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Carlos Alberto Torres. [10/4/92]. First Draft.
 Introduction to Gilberto Guevara, Alfredo L. Fernandez and Miguel Escobar (editors): Critique of Domesticating Pedagogy. A Dialogue with Paulo Freire (New York, SUNY Press, forthcoming).

Introduction:

Intellectuals and University Life: Paulo Freire on Higher Education

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1. Introduction.

Critique of domesticating pedagogy. A dialogue with Paulo Freire, reflects some of the key themes of the Freirean agenda, including the relationships between education and power, curriculum in higher education, and the role of intellectuals and universities. The dialogues presented in this book took place at the National University (UNAM) in Mexico City during the second semester of 1985.

Every dialogue takes for granted a context, historical, political and experiential, which is somewhat shared by the participants engaged in such dialogue. Thus there are implicit many themes, hypothesis, assumptions and premises, all of them structuring the conversation. This dialogue between Paulo Freire and university professors in Mexico is no exception.

The purpose of this introduction is to provide the American reader with the basic historical-structural and political-symbolic context to understand even the more subtle implications of this book. We hope this introduction will help to bridge the theoretical implications of this book, deeply rooted in the Latin American tradition, with the experience of American universities, intellectuals and students.

The academic and political life of autonomous public universities in Latin America reflect the texture and dynamics of the relationships between universities and the state. The first section, offers a succinct yet critical appraisal of the relationships between universities and the state, highlighting three main phases: the conflict between the traditional university and the movement for educational reform of 1918; the project of the modernist university that emerges from the university reform; and the postmodernist university which is subject to the vicissitudes of the project of structural adjustment and "aggiornamiento" of the democratic state in the region.

The second section focus on Freire as an intellectual, in the context of debates about university and intellectuals in Latin America. It is argued that the difficulty to classify Freire as an intellectual result, to a large extent, from Freire's epistemological and political positions, and his own pedagogical practice celebrating the multiplicity of voices, tolerance, creativity and open-ended dialogue.

2. Higher Education and the State in Latin America: Historical Background.^{*}

During the second half of the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th, the prevailing pact of domination in Latin America can be characterized as a form of the oligarchical state. This oligarchical state consolidated the nation and generated relative political stability. It was a political model supported by the massive exportation of agricultural and agropecuarian products, which served to solidify the position of an oligarchy with ties to the agricultural and beef export sector of production. The dominant economic policies were anti-industrialist, and as a general rule, the oligarchical sectors were closely linked to sectors of international capital (specially financial sectors) to which they granted concessions in diverse economic activities as one of the mechanisms by which they intended to promote economic growth and development. With respect to the political sphere, the oligarchy maintained tight control over the political process, on occassion by means of direct control over the State, or by means of control of the parliament and important political

* This sections draws from Carlos Alberto Torres "La Educación Superior en América Latina: De la Reforma de 1918 al Ajuste Estructural de los Noventas". Keynote address to the International Symposium "Perspectives of the University Curriculum in the XXI Century." Faculty of Sciences of Education, National University of Entre Rios, Paraná, Argentina, August 24-27, 1992.

parties. In order to implement this control, electoral fraud or simply open repression was employed.¹

The oligarchical state controled diferent facets of the political and cultural life of each country based upon a liberal perspective.² With all the variations of each national case, the Catholic Church, as in Argentina, attempted to establishing a cultural hegemony rather than political hegemony.³ In other countries, such as Venezuela and Mexico, the power of the Church was clearly harassed by the State.

The repercussions of the economic crisis and depression of 1929 brought about drastic changes in the balance of power in the world system. The decline of the British hegemony, and the

¹ These changes in the patterns of state-society relationships are common place in social historiography of Latin America. For classic examples of historical analysis following this tradition see Tulio Halperin Donghi, Histórica contemporánea de América Latina (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1969); Osvaldo Sunkel and Pedro Paz El subdesarrollo latinoamericano y la teoría del desarrollo. (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1970); Eduardo P. Archetti, Paul Cammarck and Bryan Roberts (editors), Sociology of 'Developing Societies': Latin America (Houndmills, Basinstoke and London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1987); and Helio Jaguaribe, Aldo Ferrer, Miguel S. Wionczek and Theotonio Dos Santos, La dependencia político-Económica de América Latina. (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1970). For a re-appraisal of this literature see the extensive and documented study of Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier Shaping the Political Arena. Critical Junctures, The Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991).

² See the insightful work of Atilio A. Boron on The formation and crisis of the Oligarchical State in Argentina, 1880-1930 (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1976).

³ Carlos Alberto Torres The Church, Society and Hegemony. a Critical Sociology of Religion in Latin America (Wesport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 1992--translated by Richard Young).

raising American hegemony dramatically altered the relationships between politics and economics in Latin America. Among those changes, the demise of the oligarchical state in the early 30s drastically changed the political and economic landscape of the region, also affecting the universities.

With the breakdown of the oligarchical pact, a new political epoch in Latin America was opened including a new model of economic development based on import-substitution, and by new models of the state, some of them based on Keynesian policies--albeit, in an ebrionic stage--within different countries. Overall, what has marked the political period and historical juncture as Collier and Collier⁴ define it, are patterns of conflict and accomodation between the state and the labor movement.

The emergence of distinct forms of control and mobilization signal what Collier and Collier define as periods of incorporation, with distinct historical legacies. Corporativism--i.e. a set of structures which integrate society in a vertical manner, and as such lead to the legalization and institutionalization of the workers movement formed and controled by the state--appears as the distinctive characteristic of Latin American capitalism and politics in the last hundred years.

The crisis of 1929 and particularly the decay of the British Empire, drastically undermined the financial and export-oriented features of the oligarchical state. It is in this context of corporatist structures and a liberal-oligarchical state that the relationships between higher education and the state should be studied. Three university models are present in this century: the traditional university challenged by the university Reform of 1918, the modernist university resulting from the reform movement, and the post-modern university emerging in the context of structural adjustment of the Latin American economies.

⁴ Rut Berins Collier and David Collier Shaping the Political Arena. Critical Junctures, The Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991).

2.1. The University Reform Movement of 1918.

If the Church had traditionally controled the university in Latin America, with the advent of the liberal-oligarchical state, these universities had yet to become cultural and educational centers from which a catholic culture irradiated. After the process of national reorganization and the strengthening of the liberal ideology of the new oligarchical states (with its masionic and anticlerical perspective, and its legal foundations striving to establish a clear separison between Church and State), the presence of catholic intellectuals in the public university constituted the most effective expression, albeit sparcely, of the Catholic thought in higher education. The example of organic intellectuals of the Argentine Church, such as José Manuel Estrada and Emilio Lamarca can be considered as paradigmatic.

The University Reform Movement of 1918 greatly influenced the university atmosphere and political life throughout Latin America. Starting in Córdoba City on March 13, 1918, quickly spread in the region, and their reformist goals surpassed the institutional reform, having profound political implications for the transformation of conservative political regimes⁵. The Reform of 1918 opposed the oligarchical university in its effort to break the ties between liberal thought and oligarchical domination, and at the same time, attempting to establish the basis for a democratic legitimation of the academic task founded upon a substantial democratic consensus.

The importance of the 1918 university reform of Cordoba cannot be ignored. The Reform impacted the Latin American university in general, and in some cases, as in the case of Haya de la Torre y Mariáegui, its effects were felt specifically in the politics of particular countries such as

⁵ See Carlos Alberto Torres "Argentina" in Philip G. Altbach (editor) International Higher Education. An Encyclopedia. New York and London, Garland, 1991, volume 2, pages 869-883.

Peru.⁶ Another example is the debate between Antonio Caso and Lombardo Toledano in México.⁷ This debate showed two contrasting two types of university, one which is politically-committed [in Lombardo Toledano's proposal the university will endorse a variant of socialism], and another one, Antonio Caso's position, which relies on university autonomy and freedom of choice and speech. As such, this debate typified many of issues brought to bare with the proposal of the university reform, at the same time that the university began to contemplate the concurrent transformations taking place within Latin American capitalism and politics.

But what type of university confronts the reformist movement and what kind of democratic proposal does it advance? The reform confronts a university intimately linked to the political power (from this fact stems the demand for autonomy), hierarchical and conservative, with professors which utilize their perks and prebends, that go along with their positions, and/or receive said positions as a reward for their services to the conservative regime. It was a patriarchal, elitist, nepotistic university with liberal professionals utilizing their *cátedra* (Chairs) to give impetus to specific projects, although with scarce ties between serious scientific investigation and teaching.

In a bitter manner, twenty years past, Brazilian Anthropologist and Senador Darcy Ribeiro, First President of the innovative University of Brasilia, would criticize the traditional university, including the post-reformist university as "a traditional University, federative in its organization of schools and faculties; professionalizing given its emphasis on teaching oriented towards the granting of legal degrees for the exercise of professional liberals; rigid in its curricula, established for the formation of singularly specialized professionals; stagnated due to its isolation with respect

⁶ International Student Conference by the Coordinating Secretariat of national Unions of Students. University Reform in Latin America. (Leiden: the Netherlands: International Student Conference, 1959).

⁷ Gilberto Guevara Niebla, El Saber y el Poder. (Culiacán, Sinaloa: Universidade de Sinaloa, 1986)

to the other institutions in society; with duplicity among units in its personnel and material resources; autocratic in its government and its magisterial hierarchy of "cátedras"; bureaucratic for its dependence on the public services of the State; and elitist given the limitation of opportunities for access and its clientelism."⁸

2.2. The University of the Democratic Modernity

The pattern of industrialization and economic development predominant in Latin America between 1940 and up to the decade of the eighties, based on a participation in the international market founded almost exclusively on the exportation of natural resources, and an industrial structure oriented to the substitution of imports and the internal market, a model of consumption in the style of the industrialized countries, and a limited valorization of the role of the national bussiness sector (both public and private), facilitated "a scarce development of the scientific-technological endogenous base, combined with a higher education based on the "soft" careers, of heterogenous quality and oriented towards the functions of integration of the masses."⁹

⁸ Raúl Atria, Eduardo Acuña et al., "El estado de la investigación tipológica acerca de la universidad en América Latina" in Various Authors, La Universidad Latinoamericana. Enfoques Tipológicos, op. cit. página 31.

⁹ José Joaquín Brunner, *Investigación científica y educación superior en América Latina* (Santiago de Chile; FLACSO, Documento de Trabajo 452, June 1990, page 2). Brunner qualifies this observation in another work where he indicates that due to the role of the state as financier, the investment in development and investigation in 1970-1980 went from US. \$500 millon to US \$3,500. See J.J. Brunner. *Higher education and the formation of the professional in Latin America*. (Santiago de Chile' FLACSO, Documento de Trabajo 380), August 1988, page 15).

José Joaquín Brunner¹⁰ presents an analysis influenced in large part by neo-structural-functionalism¹¹ in the sociology of higher education, particularly the work of Burton R. Clark,¹²

¹⁰ In the writing of this section the following monographs by José Joaquín Brunner have been particularly useful: *La educación superior y la formación profesional en América Latina*. (Santiago de Chile: FLACSO, Documento de Trabajo 381, Septiembre de 1988); *Educación superior y cultura en América Latina: Función y organización* (Santiago de Chile: FLACSO, Documento de Trabajo 412, July 1989); *Gobierno universitario: elementos de análisis y discusión*, (Santiago de Chile: FLACSO, Documento de Trabajo 414, Julio de 1989); *Educación superior y ciencia: Chile en perspectiva internacional comparada* (Santiago de Chile: FLACSO, Documento de Trabajo 447, May 1990); *Investigación científica y educación superior en América Latina* (Santiago de Chile: FLACSO, Documento de Trabajo 452, June 1990).

¹¹ A new theoretical perspective in sociology has been introduced in the United States in the last decade. The neo-structural-functionalism is the product of a group of American scholars, the majority of them sociologists, whom have questioned some of the analytical and methodological premises of Talcott Parsons, but which have conserved to a large extent, its explicative structure, for example, notions of structural differentiation and systemic specialization. Among its most noteworthy representatives is Jeffry Alexander, the latest works of Neil Smelser, and in the realm of higher education, the last work of Burton Clark, who has conducted a number of case studies, as well as analitic and historical analysis. For a sistematic presentation and critical discusion of this tendency, see Raymond A. Morrow and Carlos Alberto Torres Social Theory and Education, (Los Angeles and Edmonton, manuscript, 1992, 550 pages). For a comparative analysis (or map) of Neo-Functionalism in the context of comparative education see Rolland Paulston "Mapping Paradigms and Theories in Comparative Education", paper presented at the Comparative and International Education Society Annual Meetin, Annapolis, MD, March 1992.

and to a lesser extent his disciple, the political scientist Daniel Levy.¹³ The transformations experienced by the institutions of higher education in Latin America, following the model of the modernist university, according to Brunner's analysis, can be summarized as follows:

(1) Up until 1950 the Latin American Universities were institutions of the elite. This elitism is determined not only in the social origin of students and professors—attended to a elite with the cultural capital, educational capital, and the appropriate social capital—but corresponded to the limited social function that they served and the scarce educational certification generated.¹⁴

(2) This elitist traditional character allowed the university to have an aura of great cultural prestige. Furthermore, the universities have a quasi-monopoly on higher education (i.e. in 1959, 90.2% of the enrollment in higher education was in the universities), almost the totality of the effort in terms of scientific-technological investigation carried out in the universities. That is to say that the universities played a hegemonic role in the cultural arena.

(3) Its fundamental function was professional, in the formation of the elite leadership in the affairs of the State, and the formation of traditional professionals, specially in medicine and law. In the traditional institutional culture, the university revolved around the "cátedra" in the base, with

¹² Of the long list of work by Burton R. Clark see The Academic Life. Small Words, Different Worlds. (Princeton New Jersey, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1987) and The Higher Education System: Academic Organization in Cross-National Perspective (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1983)

¹³ Daniel C. Levy University and Government in Mexico. Autonomy in an Authoritarian System. (New York: Praeger, 1980), and his seminal work: Higher Education and the State in Latin America. Private Challenges to Public Dominance. (Chicago and London,

¹⁴ According to Brunner, around 1950, there were some 75 universities in total in Latin America, with enrollment above 270,000 students which represented approximately 2% of the total of young adults between the ages of 20 and 24 years, with a total of approximately 25,000 graduates per year.

respect to the professional faculties at the institutional intermediate level, and with regard to the specific features of insertion into the arena of the state at the level of establishments." 15

(4) That is to say, up to three decades ago, the universities found themselves in an incipient phase of organizational complexity; its size was not exaggerated; its teaching staff stable, and in its great majority constituted by liberal professionals who were always partially teaching and partially working in the state or private sector; finally the university bureaucracy was reduced to completing simple administrative tasks.

(5) Thirty years of transformations generated during the passage from an university of elites to an university of the masses. Around 1985, the gross rate of higher education enrollement fell between 10% and on occasion went over 20% in various countries (e.g. Argentina, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Venezuela). With more than 6 million students in higher education towards 1985, more than half a million graduate annually, double the number of graduates that existed 35 years previous. For Brunner this massification is the product of the differentiation experienced by the systems of higher education. In general, Brunner calculates that there presently are 420 universities in the region, absorbing close to 65% of the total of the enrollments at the terciary or higher education level.¹⁶ Along side the massification there has occurred an academic

15 J. J. Brunner. Educación superior y cultura en América Latina: Función y organización. (Santiago de Chile: FLACSO, Documento de Trabajo 412, Julio de 1989, page 5-6). A critical analysis of the Latin American professorship and the "cátedra" can be found in Gino Germani "the Professor and the Cátedra" in Joseph Maier and Richard W. Weatherhead (editors) The Latin American University. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979, pages 205-217).

16 Brunner relies on the work of the project *Desarrollo y Educación en América Latina y el Caribe* (DEALC), a project sponsored by agencies of the United Nations systems, which analized the changes in higher education, highlighting the massification of enrollments in the last three decades. For example, DEALC documents point out the fact that the growth of higher education went

professionalization, with more than half a million academics working at institutions of higher learning, more than half of them working in Brazil (123,000), Mexico (190,000) and Argentina (65,000). In the same manner, Brunner characterizes this massification as a mesocratization, with the growing participation of middle and lower sectors, consistent with the arguments of the project DEALC directed more than a decade ago by sociologist Germán Rama. Brunner incorporates the DEALC findings that in addition to massification identify the feminization of the enrollment in higher education.¹⁷ One of the causes that explain the feminization of enrollment is its regionalization along with the growing creation of institutions of higher education established outside the metropolitan areas of the principal cities of the country and the provinces. Similarly, it is observed that a terciarization of enrollments, concentrated in those careers which pertain to the areas of social sciences, education, commerce and business administration. Finally, a privatization of the enrollment, reaching one third of that in private institutions of higher education.¹⁸

(6) For Brunner, this massification is associated to the growing differentiation, in as much at the horizontal level (within each institution) as at the vertical level (among institutions). In terms of horizontal differentiation, the last three decades observe an increase in graduate training (and its resources) in detriment to the studies at the undergraduate level, as well as a growing inversion of

beyond that of the demographic growth of the population from 20-24 years old. Notably, while this population grew 22% between 1950-1960, 33% between 1960-1970, and 42% between 1970-1980, university enrollments grew 102 %, 188% and 224% respectively. See Proyecto Desarrollo y educación en América Latina y el Caribe (DEALC) Desarrollo y educación en América Latina. Síntesis General . 4 volúmenes (Buenos Aires, UNESCO-ECLA-UNDP, 1981, mimeographs).

¹⁷ According to DEALC, between 1950 and 1980 the participation of women in the total enrollment of higher education went from 20.8% to 44.9%. DEALC, previous *ibidem*, vol. IV p. 47, table IV-29.

¹⁸ See the book by Daniel Levy cited above.

the institutions and centers of investigation in detriment to teaching activities in the faculties and schools. Similarly, the vertical differentiation, results in the effort to establish institutional hierarchies based on institutional tradition, quality of the teaching staff, and prestige of diplomas and titles, "internal cultural climate" and market demand.

(7) Finally, these processes have brought about a greater degree of selectivity in higher education, specially in the case of Chile which Brunner analyzes, whereas "in Chile the higher educational system tends to be highly selective from a social point of view due to the double selectiveness in terms of academics as well, which favours the youth with a higher level of previous educational preparation, and for having surrendered its expansion to the private sector, which makes access for youth of lower income more difficult (...) the labor and artisan sectors which constitute 65% of the work force of the country has been represented by 21% in the universities with fiscal contribution and less than 2% in the universities without fiscal contribution."¹⁹

The economic crisis and fiscal crisis of the state in the eighties, the new realities of the external debt of the Latin American countries,²⁰ the new demands of the process of democratization in the context of a worldwide neo-conservative policies advanced by international organizations, have posed new dilemmas to Latin American universities. While the modernist

¹⁹ José Joaquín Brunner. Educación superior y ciencia: Chile en perspectiva internacional comparada. (Santiago de Chile: FLACSO, Documento de Trabajo 447, May 1990, pages 12-13).

²⁰ According to the World Bank, for the period 1970-1987, of the seventeen most indebted countries in the world, twelve were Latin American countries. See World Bank, World Development Report 1989 (New York and London, Oxford University Press-The World Bank, 1989, table A.12, p. 154). For a systematic discussions of the implications of the fiscal, debt and economic crisis for education, see Daniel A. Morales-Gómez and Carlos A. Torres (editors) Education, Policy and Change: The Experience of Latin America (Wesport, Connecticut, 1992).

university faces a number of challenges including enrollment massification, quality and relevance of instruction, and issues of equality and/or linkages with labor markets, the answers to these problems are been advanced from neo-conservative and post-modernist frameworks.²¹

²¹ Postmodernism is defined here as a cultural paradigm with epistemological implications; a paradigm that challenges basic tenets of the modernity tradition, including the notions of certainty, representation of reality, universality, comprehensiveness, and even the search for sure foundations. In addition, notions of rationality and knowledge fallibility, the impossibility of getting beyond language to 'reality', the fragmentary and particular nature of all understanding, the pervasive corruption of knowledge by power and domination, and the need for a pragmatic approach to the whole matter is incorporated. For a discussion of the progressive/regressive, internally contradictory, ideological diverse and eventually theoretically inadequate nature of postmodernism as a single approach, see Henry Giroux "Modernism, Postmodernism, and Feminism: Rethinking the Boundaries of Educational Discourse," introduction to Henry Giroux (editor) Postmodernism, Feminism and Cultural Politics. Redrawing Educational Boundaries. (New York: Albany, SUNY Press, 1991). For a sociological approach see Scott Lash, Sociology of Postmodernism (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), and Raymond Morrow and Carlos Alberto Torres, Social Theory and Educational Research (Edmonton and Los Angeles, manuscript, 1992).

2.3. The Postmodern University and Structural Adjustment

During the seventies and eighties, a new process of reorganization of the international division of labor and of capital has taken place. American hegemony in decline,²² even after having after pushed the Soviet Union to bankruptcy with the arms race. Japan and Germany emerge as powerful economic competitors of the postwar. The international exchange has taken on unprecedented dimensions, particularly with the announcement of the unification of Europe and the common market between Canada, Mexico and the United States in 1992. The integration of the international economies reaches surprising levels, to the point that it is difficult for the United States, for example to determine the national component of an automobile produced in a plant in Kentucky. The highly successful experiences of NICs (Newly Industrialized Countries), specifically Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore based on the low cost production is a model for "latecomers" into the international system. The adoption of global strategies of production for the multinational companies create a more economically and politically interdependent world, with strong pressures to cut back on the value of the labor force, and the replacement of the Keynesian economic formulas, with which the alliances between labor and capital grow increasingly more difficult in the context of an industrial reorganization. New economic orthodoxies, with the predominance of monetarism "trickle down" economies, and market ideologies have permeated the capitalist world and begin to be experienced in the new open markets due to the downfall of *real* socialism in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe.

In Latin America the external debt and the limitations of domestic capital accumulation forced the new and old democracies, this time with predominantly neo-liberal governments, to adopt the economic policy dictates of the International Monetary Fund with all its conditionalities. Other important phenomena are the decline of the State sector and its participation in the fixed gross

²² James Petras and Morris Morely U.S. Hegemony Under Siege. Class, Politics and Development in Latin America. (London and New York: Verso, 1990).

investment rate in Latin America, the reorientation of economic policies from the production for an internal market towards the production for an international market, the growth of a more sophisticated middle class, linked to the international system and highly differentiated and stratified, the diminishing (demographically as well as in terms of political power) of the peasantry and working classes and the growth of marginal urban sectors and of the informal labor markets. These conditions characterize what Collier and Collier call the advent of a new political juncture in the region.²³

The crisis of 1979, produced by the rise in the price of petroleum, and the recession of 1981-82 in the US which profoundly affected countries such as Costa Rica and Mexico whose economies are highly linked to the US, generated an economic whirlwind in Latin America, which manifested itself in the crisis of the external debt and in the fiscal crisis of the State. In order to restore economic development, the bridge loans of International Monetary Fund, and the structural adjustment loans (SAL) of the World Bank were extensively implemented in Latin America, with Brazil, the last country to sign an agreement with the IMF in July of 1992.

Structural adjustment imposes a number of conditions, including the reduction of governmental expenditure, devaluations to promote exports, reduction in import tariffs, and the increase in public and private savings. Other aspects linked to the policies of structural adjustment include the reduction of the fiscal deficit at the same time that the public expenditure is reduced and strict monetary policies are applied to diminish inflation. One of the consequences of this model is the absolute reduction of the State sector, the liberalization of salaries and prices, and the reorientation of industrial and agricultural production towards exportation.²⁴ The combined pressure of the conditionalities of the IMF-World Bank loans, and the difficulties for financing

²³ Collier and Collier, Op. cit. pages 772-774.

²⁴ Sergio Bitar "Neo-Liberalism versis Neo-Structuralism in Latin America" (CEPAL Review (34), April 1988, pages 45-62).

created by the external debt crisis, generates new phenomena in the educational policies of the region.²⁵

There are new efforts to pass the costs of these services to the clientele, increasing the participation of the private sector in education (i.e. privatization), reorienting educational investments towards areas of study that the World Bank has considered to render the greatest rates of return, in other word primary education and basic education, reduction of the cost of education, affecting salary levels and for that matter teachers training—considered over educated and whose university training generates higher salary expectations than that which the countries can finance²⁶—and promotion of a de-concentration and/or decentralization of educational services as a means of redefining the power and educational relations among national (federal), provincial and municipal governments.²⁷

By the time that this conversation between Freire and university professors took place at UNAM, in Mexico City in 1985, the process of structural adjustment and drastic changes of the Latin American states were just beginning. Thus, to understand the unity in the diversity of topics, themes and discussions presented in this book, we need to understand the historical, structural and

²⁵ Sylvain Lourié, "Impact of Recession and Adjustment on Education." Paper submitted to the round-table "Development: The Human Dimension", Salzburg, September 7-9, 1986. Fernando Reimers "The Impact of the Debt Crisis on Education in Latin America. Implications for Educational Planning" Prospects, Vol. XX, N° 4, 1990: 539-554; Fernando Reimers "Deuda Externa y Desarrollo: Implications para el Financiamiento de la Educación en América Latina." Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos. Vol. 71, n° 169, 1990, pages 195-277.

²⁶ See World Bank

²⁷ See Juan Pravda "Educational Decentralization in Latin America, Lessons Learned." Washington: Human Resources Division, Technical Department, Latin American and the Caribbean, The World Bank, December 15, 1991, mimeograph.

political background presented above. It is evident that political changes affecting the universities, not only transform academic work, but also drastically modify the relationships between intellectuals and higher education institutions. The next section discusses the role of intellectuals and Paulo Freire's views.

3. Paulo Freire, Universities and Intellectuals in Latin America.

Paulo Freire graduated from the University of Recife in Pernambuco, with a degree in Law. After a short period of working as a lawyer--he tried only one case--accepted in 1946 a position with the Social Service of Industry (*Serviço Social da Indústria*) an institution created in his native Recife by the private sector with clear reformist goals.²⁸ Freire worked there for eight years at SESI, becoming Director of the Educational Sector. In 1959 Freire applied for an academic position as Chair of History and Philosophy of Education at the University of Recife. Following the Brazilian system for appointments at the professorial level, organized along similar lines to the German system, Freire wrote his dissertation entitled "Educação e atualidade brasileira," [education and Brazilian reality] obtaining the equivalent to a doctorate but losing the academic position. He remained with an appointment as technician at the university level, becoming the first Director of the Service of Extension of the University of Recife (*Serviço de Extensão Cultural*) where he started his first experiences with literacy training and adult education.

Freire's work in Recife acquired national projection when he is appointed in 1963 as Director of the National program for Literacy Training launched by the populist government of João Goulard. The coup d'etat of 1964 truncated the literacy training experiment, incarcerating Freire for 70 days, and ultimately send him to exile until his definitive return to Brazil in 1980. Freire taught in Brazilian universities prior to 1964, however in exile, Freire lectured worldwide,

²⁸ Moacir Gadotti, Convite a leitura de Paulo Freire. (São Paulo: Editora Scipione, 1989); Carlos Alberto Torres, Consciência e história: a prática educativa de Paulo Freire (São Paulo, Loyola, 1979); Carlos Alberto Torres, Leitura crítica de Paulo Freire. (São Paulo, Loyola, 1981).

but in terms of teaching or research, he collaborated only marginally with universities, teaching occasionally such as his stay for a semester at Harvard in 1969, or his sporadic teaching at the University of Geneva during 1970-1979. However, it was with his return to Brazil in 1980 that Freire secured an academic position at the University of Campinas, in São Paulo, and at the Catholic University in São Paulo. Despite his experience and reputation, it is only in the last twelve years that Paulo Freire become an academic, fully engaged in systematically teaching at the graduate level, research and extension in Brazilian Universities, including short stays as distinguished professor in American, Canadians and European universities. But what kind of academic is Paulo Freire?

Joseph Maier and Richard W. Weatherhead in their introduction to The Latin American University,²⁹ have expressed very clearly a conventional view that, by and large, has been long held in the U.S. regarding Latin American academics:

“Professors are not wholly academic creatures; they retain only part-time posts in the university while performing other professional work on the outside. Teaching is a demanding exercise and monetarily an unrewarding one. The professor does receive compensations, however: he is considered a *maestro* or becomes one, revered and honored by students. Such reverence, however, often is accorded him not because the incisive brilliance of his lectures but rather because of his ideological zeal and oratory. The professor as well as the intellectual must have the gift of the word; he must be a rhetorician, harking back to his scholastic forebears of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³⁰

In this view, university professors are rhetoricians, more sophists than philosophers, and certainly not scholars pursuing an objective, rigorously scientific and politically neutral research

²⁹ Joseph Maier and Richard W. Weatherhead (editors) The Latin American University (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979, pages 11-12).

³⁰ Ibidem pages 11-12.

and teaching agendas in the calmly environment of their laboratories or offices; university professors in Latin America are merely intellectuals as well as ideologues and polemicists. They are marked by the corporatist cultural structures of the Iberian societies, remaining captives of their authoritarian, hierarchical, princely Machiavellian and Thomist past:

"The Latin American intellectual is an ideologue and polemicist, and influences the university because the reach of his ideas and the glitter of his prose and poetry. The *pensador* of the nineteenth century and the intellectual of the twentieth century write of the glories and unity of the Latin races. They are beacons for a whole generations, whether that of 1898, 1918, or any other epochal year ...The intellectual today is a more professional critic of society than was the *pensador*. He is also more cosmopolitan, and his criticism more widely read. Intellectuals do not always associate themselves with partisan callings as did the *pensadores*. All wrote extensively, and virtually no subject was foreign to their pen. They addressed themselves to their generation and to the young of the next, exhorting them to fulfill their ideals and to found the perfect society. The fact that the Latin American *pensador*--and on occasion the intellectual--so often take the road of exile attests to the political force of their writings. Governments fear the effects of their hortatory presence on the internal political process and the influence of their voice upon students and professor partisanships."³¹

For this perspective, the academic profession in Latin America is described as a melange of politicism, rethoricism, activism, and enciclopedism practiced by part-time professors who are at the same time full-time liberal professionals or state bureaucrats. They are, in short, ideological zealots that construct their careers and the social imaginary resorting to their powerful oratory, prose and poetry. They are either **pensadores**, **intellectuals** or **doctrinaires**, but certainly not

³¹ Ibidem, page 12.

scholars, lacking the scholar's professional ethics, scientific practices, commitment to research and teaching as a full-time profession.

This is not the place to assess whether the distinction between pensadores, intellectuals and scholars is a useful one. It is commonplace to define as a scholar someone who has esoteric expertise in a scientific, humanistic, technical, or cultural domain, and who has proven this expertise conducting research that after being evaluated by her peers, is sanctioned as acceptable according to the rules of the academic community and normal-paradigmatic science. One may take exception with such a definition of scholarship if it mask the political implications of scientific work, neglects the intersubjective evaluation of academic work as a proxy for an elusive scientific objectivity, or simply if scholarly work is considered exclusively as a technocratic practice, rigorously regulated and legislated through standardized rules of professions or disciplines. Likewise, one may take exception with any sharp distinction between scholars and intellectuals as representing mutually exclusive or incommensurate practices (and roles) in society.

From a Marxist perspective, James Petras has sharply criticized what he considered the metamorphosis of Latin American intellectuals.³² Petras sees two diametrically opposed intellectuals in Latin America, the organic intellectual in the Gramscian sense of the sixties, and the institutional intellectual of the eighties.³³ In the sixties, writers, journalists, and political economists "linked directly to political and social struggles against imperialism and capitalism. They were integral parts of trade unions, students movements, or revolutionary parties."³⁴ Most of these intellectuals were either killed, jailed, exiled or expelled from universities by dictatorships,

³² See James Petras and Morris Morley, op. cit. pages 147-156.

³³ In Petras' terminology, this distinctions can be applied to intellectuals in Latin America. He reserves the term lumpen intellectuals for neo-conservative intellectuals who played roles as policy advisors in the Reagan administration.

³⁴ Ibidem, page 151.

and those who remain alive lost their source of income. Petras sees that this intellectual class "was politically and economically vulnerable and increasingly disposed to accept external funding as a mode of survival."³⁵ Thus, for Petras, a perverse combination of economic need and dependency, the pressure of the international public opinion and the changes in funding criteria and liberalized ideological criteria of private foundations, government aid agencies and social-democratic parties in metropolitan countries, gave birth to the institutional intellectual in Latin America, a new, internationally-oriented intellectuals who may be critics of the neo-liberal economic model but who are "deeply embedded in dependent relations with overseas networks" and who serve as regime advisor in the new democracies "shifted their research agenda away from critical studies of inequalities, dependence, and power, toward technocratic and developmental directions."³⁶ For Petras, as regime apologists, they have abdicated their responsibilities as critical intellectuals.³⁷

A distinction between organic and institutional intellectual may not be entirely useful. Petras employs a fairly deterministic and economicist perspective, unable to explain why in more stable countries, such as Mexico or Venezuela, many of the intellectuals he would have surely considered as organic in the sixties, could be considered, according to his typology, institutional intellectuals in the eighties. Petras' analysis simply does not account for the fundamental cultural transformation of the Latin American societies, a transformation associated with the concept of postmodernism. To argue that these changes are merely prompted by an ideological capitulation to the economic

³⁵ Ibidem, page 147.

³⁶ Ibidem, page 155.

³⁷ Ibidem, page 156.

security of academic life is simple an *ad hominen* argument based on a simplistic and reductionist perception of the complexities of academic life.³⁸

Freire comes from a liberal-democratic Catholic tradition, clearly associated with the modernist, anti-traditional university. His writings in the sixties and seventies criticize the narrow views of specialization (specialisms in Freire's terminology), and supports the notion of engaged intellectuals in critical dialogue with the people, learning about and from people's knowledge. He has repeatedly criticized scientificism, as scientific practices that fails to recognize the conflicts in society, particularly class conflicts. He has emphasized the linkages between politics and education, and by implication academic work. He has emphasized that for him, teaching is the act of knowing, and learning involves a subjective stance: "It is impossible that a person, not being the subject of his own curiosity, can truly grasp the object of his knowledge."³⁹

Freire's academic, gnoseological and political approach has proven ethically consistent. He has always emphasized that the first commitment of an intellectual is a complete docility with respect to the reality that is to be studied, described and explained in a particular theoretical and historical context. This docility is not a call for empiricism but, on the contrary, it is an invitation to listen to the multiple voices that articulate and constitute the experience, knowledge and consciousness of the oppressed, of those who hardly have had any systematic education to facilitate learning about their own experience. For Freire, this experience is the beginning of the construction of knowledge which should be supplemented with the theoretical rigour of the social

³⁸ See a more sophisticated discussion of the implications of post-modernism and Post-Marxism in popular culture and intellectuals in Raymond Morrow "Post-Marxism, Postmodernism and Popular Education in Latin America" New Education, Volume 12, N° 2, 1990: 47-57.

³⁹ See "Twenty Years After Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Paulo Freire in Conversation with Carlos Alberto Torres" In Peter McLaren and Colin Lankshear (editors) Conscientization and Oppression (London, Routledge, forthcoming)

sciences in critical dialogue with the living experience of the people. That is the reason that in his early and insightful writings of the sixties, Freire called for an epistemological approach that facilitates the archeology of consciousness; that is an approach that by learning to name the world, helps people to change the world. That is the reason that for Freire, literacy consist of a set of practices that either empower of disempower people. Indeed, Freire argues in this book that "if we are not able to talk about their (students) common experience, turning it into philosophy, then we do not know what to do with our science."⁴⁰

Freire has argued that every book he has written is a report of a particular phase of his pedagogical and political experience. Even writing his famous Pedagogy of the Oppressed in Chile "appeared as a practical, theoretical necessity in my professional career."⁴¹ Writing about his own political and pedagogical praxis, usually at the margins of academic activities in the modernist universities of the sixties, Freire has always claimed to be a radical but never a sectarian; a very important distinction in the context of the complexities of the political struggle of Latin America in the sixties and seventies.

Despite hiw own self-definition as a radical, in a famous interview with members of a socialist journal in Chile in 1972,⁴² Freire was accused of not using class analysis or not giving enough weight to class struggle in his writings. Similarly, his interviewers implied that his emphasis on freedom and democracy will make him a liberal intellectual, thus putting him at odds with the revolutionary project.

⁴⁰ Paulo Freire Critique of Domesticating Pedagogy. A Dialogue with Paulo Freire [Title of Book may change] manuscript, p. 118.

⁴¹ See "Twenty Years After Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Paulo Freire in Conversation with Carlos Alberto Torres" In Peter McLaren and Colin Lankshear (editors) Conscientization and Oppression (London, Routledge, forthcoming)

⁴² See Carlos Alberto Torres Entrevistas con Paulo Freire, (Mexico: Gernika, 1978).

In a recent visit to post-Pinochet Chile, twenty years after that interview, Freire's insistency on the importance of class for political and educational practices caused reactions in many intellectual circles, and he was accused of being a romantic, bringing back 'themes' of the sixties. Freire's laconic commented that while he stills resorts to class analysis, and the concepts of democracy and freedom are key elements of his research and pedagogical agenda, many of his critics of the sixties have drastically switched positions.⁴³

Freire cannot be easily classified under the "organic intellectual" of the sixties in Petras' taxonomy nor can be accused of being an institutional intellectual. Freire's experience as Secretary of Education of the Municipality of São Paulo between 1989 and 1991 took place under the rubric of a socialist and democratically elected Workers Party (e.g. Partido dos Trabalhadores), a rare avis political experience in the context of neo-liberal governments in Latin America.

Freire is a different kind of intellectual. His emphasis on an epistemology or theory of knowledge as a precondition to learning, his perception that every pedagogical act is a political act, and his criticism to the notion of intellectual as an scholar narrowly defined as an specialist situates Freire in the tradition of the XIX Latin American pensadores while embracing many of the themes of the critical intellectual that emerge with the movement for reform of 1918, becoming more radicalized with the revolutionary experiences in the sixties and early seventies. However, his research and practical agenda transcends the modernist university, and the reverberations of his work reaches the postmodern criticism.

Against the dry pragmatism and realpolitiks of the nineties, Freire still proposes ethical and political principles that are tied to the modernity project (repeatedly talking about fairness, justice, empowerment, love) while criticizing the incompleteness of the modernist process, and the rightness of many of the postmodernist criticisms. He argues that "We cannot enter the struggle or transformation of society ignorant of the fact that the dominant class possesses an extraordinary

⁴³ Conversation with Carlos Alberto Torres, São Paulo, April 1992.

power to "folklorize" the most advanced ideas"... For me the point is not to stop using words such as curiosity or creativity just because the dominant class has begun using them. I also think it would be absurd to stop using the word love. There is no revolution without love, the revolution is loving. The fact that the bourgeoisie has distorted an important word has no effect on me."⁴⁴

His emphasis on a loving revolution shows that Freire is at the same time a traditional, a modernist and a postmodernist intellectual, and he cannot be easily classified as a romantic or a pragmatic intellectual, or under the straight jacket taxonomy of organic versus institutional intellectuals.

What is fascinating about the discussion in this book, is that Freire's arguments result from his perspective as an academic in Brazilian universities but also as an intellectual politically linked to a socialist party. Compared to his experiences as Secretary of education four years later, the consistency of his message, his approach to learning and knowing, and his principles of realpolitik linked to a possible utopia for social change show no mutation.

Democratization of higher education and Mexican society at large was a substantial part of the workshop's agenda, a theme clearly inscribed in the crisis of 1968 and the contribution of the student movements. This is a fundamental issue, particularly when some of the intellectuals who Freire encountered in this debate were political activists, trade-union activists, and university students in the sixties and seventies, and particularly when the debates about the university and academic policy were beginning to show the impact of the post-modernist criticism but also of the implementation of the neo-liberal and neo-conservative political agenda in the region.

Critical views of democracy and the academic profession predominate. There are discussions about the degree of authoritarianism of university trade unions, the complacency of a conformist culture among university professors, the lack of a truly democratic discussion about the

⁴⁴ Paulo Freire Critique of Domesticating Pedagogy. A Dialogue with Paulo Freire [Title of Book may change] 1.22. manuscript.

role of the university in the process of change of Mexico or Latin America, or even that university professors are out of touch with reality, even if some of them claim to follow a Freirean epistemology of starting from the real and concrete:

"Most professors do not address objective reality. Rather, they address analysis of objective reality found in books and articles. They turn this into the object of knowledge, within struggle for power, focusing upon accumulated knowledge. This impedes approximation to reality. The learning exercise is turned into a struggle around representations that we have of reality, and ideological struggle, addressing power that we do know how to manipulate. Consequently, the dialogue that should emerge from such analysis is no longer a mediated dialogue leading to reality. It is an alienating metaphysical "dialogue" about an abstract "reality" that has no real meaning."⁴⁵

Despite the criticism of metaphysics, the notion of an "objective reality" appears as a demiurge which can be apprehended through the mediation of true dialogue, a dialogue not about "representations," but about true reality. Another premise is that the knowledge of this "objective reality" in its entire concreteness, can be reached without resorting to abstraction. As a response, Freire emphasizes the importance of dialogue, but claims that there is no historicity in the academy which cannot be construed outside the global political context. Respect for political pluralism in the university is another tool to construct the understanding of "objective reality" by respecting multiple voices. However this does not imply to belittle the risks involved in creativity nor prevents intellectuals and scholars to sustain political views:

"This is a call for nothing less than an experience of risk within an academy that does not sacrifice itself because it does not take the risk of creating. There is no creativity without the risk of creating....The matter of freedom is basic for the search, for risk. However, we cannot fall into a naive idealism when thinking that it is possible to create a "province of

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 112.

freedom" outside a specific society where the material conditions of that society work against the affirmation of freedom."⁴⁶

From a naive perspective, tolerance, freedom, and respect predicated in Freire's view of intellectuals and academic environment do not seem to agree with intellectuals political^{ly} engaged, taking risks, or developing open-ended dialogues as a tool for intellectual inquiry. Nor does it agree with the challenge to university professors who may be prisoners of the Cartesian discourse, detached from the idea of praxis. However, Freire's legacy and his dialectical thinking and emphasis on dialogue show a more complex understanding of the relationships between university life, academic policies and politics. While emphasizing the notions of curiosity, creativity and risk-taking as essential attributes for intellectual inquiry, Freire also argues that when he started not to be sure of his own certainty, he realized that he has become more sure, because the only way one may have to be sure is not being sure. This is perhaps the reason why he cannot be easily classified either as a traditional, modernist or postmodern intellectual.

Freire's dialectical views of intellectuals and the role of university are inspired in what he considered the great lesson of his exile: "One thing I also learned in exile, maybe the best thing I ever learned, is that I could not continue being sure of my certainty."⁴⁷ This is obviously a lesson for every intellectual and for the pursuit of academic work.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, pages 135-136.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, page 145.