

Peter Mayo



Universidade de Malta
peter.mayo@um.edu.mt

MARXIST-INFLECTED PRACTICE IN PAULO FREIRE'S POLITICAL PEDAGOGY

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses and explains Freire's Marxist-inflected concept of praxis as developed throughout his oeuvre. A key feature, deriving from Marx and others, notably Gramsci, is the positing of a dialectical relationship between consciousness and the world. This is at the heart of his celebrated pedagogical approach. Praxis dates back to the time of the ancient Greek 'civilisation' Aristotle *in primis*. It involves an intellectual effort, a reflection on one's individual and collective lifeworld. These are the reflecting on action processes that can ultimately collectively lead to political change. Praxis lies at the heart of Marxian and Gramscian political thought and strategy. It is the kernel of Paulo Freire's pedagogical politics; it differs from simply practice. This pedagogical politics involves the codification of this reflection on action into theory. It, in turn, entails evaluating relevant theory against the very reflection on everyday action. The world of action is life itself with all its dimensions, including community living and work, but extends well beyond.

Keywords: Community. Literacy. Reflection. Theory. Marxism.

A INFLEXÃO MARXISTA DE PRÁTICA NA PEDAGOGIA POLITICA DE PAULO FREIRE

RESUMO

Este artigo explica a noção freireana de prática desenvolvida na *Pedagogia do Oprimido* e em outros escritos, de Freire, Marx e Gramsci, para capturar a relação dialética entre a consciência e o mundo, refletido em abordagem pedagógica pela qual ele se tornou famoso. O conceito de prática remonta à época dos gregos antigos e já em Aristóteles. Isso envolve uma reflexão sobre o processo de viver - uma função intelectual. Os processos de pensamento e de reflexão que acompanham a maioria das atividades e que se deve ajudar a nutrir com mudanças políticas em mente. A prática está no cerne da abordagem política e pedagógica de Paulo Freire e deve ser distinguida da mera prática. Envolve a codificação da reflexão sobre a vida cotidiana em teoria e os meios de avaliar essa teoria em comparação com o resultado da reflexão sobre a vida cotidiana, incluindo a vida no trabalho e na comunidade.

Palavras-chave: Comunidade. Alfabetização. Reflexão. Teoria. Marxismo.

Submetido em: 25/04/2021

Aceito em: 15/06/2021

Publicado em: 29/09/2021



<https://doi.org/10.28998/2175-6600.2021v13nEsp82-99>



1. INTRODUCTION¹

Praxis is a key concept of Ancient Greek origin (πρᾶξις) much later adopted by several theorists and activists to refer to the Marxist-inflected normative process of reflecting upon action, including the codification of this reflection into revolutionary theory to help generate social change. It is change geared to not only interpret the word but change it with the purpose of generating greater social justice. Of course, this notion of praxis has an element of materialism, deriving from Marxian thought, in contrast with the more idealistic version of Hegel, and a collective dimension in contrast to the individualistic versions projected by the likes of Nietzsche and Sartre (COWLEY, 2008).

Paulo Freire (1921-1997) is one among a number of authors who use this concept at the heart of their philosophy. He renders this concept central to his view of critical pedagogy (analyzing the relationship between education and power) for greater social justice and change. His concepts are associated with not only the strict domain of pedagogy but other ones such as that of 'cultural action for freedom' (FREIRE, 1985), the title of one of Freire's early monographs as translated from his native Portuguese into English. It is the sort of action that prefigures a situation which is 'not yet' but which can and should be, given the right conditions. His is a lens, a Freirean lens, which has been applied to a variety of areas, obviously pedagogy, and also social political theory, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, social movement activism and praxis, communications and critical media literacy, radical theology, environmental studies centering on 'unity in biodiversity' (including eco-pedagogy) and, more recently, one can add, thanks to the work of New Zealand scholar, Peter Roberts, Literature (e.g. essays on Herman Hesse, Fyodor Dostoyevsky). We might nowadays be able to speak in terms of a *Freirean lens* in the same way that we speak of Gramscian, Foucaultian and Derridian lenses.

What adds to this is the Gramscian notion that the basic pedagogical orientation that characterizes Freire's view of society and the rest of the cosmos has broader resonance than that of simply schooling, especially if one factors in the larger terrain of

Versão traduzido por: Stanley da Cruz Simões. E-mail: stanleydacruz7@hotmail.com Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/850724388449992>.

¹ This is a revised, amplified and reworked version of a paper which originally appeared as MAYO, Peter, Praxis in Paulo Freire's Emancipatory Politics, *International Critical Thought*, 10:3, 454-472, 2020 DOI: 10.1080/21598282.2020.1846585 To link to this article: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/21598282.2020.1846585>>. Its basic elements were contained in an encyclopedia entry: MAYO Peter. In *Encyclopaedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, edited by PETERS, Michael, 1946–1951. Dordrecht: Springer, 2017.

'public pedagogy' (GIROUX, 2004) and the Gramscian notion that every relationship of Hegemony is a pedagogical relationship. The range of people who, according to Henry A. Giroux, echoing Gramsci and others, engage in pedagogical exchanges is broad to incorporate artists, architects, film-makers, formally designated educators, advertising and marketing agents, security personnel, trade union activists, religious figures, politicians, state agents, theatre personnel and critics...the numbers are legion. Settings for pedagogical encounters are also many, including the several public spaces in which the kind of personnel just mentioned operate. Giroux, for his part, uses pedagogy in its broadest context and not necessarily always having a normative dimension. All these personnel and settings are either hegemonic or else disrupt relations of hegemony, at times doing both at the same time given the several contradictions involved.

There are forms of consensus-based behavior, moral regulation and contestation in every aspect of Hegemony which contains the germs for social change within its own interstices. Hegemony, seen holistically in the context of Gramsci's 'integral state', where consensus and force are often inextricably intertwined, the variation between the two being one of degree, alludes to the process of rule by consent and force. The separation between the two is simply for heuristic purposes. Furthermore, hegemony is always in flux, its being never static and finite (MAYO, 2015).

This lies at the heart of the all-encompassing 'Philosophy of Praxis' as propounded by Antonio Gramsci in his prison writings (GRAMSCI, 1975), an over-arching vision, a substantial portion of which can be found in his other pre-prison writings² and letters (GRAMSCI, 1996). It is partly a philosophy which supersedes 'common sense' by "renovating and making 'critical' an already existing activity", leading to a "to a higher conception of life" among not a small intellectual elite but an entire "intellectual-moral bloc which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the mass..." (GRAMSCI, 1971, 331-333). That there are parallels between Gramsci and Freire, not least in the context of a Philosophy/Pedagogy of Praxis³ has been illustrated in a number of works by the present writer (MAYO, 1999, 2004a, 2015). It needs not be rehearsed here. Pedagogy within the context of a Philosophy of Praxis is central to the workings of Hegemony, to the extent that it is connected, in Gramsci's case, with his whole corpus of writings (BORG et. al., 2002, 4).

² E.g. GRAMSCI, 1977.

³ See GADOTTI, 1996.

2. THIS PAPER

This paper provides a conceptual overview of the notion of praxis as developed by Paulo Freire in both its more general community context and that of its relationship with the world of production. The first usage is inspired by Marx's early manuscripts, the latter by *Capital* Vol. 1 and other writings. There will therefore be passing references to Marx's writings, especially his early writings, and to the writings of major contributors to the Marxist debate, Antonio Gramsci in particular.

The paper scours the Freirean themes of 'Reflection, Action and Theory', the 'Dialectical relations', indicating their internal relations, the 'Pedagogy/Philosophy of Praxis', 'Generative Words', 'Conscientização', 'Learning and Teaching' and the 'Collective Dimension', 'Contexts for Praxis', involving intellectual and revolutionary Praxis, 'Exile as Praxis' and 'Relearning "Home"'.

The contexts surveyed are those constitutive of life itself (BETTO and FREIRE, 1985; 1986), that is to say different sites for people's daily practical activity. They also include, in Freire's case, contexts roused for social transformation or stymied as a result of reactionary attempts to stem the flow of gradual or revolutionary action; Freire was directly involved in both situations. Learning settings include non-formal education, schooling and 'intellectual'/'pedagogical' intervention to either consolidate the status quo or prefigure and possibly usher in social change.

Adopting the concept of organic intellectuals working in tandem with subaltern groups, I would include, as educators in a Freirean praxis context, all those who engage with other people in 'reading the word and the world' (FREIRE and MACEDO, 1987), as well as *writing* it (TAYLOR, 1993). The range of learning contexts is broad enough to comprise Liberation Theology (LEOPANDO, 2017) in which faith is looked upon as a revolutionary process of 'liberating praxis' (BOFF and BOFF, 1989; FREIRE, 2000, 2017), a process of liberation from oppression not simply confined to the heralded spiritual 'next world' but which commences in the material basis and existential situation of 'this world' (BOFF and BOFF, 1989). Contexts ripe for revolutionary transformation, involving a number of potentially transformative situations, become important sources of relevance in this context.

2.1 Praxis

Praxis, the central concept which Paulo Freire adopts to capture the dialectical relationship between consciousness and the world, is reflected in the pedagogical approach for which he became famous. The concept of praxis dates back to the time of the ancient Greeks and as far back as, at least, Aristotle⁴ Freire, for his part, draws on a long tradition that partly connects with Socrates' dictum, captured by Plato in the *Apology*, "that the life which is unexamined is not worth living" (PLATO, n. d; KOHAN, 2020, 90). This entails reflection on the process of living, one which entails an intellectual function. This is connected with Gramsci's later notion that all human beings are intellectuals but not all carry out the function of intellectuals: "All men are intellectuals; one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals". (GRAMSCI, 1971, 9); one can fry an egg or sew a tear in a jacket but this does not mean one is a cook or tailor, (Ibid). The reference here is to the thinking and reflecting processes that accompany most activities and that one can help nurture with political change in mind.

Praxis in this sense continued to be adopted in subsequent writings in social theory. It entails action–reflection (KOHAN, 2020, 80) – transformative action, having a normative dimension, in this case, being central to a quest for greater social justice. It gained revolutionary prominence in Marxist thought and action, as Hegel's idealist notion of praxis was, like most of his idealist philosophy, 'turned on its head' by Marx especially through the influential writings of Ludwig Feuerbach. The abstract in Hegel was meant by Marx and Engels to be rendered concrete, to have a material basis. Echoing Marx, Gramsci rendered *Praxis* the central concept of his philosophy – 'The Philosophy of Praxis'⁵ - in keeping with the Marxist tradition and Marx himself: 'revolutionizing practice' (MARX, in MARX and ENGELS, 1978, 144) entailing reflection on action to change the world. This is captured in Marx's eleventh and final thesis on Feuerbach where he states: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it." (MARX, 1978, p. 145), one of Marx's most well-known early written statements reproduced on his (and the family) grave at Highgate Cemetery.

Marx's early notion of praxis centered on the world of practical activity and everyday life. I shall show further on that it took on a decidedly production-oriented turn, in that the

⁴ (See, for example, BELFIORE, 1983-84). In Aristotle, it referred to an intentional morally good action carried out as end in itself and in keeping with human nature; not a means to an end as in crafts. Production of the latter has an outcome – a product (poesis), the production of a thing.

⁵ E.g Gramsci, 1971, 388.

area of labor activity is given the greatest prominence as the focus of critical reflection for revolutionary action.

Paulo Freire drew on Marx in his conception of praxis, the central concept in his pedagogical politics, although one discovers echoes of Hegel and Sartre in his writings centering around the 'pedagogy of praxis'. In the final chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Chapter 4), Freire asserts: "But human activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis, it is transformation of the world. (FREIRE, 2000, 2017, 125)

2.2 Reflection, action and theory

There is a transformative edge to Freire's interpretation of praxis which involves theory, regarded as a codification of reflection on and rumination with regard to experience and therefore the world of action (FREIRE, 2000, 2017). This renders problematic common phrases such as 'from theory to praxis' - theory is embedded in praxis – unless one is eschewing the idea of theory cut off from practice to replace it with the more holistic praxis engaging the bridging of the theory-practice divide. Praxis is geared to transforming the world, that is to say, one intervenes in history to contribute towards its development. Put differently, education based on 'praxis' is one that allows people to act on their material surroundings and reflect upon them with a view to transforming them for what is perceived as the good of humanity, in a social justice sense. They must also act at the right moment – circumstances make people but it is also people who make circumstances, writes Marx (1978, 165) in *The German Ideology*, warning us, however, that people do not intervene "as they please...under circumstances chosen by themselves...", to cite from *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (MARX, 1978, 595). The process (action-reflection-transformative action) involved is *dialectical* and not sequential as the late Paula Allman (1999), one of the key exponents of Marxian concepts in Freire and Gramsci, emphasized time and time again.

For Freire, action on its own, isolated from reflection, is tantamount to mindless activism. Reflection, divorced from action, constitutes empty theorizing.

Praxis lies at the heart of different situations in Freire's writings. One recurring aspect of his use of the concept is that of standing aside, either through deliberate pedagogical action or through forced circumstances, to take a critical look at things which are familiar. Frank Youngman (1986) aptly puts it thus: "... education must help people in the process of objectifying the world, critically understanding it, and acting to change it." (p. 171). This serves as a definition of the term *praxis*.

2.3 Dialectical relations

While gaining this critical distance, with a 'social justice intention, the people involved would be contributing to 'negating the negation'. (ALLMAN, 1999) They would be negating the process of thwarting the subaltern, the oppressed and disenfranchised in their process of 'becoming' (slight parallels with Nietzsche here), 'becoming more' ("ser mais"), transcending their condition as it stands to 'beings for themselves' (there is the clear allusion to Marx's (1978, p. 218) anti-Proudhon passage, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, with respect to "a class against capital" becoming a class "for itself"– *Klasse für sich*). There is thus a projection into the future, possibilities to transcend the present, in the Hegelian and Sartre sense⁶. The early or 'First Freire' (TORRES, 2014) would regard this progression as that of "women and men engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human" (FREIRE, 2000, 2017, 66). This notion, naturally, opened Freire to criticism of essentializing the human condition, as if there is a fixed state of being *fully* human, a term used by Marx with regard to his projection of a socialist education for the future ('fully developed human beings') (MARX, 1978, p. 412). Freire later used different and more prudent language (less absolutizing) in speaking about persons becoming 'less incomplete' (FREIRE *et al*, 1997).

In denying the necessary conditions for this humanization to occur, one would be dehumanizing oneself while, at the same time, dehumanizing others. By the same token, in gaining further 'humanization', the oppressed humanize the oppressor. All this connects with solving the contradiction of the 'oppressors and oppressed' relation; it looks like a binary of opposites but they are intimately related as one presupposes the existence of the other. This is genuine revolutionary activity, one which is intended to resolve the contradiction rather than maintain it by simply replacing the personnel involved, the oppressed replacing the oppressor by acting on the internalized image of the latter, activating the 'oppressor consciousness' – wanting to be like the oppressor. Praxis can play an important role in solving this contradiction.

2.4 Pedagogy/philosophy of praxis

Paulo Freire's pedagogical approach, developed in the North-East of Brazil, and especially in Angicos, can take us some way in this regard. His 'Pedagogy of Praxis'

⁶ See COWLEY, 2008.

involves 'critical distancing'. What is often problematically referred to, in Latin America, as the 'Método Paulo Freire' is said to capture this sense of critical distancing. What is important, however, for one's appreciation of Freire's approach, is the philosophy at the heart of it, rather than the 'method' itself. As with all pedagogical approaches, the one advocated and exemplified by Freire is bound by context. In fact, Freire is on record that one should not regard his approach as 'method'. What transpired in say Angicos cannot be transferred, cargo-style, in any other context. In this respect, Freire invites parallels with Don Lorenzo Milani, Italian critical educator and author of a leading sociological text (*Esperienze Pastorali – Pastoral Experiences*), who stated that the School of Barbiana started at Barbiana and ended at Barbiana (BATINI et. al, 2014, 2017).

Echoing Freire's words, the experiment must be reinvented; it cannot be transplanted (FREIRE, 1978, 9). This notwithstanding, revisiting Freire pedagogical approach would foreground important aspects of education involving praxis. Quite instructive here is this adaptation of Dennis Goulet's summary of this approach in his Preface to *Education for Critical Consciousness*, a book containing the very early *A Educação como prática da Liberdade* (Education as the Practice of Freedom).

2.5 Generative words

A preliminary moment occurs since a community education project necessitates initial knowledge of the context, the various speech patterns adopted, aspirations, feelings and what stimulates or captures the popular imagination. Educators spend time in the community, in a team preferably including target learners who thus acquire some ownership of the programme, sharing in the enquiry and being co-researchers. The work involving co-learners and co-researchers is characterized by a preliminary search for "generative words". The emphasis is on "syllabic richness" (GOULET, 1973, p. 11). Next, the material gathered is reconstituted in the form of say a dramatic sketch, a drawing, a song, a photograph and/or similar vehicles that represent an aspect of everyday life in a specific codified form. This is intended to establish some critical distance between those who inhabit the context and all that is familiar. To echo Freire-inspired, Ira Shor, co-author of an important conversational book with Paulo Freire (SHOR and FREIRE, 1987), they are given an opportunity for "Extraordinarily Re-experiencing the Ordinary", the title of Chapter 3 of one of the American critical pedagogue's initial books (SHOR, 1987). The discussion that follows, punctuated by the introduction of 'hinge themes', leads to de-codification.

The learners inside the study circle are helped to recognize the situation as their existential one, their own, hopefully now beginning to see it from a more critical perspective. They would hopefully begin to 'unveil' the contradictions lacerating their 'reality'. They would then begin to discuss different futures. The process is one not of problem solving but problem posing, problematization – there is not always a clear and unequivocal answer to every question. Sometimes the best one can do is generate further questions, this becoming a key feature of praxis. A new codification comes into being as they are encouraged to participate in making history by collectively dreaming of alternatives for their community and act upon them to improve, from a social justice perspective, their communal space and potentially larger ones (GOULET, 1973, p. 11).

2.6 Consciousness

The notions of critical distancing, captured on theatrical stage by Marxist-inspired playwrights such as Berthold Brecht and his Berliner Ensemble through such devices as the 'alienation effect' or in communities by Augusto Boal through his Forum Theatre and other approaches, has praxis at its core. The influence of Marx cannot be missed. The basis of critical consciousness is the people's existential situation grounded in their material reality. Marx posits, in *The German Ideology*, one of the texts from the Early Marx that greatly influenced the 'First Freire' (TORRES, 2014): "Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men (*sic.*) exist at all". (MARX, 1978, p. 158).

These lines are immediately preceded by the equally important formulation that equates language with consciousness, relevant for the important Freirean process of reading and writing 'the world' and therefore making use of language: "Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness" which arises from the need for intercourse with other people. (Ibid.) Praxis constitutes the means of understanding the social relationships involved and identifying the possibilities of such awareness for the struggle to generate a climate for radical social change. The point of departure, for Freire, very much inspired by Marx, is human beings "in the 'here and now'", "...which constitutes the situation within which they are submerged, from which they emerge, and in which they can intervene" (FREIRE, 2000-2017, p. 85). Language plays an important part in this situation, an important vehicle for the transition to critical consciousness/critical literacy.

2.7 *Conscientização*

Secondly, the approach adopted by Freire is based on *conscientização* (ROBERTS, 2000), a central component of praxis. It is the process whereby one learns about the contradictions in society and takes action (action with others) to confront and change them. *Conscientização* features prominently in Latin American social thinking, including thinking associated with popular education, and radical religious Catholic thinking. It is strongly associated with work in the Christian Base Communities (Comunidades Eclesiais de Base - CEBs) where much popular education is carried out. Freire states that it had been employed by Brazilian Catholic radicals in the sixties and identifies Dom Helder Camara, then Bishop of Recife, as the person who helped popularize it (Nita Freire interview, in BORG and MAYO, 2007, 4) Freire later stopped adopting the term because of its loose usage, devoid of any sense of praxis (FREIRE, 1993) and in Nita Freire interview⁷ (BORG and MAYO, op.cit).

He later intended to re-use it describing it as the process “of the coming of consciousness” (FREIRE, 1993, 110), since, in the words of his widow, it “indicates movement, the beginning of an action, preparation of the action that must follow.” (FREIRE, N., 2007, 4-5).

Third, there is a connection between praxis, *conscientização* and literacy. The literacy in question transcends functional literacy. The latter, although being political in permitting subaltern groups access to voting rights, was shorn of praxis. It would involve a mechanical process of becoming literate without any reflection over action in a normative sense, that is to say to generate greater social justice. It was bereft of any purposeful effort as part of a struggle for radical social change. The struggle for critical literacy – the ongoing process of reading and writing words and the world, is of relevance to both functionally illiterate and functionally literate persons. One can read the word but not necessarily the world. We have seen how scholars, such as Paul V. Taylor (1993), contend that critical literacy also entails reading and *writing* the world. I would add that it would entail further understanding through a critical reading of the construction of the world's reality through different media; how consent is manufactured (HERMAN and CHOMSKY, 1988). This is also part and parcel of critical literacy. Critical Literacy, *Conscientização* and Praxis are therefore linked. Critical literacy, based on praxis, enables one to read the ‘word and the world’ to transform it.

⁷ FREIRE, Nita in: BORG and MAYO, 2007

2.8 Learning and teaching

Fourth, authentic dialogue lies at the heart of this process. The educator is not on a par with the learner. The formally designated educator enjoys authority. This derives from one's competence in pedagogical matters (this brings to mind the question of formation) and one's mastery of the subject co-investigated with the learners. Freire warns us, in several texts⁸ that this authority must however not be allowed to degenerate into authoritarianism. Educators should be inclined to *relearn* what they know with the learners. As the Middle English poet Geoffrey Chaucer wrote, with regard to the Clerk, in *The Canterbury Tales* (The Prologue), 'And gladly would he learn and gladly teach'. The Freirean educator teaches while learning at the same time. The learners also teach. They bring insights to bear on the object of co-investigation. Some derive from the learners' experience of life, their own existential situation and background. What we have are "teacher-student" and "students-teachers." (FREIRE, 2000, 2017, p. 80) As far as co-learning goes,

Liberatory education is fundamentally a situation where the teacher and the students *both* have to be learners, *both* have to be cognitive subjects, in spite of their being different. This for me is the first test of liberating education, for teachers and students both to be critical agents in the act of knowing. (FREIRE, in SHOR and FREIRE, 1987, 33).

2.9 The collective dimension

Fifth, Freire underlines in this regard learning's collective dimension and what Karl Mannheim calls, when proposing a sociology of knowledge, 'group knowledge' (MANNHEIM, 1936, p. 24). Revolutionary transformation involves not a single but a collective effort. Revolutionising praxis is *collective*. One engages in social-justice oriented transformation not on one's own but with others: it can be carried out not "in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and in solidarity;" (FREIRE, 2000, 2017, p. 85). An individualistic approach can serve to deny others their freedom: "No one can be authentically human while he [*sic*] prevents others from being so" (*Ibid.*). It can lead to the dehumanizing quest for 'having more' (*Ibid*, 85–86), - 'having' rather than 'being', in Erich Fromm's sense of the terms.

⁸ Eg. SHOR and FREIRE, 1987.

2.10 Contexts of praxis

The process of praxis in his early and most celebrated works, namely *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Cultural Action for Freedom*, centered around political and communal life in general. In later work, however, when confronted by impoverished communities such as those of Guinea Bissau, then just liberated from Portuguese colonialism, his formulations around praxis took on a slant that echoes *Capital* Vol. 1. Referring to Robert Owen and probably the New Lanark mill and school outside Glasgow (referred to by Engels when writing on 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific'), Marx writes, in the passage in *Capital* Vol. 1 alluded to earlier: "From the factory system budded, as Robert Owen has shown us in detail, the germ of the education of the future, and education that will, in the case of every child over a given age, combine productive labour with instruction and gymnastics, not only as one of the methods of adding to the efficiency of production, but as the only method of producing fully developed human beings." (MARX, 1978, p. 412). Freire's notion of praxis as discussed in the *Letters to Guinea Bissau* (FREIRE, 1978) smacks of this specific notion of the concept.

It also strongly echoes Karl Marx's advocacy of a 'polytechnic education' as explained in the 'Geneva Resolution of 1866' or rather The International Workingmen's Association's First International where the education and formation of the laboring classes were given prominence focusing on Mental Education, Bodily Education and Technological Training (MARX, 1866, 1877); re-echoed to some extent in *The Communist Manifesto* (MARX and ENGELS, 1998). The site of reflection for Freire, in this specific African context, was the world of economic production. Freire argued extensively and prescriptively (at odds with his general philosophy), in Letter 11, that there should be no dichotomy between productive labor and education.

He even went so far as to argue that educational institutions should not be "distinguished, essentially, from the factory or from the productive activity in the agricultural field" (FREIRE, 1978, 105). There are shades of Mao, Nyerere (the school-*shamba* was perceived as a site for 'Education for Self-reliance') and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, figures from the 'Third World' given prominence in Freire's early work. Che Guevara posited that "praxis (critical, creative, human life-activity) can radically transform men and women into different kinds of being through labor" (VON VACANO, 2013, 484). Freire's echoes of this position advocate a version of praxis, in the letters to Guinea Bissau (FREIRE, 1978), characterized by reflection on the world of production.

2.11 Exile as a vehicle for praxis

Finally, reference was made earlier to Freire's different uses of *Praxis* for an understanding of various situations. Freire reflected on his experience of exile in conversational volumes with fellow Latin Americans who were exiled⁹ or confined internally¹⁰. Freire availed himself of praxis as a conceptual tool when ruminating on these experiences. These moments served to enable Freire and his co-authors gain critical distance from the world of activity. These situations occurred in countries where a potential social transformation (Chile under Allende and the Unidad Popular left alliance, Brazil under the populist leadership of Joao Goulart before the 1964 coup) was halted by military coups. Freire makes statements to this effect in the book with Faundez (FREIRE and FAUNDEZ, 1989) and also in the exchange with Ricardo Kotscho and Frei Betto (Carlos Alberto Libanio Christo), *Essa Escola Chamada Vida* (That School called Life - BETTO And FREIRE, 1985, 1986), the latter not translated into English, though available in other languages.

The period of exile furnished Freire with a rewarding pedagogical understanding of his home contexts and other ones. Likewise, Betto who, when twice imprisoned as a student leader during the dictatorship, immersed himself in several projects including drama projects, projects which heightened reflection on previous action. Conversations with other exiles or prisoners of conscience can serve as a form of praxis, as Gramsci is depicted as having experienced during his imprisonment in Fascist-led Italy. These experiences of imprisonment and exile had the potential to deepen knowledge, stimulate emotional responses and provide the reinvigoration for social transformation once the situation improved. Gramsci was not fortunate enough to experience the augured renewal in his country. Freire, Betto and Faundez were more fortunate. In the case of the first two, the opportunity presented itself through the *abertura* (opening) in the early 80s. There was the promise of democracy. It was, initially, a very fragile democracy. Freire was skeptical of relocating from Geneva to Brazil. Late Franciscan Cardinal and former Archbishop of São Paulo, Paulo Evaristo Arns told the present writer at São Paulo Cathedral, in 1998, that he went to Geneva to convince Freire to return to his homeland (MAYO, 2004b).

⁹ See FREIRE AND FAUNDEZ, 1989.

¹⁰ Imprisoned in Brazil - Frei Betto - see BETTO and FREIRE, 1986.

2.12 Relearning 'home'

For Freire, ongoing praxis for social change took a different turn. He faced the necessity of 'relearning Brazil' given the changes that took place in his homeland during the 16 years of exile. Otherwise, he could have interpreted a Brazil that 'was' but cannot 'be' any longer as the country had changed – a form of 'cultural invasion,' if you will. One can easily carry ideas that cannot be transplanted in the 'new', albeit home, country. Praxis entails the ongoing relearning of contexts to improve one's reflection on the world of practical activity. The challenge of relearning Brazil was urgent for Freire who was encouraged, by São Paulo's PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores) Mayor, Luiza Erundina, to take on the onerous task to serve as Education Secretary in the Municipal administration of the city. In the Freire-led, PT administration reforms in São Paulo, praxis was at the heart of the 'popular public schools' project, targeted at the 'meninos/as popular' (popular children). The community-oriented school, in this project, where every person employed was formed as an educator, including the cooks, based its curricula on 'thematic complexes' deriving from the surrounding environment. As Lorenzo Milani would say, one had to move educationally from the 'occasional' motive to the 'profound motive' (MARTINELLI, 2007).

3. CONCLUSION

It would be fair to state that Freire's earlier and broader use of praxis, reminiscent of the Early Marx, is the most recurring sense of the concept among critical educators. Ira Shor, Antonia Darder, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, Donaldo Macedo, Peter Roberts, Paula Allman and Peter McLaren frequently use it this way.

Distinctions are often made between 'intellectual praxis' and 'revolutionary praxis.' People might undergo a shift in their consciousness without challenging oppression, leaving oppressive structures intact. Conscientization does not necessarily entail transformation of oppressive structures. People might develop an attitude predicated on critical awareness. Albeit important, this is not tantamount to engendering change. Revolutionary praxis involves ongoing critical engagement with the world to act upon it. This might involve action and violence¹¹ for social change. Praxis, entailing *conscientização*, can generate the climate and conditions for revolutionary transformation:

¹¹ e.g. guerilla action.

“...every revolution has been preceded by an intense labor of criticism and by the diffusion of culture and the spread of ideas among masses of men [*sic.*] who are at first resistant and think only of solving their own immediate economic and political problems for themselves who have no ties of solidarity with others in the same condition...” (GRAMSCI, 1977, 12). Otherwise, we might well have, as in many cases throughout history, simply a top down development, a ‘passive revolution’ not steeped in popular consciousness. Freire, Gramsci and others have argued for an ongoing revolutionary democratic process, the basis for which partly (education does not change things on its own) lies in ‘prefigurative’ cultural and educational work. The pedagogy of praxis is part and parcel of this prefigurative reflection on action. As Gramsci and others argued¹² revolutions, necessitating changes in relations of hegemony, entail lengthy cultural engagement. The Gramscian/Freirean ‘pedagogy/philosophy of praxis’ can constitute the kernel of this engagement.

REFERENCES

- ALLMAN, Paula. **Revolutionary social transformation: Democratic hopes, political possibilities and critical education.** Westport, CT and London: Bergin and Garvey, 1999.
- BATINI, Federico, MAYO, Peter and SURIAN, Alessio, **Lorenzo Milani, the School of Barbiana and the Struggle for Social Justice.** New York, Washington DC, Baltimore, Bern, Frankfurt, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014.
- BATINI, Federico, MAYO, Peter and SURIAN, Alessio, **Lorenzo Milani A Escola De Barbiana e a luta por justiça social** (Andrea Cechinel and Rafael Rodrigo. Muellert, trans), Santa Caterina: Ediunesc & Editora UFSC, 2017.
- BELFIORE, Elizabeth. Aristotle’s Concept of Praxis in the Poetics. **The Classical Journal.** 79 (2): 110-124, 1983, 1984.
- BETTO, Frei and FREIRE, Paulo), **Essa Escola Chamada Vida,** São Paulo: Ática, 1985.
- BETTO, Frei and FREIRE, Paulo. **Una Scuola Chiamata Vita** (A School called Life). Bologna, Italy: E.M.I. 1986
- BOFF, Leonardo and BOFF, Clodovis. **Introducing Liberation Theology.** Kent, UK: Burns & Oates, 1987.
- BORG, Carmel and MAYO, Peter, **Public Intellectuals, Radical Democracy and Social Movements. A Book of Interviews,** New York, Washington DC, Baltimore, Bern, Frankfurt, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007.

¹² See Raymond Williams, 1976.

BORG, Carmel, BUTTIGIEG, Joseph. A and MAYO, Peter. Introduction. Gramsci and Education: A Holistic Interpretation. In BORG, Carmel, BUTTIGIEG, Joseph. A and MAYO, Peter (eds.) **Gramsci and Education**, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

COWLEY, Natalie. What is Praxis? Discussed in relation to Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Sartre, *TKKA Te Kura Kete Aronui*, 4, 2008. Available from: <https://www.waikato.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/149261/NatalieCowley.pdf> Accessed: Nov. 7th 2020.

FREIRE, Paulo and FAUNDEZ, Antonio. **Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation**, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1989.

FREIRE, Paulo and MACEDO, Donaldo. **Literacy. Reading the World and the World**. Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey, 1987.

FREIRE, Paulo. **Cultural Action for Freedom**. Cambridge-Massachusetts: Harvard Educational Review, 1985.

FREIRE, Paulo. FRASER, James W. MACEDO, Donaldo. MCKINNON, Tanya. STOKES, William T. (eds). **Mentoring the Mentor: A Critical Dialogue with Paulo Freire**. New York City, Peter Lang, 1997.

FREIRE, Paulo. **Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation**, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1989.

FREIRE, Paulo. **Pedagogy in process: The letters to Guinea Bissau**. New York City: Continuum, 1978.

FREIRE, Paulo. **Pedagogy of the city**. New York City: Continuum, 1993.

FREIRE, Paulo. **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**. New York City and London: Bloomsbury Academic, [2000] 2017.

GADOTTI, Moacir. **Pedagogy of Praxis. A Dialectical Philosophy of Education**, Albany, New York: Suny, 1996.

GIROUX, Henry. Armand. Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy, and the Responsibility of Intellectuals. **Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies** 1(1):59-79, 2004.

GOULET, Denis. Introduction. In: FREIRE, Paulo. **Education for critical consciousness**. New York City: Continuum, pp. vii–xiv, 1973. Available from: <<http://abahlali.org/files/Paulo%20Freire%20Education%20for%20Critical%20Consciousness%20Continuum%20Impacts%20%202005.pdf>> Accessed: Nov. 7th 2020.

GRAMSCI, Antonio. **Lettere dal Carcere** (Letters from Prison) Edited by A.A Santucci. Palermo Italy: Sellerio Editore. 1996.

GRAMSCI, Antonio. **Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920)**, Translated and edited by Q. Hoare and J Matthews. New York City: International Publishers, 1977.

GRAMSCI, Antonio. **Selections from the Prison Notebooks**, Translated and edited by Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith. New York City: International Publishers, 1971

HERMAN, Edward. and CHOMSKY, Noam. **Manufacturing Consent. The Political Economy of the Mass Media.** New York City: Pantheon Books, 1988.

KOHAN, Walter. **Paulo Freire más que nunca: una biografía filosófica** Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2020

LEOPANDO, Irwin. **A Pedagogy of Faith: The Theological Vision of Paulo Freire.** London and New York City: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

MANNHEIM, Karl. **Ideology and Utopia.** New York City: Harvest Books –Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1936.

MARTINELLI, Edoardo. **Don Lorenzo Milani.** Dal motivo occasionale al motivo profondo (From the occasional motive to the profound motive), Florence (Italy): Società Editrice Fiorentina (SEF), 2007.

MARX, Karl and ENGELS, Friedrich. **The Communist Manifesto.** London and New York City: The Monthly Review Press, [1848] 1998.

MARX, Karl and ENGELS, Friedrich. **The Marx-Engels Reader.** Edited by R. C Tucker, New York City: W.W. Norton, Co., 1978.

MARX, Karl. The Different Questions, Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council of the International Workingmen's Association, *Der Vorbote* 10/11, October and November 1866 and **The International Courier.** 6/7, February 20 and Nos 8/10, March 13, 1867. Available from:
<<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1864/iwma/>> Accessed: 16th Nov. 2020.

MAYO, Peter. **Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education. Possibilities for Transformative Action** London and New York: Zed Books, 1999.

MAYO, Peter. **Gramsci, Freire e a Educação de Adultos. Possibilidades para uma ação transformadora,** Porto Alegre: Artmed Editora, 2004a.

MAYO, Peter. **Hegemony and Education under Neoliberalism. Insights from Gramsci,** New York and London: Routledge, 2015.

MAYO, Peter. **Liberating Praxis. Paulo Freire's Legacy for Radical Education and Politics,** Westport: Praeger, 2004b.

PLATO. **Apology.** (Translated by B. Jowett). Available from:
<<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html>>. n.d. Accessed 13th November 2019.

ROBERTS, Peter. **Education, Literacy and Humanization: Exploring the Work of Paulo Freire,** Westport Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey, 2000.

SHOR, Ira and FREIRE, Paulo. **Pedagogy for liberation.** Dialogues on transforming education. Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey, 1987.

SHOR, Ira. **Critical Teaching in Everyday Life.** Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

TAYLOR, Paul. V. **The Texts of Paulo Freire**. Buckinghamshire: Open University Press, 1993.

TORRES, Carlos Alberto. **First Freire**. Early Writings in Social Justice Education, New York City: Teachers College Press, 2014.

VON VACANO, Diego. Latin American Political Thought. **Encyclopedia of Modern Political Thought**. Edited by G. Claeys, 481-487. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington: Sage/CQ Press, 2013.

WILLIAMS, Raymond. **The Long Revolution**. Harmondsworth UK: Pelican & Chatto & Windus, 1961.

YOUNGMAN, Frank. **Adult education and socialist pedagogy**. Kent UK: Croom Helm, 1986.