

Paulo Freire's Pedagogy for the Children of the Oppressors: Educating for Social Justice among the World's Privileged

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Re-Inventing Education for Social Justice

"We must walk rapidly but not run. We must not be opportunists, nor allow our enthusiasms to make us lose the vision of concrete reality."- Amilcar Cabral

Paulo Reglus Neves Freire was born into poverty on September 19, 1921 in Recife, in Northeastern Brazil. He was able to rise, through education, to believe that "only through communication can human life hold meaning."¹ While in Graduate School, he began to examine the relationships between poverty and education. From his own experience, Freire believed that education held the best hope for the promotion of social justice and the gradual transformation of an unjust society.² This is the foundational assumption of his (1970) book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Implicit in this premise, however, is that those who are wealthy and privileged also use education to maintain an unjust status quo. How is this expressed in North American and European higher education? If the "children of the oppressor" are unwilling to surrender their status, wealth, and privilege, they will continue to objectify the plight of the oppressed and deny any fundamental culpability for their plight. This paper explores Freire's ideas about education in their relation to the goal of fostering social justice in North American or European (and other) contexts of privilege. Can Freirean pedagogical objectives apply to a context where people may be well-intentioned but are often ignorant and protected by layers of wealth, social status, and privilege?

This paper examines a number of major themes from the vast spectrum of Freire's writings. Because so much of Freire's writing is dedicated to the applicability of pedagogical ideas the conclusion of the paper will introduce Freirean methodologies of dialogue, problematization and questioning in the context of promoting social justice among the world's privileged.

The vast majority of students that I teach at a private North American, faith-based university, are either from the upper middle-classes or are wealthy.³ These students come to College with little social awareness of the injustices of the world or their possible complicity in the persistence of those problems.⁴ Further, the North American culture they have been cocooned within has promoted entertainment and, at its worst, the “anesthization of the mind.”⁵ Public education in the United States does little to encourage a critical examination of the systemic nature of social injustice. As Freire writes, the poor are “all but invisible” to the “non-poor.”⁶ What does this Gordian knot mean for educators intent on motivating students toward fostering social justice within a context of privilege? How can educators encourage privileged students to gain progressive solidarity with the oppressed without, at the same time, constructing a cosmetic (and unhelpful) veneer of guilt? Freire advocates that the privileged should become increasingly “accountable” to the oppressed.⁷ Freire taught that this required those in control to deny that control and privilege and to seek a “profound rebirth.”⁸ For Freire, however, offering hope for the oppressor was not the primary focus of his efforts. We are left to try and apply his ideas, as best as we can, to the role education in the promotion of social justice to North American and European Colleges and Universities.

Education for Liberation

Freire taught that “education in the service of liberation” could dislodge students from intellectual stasis and rigid conformity to the status-quo.⁹ Education had the potential to empower students to respond thoughtfully to the social controls that sustain and undergird oppression.¹⁰ In this, his work lays the foundation for Catholic liberation theologians who find inspiration from his writings.¹¹ Like Gutierrez, Bosch and others, the oppressed are called to rise up and “name the world.”¹² But unlike these theologians, Freire thought that education, and not religious structures would provide the best pathway to empower those who were down-trodden.¹³ This was because, in Richard Schull’s words, education had the potential to become a “subversive force.”¹⁴

For Freire, subservience must be countered by subversion. He argued that the oppressed live in subservience to the privileged in fatalistic silence. The poor remain perpetually under-educated and trapped beneath imposed layers of pervasive ignorance and lethargy. This dominated status is supported by a selected “education” that the oppressor provides for them- intentionally designed to strengthen a superimposed system of economic, social, and political domination.¹⁵

Freire was seen as a criminal by a Brazilian military dictatorship that had him imprisoned in 1964 at age 43. Of this experience of 70 days in prison, Freire mused that his crime was the “the sin of having loved his people too much.”¹⁶ Once released, Freire fled to Bolivia and then, after another military coup in that country, settled in Chile. He accepted a one-year teaching appointment at Harvard University in 1969 and in 1970 began working at the World Council of Churches where he “roamed the world as a tramp” for the promotion of education among the oppressed. Freire appreciated that travel afforded him the opportunity to regularly “re-encounter” himself.¹⁷ Freire was a prolific writer. While this research focuses on the *Pedagogy for the Oppressed*, Freire’s later corpus of writings are of importance because they clarify and rework ideas he introduced in earlier publications.¹⁸ In 1979, after 16 years in exile, Freire returned to Brazil and began directing education for the State government of Sao Paulo. He also held a number of professorships. Freire died on May 2, 1997 of a massive heart attack at age 75.

Freire’s ideas, born from the storms of his own life, never devolved into theoretical abstractions. He wrote that “liberation is praxis: the action of men and women upon their world in order to transform it.”¹⁹ For Freire, injustice was not a static inevitability because any individual (or community) no matter how “submerged” beneath oppressive realities had the potential to lift itself through hope and reason over defeat and a defeated mindset. Education, Freire believed, provided individuals the opportunity to realize this potential because it could foster an inner sense of dignity and self-worth. The oppressed, through education, had the potential to begin to see themselves as hopeful, confident creators of culture and the subjects, rather than the objects, of history.

What role did his Catholic faith play in this rather optimistic view of the world? Freire's nomination for the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize spoke of his "authentic Christian humanism" as a motivating force in his passionate life's work.²⁰ According to one observer, Freire "never had to fight for his faith (because) it was integrated into his identity...creating a natural sensibility that made justice a necessity. His awareness of lack and the needs of the poor came out of his faith in Jesus."²¹ Marxist views, rather than Christian teaching, seemed to form his views of social structures. However, it could be argued that Freire had a faith that linked the compassion of Christ with Marx's desire to bring revolution for social equality and justice. This was a wedding of enthusiasms that, one observer noted, "surprises certain Christians and makes Marxists suspicious."²² McLaren and Lankshear observe a link in Freire with Catholic liberation theologians: "As is true for other radical Christians in Latin America, Freire's personal knowledge of extreme poverty and suffering challenged his deeply felt Christian faith grounded in the ethical teachings of Jesus in the Gospels. Freire's pedagogy is founded on a moral imperative to side with the oppressed."²³ Because Freire lived in a world of religious authorities who often failed to confront injustice (and who even supported oppression at times), while working for the World Council of Churches, Freire repeatedly challenged "priests and the religious" to "convert to a prophetic understanding and practice of the gospels and in strengthening others in their manifest option for the poor."²⁴

***Conscientizacao* as a Force for Liberating Education**

All educational structures and theories, according to Freire, begin within specific political frameworks. These political presuppositions are never objective.²⁵ An educator functions as politician, artist, and advocate and should not be viewed as a "cold, neutral technician"²⁶ who rises above political realities related to injustice, wealth, and privilege. Education is, in fact, often the very "essence of oppression"²⁷ supported by the powerful who, with insistent assertion, "desire conquest"²⁸ over those whom they oppress. The oppressor focuses on "changing the consciousness of the oppressed and not the situation which oppresses them"²⁹ by inculcating worldview assumptions that portray injustice as an inevitable Darwinian justice and the oppressed as those who have chosen (and are

happy in) their station in life. The oppressed are given, by the oppressors' education, a rationale for their own domination. The oppressed are "educated" into accepting their vanquished status as being inevitable and perhaps even honorable and desirable. In this way, the oppressor goes unchallenged, while the oppressed embraces what Freire calls an "oppression-hosting conscience"³⁰ where the worldview of the oppressor become "housed within"³¹ the victim's own way of understanding the world. Education, in both content and delivery,³² becomes a weapon whereby the subjugated learn to adapt to the world of their oppressor.³³ The implications of these conclusions for educational advocates for social justice among the privileged are significant. Curriculum, faculty hires, financial aid, and questions about the allocation of funds will be dramatically different when such a Freirean view of educational function and structure is embraced. The sum of these conclusions is what Freire calls "*conscientizacao*."

Conscientizacao is a Portuguese term that speaks of the way that an individual, through education, comes to learn of the social, economic and political contradictions of the world and to address those elements with either passive acceptance or active resistance.³⁴ Freire saw conscientization as a social and collective process and not merely an individual exercise. The oppressed, because they feel that they have been "dismissed from life" come to regard education as something that is threatening at worst, or at best, as a meaningless exercise in futility.³⁵ Education can be seen as a threatening force because of its potential to foster a desire to attain that which is unachievable; it can create false hopes. Education can be seen to be meaningless because of its call for personal responsibility and free opportunity in a context where such prospects are either remote or entirely illusionary. Even if the oppressed gain a level of freedom to rise above predestined fate, such "advancement" often makes them oppressors and complicitious in the oppression of that class above which they have risen.

This is the familiar hopeless world of resignation that Freire is trying to dismantle among the oppressed. This same cycle is inverted where the privileged do not see themselves directly as being oppressors and are not interested in exchanging the familiar world that they have come to know (which gives them security and status) to launch into the

terrifying uncertainties of dismantling a world constructed for their benefit. This analysis finds a possible solution in Freire's notion of the development of *conscientizacao* among students of privilege who would progressively shift in their perspective from the naïve to the critical, from a posture of privilege and entitlement to the confidence and awareness of an agent within society who is able to work for social justice.

To combat the blossoming of *conscientizacao*, Freire writes, the oppressor maintains the status-quo through education by keeping the vanquished from realizing that they are being victimized.³⁶ The oppressed need, in a moment of epiphany, to recognize what actually is happening to them in order to gain an authentic view of the world.³⁷ Instead, many of the poor remain resigned to the lobotomized "security of conformity"³⁸ where the oppressed are afforded, at least, some "guaranteed space"³⁹ where they know their place and are able to make sense of their world.

The same process applies to those born and educated in wealth and privilege. The educational system for the oppressed has no self-defeating mechanism to foster within the privileged any notion that they enjoy the benefit of their lives by impoverishing and oppressing others. Injustice is either obscured (in the immediate) or highlighted in the remote and distant. Education for the privileged is not interested in promoting an awareness of the "invasive nature" of social injustice.⁴⁰

The privileged, in fact, are encouraged to see themselves in a positive light as those who are deeply concerned about the plight of those they are actually responsible (directly or indirectly) for tyrannizing. The privileged protect their status as superior while also paternalistically thinking of themselves, to use Kipling's idea (not in reference to ethnicity but status), as the "great white hope" of benighted, oppressed people who are in need of their assistance (be it the gift of their religion or their politics but not usually their direct economic sacrifice).

Paternalism, according to Freire, creates an emotional bond of control and dependence between the oppressed and their oppressors.⁴¹ In the context of North American religious

institutions of higher learning, students are often encouraged to enter the social services or be involved in “ministry” to the poor with the focus entirely on alleviating immediate symptoms with little attention given to the way that such ministries and services actually perpetrate social injustice and are rooted in paternalism. In the same way, political or economic “solutions” are unilaterally offered by the privileged that see themselves as “defenders of freedom”⁴² against the “demonic action of marginals, rowdies and enemies of God.”⁴³ Religious, political and educational structures offer paternalistic solutions that raise the oppressor’s self-esteem while, at the same time, forcing the oppressed into even greater dependence on their so-called assistance.

In contexts of militarism and two-third’s world inequality, education promotes silence for the sake of order.⁴⁴ While in contexts of the two-third’s of the world that is impoverished, education works to beat down the oppressed, forcing them to assume that only the powerful truly “define what is correct or incorrect,”⁴⁵ the same stifling of questions about injustice happens in contexts of privilege with the difference being that those providing definitions and solutions often see themselves as outside of the problem. While education by third-world oppressors prescribes intellectual “mutism”⁴⁶ for the oppressed, first-world education pontificates with paternalistic solutions that free the privileged from seeing their own direct role in oppression. Education given by either despots or paternalists will lead to the oppressed being apathetic or indifferent, according to Freire, because what is being taught (or not being taught) is basically irrelevant to the lives of the oppressed.⁴⁷ Those who are being oppressed come to internalize “the opinion that the oppressors hold of them”⁴⁸ while privileged students observe at a safe distance (Freire mirthfully calls the oppressor in this role, “the Professor”) the miserable plight of others with sympathetic paternalism.

In both contexts, students do not see their own potential because they lack *conscientizacao*. A lack of *conscientizacao* in the oppressed and the privileged fosters in both the myth of what Freire calls the “oppressor ideology” where ignorance is absolutized and enforced on both protagonists.⁴⁹ The privileged accept their role as “professionals” who can “help” by educating/transmitting their religious or political solutions (learned, importantly, in contexts that accept oppression as a *fait accompli*) on

those who do not “fit” into the way they see that the world should function. Education for both the privileged and the oppressed defines an “educated person” as one who is an “adapted person because he or she is a better ‘fit’ for the world.”⁵⁰

Education as indoctrination for both the privileged and oppressed promotes an imposed tranquility with everything understood and defined by those who are in the know and whose authority to know and command cannot come into question.⁵¹ This analysis explains why Freirean educators, in any social context, encourage students to “think” instead of “understand” an externally imposed evaluation and (in terms of methodology) advocate questions.

Conscientizacao is stunted by a host of factors. In contexts of privilege one way to limit *conscientizacao* is through idealistic sectarianism (often in the name of religious or political zeal for “truth”). The privileged view the oppressed through a lens of pity that filters out any ability to see themselves in the picture. While Freire speaks of the oppressed as being “manipulated by a series of myths”⁵² which are upheld by a “series of deceits and promises,”⁵³ the same can be said for the privileged in educational structures that fundamentally exist to promote the (unjust) status-quo.

Whether it is political or religious, sectarianism looks at the world with “naïve and magical perception”⁵⁴ which explains the other while releasing the self from any relation to the other’s plight. Universalistic claims are mythical “one-size-fits-all” solutions that need to be superimposed on any (and every) context.⁵⁵ What sectarians share in common (be they two-third’s world dictators or first-world educators) is that they seem “to suffer from an absence of doubt” in their conviction.⁵⁶ Privilege makes idealism even easier to embrace because sectarianism helps explain their own good fortune by providing an imposed narrative framework on the world. Because the privileged “understand” from a distance the plight of others they become unable to actively participate from within a given context in all of its fluidity and harrowing uncertainty. This is why idealists often lack what Freire calls a sense of “concrete-ness” needed to educate the privileged toward social responses that are fundamentally respectful.

Important for the purpose of this analysis (examining ways that Freirean ideas relate to the education of the privileged) is the observation Freire makes that *conscientizacao* is often eroded by “cultural invasion.” This term alludes to the Marxist idea that those who “rule” civic society with economic control also seek to “rule spiritually.”⁵⁷ Education among the privileged must give attention to the ways that the embrace or promotion of globalized cultural iconography leads to “cultural invasion.” Educational structures themselves also invade cultures because they are framed as paternalistic responses to those who are oppressed. Freire writes that education often is used by cultural “invaders” to “penetrate” cultures out of disrespect to cultural potentialities. He goes on to say that educational methods and models that come from the privileged to the oppressed inhibit,

...the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression...The invaders mold; those they invade are molded. The invaders choose; those they invade follow that choice-or are expected to follow it. The invaders act; those they invade have only the illusion of acting, through the action of the invaders.⁵⁸

“Cultural invasion” attacks the oppressed because the privileged accept the intrinsic inferiority of the oppressed, and the oppressed feel that they need to “adhere” to the cultural values of those who are invading their culture. The educational structures of the privileged function to ensure that this cycle continues. Freire writes “Whether they are in nurseries or universities” oppressors are prepared “to become the invaders of the future.”⁵⁹ This cycle will be interrupted by educational models that promote “cultural synthesis” instead of “cultural invasion.”

In Freire’s alternative model the privileged do not relate to the oppressed with distancing paternalism and without trying to “teach or to transmit or to give anything but rather to learn with the people.”⁶⁰ Education for the privileged that promotes social justice will not objectify the oppressed. The privileged will come to understand, according to Freire, that either indirectly or directly they are either the “spectators or directors” in the present-day realities of social injustice. One of the main reasons that the education of the privileged continues to facilitate paternalism is because it usually fosters in students “a strongly

possessive consciousness.”⁶¹ The privatized, individualized religious and political nomenclature of many North American university students exemplifies this attitude: it is not unusual to hear students speak of their God as “my personal savior” (or their country as) independent of any articulated communal identity.⁶² Social justice, however, cannot be “packaged and sold.”⁶³ It must be embraced by a non-possessive and direct “contact with the world;” it cannot see the oppressed as objectified problems that need to be “solved.”

Instead of fostering within the privileged a continued sense of themselves as mere “consumers” with purchasing power, Freirean values encourage educators to develop within the privileged a sense of their own human identification with the oppressed. Freire states that those in power “*have* instead of *are*. For them having more is an inalienable right, a right they acquire through their own effort.”⁶⁴ The commoditization of education among the privileged typifies one important way that education in that context supports the maintenance of an unjust social status-quo.⁶⁵

Educators of the privileged can proactively encourage *conscientizacao* by generating an attitude of awareness through critical reflection, a pre-requisite for liberative education. The privileged will gradually “emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled”⁶⁶ instead of seeing the world from their ideals and expectations. Through *conscientizacao*, both the privileged and the oppressed become “masters of their (own) thinking”⁶⁷ and are able to live with each other in mutual respect and authentic dialogue.

Humanization and Dehumanization

A major theme in Freire’s work as it relates to education among the world’s privileged is how education can lift the oppressed from dehumanizing marginalization (“a living death”⁶⁸) to affirmation and self-respect that empowers the oppressed to “transcend”⁶⁹ social limitations. Education for the privileged should foster an appreciation for the intrinsic human worth of all who are oppressed and explore ways that suffering can be alleviated from a posture of solidarity instead of paternalism. While Freire observes that

the oppressors often minimize or disregard the victimization of the oppressed in order to advance their own self-interests, educators for social justice, aware of this tendency, can encourage students of privilege to hear the voices of the oppressed even when articulated in rage and violence.

Education among both the privileged and the oppressed often maintains social stability and discourages change. This maintenance is most easily accomplished by both the privileged and the oppressed adopting an “attitude of adhesion”⁷⁰ to the dictates of the ruling elite. This is not always apparent because the cold force of oppression is often hidden under the guise of “solicitous paternalism”⁷¹ by the guardians of the status-quo. Oppressive sustaining mechanisms (including religious and political vehicles) obscure what they are actually doing by emphasizing their paternalistic concern or “mission” to assist the oppressed while all they are actually doing is allaying their own sense of guilt.⁷² Anyone who has worked in an educational context of privilege has seen ample expressions of what Freire calls the “false messianism”⁷³ of the educated elite whose actual, but unstated, intent is their own professional or personal interest. Verbose paternalism objectifies the oppressed and thwarts genuine humanizing solidarity⁷⁴ with brothers and sisters who find themselves oppressed. Idealistic paternalism “absorbs” the actual experience of individuals into a categorical one-dimensional designation of “neediness” as imagined and defined by their oppressors. Any sense of a critical, autonomous *conscientizacao* is obliterated when the privileged educate from this reference point.

Educators among the privileged who are seeking to reverse the tsunami of paternalistic objectification will educate in such a way as to discourage their students from seeing other people as a “project”⁷⁵ or as objectified victims floundering in an identity limited to oppression alone. Such projections systematize and organize themselves around a host of stereotypes which make any concrete quality of individual personhood increasingly difficult to appreciate. Educators among the privileged often define the non-European world in such a way as to emphasize difference, making “the very concept of the Third-World ... a total abstraction.”⁷⁶

To be consistent, a Freirean cannot “humanize” a person (and in so doing, objectify) but can only acknowledge what is already true: our shared humanity. Those who are oppressed must gain, through “conquest,”⁷⁷ their own freedom and dignity because it does not belong to anyone else to give to them. This has important ramifications for education among the privileged. The task of a Freirean educator in contexts of privilege is merely to “unveil the world of oppression”⁷⁸ and expect that both the oppressed and the oppressor will begin to “believe”⁷⁹ in their own intrinsic ability to become progressive “transformers of reality through creative labor.”⁸⁰ As both the privileged and the oppressed gain greater *conscientizacao*, paternalistic charity in both directions is replaced by authentic, humane relational generosity.

Freirean education, rooted in *conscientizacao*, expects that the relationship between the oppressed and the privileged will result, not only in social justice for the oppressed, but also in the “liberation of the oppressor.”⁸¹ Unless this happens, it is predictable that those being educated in a privileged context will probably gain social power and find their predetermined role in the dehumanization of others and the distribution of resources. Such a role will dehumanize the privileged, and this is why it becomes increasingly more difficult for them to gain liberation from their entangling social role except as they seek to divest themselves of those privileges and benefits (e.g., wealth or opportunity).

Education, in any context, allows for understanding the world as it actually is (and not as it should or should not be), and an awareness of the actual social injustices of this world leave, in Freire’s mind, no alternative for the privileged but what he calls “class suicide” where individuals willingly divest themselves of privilege (in essence, becoming traitors to their own self-interests). The privileged who genuinely are concerned about social justice will invariably repudiate “all that draws them toward middle-class standards and the natural attraction of that kind of class mentality, and to identify themselves with the working classes.”⁸² Is this not what the ethical values of St. Francis of Assisi, Leo Tolstoy, the Dalai Lama, Gandhi, Caesar Chavez, Dorothy Day, Martin King or Desmond Tutu actually call people to embrace? Where, however, among educators

among the privileged are such exemplars being developed? Even when the privileged gain a small measure of awareness of what is actually happening in the world, the tendency, according to Freire, is for them to retreat ultimately to safer instincts of self-protection that return their lives to those “marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people’s inability to think, to want, to know.”⁸³ Education that fosters oppression discourages analysis and inquiry without resolution.

Freire returns to the theme that “conversion” from the ranks of the privileged to solidarity with the oppressed is usually erased by objectification and paternalism. The privileged “believe that they (or their particular group) must be the executors of the transformation”⁸⁴ simply because it is the nature of privilege to foster in people the assumptions that they should “impose” or “force” themselves and their solutions on those who are oppressed.”⁸⁵ Using decidedly religious terminology, Freire calls for those seeking justice through education to “incarnate justice, through communion with the people.”⁸⁶ Another predominant motif in Freire’s work, which is complimentary to the views of Che Guevara, explains that “communion with the people must be more than mere theory; it must be integral to the life of the revolutionary.”⁸⁷ Education is expressed not only by words but through actions and the visible, tangible decisions of lifestyles and identifications.

Dialogue will characterize solidarity with the oppressed. For Freire “the person who proclaims devotion to the cause of liberation who is unable to enter into communion with the people whom he or she continues to regard as totally ignorant is grievously self-deceived.”⁸⁸ This kind of dialogue calls for action from *within*, as opposed to *for*, the oppressed.⁸⁹ Instead of utilizing these models of self-denial, the privileged tend to take solace in objectifying a paternalistic “activism,” which Freire dismisses as “action for action’s sake.”⁹⁰ Education among the privileged encourages their number to become quixotic “armchair-revolutionaries” who frequently engage in superficial and symbolic gestures in the guise of “opposing” social injustices. One recognizes this pattern in a reliance on “slogans, communiqués, monologues, and instructions”⁹¹ instead of a lifestyle

of identification and solidarity with the oppressed. Education among the privileged, because it maintains that privilege, invariably is an exercise in self-promotion and will not result in any substantive social change. Paternalistic idealists look at problems from outside their own personal involvement. The privileged become part of the problem and allow for the mechanisms of injustice to continue unaffected by liberative education. Dr. Martin King had such paternalistic idealists in mind when he wrote in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail” that the most problematic enemies of injustice were not the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan but actually the “white moderate who is more devoted to order than to justice.”⁹²

Education by the privileged to maintain the status-quo will be characterized by the abstraction of the “other” into generalized categories⁹³ that underscore the difference and the vulnerability of the oppressed. Education for the privileged often presents the oppressed as distant and “inanimate things”⁹⁴ who are to be understood within the parameters of their oppression and not within the primary framework of their humanness. The “noble savages” are hosts to cancerous problems needing the medication that paternalistic, generalized solutions are able to “prescribe.”⁹⁵ This allows the privileged (often through educational and religious institutions) to advance “pious, sentimental and individualistic gestures” without having to risk “genuine acts of love.”⁹⁶ The privileged are encouraged to sentimentalize the noble savagery of the poor while framing them tightly within, what Freire describes as, “subjectivist immobility.”⁹⁷ It is explained to the privileged that the fault of oppression lies within the failings of the oppressed because they cannot rise to privilege even though they supposedly have that opportunity. The privileged usually do not seem capable of recognizing any systemic complicity with furthering the plight of the marginalized. When confronted with their complicity in the maintenance of the status-quo the privileged often, in Freire’s observation, dismiss such accusations because they merely “see things differently.”⁹⁸ Subjectivist immobility allows the privileged to “create” an oppressed category of beings which are fundamentally “outside” the framework of their own world, while at the same time objectification of the oppressed creates for the privileged a “world without people.”⁹⁹

Liberative education addresses both tendencies among the privileged by encouraging *conscientizacao* and self-denying solidarity.

Freire is emphatic: “Any pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (often cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) itself maintains and embodies oppression.”¹⁰⁰ Oppressors, by definition, cannot initiate liberating education. How does this relate to our task of education for social justice among the world’s privileged? A Freirean challenge for the privileged is to explain that we should not be complicitous in the preservation of the status-quo and to call for subjectivist immobility to be countered by seeing the “social ways”¹⁰¹ that oppression is promoted.

Anesthetizing social welfare programs, according to Freire are expressions of “class-robbery” because they have become “instruments of manipulation” that “ultimately serve the ends of conquest” because they “sedate and distract victims of injustice from” being aware of the “true causes of their problems.”¹⁰² While paternalistic social programs are presented as “realistic solutions,” they fail inevitably because they are not systemic and because they, in essence, assign blame to recipients, which leads to the oppressed embracing a “fatalism and despair”¹⁰³ that fosters “a lack of vision.”¹⁰⁴ The oppressed are taught to see themselves as social “outsiders,” while, in actuality, they are very much “inside the social structure which made them ‘beings for others.’”¹⁰⁵

Both the privileged and the oppressed often turn to religion for “magical explanations” of a God to whom they “fatalistically transfer the responsibility for their oppressed state.”¹⁰⁶ If God is responsible for their plight, then nothing can be done to change their situation: “The oppressed see their suffering (the fruit of exploitation), as the will of God- as if God were the creator of this ‘organized disorder.’”¹⁰⁷ Both religion and politics have been used in the education of the privileged to club dissenters into acquiescence. A vivid example of this comes in the relation that politics and religion have with the history of slavery within the United States. Of course, a host of political and religious leaders have also challenged the privileged to oppose injustice (e.g. Gandhi, Malcolm X, Bishop Romero, and The Dalai Lama).

Both the privileged and the oppressed must free themselves from false or idealistic notions of the world. Education can foster rebelliousness against the status-quo and frame such rebellion in moral and religious terms as an act of courageous love which is “committed to others.”¹⁰⁸ Such oppression will not be challenged as long as education reduces students to vanquished “receptors” and “passive entities with their education making them even more passive still.”¹⁰⁹ Asserting the “right to be human”¹¹⁰ breaks the power of the oppressor to control others, but it also restores to the privileged a sense of their own humanity which had been “lost in the exercise of oppression.”¹¹¹ Popular religious views sustain injustice by resisting unsettling social change. For Freire, revolution is not the goal but only a transitory phase delineating the boundary between injustice and greater justice. Education is a neutral force that can either sustain injustice or support positive social change. The narrative forms that education takes among either the privileged or the oppressed will determine whether it becomes a force to challenge individuals to question (rebel against) injustice or accept its inevitability.¹¹² Educators among the privileged must particularly guard against talking about the world as if it were a “motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable fact.”¹¹³ For Freireans there is an “eminently pedagogical character of the revolution”¹¹⁴ and that is why Freire entitled his book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* rather than *The Pedagogy for the Oppressed*; both the oppressed and the privileged are responsible to struggle for their own liberation.

Dialogue, Problematization, and Questioning

Freirean education does not resort to “top-down”¹¹⁵ methodologies that “castrate curiosity”¹¹⁶ because our problematic and unpredictable world cannot be contained by restricting ideological paradigms. The student should engage in “unveiling” the world with “authentic words”¹¹⁷ of genuine dialogue which will lead to relationships of mutual respect and cooperation.¹¹⁸ Dialogue vaults over the slogans that oppressors use to explain and organize information instead of promoting “freedom”¹¹⁹ which leads to “mutual learning”¹²⁰ between teacher and student, between the privileged and the oppressed.

The methodology Freireans use to foster dialogue is “problem-posing education” which breaks the “vertical patterns”¹²¹ characteristic of “non-dialogical education.”¹²² Freirean educators may frequently generate tension within the classroom because education is capable of degenerating into a “vacuous, feel-good comfort zone”¹²³ or an egoistic “form of group therapy that focuses on the psychology of the individual.”¹²⁴ Education among the privileged must push students away from the comforting “bubbles” of their wealth and convenience and challenge them to seriously engage the world as it actually exists for most individuals suffering in oppression. Problem-posing education counters the “colonizing forces”¹²⁵ of authoritarian educators who do not encourage their students to challenge or confront social injustices but to “accept without question.”¹²⁶ Problem-posing encourages students to perceive the world critically and not as a “static reality” that is always in the process of “transformation.”¹²⁷ Freire would probably agree with the American Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau that American education was often theoretical instead of practical and outside the realm of daily life.¹²⁸ Freire would add, however, that this non-dialogical form of education for the privileged exists by design as a way to maintain social inequality. Freirean educators should constantly be reforming their own ideas about the questions they present to their students.¹²⁹ Because both teacher and student are in dialogue with the problem that is at the center of their learning experience neither agent can be a docile spectator. Students become “critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher.”¹³⁰ This approach fosters creativity and leads to emerging *conscienitizacao* in the classroom among students, who gain critical understanding, and among educators, who are able to be less controlling and more “mutual” with their students.¹³¹

Brazilian scholar Maocir Gadotti speaks of the liberative educator as an “organic intellectual.”¹³² A scholar is a person who, with genuine humility, continues in an ongoing quest for dialogue with others and with the world as it is. Educators for social justice among the privileged will challenge their students to ask how they are able to participate in genuine dialogue while at the same time being removed, offended, or closed off from those who are being oppressed. Gadotti challenges students to ask: “How can I dialogue if I am closed to- and even offended by-the contribution of others? How

can I dialogue if I am afraid of being displaced, the mere possibility causing me torment and weakness? Self-sufficiency is incompatible with dialogue.”¹³³ Humility is requisite in educational partnerships that seek to foster social justice along with an “intense faith in humankind.”¹³⁴

Education for the privileged is often expressed as a monologue, the mere transfer of information. Freire calls this the “banking concept of education” where so-called learning actually becomes, “an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and “makes deposits” which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat.”¹³⁵ This model is particularly prevalent in conservative, traditional, and religious models for education. Students are seen to be “adaptable and manageable beings” that must learn to “accept the passive role imposed on them.”¹³⁶ This banking concept of education stifles creativity and discourages inquiry.¹³⁷ Students have deposited¹³⁸ within them a “focalized”¹³⁹ and “fragmented view of reality” because praxis and engagement with life are divorced from education. Because the world is not “revealed” it cannot be “transformed.”¹⁴⁰

Freirean educators among the privileged must take to heart Freire’s warning that one of the greatest dangers that education faces in becoming a tool to sustain oppression is the tendency to harden any idea into a system expressed through a dominating “bureaucracy [that] annihilates creativity.”¹⁴¹ Freire sought to foster, in contrast, “co-intentional education” where the teacher and student are both subjects together in the re-creation of the world. At the level of their own interrelationship, the teacher and the student have to avoid the temptation to model the paternalism of a “teacher-student contradiction” by exchanging the “role of the depositor, prescriber, domesticator for the role of being a student among students.”¹⁴²

Different Tomorrows are Possible

Paulo Freire encountered many critics who dismissed him as a “utopian visionary”¹⁴³ who relied on a “utopian vision that invests and empowers his critical analysis.”¹⁴⁴ Freire is not alone among scholars who have looked at ways that education can challenge the status-quo. Some North American religious scholars advocate for what Douglas Jacobsen calls “faith-informed scholarship”¹⁴⁵—the integration of faith with learning in the hopes of critically encouraging students to become active in combating social injustice. While this has obvious merit, Freire might warn these educators to guard against the inherent paternalism that is possible in any sectarian approach. Unfortunately, many discussions among the privileged focus on questions of injustice divorced from its social context and encourage students to think in individualized, ethical terms by looking at the relation between personal lifestyle and oppression. While this is important, it does not go far enough in addressing the systemic nature of oppression and in making education what Freire thinks that it can become: “a force for radical change.”¹⁴⁶ Of course, the role that the privileged play directly in the maintenance of an oppressive status-quo is often ignored altogether¹⁴⁷ or framed in frail ethical terms with little integrative effect.

Freire warned that “in the United States the task of emphasizing the reality of injustice is much more difficult” because educators often find themselves taking on a “political posture that renounces the myth of pedagogical neutrality.”¹⁴⁸ Speaking of his own experiences while working in the United States, Freire wrote that when he first arrived people told him that he first needed to gather all the facts before he could make a sound conclusion; Freire responded that “the facts do not have a life of their own, unrelated to other things.”¹⁴⁹ Freirean ideas about educating for justice among the privileged continue to gain a strong following, and it is the case that “many liberal and neo-liberal educators have rediscovered Freire as an alternative to the conservative domestication education that equates free-market ideology with democracy.”¹⁵⁰ This paper has not been an attempt to examine all of the “dynamic currents” within Paulo Freire’s methodological and educational philosophy¹⁵¹ but to consider instead how his ideas of relating education to the relationship between the privileged and the oppressed can be meaningfully communicated to those within educational contexts of social privilege.

Paulo Freire's claims about the relation between social justice and education offer important points of departure to those among the world's privileged who seek to educate their students to gain a clearer "awareness of the necessity to transform reality."¹⁵² Educators seeking to promote social justice will both model and encourage their students to take risks and specific concrete actions of solidarity and dialogue with the oppressed.¹⁵³ As this dialogue continues, the role of the teacher will become less directive as a provider of information and leader, and will become an equal with his or her students who will increasingly "take charge of their own learning."¹⁵⁴ Freire predicts that, as that happens; the privileged will have no choice but to recognize that the resources and benefits of their lives that they have enjoyed (*pre-conscientizacao*) were actually serving to "control the submerged and dominated consciousness of the marginalized either directly or indirectly. ... [They will then become] strangers in their own communities."¹⁵⁵ Freirean education among the privileged will invariably stress the conviction that "the liberty or freedom of the rich is always in relation to the lack of liberty or freedom of the poor."¹⁵⁶

Because education for the privileged is often an exercise in "middle-class narcissism," education that supports the status-quo expresses itself as a "form of education designed to de-skill and domesticate teachers."¹⁵⁷ The students in such a context are fed a fundamentally propagandistic, "de-complexified" view of the world and of those who have not "earned" the same privilege and wealth that they enjoy.¹⁵⁸ Freirean educators must always accept and "begin in the space where they are"¹⁵⁹ and address the assumptions that their students bring to the classroom. Because teaching social justice among the privileged invariably involves the "de-colonizing of the mentalities,"¹⁶⁰ educators must avoid both "the deception of palliative solutions"¹⁶¹ and the "trap of essentialist arguments"¹⁶² where "mind-numbing and universalizing"¹⁶³ reductionism down-plays any systemic understanding of the underlying nature of oppression.

While "indispensable indignation gives one the courage to fight"¹⁶⁴ it helps no one if privileged students fall into a swampy morass of despair induced by a sense of their individualized guilt and role as oppressor. Although the confrontational posture of the

Hebrew Prophets may be enticing for some educators to emulate, Freire calls educators to assume a “posture of simplicity and the absence of triumphalism, which will reveal on the one hand, a deeply rooted sense of security and, on the other, a true humility that does not spend itself in false modesty.”¹⁶⁵ Instead of having “dogmatist super-certitude that ... we know what the students should know,”¹⁶⁶ educators should seek to be both relevant and humble, both flexible and tolerant.

Of particular concern to scholars in religious institutions of higher learning is Freire’s assertion that there is an ever-present danger that “Christians might get stuck at the level of the spirit, the soul, the subjectivity”¹⁶⁷ instead of working for substantive social transformation. Well-intentioned educators might content themselves in assuming the role of functioning as “explainers of correct interpretation,”¹⁶⁸ while all they are actually doing is passing on their own dogmatic paternalism to another generation in the name of some universalized, over-arching religious or moral self-assigned “mandate.” Educators can assist privileged students to reach beyond “the narrow horizons of our own villages” and gain an increasingly [responsive and accountable]... global perspective on reality.”¹⁶⁹

Paulo Freire lived a life characterized by “patient impatience”¹⁷⁰ with the paternalism of the liberal and privileged experts on oppression that he encountered in numerous contexts of privilege. One sustaining aid for Freire were the examples he found within social history that gave him hope that oppression could be struggled against and that education could be an ideal vehicle for the creation of what Freire called a “community of liberating remembrance.”¹⁷¹ One Freirean educator, Bishop Arnes of Sao Paulo conceded, “When we are teaching the students of the wealthy and powerful, if our education cannot forge revolutionary people, at least we can ensure that our students do not become fascists.”¹⁷² Educators among the privileged will be transparent and vulnerable with students and speak with them honestly about their personal culpability and role in ongoing systemic social injustices. The task of the educator is not to remonstrate privileged students about what they should be doing or what they need to learn but to join them in this struggle and seek, with mutuality, to facilitate each other’s learning and development of *conscientizacao*. There is no one “solution” to confronting oppression through education,

but the writings of Paulo Freire offer an interesting starting point for engagement. While Freire studied Marxist ideology he was a product of his specific time and place and should not be dismissed as a thorough-going materialist or determinist. Further, while Freire was primarily focused on the status and needs of the victims of injustice, his ideas also have clear ramifications for the privileged as they are reconsidered.

Paulo Freire believed that education could create for students a “world of possibilities”¹⁷³ instead of serving the status-quo by imprisoning naturally inquiring and curious minds in cells of silence and submission. Those of us who come after Freire are fortunate to enjoy the benefit of his passionate challenge to our pedagogy. Our task is to engage our students so as to empower their own *conscientizacao* and to work with them in sharing a dialogue of mutual respect with those among us who are oppressed.

Endnotes

¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, New York: Penguin Books, 1970 (1990), 58. Hereafter this book will be referred to as Freire (1970).

² Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez, *Learning to Question: Pedagogy of Liberation*, Geneva: WCC Publications (1989), 27. Speaking of ideology in Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans and William Bean Kennedy, *Pedagogies for the Non-Poor* by Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books (1987), 223: Freire says, “Ideology often functions as a ...false consciousness, as a distortion or inversion of the real reality or the real concreteness. It’s something which puts a kind of veil over reality and over the world. It’s something which says that A is B and not A is A. There are interests, social interests, which make it possible for ideology to operate and work.”

³ Evans, Evans and Kennedy (1987), 233: “Freire spoke of the middle class as being like tourists who can move back and forth into lower and upper-class situations.” The quote Kennedy is referring to is found on 227: “The middle class is obviously not the dominant class, the dominating class. And for this reason the middle class can go back and forth between the dominant class and the oppressed. And because they have this freedom to make little journeys back and forth, like tourists, then they feel themselves without guilt. And free. And truly, they are not. Intellectuals are always thinking that they’re free.”

⁴ Evans, Evans and Kennedy (1987), 136ff. In “Pedagogies for the Non-Poor,” Evans, Evans and Kennedy discuss the “Chrysalis Program” for the transformation of theological education in North America.

⁵ Ana Maria Araujo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, editors, *The Paulo Freire Reader*, New York: Continuum Books (2001), page 2.

⁶ Evans, Evans and Kennedy (1987), 240. William Bean Kennedy writes, “The non-poor live in such isolation from the poor that they easily hide in their cocoon and blame the victims because they neither know the hurts nor understand the causes of such hardships as layoffs or unemployment. In non-poor churches there are no hungry people-or at least no visibly hungry people- so people lack any immediate feeling for the suffering of hunger...What the cocoon does is cushion the problems and make suffering seem remote. It narrows the ideological horizons, circumscribes interpretations and severely limits imaginations which could envision a better world.”

⁷ A group of Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur working in Hartford and Cincinnati in 1980 used Freire’s text and approach and faced immediate challenges from the “non-poor” who forcefully resisted infringements against their privilege: “Those who opposed them were of the same faith, rooted in the same Bible, but still did not see the situation with the same eyes. The non-poor were opposing the human rights

of the poor in their own community whose resources they not only controlled, but with real power, resisted sharing.” From Evans, Evans, and Kennedy, (1987), 190

⁸ Freire (1970), 43.

⁹ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 40.

¹⁰ Freire (1970), 42, cites Herbert Marcuse’s texts, *One Dimensional Man* (1964) and *Eros and Civilization* (1955) as two primary texts in the development of his ideas about social control.

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¹² Freire (1970), 69. Freire writes, “Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection....saying that word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone-nor can she say it for another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words.

¹³ Evans, Evans and Kennedy (1987), 226: “It is impossible to think of education without thinking of power....if you want to transform the world, you have to fight power in order to get it. But for me, the question... is not just to get power, but to reinvent power.”

¹⁴ Freire (1970), preface.

¹⁵ Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers (1987), 121: “Schools do not operate in an overt manner...the question of power is always associated with education. The large number of people who do not read and write does not represent a failure of the schooling class. Their expulsion reveals the triumph of the schooling class. In fact, this misreading of responsibility reflects the schools hidden curriculum (see Henry Girout on this subject).”

¹⁶ Freire quoted in Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 20.

¹⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy in Process* in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 112.

¹⁸ A book written with Ira Shor, *Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*, South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers (1987) and a book written with Myles Horton, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*, edited by Brenda Bell, John Ganetti, and John Peters, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, are of particular note for a further examination of the relationship between conscientization and the elite. Freire’s discussion of neo-liberalism and the political aspects of education in two books published posthumously, *Pedagogy of Freedom* and *Pedagogy of Imagination*, are relevant for contemporary applications of Freire’s ideas on justice. In chapter two of Peter Mayo’s recent book: *Paulo Freire’s Legacy for Radical Education and Politics*, Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers (2004), the author makes a strong case that Freire’s writings must be seen in their entirety.

¹⁹ Freire (1970), 60.

²⁰ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donald Macedo, eds., 39.

²¹ Personal interview with Professor Anna Marie Saul, 8/04/05, Pontifical Universidad Catholica, Sao Paulo, Brasil.

²² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the City*, in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 233.

²³ Peter L. McLaren. and Colin Lankshear, eds., *Politics of Liberation: Paths from Freire*, London: Routledge (1994), 15.

²⁴ Freire, Paulo and Antonio Faundez (1989), 66. In this same page, Freire writes that Christians should, “Assume the role of subjects in studying the gospels which they no longer simply read...from the standpoint of the oppressor.”

²⁵ Peter L. McLaren and Peter Leonard, editors, *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*, London: Routledge (1993), 66: “In educational approaches in the United States, the privilege of experience over theory has led to an unashamed celebration of empirical realism, impartial and disinterested knowledge and a refusal to recognize that all forms of analysis are simultaneously forms of advocacy....The ideal of impartiality actually serves to mask the ways in which dominant perspectives claim universality and justify forms of domination.”

²⁶ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy in Process*, in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 131.

²⁷ Freire (1970), 127.

²⁸ Freire (1970), 119-120.

²⁹ Freire (1970), 55.

³⁰ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 21.

³¹ Freire (1970), 144.

³² Freire, Paulo and Donaldo Macedo (1987), 121: “Not only the propaganda content of the schools but also the scheduling, the discipline and the day to day tasks required of the students create a quality that gradually incites rebelliousness on the part of children and adolescents. Their defiance corresponds to the aggressive elements in the curriculum that work against the students and their interests.”

³³ Because of this Freire warns that the methodologies for social transformation are just as important as the content of the educational curriculum. He states that it is naïve to hope that the oppressor will abandon their agenda and the recognition that “true humanists...cannot use banking educational methods in the pursuit of liberation, for they would only negate that very pursuit.” Freire (1970), 59. In North America, the issue of educational methodology and its relation to racism has examined these same issues; see Jonathan Turner, Royce Singleton, Jr. and David Musick, editors, *Oppression: A Socio-History of Black-White Relations in America*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers (1987), 139.

³⁴ An excellent discussion of conscientization in the work of Freire is to be found in chapter 8 of Peter Roberts book, *Education, Literacy and Humanization: Exploring the World of Paulo Freire*, Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey Publishers (2000).

³⁵ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 7.

³⁶ This idea is also discussed in Franz Fanon’s, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1968), 52, and also in Fanon’s, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston, 1967).

³⁷ Freire (1970), 85: “In general a dominated consciousness which has not yet perceived a limit-situation in its totality apprehends only its epiphenomena and transfers to the latter the inhibiting force which is the property of the limit-situation. This fact is of great importance for the investigation of generative themes. When people lack a critical understanding of their reality, apprehending it only in fragments which they do not perceive as interacting constituent elements of the whole. They cannot truly know that reality. To truly know it they would have to reverse their starting point: they would need to have a total vision of the context in order subsequently to separate and isolate its constituent elements and by means of this analysis achieve a clearer perception of the whole.”

³⁸ Freire (1970), 30.

³⁹ Freire (1970) quoting Pierre Furter, *Educacao e Vida*, (Rio de Janeiro, 1966, 26-27), 73.

⁴⁰ Freire (1970), 137.

⁴¹ Freire (1970), 47.

⁴² Freire (1970), 19.

⁴³ Freire (1970), 127. In this same page Freire writes, “Since it is necessary to divide the people in order to preserve the status-quo and (thereby) the power of the dominators, it is essential for the oppressors to keep the oppressed from perceiving their strategy. ...In order to divide and confuse the people, the destroyers call themselves builders and accuse the true builders of being destructive.”

⁴⁴ Freire (1970), 120: Freire notes: “The question: ‘Do you know who you are talking to?’ is still current among us.”

⁴⁵ Freire, Paulo and Donaldo Macedo (1987), 122.

⁴⁶ Freire (1970), 87.

⁴⁷ Freire (1970), 97: “Bode observed that the peasants became interested in the discussion only when the codification related directly to their felt needs. Any deviation in the codification as well as any attempt by the educator to guide the decoding discussion into other areas, produced silence and indifference.”

⁴⁸ Freire (1970), 45.

⁴⁹ Freire (1970), 114-15.

⁵⁰ Freire (1970), 57.

⁵¹ Freire (1970), 57.

⁵² Freire (1970), 128. Freire writes that, “Within certain historical conditions, manipulation is accommodated by means of pacts between the dominant and the dominated classes-pacts which, if considered superficially, might give the impression of a dialogue between the classes. In reality however, these pacts are not dialogue, because their true objectives are determined by the unequivocal interests of the dominant elites. In the last analysis, pacts are used by the dominators to achieve their own ends.” Page 128.

⁵³ Freire (1979), 129.

⁵⁴ Freire (1970), 66.

⁵⁵ Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, London: Sneed and Ward (1973), 44.

⁵⁶ Freire (1970), 21.

⁵⁷ Freire, Paulo and Antonio Faundez (1989), 74. Freire writes, “Marx and Engles in the *Holy Family* taught that the class which rules a society materially also rules spiritually. Their ideas are the ideas that prevail in society...that seeks to impose its superiority over other cultural expressions... (even) while espousing a false cultural pluralism.”

⁵⁸ Freire (1970), 133. The discussion continues on 134: “All domination involves invasion-at times physical and overt, at times camouflaged, with the invader assuming the role of the helping friend...Cultural conquest leads to the cultural inauthenticity of those who are invaded: they begin to respond to the values, the standards, and the goals of the invaders. In their passion to dominate, to mold others to their patterns and their way of life, the invaders desire to know how those they have invaded apprehend reality-but only so they can dominate the latter more effectively. In cultural invasion it is essential that those who are invaded come to see their reality with the outlook of the invaders rather than their own; for the more they mimic the invaders, the more stable the position of the latter becomes.”

⁵⁹ Freire (1970), 135. Another source of preparation is in the home where “parent-child relationships usually reflect the objective cultural conditions of the surrounding social structure. If the conditions which penetrate the home are authoritarian, rigid, and dominating, the home will increase the climate of oppression. As these authoritarian relations between parents and children intensify, children in their infancy increasingly internalize the parental authority.”

⁶⁰ Freire (1970), 161.

⁶¹ Freire (1970), 40.

⁶² Freire (1970), 56: Freire writes that many see themselves as “...possessors of a consciousness: an empty mind passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside. For example, my desk, my books, my cup of coffee, all the objects before me-as bits of the world which surround me....” This theme is picked up in Evans, Evans and Kennedy (1987), 244: Baum states, “The stress on Jesus as personal savior is always linked, therefore to the defense of the political status-quo. The individualistic religion of traditional evangelical and fundamentalist Christians legitimizes the individualism of our economic system, while they present their message as nonpolitical, it has significant political consequences. The privatization of sin and conversion, fostered in Catholicism by the confessional practice, is promoted in the Protestant Churches by the traditional evangelical stress on personal conversion to Jesus (Gregory Baum, *Religion*, 209).

⁶³ Freire (1970), 49.

⁶⁴ Freire (1970), 41.

⁶⁵ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 10-11: “By refusing to deal with class privilege the pseudo-critical educator dogmatically pronounces the need to empower students, to give them voices. These educators are even betrayed by their own language. Instead of creating pedagogical structures that would enable oppressed students to empower themselves, they paternalistically proclaim, “we need to empower students.” This position often leads to the creation of what we could call literacy and poverty pimps to the extent that, while proclaiming the need to empower students, they are in fact strengthening their own privileged position...one can be empowered so long as the empowerment does not encroach on the “expert’s” privileged, powerful position. This is position of power designed to paternalistically empower others.”

⁶⁶ Freire (1970), 90.

⁶⁷ Freire (1970), 105.

⁶⁸ Freire (1970), 152.

⁶⁹ Freire (1970), 65.

⁷⁰ Freire (1970), 27.

⁷¹ Freire (1970), 119.

⁷² Freire (1970), 136.

⁷³ Freire (1970), 126.

⁷⁴ Freire quotes Hegel: “True solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these beings for another.” Freire (1970), 31.

⁷⁵ Freire (1970), 35.

⁷⁶ Paulo Freire, *Learning to Question: Pedagogy of Liberation* in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, 218.

⁷⁷ Freire (1970), 29.

⁷⁸ Freire (1970), 36.

⁷⁹ Freire, quoted in Catherine Walsh, *Pedagogy and the Struggle for Voice: Issues of Language, Power and Schooling for Puerto Ricans*, Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1991, 134.

⁸⁰ Freire (1970), 155.

⁸¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving the Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Robert R. Barr, New York: Continuum, 1995, 89.

⁸² Paulo Freire, from *Pedagogy in Progress*, in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donald Macedo, 120. Freire quotes Amilcar Cabral who says that class suicide is the only “real option of the middle class in the general picture of the struggle for national liberation.”

⁸³ Freire (1970), 42.

⁸⁴ Freire (1970), 42.

⁸⁵ Freire (1970), 113: “Domination, by its very nature, requires only a dominant pole and a dominated pole in antithetical contradiction; revolutionary liberation, which attempts to resolve this contradiction, implies the existence not only of these poles, but also of a leadership group which emerges during this attempt... To simply think about the people, as the dominators do, without any self-giving in that thought, to fail to think with the people, is a sure way to cease being revolutionary leaders.”

⁸⁶ Freire (1970), 111.

⁸⁷ Freire (1970), 151.

⁸⁸ Freire (1970), 43.

⁸⁹ Freire speaks of “meaningful mutual engagement” where revolutionaries liberate others while also liberating themselves. To do this they have to have a methodology of investigation which happens in the context of constant dialogue. Freire cites Mao Tse Tung: “I have proclaimed for a long time: we must teach the masses clearly what we have received from them confusedly.” From Andre Malraux, *Anti-Memoirs* (New York, 1968, 361-362) quoted in Freire (1970), 74.

⁹⁰ Freire (1970), 69.

⁹¹ Freire (1970), 48.

⁹² Martin Luther King, Jr. quoted in A. Christian van Gorder and Lewis T. Tait, *Three-Fifth's Theology: Challenging Racism in American Christianity*, Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2002, 185.

⁹³ Freire (1970), 38: “The oppressor... obviously never calls them ‘the oppressed’ but—depending on whether they are fellow countrymen or not—‘those people’ or ‘the blind and envious masses’ or ‘savages’ or ‘natives’ or ‘subversives who are disaffected, who are ‘violent,’ ‘barbaric,’ ‘wicked or ‘ferocious’ when they react to the violence of the oppressors.”

⁹⁴ Freire (1970), 41: “The more the oppressors control the oppressed, the more they change them into apparently inanimate ‘things.’ This tendency of the oppressor consciousness to ‘in-animate’ everything and everyone it encounters, in its eagerness to possess, unquestionably corresponds with a tendency to sadism... a perverted love—a love of death and not of life.” In the context of these comments Freire quotes and refers to similar ideas expressed by Erich Fromm in *The Heart of Man* (New York, 1966), page 32.

⁹⁵ Freire (1970), 42.

⁹⁶ Freire (1970), 32.

⁹⁷ Freire (1970), 32.

⁹⁸ Freire (1970), 34.

⁹⁹ Freire writes, “To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naïve and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without people. This objectivist position is as ingenious as that of subjectivism, which postulates people without a world. World and human beings do not exist apart from each other. They exist in constant interaction. Marx does not espouse such a dichotomy, nor does any other critical, realistic thinker.” Freire (1970), 33.

¹⁰⁰ Freire (1970), 36.

¹⁰¹ Karen Lebacqz, *Justice in an Unjust World: Foundations for a Christian Approach to Justice*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Press (1987), 56.

¹⁰² Freire (1970), 133.

¹⁰³ Freire, quoted in Evans, Evans and Kennedy (1987), 222.

¹⁰⁴ Freire (1970), 94.

¹⁰⁵ Freire (1970), 55.

¹⁰⁶ Freire (1970), 144-145.

¹⁰⁷ Freire (1970), 44.

¹⁰⁸ Freire (1970), 70.

¹⁰⁹ Freire (1970), 57.

¹¹⁰ Freire (1970), 38.

¹¹¹ Freire (1970), 38.

¹¹² Freire (1970), 65.

¹¹³ Freire (1970), 52. He goes on to say that. All too often the focus within education is on “the sonority of words and not their transforming power...Narration with the teacher as narrator leads the student to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into “containers,” into “receptacles” to be “filled” by the teacher. The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are.” Pages 52-53.

¹¹⁴ Freire (1970), 49.

¹¹⁵ Stanley Arnowitz and Henry Giroux, *Education: Still under Siege*, Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey (1993), 64: “The first responsibility of the educator is to validate the experience of the student including her aesthetic experience and to learn from students. This view corresponds to Paulo Freire’s notion of education as dialogue. Dialogical education is not the same as the old concept of student-centeredness.” See also Henry Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for Opposition*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers (1983).

¹¹⁶ Paulo Freire, *Learning to Question: Pedagogy of Liberation* in Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 222.

¹¹⁷ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 9.

¹¹⁸ Freire (1970), 148, citing Martin Buber’s *I and Thou* (1958).

¹¹⁹ Freire (1970), 74.

¹²⁰ Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy in Process*, in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 152. Freire goes on to write that in mutual learning both the student and the teacher “...take their own daily lives as the object of their reflection in the process of this nature. They are required to stand at a distance from the daily lives in which they are generally immersed and to which they often attribute an aura of permanence. Only at a distance can they get a perspective that permits them to emerge from that daily routine and begin their own independent development....always remembering that every practice is social in character.”

¹²¹ Freire (1970), 61.

¹²² Freire (1970), 61: “Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-student and the students-for-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on “authority” are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education are “owned” by the teacher.

¹²³ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 9.

¹²⁴ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 10.

¹²⁵ McLaren and Leonard, editors (1993), hooks, bell (Gloria Watkins), article, “bell hooks speaking about Paulo Freire, the man, his work”, 147. In the same page she suggests that her students read both Freire and the ideas of Malcolm X “...as a way to quench the thirst of those who long for change.”

¹²⁶ Freire (1970), 136.

¹²⁷ Freire (1970), 64.

¹²⁸ Henry David Thoreau from *Economy*, 14-15, cited in *Uncommon Learning: Thoreau on Education*, Martin Bickman, editor. Boston: Houghton Mifflin (1999), 6.

¹²⁹ Freire acknowledges that “Teachers and students are not identical, and this for countless reasons. After all, it is a difference between them that makes them precisely students or teachers. Were they simply identical each could be the other...dialogue is not a favor done by one for the other, a kind of grace accorded. On the contrary it implies a sincere, fundamental respect on the part of the subjects engaged in it, a respect that is violated or perverted from materializing by authoritarianism. Freire, Paulo excerpted from *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving the Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 248.

¹³⁰ Freire (1970), 62.

¹³¹ Freire (1970), page 67: “Problem-posing education, as a humanist and liberating praxis, posits as fundamental that people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation. To that end it enables teachers and students to become Subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an

alienating intellectualism; it also enables people to overcome their false perception of reality. The world-no longer something to be described with deceptive words-becomes the object of that transforming action by men and women which results in their humanization.

¹³² Maocir Gadotti, *Pedagogy of Praxis: A Dialectical Philosophy of Education*, translated by John Milton, Albany: State University of New York Press (1996), 45: Dr. Gadotti uses the term in the context of the works of theoretician Antonio Gramsci.

¹³³ Freire (1970), 71.

¹³⁴ Freire (1970), 71. Freire goes on to write in this same discussion: "...without this faith in people, dialogue is a farce which inevitably degenerates into paternalistic manipulation...trust is established by dialogue. Should it founder, it will be seen that its preconditions were lacking. False love, false humility and feeble faith in others cannot create trust...nor yet can dialogue exist without hope. Hope is rooted in men's incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search-a search which can be carried out only in communion with others. Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it...As the encounter of men and women seeking to be more fully human, dialogue cannot be carried out in a climate of hopelessness. If the dialoguers expect nothing to come of their efforts, their encounter will be empty and sterile, bureaucratic and tedious." Pages 72-73.

¹³⁵ Freire (1970), 53.

¹³⁶ Freire (1970), 54.

¹³⁷ Freire (1970), page 58: Creativity is stifled because "the banking concept of education is necrophilic. Based on mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action and leads women and men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power." In this same context Freire also quotes Reinhold Niebuhr in *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York, 1960).

¹³⁸ Freire (1970), page 60: "Liberating education consists of acts of cognition, not transfers of information."

¹³⁹ Freire (1970), 122-123: "One of the characteristics of oppressive cultural action which is almost never perceived by the dedicated by naïve professionals who are involved is the emphasis on a focalized view of problems rather than on seeing them as dimensions of a totality. In "community development projects" the more a region or an area is broken down into "local communities" without the study of these communities both as totalities in themselves and as part of another totality (the area, region, and so forth) - which in turn is still part of a still larger totality (the nation, as part of the continental totality)-the more alienation is intensified."

¹⁴⁰ Freire (1970), 54.

¹⁴¹ Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy in Process* in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, 117.

¹⁴² Freire (1970), 56.

¹⁴³ McLaren and Lankshear, 15: "As Freire says, to be utopian is not to be merely idealistic or impractical but rather to engage in denunciation and annunciation. By denunciation Freire refers to the naming and analysis of existing structures of oppression, by annunciation he means the creation of new forms of relationships and being in the world as a result of mutual struggle against oppression."

¹⁴⁴ Barry Harvey, *Politics of the Theological: Beyond the Piety and Power of a World Come of Age*. New York: Peter Lang (American University Series), 1995, page 103. Harvey also relates the critique of Freire offered by Peter Berger than he is guilty of "philosophical error and political irony." I very much appreciate Barry's assistance and proofreading in the development of this article.

¹⁴⁵ Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, eds., *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation*, New York: Oxford University Press (2004), 153.

¹⁴⁶ Harvey Holtz, Irwin Marcus ed. al. editors, *Education and the American Dream: Conservatives, Liberals and Radicals Debate the Future of Education*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers (1989), 2.

¹⁴⁷ While preparing this research I was given a book entitled *Teaching As An Act of Faith: Theory and Practice in Church-Related Higher Education*, Arlin C. Migliazzo, New York: Fordham University Press (2002). None of the 14 articles in this book addressed social justice education and the index listed no references to poverty, racism, injustice or class. Sociology and social ethics received scant attention.

¹⁴⁸ Freire, Paulo and Donaldo Macedo (1987), 127: He also writes, "These educators (in the United States) cannot reduce themselves to being pure education specialists...educators must become conscious individuals who live part of their dreams within an educational sphere."

¹⁴⁹ Evans, Evans and Kennedy (1987), 225.

¹⁵⁰ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 6.

¹⁵¹ Much of Freire's work focused on adult-education and literacy projects. Freire is probably best known for the "Freire-method" of literacy education. This specific context of his work is discussed in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* but is not the primary focus of the text. Instead, it is symptomatic of his vision for social justice. Another important theme in Freire's writing is the dual and ambiguous nature of those who are oppressed (on page 147 Freire quotes Che Guevara on the dual/conflicted nature of the oppressed).

¹⁵² Freire (1970), from a footnote on page 123.

¹⁵³ Freire (1970), 158.

¹⁵⁴ Derrick Jensen, *Walking on Water: Reading, Writing and Revolution*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company (2004), 195.

¹⁵⁵ Freire (1970), 123.

¹⁵⁶ Evans, Evans and Kennedy (1987), 219.

¹⁵⁷ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 1.

¹⁵⁸ In this context Freire cites in a footnote a political poster in Brasil that encouraged the people, "You don't need to think, he thinks for you! You don't need to see, he sees for you! You don't need to talk, he talks for you! You don't need to act, he acts for you." From *Education for Critical Consciousness* and cited in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 93.

¹⁵⁹ Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*, Boston, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers (1987), 61.

¹⁶⁰ Paulo Freire, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 184.

¹⁶¹ Freire (1970), 164.

¹⁶² Antonio Dorder, *Culture and Power in the Classroom: A Critical Foundation for Bicultural Education*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey (1991), 120.

¹⁶³ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 19.

¹⁶⁴ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the City* in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 231. In this section Freire writes, "My sensitivity makes me have chills of discomfort when I see, especially in the Brazilian northeast, entire families eating detritus in landfills, eating garbage; they are the garbage of the economy that boasts about being the seventh or eighth economy in the world. My hurt sensitivity does more, however than just give me chills or make me feel offended as a person, it sickens me and pushes me into the political fight for a radical transformation of this unjust society."

¹⁶⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy in Progress* in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 136.

¹⁶⁶ Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 247.

¹⁶⁷ Evans, Evans and Kennedy (1987), 220.

¹⁶⁸ Patrick Shannon, *Broken Promises: Reading Instruction in Twentieth Century America*, South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers (1989), 135.

¹⁶⁹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy in Progress* in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 153.

¹⁷⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy in Progress* in Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 122.

¹⁷¹ Peter L. McLaren and Peter Leonard (1993), in the article by Peter McLaren and Tomaz Tadeo da Silva, "De-centering Pedagogy: Critical Literacy, Resistance, Suffering and the Politics of Memory, quoting Giroux, 74.

¹⁷² Interview, Dr. Moacir Gadotti, Director, Institute Paulo Freire, Sao Paulo, Brasil, August 8, 2005.

¹⁷³ Freire, Ana Maria Araujo and Donaldo Macedo, eds., 19.

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