point of view, or unsympathetically, by assuming the peasant is a mere tool of production or a diseased one in need of the social worker's medicine. In his refusal to address his readers as different and yet sincerely committed peers, and thus to actually *engage* them in conversation, Freire affirms that very stratified discourse from which he seeks to lead us away. His own principles, commitment, a respect for education, however, do appear even if they are inadequately practiced here; it is in this spirit that this volume can remind and reinvogorate his community of fellow educators.

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The Politics of Education: Culture Power and Liberation by Paulo Freire. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1985

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In the last analysis my action is the most important element for telling me about the efficiency of my epistemological position. Research and Action are together, in a dialectical relationship. To the extent that academics don't do this, the practice they organize, based on the knowledge they get in the process of research, will fail.

As I read and reread *The Politics of Education*, these words of Paulo Freire echoed from a recent and memorable past—summer 1979 in Ann Arbor. Then as now, I was profoundly influenced by his Pedagogy of Praxis; an influence that I trace back to my preexile days in South Africa where "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" was banned as a subversive revolutionary text in the early 70s. And rightly so, I have always regarded Freire's work as subversive of the status quo. To read Freire is to recreate one's history, to critically relive one's past and reinvent one's future—to engage in what he calls auto-critique. This book demands passion and engagement no less than his earlier texts. For, in the *Politics of Education*, we are presented with a collage of Freire's "thought-language"—a collection of 13 essays revised and rewritten for this publication. I will divide the

essays thematically into five major areas: (a) The relationship of author and text (ch. 1); (b) meaning of illiteracy; (c) a critique of mechanism and cultural action for freedon (ch. 2-6); (d) liberation theology and political literacy (ch. 7-11); (e) conscientization, and the power of the imagination, (ch. 12, 13). Having made these arbitrary distinctions which perhaps fitted only my reading of the text, I will proceed to discuss some aspects of Freire's ideas contained in the book that relate particularly to our university worlds.

As Freire points out in his opening essay, "a book reflects it's author's confrontation with the world" (p. 3) and, in turn, aims to provoke the reader to critical reading of reality. In this sense, Freire is a rather unique writer for he succeeds in creating dialogue (often of discomfort) with his audience and in so doing, povides an ongoing pedagogical experience in political literacy. For words are not "amulets" (p. 8) to be worn and discarded; rather, they are instruments of empowerment or domestication. It is this notion of literacy that ties Freire to the existential-phenomenological tradition for, like Sartre, he believes that to read a book is to write it. Literacy, therefore, means writing one's own text, speaking one's own word, and as Merleau-Ponty would argue, committed to meaningmaking. But it is not the imposed meaning of the dominator class over the dominated, the literate over the illiterate; rather a "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1976, p. 26) where both teacher and learner become inhabitants of each other's worlds of meaning, using language to mediate a shared and often problematic reality. The implications of this "dialogical encounter" are far reaching in research. If we take Freire's notions seriously, we cannot continue to construct an alienated discourse of abstraction, be that in positivism *or* phenomenological *or* critical theory. For, in so doing, we create another language of domination which rends apart the possibility of a fusion of horizons, and runs the risk of transmitting an ideology of accommodation, not only to banking education and the forces of conservatism, but to critical and so-called emancipated theory as well.

As Freire questions what real meaning the literacy primer texts have for peasants (Ch. 2), we too need to question what real meaning critical analyses of education and the social structure have, if separated from the life-worlds of the actions they purport to describe. In my opinion, Freire is one of the few who bridges that gap of alienation between actuality and abstraction, between lived-language and the language of our academic sometime counter-reality. As he points out in his essays, all education practice implies an educational theory; we need to become critically conscious of the politics of language—the politics of our own literacy—in order to develop an authentic praxis in our lived-world settings. For while a more sophisticated "culture of silence" exists in the university, our autocritique must take account of our own discourse and theories of action which become meaningless if separated (ironically) in

journals like these, where we write to each other for closed worlds of meaning. It's a dilemma that continues to haunt me as I read Freire; for in contrast to Giroux's linguistically alienating introduction (which serves to lecture the readers,) Freire's style is lucid, provocative but always humble, grounded in a praxis that speaks to many different audiences—thereby opening rather than closing the possibilities for further dialogue. That is an issue, we, whose culture of silence is the university and professional world of conferences, need to continue to confront.

I was particularly drawn to Freire's frequent use of examples which represent and codify in existential terms the life-worlds of the peasants where they describe themselves as "sowers of words" and of making words speak (p. 60-61) and using imagination to create an alternative vision of a world of possibility rather than accepting a "limit-situation" of fatalism and despair.

Here we see Gramsci's influence on Freire's work. For it is *not* the intellectual elite who produce revolutionary consciousness for the oppressed and prescribe their action, but the power of the individual "will," collectively expressed in *cultural* action that initiates the process of transformation. There is a profound hope and faith in one's students, be they peasants, university members, or young children, that grounds Freire's ideas in the life-world of his informants. It is local knowledge, as Geertz might call it, that creates the starting point for pedagogical action; for it is always "small facts that speak to large issues" (Geertz, 1973). Examining in detail one's own lived universe, enables us to move beyond a focalistic atomised vision of reality to one that encompasses the broader and interconnected components of unjust social conditions; where the themes of a "favela" (slum) in Brazil can be seen as a shared system of domination experienced in South Africa, Haiti, or Honduras; and what constitutes relations of "development" while maintaining coercive dependence between the "master" society and its dependent societies (Chs. 10, 11).

It is difficult to review a text of this nature—the essays are often repetitive (part of Freire's style); some are revisions of earlier publications, but each is an experience of provocation an invitation. Donald Macedo has done an excellent translation—the prose is clear and lucid and superior to the earlier translations by Slover (Chs. 6, 7) which unfortunately still suffer from sexist references to "he" and "man"; echoes of an earlier less emancipated critical consciousness on Freire's part. A more careful organization of the essays, so that they reflect the dialectical rather than chronological development of his thought, would have been appropriate. The final essay, a dialogue between Freire and Macedo, is intriguing and serves as an excellent conclusion for the text, raising the most significant themes of his work to generative questions about critical and pedagogical thought, auto-critique, social movements, cultural domination, the

politics of literacy, and the broader application of Freire's work. The closing conversation is a very personable discussion of Freire's everyday world; his love of eating, of music, of children and above all how

> I like to live, to live my life intensely—for me the fundamental thing in life is to work and create an existence overflowing from life, a life that is well thought out a created and recreated life—a life that is touched and remade in this exstence. The more I do something, the more I exist. And I exist intensely. (p. 195)

Reading this book is to know Paulo Freire a little better. It is an experience of challenge and inspiration.

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