe in that? We are no more than the cadaver." And I said look when we die we have a very interesting experience, perhaps more interesting to you because you don't believe in anything else but your body. Then when you die you will have a great surprise because you will discover that you were and you are more than the body. And I will not have this surprise because I am already convinced about that. He died and maybe he is smiling today.

But coming back to exploring the possibility of an answer to the question of the relationship between oppression and hope, I still feel strongly that the situation of oppression works against hope. I believe that the situation of oppression has everything to prevent the oppressed from having hope. Then for the oppressed there is a moment in which hope begins to come back or to be restored. This happens when the oppressed is engaged at some level in a process of struggle. When I say struggle here I mean political struggle and not necessarily a physical fight. There are lots of physical fights which do not bring any kind of hope.

I remember a discussion that occurred some thirty years ago in one of the circles of culture of a literacy program. We were discussing about some aspects of "injecting" hope, of how to help in the process of bringing hope to the people. This discussion touched on the very conceptualization of culture. We were realizing that to grasp the meaning of culture is to understand culture as the result of the differences between human beings. And

that these differences occur within the context of the natural world which we did not create. They discovered that to transform reality is to create and solidify a culture. That to make a well is as cultural as it is to write a poem. When we, men and women, discover that by "making" we are creating and re-creating reality, we are grasping the meaning of culture.

I remember that in one of those evening discussions a man said, "Right now I know that maybe Brazil even won't change, but I am now sure that this is not because God does not want it". In that moment that man realized that there were other reasons for not changing which had nothing to do with the supernatural. These other reasons have to do with the structures of society.

You see, no establishment allows discussing about structures. You can discuss about the results, reflex of the structures, but not about the structures. It is a very dangerous terrain to be discussed.

WO - And if you cannot discuss the structures, of course there is no hope, because there are no possibilities for the deep structural changes which are needed to help the situation of the oppressed.

PF - It becomes then clear that there is undoubtedly a relationship between hope, lack of hope, presence of hope, oppression, struggle against oppression, perpetuation of the establishment, of social structures and of the status quo, solidarity, and adaptation to the oppression. The lack of hope necessarily leads us to a fatalistic position vis a vis the reality.

WO - And all of these, lack of hope, fatalism, and consequently absence of struggle, apathy, lack of solidarity are useful for the perpetuation of reality as is, of unjust social structures, of oppression.

PF - Exactly. Historically we have always acknowledged fatalism. However, fatalism was mostly existent among workers, especially peasant workers. Today fatalism is among economists of the universities, among scholars. When the economists affirm that from the point of view of economy we have nothing to do but adapt to the current reality of what has been called globalization, we have to understand that they are saying that there is no hope out of this perspective.

WO - In other words, that we have to accept reality as is, that we have no way of changing it.

PF - Why does globalization have to imply in a total impossibility of changing reality? Is it possible that technology has to have that much power over us even though it was created by us? It becomes a very good question to ask, whether tomorrow's robots will be in command, over the human beings who created them, submitting us to their power. The answers to these questions cannot be provided by technology. I refuse to accept answers to such questions from technology. It has to come from us, human beings, utilizing the power of our critical minds. We have to provide the answers, we owe these answers to ourselves and to the next generations.

The problem of technology, then, is not technological, but political. The enactment and implementation of policies dealing with technology, the policies dealing with the process of globalization, are all political issues. Globalization is essentially a political issue.

WO - And fatalism, following this line of thought, is a political attitude, ideologically controlled.

PF - Of course, this fatalism that we see today, championed by certain economists and certain political groups, telling us that there is only one way to go, works in favor of the process of globalization and in favor of creating a situation in which we see ourselves as powerless, transferring our power, human beings' power, to technology. This fatalism, therefore, has deep political implications. This fatalism today is inside of the male neoliberal speech all over the world, homogenized, saying the same thing in different languages, preaching the lack of importance of history, telling us that there is no social classes, no ideology, no struggles between classes, no hope, no dreams, no utopias and for me this is an ideological lie. As a human being I protest. Because I continue to believe in our power of transforming reality, in our utopias, cultivated over many years of civilization, and I am not even talking as a politician or as an educator, but primarily as a human being.

WO - It seems that fatalism, associated with the neoliberal drive to a global village governed by the market system, based on competition and social Darwinism, tends to lead to a homogeneization of cultures, or even the disappearing of cultural differences, with all its perils, including losing sight of other alternatives to the market ruling. It also relies on people having to accept the fact that nothing can stop it, and all we can be is to serve this destiny, to fulfill this prophecy.

PF - Yes, and I refuse to accept this role which is compromised with an ideology that contributes to our dehumanization. Again, I did not come to the world just to adapt myself to an offered reality. I recognize the

strength of this reality, the power of this reality, maybe we never had such a powerful reality before. But even this powerful reality has to be seen as changeable, and its transformation depends upon our wishes, upon our dreams.

One of the problems we have today is how the financial capital circulates quickly around the world looking for the more profitable places, the places which pay more. This was one of the reasons behind the breaking down of the economy in Mexico, in Argentina and almost did it in Brazil. If you say to some economists that there are lots of people of Brazil dying of hunger in the same moment when the production of food in the world could feed twice the population of the world they say, yes, but this is reality. I say no, this is this reality, but we have to change it. It is interesting to notice that when this same kind of people, of that level, the big capitalists, those in command in the world, become objects, and see themselves threatened by a fatalistic situation then they see the possibility of change. After the economic disasters in Mexico they began to say that it is absolutely necessary for these commanders of the world to begin to regulate, to establish a discipline for protection of the financial capital that circulates around the world. In this situation it was perceived the necessity, and the possibility, of an immediate reorganization. It was perceived that there is a possibility of stopping the problem, of changing the reality. Nevertheless, when it comes to people dying of hunger there is no possibility for stopping, there is no possibility of reorganizing, because this is perceived as an unchangeable situation, it is the reality, and that is that. Is it or not the power of ideology, the power of those who are able to dictate to others what is that can be or cannot be done, the power of interpreting and imposing an understanding of life, of reality, and of our own possibilities in the world?

I would like to finish saying to you that one of my struggles as an educator today is this one, that is, I fight against this kind of fatalism and cry out, "No! No! I am a man and I cannot accept such a terrible reality." My hope is indispensable for me.

CM/BK - Isn't there also a reactionary potential to hoping in the United States because there is this saying that people can be whatever they want to be? Maybe if you work hard enough you will make it, but at the same time that idea goes with the assumption that there is nothing wrong with the system and it is a matter of you trying very hard and working very hard. So, I see that hope, on the one hand has its potential, but also has the potential to obtain to the school because you have hope that things are going to be better without understanding that those things need to happen it has to be responsible enough. [CLARIFY] So, it is more than just hope I think, it is hope linked with reality.

PF: I think I understood your question. For me the problem is that often hope has to be critical because there are ways of being naively hope, a kind of sweet hope. Religions usually have a strong responsibility for that kind of naive hope, which is precisely the kind of hope you can find in the attitude of resignation. I do not defend this resignation. On the contrary, I defend serious rebellion. But in order to create something more than rebellion, we have to foster attitudes to create the revolutionary. In this case I am not making any kind of reference to traditional revolution, it is not that exclusively based. What I want to say is that sometimes in the rebellion you have to have much more than indignation. You have the protest, you have the denunciation, but you still have to have the enunciation. That is, at the same time you are denouncing you have to announce, at least the announcement of what should be the drawing of your dream. This is more than rebelling, but it cannot exist without rebellion.

To preach resignation is a sweet way of lying to the oppressed. For example, thirty or forty years ago it was common for a priest, after eating a good breakfast, to say in the church to the people with hunger, be patient because you will get the kingdom of God. He was proposing resignation and not proposing hope. I am against it.

NS: I have been teaching your work for 13 years in a community course on Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Critical Consciousness. The students pick up nearly everything. But when I get to cultural circles and the need to decode the emotional themes, sometimes I find difficulties in the discussion with the students. What can you tell me about what I can do to get that message across?

PF: Look, when we begin to discuss about reality we face the need to discuss some internal questions as well. At that point the discussion begins to become difficult because sometimes we have to touch on our own emotions and feelings. I never forget my first conversation in the 1970s with Eric Fromm in Mexico. I was explaining to him some of the major points of my work and in five minutes of my speech he finished the conversation because he already knew. Then he smiled because I said that if I always spoke to people like him I would not speak. He analyzed my work and said in conclusion "what you are doing is a very special kind of psychological, cultural, political, and ideological psychoanalysis." And he said "I have spent years waiting for this kind of education." He told me, "that is why you cannot be easily accepted by those who have power, because to propose the oppressed to think of themselves as not necessarily victims of the society is to work against those who impose their rules on the society."

For those who have power it is fundamental that education becomes only techniques. The reduction of education into techniques is absolutely indispensable for the continuation of a society like this. But at its best education is much more than techniques, education is an understanding of the world in order to transform it.

But to stay with your question, first of all I think we have to be sympathetic with the strong reactions of the people, especially the resistances against examining their own feelings. Our task is difficult. We don't even have scientific technology to help confronting certain psychological situations which the psychotherapists confront as well. And nevertheless truly educators are social psychotherapists, as Erich Fromm very well pointed out. The answer to the question, for me, is to understand, to respect, to be silent in the moments of pain because sometimes people really suffer during the process of education.

I remember one day in Chile in 1966, in which during a discussion a young man looked at the educator coordinating the discussion and said, "Look sire, finally what is your point?" This man was angry because the questions were beginning to touch some of his emotional problems. Then instead of questioning himself, his reaction, his resistance led him to question the educator and the process of education.

Then my answer is first of all we have to respect the feelings of the people. However we have to do our best in order to help them to get the courage of confronting themselves. Because one of the conditions for us to have hope, and to become engaged in any kind of socially significant struggle is to deal with our own difficulties and not to be angry with the others. Sometimes people feel at ease dealing with their own difficulties, but sometimes the resistance is enormous. When this happens, maybe we could tell stories that involve the same kinds of feelings which are at stake in a particular moment. In this way we could trivialize the feelings which we are touching on, and the fact that we are causing pain, perhaps we could make these feelings, and this pain, more ordinary. Maybe it could be useful to create a certain distance, a separate intimacy between ourselves and the problem. Because sometimes a question makes us to suffer in such a way that we even do not want to think about the question. What we want is to escape, to sleep, therefore, if the educator insists in asking the question and forces me again to face the situation I can feel offended.

An example of a very touchy problem has to do with the question of discrimination. One of the faces of discrimination is the imposition of white English on the black people. One question is, how is it possible to teach English to black children in a particular neighborhood if the teacher is not solidary, really solidary, with the black child? If the teacher does not have scientific information, if the teacher never read or thought about the ideology pervading issues of language and communication, if the teacher is absolutely convinced that the white English defines the standard of quality in the world of good language? How is it possible for this teacher to teach black children? It is absolutely impossible. I am not saying that a white teacher should not teach black kids, but

should teach them acknowledging the differences in syntax in the English used by white and black people. On the other hand, the teacher has to teach the white syntax, not because the syntax of the black children is inferior, not because the black English is ugly. The black kids need to learn the white English in order to fight better the white ideology of discrimination. This is how I see.

Once again we are touching on the problem of respect, and on the problem of respecting the cultural identity of the students. Because of these problems I have my doubts concerning the idea of multi-culturalism and multi-linguistic in this country. Multi-culturalism, for me, implies respect for all cultures, and this respect implies that the primary culture does not impose its values on the other cultures.

MB- Did your understanding of Christ shape your understanding of the importance of the word as a basic element of dialogue in your writings?

PF: Once, in Europe, some people asked me about the influence of the great educators, the great philosophers, in my work, in my curiosity, and I remember I spoke first about Christ. I understand Christ as a simple educator. I can think of many examples of His fantastic testimony for my understanding of history and of education. I think that we commit a great mistake in to trying to understand the Christ without considering the dialectics between the different moments of his life. For example, we sometimes quote just the moment he gave the other face to those who slapped him, but not the violent way in which he reacted to the mercantilization of the temple, because it shows a face of him which was not sweet.

MB - I want to go back for a minute to the student from Chile, the one who was hurt by not seeing the educator's point, and not look at him as a student, but look at him as a teacher. This student from Chile may have taught us something that helps us understand what a teacher is and what the youthworker is. When I say it in my words I want to make sure that my words mean the same to you as they mean to me in our conversation. It seems that the young man taught us that a teacher exists as a question, that the teacher is an interrogation and the teachers' responsibility is to live as a question. So that living as a question is a way to address the world as well as to address the student. In that case, it seems to me that the fact that the student became nervous is a sign that the teacher was doing his job.

PF: A wonderful interpretation. A good teacher makes the students tired and curious. I very much doubt the teacher who keeps his class well behaved.

MB - If the teacher exists as question, then that question is inherent to the struggle because the question is always about the possibility of distance between now and maybe. That is where courage has to walk.

PF: I agree. No comments. Sometimes I get tired of a question, sometimes we get tired, but in my case I have no possibility of getting tired of you because of the language of your abstract thinking [CLARIFY]. I think that there is a kind of a contradiction between the act of speaking and the possibility of understanding what is spoken by the others. I am much more able to say what I mean in English than understanding you, who are native English speakers. I always need help. It implies that I always get tired.

RS: I understood you to say that hope is necessary but not sufficient to overcome oppression. But, earlier on, you described one of the qualities of an educated person as being someone who has a critical mind. Apparently putting those things together, hope plus a critical mind, gets us closer to dealing with oppression. But now you mentioned the idea of solidarity as we've gone along. So, I am thinking that solidarity is another piece. Are you saying that hope plus a critical mind plus solidarity are three of the elements that you would see necessary to overcome oppression?

(PF noted that he meant "go beyond" oppression)

RS (continued) - Is there a difference between "overcoming" oppression and "going beyond" oppression?

(PF says "no")

BK - The solidarity of a working class would be one way of thinking about that. But, today, in the U.S., it is very hard to say that we have two groups, only those who have and those who have not. Among the "haves" we have lots of groups and among the "havenots" we have lots of groups. Even as I look around our group this morning there are commonalities, but there are uniquenesses too. How do you deal with solidarity given the great amount of diversity we now recognize among us?

PF: There are different opportunities in which you can express your solidarity. In a very broader understanding of solidarity you can be solidary with a billionaire person who needs, you can be a samaritan.

You do not deny to give a glass of water in spite of his badness. It is a form of solidarity, it is a kind of human necessity of the human beings. But when I speak about solidarity in the context of our discussion this morning, I am mostly referring to the necessary solidarity which people who have same dreams or similar political dreams have to have among themselves in order to struggle against the other side. Of course the other side also has to be solidary and they are. Those who have power are solidary among themselves in order to prevent the collapse of the totality of power. They demonstrate everyday solidarity among themselves. This is also solidarity.

My dream is for a society less ugly, a society in which we can laugh with no falsity. In which knowing is not a problem of seeing, in which there is no discrimination of language, race, sex. I am not thinking about a society of angels because angels don't make politics, but I am thinking of a society of human beings. We have to have solidarity among those who have similar dreams. This solidarity implies hope and without solidarity and hope it is impossible to struggle.

For me one of the things I understand scientifically but I cannot accept politically and philosophically is the lack of solidarity among the so-called minorities in this country. In the United States the minorities are really the majority. If they would discover the power of solidarity, which could make them united, that would make a world of difference. If they were united while preserving their own diversity they would discover they are not minorities, the only minority is the ruling dominance. One of the rights preserved by the dominant minority is to profile the dominated. For example, the colonizers who arrived said that the natives did not have history until the colonizers came. Because the natives did not have a language but dialects, it was assumed that they did not have culture. In this way those who have power profile those who don't have power. From a certain moment of the experience those who don't have power accept the profile determined by the dominant. When the dominated begin to struggle they reject the profile, this is why the blacks in the 1960s cried out to the world that 'black is beautiful'. It was a way the blacks had to reject the profile of the ugliness of blacks as determined by the dominant white.

Creating solidarity among those who are different but have somewhat the same kind of dream implies to admit different understandings of the profile of dream. The question comes to the domain of objectivity not subjectivity, and the struggle includes some work on understanding and dealing with these problems, on creating strategies, on working on respect for the differences. At any rate, I think that first of all they should work on the possibility of becoming solidary and not against one another.

For me the question of solidarity is, therefore, a political question and is also a methodological question. It has to do with the preparation for reaching the dream. Your question was very good. Without exploring it I might have hidden in my answers something very important. Thank you.

CM: The other element is that in addition to being a question the professor also has to be a witness, a testimony so that when the student expresses with frustration the professor also has to show himself with him in his frustration. So in addition to hope, critical mind, and solidarity, there is also a witnessing testimony that you have to provide to make all of this possible.

PF: Yes, very good. I think we all agree. The teacher must be a question who embodies and becomes a testimony. Personally, it justifies for me to have come to the states just for this morning. The nature of the other meetings was different, this is one of the best experiences that I have ever had. Thank you very much.