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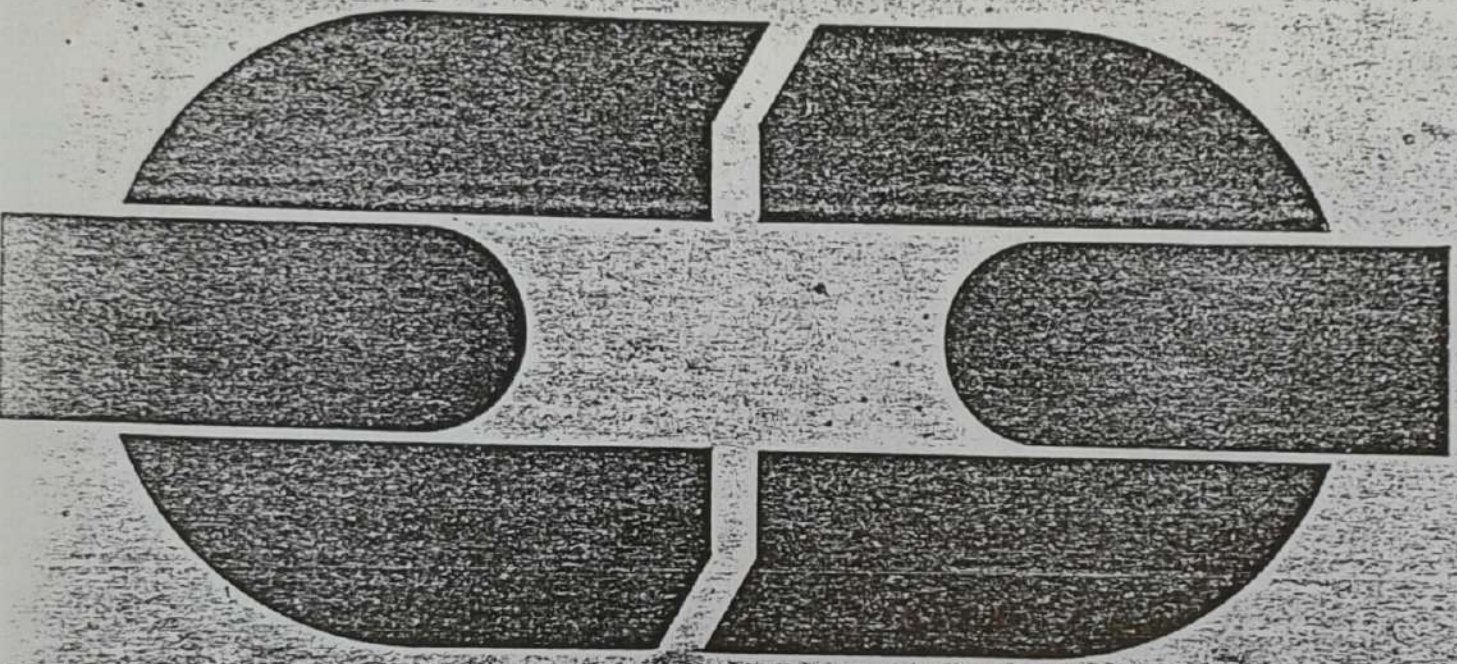


# conscientisation and liberation

a conversation with Paulo Freire

document 1

INTRODUCTION

This is the first in a series of documents which are being produced by the Institute of Cultural Action (IDAC). Confronted by the challenge which the test of practice - involvement in concrete action - puts up against theory, we feel it useful to widen the debate on the real significance of Cultural Action for Liberation. We propose beginning that discussion through a conversation with Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator whose works have served as a reference point for the systematizing of a pedagogy of liberation, in trying to see again his thought in all its authenticity and vigor.

Cultural Action for Liberation is the "praxis" of those who seek to overcome their alienation and the constraints to which they have been submitted. It is their affirmation as conscious subjects and creative participants in their own history. Conscientisation is the working instrument. This is a political pedagogy, a praxis of liberation, which can be defined over against the traditional systematic education. That education is based on an authoritarian transfer of knowledge from an all-powerful professor to absolutely ignorant students. Conscientisation, on the other hand, presents itself as an educative process in a much larger sense. It refuses this transmission of a finished, completed knowledge. In a context of liberation, education is an act of knowing. The object of that knowing process is the real world, the reality, lived daily by people, which must be known and transformed. And this act of knowing is an enterprise of community where professor and students find themselves again in a dialogical relationship which is non-authoritarian.

If we accept education in this richer and more dynamic sense of acquiring a critical capacity and intervention on reality, we see immediately that there is no such thing as neutral education. All education has an intention, a goal, which can only be political. Either it mystifies reality by rendering it inpenetrable and obscure - which leads people to a blind march through inconprehensible labyrinths, or it unmasks the economic and social structures which are determining the relationships of exploitation and oppression among persons, knocking down labyrinths and allowing people to walk their own road. So we find ourselves confronted with a clear option: to educate for liberation, or to educate for domination.

Paulo Freire has made his choice. He is a pedagogue fundamentally concerned with the process of consciousness raising among men and women and the means by which consciousness is determined and then conditions their praxis - their intervention on reality. He understands the educative process as the world's transformation by the conscious action of men and women. This presupposes methods of specific action, essentially differe from those used by education for domination.

# Conscientisation and Liberation

## A conversation with Paulo Freire

Question 1: In spite of the increasing acceptance of your thought in the United States, Europe, and Latin America, it is precisely in Latin America, the beginning point of your theory and practice, that we find the most severe criticisms directed against you. These criticisms rest on two points: first of all, you are accused of having lost contact with the Latin American reality; secondly, you are accused of idealism and reformism. What do you say in response to these criticisms ?

Freire: Let me say to begin with, and I want to underline the fact, that I am in the habit of taking seriously criticisms which are directed against me. Confronted with criticism I do not assume the air of someone attacked or injured. Nevertheless, sometimes there are among the criticisms those which, by their very fragility, do not deserve serious attention. I do not see, for example, why I should worry about the charge that I have put aside my concerned involvement with Latin America when I accepted the post of visiting professor at Harvard. On the other hand, I'm profoundly interested in criticism aimed at the content of my pedagogical and political thought which interprets me as idealist, subjectivist, or reformist. It seems to me, however, that those who thus classify me by drawing on certain naïve phrases which can be lifted out of my works - and which are today the object of my own self-criticism - must try to accompany me through the steps of my own evolution. In effect, I don't hold any simple or immodest illusions about reaching a state of absolute critical ability. It seems to me that the important thing is to see which of the two aspects - the naïve or the critical - is imposing itself as my practice and reflection gradually develope.

Question 2: Nevertheless, it seems to us that the accusation of idealism rests on a real base if one considers the historic experience of the program for the conscientisation of the masses which took place in Brazil in 1962 to 1964. At that time the extremely rapid politization of people obtained through a literacy program did not suffice for the building of a base of resistance to the military coup d'état which swept away the hopes that had been born among peasants and unskilled urban workers who had experienced conscientisation. I we agree that a

Every form of teaching or learning based on a dictation of what reality is, is unable to serve as an instrument of liberation. The objective isn't a dictation but a reading of reality. When Freire worked with illiterate peasants, he affirmed that the goal of literacy was not the reading and writing of a linguistic code but the reading and, above all, the writing of (that is to say, the inderstanding and the act of transforming) reality.

Systematic education as now known - with the school as the priviledged point for the diffusion of knowledge, with the professor as the only authorized interpreter of the long accumulated wisdom of the centuries - must disappear. In effect, life is the real school and education is a permanent process of deciphering what is real, continually redefined and enriched in the light of action and struggle against oppresion. All barriers between "school" and "life" must fall, for they are artificial and false. They are only one example, among a multitude of others, of the separation imposed by a class society, just like the distinction between manual and intellectual labor, theory and practice, knowledge and action. Against these divisions we must affirm the unity and the dialectical tension in such diverse elements. A true theory, for example, cannot exist if it is not a reflection on a previous action, having as its goal a return to practice, for it is only in action that theory is confirmed or refuted, developed and enriched.

In the interview with Freire we wanted to raise some of the points here mentioned. However, so that this reflection has a sense to it, it must be seen as an invitation to dialogue, a dialogue with all of you who in your daily experience are confronted with these types of problems. In our opinion, this first of our documents is to establish dialogue. Without that there is no reason for being.

process of becoming aware in an oppressive situation is not sufficient for changing that reality, then we should have had from the very beginning of the Brazilian experience, the development of a political organization of the masses of people with a strategy capable of orienting their action toward a social and political transformation.

Freire: Acually, one of the weakest points of my work on which I've done an autocritique, is precisely at the point of the process of consientisation. To the degree that, especially in my first theoretical works, I made no - or almost no - reference to the political character of education and I neglected the problem of social classes and their struggle, I opened the door to every sort of reactionary interpretation and practice leading to many distortions of what conscientisation must really be. And how often I've been criticized - not for a lack of clarity in the analysis and the theoretical basis of conscientisation - but, quite to the contrary, many of these criticisms reveal the mechanical objectivist position, anti-dialectical in itself, of those who express them. In so far as they are mechanicists, denying the very existence of consciousness, they reject, as a consequence, conscientisation. I want, then, to re-state that while all the time trying to go beyond my ever present frailties, I see no reason to reject the role of conscientisation in the revolutionary process.

Question 3: We agree with you that often these criticisms have been inspired by what you call mechanical and objectivist positions. However, Marx insisted that the revolutionary situation implies not only objective factors: the existence of an oppressive reality imposed on classes or social groups who become the "living negation" of this system of exploitation. It also implies, he insists, subjective factors: the consciousness of this oppressive reality on the part of the exploited classes and their readiness to act for the overthrow of the established order. These past few years have been marked by two different treatments of the subjective pole. Either there was a kind of eclipse of it in the dialectical relationship with the belief that revolutionary action only becomes possible after the fulfillment of certain infra-structural conditions, such as, for example, the full development of capitalism in the under-developed countries as a precondition to the transition toward socialism. Or, we have also seen a sort of perversion of the subjective element: Stalinian willfulness or an overestimation of the capacity of small avant-guard action groups cut off from the masses in a kind of "foquismo". Nevertheless, the historic failure of objectivism and of these two deviations of subjectivism have put the question of the subjective factor, as an agent for the transformation of reality, at the center of the contemporary political debate. How do you see this situation ?

Freire: This question brings us to the very heart of a fundamental problem which has always preoccupied philosophy - especially modern philosophy. I refe to the question of the relationship between subject and object, consciousness and reality, thought and being, theory and practice. All attempts to deal with the relationship which is based on the subject-object dualism, while denying their dialectical unity, is unable to satisfactorally explain this relationship. In breaking down the subject-object dialectical unity, the


dualist vision implies the negation either of objectivity, (submitting it to the powers of a consciousness created at will), or of the reality of the consciousness - a transformed one - so then, a simple copy of objectivity. In the first hypothesis we have the subjectivist error, the expression of an anti-dialectical and pre-Hegelian idealism. In the second, we are dealing with the mechanical objectivist one, equally anti-dialectical.

In reality, consciousness is not just a copy of the Real, nor is the Real only a capricious construction of consciousness. It is only by way of an understanding of the dialectical unity, in which we find solidarity between subjectivity and objectivity, that we can get away from the subjectivist error as well as the mechanical error. And then we must take into account the role of consciousness or of the "conscious being" in the transformation of reality.

How can one explain, for example, in subjectivist terms, the position of human beings - as individuals, generation or social class, - confronted with a given historic situation in which they "fit" independent of either their consciousness or their will? And how to explain, on the other hand, the same problem from a mechanical point of view? If consciousness arbitrarily creates reality, a generation or social class could, in rejecting the given situation in which they live, transform it by a simple relevant gesture. Likewise, if consciousness were only a simple reflection of reality, the given situation would be eternally the given situation. Reality would be the determinant "subject" in itself. Human beings would be only the yielding objects. In other words, the given situation would change of itself. That means seeing History as a mythical entity, outside of and superior to human beings, able to capriciously command them from above and beyond. I think just now of Marx and what he wrote in The Holy Family:

> "History does nothing, possesses no great riches, liberates not one class from its struggles; what does all that, possesses and struggles, is man himself - real, living man. It is not History which uses man as a tool to reach a goal, as though History were a being apart, for History is nothing but the action of man following his objectives."

Actually, when we are faced with a given situation in which we "fit" without being aware, we are up against a concrete condition which poses a challenge. The given situation, as a problematic situation, implies what I called in my last book, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the "untested feasability", that is to say, the constructable future. The

accomplishment of this untested feasability which demands going beyond the point blocked by living without reference to our consciousness, is only verified in praxis. That means, and let us emphasize it, that human beings do not get beyond the concrete situation, the condition in which they find themselves, only by their consciousness or their intentions - however good those intentions may be. The possibilities that I had for transcending the narrow limits of a five by two foot cell in which I was locked after the April 1964 Brazilian coup d'état, were not sufficient to change my condition as a prisoner. I was always in the cell, deprived of freedom, even if I could imagine the outside world. But, on the other hand, the praxis is not blind action, deprived of intention or of finality. It is action and reflection. Men and women are human beings because they are historically constituted as beings of praxis, and in the process they have become capable of transforming the world - of giving it meaning.

It is only as beings of praxis, in accepting our concrete situations as a challanging condition, that we are able to change its meaning by our action. That is why a true praxis is impossible in the anti-dialectical vacuum where we are driven by all subject-object dichotomy. That is why subjectivism and mechanical objectivism are always obstacles to an authentic revolutionary process, no matter what concrete forms they take in praxis. In this sense, subjectivism - throwing itself into a simple verbal denunciation of social injustice, preaching the transformation of consciousness while still leaving in tact the structures of society - is just as negative as the willfull mechanicalism which, mistrusting a rigorous and permanent scientific analysis of objective reality, becomes equally subjectivist in the measure where it "acts" on invented reality.

It is precisely this mechanical objectivism which discovers idealism or reformism in all references to the role of subjectivity in the revolutionary process. At the heart of the matter these expressions, however different, grow up from the same ideological "source" : the petite bourgeoisie.

Mechanical objectivism is a gross distortion of the Marxist position with regards to the fundamental question of the subject-object relationship. For Marx, these relationships are contradictory and dynamic. Subject and object are not found to be dichotomized nor constituting one identity, but one dialectical unity. The same dialectical unity in which we find theory and practice.

Question 4: Do you believe that one can become conscious of a situation of exploitation in what you call the "theoretic context", like the circle of culture of the Brazilian experience? In those circles of culture a group of illiterate peasants, at the same time as learning to read a linguistic code went on to decipher the socio-historic reality in realizing that their illiteracy was but one aspect of a whole process of economic and social exploitation to which they had been submitted. Or do you think that this becoming conscious, this learning to read and write one's own reality, is only possible in and by the action of transforming the oppressive reality ?


Freire: The answer to this question requires a few preliminary remarks. First, let's try to see in what the "theoretic context" consists. Our point of departure is the affirmation that neither subjectivism, on the one hand, nor mechanical objectivism on the other, are capable of correctly explaining this problem, which finally, is similar to the one of which we just spoke And they are not capable of explaining it correctly because, in dichotomizing the subject from the object, they automatically dichotomize the practice from the theory, breaking apart the already mentioned dialectical unity. Cut off from practice, theory becomes a simple verbalism. Separated from theory, practice is nothing but blind acticism. That is why there is not authentic praxis outside the dialectical unity, action-reflection, practice-theory. In the same way, there is no theoretic context if it is not in a dialectical unity with the concrete context. In this context--where the facts are--we find ourselves enveloped by the real but without necessarily comprehending in a critical way why the facts are what they are. In the theoretic context, holding the concrete off at arms length, we seek the raison d'être of the facts.

In the concrete context, we are subjects and objects in dialectical relationship with reality. In the theoretic context we play the role of cognative subjects of the subject-object relationship which occurs in the concrete context, so as to return to the point of better reacting as subjects over against reality.

This makes up the unity--not the separation--between practice and theory, action and reflection. However, since these moments can really only exist as unity and process, whatever be the

beginning point already demands and also contains the other point. And that is why reflection is only legitimate when it sends us back--as Sartre insists--to the concrete context where it seeks to clarify the facts. In so doing, reflection renders our action more effective over against those facts. In throwing light on an accomplished, or being accomplished, action, authentic reflection clarifies future action which, in its given time, will have to be open to renewed reflection.

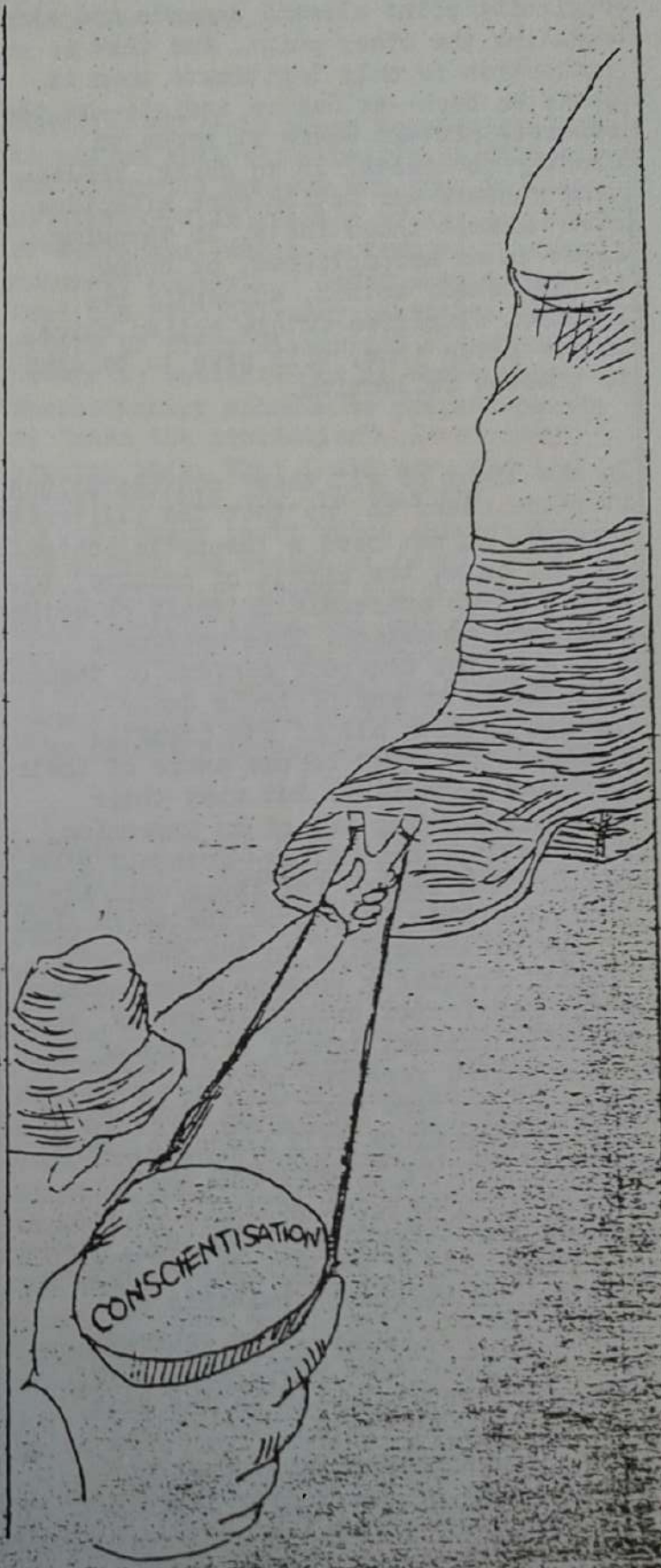
In the light of all these considerations, it seems clear to me that the illiterate peasants do not need a theoretic context (in our case, the circle of culture) to arrive at an awareness of their objective oppressed situation. This awareness occurs in the concrete context of their life. It is by way of their daily experience with all of its dramatic evidence that they become aware of their oppressed condition. But what their awareness--coming out of an immersion in daily life conditions--does not give them, is the reason for their exploited condition. This in one of the tasks that we have to accomplish in the theoretic context. Precisely because consciousness is not transformed except in praxis, the theoretic context cannot be reduced to an"uninvolved research center". The circle of culture must find ways, which each local reality will indicate, by which it must be transformed into "center for political action". If a radical transformation of social structures, which explain the objective situation in which the peasants are found, does not happen, the peasants continue in the same condition. They continue to be exploited in the same way. It matters little that some among them arrived at an understanding of the reason that their reality is as it is. Acutally, the demasking of reality which is not oriented toward clearpolitical action over against that same reality simply lacks sense.

Of course, this transforming knowledge is impossible in the framework of the "every-day". It is only in the unity of praxis and theory, action and reflection, that we go beyond the alienating character of the everyday, such as our spontanious way of moving through the world or as a result of action that are mademechanical or bureaucratic. In these two expressions of daily life, we don't succede in reaching irreductable knowledge of facts--facts of which we are hardly aware. From there comes the necessity which we feel to go further than a simple perception of the presence of facts and events, seeking not only the interdependence among them but also the constituting elements of the totality of each; also the necessity of trying to establish a permanent control on our thought processes.

There it is, in the last analysis, the dialectical movement (incomprehensible from the subjectivist point of view as well as from the mechanical objectivist perspective) which gets posed as a fundamental demand on every effort of knowing reality. This movement implies, on the one hand, that the subject of action holds the theoretic tools for dealing with the knowledge of reality, and, on the other hand, that the subject recognizes the necessity of readapting them after the results attained by their application. By that I mean that the results of the act of knowing must constitute the norms for judging one's own behaviour.

Question 5: What you are doing, if we understand correctly, is holding up the political involvement of a scientist, for example, as an essential condition and test for the scientific nature of his knowledge. Or, another way of putting it, for you an apolitical science constitutes nothing but a "false knowledge". Is that right?

Freire: Yes. Every student worthy of the name knows very well that the so-called neutrality of science (from which flows the equally famous "impartiality of the scientist" with his criminal indifference to the destiny of his discoveries) is nothing more than a necessary myth of the ruling classes. That is why he must not confuse a concern with truth--which characterises all serious scientific effort--with the myth of this neutrality. On the other hand, in trying to understand reality, the critical and careful student cannot attempt to domesticate it to suit his own ends. What he wants is the truth of reality and not the submission of reality to his own truth. We cannot respond to the myth of neutrality of science and the impartialitity of the scientist with the mystification of truth, but rather with a respect for that truth. In effect, at the moment when one is seduced by this falsification of reality one ceases to be critical. And the action resulting from such an uncritical or "false" knowledge cannot bear good fruit. So the student must be critical and involved, rigorous toward truth. This does not mean that his analysis must attain a definite or definitive profile of the social reality --among other reasons, because reality, to exist, must be becoming.



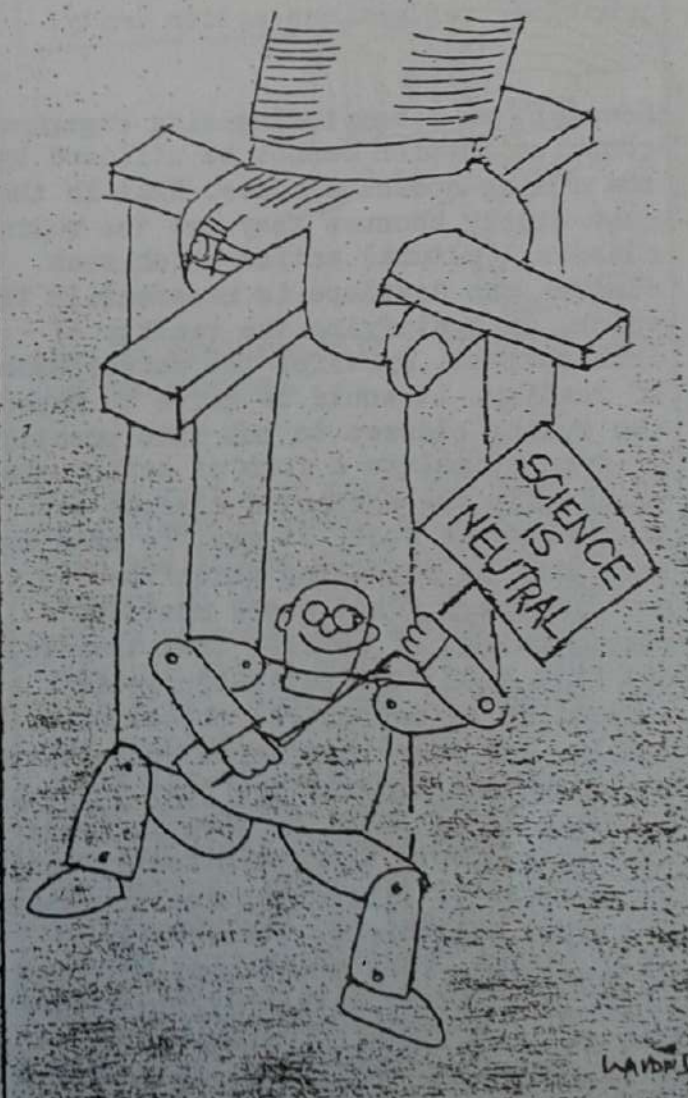
This vigilant attitude characterizes the critical student, the student who is not satisfied with misleading appearances. He knows well that knowledge is not something given or finished, but a social process which demands the transforming action of human beings on the world. For this reason he cannot accept that the act of knowing would grow out of a simple narration of reality, even less--and this is worse--, that it grows out of a proclamation that what exists is what must exist. Quite to the contrary, he wants to transform reality so that what is happening in a given manner begins to happen in another manner.

Question 6 : If we consider the masses only on the level of their "concrete context" without permitting their movement toward a critical examination of that context, will they necessarily be condemned to a reformist option?

Freire : In so far as ~~they~~ we don't account for the subjectivity-objectivity dialectical unity, we cannot understand this very evident fact: the dominated classes' state of being cannot be understood as an isolated thing; it must be seen in its dialectical relationship to the ruling class. The dominated classes' tendancy to reformist solutions is sometimes attributed to a sort of natural incapacity. Actually, however, the dominated classes become reformist in their dealings with the ruling classes. This happens in the concrete situation where they find themselves. Immersed in the alienation which constitutes their daily life, they do not spontaneously arrive at a self-consciousness in the sense of "class for itself".

Question 7: Isn't it fair to say that this is precisely the role of the revolutionary party?

Freire : In the last analysis, this is one of the fundamental jobs of any revolutionary party which is involved in attempts at a conscious organization of the oppressed classes so that, going beyond the stage of "class in itself" they can arrive at "class for itself". One of the basic aspects of this task rests on the fact that the relationships between revolutionary party and the oppressed classes are not



relationships between one side which brings historic consciousness and another side, void of consciousness, arriving on the scene with an "empty consciousness" If it were so, the role of the revolutionary party would be the transmission of consciousness to the dominated classes and this transmission would signify filling up their consciousness with the consciousness of their class. Actually, however, the dominated social classes are not void of consciousness, nor is their consciousness an empty depository. Manipulated by the ruling classes myths, the dominated classes reflect a consciousness which is not properly their own. Hence, their reformist tendancy. Permiated by the ruling class ideology, their aspirations, to a large degree, do not correspond to their authentic being. These aspirations are superimposed by the most diversified means of social manipulation.

All this throws out a challange to the revolutionary party. It unquestionably calls them to play a pedagogical role.

Question 8: One has to be aware, however, that attributing a pedagogical role to a revolutionary party carrys with it the danger of a manipulation of the masses.

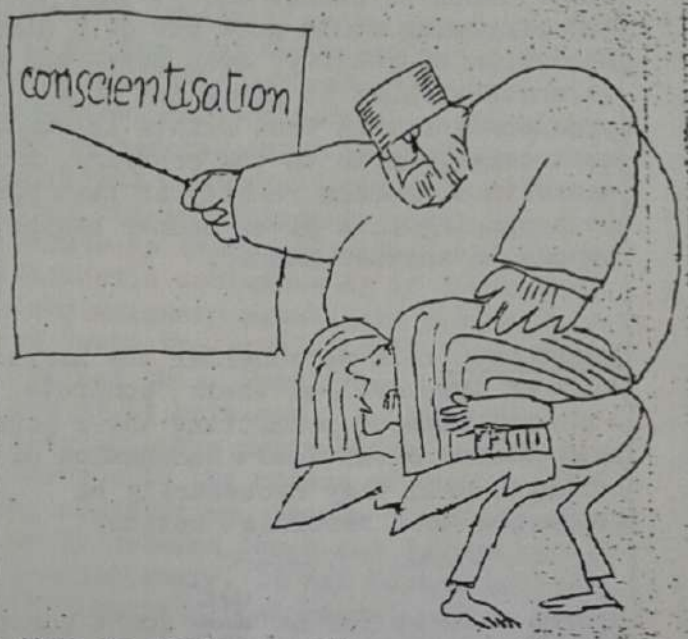
Freire : This danger exists; that's true. But we have to remember that the pedagogy of a revolutionary party can never be the same as that of a reactionary party. In the same way, the methods of the revolutionary party must necessarily be different. The reactionary party must, of necessity, avoid by all means, the creation of class consciousness among the oppressed. The revolutionary party, on the contrary finds this to be one of their most important tasks.

Finally, while it seems necessary to me to affirm that while analyzing the role the theoretic context can play in the critical radicalisation of the process of awareness--which is verified in the concrete context--I don't want to say that the revolutionary party has to create in every historical situation theoretic contexts--as if these were revolutionary schools to prepare people to "make the revolution". I've never claimed this. What I did say, and I repeat it here now, is that the revolutionary party which refuses to learn with the masses of people (and by so refusing, breaks the dialectical unity between teach and learn) is not revolutionary. It has become elitist. It forgets a fundamental point of Marx in his third thesis on Feuerbach: "The educator himself needs educating".

Question 9 : Let's talk for a moment, if you will, about this word which is constantly associated with you, CONSCIENTISATION. It has become the object of all sorts of ambiguous interpretations and distortions. Some wonder if the ruling classes cannot themselves "conscientize the people". Others, working at so-called revolutionary actions with the masses, also claim this word for themselves. Finally, many see conscientisation as a sort of magic wand capable of "healing" social injustice by simply changing the conscience of men and women. Could you, one more time, clear up these mystifications and reconstitute for us the real content of conscientisation?

Freire : To begin with I must say that it's impossible to correcly envisage conscientisation as if it were an intellectual hobby or the constitution of a rationality separated from the concrete. Conscientisation, which is identified with cultural action for freedom, is the process by which, in the subject-object relationship (already so often mentioned in this conversation) the subject finds the ability to grasp, in critical terms, the dialectic unity between self and object. That is why we reaffirm that there is no conscientisation outside of praxis, outside of the theory-practice, reflections-action unity.

However, as a demythologizing engagement, conscientisation cannot be utilized by the ruling social classes. That is the case simply because they are the ruling classes. Cultural action which such classes can develope is necessarily that which, in mystifying the reality of consciousness, mystifes the consciousness of reality. It would be naive to expect the ruling classes to put into practice, or even stimulate a form of action that would help the dominated classes see themselves as such. It must be said again that this is something which the revolutionary avant-guard must do, presupposing, of course, that they will not fall into the petit-bourgeois temptation of mechanical objectivism. Really, for these mechanical objectivists, the dominated classes <u>are just there</u>, as objects, to be freed by them in their role as subjects in revolutionary action. The process of liberation is, for them, something mechanical. Thus their willfullness. Thus their magical confidence in military action dichotomised from political action. That is why it is easier for them to accomplish a hundred dangerous activities, even though these may be void of political significance,




than to dialogue with a group of peasants for ten minutes.

But we must also point out that conscientisation cannot escape, by chance, from the limits which historic reality imposes on it. That is to say, the effort of conscientisation is not possible with a mistrust of "<u>historical viability</u>". Sometimes it happens that the peoples' action, moving toward the demasking of oppressive structures of a given society--though partial--is not the political expression of the "historical viability". In other words, it can happen that the masses of the people comprehend the immediate reasons which explain a particular event, but that they do not grasp, at the same time, the relationship between this event and the total picture in which they participate--where the historic

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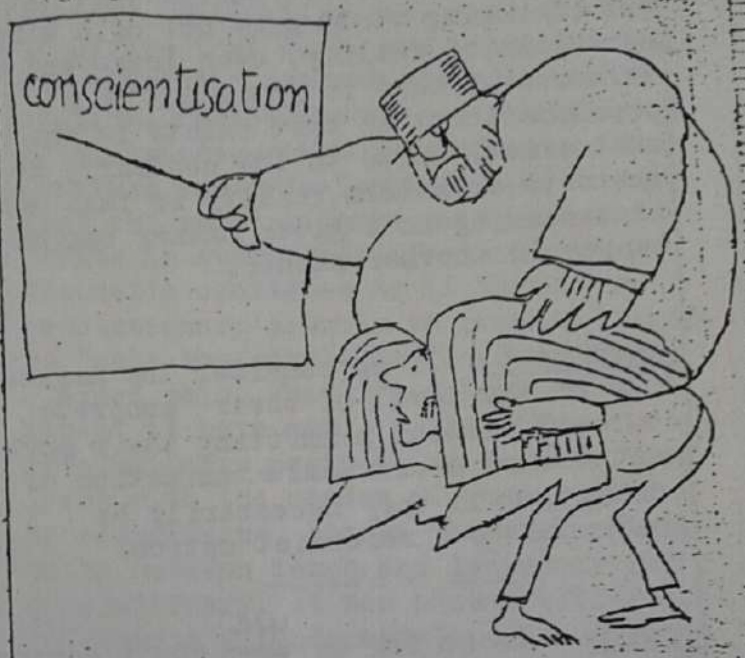


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viability is found. In such a case, over against event "B", action "A" may not be the adequate action from the point of view of the totality. This would be the case, for example, of an action which, though being valid politically for a certain local area, would be inadequate in regards to the demand of the total national situation.

Question 10 : This observation on the difficulty of grasping the total picture contained in the historic viability and organizing the diverse elements which constitute the totality, seems fundamental and basic to us. Actually, to insure their domination, the ruling classes need to deride the oppressed, pitting them one against the other. Thus, in the U.S., in the beginning of the liberation movement among the blacks, the principal enemy was simply the white, while, at the same time, the white workers made up one of the most racist groups in American society. The same phenomena is seen, with a few different elements present, in the clash which one observes in Latin America between the immediate interests of the urban-industrial proletariat and the demands of the peasantry. This is the case, while, quite evidently, the deepest interest of the two would be served in the identification of the principal common enemy. We see the escape from this fragmentary and partial vision as lying in the direction of the oppressed masses taking to themselves a class consciousness. How do you see this process?

Freire : I'll begin responding to that by reiterating that since it cannot be an atomised, spontaneous, or paternalistic "something to do", the work of conscientisation demands from those who consecrate themselves to it, a clear perception of the totality-partiality relationship, tactic and strategy, practice and theory. This work demands a no less clear vision than the revolutionary avant-guard must have of its own role, of its relationships with the masses of people. In these relationships, the avant-guard must be careful not to fall either into liberalism and lack of organization or into bureaucratic authoritarianism. In the first instance, they wouldn't be able to conduct a revolutionary process. They would disolve into dispersed actions. In the second situation, they would, in smothering the peoples' capacity for conscious action, transform those people into simple objects to be manipulated. In both cases, nothing present resembles conscientisation.

Let's analyse now how the masses of people could go beyond this stage of "consiousness of the necessities of class", where they naturally find themselves, to attain the stage of class consciousness. The "dialectical gap" between these two stages is an unquestionable challange to the revolutionary avant-guard. This dialectical gap is the ideological space where the dominated classes are found in their historical experience between the moment in which, as "class in itself" they act in a fashion that is out of accord with both their being and the moment when as "class for itself" they become aware of their own historic mission. It is only at that latter moment that their needs get defined as class interest.

And there we are confronted with a difficult problem. On the one hand, class consciousness doesn't spontaniously engender itself separated from revolutionary praxis. On the other hand, this

praxis implies a clear consciousness of the historic role played by the dominated classes. Marx underlined, in The Holy Family, the conscious action of the proletariat in the abolition of themselves as class by the abolition of the objective conditions which constitute that class.

Actually, class consciousness demands a class practice which, in turn, gives birth to a knowledge at the service of class interests.

While the ruling class, as such, constitutes and reinforces self-consciousness in the exercise of economic, political, and socio-cultural power which they impose on the dominated class, aligning it to their positions, this dominated class cannot attain its self-consciousness except by revolutionary praxis. In this process the dominated class becomes "class for itself" and, in moving then in accord with their Being, not only do they begin to know in a different way what they knew before, but they also begin to know what before they did not know. That is why class consciousness, not being a pure psychological state nor a simple sensitivity on the part of the classes to detect what opposes their needs and interests, always implies a class knowledge. This knowledge is non-transferable. It is born in and through action on reality.

Going beyond this dialectical gap, in demanding a revolutionary pedagogy, also insists that the relationships between revolutionary party and dominated classes is verified in such a way that the party (as the "critical consciousness" of the masses of the people) does not block the process of class "criticity".

Question 11 : We can perhaps end this conversation in coming back to the problem of the organization of the revolutionary party. Can you systematize for us your criticism of forms of political action which are based on a mistrust of the creative and conscious participation of the masses of people and which grow out of--as you have already said--a petite-bourgeois concept of the relationship between avant-guard and masses?

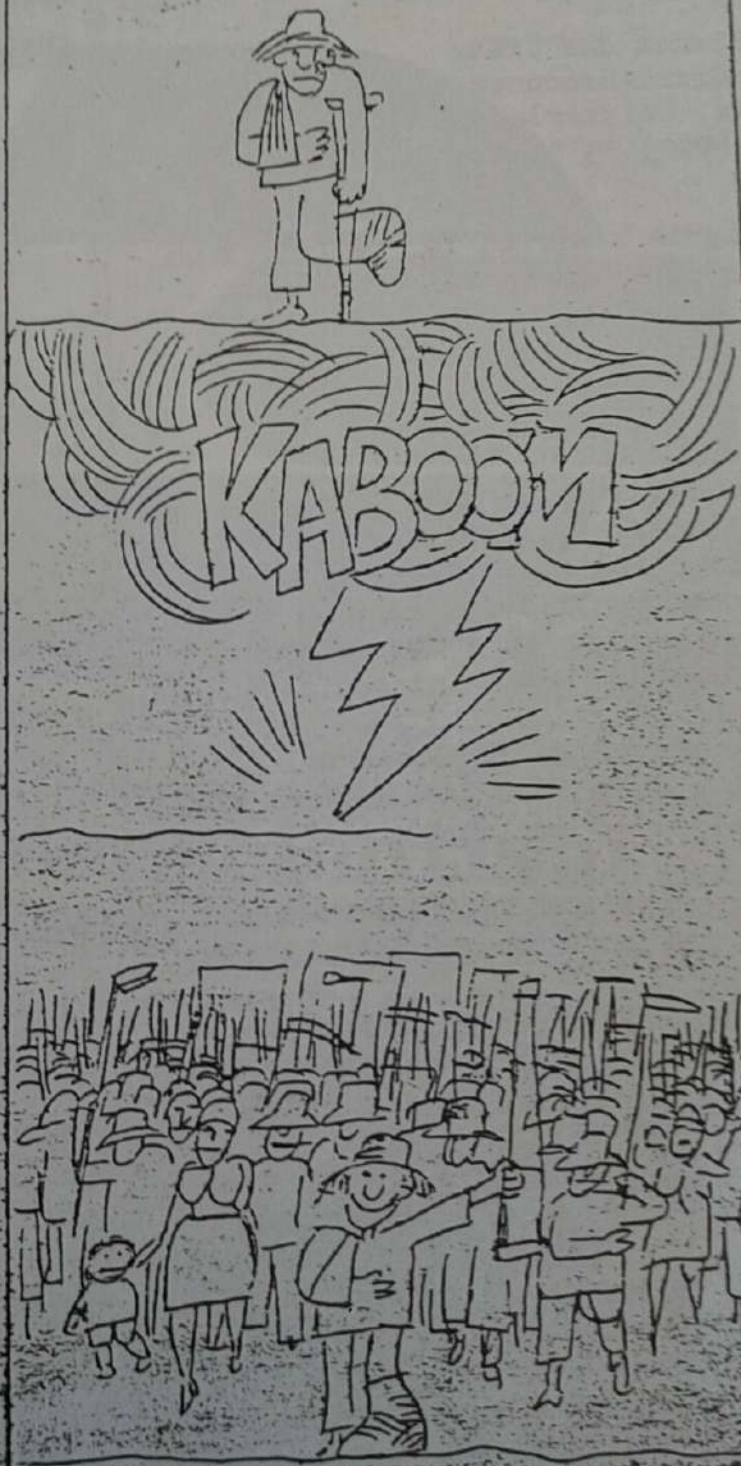
Freire : I believe that one of the most difficult problems confronting a revolutionary party in the preparation of its militant cadres consists in rising above the canyon which exists between the revolutionary option formulated verbally by the militants and the practice which is not always really revolutionary. The petite bourgeoisie ideology which has permeated them in their class conditions interferes with what should be their revolutionary practice. This then becomes contradictory in relationship to their verbal expression. It's in this sense that methodological errors are always an expression of an ideological vision. In so far as, for example, they keep within themselves the myth of the natural incapacity of the masses, their tendancy is one of mistrust, of refusing dialogue with those masses and of holding the idea that they are the only educators of the masses.

In so behaving, all they do is reproduce the dichotomy--typical of a class society, between teaching and learning in which the ruling class "teaches" and the dominated class "learns". They refuse, therefore, to learn with the people. They start giving prescriptions, depositing revolutionary knowledge.

Because of all this, I'm convinced that the effort to clarify the process of ideologizing must make up one of the necessary introductory points in every seminar for preparing militants, simultaneously with the exercise of dialectical analysis of reality. In thus proceding, the seminar becomes an occasion by which the participants--having been invited to overcome their naive and partial vision of reality, replacing it by a vision of the totality--engage also in a process of ideological clarification. They realize that dialogue with the people, in cultural action for freedom, is not a formality but an indispensible condition in the act of knowing...if our action is authentically revolutionary. They become aware that it is impossible, this dichotomy between the militant intent, which is political, and their methods, techniques, and processes through which the intent is translated into practice.

The political option of the militant determines the route which leads to its expression. There will always be radical differences between the leftist and the rightist militants in the use to which they can put even a slide projector. Many of the obstacles on the road of correct political--revolutionary action are rooted in the contradictions between revolutionary option and the use of methods which correspond to a practice of domination.

If my option is revolutionary, it is not possible for me to consider people as the object of my liberating act. If, however, my option is reactionary, the people will only be, as far as I'm concerned, a simple tool for my active preservation for the status-quo within which I am only interested in bringing off a few reforms. Political-revolutionary action cannot immitate political-dominative action. Enemies because of their goals, these two forms of action are set against each other not only by the practical consequences of chosen methods, but also by the use they make of the aids and alliances serving them.



I D A C

(Institut d'Action Culturelle)

INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL ACTION

27, chemin des Crêts
1218 Grand-Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland
Tel. (022) 33 57 42



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