

## PREFACE

From May 1969 to January 1970 I stayed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States, coordinating two seminars about Cultural Action (Education). The first one, from May to August, at the Center for the Study of Development and Social Change; the second, from September 1969 to January 1970, at the Center for Studies in Education and Development, of Harvard University.

A small essay, "Cultural Action for Freedom", resulted from the first seminar, which some of the main texts which were discussed at the Harvard seminar constitute this issue. In many aspects, both of these studies, in mutually completing each other, establish the relationships between my first book, "Educação como Prática da Liberdade" and the last one, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed". Nevertheless, while "Cultural Action for Freedom" presents a logical sequence in its three chapters, "The Cultural Action Process - an introduction to its understanding" reveals a formal discontinuity. This is because, while the first one was written as a totality whose chapters are structurally interlinked, this, on the contrary, is a set of texts which were written on different occasions. In fact, ~~in~~ <sup>among</sup> them, only first part is that which I wrote intentionally, for the seminar at Harvard University. The above-mentioned formal discontinuity does not mean the non-existence of a conceptual coherence between the texts. Really, this coherence exists there to the extent that all of them reveal my main preoccupation concerning education as cultural action.

It seems to me interesting, on the other hand, to offer some considerations about the seminar itself and its development. From the point of view of a democratic educational practice, necessarily based on dialogue, - which I defend - the content of the educational program cannot result from a decision taken solely by the educator. His experience, his understanding derived from the disciplines of his speciality, his global grasp of the problems, none of these are sufficient justification for the educator, acting alone, to dictate the thematic content of his course or his seminar. This is because the course or the seminar are not, strictly speaking, "his". If it be permitted to employ the language of possession, they belong to him and to the students.

In a consistently democratic practice, the educational dialogue does not begin when, in the same room, professors and students are confronted with each other and with a program which is already determined and untouchable. On the contrary, the dialogue ought to begin, according to a more rigorous viewpoint, when the professors and the students, as subjects of the educational process, question each other about the subject about which they will dialogue; or, according to



a less rigorous, but equally correct point of view, when the professor proposes the draft-program to the critical analysis of the students. The results of this analysis, in its turn, ought not to be considered as something which is absolutely concluded. Rather, during the process of the seminar, to the extent that these subjects in dialogue continually exercise a critical reflection on the content of the subject-matter, it is possible that they will come to perceive new angles or insights previously not appreciated - which could require a modification of the program. For this reason in a really humanistic mode of education, the program is always something in the process of elaboration, forming and reforming itself and, by this process, expressing a correspondence with the proper nature of education and culture, both of which are only in the measure that they are becoming.

Only in the anti-democratic process of education, necessarily opposed to dialogue, does the program remain not only the exclusive choice of the professor, but also static, rigid, immutable and "bureaucratized". Thus, it is that in such a practice, education becomes a mere transfer of information.

In the practice which I defend, education is, on the contrary, an act of knowing in which the cognitive subjects seek to grasp, by means of dialogue, the very essence of the knowable object which challenges them. Precisely because of this, I did not impose a program, but, on the contrary, I offered a draft-program in order for us to discuss it.

I was equally convinced that the seminar would only be successful to the extent that it became a "theoretical context" in which the concrete facts as they are being given in the "objective context" were critically analyzed. Only in this way it would avoid being, on the one hand, mere empty verbiage; on the other, a superficial study of facts without penetrating their meaning and remaining therefore at the level of a naive acquaintance.

This dialogical and critical spirit, to which the students responded more and more in an excellent way, characterized the seminar throughout. Hence it was our seminar and not my or their seminar.

Finally, I want to express here my thanks to the staff of secretaries of the Center for Studies in Education and Development, to its Director, Professor William Charleson and also to the professors of the same Center, Noel MacGinn and Richard King for their collaboration at different levels.

In a particular way, I want to express my debts to Jonk MacPadden, of California University, and to Jonk Dewitt, of Dayton University, for the translations which they made of <sup>the</sup> two texts which constitute this publication.