

TORRES, Carlos Alberto. "Foreword: a land of contrasts and a Pedagogy of Contradiction". In: GADOTTI, Moacir. *Reading Paulo Freire: his life and work*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

## Foreword: A Land of Contrasts and a Pedagogy of Contradiction

Brazil is a land of contrasts. Land of wonderful Rio de Janeiro, with the beautiful sights of the Corcovado mountain and its splendid world-class beaches, but also land of the Amazonian Indians, harassed, haunted, and murdered in their own dominion by gold prospectors and entrepreneurs of many sorts. Brazil is a land of joy expressed in the Brazilian music like samba or lambada, and the skillful soccer that is played in beaches, parks, and everywhere, but it is also the land of sorrow, everpresent in the widespread urban violence in Rio de Janeiro and every major urban center: in the killing of *meninos da rua*, children living in the streets: in the growing numbers of the rural poor that make up one-fifth of the Brazilian population. It is this Brazil that with a GNP of \$375 billion in 1991 ranked tenth among the industrial powers in the world system, this Brazil that is dressed both in the glamour of its riches and the bitter saeur of poverty, that this book about Paulo Freire is situated in, narrated as a personal experience by Moacir Gadotti, professor of the University of São Paulo.

Moacir Gadotti was born half a century ago in Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil. The middle son of a family of Italian poor peasants, he grew up among ten siblings speaking Italian until he entered elementary school, where he learned the national language, Portuguese. It seems that his appetite for languages did not stop there because he studied also French, Spanish, English, German, Latin and Greek. He obtained a B.A. and a M. A. in Philosophy in Brazil, and his Ph. D. in education at the University of Geneva (Switzerland) in 1977. Like many Brazilian intellectuals, Gadotti returned to Brazil in 1977 in confront the rampant authoritarianism of the military government that took power in 1964 and sent to exile many Brazilian intellectuals, Paulo Freire included.

The struggle against authoritarianism in Brazil, and the exploration of the work of Paulo Freire, whom he had met in Geneva in the early seventies, marked the beginning of Moacir Gadotti's academic career. Like many Brazilian professors returning to Brazil, Gadotti had to accept two university positions to survive. He worked as a Professor of Philosophy of Education at the Catholic University of São Paulo, and at the University of Campinas (UNICAMP; one of the premier research universities in the country), a hundred kilometres away.

For a philosopher of education deeply concerned with the notion of contradiction, resistance, and

praxis of the liberation, this geographical location couldn't have been more appropriate for his work. The State of São Paulo was the center of the opposition to the military government. The strikes by metalworkers, of São Bernardo – an industrial region of São Paulo – in 1978 and 1979 sparked strikes all over Brazil, with more than three million diverse meetings celebrated throughout the country, more than one hundred people, including members of Congress, union leaders, and intellectuals, Moacir Gadotti among them, decided to launch the Partido dos Trabalhadores, Worker's Party, or PT, a socialist democratic party.

In the acts of creation of the party on February 10, 1980, Moacir Gadotti signed in representation of Paulo Freire who, from Geneva, had enthusiastically adhered to the newly created mass party. Between 1980 and 1982 the PT grew from a thousand to 212,000 members, being officially granted its provisional registration as a national political party on February 11, 1982.

The PT has been playing a forceful role in the process of democratisation of Brazil. Its leader metalworker Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Lula), was the runner-up in the 1989 presidential campaign that elected Collor, the first president ever impeached by Congress in Brazil. Today, Lula is ranked by political pools as a serious candidate in the next presidential elections of 1994, quite a remarkable situation for a leftist candidate in the landscape of neoliberal governments in Latin America.

For many years, Moacir Gadotti chaired the Educational Commission of the PT in São Paulo, helping to devise a socialist democratic educational policy for Brazil. When PT won the 1989 municipal elections in São Paulo, Gadotti joined Paulo Freire, who as appointed by Mayor Luiza Erundina, becoming Freire's Chief of Cabinet until Freire resigned to continue with his writing and lecturing in 1991.

Moacir Gadotti has developed an original approach to the notion of popular public school which links closely the key demands of a socialist democratic approach to schooling (school autonomy, quality of education) with the tradition, mandatory, and compulsory public schooling in Latin America. Gadotti's view, while not exactly the same, is very close to the positions that Paulo Freire has defended for more than four decades. Not only is there a compatibility of theoretical and political views, and a long friendship between Gadotti and Freire, but Moacir Gadotti was also very instrumental in helping Freire to secure a university teaching position then he returned to Brazil in 1980 from his exile in Geneva, despite the myriad of obstacles put forward by conservatives in academia and government.

Drawing from his work and his association with Freire that has spanned two decades, Moacir Gadotti offers in his book a fresh political view and biographical analysis of Freire's life and work. Written in jargon-free, straightforward manner, for elementary and secondary school teachers, this book is rich in biographical and firsthand accounts, and provides graphic images of Freire's

work in Brazil and elsewhere, offering also documented accounts of sources that influenced Freire, and interpretation about the political philosophy of the creator of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Brazil, a land of contrast, displays in Hegelian fashion the contradiction between universality and particularity – a feature well captured by Moacir Gadotti in discussing the dialectical tensions between Freire's original proposals in northeast Brazil and the reverberation of his work worldwide. The quality of descriptions and analysis, and the tension between Freire's universality and particularity intriguing and appealing for English reader in our incomplete modernity.

*Carlos Alberto Torres*

*Agoura, California, September 1993.*

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GIROUX, Henry A.; MACLAREN, Peter L., "Foreword". In: GADOTTI, Moacir. *Reading Paulo Freire: his life and work*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

## Foreword

Few educators have received as much widespread acclaim and worldwide recognition as the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. His singular contribution to the development of critical social theory and his personal involvement in literacy campaigns, educational movement and an astonishing array of political and educational projects has revolutionized on an international scale the meaning of pedagogy and its relationship to the making of both personal and collective history. Freire's presence on the world stage as a "man of his time" has provided the conditions for the countless individuals, regardless of race, gender, class, and caste, to break free from their historically contingent and entrenched vocabularies to face up to their fallibility and strength as agents of possibility. As the standard-bearer of what has come to be known as critical pedagogy, Freire continues to identify and challenge not only those pedagogical mechanisms central to the phenomenon of oppression but also those relations within wider social, cultural, and institutional contexts that confront individuals with the logic of domination in the guise of grand narratives of reason and univocal meaning in the service of capital.

Rather than ground his pedagogy in a doctrinal absolutism, Freire's attention is always fixed on important social issues. What has endeared several generations of critical educators to Freire, both in terms of respect for his political vision and for the way he conducts his own life, is the

manner in which he has situated his work within an ethics of pragmatism, love and solidarity. Moacir Gadotti's book, *Reading Paulo Freire: His Life and Work* is more than a monument to Freire's continuing contribution to a praxis of liberation: it is a sensitive interpretation and personal commentary on the relationship of Freire's philosophy of liberation to the central historical events that have shaped Freire's life. Recognized as one of the foremost authorities on Freire's work, as well as a distinguished educational theorist in his own right, Gadotti offers us an intimate and compassionate - but not uncritical - treatment of Freire's central ideas and achievements.

Gadotti situates Freire, first and foremost, as a "militant educator", a revolutionary who has "tried not to dichotomize his task with the liberation of the oppressed". Through vivid and often poignant anecdotal accounts, Gadotti traverses with keen insight Freire's tumultuous history, from his condemnation, imprisonment and exile by the leaders of Brazil's 1964 military coup, who accused Freire of being an "international subversive", and "traitor of Christ and the Brazilian people", and denounced his writing as comparable "to that of Stalin, Hitler, Peron and Mussolino", to Freire's ten years of international service with the World Council of Churches, to his eventual return to Brazil in March, 1980, and his subsequent work as Secretary of Education of São Paulo and his inaugurations of MOVA-SO (Literacy Movement in the city of São Paulo), which is based on Freire's work and that of Pedro Pontual and continues up to the present day.

Gadotti reflects upon the development of the central concepts and themes that drive Freire's work, from his conception of dialogue (which Gadotti describes as "a horizontal relationship...fed by love, humility, hope, faith, and confidence") to his ideas of coherence, democratic radicalism, recovering citizenship, and interdisciplinarity, to name just a few. Throughout Gadotti's discussion of Freire's work, whether related to Freire's early anti-colonialist struggles with Amílcar Cabral's PAICG in Guinea-Bissau, or FRELIMO in Mozambique, or his contribution to the Partido dos Trabalhadores, in his native Brazil, we rarely lose sight of the intensely intimate connection between Freire's own praxis of the possible and the ongoing development of Freire's thought.

Reading Paulo Freire underscores a number of important conceptual themes that undoubtedly will prove valuable to North American educational and cultural workers largely unfamiliar with Freire's work. One is the manner in which knowledge is emphasized as an "act of knowing" that is deeply inscribed in pedagogical, cultural, and institutional practices. Another is the process by which, in Freirian praxis, the realms of the ethical and rational become dialectically re-initiating and mutually constitutive. Equally edifying is Freire's conceptual understanding of how the power of institutionalized schooling finds its correlative in particular regimes of knowledge that stress technocratic reasoning and an introduction to a model of citizenship based on an individualist

and consumerist ethics. One of the great strengths of Freire's work, as Gadotti is quick to recognize, is his recognition of the ways in which power is subjacent to systems of intelligibility, social formations, and the role of the state. Resisting the aestheticization of politics (which Walter Benjamin, it may be noted, concluded to the ineluctable mark of fascism). Freire has also consistently attacked forms of pedagogy that attribute great hermeneutical power to the figure of the master, preferring instead to situate teaching in the performative mode of dialogue. Teaching for Freire is not an exegetical practice reserved only for experts or educational specialists but is located in the historically open ability of individuals to learn from their own experiences by developing a language of analyses that challenges the formation of their lives as they have been constructed from within hegemonic relations of domination and subordination, power and privilege, affirmation and negation, and caught within the tension between a resignation to despair and a loyalty and commitment to hope. Above all, Gadotti captures, often with poignant directness, Freire's affirmation of the radicalization of the revolutionary against the sectarianism of the reactionary, and the militancy of the spirit against the political quietism of the custodians of tradition.

In the final sections of *Reading Paulo Freire*, Freire's work is read presciently against the contribution of Carl Rogers, Ivan Illich, John Dewey, and Lev Vygotsky. The book succeeds in removing the life and work of Paulo Freire out of the narrow context of education and cultural politics. A closing epilogue takes the form of a dialog between Freire and Gadotti and manages to reverently capture in a manner admirably devoid of sentimentality and apocalyptic overtones, the spirit of the mature Freire, now in his seventies. Here the encounter Freire his own words as a proud yet eminently humble warrior of the spirit who describes his present contribution to education as engaging in "a bohemian pedagogy of happiness" - a pedagogy that he elaborates with both the wisdom of an ancient sage and the unfailing passion of the socialist revolutionary as "a pedagogy of laughter, of questioning, of curiosity, of seeing the future through the present, a pedagogy that believes in the possibility of the transformation of the world, that believes in history as a possibility".

*Peter L. McLaren*

*Henry A. Giroux*