

**From  
A Pedagogy for Liberation  
to  
Liberation from Pedagogy**

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Paulo Freire was a prominent member of a group of brilliant intellectuals and activists, who revealed --- particularly to privileged audiences --- the horrors of modern oppression. In the steps of Franz Fanon, they fostered a new awareness of the condition of the world's social majorities after World War II.

In Latin America, Freire was inspired by the revolutionary ethos stimulated by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara in the 1960s. Like many others, however, Freire searched for an alternative to guerrilla warfare and terrorism to promote profound social change. Revolution, for Freire, would arise neither by pen nor by sword, but via enlightened literacy.

Freire gained fame and fortune for his ideas on literacy and education. Banking education --- the dominant curriculum and pedagogy of classrooms and campuses for credentials, careers, social caste or pedigree --- came under Freire's critical scrutiny. He denounced its flaws with great effectiveness. Thousands, perhaps millions, of young people found in his writings a source of inspiration for their activism on behalf of peoples' liberation. His many followers applied his method with courage and ingenuity all over the world.

In the years following publication of his pedagogy, Freire remained highly fashionable, particularly within certain professional educational circles of industrial countries. Following the Cold War, serious reconsideration of schools of thinking and action, previously marginalized by ideological disputes, occurred. The anxious search for new avenues of reform targeting the crises of educational systems created new opportunities for Freire's thinking. There also emerged at this time a new wave of criticism, putting every aspect of his theory and method under close examination. We add our names to those whose scrutiny recognized in Freire's praxis unintended corruption.

Given the well-established image of Freire as a progressive, radical or even revolutionary educator, it may seem preposterous, outrageous or even ridiculous to present him --- as we do in this essay --- as a conservative thinker and practitioner. Even more, on both theoretical and political grounds, we present him as a colonizer.

We strongly believe that Freire was a man of integrity, faithful to his beliefs and possessing profound social commitments. He was particularly committed to deep social transformation for liberating the "oppressed," as he called them. Yet, in spite of his intentions, we observe that he adopted assumptions or presuppositions which served the system he wanted to change. Instead of its transformation, his ideas nourished its conservation and reproduction. In

making this claim, we hope that our observations may help to explain the frustration we have sensed in many of his followers and practitioners of his ideas --- frustration arising from their accommodation within the very system against which they were courageously rebelling after being educated by Freire.

### **I. The Corruption of Awareness**

During the 1960s, a new awareness emerged among sections of the educated elite across the world. Surveying their social, political, and environmental landscapes, they recognized serious wrongs in it: growing social injustice; wars like the one being waged in Vietnam; the failure of the progress promised for the post World War II period. They wanted change.

Some, attempting to escape from the established world and its set of institutions and rules, marginalized themselves from this world. Soon they discovered that this path was an illusion, a delusion, a bad dream. After some time, they looked for an accommodation to the world from which they were escaping or even for ways to thrive within it.

Some others attempted to make with their lives and livelihood the changes they wanted for the world. They changed themselves, their own behavior, translating their awareness into new attitudes in order to live their own lives, in their own way, after identifying their own personal limits and the prevailing social constraints.

Others bore on their shoulders the responsibility to change the world. Freire was one of them.

Yet, if you want to change the world, you need to be aware of the direction of the global change you think is needed. You need a catholic (universally human) vision of both the desirable outcome for everyone and the way to achieve it. And if you do not suffer the illusion of being god, such consciousness should include the identification of the actors, subjects, agents who would produce the global change of which you are "aware."

Freire's pedagogy was born out of this kind of universal conscience<sup>i</sup>. Freire had it. He imagined the direction and nature of change. He identified the agents for that change. And, he dedicated his life to promoting the change he conceived. The way which would enable that change was education. Freire's catholic mission: secular salvation via education.

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#### NOTES

<sup>i</sup> In using "conscience," we are guided by Illich who in a footnote in *Gender* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1982, pp.158-9), provides a lengthy elaboration on the history of the term as well as a critique of its contemporary derivative. We include an excerpt from the text. "Conscience here means the human guide and umpire internalized. As an ideal type, it is opposed to the gendered sense of vernacular probity (FN 82). What has been called the 'process of civilization' builds on a process that could be called 'conscientization.' The term has been coined in Brazil to label a kind of political self-help adult education organized mostly by clergymen popularizing Marxist categories to help the poor discover that they are 'humans' (FN 4). It could be used by the historian to describe an enterprise that was decisively shaped by the Church through the institutionalization of the sacrament of Penance in the twelfth century, an enterprise that since then has been followed by other techniques. I would call conscientization all professionally planned and administered rituals that have as their purpose the internalization of a religious or secular ideology. Conscientization consists of the colonization and standardization of vernacular probity and honor through some 'catholic' (that is universally human) set of institutional rules. I would argue that it constituted, during the early Middle Ages, a perversion of the original Christian idea of reform. Reform as the attempt to bring about a renewal of the world by means of one's own personal conversion was conceived by early Christians as the vocation that set them apart."

The unsatisfactory conditions of the world had already a universal name, even a global identity by the 1960s: underdevelopment. The Peace Corps, the Point Four Program, the War on Poverty and the Alliance for Progress contributed to root into both popular and enlightened perception the notion of underdevelopment, coined by Truman on January 20, 1949. These programs also deepened the disability created by such a perception. None of those campaigns, however, were comparable to what was achieved by Latin American dependency theorists and other leftist intellectuals dedicated to criticizing all and every one of the development strategies that the North Americans successively put into fashion to counter underdevelopment everywhere. (Esteva, 1992). For them, as for many others, Truman had simply substituted a new word for what had already been there: backwardness or poverty. They attributed such conditions to past looting (a.k.a. colonization) as well as to the continued raping caused by capitalist exploitation. The neologism coined by Frank aptly summarized the prevailing political perception, becoming a political slogan: development (capitalism) develops underdevelopment. (Frank, 1969)

Trapped within an ideological dispute, very virulent at the time, many activists took sides: to get cured of underdevelopment, their countries needed to get cured of capitalism. From this awareness, a revolutionary ethos ensued. Latin American revolutionaries reformulated the European tradition of the "enlightened vanguard" as the agent of change. Instead of a party, to develop the conscience or an organization necessary for leading the people to their emancipation, they created the guerrilla, in the words of Che Guevara (after Mao), "a fish that swims in the sea of the people." *Guerrilleros* will conscientize the people --- through word and praxis --- in the nature of their oppression: leading them in the struggle to dismantle the dominant system; bringing them the right and appropriate kind of development; offering them the promise of their emancipation.

Within that intellectual climate, Freire shared with the *guerrilleros* a radical critic of capitalism and underdevelopment. He insisted that "Third World" was an ideological rather than a geographical definition. Like Fanon, he extended the denunciation of oppression to all societies on the planet. Although he never defined his "oppressed" with any precision, clearly the oppression was associated with capitalism.

Freire also assumed, with the *guerrilleros* and with Marx, that by liberating themselves the oppressed would also liberate their oppressors. For Marx, capital was not a stock of means of production but a social relation. Accordingly, he affirmed that destruction of the bourgeoisie does not consist in exterminating the bourgeois, who are mere personifications of capital, but in dismantling the social relations of domination. In this way, all would be liberated. Freire sought a path of liberation which did not imply extermination of the oppressor, but his concomitant liberation with the oppressed.

While sharing the critique and purposes of the *guerrilleros*, Freire drew a line separating his thinking and action from theirs. He explicitly rejected the use of violence for seizing political power in the name of revolution and liberation, and its usual outcome: an authoritarian state.

Freire wanted the change to start with the people themselves, with their conscientization, their awareness. Convinced that both oppressors and oppressed were dehumanized by oppression, he assumed that a new

consciousness would enable both to be fully human again. This consciousness, by itself, would give them the capacity to dissolve the oppression.

According to Freire, "the oppressors, who oppress, exploit and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both." (Freire, 1996, p.26) The oppressed, however, cannot liberate themselves by themselves. They are submerged within oppression, in the world of the oppressor; they are dehumanized, divided, inauthentic beings. They need an outside critical intervention. Freire writes,

The duty which Lukacs ascribes to the revolutionary party of explaining to the masses their own action coincides with our affirmation of the need for the critical intervention of the people in reality through the praxis. (Freire, 1996, p.35)

In theorizing this critical intervention, Freire's pedagogy grew. According to Freire, a pedagogy was needed to conceive and implement such intervention --- a pedagogy of the oppressed. Such pedagogy could not be developed by the oppressors. "It would be a contradiction in terms if the oppressors not only defended but actually implemented a liberating education." (Freire, 1996, p.36) It can neither be implemented through "systematic education which can only be changed by political power." (Freire, 1996, p.36) The oppressed neither have that political power nor should they seize it. What is thus needed is a group of liberated pedagogues, fully conscientized themselves in the pedagogy of the oppressed. The liberated would conceive educational projects, which should be carried out with the oppressed in the process of organizing them. At first a pedagogy of the oppressed, this pedagogy would then become a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation, a pedagogy of humankind. (p.36)

Freire used many titles for his mediators, his agents of change, in different moments of his life and work, describing them in different ways. Yet, he always wrote for them. He did not address himself to the oppressed, who had lost their humanity. Instead, he addressed the mediators. Freire's pedagogy is, therefore, best understood as a pedagogy for mediators *qua* liberators. Freire wrote for critical educators, revolutionary leaders, social workers, organic intellectuals, a motley crowd of characters who in his view could and would dedicate themselves to the liberation of the oppressed. He attempted to teach them the moral and political virtues, as well as the technical tools, that would enable them, through their own liberation, to perform the function he ascribed to them. They become a substitute for a revolutionary party or for guerrilla activities. Once liberated, they become, for Freire, the new enlightened vanguard that would make possible the desirable change.

Quoting Marx, Freire stressed that no reality transforms itself:

The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating. (Marx, in Freire, 1996, p.35)

Yet, Marx's rhetorical question remains valid: who educates the educators? To this question, Freire responds with his pedagogy. He does not explain, however, why the only men who can change circumstances --- and thus change other men and the world --- are privileged agents: principally, educated educators. And this is the point.

There is no need to assume, like Peter Berger, that Freire's consciousness raising implies the arrogance of higher-class individuals with respect to the lower-class population. (Berger, 1974) However, there is no doubt that Freire located himself in an old tradition, assuming in the oppressed a variety of disabilities and deficiencies embedded in their context. Neither does he attribute to them an ontological or existential sickness. He is most certainly not a racist. Freire merely assumes that the oppression suffered by the oppressed has radically disabled them. The oppressed can neither liberate themselves from oppression, nor can they even perceive fully this oppression. Thus, the mediator must endow the oppressed with both awareness and conscience: the perception of the oppression itself and the characterization of the oppressive system so that its dismantling becomes possible. In both cases, what is supposedly needed is a specific abstract, rational perception, with a specific theory about the oppression and its causes. Such theory takes for granted: 1) that such awareness defines "true" reality, 2) that the oppressed lack such awareness and conscience, and 3) that such awareness and conscience are preconditions for the required liberation and transformation to occur.

Freire's position belongs to a distinctly modern (and, therefore, Western) tradition. At the beginning of modernity, the old Hegel stated it in very clear terms a generalized conviction in his time: *people cannot govern themselves; someone needs to govern them*. This apothegm has been the premise, the point of departure, for all the dominant political theories and practices of the last two centuries. It implies that if people cannot govern themselves, they cannot change by themselves. They cannot, therefore, liberate themselves from any form of oppression. The underpinnings of this tradition and conviction are well known. They are embedded in the unilinear, evolutionist vision of the world, which presupposes the equally Western conception of the autonomous individual and of Western rationality/science. An enlightened elite should guide the masses of individuals along their evolutionary path, sometimes to control them, sometimes subordinating them to the dominant system, and at other times leading them in the process of substituting one system for another. That elite is constituted of autonomous individuals who have evolved to the point in which they have acquired the rational (scientific) conscience capable of defining the necessary path for everyone, and particularly for those who are in a previous stage of development.

This perspective, however, implicitly or explicitly dismisses, suppresses, or disqualifies the abundant historical evidence of how people have governed themselves or have rebelled by themselves against all sorts of oppressors, through what Teodor Shanin calls "vernacular revolutions." (Shanin, 1983)

The term "vernacular" means native, indigenous, not of foreign origin or of learned formation. (OED) The antonyms of vernacular are: cosmopolitan and worldly-wise, artificial and subtle, expert, official, universal and scientific. When in the nineteenth century the idea of progress was accepted as self-evident, the dual conceptions of vernacular and its antonyms turned into the stages of a "necessary evolutionist scheme: the uplifting of men from the vernacular to the universal, the scientific and the sublime." (Shanin, 1983, p.249)

Changes made during the twentieth century further transformed the meaning of vernacular.

Now, vernacular was defined as unique, hand-made, informal, autonomous, self-generated or even native .... It is therefore a product or a situation in which the mass market, price accounting and bureaucratic administration cannot handle to full effect. The directionality of progress becomes an official strategy of reforms due to bulldoze, replace in plastic and electronics or else to educate-out any vernacular substances, i.e. the inadequate and archaic products, humans and ways. (Shanin, 1983, p.249)

According to the dominant modern perception, vernacular initiatives and movements, expressing the rebellion of the oppressed against their oppressors or at least their resistance, are unseen, irrelevant, or non-existent. Or, even worse, they are viewed as counterproductive, traditionalist, parochial, fundamentalist, reactionary or counter-revolutionary because they do not follow the official program. According to the prevailing perspective, the only movements or initiatives taken into account are those conceived and promoted by cosmopolitan, universal, educated agents of change, agents who educate the people towards progress, pointing the way out of the vernacular towards the universal ... the global.

Yet, recent decades have increasingly revealed that the vision of a world integrated under the rule of reason, welfare and the very ideal of progress has become archaic, an intellectual and conceptual artifact fit for any museum. (Sbert, Sachs, 1992) No longer can the existence of vernacular revolutions be denied. With the insurrection of dominated knowledge, as Foucault calls it (Foucault, 1992), a whole corpus of revisionist literature provides documentation of changes, initiatives and movements born among the people themselves, in their vernacular realms. (Frank, 1987, Eyerman and Jamison, 1991, The Ecologist, 1992, Esteva and Prakash, 1998, Negri, 1999).

Those studying the vernacular insurrections of subordinated knowledge with a new gaze have escaped the dominant dilemma --- if your vision of the world is not associated with the idea of progress, you are going back in history. Instead, seeking considerations of social transformation in the full richness of peoples' cultural diversity, they are dis-covering the multiplicity, multi-directionality and multi-quality of actual and potential social routes. (Shanin, 1983, p.250)

What is therefore increasingly in question is the real nature and potential for transformation of the conscience which all sorts of revolutionaries have attempted to instill in the people in order to promote their own projects. For some, this has been but another form of colonization, not of liberation. As Wendell Berry puts it:

The thinking of professional reformers and revolutionaries usually fails to escape the machine analogy operative in military and other coercive thinking. And a machine is by definition subservient to the will of only one man. In the formula Power to the People, I hear "Power to me, who am eager to run the show in the name of the People." The People, of course, are those designated by their benevolent servant-to-be, who knows so well what is good for them. Thus by diseased speech, politics, as usual, dispenses with the facts. (Berry, 1972, p.41)

Often, when it becomes impossible to deny the very presence and the social and political impact of peoples' initiatives or vernacular revolutions, the dominant reaction is to associate them with prominent characters or charismatic leaders. Such attributions of the origins and orientations of peoples' movements to enlightened or educated leaders legitimizes the prejudice that nothing progressive can happen without mediators<sup>ii</sup>.

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<sup>ii</sup> A case in point is the Zapatista movement. For the government, the political parties, many analysts and even many of its followers or sympathizers, the Zapatistas are in fact reduced to the now famous subcomandante Marcos. They thus express their racist prejudice: the only educated white man of the movement, who has performed a brilliant role as speaker (a kind of cultural bridge between the indigenous peoples and

The construction of mediators, intrinsic to Freire's pedagogy for liberation, expresses thus a corruption of his awareness of oppression. It operates as a veil, hiding from their supposedly "liberated" agents of change their own oppression -- the fact that their conscience is still embedded in an oppressive system and thus becomes counterproductive --- adding oppression to the oppressed, disabling them while dismissing, denying or disqualifying the fullness of their initiatives. This operation does not only imply a specific, untenable arrogance: the hubris of possessing the true, universal conscience. It also serves the purpose of legitimizing the right of intervention in the lives of others.

## II. The Corruption of Love

At the end of his life, Freire wrote a short book, Pedagogía de la autonomía. (Freire, 1997) In it, he offers a meditation on his life and work, while returning to his most important themes. Freire reminds us that his education, his pedagogy, is pointedly and purposively ideological and interventionist. It requires mediators. Here again, it addresses those mediators: a final call to involve them in the crusade.

The leitmotiv of the book, the thread woven through every page as it occurred everyday in the life of Freire, is the affirmation of the universal ethic of the human being --- universal love as an ontological vocation. He recognizes its historical character. And he reminds us that it is not any ethic: it is the ethic of human solidarity. (Freire, 1996, p.124) Freire promotes a policy of human development, privileging men and humans, rather than profit. (Freire, 1996, p.125) He proclaims solidarity as a historical commitment of men and women, as one of the forms of struggle capable of promoting and instilling the universal ethic of the human being. (Freire, 1997, p.13)

Similar to liberation theology (an option for the poor) courageously adopted by an important sector of the Catholic Church in Latin America, Freire finds a foundation and a destiny for his theory and practice in the ideal of solidarity. Solidarity expresses an historical commitment based on a universal ethics. Solidarity legitimizes intervention in the lives of others in order to conscientize them. Derived from charity, *caritas*, the Greek and Latin word for love, and motivated by care, by benevolence, by love for the other, conscientization becomes a universal, ethical imperative.

Certainly, Freire was fully aware of the nature of modern aid; of what he called false generosity. He identified clearly the disabling and damaging impact of all kinds of such aid. Yet, for all of his clarity and awareness, he is unable to focus his critique on service: particularly that service provided by service professionals. Freire's specific blindness is an inability to identify the false premises and dubious interventions --- in the name of care --- of one specific class of service professionals: educators.

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the educated world), should be the one conceiving and leading the movement. Time and again, the Zapatistas have declared, or demonstrated with facts, that their uprising came from people's own initiative, from their communities, not from an enlightened leader. They affirm that they are not guerrillas: they are the sea, not the fish, having no interest in seizing power while their army is subordinated to a civil command. Zapatismo was born from the communities themselves, that have since then been in control of it. Marcos himself has explained how he was "converted" by the communities, which cured him of the ideological burden he brought to the jungle. But no fact seems to be able to dissolve the prejudice: the Zapatistas are still seen, by the elite, as a group of manipulated Indians, under the control of a mestizo.

In its modern institutional form, *qua* service, care is the mask of love. This mask is not a false face. The modernized service-provider believes in his care and love, perhaps more than even the serviced. The mask is the face. (McKnight, 1977, p.73) Yet, the mask of care and love obscures the economic nature of service, the economic interests behind it. Even worse, this mask hides the disabling nature of service professions, like education.

All of the caring, disabling professions are based on the assumption or presupposition of a lack, a deficiency, a need, that the professional service can best satisfy. The very modern creation of the needy man, a product of economic society, of capitalism, and the very mechanism through which needs are systematically produced in the economic society, are hidden behind the idea of service. Once the need is identified, the necessity of service becomes evident. It is a mechanism analogous to the one used by an expert to transmute a situation into a "problem" whose solution --- usually including his own services --- he proposes.

In this way, Freire constructed the human need for the conscience he conceived. In attributing such need to his oppressed, he also constructed the process to satisfy it: conscientization. Thus, the process reifies the need and the outcome: only conscientization can address the need for an improved conscience and consciousness and only education can deliver conscientization. This educational servicing of the oppressed, however, is masked: as care, love, vocation, historical commitment, as an expression of Freire's universal ethic of solidarity. Freire's blindness is his inability to perceive the disabling effect of his various activities or strategies of conscientization. He seems unaware that the business of modern society is service and that social service in modern society is business. (McKnight, 1997, p.69) Today, economic powers like the USA pride themselves in being post-industrial: that is, the replacement of smoke stacks and sweatshops moved to the South, with an economy retooled for global supremacy in providing service. With ever increasing needs, satisfaction of these needs requires more service resulting in unlimited economic growth.

Freire was also unaware that solidarity, both the word and the idea, are today the new mask of aid and development, of care and love. For example, in the 1990s, the neoliberal government of Mexican president Carlos Salinas used a good portion of the funds obtained through privatization to implement the Programa Nacional de Solidaridad. The program was celebrated by the World Bank as the best social program in the world. It is now well documented that, like all other wars against poverty, it was basically a war waged against the poor, widening and deepening the condition it was supposed to cure, a condition that, in the first place, was aggravated by the policies associated with the neoliberal credo.

Freire could not perceive the corruption of love through caring, through service. Furthermore, he was unable to perceive that the very foundation of his own notion of universal, globalized love, God's love for his children through Christ, is also a corruption of Christianity. (Cayley, 2000)

Freire was particularly unable to perceive the impact of the corruption which occurs when the oppressed are transformed into the objects of service: as clients, beneficiaries, and customers. Having created a radical separation between his oppressed and their educators, Freire was unsuccessful in bringing them together, despite all his attempts to do so through his dialogue, his deep literacy --- key words for empowerment and participation. All these pedagogical and curricular tools of education prove themselves repeatedly to be

counterproductive: they produce the opposite of what they pretend to create. Instead of liberation, they add to the lives of oppressed clients, more chains and more dependency on the pedagogy and curricula of the mediator.<sup>iii</sup>.

During the last several centuries, all kinds of agents have pretended to "liberate" pagans, savages, natives, the oppressed, the under-developed, the uneducated, under-educated, and the illiterate in the name of the Cross, civilization (i.e. Westernization), capitalism or socialism, human rights, democracy, a universal ethic, progress or any other banner of development. Every time the mediator conceptualizes the category or class of the oppressed in his/her own terms, with his/her own ideology, he is morally obligated to evangelize: to promote among them, for their own good, the kind of transformation he or she defines as liberation. Yet, a specific blindness seems to be the common denominator among these mediators: an awareness of their own oppression. In assuming that they have succeeded in reaching an advanced level or stage of awareness, conscience, or even liberation (at least in theory, in imagination, in dreams), and in assuming, even more, that what their oppressed lack is this specific notion or stage, they assume and legitimate their own role as liberators. Herein, they betray their intentions.

In response to colonization, Yvonne Dion-Buffalo and John Mohawk recently suggested that colonized peoples have three choices: 1) to become good subjects, accepting the premises of the modern West without much question, 2) to become bad subjects, always resisting the parameters of the colonizing world, or 3) to become non-subjects, acting and thinking in ways far removed from those of the modern West. (Quoted in Esteva and Prakash, 1998, p.45)

The assumption of Freire is that his oppressed are trapped within the dominant ideology, that they have been de-humanized by the system, that they are its subjects. But his rebellion, as much as his solidarity, succeeds at best in creating the condition of a bad subject, a rebel subject. In this way, neither Freire nor his conscientizers can perceive their own oppression. As the old Arab saying wisely warns: "Choose your enemy well; you will be like him." Freire's presuppositions trap him with the ideology of his oppressor. He becomes a bad subject --- though not embracing his oppression, not loving his chains, or even loving power. Yet, although bad, he remains a subject. By reducing his definition of himself, of his own being, to the terms of the oppressor, even to resist or to oppose him, he can not even conceive the possibility of becoming a non-subject.

In rejecting the need of mediators and the dominant paradigm which holds that the people cannot govern themselves or change and rebel by themselves autonomously, we are of course affirming the opposite: that the people can govern themselves. Even more, it is our contention that people liberate themselves from oppressors only when both the initiative and the struggle come from them; from within themselves rather than from external agents of change. Instead of pro-motion (which operates under the assumption that the people are paralyzed or are moving in the wrong direction), those taking initiatives at the grassroots to govern themselves autonomously or democratically speak of co-

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<sup>iii</sup> Krishna Kumar (1998) accurately writes that "it is hardly unfair to say that Freire belongs to that short historical period which lasted from the late 1960s to the middle of the 1980s ... Activism aimed at social change had become a fully magnetized service industry, copiously funded by international donors with a clear view that it would help contain within limits the feelings of the poor and the marginalized majority. This portrait of the past decade or so, though sketchy, should help us appreciate the incorporation of Freirean ideas and terminology into the industry of voluntarism."

motion --- moving with the people, rather than moving the people. In Spanish, the word *conmover*, *conmoción*, is instructive and strong in its denotation. *Conmoción* means not only to dance with the other the common tune (which does not necessarily define a common conscience). It also denotes moving together with the heart and the stomach, not only with the brain, with rationality. The real plurality of the world is thus manifest in a pluralist attitude, fully respecting both the radical otherness of the other and their own visions and initiatives. Co-motion may thus operate as a vaccine against the corruption of love.

### III. Resisting Awareness: The Case of Literacy

Like Marx, Freire professed a profound fascination for modern technology. Like Marx, he recognized that technology is not neutral; that it can be used as a vehicle of oppression. But like Marx, he seemed unable to discover the nature of technological society and to find in *la technologie* itself, as defined by Ellul (Ellul, 1964), a source of oppression and alienation.

Admittedly, Marx was a man of his time. It was for him impossible to anticipate technological evolution and how completely tools would enslave rather than liberate tool-users. Freire, in contrast, separated himself from his times. While he conceived his work within the intellectual climate in which Jacques Ellul and Erich Fromm were revealing the nature of the technological society; when Illich published *Tools For Conviviality* (1973); when the Greens were emerging as a radical movement against the dominant paradigms of industrial society, Freire was incapable of radically rejectioning the progress flaunted by technological society. Critiques of Freire's pre-ecological mindset legitimately focus on this incapacity.

In no other aspect is his silence or denial more evident than in the case of the alphabet: the tool of literacy. It is to the alphabet and to literacy that Freire dedicated his life. Literacy was his chosen field and until his end, he dedicated himself to promoting it and its tools. Courageously, he denounced the deficiencies and perversions of the literacy promoted and imposed by banking education. From these critiques followed Freire's proposed paths to liberation: the appropriation of the tool, its pedagogy and curricula, as well as the skills engendered by the oppressed themselves. He insisted on the importance of a "critical appropriation" of literacy so that oppressors can no longer oppress the oppressed.

Here Freire confines himself to the critical question of who owns the tools and curricula of literacy as well as to their means and ends. He does not venture the distance required to see how the tool itself tames people, reducing and confining them to the operations of the textual mind. Freire's historical perspective does not extend itself to examine the social construction of the textual mind. Neither does he reflect upon the implications of the textual mind for the human condition, including social organization and its system of domination. (Illich, 1986, 1993)

In his denunciation of the discrimination suffered by the illiterate, Freire does not see, smell, imagine or perceive the differential reality of the oral world. While aspiring to eliminate all these forms of discrimination from the planet, he takes for granted, without more critical consideration, that reading and writing are fundamental basic needs for all humans. And, he embraces the implications of such assumptions: that the illiterate person is not a full human being.

Freire's pedagogic method requires that literacy should be rooted in the socio-political context of the illiterate. He is convinced that in and through such a process, they would acquire a critical judgement about the society in which they suffer oppression. But he does not take into account any critical consideration of the oppressive and alienating character implicit in the tool itself, the alphabet. He can not bring his reflection and practice to the point in which it is possible, like with many other modern tools, to establish clear limits to the alphabet in order to create the conditions for the oppressed to critically use the alphabet instead of being used by it.

Though we are writing a text, we no longer wish to describe ourselves as "text people." With this expression, we are alluding to a kind of man whose mind has been shaped and constructed, as if it was a text. However the text, as an object in itself different from the book, appeared simultaneously with the possessive individual and is its counterpart. It is clearly modern. Plato foresaw the problems inherent in the division between orality and literacy. He examined the transition from the always new act of remembering to the literate memory --- to a condition dividing speech and thinking. With the emergence and dominance of text, a radically new kind of being is born.

As Plato suggested, the text is radically uprooted from any concrete, living experience, no matter how much it evokes living and concrete experiences or is written or read in a very concrete and alive situation. The textual mind is constructed according to that model. In the same way that the liturgy of the Catholic church generated the faith and the reality of the community as a church, which is the object of such faith, the learning of texts, in the school, is the privileged place to generate the modern textual mind --- radically uprooted and homeless.

The textual mind thinks of speech as frozen; of memories as things that can be saved and recovered; of secrets that can be engraved within the conscience and thus examined; and of experiences that can be described. In writing texts, the modern individual "looks" for the proper word to say what he wants to say. He thinks that he can fix in line what has happened --- in his life, his job, his country --- and mummify them, only to resurrect them later. A text is in a sense past speech, but speech which has suffered a radical transformation, so radical that perhaps it can no longer be called speech. The alphabet allows us to register the speech and to conceive that record as a "language" that we can use to speak and, in particular, to transmit to others the text we have in the mind. A textual man is someone who speaks trying to find, in his mind, the proper words, the text, to shape his speech, his discourse. To "communicate" with others --- a very modern urge --- he tries to find not only the appropriate text, the one capable of capturing everything he wants to "communicate," but also the best way to transmit that text, to imprint that text within the mind of another.

Text offers the material useful for constructing the present. Textual man continually constructs his present with the materials offered to him by his memory. Here, in memory, he is storing all the previous texts that he has learned "by memory" as well as the texts into which he has transformed his experience.

Prior to the ascendancy of text, persons must abide by their word. With the emergence of text, they need to rely on it. The transformation of man and society with the text is illustrated by its etymology. Jurisdiction is

"administration of justice; exercise of judicial authority, or of the functions of a judge or legal tribunal; power of declaring and administering law and justice; legal authority or power." It is also "power or authority in general; administration, rule, control" or "a judicial organization; a judicature; a court, or series of courts, of justice." (OED) The word comes from the Latin: *jurisdictio*. *Dictio* is the action of *dicere*, to say, to declare; *Jus-juris* is law, rule. Used to establish the force of the word, the condition in which the word of a man was valued, accepted, or in which it ruled, the original meaning of the word and its modern use can only be fully grasped in the two different worlds in which they were used.

In the world of orality, where the oath is law, words are the fabric of human interaction. Modern men are men in context. The word context still describes the weaving of words, the connection between the parts of a discourse, the parts around a 'text' which determine its meaning. But it also means today how men and woman are woven together, connected. They are connected through texts. Their minds are constructed in the shape of texts --- uprooted, homeless texts. And they feel unbearable loneliness unless they find their contexts, to connect themselves to others through pertinent texts.

Thus, we no longer wish to describe ourselves as text people. Instead, we are bookish people: people who love to read books. But we have learned with the people at the grassroots, to assume a critical distance from the alphabet. We now carefully avoid being reduced to a text. Even more, we seek not to reduce others to a textual frame of mind. We resist the modern faith that liberation comes with literacy.

Modern mentality --- whether that of Freire's oppressor or oppressed --- is inextricably shaped by the alphabet. Liberation cannot come from literacy --- not even critical literacy, Freirean style. Liberation comes with the autonomy of assuming a critical distance from the alphabet; from the recovery and regeneration of our minds, currently trapped and embedded within texts.

We recognize and celebrate that most people on earth are either functionally or absolutely illiterate: that is, non-alphabetized. Tragically, with each and every literacy campaign, their way of life and cosmivision are at risk of being disqualified. Thus, in departing from Freirean pedagogy and liberation, interest in the autonomy or liberation of the non-alphabetized by the literate must also be accompanied by the sense and feeling of the association between our texts and their oppression.

#### **IV. Resisting Love: The Case Against Education**

Freire's central presupposition: that education is a universal good, part and parcel of the human condition, was never questioned, in spite of the fact that he was personally exposed, for a long time, to an alternative view. This seems to us at least strange, if not abhorrent.

Freire was explicitly interested in the oppressed. His entire life and work were presented as a vocation committed to assuming their view, their interests. Yet, he ignored the plain fact that for the oppressed, the social majorities of the world, education has become one of the most humiliating and disabling components of their oppression: perhaps, even the very worst.

Education creates two classes of people: the educated and the uneducated or undereducated. The educated, a minority, receive all kinds of privileges from their position. The rest get all kinds of deprivation and destitution. No literacy campaign or educational project has or can overcome that deprivation and destitution in any society. Why did Freire close his eyes to such facts? Like all other educational reformers, he concentrated his efforts on polishing and cosmetizing people's chains. This further legitimized and deepened the oppression he was supposedly struggling against.

The uneducated are not able to read the texts of the educated. But they are not stupid.<sup>iv</sup> They retain their common sense. In the era of accelerated educational reforms, the uneducated are better equipped to accept the fact denied by the educated: the foolishness of placing faith in the possibility of secular salvation through education. The growing awareness among the illiterate, the uneducated, and the undereducated about this situation, coupled with many other facts, is allowing an increasing number of them to think that perhaps the beginning of the end of the era of education has already begun.

For the experts, the contemporary state of education is dire. The educational system becomes more oppressive to those enrolled within it, even as it expands. With every step of its expansion, teaching becomes more mechanical, monotonous and irrelevant. Students discover faster than their teachers can hide how irrelevant their learning is; how little it prepares them to do useful work or to live.

Despite this, the reform proposals proliferate. Grouped into three categories of reformers, some look to improve the classroom: its methods, equipment or personnel. Others attempt to liberate it from any bureaucratic imposition: promoting teachers, parents, and communities as the principal decision-makers for determining the content and methods of education. Still others attempt to transform the whole society into a classroom: with new technologies substituting for the closed space of the classroom, providing for open markets and remote teaching. Whether reformed, free or a world-wide classroom, these reforms represent three stages in the escalation of interventions to increase social control and to subjugate people.

Educators continue to educate the world in the fallacy that education is as old as the hills. However, the idea of education is exclusively modern. Born of capitalism, education perpetuates it. The past is colonized every time the cultural practices or traditions for learning or study of pre-modern or non-modern peoples are reduced to that category understood as education.

Across the globe, education is promoted in the name of equality and justice. Education is presented as the best remedy for the oppressive inequalities of modern society. It produces, however, exactly the opposite. Education creates the most oppressive of the class divisions now in existence, separating people into two groups: the "knowledge capitalists" and the "destitute." In this new class structure, more value is attributed to those consuming more knowledge. And because society invests in them in the creation of "human capital," the means of production are reserved for them. The few receive all kinds of privileges; the many suffer all kinds of discriminations and disqualification.

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<sup>iv</sup> In fact, the very idea of modern education emerged with the conviction, generalized in the XVII century, that men are born stupid. Stupidity became equivalent to original sin. Education became its cure, defined as the inverse of vital competence. (Illich, 1977).

Beyond any consideration of the quality of the services provided by educational institutions, the fact remains that everywhere the outcome is the same: to disqualify the social majorities. According to the educational experts of UNESCO, 60% of the children now entering into the first grade will never be able to reach the level considered obligatory in their countries. They will live forever with the handicap of a distinctly modern social category: the "drop-out." Meanwhile, a small minority will get 20 or 30 years of schooling.

The compulsion, now achieving epidemic proportions across the world, is to expand and to reform the educational system. This compulsion is derived from two well established facts: 1) that most people in the world are uneducated or undereducated, and 2) that an increasing number of the educated can no longer find the type of job for which their education supposedly prepared them. Reformers continually debate the content or method of the reform while sharing the same purpose: the reaffirmation of the social prejudice which holds that schooling and its equivalents are the only legitimate way to prepare people to live; and that whatever is learned outside of them has no value. New generations are thus educated to consume knowledge under the assumption that their success will depend of the quantity and quality of their consumption of that commodity, and that learning about the world is better than learning from the world.

The most dangerous reformers are today those who promote the substitution of the classroom for the massive distribution of knowledge packages via global communication technologies. These reformers go further in establishing knowledge consumption as a basic need for survival. While traditional reformers are still promising more and better schools, these current reformers are at this moment winning the race. They present themselves as the only ones who will be able to achieve the goal, accepted by everyone: equality of access.<sup>v</sup> Rather than diminishing the need for classrooms, these reformers extend its function. Theirs is an attempt to transform the global village into an environmental womb in which pedagogic therapists will control, under the appearance of a free market, the complex placenta necessary for nourishing every human being. Furthermore, the regulation of intellectual rights, now being negotiated in international institutions, will serve to protect the corporations which produce and distribute the knowledge packages that from now on will define education in the global campus.

Education, like capital, was initially promoted through force. Today, police and armies are still used to extend and deepen educational control. However, education has now been established as a personal and collective need. Like other needs, it has been transformed into a right. More than bureaucratic imposition, education has become a legitimate and universally accepted social addiction --- it stimulating knowledge consumers to freely, passionately, and compulsively acquire their chains and thus contribute to the construction of the global Big Brother.

In attempting to define "education," Tolstoi observed that education is a conscious effort to transform someone into something. More and more that 'something' is a subsystem, a creature who functions within an oppressive

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<sup>v</sup> The promise is of course another illusion, legitimizing the current campaign. Less than one percent of the people in Southeast Asia have access to Internet. Two thirds of the people on Earth have never made a phone call. So much for equality of access through the Internet.

system. As a central tool for reproducing this system, modern technologies, particularly those linking TV and internet, will lead the oppression farther than ever before.

Marx observed that the blind compulsion to produce too many useful things will end producing useless people. The current global escalation of educational need only accelerates the process. And, although capital has more appetite than ever, it has not enough stomach to digest everyone. The promise of employment for "educated" people is viewed as the illusion that it is. Globalized markets simply cannot absorb the masses. Increasingly, people become disposable human beings --- unavailable for capital to exploit them. However, by giving them, with public funds, access to knowledge packages, capital educates them as consumers and prepares them for the moment in which it can subsume them again in the system of exploitation.

These "disposable" people have started to react everywhere. There is a proliferation of initiatives escaping the logic of capital. Everywhere, disposable people are transforming the drama of exclusion into an opportunity to follow their own path and to create by themselves their own life. One of their first steps is to escape education.

In 1953, when education was included in the promotion of development launched by Truman in 1949, UNESCO experts concluded that the main obstacle to education in Latin America was the indifference or resistance of most parents. Eleven years later, the same experts warned that no Latin American society will be able to satisfy the demand for education. The campaign had been successful. Parents educated to accept the idea of education began to clamor for more teachers and schools, always in short supply for the majority. Throughout the world during different periods, the same process was reproduced. During the last 20 years, the impulse to resist or claim has been transformed into a struggle for liberation --- liberation from pedagogy and the idea of education.

The illusion that education delivers employment, prestige and social mobility, which proved real for a minority, lead many people to accept its high price: severe cultural destruction and dismembering of family and community life. Step by step, the social majorities received proof that diplomas did not certify competence or skills but the number of hours and years during which the ass of a student has sat in a school chair. Far from guaranteeing employment, they doom many of those advancing up the educational ladder to permanent frustration. The humiliation of engineers or lawyers, forced to work as taxi drivers or hotel porters, has become an opportunity for liberation for those without diplomas or those having one of low value. In time, people, the "disposables," are revaluing their own wisdom, skills, and competencies for living.

While the Internet accelerates the irrelevance of most schooling, the social majorities are bypassing schooling altogether as they do, whenever they can, all bureaucratic impositions and the addictions of the rich. They no longer surrender themselves to the illusions of education. People are saying: Enough! -- recovering, little by little, their old art of learning.

Given the fact that education is the economization of learning, transforming it into the consumption of a commodity called knowledge, people are recovering their own notions of learning and living free of educational mediation. Since the

noun "education" imposes a completely passive dependence on the system which provides education, people are substituting this noun with the verbs "to learn" and "to study." Unlike the noun, these verbs reestablish the autonomous capacity for building creative relationships with others and with nature --- relationships which generate knowing, wisdom. People are again acknowledging that to know is a personal experience, and that the only way to know, to widen the competencies for living, is to learn from the world, not about the world.

Everywhere, dissident groups are enjoying the sufficiency of their initiatives, the opening of new spaces for freedom. (Prakash & Esteva, 1998) Here and there, some people close the schools or put them under community control. Instead of allocating public funds for education, they start public campaigns to impose heavy taxes on schooling, like those on alcohol and tobacco. Other campaigns seek to abrogate all laws making education obligatory. However, the main impulse of these initiatives follows another direction.

While the educated persist in their competitive struggle to consume more knowledge, the uneducated or undereducated are increasingly acknowledging that to know is a personal experience and relation, controlled by the person learning. Confronted by the propaganda of knowledge peddling, they adopt the same attitude that they take before junk food: they know that the latter does not nourish, although sometimes it may curb hunger. They realize that education, akin to junk food is unable to generate wisdom or to guide experience.

While Bill Gates and his colleagues prolong the agony of education, many people are anticipating its death with creative, convivial initiatives which widen their capacity for learning, studying and for doing (instead of the capacity to buy and to consume). Such initiatives are proving useful in their living and working within their old or new commons. While undermining the dominant institutions, they prepare their inversion. Their hope: that the extinction of the ritual of schooling and of the myth of education is appearing on the horizon --- the beginning of an era ending privilege and license. (Illich, 1971)

Freire was entirely unable to anticipate such evolution or even to perceive the nature of the problem. In his very famous essay, "Education: Domestication or Liberation?", written two years after Pedagogy of the Oppressed, he presented the essence of his thesis: Education cannot be neutral.

If we claim to go beyond the naive, formal interpretations of the human task of education, this must be the starting point of a critical dialectical reflection. Lacking this critical spirit, either because we are alienated to thinking statistically and not dynamically, or because we already have ideological interests, we are incapable of perceiving the true role of education, or if we perceive it, we disguise it. We tend to ignore or to obscure the role of education, which, in that it is a social 'praxis,' will always be at the service of the 'domestication' of men or of their liberation. (Freire, 1972, p.18)

From there on, Freire concentrated all his efforts, in that essay and in his life, on the idea of designing an "education for liberation." He was thus unable to perceive the victimization created by schooling and education and to derive the pertinent conclusions. He was unable to bring his brilliant critique of "banking education" to education itself.

"Birds fly, fish swim, people learn." (Holt, 1976) With these words, Holt reminds us of the treasure of learning and study. Learning is a human invariant, but not a cultural universal. (Panikkar, 1993) People learn from the day they are

born until they die. At all times, in all cultures, people learned. Most peoples created institutions to facilitate the group study and many of them also created institutions to train specific persons or groups for a programmed destiny: to become a king, a priest, a warrior or a tailor. The modern university was born out of the sensible idea that a group of peers can better deal with the intricacies of a text if they are together, discussing it, rather than alone in their rooms.

The very modern idea of teaching everything to everyone, of providing the same knowledge to every member of a society, of educating all of them to give to them vital competence, transformed learning and knowledge into a commodity. It applied to learning the premise of scarcity: the economic principle that man's wants are very great, not to say infinite, but his means are limited, although improvable. The logic of this assumption defines the economic problem *par excellence*: to allocate resources (limited means to alternative, unlimited ends). Once defined as education, the conditions for learning, always sufficient in every culture for its own requirements, became scarce. Once the premise of scarcity became the main principle of organization for society, with modernity and capitalism, the allocation of means for learning and for the distribution of the new commodity called knowledge, always limited, started to follow the pattern of injustice: some had access to them; others did not. Furthermore, the ways and means of learning still available for the destitute were restricted, eliminated, or radically devalued. The very experience of knowing was transmogrified into the mechanical consumption of abstract, unfleshed, disembodied, genderless texts, now called "knowledge."

The new awareness of the 1960s, looking for alternatives to that condition, was corrupted in the remaining decades of the last century. Like the global emblem of development, the 1960s winds of change left ruins which are now being explored with an archeological gaze. Freire's pedagogy of liberation, viewed with archeological eyes, is yet another modern tool and technology used against vernacular probity and honor. The universal conscience and the institutional rules guarding it are doomed to colonize, standardize, and tame the wilderness of what still remains vernacular.

At the grassroots, people still rooted in their own cultures, in their ancient traditions, are reclaiming and revaluing their own ways of learning and studying. They are saying Enough! to the reformulation of learning as a commodity (scarce by definition) and the concomitant transmogrification of knowledge into an additional tool of oppression. They thus can enjoy the blessing of their own capacity to learn and study, in freedom, and their art of teaching for the cultural initiation of new generations.

## **V. Liberation From Pedagogy**

There are teachers --- past and present --- whom we admire. We admire them for different reasons and in different ways. They come from completely different worlds. We admire the kind of impact each of them has had or is having in their worlds; an impact so profound and powerful on their people that it spills over into other worlds; of the Other who does not belong to the world of each of these.

The teachers we admire have not prided themselves in being professional teachers. In fact, even those who were professionals chose to abandon their profession: to become, so to speak, professional dropouts. Here, for matters of variety and spice, we will limit ourselves to identifying only three. Three de-

professionalized teachers, belonging to three worlds so different ... they might as well be three distinct planets.

For clarifying the issues of this essay, we chose to reflect on the life, the work, and the teachings of Gandhi, Subcommandante Marcos and Wendell Berry. Purposely, we juxtapose them to exacerbate their radical and dramatic differences. Is it absurd to even place them under the umbrella of public and private virtues we dwell on as we reflect on the kind of impact they have had upon others ... even as they have said a firm No! to all the symbols of modern power? Particularly the power of the modern agent of secular salvation: education?

We cannot call them educators. Even less can we call them Freirean educators. Emancipators. Conscientizers. Empowerers. Liberators. Humanizers. Undeniably, each of them has put up the good fight for freedom from colonizers, from corporations, from the oppressive system of the State. Undeniably, their courage has infected others with the contagion needed to swim upstream against the global current. Each lives a life so compelling that it becomes their message --- let me be the change I wish for the world. Each is literally an enfleshment of these words. Words made flesh. Each reveals in his own fashion what it means to buck the modern madness called Progress. Each has been cured of modern man's mad love for The Machine. Each goes against the grain of modernity not to be novel, not as a fashion, but because his wisdom suggests the significance of breaking free from the radical rupture imposed by modern man on tradition. And, each reveals the art of enriching, enlivening tradition; possessing the traditional knowledge for changing the tradition from within the tradition, thus ensuring its historical continuity.

Each of them suffered a radical transformation, once they became aware of their condition as subjects. First, they became good subjects. Next, they became bad subjects of an oppressive system. In so doing, each of them was able to perceive and to conceive a way out of such oppression. And each of them fell into the temptation to transform their awareness into the agency of change, leading others towards that way. But each of them recovered after that fall and transformed their culturally rooted awareness into the decision to incarnate, in their own lives, the way out of oppression, while embracing their own personal limits under pervading social constraints.

Finally, each of them became non-subjects and attributed the agency of change to the people themselves, rather than to any kind of mediator. They do not see others' awareness as something created or constructed by them: their intermediation, their leadership. They are only articulating peoples' experiences and traditions, through which people recognize the foundation for their own thinking and action. Instead of using such awareness to preach ideals of life, they transform it into living ideals which they attempt to incarnate and regenerate, in an ashram, in the jungle of Chiapas, or on a farm in Kentucky.

Gandhi changed himself. From good subject to bad subject: from being another Hindu educated in Oxford, to being a lawyer-activist in South Africa, providing legal services to his people. After he re-rooted himself in his traditional soil, the soil of his people, he became a non-subject. Others experienced a similar transformation. They joined him. His experiments spread through contagion: any ordinary man or woman could do as much as Gandhi in his eating or shitting practices, his regeneration of *khadi* or his production of the salt controlled by the British. To suit their career ambitions, even the good subjects of colonialism

allied themselves with Gandhi, next to some bad subjects. After the British were thrown out using Gandhi's non-violence ("as old as the hills" to him), the good and bad subjects threw out Gandhi. In Independent India, there was no place for a non-subject leader. Gandhi was the wrong man for being at the helm in the race to catch up with the West, even if catching up meant that a few Indians would annihilate the many. The educated Indians early decided there were too many of the wrong kinds of Indians: the uneducated; those who did not consume education; did not consume, period --- those who proliferated like rabbits, like their grandparents.

For the India of his dreams, Gandhi allied himself with the people of the soil; not with those who, like himself in his earlier incarnation, were a product of colonial public schooling. He thus sought to realize *Hind Swaraj*: traditional home rule. He wrote for other educated Indians, not to conscientize them or the uneducated, but to dismantle the invisibility of people's strength and beauty; to make it evident how they were re-rooting themselves in their traditional soil through *Hind Swaraj*.

Gandhi trusted his people still living in their vernacular worlds. They trusted him. Together they worked to throw out the British. Together they suffered in the hands of the Brown Sahibs who grabbed the power vacated by the British, starting a new phase of colonialism. For these reasons and others, Gandhi's legacy is even more pertinent to those in the XXI century resisting the neo-colonialism in which the Brown Sahibs have opened wide the doors of the Global Economy and Global Education so that their private lives can quicker approach The American Dream.

Like Gandhi, Marcos changed himself. From good subject to bad subject: from a student and a teacher in Mexico City or Paris, to a *guerrillero* in Chiapas, following the steps of Che Guevara. With and from the *indigenas*, Marcos learned how to become a non-subject. Slowly, he learned from them: the Others; the mute ones, the silent ones. He learned from them to speak true words. He learned their words while abandoning his own words and projects. After living with them in their jungles for a decade, learning with them, from their jungle, from their mountain, he could no longer fight the revolution he learned about from books. He then began to fuse his genius with theirs. He became their literate bridge to the worlds of the educated. He offered his genius not to some abstract cause: the liberation of mankind. Instead, he became a rooted, incarnated intellectual, offering other uprooted intellectuals and activists a glimpse into that art of writing and working and struggling, well rooted in communities that have retained all the textures of vernacular worlds.

Some of the main principles of Zapatismo, like "commanding by obeying," "to walk at the pace of the slowest one," and "to listen as you walk," are not theoretical statements or abstract values of a new utopia. They are concrete shapes and styles of the movement as it is formed and reformed. All of them allude to a condition in which the people themselves, including of course the weaker and the slower, inspire and realize the action and control over all decisions. Like other grassroots groups, the Zapatistas are revealing what it means to be non-subjects, affirming their own forms of local thinking and action in their particular cultural places. They refuse to buy or sell global ideologies, political platforms, revolutionary plans or the appropriate way to participate in conventional politics and to struggle for power. They refuse to transform themselves into any form of enlightened vanguard or to reduce their action to a

force game or to mere numbers in a “statistical democracy,” trapped by the ballot box.

In a recent caravan to Mexico City, when the crowds were continually acclaiming him, Marcos repeatedly reacted by affirming that Marcos exists only as a frame through which the people can view another social landscape. “If you see through it carefully,” he said, “you will find a mirror.” That was also the message of Commandante Ana María, on behalf of the Zapatistas, in the inauguration of the Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism convened by them:

Brothers and sisters: We have invited you to this meeting to seek and to find yourselves and us. You have all touched our heart, and you can see we are not special. You can see we are simple and ordinary men and women. You can see we are the rebellious mirror that wants to be a pane of glass and break. You can see we are who we are so we can stop being who we are to become the you we are.

Berry also changed himself. From good subject to bad subject to non-subject. From a college graduate, establishing himself as a teacher in New York, to an awarded, critical writer, to a farmer-philosopher, rooted again in the family farm. Viewing himself as neither citizen of the United States of America as a global citizen, Berry is instead the dweller of Henry County and Lands Lane Farm. In this way he is trying once more to walk in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. Slowly, he retraces their steps, in order to wean himself from Walmart and Giant.

Without being empowered by Berry, people across the country started to read his words about soil-culture; about farmers who support their communities and communities who support their farmers. Without being conscientized, hundreds and thousands of people stretching across America and Europe started experiments in Community Supported Agriculture or Community Shared Agriculture. Though thousands of communities are infected by Berry’s contagion, the CSA movement has no leaders. His life and work today inspire us to wean ourselves from all institutions. Like Walmart. Like Fast Food. And particularly from the institution that continually pulls the young and adults alike from their places in order to pursue uprooted and uprooting careers in the quest of educating others and themselves.

Berry rejects the tools of education, including its hellbentishness on cleaning up the dirty hands and nails of dirt small farmers. Berry, seeking meaning within Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, not to demonstrate his mastery of the Great Books selected by Allan Bloom, but rather to make meaning in his life. Walking in the lineage of his parents and grandparents, he wants to share with his children and grandchildren that life is a miracle, particularly in rural Kentucky.

These non-teachers, non-conscientizer teachers give us a glimpse of what it means to be non-subjects; what is involved in the recovery and the regeneration of vernacular worlds. They do not do it in any nostalgic, sentimental way. Their living, rather than a going back, are worthy of emulation precisely because they live full of hope, in the present. Their lives are attempts to heal the brutal rupture caused by modernity while they break free from it in order to re-connect themselves to real people in their soil cultures.

We refuse to reduce their life and work to the enterprise called education. We refuse to have their life and work corrupted and co-opted by an institution and by a word that we have been well warned not to use for what occurs in

vernacular worlds. We can no longer call education these many other forms of traditional, cultural initiations, bookish or not. We have been guided away from having the word “education” co-opt and corrupt the life and work of such teachers. Such guide was not offered to us by Gandhi, Marcos, or Berry. Or by Illich the de-schooler. We did not find our new, archeological gaze for the educational enterprise, in the Illich of Deschooling Society (1971) who used his influence and diplomatic skills to rescue Freire from jail and to bring him to CIDOC in Cuernavaca and who called Freire’s pedagogy “truly revolutionary.”

The critique of a de-schooling Illich died a quick death once he recognized the ridiculous impact of his most famous book on nourishing the very institutions he identified as oppressive, unjust, and violent. The Illich who rose out of the ashes of the dead de-schooler knew well the folly of fame; knew well the danger of writing for abstract audiences. Forsaking the temptation of fame and fortune, following in his Christian tradition, he chose the path of friendship, of seeing himself in the eyes of his friends. He thus wrote only for his friends, rather than for abstract audiences. “In Lieu of Education” (1977) was written by the Illich who celebrates the worlds, the traditions of the uneducated, the undereducated, the illiterate, and the drop out. It is the Illich who showed us the wealth of worlds, the richness of those Two-Thirds worlds of people whose being forsakes the curricula and the pedagogies of the pedagogues in the global classroom. It is this Illich who forsakes the desire to convert people into de-schooling their lives. It is this Illich who so fully celebrates the vernacular gender of his vernacular worlds, of his 12th century ancestors, uneducated and uneducable.

From this Illich, we have learned to use the word “education” with extreme caution because of the toxicity of the enterprise with which it has come to be inextricably connected.

It is the post-Deschooling Illich who recognized that ALL education is consumer training, transmogrifying people into individuals, who can fit into and function within a society of consumers as either prisoners of addiction or prisoners of envy.

It is Illich who, having recognized that socialism must come on a bicycle, used the best of this insight to ride his way out of socialism and all modern “isms.”

It is this Illich whose archeological gaze not only guided us to clearly see the ruins of all modern institutions, including the one that most insidiously trains all ages to become completely dependent on economic society, without roots which are necessary for flourishing in soil cultures, in vernacular worlds.

And, it is this Illich whose gaze reveals to us the profound richness of the worlds of Gandhi, Marcos, and Berry. These three have liberated themselves from being both good and bad subjects of industrial society, of the society of the educated. Thus, they have become non-subjects, re-rooting themselves, rediscovering their traditional soils, their vernacular worlds.

The Illich who walked away from his own ideology of de-schooling society is also the Illich who parted company from Freire. Illich clearly recognized the way beyond any and all varieties of conscientization: “all professionally planned and administered rituals that have as their purpose the internalization of a religious or secular ideology.” (Illich, 1982, p.158) Illich reflects,

Well, one of the men I had to meet (in Brazil) was Paulo Freire. We hit it off immediately

and became good friends. Then, a year and a half later, he was in the military police jail... I then brought him to Cuernavaca, and there we edited and published his first book outside of Brazil. We made the first translations of his writings and circulated them throughout the world. I was certainly very much impressed by what I saw Paulo's teams do *Deschooling Society* has a few pages which give testimony to this. But I moved from the criticism of schooling to the criticism of what *education* does to a society, namely, foster the belief that people have to be helped to gain insights into reality, and have to be helped to prepare for existence or for living. Adult education then tries to push itself and make itself obligatory. This became for me the thinking I wanted to analyze very critically.

Therefore, despite its good and solid tradition, it was I who moved away from the approach for which Paulo had become the outstanding spokesman during the 1960s and early 1970s not only in Latin America but all over the world. Our friendship has remained tender and completely untouched. And I think a good biography of Paulo would show that he has remained quite independent from the Marxist Christians at the World Council of Churches who have adopted him as their idol and have manipulated his image. I remember Paulo with immense affection, but also as somebody who more and more wanted to save the credibility of educational activities at a time when my main concern had become a questioning of the conditions which shape education in *any* form, including *conscientização* or psychoanalysis or whatever it might be.

Now, I hope that nobody interprets such a split in our fields of interest, which at a certain moment began to diverge, in that silly political way in which people are always considered as opposing each other. In the analysis of ritualized and graded school education, Paulo was for me a very solid point of passage and remains a dear friend. (Illich in Cayley, 1992, pp.206-207)

## VI. Reclaiming Awareness and Love

As victims, we have been seduced into believing that schooling and education are prerequisites for living a good life. We have been deceived by the cult of experts to accept that living, learning, and growing require expert expertise. We have been schooled into accepting one kind of institutional arrangement (for example the school) --- hierarchical, centralized, compartmentalized, and normalized --- which provides programmed choice behind the guise (and using the language) of freedom. Through curricularized learning, we know how to measure, assess, and rank knowledge (as well as ourselves and others), increasingly devoid of real-life experience. And, we have resolved that schooling yields learning, that school-learning yields wisdom, and that school-wisdom ought to yield quantitatively improved living. Yet, most fail to consider the ill-effect that an over-emphasis on "quantity" or "quality" (education, not to mention career, income, "toys" and the like) must have on spirit, body, culture, and nature.

Wendell Berry summarizes the "victimization,"

The purpose of education with us, like the purpose of society with us, has been, and is, to get away from the small farm --- indeed, from the small everything. The purpose of education has been to prepare people to 'take their places' in an industrial society, the assumption being that all small economic units are obsolete. And the superstition of education assumes that this 'place in society' is 'up.' 'Up' is the direction from small to big. Education is the way up. The *popular* aim of education is to put everybody 'on top.' Well, I think I hardly need to document the consequent pushing and trampling and kicking in the face ...(U)p may be the wrong direction. (Berry, 1990, pp. 25-26)

As Berry suggests, either we have done the trampling and kicking, have assisted others in their trampling, or have ourselves been kicked. Furthermore, the depth of our victimization lies in the degree to which we are transfixed and dependent upon the technologies which serve Progress. Schooling is one such technology of Progress.

Schooling, analogous to both a social and societal crutch, functions as mass employer, day-care provider, social strata legitimator, and as “education” deliverer. Schooling enables society’s advancement in the direction of Progress. As a consequence of the desire for society’s smooth operation, people must increasingly submit themselves to bureaucratic and technocratic control, the product of Progress’ institutions. Believing in the power which such control allegedly offers, people hypnotically seek more power.

This power, however, is only tendered in exchange for greater and greater submission to the bureaucracies and technocracies of Progress. With such submission, tragic and despairing distortions occur. Institutional insurance displaces both the traditional as well as the radical abandonment of grace. Technical proficiency within the technological hardware replaces both humane or divine vocation. And, an ethic of power (which supports systems of war, systems of neo-colonial and global cultural hegemony, systems of mass economies, and systems of education) militates against all forms of powerlessness: those supportive of small-scale, localized, communal, and convivial forms of living. As a result, people’s self image and self-capacities are altered.

Three types of alteration (separation) occur. First, people become separated from themselves. No longer possessing the capacities to provide for their own necessities and desires, they become dependent upon technological “fixes” to do what they could provide for themselves amidst family, friends and neighbors. Rearing the young, caring for the elderly, food cultivation and preparation, treatment for illness, enjoyment and entertainment, and learning (understood as being) all demand some gadget, some system, some enterprise. Doing for oneself is now understood as making the money which will buy access to the goods and services that a person or group can no longer do without. Thus, making, doing and being are transmogrified into buying, hiring, and becoming. And in this transmutation, people believe themselves more powerful when, in truth, they are made debilitated and dependent to the degree that they must consume industrial and technological goods and services.

Second, people become separated from each other. Education addiction almost inevitably sends people scrambling for more and better knowledge. Requiring specialized treatment which only specialized teachers can dispense, the person needing education looks to the artificial, the imposed, and the authoritatively verifiable for the abstract, practical, technological, scientific, humanistic, and empirical “knowledge” uncritically viewed as distinct from the home, the field, the craft, the story, or the tradition. Always needing to be “taught,” people are led away from the very sources capable of nurturing courage, character, and conviction. These virtues are cultivated amidst local family and friends still bound together within local cultures. In contrast, the educated become consumers, viewing all affairs as sales transactions, always searching for the best “buy” and prepared to go wherever the “purchase” may lead.

Third, people become separated from a place, somewhere to which they are intimately, nutritively, psychically, and generationally connected. The “enlightenment” peddled within educational “systems” is not attuned to a wisdom which suggests that one stay put. Rather, educationally enlightened people purposively pursue the career pathways which their education and schooling make available. Such an “awakening” requires that people view the traditional simplicity which sustains the life of small and local places as mundane and anachronistic. Earthiness is viewed as backward and crude,

commonness as repressive and unfulfilling. Individuality, newness, sophistication, specialization --- all characteristics of educational “niches” --- are suggestive of the fast and furiously paced race to keep abreast and to get ahead. All imply dislocation and evolution at a speed where one is constantly, intellectually and physically, “on the move.” Thus, there is little remaining time for knowing a place well. In fact, one may consider himself to be doing well if he has time for eating and sleeping. Smelling, not to mention growing the flowers, is supreme luxury, most especially for the educated and professional “careerist.”

Having despaired over the deceit perpetrated by schooling and education, we are, we believe, ready to hope. The gods of schooling and education no longer hold possession of us. They no longer bind us to expectations of a world or society made better as a result of their functioning --- whether reformed, revolutionized, humanized, conscienticized, multi-culturalized, democratized, or greened.

We prevent our hope from being transmogrified into a program or an expectation --- the hubris of pretending to control the future. As Vaclav Havel affirms, “Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the conviction that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.” (Havel, 1991)

We find inspiration in the words of Paul Goodman, another of our teachers:

Suppose you had had the revolution you are talking or dreaming about. Suppose your side had won, and you had the kind of society you wanted. How would you live, you personally, in that society? Start living that way now! Whatever you would do then, do it now. When you run up against obstacles, people, or things that won't let you live that way, then begin to think about how to get over or around or under that obstacle, or how to push it out of the way, and your politics will be concrete and practical. (Quoted in Holt, 1970, p.302)

Every day we find affirmation and nourishment for our hope. We find it, first of all, in the epic now evolving at the grassroots. Pioneering social movements are groping for their liberation from the “Global Project” being imposed upon them. Seeking to go beyond the premises and promises of modernity, people at the grassroots are reinventing or creating afresh intellectual and institutional frameworks without necessarily getting locked into power disputes. Ordinary men and women are learning from each other how to challenge the very nature and foundations of modern power, both its intellectual underpinnings and its apparatuses. Explicitly liberating themselves from the dominant ideologies, fully immersed in their local struggles, these movements and initiatives --- which need no mediators --- reveal the diverse content and scope of grassroots endeavors, resisting or escaping the clutches of the “Global Project.” (Esteva and Prakash, 1998)

We recognize Gandhi's path in that epic. At the grassroots, we find him alive and flourishing everywhere, not in the hands of the self-appointed guardians of his teachings, but among people who perhaps ignore his name. The contagion of the living ideals he so well incarnated have continually spread, from mouth to mouth, among ordinary men and women. Perhaps, as Illich once said, Gandhi will become the philosopher as opposed to the conscienticizer of the XXI century.

Our hope is also continually nourished by the Zapatistas, who have inspired thousands, millions of globaphobics all over the planet. The Zapatistas continue

to offer a radical refutation to all modern fanatics, self-styled cosmopolitan individuals, still dismissing all vernacular initiatives and movements as parochial, fundamentalist, and as going-back-in-time.

We find parochialism in all globaphilics, like international institutions or transnational corporations, and in their reductionist science. All of them are constrained by their lenses which reduce the richness of the world, in all its diversity and complexity, to the homogeneous, abstract quantities of their statistics, always associated with a very parochial, self-serving interest.

As defined by the deeds of the Zapatistas as well as by the words of Marcos, localization is the opposite to both localism and globalization. True, traditional resistance to all kinds of colonizers often implied forms of localism in which people were forced to entrench themselves in their own places. Such entrenchment implied the danger of short-sighted and even fundamentalist localism. In the epoch of economic and technological globalization, people realize that all isolated localisms will be razed to the ground. But instead of abandoning their roots and places, as global forces push them to do --- in order to better gut them in the shapeless space of the market and the State --- they affirm themselves in them while at the same time opening their hearts and hands to others like themselves.

What we observe at the grassroots, as the Zapatistas clearly illustrate, is the multiplication and strengthening of wide coalitions of discontents with the "Global Project." Far from being parochial, their localized views and perspectives are affirming cosmovisions of a cosmic nature. They are no longer trapped in the western universalism, but neither do they fall into the trap of relativism which so easily transforms itself into fundamentalism. They are not pluralists either: no one can be. Still, they affirm themselves in their own set of beliefs, opinions, philosophy, and religions. They affirm themselves in their truths, but at the same time adopt a humble, open attitude, a pluralist attitude having recognized their own limits, the radical incapacity of any human being of knowing it all, of owning *the* universal truth, the only version of the truth, a catholic truth. (Panikkar, 1996) They can say, with Gandhi:

(S)eeing that the human mind works through innumerable media and that the evolution of the human mind is not the same for all, it follows that what may be truth for one may be untruth for another .... All that I can in true humility present to you is that truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility. (Gandhi, 1970, p.433).

We also find our hope nourished by the life and work of Wendell Berry, a western man seeking to recover the best of the western tradition, while abandoning what does not work; what does profound damage; what creates enormous suffering for all. He sees himself very much implicated in the suffering. He suffers from the hidden wound of racism. And, he is a man of conscience while avoiding the arrogance of transforming himself into a conscienticizer. His humility is all the more touching, in light of the profound impact he has had at the grassroots in the western world.

Yet, the truth is that each time we read about his life, we feel inspired by him, desiring to emulate him. As we embrace Berry, Gandhi, and Marcos, our hope focuses on the awareness and love, the rootedness and the humility, that knowing which is neither born of conscience, conscienticization, or mediation, but rather of a procession --- "a living procession through time in a place." Berry writes,

Modern humans tend to believe that whatever is known can be recorded in books or on tapes or on computer discs and then again learned by those artificial means. But it is increasingly plain to me that the meaning, the cultural significance, even the practical value, of this sort of family procession across a landscape can be known but not told. These things, though they have a public value, do not have a public meaning; they are too specific to a particular small place and its history. This is exactly the tragedy in the modern displacement of people and cultures.

That such things can be known but not told can be shown by answering a simple question: Who knows the meaning, the cultural significance, and the practical value of this rural family's generational procession across its native landscape? The answer is not so simple as the question: No one person ever will know all the answer. My grandson certainly does not know it. And my son does not, though he has positioned himself to learn some of it, should he be so blessed.

I am the one who (to some extent) knows, though I know also that I cannot tell it to anyone living. I am in the middle now between my grandfather and my father, who are alive in my memory, and my son and my grandson, who are alive in my sight.

If my son, after thirty more years have passed, has the good pleasure of seeing his own child and grandchild in that procession, then he will know something like what I now know. This living procession through time in a place is the record by which such knowledge survives and is conveyed. When the procession ends, so does the knowledge. (Berry, 2000, pp.152-153)

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