

PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED, by Paulo Freire. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. *Sheed and Ward*, London, 1972. 186 pp. £2.50. *Penguin Books*, London, 1972. 153 pp. 40p.

Even though *conscientização*¹ has become an essential topic when discussing radical views of education, the man who first introduced the concept, and whose ideas have influenced Illich and other 'deschoolers', remains relatively unknown outside of Latin America. Paulo Freire is a Brazilian educator, in exile since the military take-over in 1964 because of his revolutionary method for teaching illiterates. At the present he is head of the Educational Division of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. His call for *conscientização* has made an impact not only on education, but has also contributed to the fight against oppression in Latin America.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire analyses the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: 'to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well', and in so doing restore the humanity of both. We find Freire drawing from the psychoanalytic theory of Fromm, from existentialists, from Marxist humanists, de Chardin, Mao, Che and Castro. What emerges in the end, if one is patient enough to follow Freire's rather intricate and unsystematic reasoning, is a view of man and of the world which is very much his own. His basic assumption is that man's ontological vocation (i.e. the essence of his vocation) is to be a Subject, that is, one who knows and acts, rather than an object, which is known and acted upon.

Freire emphasizes the impossibility of a neutral education; education for him is either for liberation or 'domestication'. A pedagogy for liberation 'must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity'. How are the oppressed to contribute to their own liberation? Freire recognizes that as long as they live in the duality in which *to be is to be like*, and *to be like is to be like the oppressor* this contribution is impossible (p. 33). Only a liberating education, based on dialogue, can help the oppressed overcome this

¹The term *conscientização* means an awakening of consciousness; it refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.

contradiction. Dialoguing with the people will result in praxis, i.e. 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it'.

But the implementation of a liberating education requires political power. How is it possible to carry out the pedagogy of the oppressed prior to the revolution? Freire attempts to answer this question in Chapter 4, where he analyses theories of cultural action which develop from antidialogical and dialogical matrices. He emphasizes that dialogue is essential to revolutionary action, and goes beyond Lukács' requirement of 'explaining to the masses their own action'. Freire sees the requirement not in terms of explaining to, but rather dialoguing with, the people about their actions, to achieve what Guevara called 'communism with the people'.

Freire is aware that some people will regard his emphasis on dialogue as subjectively idealistic. Others, especially holders of power, will simply reject his denunciation of oppression. It is important to remember, however, that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is the result not only of thought and study, but of concrete experience with the oppressed in several Latin American countries. At times, social dissatisfaction has been the outcome of dialogues, which explains why governments look with alarm upon Freire's work. Freire himself acknowledges his method as revolutionary. As his friend João de Veiga Coutinho put it: 'at the heart of the thought of Paulo Freire there is an experience and a vivid perception of what he calls the "culture of silence" and at the core of his project the decision to subvert it'.

Paulo Freire presents us with a challenge; that through dialogue we can transform the world and shape the human future. He knows that perhaps only radicals will accept the challenge. He is certain, however, that 'Christians and Marxists, though they may disagree with me in part or in whole, will continue reading to the end'.

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REVOLUTIONARY PRIEST: The Complete Writings and Messages of Camilo Torres. Edited and introduced by John Gerassi. *Jonathan Cape*, 1971. 460 pp. £4.

Camilo Torres was a priest in Columbia who studied sociology at the Catholic University of Louvain and was subsequently appointed to

a lecturer's post at Bogota's National University where he was also chaplain. He has become a legend and source of inspiration throughout