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PAULO FREIRE, 5 YEARS AFTER A Legacy Of Hope

by *Moacir Gadotti*¹

Eleven years ago, on April 12, 1991, Paulo Freire proposed the creation of the Paulo Freire Institute in a get-together with educators and friends here in Los Angeles. He wanted to find a way to join people and institutions inspired by the same utopian idea of education as the practice of freedom so that they could reflect, exchange ideas and experiences, develop pedagogical practices in different areas of knowledge and contribute to the construction of a world with more social justice and solidarity. And so the Paulo Freire Institute (PFI) was born. Today, Paulo Freire is no longer with us or, rather, he is within all of us in the net he wove and the PFI is present in more than twenty countries, finding ways to keep his struggle alive, continuing and reinventing Freire.

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the human being is restored to the plenitude of the 'I' and the 'we', based on social rather than economic priorities. For this new world to be possible, it is necessary that the whole of humanity to understand and accept transformational education as a precondition. This education presupposes the principle that no one teaches anyone anything and that everyone learns in communion, beginning with a collective reading of the world."

You cannot understand the **pedagogical thinking** of Paulo Freire apart from a social and political project. Thus, you cannot "be Freirean" by merely cultivating his ideas. What it demands, above all, is the commitment to construct "another possible world." As he used to say, "the world is not; the world is being."² His "pedagogy without borders" is an invitation to transform it.

There are many Freireans scattered around the world. Today they constitute a great strength for the renovation of education. All of them have the right and the duty to proceed with the work which Freire began. That is why we always support the initiative, as much inside Brazil as out, for the creation of organizations, institutes, chairs and study groups, etc. based on the **Dialogical Philosophy** and pluralism of Paulo Freire. We do not deny anyone's voice because we recognize the right and the duty of so many institutions and people to make their contribution to the continuity and reinvention of Paulo Freire's cause, each in his/her/its own particular way.

Paulo Freire's idea may have rousen controversies, but not his person. Many of the messages received in the Paulo Freire Institute, in Sao Paulo, soon after his death, on May 2nd, 1997, said basically: "My life would not be what it is if I had not read the

²Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia da autonomia: saberes necessários à prática educativa*. Sao Paulo, Paz e Terra, 1997, p. 86.

For us, Paulo Freire continues to be the major reference point of emancipatory education. He may be compared to many twentieth century educators but no one else formulated a pedagogy of the silenced and oppressed and of the social responsibility of the oppressed and those who are not oppressed but want to align themselves with and fight alongside them, as he declares in the dedication of his best-known book, *Pedagogy of The Oppressed*. To place Paulo Freire in the past is not to want to be involved with the oppressive culture of yesterday and today, which he was denouncing.

We believe that the recognition of the importance of Paulo Freire's work in the field of education will be revealed when the school stops being confined to a particular space and **life-long education** is recognized, which means recognizing that it is essentially informal. Freire's legacy cannot be considered a contribution to the education of the past, but to the education of the future.

Many educators, meeting in the "Cultural Circles" of the First World Social Forum in Porto Alegre from the 25th - 30th of January 2001, rightfully referred to Freire as the most coherent educator of the 20th century whose lessons ought to be valid for a long time to come. They created a "Manifesto" wherein they recognized the currency of Freire's thinking: "In the century which just finished, two societal projects failed relating to the **process of civilization**, one because it focused on the 'I', eliminating the 'we'; the other because it favored the 'we', not taking the 'I' into consideration. In this new century, two antagonistic societal projects confront each other: one subordinates the social to the economic and to the dominion of the market; the other prioritizes the social. It is now necessary to construct a societal project where

work of Paulo Freire. What he wrote will remain in my heart and in my mind." This relationship between the **cognitive** and the **affective** is very strong in Paulo Freire's praxis and also in those who were influenced by him. This relationship was also very pronounced in his work. He involved people emotionally, not only by means of his very moving talks, but also through his writings.

The messages received soon after his death revealed the theoretical and effective impact of his work on the lives of so many human beings in all parts of the world. These manifestations always ended with the desire to join with other people and institutions to give **continuity to his legacy**, to his commitment, not the commitment to the oppressed of one place or the other, but to the **oppressed of the entire world**.

1. Lessons of life, lessons of history

Paulo Freire confessed, in the last big International Congress about his thinking, which took place in September 1996 in Vitoria (Espirito Santo, Brazil) that he always considered himself as a "**connective child**".³ This characteristic was not just personal. It was also epistemological. He succeeded, better than any other intellectual I know, in creating ties, intertwining history, politics, economics, class, gender⁴, ethnicity, poor and **non-poor**.⁵ His pedagogy is not just for the poor. As a

³Edna Castro de Oliveira, Marlene de Fatima C.: Pires e Silvana Ventorini (orgs.) *Paulo Freire: a praxis politico-pedagogica do educador*. (Vitoria, EDUFES, 2000)

⁴Nelly P. Stromquist, *Literacy for Citizenship: Gender and Grassroots Dynamics in Brazil*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).

⁵"Conversations with Paulo Freire on Pedagogies for the Non-Poor", ed. by William Bean Kennedy, in Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans and W. B. Kennedy (orgs.) *Pedagogies for the Non-Poor* (New York Orbis Books, 1986).

connective being, he also wants to see the non-poor and the middle class engaged in transforming the world.

In all of Freire's writings, from the oldest to the most current, he speaks to us of virtues demanding and necessary to the practice of transformative education. But he also gave us examples of some of these virtues, including coherence and simplicity. He was not hardheadedly coherent. For him, coherence was a virtue which took the form of permanent hopefulness. Above all, Paulo practiced the virtue of the example: he gave proof of what he was thinking. In this coherence between theory and practice I would highlight the value of solidarity.

Another virtue he conquered was simplicity. The simple is not the easy. It is difficult to be simple. He succeeded in questioning everyday thinking without being pedantic or arrogant. Paulo detested the arrogant intellectual, above all, the arrogant leftist intellectual. To him, the right-wing intellectual was already arrogant in his beliefs while the leftist was arrogant by deformation. That is how he ends his final book: "Arrogance is no more a sign of competence than competence a cause for arrogance. On the other hand, I do not deny the competence of certain arrogant people, rather I regret their lack of simplicity which would make them better people, more human people, without diminishing their knowledge in the least."⁶ The simple does not oppose the concrete or the complex. It opposes the prolix. Paulo Freire's simplicity was dense, concrete and complex.

Paulo Freire was a hopeful human being as well. Not out of stubbornness, but for "historical and existential imperatives", as he states in his books *Pedagogy of*

⁶Paulo Freire, *op cit.*, p.165

Hope.⁷ He cultivated **autonomy** as well as **hope**. Autonomy is the capacity to make decisions, to take your destiny in your hands. Faced with a market economy which invades all the spheres of our lives, we must fight -- also through education -- to create in civil society the ability to govern ourselves and to govern through a "public citizen sphere", so wrote Jurgen Habermas (an author much appreciated by Paulo Freire)⁸ by creating mechanisms for non-Statist public administration (an alternative to authoritarian socialism). Paulo Freire had a real **taste for democracy**. He always handled it with care.

What worried him the most in his last years was the advance of neoliberal capitalist globalization. Why did Paulo Freire attack **neoliberal thinking and practice** so strongly? Because neoliberalism is viscerally contrary to the central nucleus of Paulo Freire's thinking which is **utopian**. Whereas, Frierien is utopian, neoliberal thinking hates the dream. For Paulo Freire the future is **possibility**. For neoliberalism the future is **fatality**. Neoliberalism presents itself as the only answer to current reality, disqualifying any other proposal. It mainly disqualifies the State, the labor unions and the political parties. It denounces politics while making politics under cover.

Paulo Freire attacked the **market ethic** sustained by neoliberalism, because it is based on the logic of control, while he affirms the **integral ethics** of human beings. In his book, *Pedagogy of Autonomy*, he explains: "that is why I am permanently critical of neoliberal cruelty, of the cynicism of its fatalist ideology and its inflexible denial of

⁷Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia da esperança: um reencontro com a pedagogia do oprimido*. (Sao Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1992)

⁸See Jaime José Zietkoski, *Horizontes da (re)fundamentação em educação popular: um diálogo entre Freire e Habermas*. Frederico Wesphallen, Ed. URI, 2000 and Raymond Allen Morrow and Carlos

the utopian dream. That is why I get angry, truly angry, when I discuss the injustices to which the wretched of the earth are submitted. That is why I have no interest in those who assume the air of impartial, objective, secure observers of facts and events, no matter of what order. At no time could I be an ash gray, impartial observer for I have never stepped back from a rigorously ethical position.”⁹

For Freire, education should never be guided by a business paradigm which only emphasizes efficiency. The business paradigm ignores the human being. In this paradigm, the human being functions merely as pure economic agent, a “human factor.” The **pedagogic act** is democratic by nature, the **act of enterprise** is directed by ‘market logic.’ Neoliberalism has made **inequality seem natural**: “That’s the way it is”, “there is nothing else to do” are common expressions. Thus Paulo Freire reminds us that it is necessary to observe how **democratic subjectivity** is constructed, demonstrating, by the contrary, that inequality is not natural. He insisted that it was necessary to sharpen our capacity for estrangement and to be aware of the **anesthetic quality** of neoliberal ideology: it is fatalistic. Neoliberalism acts as if **globalization** were a definitive reality and not a historical category.

His conception of the world and his socio-political educative theory help us understand not only how the neoliberal model works but, also, how to construct the necessary response to neoliberalism. He defends a **new modernity** whose rationality must be “moist with affection.” Against the pedagogical and cultural **illumination** (enlightenmentism), which only accentuates the acquisition of curricular content, he stresses the importance of **the cultural dimension** in the processes of social

Alberto Torres, *Critical Theory and Education: Habermas and the Dialogical Subject* (translation Bianco Zalmora Garcia). “Biblioteca Freiriana” (IPF/Cortez, in print).

transformation. Education is much more than instruction. To be transformative--to transform the conditions of oppression--it must be rooted in **people's culture**. Post-modernity is characterized by simulation and immediate consumption. But education is a lifelong process and must fight immediatism and consumerism, if it wants to contribute to the construction of a progressive post modernity. Education for liberation needs to construct a true historical consciousness between educator and educatee. And that takes time.

2. Freirean critical constructivism

Paulo Freire was a happy person. He took real pleasure in learning and teaching and transmitted this pleasure to those around him, in the classroom or elsewhere. According to the constructivists, you learn when you **want** to learn and you only learn what is **significant** for you. Paulo Freire was also one of the creators of constructivism but his **constructivism** is **critical**. Beginning with his first experiments in northeast Brazil in the early nineteen-sixties, he sought to base his methods of teaching and learning in **interactive environments**, through the use of audiovisual resources. Later, he restated the necessity of using new technologies, principally video, television and computers. But he did not accept their use in an uncritical way.

Freirean constructivism goes beyond **research** and **thematization**. It implies another stage: that of **problematizing**, leading to transformational action. Knowledge is not liberating *per se*. It needs to be associated with a cause.

⁹Paulo Freire, *op.cit.*, Sao Paulo, Paz e Terra, 1997, p.15.

Knowledge is an indispensable good to the production of our existence. That is why it cannot be the object of buying and selling, whose possession is limited to the few. Paulo Freire had a true love for knowledge and love of study. But he said: we must know so as to **understand the world** (word and world), to **question** (right or wrong, real research not just trading ideas) and to **interpret and transform** the world. Knowledge must be formed into an essential tool for intervention in the world.

For Paulo Freire, knowledge is constructed in an integral and interactive manner. It is not **something ready-made** to be simply “appropriated” or “socialized”, like the “pedagogy of contents” which insists on the memorization of contents. To know is to **discover and construct** and not to copy. In the process of the search for knowledge, Paulo Freire brings together the aesthetic, the epistemological and the social. It was important, for him, to reinvent knowledge which has beautiful features.”

School does not distribute power but constructs knowledge which is power. We do not change history without knowledge, but we have to **educate our knowledge** so that we can interfere in the market as subjects. The **school's role** consists of putting knowledge and critical skills into the hands of those excluded because **political poverty produces economic poverty**. “No one is totally ignorant, no one knows everything”, Freire would say. The “political illiterate” cannot understand the reasons for his/her economic poverty. That is why Paulo Freire associated literacy and politics. Neoliberal pedagogy is a **pedagogy of exclusion** precisely because it reduces pedagogy to the narrowly pedagogical, attempting to strip it of its political essence. The **pedagogy of hope** is the opposite of the pedagogy of exclusion. To

teach is to insert yourself in history: it is not just to be in the classroom, but to be in the broader political space of imagining.

Apart from elaborated scientific knowledge, Paulo Freire also valued primary knowledge, **everyday knowledge**. He maintained that the student did not mentally separate instructive significance from everyday educative significance. While incorporating knowledge, he/she incorporates other meanings, such as: how we know, how we produce and how society uses knowledge... in sum, the everyday knowledge of the social group.

Another notion that he developed in his constructivist conception and which distinguished it from all neoliberal connotations was the notion of **quality**. When he was the Sao Paulo Municipal Secretary of Education, he spoke to us of a "new quality."¹⁰ Quality is for everyone (quantity) to have access to knowledge and to renewed social and human relations. Quality is **ethical obligation**, the **joy of learning**. In neoliberal thinking, quality is confused with **competition**, negating the need for **solidarity**. People are not competent because they are competitive, but because they know how to confront their daily problems together with other people.

Another of Freire's contributions to the history of pedagogical ideas is his **concept of curriculum**. You cannot understand Freire's pedagogy without understanding the concepts of transdisciplinarity, transcurricularity and interculturalism¹¹. Freirean inter- and transdisciplinarity are not merely a pedagogical **method** or a professional **attitude**. They constitute a real **demand** for the proper

¹⁰ Maria Pilar O'Cadiz, Pia Lindquist Wong and Carlos Alberto Torres, *Education and Democracy: Paulo Freire, Social Movements and Educational Reform in São Paulo*. Westview, 1998

¹¹ See Luiza Cortesão, *Ser professor: um ofício em risco de extinção*. São Paulo: Cortez e Instituto Paulo Freire, 2002.

nature of the pedagogical act. Paulo Freire knew, in practice, how to work with various disciplines at the same time: ethnography, literary theory, philosophy, politics, economics, sociology, etc. He worked more with theories than with disciplines or curricula. He insisted that students search for knowledge and understanding outside of their curriculum, in other disciplines, in literature, in other languages and forms of communication. Many sciences are concurrent in the pedagogical act. He was also working from various theoretical perspectives: that of the political militant, the philosopher, the scientist, the intellectual, the revolutionary, etc.

3. Crossing borders

Paulo Freire's theories crossed the borders of disciplines and sciences far from Latin America. At the same time that his reflections were deepening the theme that he pursued his whole life -- education as the practice of freedom -- his theories were spilling over into other fields of knowledge, putting down roots in the most varied soils -- from the shantytowns of Recife to the *burakunin* communities of Japan -- strengthening educational theories and practices, as well as aiding the reflections not only of educators, but also of physicians, therapists, social scientists, philosophers, anthropologists and other professionals. His thinking is considered a transdisciplinary parameter.

We cannot view Freire as merely an adult educator or an academic, or reduce his work to a technique or methodology. It should be read within the context of the

“profoundly radical nature of his anti-colonial theory and practice and of his post-colonial discourse”, as Henry Giroux tells us.¹² This will show us that Freire took the risk of crossing borders so as to read the world better and facilitate new positions without sacrificing his commitments and principles.

We are always surrounded by barriers and borders. Intellectuals and educators who occupy very narrow borders do not perceive that they also have the capacity to imprison them. For this reason, it is necessary to highlight the importance of Paulo Freire's work in more global terms. It would be ingenuous to consider his pedagogy as something applicable only to the so-called “Third World.”

Paulo Freire's work has been recognized throughout the world not only as a response to Brazilian problems of the past or present but, also, as an original and important Latin American contribution to universal pedagogical thought. It cannot be said that his thinking only responds to questions of adult education or the social problems of poor countries.

What are Paulo Freire's most ^{important} noteworthy contributions and those which made him so well-known?

I believe that the **universal validity** of Paulo Freire's theory and praxis is linked, above all, to **four original intuitions**, which have been featured in the work of Carlos Alberto Torres, especially in his book *Pedagogia da luta: da pedagogia do oprimido a escola publica popular*¹³:

¹² In Peter McLaren and Peter Leonard, organizers, *Paulo Freire: a Critical Encounter*, Routledge, 1993, p. 177.

¹³ Carlos Alberto Torres, *op. cit.*, Campinas, Papirus, 1997. See also, by the same author, *Estudios friereanos*. Buenos Aires, Libros del Quirquincho, 1995.

1st - Emphasis on the **gnosiological conditions of educational practice**. All of Paulo Freire's work is permeated by the idea that to educate is to know, to read the world so as to be able to transform it. From the beginning, he stressed the importance of methodologies, which is very current today. He was accused of not valuing the contents and, thus, of being spontaneous and non-directive. In truth, he was nothing of the sort: his thinking was strongly oriented by a politico-pedagogical project whose content was liberation. The criticisms of his spontaneity and lack of direction went nowhere.

2nd - The defense of **education as a dialogical act** is, at the same time, rigorous, intuitive, imaginative, and emotional. Paulo underlines the need for a dialogical, communicative rationality. The Freirean theory of knowledge recognizes that the acts of knowing and of thinking are directly tied to one another. Knowledge requires communicative expression. It is not a solitary act. As well as being a historical, gnosiological and logical act, it contains a fourth element, its dialogical dimension.

3rd - The notion of **science open to the needs of the people** and, as such, tied to their work, employment, poverty, hunger, disease, etc. His method, thus, does not start from abstract categories, but, rather, on people's needs, captured in their own expressions (valuing the oral) and analyzed both by educator and educatee. In his final years, Paulo Freire also highlighted the *planetary needs* brought to the debate about ecology, as fundamental human requirements relating, for example, to basic sanitation, garbage collection, potable water and air without pollution. On the 17th of April 1997, a few days before his passing, he was speaking about **ecopedagogy**,

expressing his love for the Earth, the animals and plants. He said in an interview at the Paulo Freire Institute that day: "I want to be remembered as someone who loved life, men, women, plants, animals, the Earth." One of his last books was *In the Shade of This Mango Tree* where he spoke of the pleasure of breathing pure air (one of the human necessities), of entering an unpolluted river, of walking on grass or on the sand of a beach. He criticized capitalist logic for not valuing these pleasures as gifts of nature and for replacing them with pleasures bought and sold, pleasures which provide profit and are not so much human needs as needs imposed on human beings with a profit motive.

4th - **Participative community planning**, democratic administration, participant research. Under the influence of Paulo Freire's thinking, many educational experiments of enormous impact are currently taking place in Brazil, related to the so-called "Scholastic Constituency", which utilizes Freirean methodological principles, and to the emblematic "Participative Budget" in the **Citizen School** movement, another expression he often used in his last years.

The recognition of Paulo Freire outside the pedagogical field shows that his thinking is also **transdisciplinary and transversal**. Pedagogy is essentially a transversal science. From his earliest writings, he considered the school as much more than the four walls of a classroom. He created the "Culture Circle" as an expression of this new pedagogy which would not be reduced to the simplistic idea of a "class." In today's information society, this is truer than ever; the scholastic space has become much larger than the school. The **new learning spaces** (media, radio, TV, video, churches, trade unions, businesses, non-governmental organizations,

family space, the Internet...) have enlarged the notion of school and classroom. Education has become communal, virtual, multicultural and ecological and the school now encompasses the city and the planet. Today we think in networks, we research the networks and work in networks, without hierarchies. The notion of hierarchy (knowledge-ignorance) is very close for the capitalist school. On the other hand, Paulo Freire insisted on **connectivity**, on collective administration of social knowledge to be socialized in ascendant form. It is no longer just about seeing the "educative city" (Edgar Faure)¹⁴ but of looking at the planet as a permanent school.

To open the school to the world, as Paulo Freire wished to do, is one of the conditions for its dignified survival at this moment of millennial crossing. The new scholastic space is planetary because Earth has become our common address. The new educational paradigm is founded on the planetary conditions of human existence. **Planet** is a new category which provides a basis for the **Earth paradigm** -- the utopian vision of Earth as a living and evolving organism where human beings organize themselves as one unique community, sharing the same home place with other beings and things.

4. Humanism and dialectic

What are the primary sources of Paulo Freire's thinking? Which authors influenced him or resonated in him? Into which current or contemporary pedagogical tendency can he be inserted?

¹⁴ Edgar Faure and others, *Apprendre à Être*, Paris, Fayard/UNESCO, 1972.

These are some of the questions that many people ask me after reading my books on Paulo Freire, principally *Paulo Freire: a biobibliography* (1996).¹⁵

I had many conversations with him about this. He always avoided it. He said that it was not important. In fact, he was not very interested in knowing which authors or philosophical currents influenced him. It is not easy to place him in any particular pedagogical stream. He was not interested in exegesis, not even the exegesis of his works. He read and reread them to see whether they contained mistakes and even to understand them better, to make his positions more profound. Thus it is up to us, the students of his thinking, to try to respond to these questions.

I believe there were two main sources of his thinking: **humanism** and **Marxism**. In that order. In other words, humanism and dialectic.

Paulo Freire was one of the last humanists. In his earliest work, mainly in his first book, *Educacao e atualidade brasileira* (written in 1959 as a doctoral thesis and only published in 2001 by the Paulo Freire Institute) he frequently cites the Christian humanist philosophers, Gabriel Marcel and Jacques Maritain, authors who were much discussed in the 1950s. As a humanist, he affirmed and broadcast the belief that it was possible to change the way things were and he showed us how to do it. To him, utopia is the very realism of the teachers.

Even though we cannot speak about the stages of Paulo Freire's thinking with much particularity, we can safely say that the influence of Marxism was second only to that of Christian humanism. These are different moments but not contradictory ones. As the German philosopher, Woldietrich Schmied-Kowarzik affirms in his book *Dialectic Pedagogy*, Paulo Freire combines Christian and Marxist themes in his

¹⁵ Moacir Gadotti (org.), *Paulo Freire: uma biobibliografia*, Sao Paulo, Cortez/IPF, 1996.

dialectical-dialogical pedagogy.¹⁶ **Paulo Freire is dialectical.** Education is an anthropological practice, by nature, but it is also ethical and political. That is why it can become a practice of liberation. The liberation theme is both Christian and Marxist. The method is what is different; the strategy is different. The end is the same. Hegel is a primary reference. The oppressor-oppressed relationship recalls Hegel's master-slave relationship. Then come Marx, Gramsci, Habermas. Freire's thinking is **humanist and dialectic.**

The affirmation of utopia as a praxis for teachers and learners recalls the humanist, Christian and socialist paradigm. What is original in Freire is that he affirms **subjectivity** as a condition of the revolution, of social transformation. Whence the role of education as consciousness-raising. He affirms the role of the subject in history and history as possibility. Not through a mechanistic movement of class struggle, pure and simple, but through the conscious action of organized historical subjects. Paulo Freire maintained that socialism is a utopia which must be renewed through education. This had escaped Marx, while Lenin and the Marxists generally gave little attention to education. That is why Paulo Freire was criticized by orthodox Marxists.

5. Paulo Freire and current educational perspectives

Current perspectives of education are dominated by the **question of knowledge.** And this is not by accident. Knowledge has become the key to

¹⁶ W.Schmied-Kowarzik, *Pedagogia dialectica: de Aristoteles a Paulo Freire.* Sao Paulo, Brasiliense, 1983.

understanding current society itself. Sometimes it is called, improperly, a knowledge society. We ought to say that we live in an information age rather than an age of knowledge since we perceive the dissemination of information and data much more than that of knowledge. The access to knowledge is still very precarious, especially in societies which are educationally backward.

Today knowledge theories in education are centered on learning. Starting with his thinking, we can come up with some very up-to-date questions which preoccupied Paulo Freire.

1st - *What is it to know?* To construct categories of thought, according to Piaget. To read the world and transform it, according to Freire. To know is both building categories of thought, reading the world and transforming the world, especially since it is impossible to build categories of thought as if they existed *a priori*, independently of the subject who, by knowing, reconstructs what he or she knows.

2nd - *How do we know?* It is only possible to know when we desire, when we want, when we involve ourselves deeply with what we are learning. In learning, to desire is more important than creating study habits, for example. Today we give more importance to methods of learning, to language, than to content. The transversality and transdisciplinarity of knowledge is given more value than the longitudinal content of the classic curriculum.

3rd - *To know what?* Confronted with the dissemination and generalization of knowledge, schools and teachers need to make a critical selection, because there is a lot of garbage and erroneous propaganda being passed off as scientific knowledge.

There is no lack either, in this information age, of talented "spinmasters" looking to take economic, religious or ideological advantage.

4th - *Why know?* To know is important because education is founded on knowledge and knowledge in human activity. To innovate, it is necessary to know. Human activity is intentional, it cannot be separated from a project. To know is not just to adapt yourself to the world. It is a condition of survival for human beings and species.

For us educators, it is not enough to know how knowledge is constructed. We need to dominate other kinds of knowing in our difficult task of teaching. Above all, we need to know how to learn. The following theses were taken from multiple experiences, some from my practice, some from theoreticians I have studied but, above all from 23 years of living and working with Paulo Freire. I learned many lessons from him. We frequently had the opportunity to exchange ideas about these things. As an educator, Paulo Freire was constantly preoccupied with the act of learning, of studying, of teaching.

1st - *We learn our whole lives.* There is no proper time to learn. Everyone can learn.

2nd - *To learn is not to accumulate knowledge.* We learn history not to accumulate knowledge, data, facts but to know how human beings made history so we can make history.

3rd - *The important thing is to learn to think* (about reality, not thoughts), to learn how to learn.

4th - *It is the subject who learns* through his/her experience. Not a collective which learns.

5th - *You learn what is significant* for your own life project. You learn when you have a life project.

6th - *You need time to learn* and consolidate information. You cannot inject facts and information into anyone's head. Discipline and dedication are also necessary.

7th - *We also learn by teaching*: "Those who teach learn by teaching and those who learn teach by learning."¹⁷ For Paulo Freire knowledge was not detached from a life project, a project about society and the world. The relation between **education and utopia** is one of the bases of Freirean thought. It can be summed up in four points:

1st - *To build the future it is necessary first to dream it*, to imagine it. In his final book, *Pedagogy of Autonomy*, he criticizes neoliberalism precisely for negating the dream, for being fatalist, for denying the possibility of change. To him, when neoliberalism is presented, arrogantly, as the plenitude of the times, it does not take into consideration that history continues to be made. Neoliberalism proclaims the "end of history" because it does not want history to change. It just wants the continuation of the present.

2nd - *Pedagogy is a guide to the building of dreams*. It is not enough to dream. It is necessary to know how to build dreams. Paulo presented his "necessary knowledge" for achieving the dream. He offered, in *Pedagogy of Autonomy*, the

¹⁷ Paulo Freire *op.cit.* Sao Paulo, Paz e Terra, 1997 p. 25

pedagogical mediation for conquering it. All Paulo Freire's books are pedagogical, that is, they are books dedicated to education as the building of the dream.

3rd - *Pedagogy sees the future first*, a better future for all, utopia. Afterwards it returns to the present and the past.

4th - *Freirean pedagogy is dialogical and dialectic*. Not mechanical. The dialectic continues to be valid since it does not exclude subjectivity. Otherwise, it would transform itself into a senseless mechanization like Christian divine providence. The mechanized dialectic is idealist and idealizes reality.

6. Educating for peace, citizenship and sustainability

In the 1990s, Paulo Freire's work inspired a large Brazilian movement around the thesis of **education for and through citizenship**, which we at the Paulo Freire Institute called "Project Citizen School." The "Citizen School" movement was born at the end of the 1980s in Municipal education to combat the neoliberal politico-pedagogical project. Jose Eustaquio Romao defended this thesis in his book *Dialectic of difference*¹⁸, in which he confronts neoliberal thinking with the Freirean thinking which inspired the Citizen School Project.

The Citizen School is strongly rooted in the community popular school movement which, in the 1980s, was translated by the expression *popular public school* as an educational project and practice undertaken in various regions of the

¹⁸ José Eustáquio Romao, *Dialética da diferença: o projeto da escola cidadã frente ao projeto pedagógico neoliberal*. São Paulo, Cortez, 2000.

country. The concept of popular education is certainly Latin America's most important contribution to universal pedagogical thought.

The consequences of this concept of education are numerous and profound, not only in terms of administration but, also, of the attitudes and methods which shape the new teacher, the new student, the new system, the new curriculum, the new pedagogy of citizen education.

In the last few years, the concept of the Citizen School was marked by Ecopedagogy, understanding that the new curriculum is based on the idea of the sustainability. Education for and through citizenship is education for a sustainable society as well. The Citizen School and Ecopedagogy are sustained by the principle that all of us, from childhood on, have the fundamental right to dream, to make projects, to invent. As Marx and Freire pointed out, all of us have the right to decide our own fates. This also includes children, according to the Polish educator Janusz Korczak¹⁹.

It is not a matter of reducing current schools and pedagogies to a *tabula rasa* and building the ideal Citizen School and ecopedagogy on top of their ashes. Nor is it about "alternative" schools in the sense that they should be constructed separately from current schools. What it means is that we have to construct other pedagogical possibilities in the schools themselves, without annihilating everything that already exists. The future lies in our ability to dominate the past, not in its annihilation.

Current problems, including ecological problems, are exacerbated by our way of life and our way of life is inculcated by the school, by what it selects or fails to

¹⁹ KORCZAK, Janusz. *Como amar uma criança*. Preface by Bruno Bettelheim. São Paulo, Paz e Terra, 1986.

select, by the values it transmits, by the curricula, through didactic texts. We need to reorient education beginning with the **principle of sustainability**. This means completely recuperating our education and implies a revision of curricula, programs, educational systems, of the roles of school and teachers and the organization of the work of the school. Ecopedagogy, as it has been developed by the Paulo Freire Institute, demands curricular reorganization so that certain principles of the **culture of peace and sustainability** are incorporated.

Paulo Freire had said to us at the Paulo Freire Institute that he intended to write a book about Ecopedagogy. He had already stimulated Francisco Gutierrez to write about the theme.²⁰ He was writing when he passed away in 1997, leaving his initial reflections in a small text which was published, after his death, in a book called *Pedagogy of Indignation*, organized by his widow, Ana Maria Araujo Freire. In this text, Paulo Freire writes: "It is urgent that we assume the duty of fighting for the fundamental ethical principles, like respect for the life of human beings, the life of other animals, the life of birds, the life of rivers and forests. I do not believe in love between men and women, between human beings, if we are not able to love the world. Ecology takes on fundamental importance at the end of the century. It has to be present in any radical, critical or liberationist educational practice. For this reason, it seems to me a lamentable contradiction to engage in progressive, revolutionary discourse and have a practice which negates life. A practice which pollutes the sea, the water, the fields, devastates the forests, destroys the trees, threatens the birds and

²⁰ Francisco Gutierrez and Cruz Prado, *Ecopedagogia e cidadania planetária*. Sao Paulo, Cortez/PFI, 1999.

animals, does violence to the mountains, the cities, to our cultural and historical memories... to the weak, defenseless and offended minorities."²¹

The classical pedagogies were anthropocentric. Ecopedagogy begins with a planetary consciousness. We broaden our point of view from man to the planet, surmounting genders, species and kingdoms. From anthropocentric vision to planetary consciousness and a new ethical reference. The Citizen School, oriented by Ecopedagogy or **Earth Pedagogy**²² must also be understood as an alternative for the construction of a sustainable society.

7. What is Paulo Freire's legacy to us?

First fo all, he left us his life, a rich **biography**. Paulo enchanted us with his tenderness, his sweetness, his charisma, his coherence, his commitment, his seriousness. His words and his actions were fighting words and actions directed toward a world "less ugly, less evil, less inhuman." Along with love and hope, he also left us a legacy of indignation in the face of injustice. He said that, when faced with injustice, we must not "sweeten" our words.

Apart from the testimony of a life of commitment to the cause of the oppressed, he left us an immense **body of work**, comprising many editions of his books and articles and videos distributed around the world. In it, we find a **revolutionary pedagogy**. Conservative pedagogy humiliates students. Freirean pedagogy, the pedagogy of dialogue, gives them back their **dignity**, respecting those in the process

²¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia da indignação: cartas pedagógicas e outros escritos*. Sao Paulo, UNESP, 2000, pp.66-67; 132-3.

of educating themselves and placing teachers beside them as companions charged with orienting and directing the educative process, as beings who also learn by teaching.

Beside the student, the teacher becomes a learner. This is Freire's legacy. In the development of his theory of education, Paulo Freire succeeded, on the one hand, in demystifying the dreams of 1960s **pedagogy** which, at least in Latin America, put forth the thesis that the school could do everything and, on the other, succeeded in overcoming the **pessimism** of the 1970s, which saw the school as merely reproducing the *status quo*. By doing this--overcoming ingenuous pedagogy and negative pessimism--he succeeded in maintaining his faith in the utopia, dreaming possible dreams. Doing today what is possible today and, tomorrow, what is impossible today.

In March, 1997, a group of young people in Brasilia set fire to and killed a Pataxo indian. Paulo Freire was deeply affected by this horror and asked himself how we had come to the point of such barbarity. The causes are multiple: media, school, society. We are all responsible. But there is an impunity which permits the powerful classes to do almost anything they wish without punishment. There are very few rich people in jail. That is why we need to say "you cannot" without fear of being antidemocratic. There is that which can and cannot be done. When confronted with injustice, impunity and barbarity, we need a **pedagogy of indignation**. To say "no" provokes understanding. The "no" dislodges, irritates, disestablishes. It obliges us to inquire. To say "no" is to confirm oneself as an "I". It is to seek an ethic, it is valor, it is a stance. Paulo Freire spoke to us often of a **pedagogy of rebellion**.

²² Moacir Gadotti, *Pedagogia da Terra*. Sao Paulo, Peirópolis, 2000.

Finally, I would like to reemphasize the significance of the many **tributes** to Paulo Freire which are now taking place. For them to have transformational meaning, they must not simplify or mythologize Paulo Freire. In the case of a lifework as complex as his, there is always the danger of oversimplification. For example, it can consist in our choosing a phrase, a passage, or a thought of his which pleases us and interpreting it as absolute truth, rather than contextualizing it. There is nothing less Freirean than this. Paulo Freire wrote a lot and it is possible to take up certain passages without contextualizing them. Each one of his passages needs to be read not only in the context in which it was written but in the broader context of all of his work. To appropriate critically or in a sectarian way any part of his work is to disfigure Freire.

Paulo Freire confessed once that he "was not ashamed of being a teacher." As a planter of the future, he will always be remembered because he left us **roots, wings and dreams** as an inheritance. Paulo Freire left us a **legacy of hope**. As a creator of spirits, the best way to do him homage is to reinvent him. Not to copy him. It is to move ahead with the effort to educate with a new quality for all. This new quality will not be measured only by the quantity of technico-scientific contents absorbed but by the production of a new kind of knowledge, "moist with existence" and history, a knowledge which should be, more than anything, a tool for change in the life conditions of those who do not have access to a full existence. He left us **theories and examples** which can take us very far from where we are today. As a teacher said, as soon as he heard of Paulo's death, "he left us poorer because he is gone, but we are richer because he existed."

It is up to us to give **continuity** to his legacy. But what does giving continuity to Freire's work mean?

To give continuity to Freire, does not mean to treat him like a "Totem", which cannot be touched but ought just to be adored; it does not mean to treat him like a "guru", who must be followed by disciples without questions. There is nothing less Freirean than this idea. Paulo Freire was, above all, a creator of spirits. That is why he ought to be treated as a great popular educator. To adore Freire as a totem means to destroy Freire as an educator. That is why we must not repeat Freire, but "reinvent him" as he used to say. For this task, he did not designate this or that person or institution. This work he left for all of us, and it is very clearly expressed in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* which he dedicated to "the wretched of the earth, and to those who discover themselves in them and, because of this discovery, suffer with them but, above all, fight by their side."

8. Why should we continue reading Freire?

Linda Bimbi, in the beautiful preface to the Italian edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, rightly claims that Paulo Freire is "unclassifiable." More than thirty years later, after so many works published by him and about him, this claim is still true. We are faced with an author who never submitted to pedagogical currents and tendencies and created a living testament, oriented only by the point of view of the oppressed. This is the basic optic of his work to which he was *faithful* all his life: the perspective of the oppressed.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed was written in Chile in 1968. Today we can question whether this point of view is still valid. If it were not, there would be no reason to continue reading Paulo Freire. Or, rather, Paulo Freire would be an antiquated author, because his struggle for the oppressed would be antiquated. He would pass into history as a great educator, but one who had nothing more to say to our time.

On the contrary, his pedagogy continues to be valid not only because there is still oppression on the world, but because it responds to today's fundamental educational necessities. The school and educational systems currently find themselves facing huge new challenges created by our society's generalization of information, called by many the knowledge society, or the learning society. Cities are becoming educators and adepts, multiplying their formative spaces. The school, in this new context of knowledge impregnation, cannot be one among many formative spaces. It needs to be an organizing space for multiple formative spaces, exercising a more formative and less informative function. It needs to become a "culture circle", much more generative of social knowledge and less a lecturer, as Paulo Freire would say.

In this context, Paulo Freire's thinking is more current than ever since, throughout his work, he insisted on methodologies, forms of learning and teaching, methods of instruction and research, personal relations and, finally, dialogue.

We should continue to study his work, not to venerate it but because he can be read as one of **greatest critical educators of the twentieth century**. To honor an author is above all to study and read him/her critically, re-addressing his/her themes, problems and questions.

He gave us a beautiful example of this process. Paulo frequently re-addressed the same themes. There is something which remains constant in his thinking: his preoccupation with ethics, his commitment to the "condemned of the earth" (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) to those "excluded" (*Pedagogy of Autonomy*). His point of view was always the same. The difference is his emphasis on certain *problematiques* which were always diversifying and evolving.

Paulo Freire "reexamines" certain themes, as in *Pedagogy of Hope*, he "reexamines" *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In *Pedagogy of Autonomy* he textually affirms that he reexamines certain problems, but not as "pure repetition of what was already said." "In my case", he says, "to reexamine a subject or theme has mainly to do with the oral style of my writing. But it is also because of the relevance that the theme of which I speak and to which I return as in the ensemble of objects I direct my curiosity. It has to do also with the relation that certain materials have with others which keep emerging in the development of my reflection."²³

There is certainly in Paulo Freire's work a return and a spiraling development of a great polyphony of generative themes oriented by the choice of an emancipatory point of view on science, culture, education, communication, etc. Thus, we can conclude that Paulo Freire's work revolves around a single object of study. This object was already in his first book, *Education and Brazilian Reality*, and was definitively consecrated in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: education as the instrument of liberation.

Why should we continue reading Freire?

²³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia da autonomia: saberes necessários a prática educativa*. São Paulo, Paz e Terra, 1997, pp. 14-15

Some would certainly like to leave him behind in the history of pedagogical ideas and others would like to forget him, because of his political options. He did not want to please everyone. But there is a point of unanimity among all his readers and all those who knew him personally: his respect for people. Paulo was always a cordial, generous and very respectful person. Even if he disagreed with your ideas, he respected your person, demonstrating a high degree of civilization. And more than that: his dialogical practice led him to respect the thinking of those who did not agree with him.

The pedagogy of dialogue that he practiced is based on a pluralist philosophy. Pluralism does not mean eclecticism or "sweetened" positions, as he used to say. It means to have a point of view and to dialogue with other people from it. That is what allows you to maintain the coherence of your practice and your theory. Paulo was, above all, a humanist. That would be the only way to "classify" him today. There is no doubt that Paulo Freire was a great humanist.

The power of Paulo Freire's work is not in his theory of knowledge, but in having insisted on the idea that it is possible, urgent and necessary to change the order of things. He not only convinced many people in many parts of the world through his theories and practices but, also, awakened in them the capacity to dream about a more human, less ugly, more just reality. He was a kind of guardian of the utopia. That is the legacy he left us. His legacy is, above all, a legacy of hope.

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