

Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*.
New York: The Seabury Press, 1973. Price \$6.75, Pp. 164.

The work of the eminent Brazilian-born educator, Paulo Freire, has been receiving the attention of educational circles on the American continent because of Freire's remarkable insight into the relationship between education and critical consciousness. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is Freire's best-known work, but *Education for Critical Consciousness*, which also explores this theme, forms the subject of this review. *Education for Critical Consciousness* is divided into two separate but related essays, "Education as the Practice of Freedom", which arose out of Freire's involvement in adult literacy programmes in Brazil prior to the military coup of 1964 which ended in his exile, and "Extension or Communication", written in Chile in 1968 at a time when the U.S. model of rural extension was spreading throughout Latin America. (pp. VII, X).

Freire's basic premise is that critical consciousness is the "motor of cultural emancipation" and that oppressed people must possess such consciousness if they are to liberate themselves (p. VII). Critical consciousness, he maintains, is a product of the *human capacity for reflection* which enables them to integrate with, rather than merely adapt or adjust to, social reality, and humans are Subjects, not objects, in the process of historico-cultural change (p. 4). The attainment of critical consciousness, however, is dependent on the availability of an authentic education which makes educators educatees and educatees educators, since this is the only way in which people can fulfill their primordial ontological vocation to be fully human (p. 33). If such education is available, dialogical and intercommunicative in its essential characteristics, then the "tidal wave" of social change will not submerge mankind and mankind will be able to cope effectively with the tasks presented by each transitional epoch (pp. 7, 8).

Freire's specific frame of reference is Brazil which during the 1950's and 1960's experienced many of the birth-pains of modernization and decolonization. During this transitional period, according to Freire, Brazil attempted to move away from a predominantly "closed", colonial, plantocratic society, marked by the absence of participatory democracy, toward an "open" society with the "masses" beginning to intervene in the historical process, despite the reactionary and co-optative stance of endogeneous and exogeneous elitist forces that attempted to preserve latifundia-based structures of oppression (pp. 21-31). He is, however, unsparing in his criticism of any education, in Brazil as elsewhere, that causes people to remain at the "margin of historical events", since the role of education, especially in developing countries, is to promote the development of authentic, transitive, critical consciousness that can help to eliminate "massification", and should not be confined to the mere satisfaction of survival needs and the perpetuation of that spurious, naive, intransitive, or fanaticized consciousness that disengages itself from coming to grips with social reality. This explains his indictment of the simplistic, technicistic, propagandistic, *modus operandi* of rural extension agents in Latin America who seemed to him to be more interested in "domesticating" the peasant masses and in "invading" their cul-

ture, than in treating them as reflective beings capable of "praxis".

Freire, as many have come to recognize, is particularly strong in his philosophical analysis of the dialectical unity of thought and action, theory and practice, oppression and authentic liberation. His modification of the Hegelian-Marxian dialectic enables him to reach a level of analysis far above that which more mundane forms of logical reasoning provide. At the same time he does not hesitate to bring to bear on the question of educational theory and practice the insights of existential-phenomenology, but he is quick to reject the questionable doctrines of either idealism or solipsism, or for that matter, misguided positivism. Sociologically, he correctly analyses the transmission function of educational institutions (in their broadest sense) as not being equivalent with the systematic extension of skills and knowledge alone, but also as subjecting knowledge and skills to epistemological scrutiny since education, which *is* dialogue and communication, attaches equal importance to the significance of the object of knowing and thinking. Here the thought of Freire is quite similar to that of phenomenological and ethnomethodological sociologists.

But if Freire is quite at home as a philosopher, he is less convincing as a sociologist. For example, his contention that colonial Brazilian society was a "closed society in equilibrium" (p. 30) which attempted to become predominantly "open" with the dawn of independence, is based on the Weberian notion of the presumed existence of ideal-typical "closed" and "open" systems of social stratification that are in fact non-existent. Moreover, in his attempt to utilize equilibrium theory, Freire has been inclined to attach exaggerated importance to exogenously induced social change, and although it is true that he concedes the periodic inclination of the oppressed in Brazil toward mutiny during the course of that country's history, their essential characteristic has been that of "submission" (p. 26). Ironically, Freire in this respect, comes very close to denying a basic postulate of the dialectic which is that *society is in a perpetual state of flux and not static*, although change may be gradual and quantitative rather than rapid and qualitative at an early stage, and the Brazilian masses, intentionally or not, are not very far removed from being *objects* in the historical process.

Secondly, Freire has nowhere given acceptable operational and quantifiable sociological definitions of such deceptively flattering concepts as "integration", "massification", "modernization" and "development". Some may claim that Freire should not be taken to task for his limitations as a social scientist, but philosopher or not, he persistently makes incursions into cultural anthropological and sociological analysis, and he himself prefers "logos" to "doxa" (p. 102). Take for instance his discussion of "modernization" and "development" (pp. 129-130). In scientific terms, he goes little further than saying that the two terms are not synonymous and that the former is "mechanical, automatic, and manipulative" while the latter is not!

A major substantive problem posed is whether there should be unlimited and uncontrolled dialogue and communication between educators and educa-

tees. Infinite dialogue and communication are to be encouraged, says Freire, and teachers should not "extend" or superimpose their cultural responses on those of pupils (p. 109). He has little sympathy for agronomist-educators, or any other educators, who see time as wasted if dialogical results are "slow, uncertain and long-drawn out" (pp. 117-118). Freire's "faith in people" may be justified but seems to assume that everybody can become a leader, and fails to recognize that teachers as leaders must have some leeway for independent decision-making. Freire does not discuss the distinctive characteristics of leadership, apart from dialogue and communication, and is virtually preoccupied with the establishment of horizontal relationships in the educational process, thus almost implying that students, in the interest of "fundamental democratization", can carry on democratic "chit-chat" while the economy awaits education as well as trained manpower.

The intention here is not to criticize Freire for the sake of mere criticism. This is one of the most enlightening books this reviewer has read on education for critical consciousness or on education as re-socialization, but the brilliance of the philosophical analysis should not blind us to its social scientific shortcomings, since social science stands in dialectical relation to philosophy. In an age of increasing specialization and differentiation of knowledge, the need for a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to human problems, such as, educational theory and practice, dehumanizing oppression and authentic liberation, becomes imperative with each passing day.

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