

Presence of Mind in the Process of Learning and Knowing: A Dialogue with Paulo Freire

By Pepi Leistyna

Paulo Freire has been the most widely recognized and influential theorist and educator of critical pedagogy. He is perhaps best known for his literacy work in the decolonization process in a number of countries in South America and Africa, and for his first book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published in 1970. While the theoretical grounding and implications of Freire's practices are profound, at the foundation of such work is the conviction that a critical, multicultural democracy should be the driving force of the struggle for freedom. For Freire, conscientization, a sense of history, praxis, and dialogue are central to such a struggle.

Conscientization (i.e., critical consciousness, or what I refer to as "presence of mind") is the ability to analyze, problematize (pose questions), and affect the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural realities that shape our lives. Such a level of consciousness, according to Freire, requires that people place themselves in history, the assumption being that we are never independent of the social and historical

forces that surround us. That is, we all inherit beliefs, values, and thus ideologies that need to be critically understood and transformed if necessary. For Freire, this process of transformation requires praxis and dialogue. Praxis refers to the ongoing relationship between theoretical understanding and critique of society and action that seeks to transform individuals and their environments. Arguing that people cannot

Pepi Leistyna is an assistant professor in Applied Linguistics Graduate Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

change a given situation simply through awareness or the best of intentions, or through unguided action, he contends that we, as active subjects, must continuously move from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to a new action. Paulo Freire is an anti-colonialist writer and intellectual, and, as such, any reinvention of his work should never be abstracted from a political project to achieve social justice.

Pepi: Your pedagogy stresses the enormous role of dialogue and speaking from one's location. Is there a contradiction in the idea that if a person speaks from his or her location and personal experiences that negotiation, in terms of meaning and direction of the conversation, is not entirely possible? On the other hand, if one speaks from a negotiated place, then subject position and voice are somehow lost. Could you elaborate on this idea of dialogue, voice, and negotiation in the classroom?

Paulo: First of all, I am convinced that when we talk about dialogue and education we are talking about a way to approach an object of knowledge. Let me make this clear. I think that in an attempt to understand the meaning of the dialogical process we have to put aside any possibility of understanding it as pure tactics or strategy. The dialogue is characterized by epistemological relations, and in this sense, it is a way of knowing and not a tactic to involve. It is also not something that I create to involve the naiveté of the other. At the same time, a dialogue is not simply another word for a mere conversation among people about everyday matters. Dialogue, from an epistemological perspective, requires approaching and examining a certain knowable object.

Pepi: So the exchange of different personal experiences is not in and of itself a dialogue, because the speakers never move beyond descriptive conversation. In other words, such discursive practice is bereft of theorizing, that is, making sense of one's history in relation to an object of knowledge. For example, without an analysis of racism, we cannot explain why it is that something that is potentially race related has happened to us. In the United States, even educators that appreciate and attempt to articulate forms of practice around the idea of dialogue end up using it as a strategy of interaction without realizing that understanding the object, and its relational aspects, is the fundamental goal of the process. I remember constantly being confronted with educators in graduate courses who attempted, knowingly or not, to disregard the theoretical. When this type of indifference comes from reactionaries, I understand it is a conscious process of deskilling students in the name of conformity — it's a kind of "just do this, do as I say" attitude. Unfortunately, among more progressive educators, this resistance to theory and theorizing also often occurs. In this case, I don't believe that it's done consciously in the name of conformity, though this is generally the inevitable result. Theory is simply disregarded in the name of descriptive voice. As such, the authority to speak

emanates from the personal — “authentic” — experience in which theoretical explanations of the ideological and sociohistorical formations of such incidents and identities are ignored or simply dismissed. There is an erroneous perception that location predisposes presence of mind. However, in reality, this type of interaction is not about conscientization or social agency — it is more like storytelling hour, or a blind form of therapy.

Paulo: By disregarding the object of knowledge, the dialogical process of coming to know becomes an impossibility. You understood it very clearly. Viewing dialogue from this perspective, we have to acknowledge the following, something that is an unconditional requirement, something that without it we can't say that the dialogue actually occurred. This something is the presence of epistemological curiosity among all of those involved in the interaction. Humans are curious beings. In fact, this is an essential element of our existence. So, dialogue presupposes curiosity; it doesn't exist without epistemological curiosity, without the desire to understand the world around us. That is what differentiates dialogue from simple conversation. Such curiosity embodies the conscious willingness to engage in a search for the meaning of an object, to clarify or apprehend the full meaning.

Pepi: Especially when, in many cases, the full meaning of that object exists in a way that has worked to shape identities and experiences. Via critical dialogue we develop a more profound understanding of our place and possibilities in the world. However, critical curiosity is often systematically crushed out of the spirit of learners in educational institutions, even by well-intentioned teachers who unfortunately do not understand the importance of presence of mind in the process of learning and knowing.

Paulo: One of the difficulties that educators have when assuming a dialogical posture is that they often fall into a position that I call bureaucratic — their minds become bureaucratized. The teacher who becomes a bureaucrat turns into a rigid methodologist, a pure repeater, like a machine, a tape recorder. The students become the stimulus that incites the memorized discourse, a bureaucratized discourse. The traditional teacher keeps talking, talking, and talking, totally convinced that he or she is teaching a lesson. In a similar fashion, the more progressive educator believes that he or she is engaged in dialogue by allowing students to participate in a mechanical pedagogy of questions and answers. This is not a dialogue because it is empty of any real epistemological curiosity and profound engagement with the material at hand.

The teacher who seeks to dialogue has to be very reflective, constantly refining his or her epistemological curiosity and reflecting on his or her view of the world. Educators can't merely repeat information. For a real dialogue to take place, the teacher also needs to engage the students in epistemological uneasiness in a way that inspires them to revisit the knowledge that they already possess in order to get a

better understanding of, expand upon, or rewrite, it. And that is why it is not easy to be dialogical; it requires much work. It is much easier to be descriptive, purely descriptive, without epistemological curiosity. Now, teachers who are really dialogical get tired. They get tired because, as I've said, they first and foremost have to keep themselves epistemologically curious, and then to engage students in that very practice.

Pepi: On the other hand, there are those types of social interaction in the classroom, masquerading as dialogue, in which the rules of discourse inevitably silence all participants. What often happens in these "learning" environments is that a deceitful form of democracy is used in order to make the teacher's interactions with students and the object of knowledge appear dialogical and egalitarian. For example, each person is allocated an obligatory, twenty seconds to speak. What I often found in graduate school is that during my twenty seconds, any critical question that I would raise was avoided at the level of "Okay, because of the limited time, let's hear from someone else." This superficial affirmation — "Okay . . ." — and apparent emphasis on equal opportunity to participate, strategically disrupts any possibility for profound theoretical engagement and analysis.

Paulo: You can't have a dialogue thinking that it is simply a process of turn-taking and a mechanical back-and-forth!

Pepi: Such a dialogue is not an exploration of the object of knowledge; if anything, it's a distracter. What I often find is that, as a diversionary tactic, this type of pedagogy simply abstracts the learner's curiosity and identities from the institutions and socially sanctioned practices that produce inequality, injustice, and cultural resistance — institutions and practices which ultimately remain in tact.

Paulo: As I've said, this is a product of the bureaucratization of the mind. It happens when epistemological curiosity is discouraged or deadened, while relegating the object of knowledge to the periphery of the dialogue. We cannot assume that epistemological curiosity is always present, particularly when the forces that work to bureaucratize the mind work very much to kill it. Even graduate students often do not possess the intellectual stimulus of epistemological curiosity, and that is why most of the time they study mechanically. Epistemological curiosity, which allows for discovery and rigorous investigation of the object of knowledge, is rarely evoked. Since students are not asked to participate as such, it comes as no surprise that they have a hard time if and when requested to do so. The obvious consequence is that they develop superficial understandings of the subjects or problems.

Pepi: As Noam Chomsky has argued throughout his work, the more formally educated they are, the more indoctrinated they become. On the other hand, Terry Eagleton is correct in assuming that kids generally make great theorists — they are relentless in their efforts and courage to understand the "whys" of the world.

Unfortunately, as a process of cultural reproduction, that innate curiosity that you speak of, that can lead to critical consciousness if properly nurtured — via a deep and meaningful examination of the object in relation to the participant — is eliminated. At this point, educators are engaged in a paradox: While they claim to be teaching, they are actually deskilling students. That is, without critical teaching, learners don't acquire the necessary tools to participate in a dialogue that reveals the object of knowledge. They are thus unable to read and reinvent, as you would say, the world around them.

Paulo: Which brings up your original question about location. While it is true that people need to use their historical location as the place to begin to reflect upon the object of knowledge and to create meaning, the problem is that they often neglect to question their own self or others. My locality necessarily conditions me to ask certain questions about an object. However, even within the limits of my position, and under historical and cultural influences, my job as a learner is to connect it to the rest of the world. In other words, I need to be able to make linkages with other historical events so as to gain a greater comprehension of reality. That is why rigor should be viewed as part and parcel of any method of analysis, as well as an indispensable characteristic of any form of dialogue as a way of knowing. As a process of learning, it can't make any concessions that may inhibit a deeper understanding of the object of knowledge.

Take, for example, a classroom in the United States, where the object of knowledge is multiculturalism. Let's say we have a diverse group of participants — a Kenyan, a Dutch, a Norwegian, and so on — and each one of them would look at the issue from the point of view of their own location, their culture. What we aim at is to reach a knowledge that generalizes. That is, while it is very important to use your location as a point of reference to know your world in more depth, and to also use this point of reference to relate to other locations in the world, the challenge is always to transcend without losing touch of that place. By overemphasizing your immediate location without reflection or understanding of other perspectives of the world, you will invariably fall into a form of essentialism.

Pepi: You would be limited by the boundaries of your own experience, values, and beliefs. People often misinterpret your work as saying that if personal experiences are not present, then it's a pedagogy of imposition. But realistically we can't always move from direct experience.

On the other hand, there is also the lack of awareness necessary for engaging how certain experiences exist dialectically with those of other people; that is, they may exist relationally in terms of institutionally and socially sanctioned practices. However, I would argue that those relationships, because they are not based on face-to-face interactions, are usually unacknowledged. In other words, an affluent white person may never actually interact with a black person in the ghetto, but the white's participation in the status quo that generates those very conditions of poverty is

formative and interpenetrating. These relations, which are often antagonistic, play a significant role in shaping cultural realities, identities, and politics.

A deep understanding of one's subject position thus requires engagement with the unknown on a number of levels. Another justification for critical dialogue via an object of knowledge, such as capitalist social relations, racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism.

Paulo: Exactly! The way that I conceive of it, we are engaged in a dialogue at this moment. This theme could lead us not to an interview of an hour but a whole semester, discussing points that would emerge from the dialogue. We have an object of knowledge and we have come very close to it many times in our discussion. What I would like is that this conversation that we are having now be published as a dialogue where the readers could also assume a dialogical posture.

Pepi: This type of interaction that you call for would lead to unity in diversity, that is, a level of understanding alternative perspectives while being able to critically situate ourselves in whatever the debate may be. Unfortunately, many folks misconstrue this idea by falling into the trap of cultural relativism. In fact, your work is often misinterpreted as embracing all cultures and perceptions of reality. On the contrary, I have always understood your pedagogy as calling for the engagement of cultural realities, in terms of a search for the strengths, weaknesses, and possibilities therein, and a transformation where need be. Thus, no culture should be taken at face value, especially considering the fact that all cultures are intimately related to the dynamics of power.

Paulo: First of all, I think that all cultures have their own identity, a reason of being, and they should undoubtedly struggle to preserve it. This does not mean that cultures don't carry within themselves weak dimensions. This reminds me of Amílcar Cabral, the famous African leader who used to talk about the weaknesses of cultures. One of the weaknesses that I found in Brazil, just to cite an example, is the "machismo." Machismo is part of our culture, but that doesn't mean that we should preserve it. So, I think that cultures should struggle to reinforce what is already valid and to promote what needs to be validated — especially that which has yet to be recognized — and, obviously, understand and eradicate what is negative.

Pepi: What about intercultural dialogue?

Paulo: I think that dialogue among cultures should have two dimensions. It should be a spontaneous and loving one — not only epistemological, when attempting to understand a certain object or objects from a general perspective of the culture. In other words, we should embrace an intercultural dialogue moved also by affect, and not only our rationality. We should use our sensitivity in this task in order to become almost like the artists, to understand and respect the cultures. We should also possess the political quality of tolerance.

Pepi: But tolerance also implies unequal power relations: There are those who have the power to decide who will and will not be "tolerated." Tolerance in your sense of the word, I assume, is not about "putting up with" so-called others!

Paulo: No, in this respect tolerance enables us to open ourselves to other worlds. Prejudices are in part based on an intolerance of differences. What I mean is that people often tend to be more prejudicial when they face the differences with intolerance. For example, when we look at a person from somewhere else, we feel our differences and we tend to find ourselves superior. But differences have nothing to do with superiority or inferiority. The real concern is to identify the differences and to find the similarities within them, to find certain aspects from a perspective of unity in diversity. We should look for unity; we won't get anywhere if we are not united.

Pepi: I agree that an initial level of affirmation is necessary, especially when it comes to schooling and identity; however, those cultural manifestations, such as art, are also embedded with ideologies that express particular visions of the world. As Edward Said's work has pointed out, culture and imperialism have existed in relationship to each other in a way that such expressive bodies as literature, opera, etc., are formative in that they shape "otherness." These distorted representations give rise to false justifications for domination.

Difference is the problematic term here. The concept does not exist without a referent. Unfortunately, we often perceive of differences without understanding how our own location in fact shapes those discontinuities. Acknowledging this relationship is especially dangerous for dominant groups; it questions the legitimacy of their privilege in society. For example, in the United States, the dominant referent of white, affluent, heterosexual male is what shapes the margins of society, situating identities hierarchically. And yet this dominant paradigm, even within models of multicultural education, is rarely if ever named. As an object of knowledge it remains invisible.

This particular point brings to mind a criticism that I have heard, here in the United States, of your work. The basic complaint is that your conception of oppressed, which seems to focus on social class, fails to take into account issues of race and gender.

Paulo: This is generally a response to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in which my central point of analysis, which was social class, was a means to understand a more global sense of domination. What I want to make very clear to both women and men in Brazil and North America is that it doesn't matter to me in what geographical or historical site a woman or a black person has been born; I just want to say that I am, and always have been, sympathetic to their causes. I've been expressing solidarity with these causes since I was a boy, and certainly in much of my writing. One needs to simply read more of my work and to explore the struggles that I've wholeheartedly engaged in Africa and South America.

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Pepi: If we are to recognize and engage a politics of identity and difference, which I think is crucial in order to dismantle all forms of oppression, at what point does transformation begin, and from whom? While Pedagogy of the Oppressed speaks of the voices of peasants, the United States, as Brazil, is faced with multiple, shift-ing, interconnecting, and oftentimes contradicting voices. Whose interests do we begin with in the struggle for change without cre-ating a hierarchy of oppression or false binarisms? And, how do we avoid paralyzing the possibility for agency, which often occurs in an endless relativistic defining of difference?

Paulo: The imperative of unity in diversity should bring all the op-pressed groups together with the goal of doing away with in-equality. Politics is a game of concessions; we need to be essen-tially critical to understand what is really necessary and what is superficial in my position and in others, and promote unity by bringing together common goals — that is how I see it.

Pepi: How would you deal with the conflict among differences when these differences are rigid and essentialist?

Paulo: I think that it is very important that the leaders of the groups get a better comprehension of what could be conceded. Let's think about this. I am a Brazilian from the Northeast of the country. Let's say that the profile of northeastern culture is not the same as Sao Paulo or Rio Grande do Sul. What really matters to me as a north-erner, or to a southerner, or someone from Sao Paulo, for example, is to get to know what it is that, within those differences, could bring us together. The idea is not to try to eradicate the differences. There are a lot of people who think that we will have unity in diver-sity by a reduction of the differences, creating a whole by this re-duction. Unity in diversity does not mean homogenization.

Pepi: How do you avoid a false form of assimilation into the domi-nant group, because, as you know, this is their agenda? We see this with reactionaries in the United States, such as E. D. Hirsch Jr., who call for common cultural literacy. This move to educate the masses is at best a process of homogenizing, and at worst, a form of segregation that, via symbolic violence, will ensure that certain groups, regardless of how hard they try to join the club, will be marked and excluded.

Paulo: Yes, dominant groups have this type of discourse. But it is not the vision of those who are discussing unity in diversity. Unity in diversity can't ask of me to deny of what and who I am. If I am a northeastern, I don't have a reason to renounce the beat and tone of my voice to sound like a southerner, and they don't have to do the same thing either. I am giving you the simplest possible example. Now what I would call for, if this were the case of Brazil, and the fundamental goal was the unity of the country, is that everyone make concessions in relation to certain demands of our regional culture in favor of a broader culture that unites and iden-tifies all of us as part of the Brazilian culture. That may serve as glue for a national identity. However, this

cultural glue should never suffocate the multiple cultural manifestations that are part of the Brazilian reality. Unity in this sense should never constitute a process of incorporating difference in a manner that leads to blind assimilation. What I want to make very clear is that I am not proposing, for example, that women or gays who fight for liberation renounce their role. Unity in diversity would call for their association with other oppressed groups in order to be truly engaged in a fight for freedom.

Pepi: A fight against social injustice, for example. But this would require that the broader culture that you spoke of be about democracy, which is based on participation and dissent, and not coercion and conformity. In other words, democracy and cultural commonality are contradictions.

Paulo: Exactly, in the end, the political tactic that I support would lead to liberation via democracy, and not containment in the unjust sense.

Pepi: You spoke earlier of leaders. It seems to me that people, even many critical pedagogues, are confused about the role of leadership in social movements, as well as in the classroom. There is this notion that leadership is antithetical to social equality and engaged learning.

Paulo: For me, any movement, any pedagogical process, such as education, which has both social and individual dimensions, necessarily implies some leadership. The political process, which is also educational, implies it even stronger. An action aiming at a certain dream—a realization of a utopia—is not possible without leadership. Without leadership, we would fall into the dismantlement of a practice that is characterized purely by spontaneous reactions, and a form of laissez-faire without rigor or goals. What kind of leadership should there be? How does it come to be? What is the nature of the relations with the people who are being led, and who in fact are the ones also commanding the leadership? The origin of authentic leadership is politics, and there is no other place for leadership to be born than within the group that intends to lead. Leadership should not be something or someone coming from outside the group to take charge.

Pepi: It emerges from the group itself, but surely it allows influences from the outside. For example, your literacy work in the decolonization process in a number of African nations. However, there is a big difference between this type of influence and, say, using the voices, that is, the ideologies, of the colonizer to rebuild. This seems to be the case in many countries that have internalized their inferiority after years of subjugation—a great many Cape Verdeans still believe, often unknowingly, that Portuguese is a superior language to their native tongue.

Paulo: Exactly! From a political point of view, you can see the difference between the leadership that denies, that does not recognize the voices of the people, and the kind of leadership that defends its constituents from the bottom up. In short, we have a democratic leadership and an authoritarian leadership. When considering

the democratic leadership and its nature, we have to understand that it has obligations that include establishing principles and limits that have to correspond to the goals to be achieved — which have to be shared by the whole group in a general policy.

Pepi: Avoiding a false form of consensus that contradicts the ideals of a participatory democracy.

Paulo: Yes, avoiding a debilitating consensus where principles of social justice are sacrificed so we can “get along.” Although it has authority, the democratic leadership should not impose its ideas. It has to know how to deal dialectically and democratically with the freedom and the authority. That is, it needs to establish limits on, or I should say through, its subjects; through because I don’t believe that these limits should be established exclusively by the leadership. Those in power by consent of the population should set the limits that express the desires, dreams, and history of all the people who are part of a multicultural society. Leadership is only authentic when it is governed by validating the wishes of the people.

Pepi: This is especially important in a country such as the United States — most countries for that matter — in that the tyranny of the majority, inevitable in a majority rules kind of democracy, is problematic in a multicultural society in which the numerical minority is silenced in the process. This appears to be the missing key. However, being united across markers of oppression — women, the racially subordinated, the lower classes, gays and les-bians, the disabled, etc. — and bringing together common goals, as you’ve said — this makes for very different numbers than implied by the term minority. This also takes a great deal of leadership. I would imagine that your philosophy of leadership also pertains to educational institutions and the classroom.

Paulo: Yes, teachers who take ownership of their students’ desires and dreams are using their position of authority in an authoritarian manner. Neither in the affective nor epistemological sense is this dialogical. Such a teacher is in the class, but not with the class. He or she might mechanically teach a lot of biology but nothing about making meaning and democracy.

Pepi: Teachers need to be directive, but there is an enormous difference between exposing students to a body of work and imposing a particular view of an object of knowledge. Many teachers and students often misinterpret your ideas as saying that, in order to evoke epistemological curiosity in students, their directive role as teacher should be reduced to that of a facilitator. But this contradicts your call for academic rigor and the responsibility of teachers to teach, to act as learners, and to authentically participate — that is, to express themselves in the classroom dialogue. My understanding of your work is that we are first and foremost teachers, and that our job is to teach to facilitate the process of learning and knowing.

Paulo: There is an enormous difference between facilitating and teaching. When someone calls himself or herself a facilitator and not a teacher, deep inside what they are doing is renouncing the task of teaching, and therefore the task of dialogue. Their job of ap-prenticing students into a body of knowledge, and ensuring a criti-cal examination of that body, becomes an impossibility. They are renouncing their duty of teaching, the task of placing the object of knowledge as a mediator between himself or herself and the students and then assuming the responsibilities as a dialogical educator — that is, an illuminator of the object, a revealer of the object. The student should also play this role. However, as far as I'm con-cerned, I am a teacher — I mean, to teach is my duty, and in doing so I seek to facilitate learning. It is exactly as you said.

Pepi: Denouncing their role as a directive teacher is also an inher-ently political action that is guided by an ideology that works to inhibit presence of mind both for teachers and students.

Paulo: Exactly, and this ideological posture is to be kept hidden. In other words, they create mechanisms that give the illusion that their position in the world is not informed by ideology. Only the other has ideology. Of course, this is not possible — we are all ideological beings.

Pepi: When you spoke earlier of dialoguing among cultural groups, you mentioned the need for love. Both you and Che Guevara have discussed the role of love in leadership, and you have certainly expressed the importance of love in the classroom. In my experiences in classes such as antiracist multicultural education, and education for social and political change, there are a number of people who are not so eager to engage in dialogue from a position of love, and understandably so. There are a great many people who have suffered, and continue to suffer enormously, in this country. Having experienced the oppressive nature of schools and other social institutions, many students carry with them justified anger.

Paulo: First of all, I understand the process of teaching as an act of love. I mean, it is not an act of love in the formal sense, and never in the bureaucratic sense. It is an act of love as an expression of good care, a need to love, first of what you do. Can you imagine how painful it is to do anything without passion, to do everything mechanically. Second, in loving the very teaching process I cannot exclude loving those I work with when teaching, and those whom I teach. Lovingness, however, as part of the process of educational practice, does not exclude moments of anger. I feel this anger exactly because I love. I do not need to hide this anger. But I also need to understand the anger of the students. They also have this very right to be angry. Teachers working in coordination with the ideology of most formal institutions of schooling often forbid the students to expose their anger, frustration, and disappointment with the teacher and the institution itself.

Pepi: In schools in the United States there is this de facto under-standing that we are supposed to pry apart our inherently subjective and affective beings from our work, rather than honestly express ourselves. As modernist institutions, schools for all ages uphold the idea of a mind/body/heart split, which discourages the presence of emotions, passion, and the physical body in the process of learning. As such, students come to believe that they are listening to neutral, objective facts that have nothing to do with the ideology of the teachers, or the institution in which they teach. As bell hooks points out, this constricting, bourgeois cultural capital, which reinforces particular kinds of etiquette that shape classroom interactions, undermines a true exchange of ideas, and ultimately works to neutralize any potential critical/challenging exploration of the inherently political nature of education, identity, and difference. In my experiences, being accused of being angry or passionate is used in a way to silence people — as if one is being emotional and thus irrational and unscientific. This has been a classic tactic for silencing women.

Paulo: Both teachers and students have this right. To not be angry when you are a victim of violent oppression constitutes a form of complicity with the very conditions that oppress you. Love and anger lie behind the fundamental concern of one of the greatest French Marxist philosophers of education in this century, George Signider. He debates the question of joy in almost all of his books. Signider can't understand, nor can he accept, a school that is not full of joy. You can't bring this kind of joy to life and you can't involve yourself with joy if you don't have the possibility of experiencing love and anger.

Pepi: And the struggle to make meaning via real rigor to learn and know is part of that joy, part of that process of liberation, of breaking free. Again, liberal educators often misunderstand such words as joy and assume that learning and knowing is only about having fun. If students are not engaged in pleasurable activities, then the pedagogy is dismissed as being harsh and debilitating, or imposing.

Paulo: I think that love, anger, rigor, and struggle are part of the constitution of joy. I would say that this joy that Signider claims for schools should be extended to the whole world, to the whole existence. I think that good politics should be the one that does not close its eyes and ears to the call for joy.

Pepi: Revisiting your past, considering your political and educational position, is there anything that you would have changed about the course of your life?

Paulo: No. My response may sound a little arrogant, but this comes from a man like me who has reached seventy-three years of age and who has been able to confirm and build upon what he said in his twenties. But that's how it has been in terms of my entire experience; I keep adding new knowledge. My curiosity has been working, constantly increasing my knowledge, enlightening myself. I can say that, as an example, this dialogue has challenged me to a point that I ended up saying

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things that I have said before, but never like this. The readers might not find it anything special, but I think that there is something new in it. In general, I've been the person I always wanted to be. I might have become more radicalized, but I have always fought the temptation of falling into sectarianism.

Pepi: I want to thank you for this time and insight and for the enormous hope that you have given me and a great many others in the struggle for social justice and joy.

Paulo: I would say that this has been one of the best dialogues that I have had in the last two years. I like this.

Note

This dialogue was first published in Pepi Leistyna's book *Presence of Mind: Education and the Politics of Deception*, (1999). Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Many thanks to Perseus Books Group for the permission to reprint it.