

## PAULO FREIRE'S PEDAGOGY OF HOPE REVISITED IN TURBULENT TIMES

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**ABSTRACT** This paper written by one of Freire's collaborators focuses on the Brazilian educator and thinker's pedagogy of hope and its importance in an age characterised by cynicism and the widespread mantra that there is no alternative to Capitalism. This paper argues for a radical and educated sense of hope which can revitalise critical human agency to operate strategically and responsibly to intervene in and contribute to collectively changing the course of history. This necessitates our understanding of the nature of different forms of oppression, not avoiding the question of class but broadening the range and facets of oppression to include race, gender, migration, and ecological insensitivity. It argues for the importance of utopia and the need to rescue it from the clutches of a reified system whose overarching narrative is dystopian. Freire provides a healthy utopian alternative to this, based on his ongoing struggles against different forms of oppression, including colonial oppression in his own country but also in the many former colonies he visited during his time in exile.

**KEYWORDS** utopia, critical agency, praxis, collectivity, transformation

Paulo Freire's birth centenary this year throws into sharp relief a pedagogical message of hope in an ever-difficult period marked by various forms of oppression and ongoing modes of colonization. His corpus of writing transcends the age in which it was produced. This is the mark of a

truly great writer who continues to inspire hope for the construction of a world not as it is but as it should and can be. Hope reverberates as a distinctive message for a decolonizing and liberating politics. It is the sort of position and analyses that emerge from the reflections of a 'third world' luminary, suffering like other similar public intellectuals, who survived banishment for sixteen years from his homeland which he loved and was roused for transformation. Freire learned from the experience of exile returning at an elderly age and living long enough to stamp his mark on the Brazilian, and more specifically, the São Paulo scene, through municipal educational reforms and further writings.

*Pedagogy of Hope* (Freire, 1994) is the one volume which accounts for most of these vicissitudes and that extends its reach beyond the sixties, seventies and eighties, as well as beyond the first four years of the nineties, when it was produced, to address the future. Originally intended as a text for revisiting his opus magnum, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2018), after twenty-five years, it turned out to be prophetic and an invaluable source for navigating turbulent times.

These are times when colonisation sparks danger for survival of the planet, the sort of danger that prompted Freire and his colleagues from Brazil, to commit and contribute to the Earth Charter (*Carta da Terra*). Despair and hope collectively exists cheek by jowl. The specters of Necropolitics and ailments have come to haunt us even in the most intimate spaces of our lives. A pandemic, whose global spread is facilitated by colonizing and socially divisive policies, continues to wreak havoc, especially among Indigenous populations in Freire's native Brazil, among the homeless removed internationally from the index of human concerns and those many others among the multitudes who eke out a living at the margins of society. The plague has become a metaphor for a capitalism that has turned savage.

This is the medieval European bubonic plague writ large. The small percentage who benefit from the riches of Empire, the once much condemned 1%, vilified by mobilizing social movements against the global Neoliberal system, can experience their relative Covid-induced ‘imprisonment’ in plush and spatial surroundings, including the accoutrements for an everyday holiday life. There are no such safety and comforting outlets for the destitute, those seeking to survive by the ‘skin of their teeth’ and the elderly. Body bags and graves are, in certain countries and areas, at a premium and cannot keep abreast of the death toll. Manufactured ignorance is the order of the day and people’s concerns and anxieties are increased as they try to sift through the web of conspiracy theories, misinformation, and state sponsored fabrications, particularly those emanating from and well-known right wing populist politicians apportioning blame to a variety of persons, the disposable who feature among what Freire calls ‘the oppressed’.

This type of irresponsible right-wing populism, to be distinguished from that type of populism in South America in the 50s and 60s in Brazil through which Freire’s brand of popular organisation and education thrived, provides a perilous counterweight to public health authoritative (not to be confused with authoritarian, as in Freire’s distinction) sources. In Freire’s present-day Brazil, under the leadership of Jair Bolsonaro, a new term has been coined: *negacionismo* which literally translates into English as ‘negationism’, negating through a politics of denial and disappearance, the existence of things that make people disposable, relegated to terminal spheres of exclusion. It is as though Bolsonaro sees this as a golden opportunity to strengthen what Zygmunt Bauman (2006:39) calls “the human waste disposal industry”. As a result, it is the poor who become poorer as jobs are cut, replaced by such innovations as AI-induced mechanisms and other technological paraphernalia. Human life becomes ever more dispensable. This is especially true of

the lives of the have-nots, the Indigenous, slum dwellers, and immigrants crossing perilous deserts and raging seas whose boats, some rickety, are not allowed to berth inside European harbors. Such populations have become unnamable, unknowable, and relegated to the abyss of neoliberal cruelty – they are national governments’ pawns in a necropolitical game against larger supranational institutions such as the EU. Immigrants are often rendered the scapegoats for all the pandemic ills, especially via the bellowing sound-bags of right-wing populist, racist and ever colonizing politics.

What inspiration can Freire provide in this regard? Paulo Freire’s pedagogy instils hope against a discourse of cynicism that embraces a normalized sense of Armageddon. In Frederic Jameson’s and Slavoj Žižek’s words, it is always “easier to imagine the end of the world, than the end of capitalism” (Fisher, 2009: 2), the latter tainted by blood as with many other situations throughout its history. This would be a common feeling as we experience, in these times, “unprecedented disruptions to our social orders and personal lives.” (Merrick, 2020, online)

For Freire, hope is not a desperate and forlorn invocation to counter what comes across as the ‘will of God’, that desperate proclamation from peasants in his earlier texts and *Pedagogy of Hope* (Freire, 1994: 48), which he decried and regarded as part of the problem of that ideology (ideology as an obfuscation or distorted version of reality) which kept them immersed in the ‘culture of silence’. It is, to the contrary, a means of empowerment and conscientisation which makes people read the world, as well as read the word, to understand its underlying contradictions, and do so with a sense of social togetherness, and mobilise, educate and act collectively to change it (Freire and Macedo, 1987). What appear *prima facie* and strictly as the forces of nature, of which all species, including we humans, form an integral component, are the result of human malpractices and

nefarious policies and ideologies that are part and parcel of what Peter McLaren (1995) calls a “predatory” Global Capitalism with its ‘universe’, in Marx’s analysis, consisting of an ensemble of unequal and differentiating power relations.

Freire’s *Pedagogy of Hope* shows how, in Romain Rolland’s phrase, pessimism of the intellect can be healthily overcome by ‘optimism of the will’. Pessimism can serve to politically disengage and disempower human beings rendering them, as Freire expressed in his earlier works, fatalistic in their attitude to humanly constructed crises. A political pedagogy of hope, to the contrary, spurs us on to regard these situations as challenges that engage our critical thinking, consciousness, emotions and imagination in order to strategize against them and to confront the terror that they arouse within us. They are challenges to be surmounted collectively in an ongoing process of critical understanding, mobilization and struggle. It is as though Freire is echoing Walter Benjamin in his struggle on behalf of and *with* the Oppressed, the presently apparent hopeless ones for whose sake “we have been given hope.” (Benjamin, 1996: 156)

Antonio Gramsci, one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s greatest analysts of capitalism, in relation to whose ideas Paulo Freire’s have been juxtaposed, in a complementarity manner (Mayo, 1999, 2015), wrote of an ‘Interregnum’ in which the old is dying and the new is struggling to emerge, a situation which seems to characterise the present conjuncture as indicated by Nancy Fraser and others (Fraser, 2019, Giroux, 2020). The current crisis presents us with the opportunity to strive towards the ‘new’, all the while imagining a future that does not mimic the present. There are moments when long standing or invented (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) traditions are questioned, the way Gramsci, in his interest in artists and playwrights, including those of different political persuasion than his who questioned old assumptions, foregrounded their preoccupations. This is where resistance in varied forms

makes its presence felt.

In the current period of uncertainty and precarious living, particularly in the aftermath of the economic crisis of 2008 and the current pandemic crisis which reveal the limits of so-called 'Capitalist realism' (Fisher, 2009), the overwhelming colonizing and predatory nature of this mode of production has been laid bare. It is not the omnipotent system it purports to be, unable as it is to cater for health issues that extend well beyond the vagaries of the market. Its market-driven values come up short when measured against the much-needed life-centered values.

The spirit of critical resistance and an energized solidarity once again come to the fore as the streets are reclaimed by multitudes inveighing against the brutality of police violence, structural racism, and attacks on journalists, dissidents, and critical intellectuals. The young, of whatever race and class, are proving to be agents of democracy and help rewrite the script of social justice. A decolonizing process of hope and expectation re-emerges in its often radicalism. Struggles are no longer personal, as if pertaining to the singular, atomised individual, as neoliberalism would have us believe, but are public. They are calling for collective action, as in the student riots in the UK and mobilizations in Quebec Canada and parts of Europe including Vienna and Greece.

There appears to be a groundswell among youth and the social movements of which they form part, not just in the West but also in subaltern southern contexts (the various movements for the assertion of Indigenous rights in India and South America and also land rights, for example the MST in Brazil and the Frente Zapatista in Chiapas, Mexico), clamouring for the emergence of the New to replace the Old Order. As I argue elsewhere (Giroux, 2021), this intermeshing of despair and hope suggests that we are really in an interregnum. It characterised by the desperate attempts by the repressive forces of the dying old order, in a crisis of hegemony, to

impose a sense of authoritarianism, similar at times but also different from that which led to Paulo Freire's banishment from his country in 1964, and the visible struggle to usher in a new world. Freire's pedagogy and politics of hope are, given his remarkable prescience, a model for articulating education and politics to actions that speak to the struggles and promises of these times. His book *Pedagogy of Hope* might well be a manifesto for those engaged in the present struggle, just as that great pedagogical and political book, *Letter to a Teacher* (School of Barbiana, 1969), by the eight boys of Barbiana under the direction of their master, don Lorenzo Milani, served as a manifesto for Italy's 1968 movement.

As a public intellectual whose oeuvre evolved, a person in process who built on his previous work clarifying and rendering more nuanced concepts and formulations already enunciated in his early work, Paulo Freire continued to explore new areas of enquiry. They ensued almost naturally from ones already broached but which were refined and rendered more complex as a result of new experiences that derived from different international contexts. These included the postcolonial contexts for his work in newly independent countries in Africa, on behalf of the World Council of Churches in Switzerland during the last phase of his period in exile. They also include experiences in countries such as Nicaragua and Grenada in a revolutionary phase during which mass literacy campaigns were staged. There was the process of relearning Brazil following his return from exile and the experience of educational administration when called upon to serve as Secretary of Education in a PT<sup>1</sup> led municipal government in one of the world's most populous cities, a megalopolis. His head remained turned to the Left and to the plight of the oppressed, be it street children or undernourished 'meninos popular' ('popular children') thrown out of the schools after two years or less, children euphemistically labelled 'dropouts'. They also include

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<sup>1</sup> Partido Trabalhadores – Workers' Party.

those who are functionally and critically illiterate.

Education, for Freire and those who share his view, is political while the political is educational. Freire refused to isolate himself in the prison-house of abstractions, disciplinary silos, and the comforts of an academic discourse. On the contrary, he consistently connected his work to actions, social problems, and matters of power. Moreover, he engaged in praxis in multiple sites and in contexts far removed from academia, even though he held positions at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC) and at the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP). He was a man who acted reflectively and politically not only on but most particularly *in* the world and suffered for this.

While working in and against capitalism and the systems it spawns in different aspects of a person's life, what he and other Brazilians call 'being tactically inside and strategically outside the system', he had no illusions about this mode of production and the broader universe it generates. It was an evil and grossly exploitative system that had to be transcended. This notwithstanding, his political struggle was not class reductionist as he broadened his definitions of the oppressed to include an array of social groups extending to many of the people mentioned earlier in this essay: Blacks, Indigenous, women, migrants *sans papiers* (without papers, undocumented), the *gastarbeiter* (guest workers such as those he encountered in Switzerland when he was based there, mentioned in *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire, 1994: 122). And yet the class struggle was not placed on the back burner as in Laclau and Mouffe's prominent book of the late eighties (1989). He once said, at an AERA meeting in 1991, something to the effect that "Perestroika did not put an end to that".

Intersectionality increasingly became an important aspect of Freire's critically engaged pedagogical politics. In a response to a number of writers, in a book published at the time of his death (Freire, 1997), he spoke of 'Unity in



diversity' which necessitated the struggle for one to come to terms with one's contradictions, to become less incomplete and therefore more coherent. He was committed to a vision of society predicated on popular sovereignty, social justice and equality. In this regard, he stands close to sociological luminaries such as C. Wright Mills and the contemporary Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Dorothy E. Smith, Zygmunt Bauman and Patricia Hill-Collins. In this regard, he posited an education for critical consciousness at the basis of the intersection of people's everyday lives, their histories and the social structures which they help create and transform, rather than simply reproduce, through their agency.

He echoes Gramsci in seeing capitalist and colonial hegemonic formations as being perpetuated through uncritical commonsense assumptions and dominative notions of education characterised by cultural invasions/imperialism and therefore prescriptive 'banking education' - all delineated in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2018). Here, the themes of colonialism and invasion of the mental universe of the colonised are expounded upon in the fourth and final chapter of the book. Freire, for his part, countered this, dialectically, by a dialogical, non-prescriptive education, in which the teacher enjoys authority without being authoritarian. This is intended to foster critical agency among officially designated educator and teacher-students who render the subject or topic discussed the target of co-investigation spurred on by epistemological curiosity. This process of critical literacy, which included civic literacy, was geared to not only interpreting the world, but, as in Marx's eleventh thesis of Feuerbach, to change it. Of course, the quest for change was for Freire a collective one, involving tactical interventions and learning which are rooted in the participants' existential situations but which gradually do not remain at that juncture, lest, as stated in *Pedagogy of Hope*, this would entail a dangerous form of populism referred to in Latin America as *basismo*. (Freire, 1994: 84)

The approach therefore is to gradually lead students outside of the immediacy and, perhaps, comfort zone of their limited experiences. Freire argued that there is politics in everyday life, and in the workings of popular culture – the basic existential situations of learners. Stanley Aronowitz is spot on when stating that, for Freire, “learning begins with taking the self as the first but not the last object of knowledge.” (Aronowitz, 1998: 12 ) One ought to transcend the existential situations to develop critical consciousness. (Robbins, 2016, online) *Conscientização*, the process of coming into consciousness, is a vehicle to help transcend the existential situation. Of course, Freire never decoupled the personal experiences, which provide different takes on the objects of co-investigation, from the structuring forces that condition and shape them. Moreover, he refused to collapse the political into the personal. Instead, he endlessly worked to see how one shaped the other as part of a more comprehensive politics in which matters of subjectivity and power merge in the challenge of rethinking matters of agency, consciousness, and identity.

Configurations of power were analysed for an understanding of how they impinge on the way knowledge is selected from the cultures of society, thus exposing whose ‘cultural arbitrary’, in Pierre Bourdieu’s terms, conditions this selection. How does this selection thwart or enable the generation of greater social justice? Critical thinking, though necessary for Freire, was not regarded by him as sufficing in this quest. It is meant to lead, in Freire’s view, to a concrete ‘on the ground’ collective contribution to bring about change in the form of greater social justice in the community or directly related contexts. This is the distinction between ‘intellectual praxis’ and ‘revolutionary praxis’. Social agency entails the latter and establishes social hope as a precondition of both agency and politics. Critical educators are meant to instil upon their students the need to exercise the ‘right to govern’ rather than passively accept the fate of being

governed, a point which draws parallels with the School of Barbiana and its task of helping students to develop into 'sovereign citizens'.

At the same time, Freire urged educators to provide the conditions to teach students to learn how to govern rather than learn how to be governed. As with the School of Barbiana (1969), Freire urges educators/students to explore the broad spaces for critical education and action that exist beyond strictly demarcated educational settings to avail themselves of multiple other spaces in society at large, especially, in his case, within and among progressive, social-justice-oriented social movements.

Freire's approach is no mix and stir recipe but one which stresses contexts, their limits and possibilities and therefore also reinvention. It is one which is intended to help develop a critical attitude and foster greater understanding of the power dynamics at the heart of the pedagogical situation. Whose knowledge is selected, by whom and for what purpose? This might entail delving into history to explore the conditions that helped render a particular knowledge hegemonic at the expense of others. It entails a series of WH (who, which, when, where, what) questions and also the How question. It entails questions regarding representation, identity and subjectivity. It is very much a pedagogy of the question, highlighting the complexity of things and the need to be wary of certainties. It is based on problem posing rather than simply problem solving – problematization.

The approach adopted in a pedagogy of hope is dialectical which sees seemingly disparate elements that are opposed to each other as being connected, a relationship in which one would not exist without the other. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is written in this dialectical style, especially in its first three chapters. The approach entails the exploration of the relation among things that are never completely separate. In this sense, pedagogy becomes contextual, relational and comprehensive. There can be no oppressor without

oppressed, dominating authoritarian teacher without a dominated, subjugated student, and so forth. The approach entails exploring and working through the contradictions between things in the dialectical relation. The ultimate goal and healthy utopia is to end the contradiction itself; that there would be no oppressor and oppressed. Simply replacing the present oppressor with the present oppressed reproduces the contradiction of opposites and does not change the relation. The alternative is to help develop what Freire calls 'reinventing power'.

At work here was an intricate dialectic of affirmation and expansion, an understanding of the immediate forces that shaped students along with the crucial task of broadening those horizons. Education has a history of being enmeshed in political struggles and its process and outcomes are inextricably related to diverse ideological struggles and contestations over relations of power.

Freire was a complex thinker who scoured an extensive terrain. He therefore eschewed reductionist, one-dimensional views of education irrespective of their ideological provenance. He repudiated orthodoxy coming from any political quarter, including the Left. This might perhaps have been conditioned by the traditional rigid positions taken by the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and its rhetoric, at a time when several movements were engaged in diverse struggles for democratisation in his country, not least the ever-pertinent Latin American struggle for land/Agrarian reform. Vulgar Marxism was anathema to Freire, based on its diktat of what he calls, in *The Politics of Education* (Freire, 1986), a theory of predestination, based on the belief in the inevitability of revolution, a theory which denies the critical interaction between agency and structure that is so central to Freire's vision. Vulgar Marxism, which is making a return among some younger academics, would have appalled Freire given its class reductionism, sterile retreat into a regressive economism, its appeal to political purity, its

display of vacuous guarantees, and its prison-house of certainty and unchecked hubris.

Freire's emphasis on authentic dialogue should not play down his belief in the unabashedly directive nature of an education that embraces authority. Directivity is not to be confused with authoritarianism, a distinction made earlier, and indoctrination. He takes his cue from Antonio Gramsci's interplay between spontaneity and conscious direction, engaging the tension involved. He struggled, as did Zygmunt Bauman, against any foreclosing of human possibilities through adherence to a pre-established script, but argued for a continuous pedagogy of the question, a pedagogy involving one's problematizing statements and concepts. (Bauman and Tester, 2001: 4) It is a value committed pedagogy that Freire advocated and practised, one which renders problematic any posturing of 'neutrality', a view shared by many other key figures such as Gramsci, with his 'I hate the indifferent', Lorenzo Milani with his 'better a fascist than being indifferent' and Ada Gobetti's similar assertions (Mayo and Vittoria, 2021).

Neutrality, for Freire, is tantamount to siding with the dominant. It is a cover for both complicity with authoritarianism and the flight from any sense of moral, political, and social responsibility. A neutral education therefore is a reproductive one which serves to depoliticize and normalize power relations, thus preserving the status quo of a world based on inequality and a Darwinian notion of survival of the fittest (read: the most resourceful in terms of symbolic and material wealth). This obfuscated view of education as a technical and neutral enterprise, is captured in the post-PT Brazilian governments' (the PT, or Workers' Party in English, is the party of which Freire was a founding member) mantra of 'Escola sem Partido', that is School without Party. Non-neutrality was misrepresented by the interim and Bolsonaro governments in Brazil as signifying indoctrination, a far cry from what Freire espoused as indicated earlier, that very same Freire whom these governments sought to deny

the well-earned title, bestowed during the Lula and Rousseff PT governments, of Patron of Brazilian Education.

This posturing of neutrality in education or in anything else for that matter serves to extricate, at the level of dominant discourse, the processes involved from consideration of the organising political and social structures that condition them. It negates the struggle for an education that renders students and teachers critical agents in a quest for the reconfiguration of the power structure itself, a renewal of the democratic process which, like education, is an ever unfinished process.

All this is intended to avoid education and democracy as being regarded as a form of reification, in Feuerbach's and Marx's sense of the terms. An engaged critical pedagogy entails a sustained commitment to condition the kind of subjectivities produced under specific democratic social relations. Fundamental is an understanding that the choice of content is a political choice as is the choice of pedagogical relations fostered. Questions of citizenship emerge from these processes of understanding. At stake is an understanding of the relationship between the manner in which one learns, what one knows, and the way one acts responsibly and conscientiously as a citizen in the larger polis.

Contrary to encouraging scriptural 'party' readings, the staple of several critiques of a politically engaged education elsewhere and captured in the phrase 'escola sem partido' in Brazil, Freire underscores the unfinished nature of human beings which entails a continuous act of enquiry to intervene in history to contribute towards shaping it as active agents, as subjects rather than objects of the historical process. Neutrality encourages indifferent responses, creating passive bystanders, standing aloof as objects of history.

Unmasking power to be able to speak truth to it, and to intervene to change the capillary relations that constitute it has always been the staple of Paulo Freire's

pedagogy of hope. At the same time, power is defined not only through dominative forms but also through possibilities for social reconstruction of alternative social forms and human capacities (Corrigan, 1990). In his fostering of a radical hope, Freire makes clear that the present does not set the limits of what is possible. Nothing is set in stone, immutable - all can be changed. This applies to the construction of a world, in Freire's words, "meno feio, meno malvado, meno desumano" (less ugly, less mean, less inhuman). He, to the contrary, projects an image of human agents subject to bursts of creative energy to change things rather than reproduce them. They would be inspired by a language of critique (not to be confused with mere criticism) which comprises denunciation but also hope and possibility. It is a language which calls for a moral and political practice predicated on collectivity and social responsibility.

It is crucial to acknowledge that Freire understood education in the widest terms and in doing so argued strongly that education was central to politics itself. Freire viewed education in its broadest contexts, comprising a wide range of sites ranging from formal education institutions to settings of non-formal education, in tents or in the shade of a mango tree. Also included are the mass media, including digitally mediated ones. He argued for an education with praxis at its core. None of these are immune to neoliberal encroachments; neither are they incapable of staving them off.

As far as communicative processes are concerned, he avoided turgid and obscure language which appealed to coterie of literati but stood aloof from the daily preoccupations of people outside them. He insisted on a language which, though poetic at times, was simple without being simplistic, as he once confided to my colleague and friend Peter McLaren. Theory was not meant to be reified nor abstract, at the furthest remove from the struggles of everyday-life. Abstraction was, in the words of Derek Sayer, a form of violence (Sayer, 1987). The

language of Freire, as demonstrated in his own writing, notably *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, had to be steeped in the dialectics of struggle, a language reflecting a mode of thinking not linear in shape but moving between elements that seem detached from one another, but which are connected by their interdependent relations. This goes to show that Freire was against the sort of anti-intellectualism found in populist settings appearing to promote democratic posturing where any recourse to theory, on occasions even to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed's* opening chapters, is dismissed as “oppressive”. For Freire and others, good theory is a codification of the experiences reflected upon in a process of praxis (not to be confused with practice, the drift of everyday life). Praxis means reflection upon action which includes recourse to theory which is possibly revised in light of this reflection – all this with the purpose of transformative action.

Freire saw critical educators including formalised teachers as transformative and public intellectuals. Like Gramsci, he saw them as proposing particular views of the world while addressing important social problems. They were not coddling aunts nor the type of professionals who would stay away from struggles (Freire, 1998) being led to believe that they were part of a ‘noble and dignified’ profession. They were neither simple machine operators for the transmission of prepackaged material, deskilled technicians dispensing ‘teacher proof’ material. To the contrary, these views horrified Freire and he inveighed vehemently against such representations intended to deny teachers agency, critical agency in their immediate educational surroundings: the classroom, popular education circles, higher education institutions and the wider settings of what I call ‘public pedagogy’.

Teachers can be important intellectuals in a democratic public sphere. Not only can they provide the architectural scaffolding upon which agency is constructed, the present interpreted, and the future imagined, but they also can be the front-line intellectuals



who take seriously the notion that there is no democracy without informed citizens. Freire wrote his later works at a time when the world was well under the sway of a Neoliberal politics with the emphasis placed on excessive individualism and atomised individuals at that, governed by simple self-interest and by the ideology of *responsibilisation* (one is responsible solely to and for oneself). As is well known, this ideology prompted some (e.g. Margaret Thatcher) to even question the existence of society.

Freire rejected a regressive neoliberal individualization which focused exclusively on the self, rendering all problems a matter of individual responsibility while denying if not erasing the social and political in favor of the therapeutic. In this discourse, the only normative anchor is the individual. Ignored here are those structural, economic, and political conditions that drive massive inequality in wealth and power, ecological devastation, systemic racism, and class warfare. Freire, for his part, expressed grave concerns about the erosion of community life. As Education Secretary in São Paulo, he sought to safeguard vestiges of a welfare state rendering those who joined his municipal government's project of the 'popular public' schools as responsive to communal needs. They were intended as schools that comprised a learning community within and outside their precincts. Freire saw neoliberalism as a means of de-politicization and unbridled privatisation and consumerism.

Failure was apportioned to the individual and educational policies surrounding such mantras as lifelong learning made initial and continuing education an individual responsibility rather than a social one. The same applies to health, pensions and what were once social safeguards born of struggles between organised labour, other social organisations/movements and capital. Freire stressed that persons are social and ecological beings who do not exist as apart from the rest of nature and the entire

universe in which they are rooted. They are located in an ensemble of relations, intra-human and human-earth relations.

In *Pedagogy of Hope*, he broadens the nature of relations in which people exist as relational beings. His later writings and those of the persons he inspired tackle social class oppression intertwined with one or more of misogyny, racism, climate change, refugees, and a host of other 'species beings' considered disposable and subjected to constant forms of 'immiseration', to use Marx's term. In *Pedagogy of Hope*, he revisits many of the shortcomings at work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and engages in a dialectical analysis of many of the substantial and unwarranted criticisms of the latter work.

Freire never wavered from his commitment to class politics but did so without eclipsing or giving short shrift to gender and racial politics, even thanking feminists for flagging the *machista* discourse in his early work. He subsequently sought to render his later views more socially inclusive, even deliberately avoiding totalizing language. From the more totalizing language of 'becoming more fully human', as if there is an essentialist discourse of what it means to be human, he reverts to the notion of people becoming less incoherent and incomplete, recognizing a politics of biodiversity which makes us aware of our contradictions. In *Pedagogy of Hope* and later works, he revises and renders more nuanced and more inclusive his conceptual framework, oppression being represented as multifaceted where the earlier stricture of 'Internalizing the image of the oppressor', again a multifaceted oppressor, is rendered all pervasive, more capillary and therefore more diffuse than in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, written in Chile in 1968 and first published in English in 1970. Conceptually speaking, much water has flowed under the bridge since then.

As a scholar and public intellectual, Freire provided work that is accessible and rigorous. His style becomes

clearer in his later work, a huge portion of which consisted of dialogues with kindred spirits such as Ira Shor, Antonio Faundez, Myles Horton, Jonathan Kozol, and Donaldo Macedo. I am confining myself here to dialogues published in so called 'talking books' in English. There are other published dialogues which have not been translated into English such as the ones involving Frei Betto and Ricardo Kotscho and also Sergio Guimaraes and Moacir Gadotti. bell hooks claims to have wanted to do such a book with Freire although this never came to pass. This would have taken his engagement with issues of gender, class and race further, although Donaldo Macedo did broach such topics with him in single conversations in journals such as the *Harvard Education Review*. They covered a large number of areas perhaps, at times, skimming over the surface, though I would argue that some did stretch Freire to deal with issues having a broader international resonance, notably North American resonance. Freire's age and enthusiastic return to his homeland provided a sense of urgency reflecting the sense of someone who wants to do so much while cognizant of the little time available in which to do it. Self-reflection is consistently a hallmark of Freire's body of work. And a sense of Hope, a radical sense of Hope, persists throughout the whole oeuvre.

Hope lays at the heart of what Freire terms (Freire, 1994) "an adventure in unveiling", reflecting the readiness to reinvigorate many for the task of continuing the ongoing struggle for what I would term a 'substantive democracy'. An educated hope was key to keep people galvanized to continue striving for change, preventing them from lapsing into despair and to channeling their anger into dead ends or worse into bouts of unproductive cynicism. His urge was for people to keep the dream of a better world alive, the dream which is rooted in that which is possible but is 'not yet' and which lends coherence to their critiques and actions having a transformative dimension. It had to be anchored in both a historical consciousness and the

concrete realities of the time. Stanley Aronowitz recognizes this in Freire, contending that “Freire's belief in the emancipation of men and women is rooted in an "existential" commitment to an ethical ideal rather than to historical inevitability.” (Aronowitz, 1998: 7-8)

Hope is not simply a matter of enlivening the spirits and engaging the imagination, important though these are, but also the catalyst for acting coherently in a manner that foregrounds questions regarding power and organization at different levels including the socio-economic and cultural levels. This becomes more urgent at a time when the new forms of fascism and authoritarianism are on the rise conjuring images of the past that continue to haunt us. Pier Paolo Pasolini saw the ghost of a new fascism throughout post-World War II Italy with the US-CIA shackles placed on its purportedly democratic process which prevented one large popular party from sharing in the national government. As I have argued, his chosen term would well suit much of the world's political climate today with clear attempts at derailing representative democratic processes via legal loopholes to condition who gets to govern Freire's Brazil and Paraguay via white coups - ‘Golpe Branco’. More recently we had the crass scenes of thuggery making its presence felt through Trump-hordes marching towards and ransacking the Capitol in light of the latest US Presidential results – shades of the 1922 ‘stage-managed’ Fascist ‘March on Rome’. These moments which shake the foundations of representative bourgeois democracy, despite its obvious limitations, lend credence to John Dewey's statement that “Democracy has to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife.” (Dewey, 1993:122) It is a sense of hope that must have education as its resting piece, therefore what I keep calling an educated hope. It is a social dispositif that activates social resistance, mobilization and a collective effort. It is predicated on critical consciousness, analyses and an understanding of power and its apparatuses, power once

again conceived in both its dominative and reactionary and its propositional and transformative sense. There is power also in resistance and collective counter-action.

Freire counters the neoliberal sense of individual, consumer-oriented false sense of freedom with a sense of liberation carried out not on one's own but in concert and solidarity with others, a point that takes us back to his groundbreaking *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2018). It is the hope that inspires us to repudiate TINA (there is no alternative). It spurs us onto combat the smothering and inertia-inducing state of what, once again, the late Mark Fisher (2009: 6) called capitalist realism, "a monstrous, infinitely plastic entity, capable of metabolizing and absorbing anything with which it comes into contact." (p. 6) This is symptomatic of what he calls 'reflexive impotence' (Fisher, 2009: 21).

Freire's pedagogical politics of educated hope enable critical agents to scour the liminal spaces available to overcome capitalism's "horizons of the thinkable," which suppresses what seems unthinkable. (Fisher, 2009: 9) Hope uncovers hitherto untilled liminal spaces of what can or might be possible, wary of course of what is yet not possible as people make change but not "under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given, and transmitted from the past." (Marx and Engels, 1978: 595), Marx warned in the *18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*. Hope "contains the spark that reaches out beyond the surrounding emptiness," and traverses established and mind-forged boundaries. (Bloch, in Rabinach, 1977:11) This urge to transcend limits and, in bell hooks phrase, 'talk back' helps consolidate civic culture and a healthy public sphere characterised by harmony in diversity.

Freire's embrace of a pedagogy of hope, finding its many homes in different sites of practice, was characterised by a repudiation of an idealist/abstract or vulgar utopianism far removed from the struggle over

power. As with Gramsci, he did not limit these struggles to the economic or strictly political (narrowly conceived) terrain but extended them to the cultural domain, the latter imbued with its own sense of agency and with cultural workers acting as agents of cultural transformation that impacts on the broader social life itself. Cultural forms and practices were seen not as mere epiphenomena, foliage emanating from the material economic bark beneath (adjusting E. Brontë's famous phrase), but as sources of change. There was revolutionary potential attributed to culture that reacts in a dialectical manner on the relations of economic production, a key Gramscian insight.

Freire regarded hope as being linked with the perennial quest for human dignity manifest in such uprisings as those in the Arab world at the start of the last decade. It also involves learning lessons and drawing inspiration from public memories and histories that indicate the limits and possibilities of situations calling for resistance and the struggle for change. Reading the world entails reading the histories and constructions of the world, alongside the word made flesh, in the latter case involving a critical media literacy, an important aspect of critical literacy, the kind of literacy to which Paulo Freire's political work attaches utmost importance.

This is all part and parcel of refusing to give up the dream of a just and equitable society, once again the imagining of a world governed by social justice and ecological sensitivity, a decolonizing world in which matters of critical literacy, education and pedagogy are mutually sustaining to help develop an authentic democracy in the true sense of the word. This would be a democracy for the multitudes and not for the few who bask in the sunlit uplands of Empire. In the fight for justice, economic equality and democracy itself, Paulo Freire speaks strongly to the importance of collective struggles and the need for broad-based social movements. Freire is instructive in showing us how to derive insights from the

past and commit ourselves to constructing, with others, a more just future, at a time when there is an urgent need to rescue that sense of healthy utopia or heterotopias from the iron cage of 'Capitalist dystopian realism'.

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