

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Paulo Freire

A review and evaluation of the relevance of this work to contemporary education and youth work

Introduction

This seminal work was published in 1968 in Portuguese. The author, Paulo Freire, was an educationalist working in Brazil, though for political reasons, (he was imprisoned by a military junta in 1964) he spent time in other countries including a period in Geneva where he worked as an adviser on education for the World Council of Churches. This book itself was written while he was in Chile. After his return to Brazil in 1979 he became involved with a socialist political party and eventually came to hold an administrative position as Secretary of Education for São Paulo city.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed is Paulo Freire's most well-known work. In it he presents a theory of education in the context of the revolutionary struggle. While the revolutionary theory is Marxist the context is unmistakably South American. There is more than a hint of Liberation theology. The focus of the educational programmes he describes seem to be aimed primarily at rural peasants rather than the urban poor.

This review follows the structure of the book. The four chapters deal with; i) the revolutionary context, the oppressed and the oppressors, the historical vocation of the oppressed, ii) the method of education favoured by the oppressors, which Paulo Freire calls the banking concept of education, and which he counters with his theory of a problem-posing education, iii) a description of his theories in practice in educational programmes with the rural poor in various South American countries and iv) two opposing theories of cultural action, 'antidialogical' and 'dialogical', the former aiming to suppress critical apprehension of reality the latter favouring the discovery of reality through critical thought and free communication.

Freire's theoretical model is that of dialectical materialism, the idea that the human destiny is to be resolved in a struggle between the two economic classes of owners and labourers (people who sell their labour to capital). We don't accept the idea that this struggle is the only locus where man's destiny is to be resolved. So, in reading this book, our aim is to sift through it and see what remains of value after the dialectical materialism is stripped away. Our second aim is to ask how relevant that remaining theory is to contemporary Western schooling (and youth work).

The context for writing this paper came from a comment in *The Dangerous Rise in Therapeutic Education* by Ecclestone and Hayes (1) that "And nor do we adopt the safe form of verbal radicalism of liberals who cite the emancipatory rhetoric and beliefs of educators such as Paulo Freire without any recognition that the structural and material conditions that shaped it are starkly different from current conditions". We wanted to see how relevant indeed Freire's work is to our present conditions.

Chapter 1. The revolutionary context

Freire's analysis of the social situation is based on the ideas of dialectical materialism; an oppressor class oppresses and an oppressed class is oppressed. His particular concern is with the state of consciousness of the oppressed class. The oppressed class is submerged, having accepted the *thing* status into which they are oppressed. The historical vocation of the oppressed class is to struggle against the oppressor and realise their humanity which the oppressor denies them. Only the oppressed class can realise humanity, but they do it for all. That is the oppressed class has the role of liberating the oppressors, as well as itself, from their role as oppressors, thus resolving a contradiction in which they neither are fully human.

In this chapter Freire outlines the relations which exist between oppressor and oppressed. For example: "Any situation in which 'A' objectively exploits 'B' or hinders his or her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression". And also: "One of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed is prescription. Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness." He states that the oppressed may internalise the oppressor. The oppressed who emerge from their submergence in being-for-the-other or thingness are 'dual' beings; they have an attitude of adhesion to the oppressor and cannot sufficiently 'objectify' him. Freire writes: "But almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors'". The peasant who just receives some education may express a desire to be foreman on the ranch for example. As we will see later this theory of the 'dual-nature' of the peasants creates the possibility of a kind of authoritarian outlook. In theory it creates the possibility that peasants who disagree with the revolutionary ideas can be dismissed as having 'internalised the oppressor'.

The education that Freire is proposing in this book is one that makes "oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed", and he continues, "from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for liberation". It is thus a pedagogy *for the revolution*. In Chapter 4 Freire discusses the attitude of the *revolutionary leaders* towards education. He lectures them to avoid communicating with the oppressed via *communiqués*; the revolutionary leaders must dialog with the oppressed otherwise the relationship is one of domination and the revolution is not authentic.

A key theme throughout the book is that of '*praxis*'. This theory links the work of critical reflection on the situation of oppression with action which changes that situation in a concrete, objectively verifiable way. Freire writes "A mere perception of reality not followed by this critical intervention will not lead to a transformation of objective reality - precisely because it is not a true perception". The involvement with actions (which are collective, class-based and led by the revolutionary leaders) ensures the authenticity of the perceptions. Action without reflection is 'activism'. Reflection without action is 'subjectivism', which Marx has "scientifically destroyed" -a reference to the theory that human destiny is realised in the class struggle and political action perhaps. "It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for liberation that they begin to believe in themselves. This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be a praxis."

It is not entirely clear whether this means all thinking or whether it is just reflection on social matters which cannot be authentic unless it is linked to action. Given that the historical vocation of mankind is to be found in the class struggle and in the revolution it seems that all merely academic thinking is regarded as suspect. However; in a footnote in Chapter 3 Freire writes concerning those who "retreat from the world to consider it": "But this type of retreat is only authentic when the meditator is 'bathed' in reality; not when the retreat signifies contempt for the world and flight from it, in a type of 'historical schizophrenia'". The revolution then is primary; philosophy is allowed only if the thinker is 'bathed' in reality, this bathing presumably connecting him to the revolution and history. Heidegger, in an interview for television quoted from Marx, in a Theses on Feurbach saying

that "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.". Heidegger replies "That means that Marx relies on a certain interpretation of the world to demand his change of the world. The statement by Marx is thus unfounded." It requires an interpretation. For Heidegger, thinking about the world, using the kind of thinking which is proper to Being, is an interpretation of the world and must come before any thought of changing the world. For Marxists like Freire the discussion is over because it is 'scientifically proven' that their theory of revolution is right. Having been proven the thing now is to change the world. There is a certain interpretation of the world but, because it is scientifically proven further discussion is mere 'blah', 'subjectivism'. This is the heart of the matter. For Marxists philosophy is resolved and human destiny is to be realised through the class struggle. Any further philosophising is vaporising. But for Heidegger and others this is a foreclosure of the argument. So - we, too, maintain, that philosophical thinking without political action is valid (if of course the philosophy is authentic). We would allow that thinking about existence can be authentic even when it is not political thinking. Freire seems to allow this but only marginally. We would wish to give it greater priority.

Nonetheless the way Freire brings the political into focus is important. A person who does not think (and think critically) about social and political reality but simply accepts it is thereby participating in the world in a way which has been organised for him by others. If being human means exercising freedom this is to be less than human. To reflect 'the normal life laid down for one in this society is an unfree one' and then to change nothing does indeed render the reflection superficial, mere vaporising empty thoughts. To act on the basis of this reflection would indeed deepen the insight and lead to further insights. The argument can be extended; one is not unfree alone. If society is organised in such a way that one is unfree it is likely that others will be unfree too. A critical response that simply developed a personal lifestyle on a solipsist basis would be meaningless given the interconnectedness of human beings (however and at all levels that interconnectedness is analysed). There is thus of course an argument about the nature of the collective struggle. If, as we assert, the notion of class struggle and the materialist analysis is erroneous how do we escape from a purely each man for himself, solipsist, vision of liberation? What is the concrete basis for solidarity if not membership of the proletariat (those who sell their labour to capital)? (These questions will be developed in a subsequent paper). And, in thinking about social and political reality one must indeed, as Freire asserts, also act in line with this thinking.

Freire acknowledges some of the problems faced by revolutionary movements. For example; "However, the moment the new regime hardens into a dominating 'bureaucracy' the humanist dimension of the struggle is lost and it is no longer possible to speak of liberation". He acknowledges that the revolutionary leadership may disregard the peasants and simply tell them about the revolution rather than educate them so that they participate in it as reflecting/acting human beings. He allows that "However, the restraints imposed by the former oppressed on their oppressors, so that the latter cannot reassume their former position, do not constitute *oppression*". It is of course a fine line between repressing the former oppressors to preserve the purity of the revolution and oppressing them for personal gain. These problems relate to the real historical failures of socialism. George Orwell described how the revolutionary leaders will be hard-pressed to give up their comfort in the post-revolutionary phase in *Animal Farm* and indeed were in Stalin's Russia. In *The Rebel* Albert Camus discussed how revolutions tend to turn nasty as they impose their vision of the end of history on those who are to be saved. The problem with dialectical materialism is that the economic struggle between classes is not the core determining factor in history. The mode of production and the forms of economic relationship analysed by Marx are one form of economic relations, not the total context in which human destiny is worked out. It is simply implausible that a simple blue-print of two opposing classes, with the latter guided by the 'revolutionary leaders', will fight to resolve the contradiction between them and thereby resolve human destiny once and for all. It is the story-line for a film. Psychologically such a method leaves aside the problem of human violence. The oppressed are not saints. Freire again is aware of this when he notes the dangers of 'revanchism' on the part of the peasants. But he offers no solutions to the problems of evil and violence in human beings. The problem is that all the cautions and warnings he feels bound to cite are needed because when the revolution gets going this is exactly what happens. Caught between justifying the violence of the oppressed as a 'loving' response to the violence of the oppressor and perhaps not wanting to present his heroes dripping with blood

Freire describes a scene, that actually occurred, where peasants have 'kidnapped' the owner of ranch but no one can bring themselves to actually hold him so in fear of the power of the oppressor are they. But, in fact, revolutionary movements in South America are stained with blood. When the genie is let out of the bottle it simply isn't going to follow the dialectical blueprint for a text-book revolution presented here by Freire, which is required for it to be authentic. There is no real psychology in this and a false and over simplified grasp of history.

What Freire does well in this chapter is discuss the 'sadism' of the ruling class. While the dialectical materialism of Freire is Marxist in this he is borrowing from Eric Fromm with his distinction between 'being' and 'having' as two contrasting approaches to the problem of living. For example "They [the oppressor class] cannot see that, in the egoistic pursuit of *having* as a possessing class, they suffocate in their own possessions and no longer *are*; they merely *have*." We would only partially accept this; the social context of 'class membership' is important and determining to some extent but the phenomenon is also a psychological one. Freire has to manipulate this interesting psychological phenomenon totally into a class one to sustain his dialectical materialism. (The problem with revolutionary Marxism is that it attempts ultimately to coerce the world into a theoretical framework which doesn't fit). Nonetheless Freire's exploration of this theme is profound. He notes that the possessive view of the world to be found in 'the oppressors' is necrophilic. For example he writes: "And the more the oppressors control the oppressed, the more they change them into apparently inanimate 'things'". We would argue though that this holds as a description of any form of human oppression; it is not limited to economic class oppression and when it is found in that context it is still an individual psychological phenomenon - though nonetheless class determined.

Nonetheless the analysis is profound. 'Class membership' is in many ways determining for an individual. Freire analyses the relationship between oppressor and oppressed well. For example: "For the oppressed, at a certain point in their existential experience, *to be* is not to resemble the oppressor, but to be *under* him, to depend on him. Accordingly, the oppressed are emotionally dependent." Again, though, once you dispense with the dialectical materialism then this understanding of oppression can be extended to other oppressive relationships. Our caveat throughout this is not that the analysis is wrong but that it should not be limited to the struggle between capitalists and workers. There are other forms of oppression. Which of course is heresy from an orthodox Marxist viewpoint.

Much of this chapter is taken up then with looking at the relationship between oppressor and oppressed. The oppressed are 'submerged', seeing themselves as *things* as the oppressor sees them; they lack a critical take on their situation of oppression. The concern of pedagogy in this book is with a revolutionary pedagogy; essentially working with the peasants to help them develop a consciousness of being oppressed so they act to change this. Freire seems to be concerned with the understanding of the situation of oppression and regards the revolutionary leaders as being more responsible for stimulating action. Because it is this kind of pedagogy which is his concern in this book and thus all the pedagogical discussions are contextualised in the revolutionary theory it is not entirely clear to what extent he sees a liberating education existing which is based on freedom but which is not explicitly revolutionary. The question is important because the theory of a pedagogy for the revolution seems in many ways alien to us in the West now. Freire with his pedagogy of the oppressed is preparing the way for the revolutionary leadership. The working class in the West is fragmented and co-opted by individualisation into the bourgeois game. The class struggle has failed. The two-class analysis fails to fully address the types of alienation in this society. Other analyses; such as Foucault on power have more descriptive power. Nonetheless the ideas about a pedagogy which is liberating do not depend on a traditional revolutionary context. In the concluding section of this review we attempt to apply Freire's analysis and pedagogy to our contemporary situation.

According to some viewpoints the signal disease of late industrial capitalism is schizophrenia. There is no simple confrontation of oppressed or oppressor which can be found. One is alienated but, what from? Modern Western man can be both oppressor and oppressed at the same time and in any event the nets of power in which he is caught and catches others are more social and more

subtle than simply being a worker without capital forced to sell his labour to the capitalist. This relationship is however still important but is not the sole focus of how power operates. It seems that the project to build an authentic consciousness through developing a critical awareness of being oppressed and taking action not to be and doing this *collectively* and under the guidance of the *revolutionary leaders as a unified class* does not have catch in our situation. We would argue that it was a mirage even in the South American context at the time Freire was writing, though that situation with its polarisation between land-owners and peasants was more obviously a 'two-class race'. However, in the end, dialectical materialism is not 'scientifically proven', the revolutionary leaders are not to be trusted, and individuals will stubbornly remain individuals however much you designate this as their having imbibed too much oppressor consciousness. Freire's pedagogy of the revolution required that the peasant of his own free will of course, sign up to the revolutionary theory. Should he not this be regarded as evidence that he still had 'oppressor consciousness' in him, a dangerous theory.

The pedagogical theory, which we will examine in detail next, requires that teacher and student work together to solve problems on an equal footing, or at least without the teacher claiming absolute knowledge and an authority superior to that of the peasant. One critical problem for Freire is - what happens when after participating in his programmes and engaging in an open and free dialog with the revolutionary teacher and leaders the peasant still insists he wants to open his own ranch and employ hands? In the end Freire can only regard that as refractory. "But they [the leaders] must always mistrust the *ambiguity* of oppressed people, mistrust the oppressor 'housed' in the latter." In the end the organization (of the revolution) we are told requires authority.

In Chapter 1 of the book Freire is keen to stress the revolutionary context for his pedagogy based on the theory of dialectical materialism. We have been at pains to criticize this model with its insistence on the absolute importance of two opposing economic classes, however the criticisms of oppression have a general value even outside this (limiting in our view) theoretical context. In Chapter 2 Freire discusses his pedagogical theories. Can anything be salvaged of Freire's approach to education once we have shaken off the shackles of dialectical materialism?

Chapter 2 - Banking Education v. Problem-posing education

Freire opposes what he names the "banking concept" of education with his "problem-posing" education. The banking concept of education suits the oppressors. In this system the students are treated as empty vessels into which knowledge can be deposited (like deposits in a bank) by the teacher. Freire depicts what actually goes on in the world of banking education succinctly. He writes "This relationship [teacher-student] involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). The contents, whether values or empirical dimensions of reality, tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified.... His [the teacher's] task is to 'fill' the students with the contents of his narration- contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance".

In banking education the teacher 'knows', because he or she has received the officially sanctioned curriculum knowledge which is then imparted as a stale, static narrative to the students. This is reminiscent of the notion in Illich of the teacher as the *deliverer* of educational packages to the students. Both Illich and Freire notice that the student in modern education is excluded from participation in the getting of knowledge first-hand and as it relates to them. It is someone else's 'knowledge' which they are being given about objects which also belong to others. Students are excluded from inquiry and are in Freire's words "filed away".

Freire makes his critique of education in the Latin American context. The education proposed in that context, even by humanitarians, is an education which excludes the peasant from "restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry". Freire proposes that the themes of an education for the rural poor in South America be ones from their own experience and that they be trained in critical reflection on their own experience.

Freire sees clearly how the teacher in a banking system must assume that the students "know nothing", indeed the teacher projects an "absolute ignorance" onto others. He describes the modern teacher thus: "The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his existence." Banking education is banking education the world over, a theme echoed by Illich who points out that the institution of school is universal, in all political and economic regimes.

Freire argues that banking education fosters passivity in students by negating the spirit of inquiry. "The teacher's task is to organize a process which already occurs spontaneously, to 'fill' the students by making deposits of information which he or she considers to constitute true knowledge". It is this taking over of a natural process which alienates. Freire understands that the teacher is set up between the student and the world to offer a prescribed version of the world to the student, and to adapt the student to the world. The teacher is, as Illich pointed out, the custodian and transmitter of society's rituals. (Illich more than Freire analyses the role the exam system plays in this process though both describe how in modern education knowledge has become an official product not the result of inquiry.) In banking education the teacher owns the object of knowledge and prepares a lesson on it. The lesson is delivered to the students as secondary knowledge. The students never find out anything for themselves and thus are rendered passive. They are good students in as much as they can repeat the narrative about the world which they have been given.

The key to banking education for Freire is the relationship between teacher and student. In banking education there is an absolute dichotomy between the teacher and the student. The teacher *always* has knowledge. His knowledge is *absolute*. Linked to his absolute knowledge is his authority, not just subject authority but the authority of social control. The teacher chooses what is learned. (We would add that in curriculum systems the teacher may themselves have very little say in what is taught; it is determined as a matter of national policy). The students, in their serried rows, learn by absorbing what they are told by the teacher. The good student is the one who does this as meekly and passively as possible. For Freire it is a "ready-to-wear" approach to education which does everything to obviate the need for critical engagement with reality. The teacher *imposes* himself on the students. He is not *with* them. In banking education reality is made static. The students learn about it and adapt to it. In problem-posing education, which Freire contrasts with

banking education, the present is not "well-behaved" and the future is not pre-determined. In problem-posing education the students are involved in reality; they inquire into it critically and thus are able to transform it. Their humanity is thus not denied. Banking education teaches fatalism; the 'world' is a given; one can but submit to it.

Freire links these ideas to his idea of praxis, the idea that thought is only authentic when it is generated by action upon the world. It follows from this that the "thoughts; imparted to the students, devoid of action, are sterile, empty ones, which can only help to build an alienated consciousness". The point is that the student *is given the thoughts of others*. Educational success is measured by her ability to regurgitate these thoughts.

Freire's critique of banking education is located in his class analysis. "Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression". "Banking education", though, is precisely the method favoured in the West to teach almost everyone. Even private schools for the elites in the West use an approach which is essentially banking education, though perhaps with slightly more play in it than is used in the state sector, sufficient to instil a sense of social superiority in the students. Banking education appears to have a utility beyond keeping the rural poor subject to the law of the hacienda owner. It appears to have a utility beyond keeping the proletariat submerged in a false consciousness as understood in Marxism. Indeed banking education appears to have a very wide utility as a general purpose system for ensuring compliance to an existing system. It does this by engendering passivity, by teaching that social conformism is right and not to conform is aberrant, by stifling critical thinking about reality, by teaching submission to social authority as personified by the school-teacher, and by training the student to accept packages put together by others rather than trusting his own instinct to learn. This last point is touched on by Freire but taken much further by Illich in his critique of education as being a training in consumerism.

For Freire banking education alienates because it is outside the *praxis*. Banking education, by excluding the students from a living, critical engagement with the now (the present political and social conditions) is, without doing anything further, already indoctrinating students into acquiescence in the status quo. His ideas about "banking education" and what he proposes instead, "problem-posing education", have, in our view though, an applicability as a general educational theory outside of being the doctrine of the educational wing of the revolutionary party, but this field is not developed specifically by Freire in this book.

Freire, as we have seen, counters banking education with "problem-posing" education. The key is the relationship between student and teacher. In this approach to education the teacher-student teaches the student-teachers. This indeed recognizes a truth; it is never the case in fact that the teacher always knows and the student never does. Even quite 'conventional' academic authors often testify to the contributions their students have made; this bears witness to the fact that a meaningful *dialog* has taken place between teacher and students. In a subject, like history, where 'knowledge' is a matter of interpretation this is quite obviously so. But also in a subject such as mathematics it is likely that students will from time to time surprise their teacher. It is obviously true that where there is a great disparity in experience the teacher will rarely gain new subject knowledge from the students; for example a maths teacher with a Phd is unlikely to extend his own knowledge of mathematics greatly by teaching basic arithmetic to a group of 10 year olds, however bright and capable. Nonetheless two things remain true: i) In *no case* will the teacher ever be guaranteed not to be able to learn from his students and ii) even in those cases where this is unlikely there is no reason why a teacher cannot still work alongside the students, as an equal, posing problems and working with them to solve them. The method, if you want to call it that, of problem-posing education is applicable in all learning situations. It is obviously false to set up a situation where the teacher acts as if he has *absolute knowledge relative to the students*. Such a system can only be maintained by violence *because it is untrue*. This is why students in schools become 'disaffected'; they have been forcibly disengaged from the learning process by being denied their right to truth, to make a direct connection with it. It is an assault on their being. Another reason why problem-posing education is still relevant even with 'children' is that we were

all a child once. That is - if someone cannot empathetically enter into the world of the child as an equal in spirit (and needs to hide behind a spurious authority which is maintained only by violence in the last analysis) then what is he or she doing in the classroom?

Problem-posing education is an approach to education where teacher and student approach a problem together. Student-teacher and teacher-students work together to solve the problem. There is a real critical engagement with reality and is part of the *praxis*. We would argue that even when the content of the educational programme is not specifically political a problem-posing approach is still politically liberating because it treats people as persons who can take their place in society as thinking beings while a banking approach is oppressive because it, as Freire says 'files them away'. In problem-posing education the students and teacher *discover* truths. In banking education the second-hand truths which have received the sanction of the board of education are disseminated to the passive students whose merit is the greater the more meekly they absorb other people's version of reality. Freire argues that in problem-posing education teacher and students are both Subjects. In banking education the teacher alone is the Subject; the students, as vessels to be filled are merely objects. In banking education the teacher fills the empty vessels with 'knowledge' about the world - a stultifying process. In problem-posing education the teacher does not claim to either own nor know the world; teacher and student approach the problem together. Freire writes: "Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation".

In Chapter 4 Freire emphasises that problem-posing education is 'dialogical'; that is it involves a dialog between student-teacher and teacher-students. Banking education progresses by issuing a series of communiqués, (for example from various committees in Whitehall and elsewhere which determine the national curriculum). In Chapter 4 he relates this especially to the classic revolutionary context and reminds the revolutionary leadership that they must dialog with the people and not just issue communiqués. Again, while distancing ourselves from the revolutionary analysis it is clear nonetheless this is still a pertinent criticism of educational methodology in general. Most teaching is indeed about issuing communiqués. These communiqués have been prepared in advance by others about subjects which they have determined the students should know. It is a one-way dialog. Hence a situation is created where the concept 'back-chat' is created. 'Back-chat', a 'moral' notion unique to banking education, is the result of bright people driven into an untenable position: that of being asked to become an 'empty vessel'. In an educational situation where communication takes place in the form of two-way dialog there is no back-chat. The very phrase 'back-chat' with its pejorative intonation reflects the one-way nature of the approved educational process and the way it makes bad normal human creativity and interaction.

Freire discusses banking education versus problem-posing education in the context of his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; teaching literacy to the oppressed rural poor in Latin America and with it a social and political consciousness, in line with traditional Marxist orthodoxy. Nonetheless the basic concepts apply in non-revolutionary contexts, the criticism is applicable as a general critique of education. Certainly; in problem-posing education the teacher-student respects the student-teachers because a reality is recognized, that in fact the teacher is not an absolute authority on the subject and the students are able to make a valid contribution. As such the humanity of the students is valued; in that their truth as inquiring beings is engaged not stifled. This approach to education requires a teacher who can empathise with the students, who can enter into their activity of inquiry, alongside them. It requires patience and love as Freire says. It probably can't be done very efficiently on a large-scale and its fruits cannot be measured in exams which are just regurgitating the official words. (One of the dilemmas in contemporary school systems is that inevitably teachers 'teach to the test'. This happens to such an extent that students by the time they reach University may really come to confuse 'knowing' with placing the right words on paper that will enable the examiner to give them a mark. Because they never had to discover anything for themselves they know nothing). It can be seen that an educational methodology which is authoritarian and operates according to a one-way dialog excludes the students from a critical participation in social and political reality. The disaffected are those who won't give up their political and social consciousness, who won't be turned into 'filled empty vessels' but who reserve the right

to inquire for themselves. In trying to preserve their freedom the 'disaffected' are also trying to preserve the freedom of their oppressors and to keep open the possibility of dialog. For Freire, who believes that human destiny is to be realised in the final triumph of the proletariat in history this exclusion from social and political reality and the enforced alienation concomitant on it is specifically and only a class oppression. Thus banking education is linked to the "oppressing class" (owners of capital). Nonetheless even if we discard dialectical materialism, we still see that the banking approach to education is, in its apoliticalness, dehumanising and alienating.

Chapter 3 - Dialog is central to a pedagogy of the oppressed. Freire's 'system'

In this chapter Freire outlines his educational programmes with the rural poor in Latin America. These programmes use political content gleaned from the observed everyday life of the peasants to teach critical awareness. The chapter describes the programmes in some detail. Initially material will be gathered partly by Freire's assistants and partly by leaders from amongst the peasants using audio-visual equipment. The preliminary investigation will discover certain themes in the political and social life of the people. Freire refers to these as 'generative' themes; according to Freire each epoch and each locality has its own 'generative' themes; these are the key political themes of the community (a subset of the society and in turn of the epoch). Of course; the themes are understood as having a dialectical binary opposite. There is a dialectical struggle striving for plenitude. These dialectical struggles will necessarily focus on limit-situations; points at which the human potential of the people is being frustrated but which they could go beyond if they could overcome their fatalism. The material is investigated and a selection is made from which codifications are made. This material is then discussed in groups with the peasants ('thematic investigation circles') and decoded. Their discussions are observed and recorded by a psychologist and a sociologist. Then, using this material gleaned from the meetings, and insights provided by the psychologist and sociologist the team study their findings and identify the themes which have emerged. The recordings made of these discussions together with the notes from the psychologist and sociologist are also presented by the team to appropriate University academics. The professors add some content of their own. These may be in the form of recorded interviews. The team may also add additional material which was not turned up in the investigations with the people including key themes of a more academic nature such as the idea of 'culture'. This material is now codified (again) and the coded material, together with the contributions from the professors, is now taken back to groups of the rural poor and forms the content for "culture group" discussions. In these the peasants decode the encoded representations of their own 'generative themes', the key social and political dilemmas they face. They may also listen to and discuss the recordings made by 'specialists'. The decoding is the key process which leads to insight. So the encodings must be done sensitively.

The process as described by Freire clearly co-involves the peasants in the production of their own special course content. Freire emphasises that his approach is one of dialog. This dialogical nature of the programmes distinguishes them from the 'top-down' approaches which even humanitarian programmes are likely to use. An educational programme built around dialog is contrasted by Freire with one which seeks to impose its truth. One of the virtues of this dialogical approach is humility. "How can I dialog if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own?". And again; "How can I dialog if I regard myself as a case apart from others- mere 'its' in whom I cannot recognize other 'I's'". We can apply this to contemporary schooling; while Freire here is thinking of those would be teachers of the people and perhaps humanitarian academics who approach the people as 'the great unwashed', a collection of 'its', this is precisely the kind of thinking prevalent in contemporary school education. The teacher, a member of an in-group by virtue of their degree and teacher-training approaches the *pupils*, usually uniformed and in any case reduced to 'it' status by having to obey the kind of rules which (as Illich points out) no adult would accept in a democracy. Humility is not a quality often found in teachers in these kind of systems; how could it be where their job is to stick some of their knowledge into the 'wholly ignorant' empty vessels in front of them? The reduction of people to it-status is a necessary part of an education which conceives of its role as grinding facts into young minds. All children in these contemporary systems of education are treated in the same way that paternalistic programmes of 'education' run by the Latin American dominant classes treat Latin American peasants.

There can be no doubt that this method - of encoding and decoding representations of political themes must be an effective way to develop critical awareness. (One can imagine a similar method of 'teaching' young children about say avoiding harmful eating habits using cartoons which encode say the situation of being pressurised by an advert to drink coke but instead choosing to refresh one's thirst with water). There are some anomalies in Freire's approach; perhaps sounding more anachronistic today than they might have done in 1971. Even relatively illiterate Westerners would probably feel patronised by these efforts. More serious, from our point of view is the promotion of

the idea of professional subject specialisms in the human sciences; and the infliction of this on the peasants. This, surely, is teaching them to 'respect' academia - with its departments and subject specialisms? Indeed we can ask are the peasants being tricked into swapping their 'respect' for the landowner and his ally the humanitarian educator for 'respect' for the left-wing academic? The problem is that without this part of the programme there was no link between Freire's intellectual world and the daily life of the peasants. And that there is such a link is vital to his revolutionary theory; as he says himself the 'revolutionary leaders' are likely to come from the middle-classes. They go to the peasants in solidarity and dialog with them, raising their revolutionary zeal and directing it. If the peasants are not seen to be interested even if only as one part of the total educational programme in the thoughts of the professors then there is no connection between the revolutionary theory and those who, by weight of numbers and their role in production, are to carry out the revolution. In this case either revolution would have to be imposed on the people or there simply would be no revolution. The praxis between the theory and the practice of the revolution would break down. But we doubt that the peasants would have been that interested in these subject experts, professors of political science or psychology or sociology; because the whole edifice of academic disciplines is itself something artificial, linked to power and alien to them. It can never be of the people.

Thus, unfortunately; much of this chapter reads like Freire, the academic, trying to justify the academic world in the same way that a priest might seek to justify God and the church by attaching them to the cause of the poor.

Chapter 4 - A cultural revolution

This chapter examines the broader cultural context in which the educational programmes described in the previous chapter take place. In the same way that banking education is contrasted with problem-posing education so 'antidialogical action' is contrasted with 'dialogical action' in social relations and cultural communication. The distinction is that dominant elites do not communicate with the people, do not dialog with them, but rather issue communiqués. The revolutionary leadership must dialog with the people and avoid the temptation to issue communiqués themselves. The need for dialog is linked back to the idea of the *praxis*. It is not good enough for the revolutionary leadership to have a theory of the revolution and to employ the people simply as activists; this would be to manipulate the people and the leaders would thereby invalidate their own *praxis*. The *praxis* must include the intellectuals and the people together. If the leadership simply issues communiqués they deny the people their *praxis*. The essential point is that the relation between revolutionary leaders and the people must be dialogical if it is to avoid mirroring the relations between the oppressor and the oppressed.

The leadership must not "believe in the myth of the ignorance of the people". While the leadership must not accept the myth of the ignorance of the people nonetheless Freire tells us they have a greater understanding than the 'empirical' understanding of the people. And, again, the leaders must always 'mistrust' the peasant who still may "house the oppressor" in him. The leadership must show 'determination'. "The fact that the leaders who organize the people do not have the right to arbitrarily impose their word does not mean that they must therefore take a liberalist position which would encourage license among the people, who are accustomed to oppression". If you take this together with earlier warnings about how the leadership may find it necessary to impose 'restraints' on the former oppressors it is possible to see glimmers here of an authoritarian attitude. What will the revolutionary leaders do with the peasant who stubbornly wants to own a ranch and just doesn't get the need for a class-based revolution (which will put the revolutionary leadership into power?). Firstly; his obstinacy will be written off - it is because he "houses the oppressor within in". Whether or not authoritarian measures will be taken against him isn't clear. Perhaps he will be treated as one of the oppressors from the former regime who need to be 'restrained'. The problem is that organizing a revolution according to a blueprint does require authoritarian measures. Freire's dialectic that authority is required for freedom is somewhat unconvincing. This authority, which he distinguishes from authoritarianism, must be based (though he does not say so explicitly) in his belief in the scientific truth of the revolution which aims to seize power, which is precisely what we dispute.

For Freire his call to authentic *praxis* leads inexorably to the revolution, because he has already accepted that the revolution is the ultimate conclusion of philosophy. This is why in this chapter of the book there is an authoritarian tone. The revolutionary leaders will, as well as engaging in dialog with the people, lead and organize. The problem is that there is only one permissible outcome to that dialog - scientifically proven dialectical materialism, the class struggle, under the wing of the leadership. So - this isn't really a dialog since there can only be one end and any other conclusion is already explained away as the oppressed housing the oppressor within themselves. A real dialog does not have a prescribed outcome. Something unknown may yet be discovered.

Anti-dialogical action proceeds by conquest which it achieves by depositing myths in the people, divide and rule, manipulation, and cultural invasion.

Conquest operates on a scale from repressive measures to "the most solicitous (paternalism)". The conqueror makes of people his possession. Conquerors present the world to the people as a given to which they must adapt rather than a problem to be solved. Freire goes on to list some myths which conquerors deposit in the people: the oppressive order is a 'free society', all persons are free to work where they wish, that if they don't like their boss they can leave him and look for another job, the myth that the street vendor is as much an entrepreneur as the owner of a large factory; education is the path for inclusion for all - when in fact it is shaped like a pyramid and only a small fraction actually get to the top and so on. (Some of the other examples are more specific to the Latin American context).

One tactic of divide and rule which Freire refers to is that of promoting a 'focalised' viewpoint of problems. Even allowing for the obvious sense that this unveiling of oppressor tactics makes to a Marxist it still has force. Localization of problems prevents people seeing their problems as part of larger picture. We can see this in social policy today (in our society): there are projects to help this estate and that estate but no project to address the poverty of the poor collectively. (Tax credits individualise and are an extreme form of focalisation from this point of view). There is an interesting critique of leadership courses: while these appear to be emancipatory but they are not because they are based on a mistaken concept "- as if it were the parts that promote the whole and not the whole which in being promoted promotes its parts". We can see this in the UK. When people from working class communities go to University this does not raise the level of the working class; rather those individuals join the middle-class. Together with the fact that (whatever the incline) education is a pyramid with only a proportion making it to the top we can see how, in reality, "education, education, education" does relatively little for the working class and nothing for the poor. Freire also cites oppressor tactics of manipulation of trade unions and individuals in the workplace.

In the case of manipulation Freire writes "In a situation of manipulation, the Left is almost always tempted by a "quick return to power", forgets the necessity of joining with the oppressed to forge an organization, and strays into an impossible 'dialog' with the dominant elites. One tactic under the heading of manipulation is for the bourgeois to inculcate an appetite for "personal success" amongst the poor.

Cultural invasion is the instrument of domination where the dominator imposes his values and outlook into the culture of the oppressed. Freire sees that this may not be overt: "All domination involves invasion- at times physical and overt, at times camouflaged, with the invader assuming the role of a helping friend". The example Freire gives is how the values of the surrounding culture can be reflected in the conditions in the home. Cultural invasion "implies the 'superiority' of the invader and the 'inferiority' of those who are invaded, as well as the imposition of values by the former, who possess the latter and are afraid of losing them". The cultural revolution must always be dialogical and resist tendencies to cultural invasion even in the revolution - for example bureaucratic tendencies in the new society.

Dialogical action, on the other hand, proceeds by cooperation, unity for liberation, organization and cultural synthesis.

Co-operation is an extension of the equality of Freire's approach to education to the cultural sphere. In both contexts the point is that the relation is one of Subject to Subject, not Subject to thing. This speaks of a relationship of empathy. Co-operation, as dialogical action, occurs amongst subjects and can only be achieved through communication. The revolution does not seek to conquer people but to gain their adherence.

Unlike the antidialogical action of the oppressor which seeks to divide and rule the tendency in dialogical action is to strive for unity, for liberation. Necessarily for Freire unity means class consciousness. A consciousness of unity is linked to organisation amongst the oppressed. Organisation must be based on a solidarity with the people as opposed to manipulation of the oppressors who organise themselves so as to dominate them. Freire sees authority as part of this organisation but argues that it must be built on freedom; if not it is authoritarianism.

Freire contrasts cultural synthesis with cultural invasion. In cultural invasion the actors superimpose themselves on the people. In cultural synthesis the actors "become integrated with the people". Both act on the world together. For Freire the revolution must have this cultural aspect - it is the intellectual part of the *praxis*. Freire links this back to his educational programmes, which, as we have seen, involve the peasants in the investigation of their own reality. Thus no one, he claims, is imposing on them. (We discussed how, in our view, what is still being imposed on the peasants is the world of 'academia'). However; for Freire, cultural synthesis is where the world-views of the leadership (which will include academics) and of the peasants affirm and support each other.

In conclusion: the relevance of Freire's case to our experience of school

This book is a rich source for those concerned with education and social struggles. It is fatally flawed by its full acceptance of dialectical materialism and the way this is used as the model for all subsequent arguments. Dialectical materialism is not 'true'; a scientific theory of history is not possible. And while the questions of economic class conflict are important history is not resolved simply in this one economic struggle. Furthermore, and perhaps for these very reasons, class revolutions have a tendency to end up just putting a new set of rulers in place. It is a question then of what can be salvaged from this great book.

The answer is a great deal. Freire's concepts of problem-posing education and its cultural concomitant, dialogical action, and his working out of these concepts as the dialectical opposites of banking education and antidialogical cultural action is if not profound then significant. Of course; If empathy is not in your heart as a teacher or solidarity as a cultural actor than this lesson may pass you by. Freire's words are most likely to serve as a reminder to those who already approach life in this way.

Possibly the least useful part of the book for us today (in the UK) is the Chapter in which he describes the educational programmes for rural poor in Latin America (40 years ago). That said, and interestingly, the problem he describes has not gone away. In contemporary society there are many who are 'submerged' in reality, who have no political consciousness. Modern schooling does indeed, just like antidialogical cultural action of conquest, render people passive and apolitical, especially by the relentless focus on individual 'achievement' and 'success', a classic case of divide and rule. The culture of 'entertainment' aimed at young people by commercial providers and imitated by the BBC quite specifically drowns them in an apolitical myth. We live in a 'free' society. Aren't we lucky. You can change your job if you don't like it. Anyone can get rich; the street vendor is as free as the entrepreneur. The thing to do is to 'have fun' as you dash from one pleasure experience to the next. Politics is 'square'. And so on. But this experience of being submerged, of having no political consciousness, is diffused. It is not a clear case of rounding up all the peasants in a district and inviting them to participate in a programme to raise their political awareness. The submerged live amongst us, dotted about- as indeed do those who are more actively politically aware. Apart from the problem of geographical dispersion there is another problem. While people may be 'submerged' nonetheless they are sophisticated in terms of media. The methods which Freire used with rural peasantry would probably seem insulting to our contemporary submerged, even if they could be somehow rounded up into a group. Nonetheless if we did- then what would the generative themes be? An interesting question. (Guessing: lack of money, drugs, childcare problems, difficulty in finding work, travel problems in some areas?) . However; the extent of the fragmentation of society, the sophistication-in-submergence, the lack of any existing social groups to which people belong, all mitigate against a pedagogical approach such as Freire's being applicable to those who are 'submerged' in contemporary society, though they undoubtedly exist. Though - has anyone tried? And, another problem, Freire perhaps would have had no problem confronting the peasants with the notion that their (and 'their' would have had an obvious meaning as the peasants would have had a consciousness of themselves as a group), situation was in some sense problematic. In contemporary society the submerged may well (indeed are quite likely to) have a fair amount of material wealth. They may not feel there is anything so wrong that something as radical as a revolution was required to change it. But - a programme of investigating 'generative themes' could still work with a group of people with little political consciousness (i.e. what school gives them). If the actual methodology was somewhat adjusted what would emerge out of such an investigation?

In terms of immediate receptivity to a radical pedagogy a more politically aware group might be found amongst those who have encountered first-hand in a raw way injustice. First thing; we should forget educating for a revolution. A critical view such as provided by Foucault with his analysis of power, of strategies and tactics is more useful in the fragmented world in which we live than Marx. Youth work (as 'informal education') can engage with such young people. Potentially, work which enables young people to articulate their insights into the social and political reality which confronts them can lead to solidarity, increased adroitness in dealing with the world, and

clearer insight into what that world is. We cannot hope for a revolution and cannot unite people simply around their membership of an economic class, though this is important. But somewhere between the crass individualism of consumerism which the young are trained in via the myth of 'educational achievement' and the other individualising and alienating mechanisms of modern schooling and the impossible notion of 'unity for liberation' based purely on economic class membership, it must be possible to develop a sense of solidarity such that amongst the crowd of the 'dominators' and the submerged people pockets of resistance can form bearing in mind in this multi-polarised society a 'dominator' and a 'submerged' are not fixed; most of us are probably both at several times during each day. Workers in youth work projects must indeed be 'with' the people rather than trying to teach them from the top down, but again, if you have to be told that....

Freire's critique owes something to Sartre with the emphasis on how people, as Subjects can relate to others as also Subjects or attempt to treat them as objects. Sartre's phenomenological model of subjectivity tends to accept a permanent I-subject. Freire's theory is based around this idea of a Subject; this is part of its theoretical limitations. There is a mode of communality which is not based around the 'I' which, itself is a construct. This review is not the place to explore this. Foucault's critic of individuality is relevant, following Nietzsche.

One of the (many) rich seams which can be found in Freire would be the transposition of his educational critique to contemporary schooling. In attempting to translate Freire's general critique of education to the school system in the contemporary West however one immediately encounters a problem; the argument might run like this:- while adults may be suitable partners in inquiry, for 'children' it is different. It is acceptable to make 'children' learn knowledge won by experts and exclude them from the process of inquiry. The argument goes on;- how could anyone contribute anything meaningful to knowledge until they have mastered the existing corpus of knowledge in any one subject domain, which, in fact, takes them the full course of a modern education from primary school to doctorate? That is; one might accept Freire's basic theory and programme of problem-posing education, with its emphasis on dialog and Subject to Subject communication but say that he was talking about teaching adults. In the case of children, one might say, this is not relevant. How can education of children be anything other than banking education since *they don't know anything and they have to be taught?* But in fact such an argument would be no more than a justification for an unnecessary authoritarianism and based on a fear of not taking such an authoritarian attitude towards 'children'. A simple extension of the self in imagination can overcome the (false) barrier that appears to exist between the teacher with their University degree in a subject and young minds approaching it for the first time. If the teacher can recall that at one point they did not 'know' then even between those with advanced subject knowledge and those without, a problem-posing dialog can take place. It also requires the teacher to recognize that people form hypotheses about the world of their own accord as a result of their own investigations before any contact with formal education; thus children in schools are far from being the 'empty vessels' which banking education would have them be. True, in this case this does involve a certain amount of acting on the part of the teacher, who can forget his knowledge and artificially (by artifice) 'reduce' himself to just one step ahead of his students. Once he has done this then certainly the lesson can proceed on dialogical means in 'communality'. Teacher-student and student-teachers can work together to solve problems even in this case. Such an approach does of course mean throwing out the apparatus of authority - the curriculum, the text-books, all the arrangements which emphasize the superiority of the teacher and which are there to breed a dull passivity in the students. But - this does *not* mean throwing out the authority of real subject knowledge; simply the authority which is transferred from this to create a suffocating environment of social hierarchy. Despite all the perpetual policy changes education is still essentially Victorian. Serried ranks of 'pupils' are lined up. They must not speak until spoken to. The teacher represents not simply a subject expert but the social authority of the state and the church (3). We have banking education and a problem-posing approach could certainly be applied. It would be liberating as it would treat people as Subjects, facing the world together, rather than as 'empty vessels' to be filled. The education does not have to have a specifically political content for this to be true.

In Illich's analysis, which goes deeper into the nature of schools as a social institution than Friere's (possibly because it is not limited to a class analysis), schools train people to be consumers as

they consume the obligatory educational packages and compete for pole position in society. They engender passivity, conformity, obedience and acceptance of the status quo. The reason that schools do not adopt effective pedagogical methods which engage students *with reality* is because of their role as social incubators. Both Freire and Illich are looking at the same process; both authors see that the banking approach to education is about inculcating submission to the status quo. Freire, given his Marxist orientation, focuses on this as a process of class domination and looks at how the recipients of education in a banking system are alienated from reality, while Illich with his critique of manipulative institutions sees school more as a training in acceptance of these kinds of institutions in general. Modern schooling is certainly 'banking education'. It still proceeds as Victorian schooling did with a teacher who represents social authority as well as subject authority pushing knowledge into the 'empty vessels' lined up before her. 'Pupils' are marshalled around as 'efficiently' as possible to as to absorb as much 'knowledge' as possible, making as much use of technology as possible to control them. (For example biometric clocking-in systems). As the government is fond of repeating "Every lesson counts". There is no question here of Subjects and Subjects engaged in a respectful approach to reality together - confronting reality together as Subjects. Rather, just as Freire analyses, the teacher is the only Subject permitted in the classroom. He writes "banking education maintains and even stimulates the contradiction ['pupils' v. teachers] through the following attitudes and practices, which mirror oppressive society as a whole". He goes on to list 10 attitudes and practices all of which apply to contemporary schooling. The tenth is; "the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects". (The full list is attached as Appendix 1). What is interesting is how an educational process analysed by Freire as being that suited to a ruling elite intent on keeping the masses 'away from reality' is used by the government in our rich 'democratic' nation for almost all students. (As we mentioned in the body of this review, even private schools use essentially this method though they may allow a little more leeway, sufficient to enable their products to enjoy a sense of social superiority). The *only* exception to this method of education in the UK is the home education sector. And that sector is coming under attack with proposals in a current Bill (4).

It is difficult to argue then that banking education is used as a tool of class oppression in the West since it is applied to all classes - or something similar is. How are we to explain this? Part of the answer may be provided by Illich's more subtle analysis. One of the functions of schooling (which typically means banking education) is for everyone to buy into the system. Only a few can make it to the top of the ladder and obtain all the benefits; those who 'fail' nonetheless measure their worth by what (little) they achieved in school. Schooling allocates people into roles in a stratified society. Today the Labour party urge education on everyone, "every lesson counts", but they know full well that the school system will not bring 'fairness' or income equality for the poor. The school system contributes to a manipulative economic system by sorting people into roles and managing their expectations. It justifies subsequent exploitation. The banking system of education is prevalent because it is a tool for inducting the next generation into a stratified, consumerist, exploitative society. As analysed by Freire banking education has a mythologizing aspect. It promotes certain myths about how we 'live in a free society' and so on. It alienates by teaching static 'knowledge' which is thus always a second-hand apprehension of reality, rather than by providing a milieu where teacher-students and student-teachers could address reality together, as they engage in an open dialog. The alienating effect of banking education is to incapacitate people; their capacity for critical thought and their capacity to become transformers of their world is suppressed. Instead their credulity is stimulated. (Watch for example how schools participate in the marketing campaign for a certain well-known brand of margarine, with children bringing their tokens to school. This is a training in how to be a consumer. How many schools encourage their students to critically question this business? Instead, they collude with the manufacturers and thereby stimulate childrens' credulity). Banking education alienates by stopping children engaging critically with reality (as they substitute the 'curriculum' for critical thought and fresh dialog). Its products are compliant cogs for the social and economic realities of the day, people who 'fit in' and *accept* the status-quo of the existing social and political arrangements rather than question them. It is necessary that all classes in a society such as ours be educated and defused in this way: rebellion against consumerism, manipulative institutions and materialism can come as much from any class or group. The threat to the middle-classes and the wealth-owning minorities in Western society today comes not so much from a revolution of the oppressed; but from *non-acceptance of the*

culture of alienation and materialism which allows the whole system to function. Banking education which was used in Latin America as a tool specifically to exclude the peasants and keep them from thinking is used in the West now to train people in the kind of passivity and alienation required for successful participation in this society. The middle-classes who support the present regime are themselves alienated and seek to make this kind of alienation the norm. The materialist and consumerist outlook, the idea that salvation comes from manipulative institutions, the avoidance of awareness, the escape from freedom are all 'values' which are embraced by especially the ruling class and they wish to inculcate them into the next generation - but by many others as well across society who have learned to take these things for granted. In the kind of polarised class society which Freire deals with the dominant class has an interest in rendering the oppressed class passive and uncritical via education so as to enjoy their freedom; in our society, where being unfree and alienated is the norm, banking education is used to normalise everyone. Bizarrely, the *thing* status which is the effect of banking education is for some (look at Ed Balls) entirely the norm. It works in both, different, cases because of the effect of banking education to stifle creativity, critical thought and the sense that we, as people, can transform our world. It is this effect of banking education which is appreciated by both reactionaries in the Conservative party and bureaucrats in New Labour.

We are more alienated than the more primitive systems of exploitation that Freire was confronting. In our situation alienation is a requirement for all participants. Education is the primary means of achieving this.

Of course, schools, and banking education with its system of exams and certificates individualises. It also works very well to promote the myth that this is a classless society - by mixing all the classes in the same system and individualizing them all. Though the middle-classes always win at this game. It is interesting how willing the middle-classes are to put their own children through what is essentially a demeaning process, which treats them as objects, with a view to perpetuating their class.

Another interesting seam which can be mined in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is the applicability of the theory of anti-dialogical action to New Labour. All of the anti-dialogical processes which Freire analyses in Chapter 4 can be seen at work in New Labour's approach. Under the heading of conquest New Labour has simply inherited the ordinary myths which support capitalism; that a worker is free to change their job if they wish, that the system is for the benefit of all, that we live in a free society etc. New Labour has specialised in the kind of 'focalisation' which Freire discusses under the heading of 'Divide and Rule' - whereby 'help' is directed to specific groups who are seen in isolation from the wider social and political contexts. SureStart would be an example. Under the heading of 'Manipulation' Freire's comment that the populist leader while linked to the emergence of the oppressed "simply manipulates, instead of fighting for authentic popular organization" sounds like it was written about New Labour. Further; New Labour's promotion of the myth of "educational success", a central plank of its claim to be progressive is a classic case of manipulation. If this benefits anyone it is the middle-classes who already speak at home the language of school-teachers and who, anyway, will be getting the middle-class jobs come what may (as a recent parliamentary report indicated) (2) . Meanwhile New Labour's 'dialog' with the dominant elites is well-known. With New Labour's manipulative programmes of behaviour control, for example parenting classes, we see the ever increasing cultural invasion, another feature of anti-dialogical action, of the values and thinking of social workers and other 'professionals' and 'experts' into working-class life. One of the examples of dialogical (as opposed to anti-dialogical action) which Freire gives is of a Latin American politician urging the people to organize and work with him against the forces of reaction. We sometimes hear this tone from New Labour; Gordon Brown in particular seems to favour this tone. However; with New Labour it is simply tone. New Labour will speak as if *on the side of the people* but only on totally trivial matters - Tony Blair intervening to get football tickets for disappointed youngsters, Gordon Brown getting involved in the outcome of reality TV shows. Often New Labour sound as if they were *outside government* like the people and try to represent themselves as facing the same battles with the powers that be that ordinary people do. Of course, this all theatre (TV) and a purely presentational kind of siding with the people.

Under the heading of divide and rule we can possibly see the Anti-Social Behaviour campaign of New Labour as a tactic of divide and rule; it separates off part of working class communities from another part, (in a way reminiscent of Victorian ideas about the deserving and undeserving poor), rather than seeing problems of 'Anti-Social behaviour' (which are often in fact problems of petty crime being re-branded as 'Anti-Social behaviour') as being linked to social deprivation and community breakdown.

One tactic under the heading of manipulation is for the bourgeois to inculcate an appetite for "personal success" amongst the poor. With New Labour we see this again with the myth of "education, education, education". Education or what passes for it creates at best a better skilled work force; it gives the capitalists a better choice to make, and it may increase productivity and thus profits. Only if we assume / hope that the profits are re-invested in creating jobs can this approach even indirectly actually benefit the working class (who indeed have to work much harder to benefit from education in the first place). Fattening up the slaves is not the same as abolishing slavery.

Freire's criticisms of banking education and the opposite he proposes, problem-posing education, provides a rich analytic, critical, attack on contemporary schooling. While the situation is more fragmented than can be contained in two class model nonetheless banking education is fruitfully exposed by Freire as the method of oppressive and alienating education. In our society oppression is the norm in all relations and banking education is used across the board. Freedom as a way of being has been more or less 'cultured out'; a banking system of education is the first point of contact almost everyone has with this oppressive social reality.

Freire's theory of antigialogical action and the opposite he proposes, dialogical action, has a strong resonance in terms of a contemporary cultural and political critique. The tactics of cultural invasion, divide and rule, manipulation and conquest are part of the stuff of daily life -as they emanate from politicians of all parties and are broadcast by a compliant media. (Illich would almost certainly note how much of the media is dependent financially on what he calls 'right-wing' manipulative institutions - and this necessarily has a bias in favour of this kind of outlook).

The challenge is to think of how to apply ideas about "problem-posing education" when working with young people (divested of the focus on Sartre's 'Subject') and dialogical theories of cultural action (divested of their focal point of the revolutionary party) in a situation which is diffuse - where power, oppression and alienation are everywhere and are the norm, not simply the actions of one class acting on another. Maybe what will transform society into a humane one where people can realize their potential as human beings is not a single class-based revolution but a whole series of spear-heads all aimed at the same target and all trying to develop a critical, humane world, in their field - but without trying to establish a new, overall, structure. The 'unity for liberation' should be one of solidarity between different struggles for freedom rather than an attempt to bind everything into one single point of struggle.

Notes

1. The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education Eccelstone and Hayes Routledge 2008
2. The Milburn Report July 2009
3. This aspect of teacherly authority is undergoing a change at the moment. In place of the Church teachers now teach children how to feel according to the latest pronouncements of therapy. See, for example, Eccelstone and Hayes, The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education, Routledge 2009
4. Children, Schools and Families Bill. Going through parliament in early 2010. The Bill implements proposals from a 'review' carried out by Graham Badman into home education and seeks to impose a regime whereby parents must define in advance 'outcomes' of their home education programme. by forcible entry local authority inspectors can then test the children to see that these outcomes have been delivered. I.e this is the imposition of a banking education type outlook onto the family.

Appendix 1

- the teacher teaches and the students are taught;
- the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
- the teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
- the teacher talks and the students listen- meekly;
- the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
- the teacher chooses and enforces his choice and the students comply;
- the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the teacher,;
- the teacher chooses the program content and the students, (who were not consulted) adapt to it;
- the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of his students;
- the teacher is the Subject of the learning process and the students are mere objects.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed Paulo Freire Penguin 1996.
(First published in 1970).