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# pilgrims of the obvious

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# RISK

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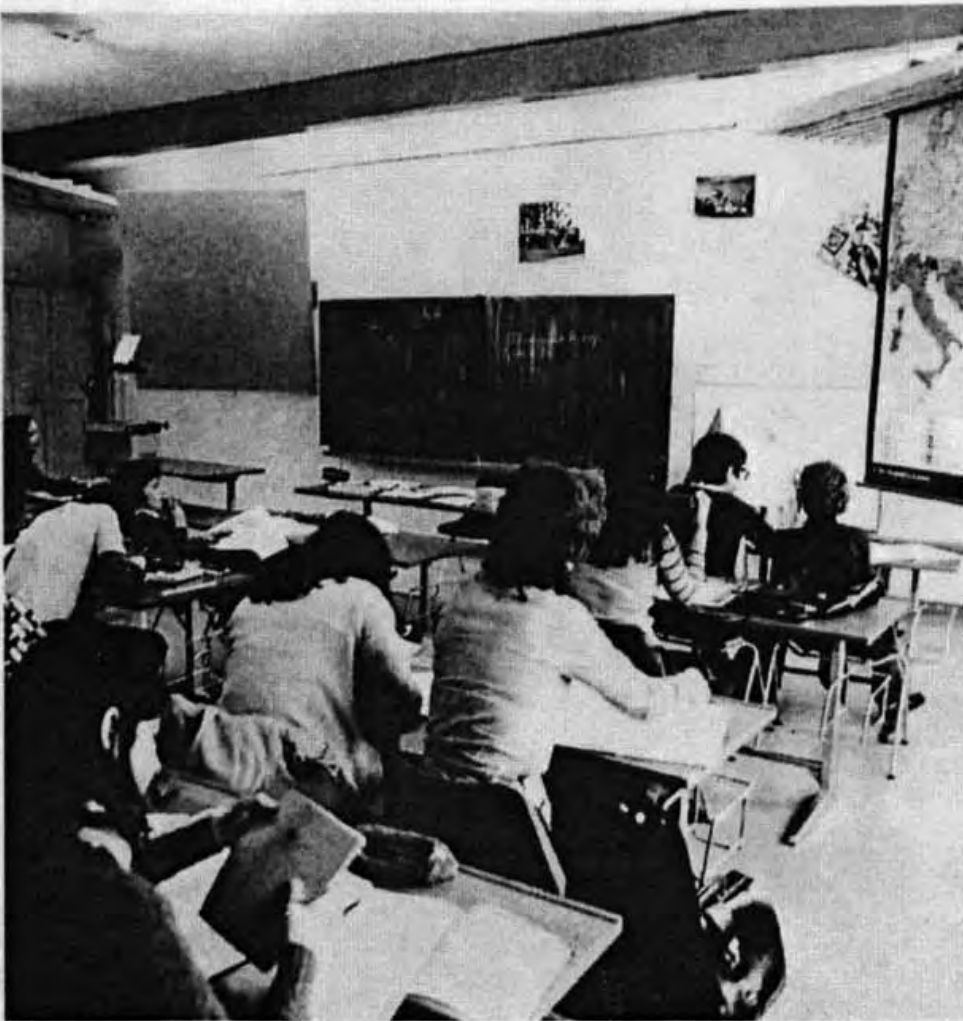
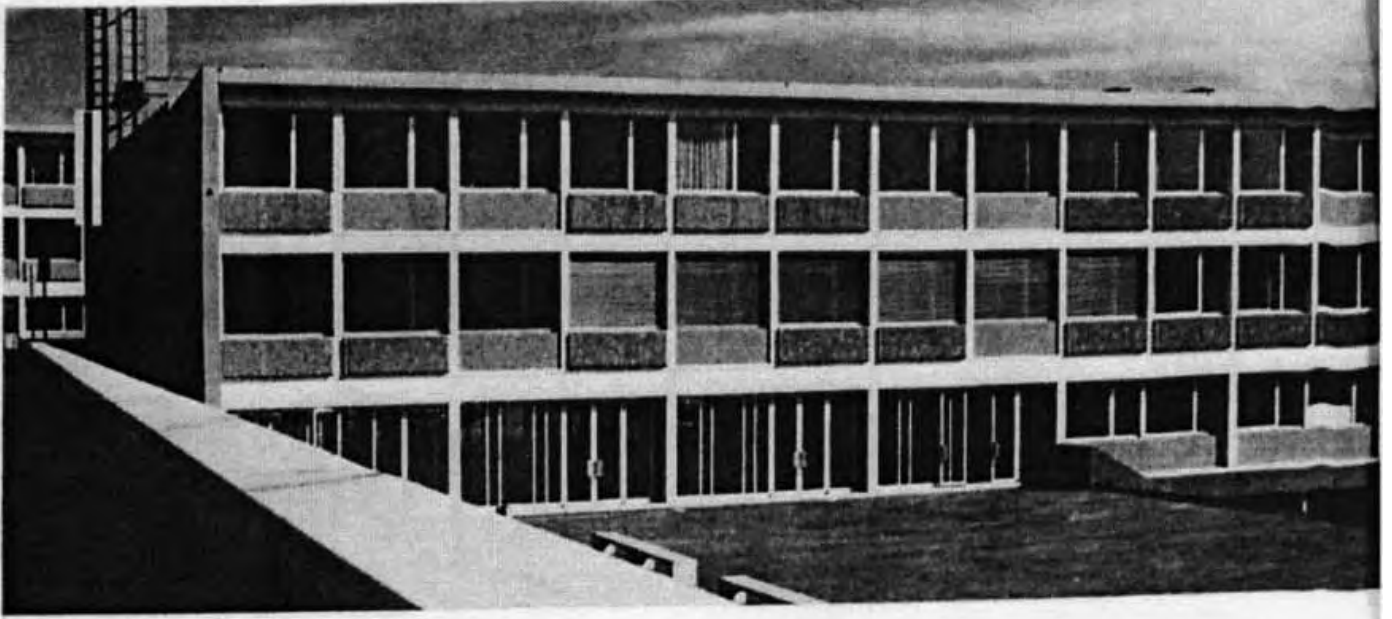
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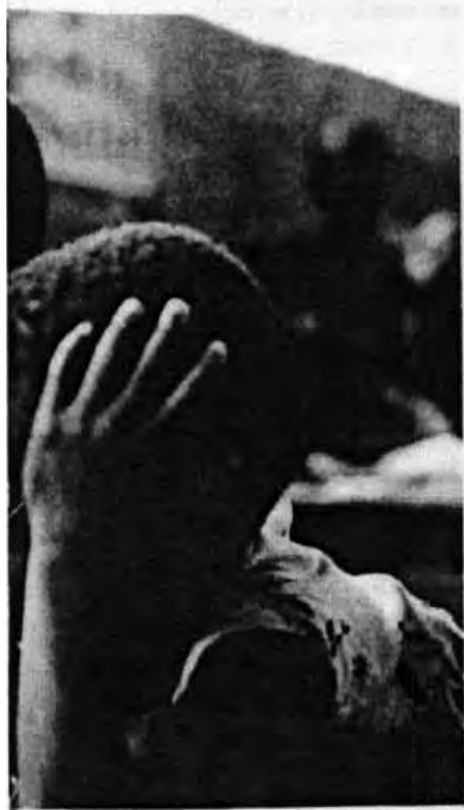
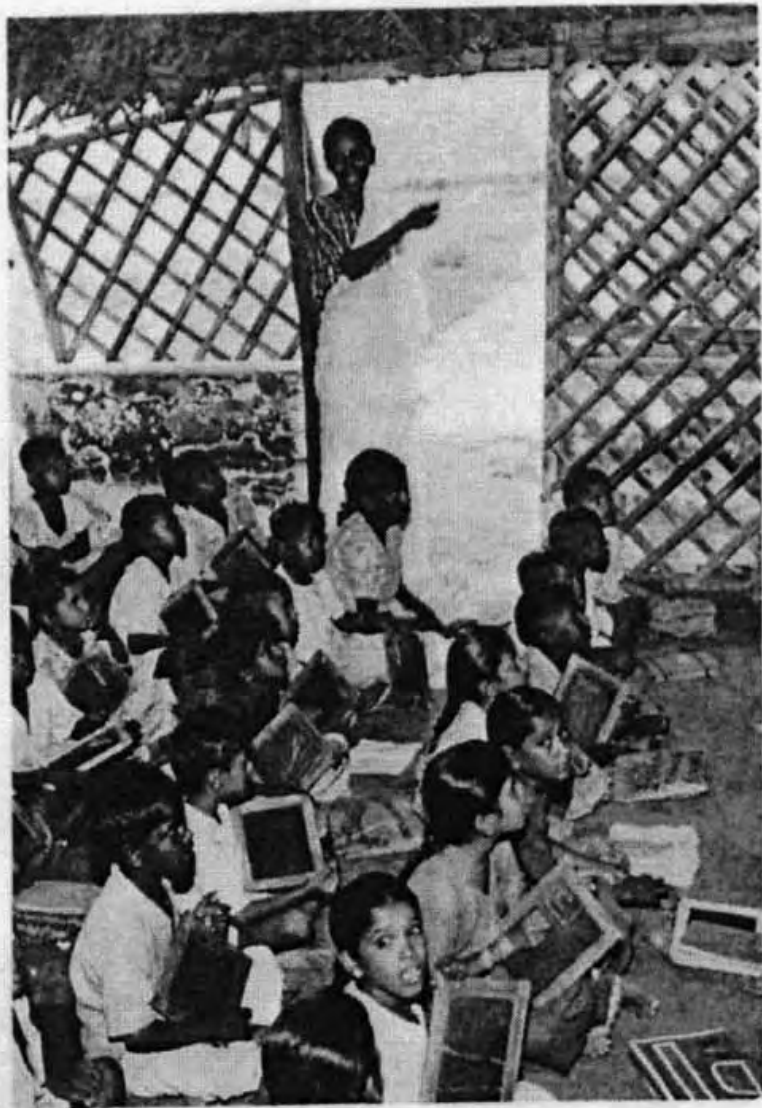
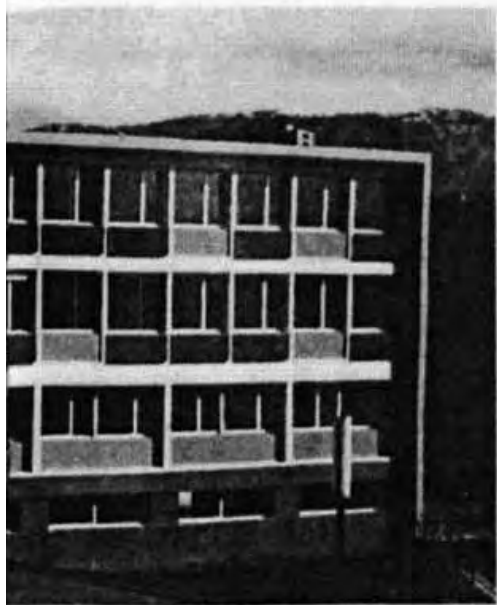


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# introduction

Some years ago *Risk* introduced readers to both Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, the first in an interview in *School or Scandal* (1970 No. 4), in which we also included an article by Illich, whom we had earlier introduced in *Good Will or Evil Goods* (1970 No. 2).

Since then both these men have won further notoriety: Freire for his philosophy of education and, in particular, his connection with the notion of "conscientization", and Illich as the master of contemporary iconoclasm, the ikons being the school, modern medicine and the thoughtless speed of travel.

On 6 September 1974, the Office of Education of the World Council of Churches arranged a seminar called "An invitation to conscientization and deschooling: a continuing conversation". This gave the first occasion for Illich and Freire to talk together in four years. Joined by Heinrich Dauber, of the faculty of education in Tübingen (who had just returned from a summer study on adult education at Cuernavaca) and Michael Huberman, co-director of the Institute for the Study of Education in the University of Geneva, Freire and Illich reviewed their thinking and gave some account of their present preoccupations. The chairman was Mr Leo Fernig, Director of the International Bureau of Education. *Risk* offers here the four presentations together with a transcript of the dialogue which took place.

Dr W. B. Kennedy of the Office of Education introduces this symposium with some critical reflections based on his own association with these men and their ideas since 1969. The presentations and discussion then follow, broken for a space by a photo essay of an international alternative "school experience" being built up near Florence in Italy.

Michael Huberman more or less has the last word. His common sense approach will be valued by many. Nevertheless, he raises the perplexing question of just how valid the shattering criticism of Illich and the profoundly simple insights of Freire may be, even if at times they seem to turn ordinary, well known, accepted conventions about education into stumbling blocks — stumbling blocks which we so easily overlook, perhaps because they are too obvious. In which case this *Risk* becomes an invitation to join them on their pilgrimage of the obvious.

*Rex Davis*



# pilgrims of the obvious: or the not-so-obvious?

William B. Kennedy

For a decade Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich have been engaged in dialogue about education. In the late 1960s that discussion centred in Cuernavaca, where periodically Illich gathered a group of critics and innovators who stimulated one another to dramatic analyses of and prescriptions for education in the modern world. Since Freire's move to Geneva in 1970, where he has been serving as special consultant to the Office of Education of the World Council of Churches, that personal dialogue has lapsed. Taking advantage, therefore, of Illich's presence in Geneva for the 50th anniversary celebration of that city's International School, we invited him and Freire to join again in a personal dialogue. We asked each to share what he had learned about his major thesis (deschooling and conscientization, respectively) from experiences and developments since it had first been proposed. We also invited two European educators familiar with their work to relate those theses to the Federal Republic of Germany and Switzerland, and we asked the Director of the International Bureau of Education in Geneva to chair the discussion. Our interest, and the aim of this essay, is to further the analysis of education by comparing the recent development of the work of these two prophets of education, these two pilgrims of the obvious.

But the comparison is not simple, nor obvious. On the one hand, one frequently sees the two mentioned together, as if they were advocating the same solutions for the problems of education from the same basic analysis of the situation. On the other hand, certain followers of one or the other make sharp distinctions between the two. The transcript of the dialogue published in this issue indicates some of those basic differences. But it also points to some fundamental similarities. By analysing this comparison more carefully, I hope to make their pilgrimage of the obvious more obvious – and hence more useful.



## I. The denunciation

These two prophets are both unhappy over the present situation in which human beings find themselves. Both denounce the oppression which characterizes the life of most persons and societies today. Both speak of dependency as the condition of human beings resulting from their domination by oppressive forces and structures. They see human beings as less than they should be: silent, still, dehumanized in comparison with the vision of humankind which the Christian tradition would espouse, and which both of them would support.

They differ, however, in their analysis of that oppression, in their identification of the enemy. For Illich the problem stems from the advanced institutionalization of modern industrial society, technocratically organized, planned and ritualized to such a degree that people are conditioned to need institutionalized services in order to cope with their own lives. That oppressive force working on them makes them so dependent that they cannot even conceive of transforming the conditions in which they live, much less act concertedly to do so. Beyond the medical nemesis of his latest book he sees the total "industrialized nemesis" of our modern existence. Unless radical change occurs, he foresees either extinction or some sort of "compulsory survival in a planned and engineered hell" (*Medical Nemesis*, p. 166). A tone of apocalypse therefore pervades his comments.

For Freire the oppression is equally real, and has some of the same elements. But the enemy takes form in the political and economic structures of particular nations. These structures are, of course, related to the international structures that support them. His experience with military governments, in prison, and in forced exile, gives a reality to his discussion of oppression that focuses it on visible and concrete human instrumentalities. Life in northeast Brazil, dominated by national politics and its effect in his local situation and personal life, colours his analysis of oppression, and hence shapes his hopes for change. Illich wrote a doctor's thesis on Arnold Toynbee, and through his analysis oppression becomes more global, culturally pervasive, and international, although it still affects directly and harmfully the personal lives of people. Freire spent years among peasants, learning from and with them how oppression works and can be combated. His approach reflects an earthiness that is local and national.

For Illich the oppressed human being looks like a consumer, passively getting and taking rather than doing or being, trained to use up the earth's resources. Illich criticizes both capitalist and socialist nations for perpetuating that goal for humankind. With continuing growth as its aim, "development" supports the same evil. Even social justice he sees based on consumption, emphasizing equal distribution of resources to people all of whom have been taught to use up increasing amounts. For Freire the oppressed human beings look most like slaves, docile, meek, doing what they are told to do or "assisted" to do by various persons or projects designed elsewhere for their benefit. They are therefore bound in a culture of silence, unable to "say their word" and

participate in the transformation of the world as they should. The "assistentialism" of modern development programmes therefore perpetuates and intensifies their dehumanization. Hierarchical societies or practices within societies contribute also to the continuation of their oppressed condition. Hence he criticizes most sharply the capitalistic nations which breed competition among people and create larger and larger gaps between "haves" and "have-nots" and foster separation among other groups. For him they are more oppressive than governments that try to build on communal or socialist principles, where people participate more directly and share more fully and equitably in the transforming action of their societies.

For both men that oppression involves subjugation to overarching "myths" which prevent people perceiving clearly their actual condition. Freire analyses the introjection of the dominating value system of society into its people, so that they lack the structural perception necessary to see that their values reflect their dominators' advantage rather than their own. These cultural myths, often supported by religious teaching, immerse people in an ideology that limits their ways of reality. This "mythification of reality" results in a falsification of consciousness. The ordinary person in such a situation is crushed by the myths that determine his perception of reality. Freire describes different levels of such subjugation, such as naïve transitive and semi-intransitive consciousness, all of which fail to reach the critical consciousness necessary for full human activity. Furthermore, Freire increasingly refers to the element of irrationality that characterizes this state of dependency, and which contributes to perpetuation of the oppressing myths. The result is human beings who are reduced to things, who cannot fulfil their humanness, their responsibility to be and become human.

Illich also gives major attention to these oppressive myths, as his masterful attack on disease, pain and death in *Medical Nemesis* shows. In particular, he relates the mythical element to religion. Because of the role of the schools in interpreting these myths and socializing people in them, he accuses the educational system of being the modern religion. It teaches people the current belief in life everlasting, the myth of unending consumption of services. He points to the ritual of initiation into failure which the schools provide for the huge majority as they move into adulthood. The education process makes society's contradictions tolerable and thus produces continuing conformity among successive generations of citizens. In the seminar, Huberman's description of the "hidden curriculum" in primary schools illustrated this element in the mythification process. In *After deschooling, what?* Illich cites specifically the divergence between the egalitarian myth upheld by school rhetoric and the way school certificates perpetuate the class society.

## II. Concepts of education

Both men believe modern educational systems contribute to the oppression of human beings. Illich's critique of schools is familiar: it is their institutionalization of education that makes them dangerous, because they have come



to provide packaged and institutionalized services for the dependent people they produce. Freire's criticism of extension education (in *Extension of Communication*) and of "banking education" (in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) also accuses traditional education of perpetuating dependency and oppression.

But there is a difference in their ways of analysing education. For Illich education is not a dependent variable of other structures, but a significant system on its own. Deschooling must be part of any revolutionary political programme. Fundamental social change must begin with a change of consciousness about institution. For Freire education is clearly a subsystem dependent upon political and economic structures. Thus it serves the powers controlling those structures, and can be changed fundamentally only when those structures change.

At this analytical juncture in the seminar, Freire and Illich challenged each other. Illich asked Freire what he thought about the technological oppressor and the need for what he called negative design criteria and identification of the critical thresholds in society. Freire did not answer. I believe Illich's concern, which he has developed further in *Medical Nemesis*, does call for further development in the work of Freire. In *Medical Nemesis* Illich brilliantly analyses from historical and contemporary sources the myths regarding disease, pain and death that are used to maintain and increase human dependency upon institutionalized medical services. In the seminar he cited transportation as another field where critical thresholds have been passed and which need to be identified if the myth of continuing technological expansion is to be stopped and industrial progress inverted. Freire speaks little about such elements in human oppression. These international institutions with their global mythologies (of which the "multinational corporation" of similar school systems all over the world is a good example) deserve more analysis in regard to the political and economic structures upon which Freire concentrates.

On the other hand, in the seminar Freire disagreed with the way Illich extended his criticism of schooling to include all education. He said that he felt Illich mythologized education and made it such a diabolical instrument that it was not in fact the inevitable human praxis of knowing that he believes it is. Illich admitted that in the kind of world we have today, education – and politics – simply cannot occur, because the technological juggernaut under the wheels of which we are all being crushed is so far beyond those "critical thresholds" that until it can somehow be reversed, education can only serve as what Freire somewhere calls "myth-creating irrationality". But for Freire that is to remove the possibility of human action to reverse the bad direction of historical development. He therefore challenges Illich to analyse more carefully the processes by which such change can occur. Many of the questions in the seminar regarding the relation of education to social change focused on Illich's effort to avoid prescribing educational or planned attempts to change the harmful situation in which humankind finds itself.

### III. How does change occur?

This reciprocal set of challenges calls for further analysis of the processes by which both men would respond to the problem they have described. Differences emerge more clearly as each responds to the questions: "What kind of change do you want?" and "How do you propose to go about it?" Both men include cultural and structural elements in their thinking.

Illich is reluctant to offer concrete proposals for action. The macrocosmic and research-oriented nature of his analyses does not easily lead into microcosmic "next steps" for those engaged in practice. Illich's research reflects library effort, for he has studied carefully documents which trace these mythologies. The effect, and perhaps the major value, of his challenge is to offer provocative options to our perceptions of the total situation, to our assumptions, to the value-laden ideologies which we have absorbed in growing up and living in this highly organized "teaching" society. But working out those options is not Illich's strong point. Hence critics accuse him of being a "reactionary nihilist" or a "radical moralist". Behind his stimulating analysis, however, lie hints of how to proceed that relate to his own activities as a person and a prophet.

According to Illich, what is needed is political action to invert the present industrial society. That action will require political programmes and efforts from the base, from the people, since the inversion will occur only when "an enlightened and powerful majority" can impose effective limits on the technocrats (*After deschooling, what?*, p. 22). For people to join such a majority requires a radical change of consciousness on their part concerning institutions. Hence the importance of radical changes in their conceptions of education (deschooling) and medicine (demedicalizing). Such effort requires a cultural and not just a political revolution. Illich reflects the cynicism of many who see political revolutions resulting only in a change of powerful elites, and he therefore advocates deeper changes in the mythologies which continue to support present practices and political and economic systems. Hence the strategic task is to find ways to identify the "politically established limits to industrial growth", the negative design criteria necessary to reverse technological advance to the point where social life can once again be viable. At that point politics and education would again become "unnecessary" – in other words, so integral to the very nature and style of society that the formal institutionalized planning that now characterizes those processes would be superfluous. In short, he seeks an "anti-technocratic consensus" in modern society.

Nor is he silent about how to move towards that consensus, although he avoids becoming either a political or an educational planner for the process. The "respectful procedure" he desires recognizes that the "principles for alternative institutional arrangements and an alternative emphasis in the conception of learning" are the same as those "for a radically alternative political and economic organization" (*After deschooling, what?*, p. 11).



His attacks on the education and health systems are chosen strategically, partly because both are easier to start with than the political or economic systems. The “pedagogical *hubris*” – the mystification and the massive industries associated with each – make them significant points of entry into the grand change desired. The “vibration effect” resulting from the radical inversion of them will help reverse other sectors. Within each systemic point of attack the microcosmic connects with the macrocosmic with strategic potential for radical change. He affirms that “people who can face suffering and death without need for magicians and mystagogues are free to rebel against other forms of expropriation now practised by teachers, engineers, lawyers, priests and party officials” (*Medical Nemesis*, p. 16). Hence slaughter of the sacred cow of medicine – or schooling – fits into a broader political strategy. Personal autonomy combines with political action in a reciprocal cause-and-effect dialectic. Thus Illich personally seeks to discover and work with as many people as possible who are also searching for the “critical thresholds”, the “negative design criteria” to help form that majority consensus. Those recognized limits need to be generalized among people outside the minority, marginal and alternate groups. They need to be arrived at “by agreement among a vast majority and ultimately in the interest of all”. Those proscriptive limits need to be formulated so they become “part of everyday discussion amongst typical people, schooled or non-schooled, so that they might begin to be political programmes starting from the base”. Such a community effort to find rational limitations upon the technical industrial forces which limit human freedom is required if we are to keep our joint dreams under control.

That process does reflect a strategy, however much Illich wants to avoid “the creation of some party or some school”. It includes both personal and political action. In the light of Freire’s approach, however, I would challenge him at two points.

The first is at the point of *process*: very little indeed is said about action, about commitment, about engagement in the struggle from which comes the knowledge and will to take risks in the fight for radical social change. Action is implied, but the discussion about mythologies and change of consciousness about institutions sounds as if some magic process occurs by which insight leads to action for radical change. More explicit analysis of the implications and strategies involved in Illich’s personal activity and style, as well as in other strategies which would lead to that anti-technocratic consensus, would be helpful to all those many people for whom his analysis illumines their situation and calls them to join the movement for change. Second, who are the *agents of change*? Illich’s sensitivity to the point about his criticizing schools as one who had profited from them, calls for further work on the relationship of specially equipped persons to the masses who ultimately make up a majority consensus. Freire has analysed this relationship more carefully, and Illich’s lack of attention to this connection results in another dimension where those who learn from him could learn more and more practically.

## The historically possible

During recent years Freire has developed further in his thinking about strategy, as the transcript indicates. The kind of change he wants combines a growth of critical consciousness in people as they work together to change the oppressive conditions under which they live. He sees, like Illich, a rational rather than an irrational consciousness as the way forward. The process of conscientization thus helps people eject the cultural myths that confuse them and see the obstacles that prevent their clear perception of reality. It also helps them act to change those conditions by a critical self-insertion into reality. In his initial statement in the seminar, Freire affirms with a fresh emphasis the inevitable political nature of education. He stated both a more realistic awareness of the dependent relationship of education to the political systems and a more thorough understanding of the epistemological circle which includes both action and reflection and which binds subjectivity and objectivity inseparably together. Formed as Freire was in his life and his educational praxis by the historical realities of northeast Brazil, he reflects a sensitivity now to the politically repressive situations in many countries of the world that leads him to great caution about cultural action for freedom as he terms his educational praxis to be. "In history," he stated in the seminar, "one does what is historically possible and not what one would like to do." In the countries he knows best, in Latin America, educators are speaking of "free space" within which they can move. Here he joins Illich in searching for strategy that begins radically where people are and helps them confront realistically the macrocosmic forces that limit their freedom. In that context he recommends careful development of action and reflection that realistically avoids both pessimism or cynicism and opportunism or naïve activism.

Freire, however, works out much more thoroughly than Illich the method by which he hopes change will come. He speaks of an "archaeology of consciousness" that searches deeply into the "thought-language of the people" in order to begin radically where they are in their perception of the inhibiting cultural myths. He does not allow even that initial and all-important exploration to be thought of as unpolitical, nor separated from political action. For him the development of a degree of critical consciousness and a degree of critical action must be joint development. Therefore technical aid or any other human process that allows naïve response or involvement without enhancing critical consciousness must be avoided – or changed so as to be critically educational. And any deliberative thought process remote from action is a political illusion. His problem-posing educational process thus focuses on obstacles which theoretically unite microcosmic experience of oppression with macrocosmic structures contributing to that experience. Only by shrewd mixture of both levels in praxis can real cultural action for freedom occur.

At two points I would like to challenge Freire to go further. One is to develop the concept of "free space". He has done further analysis in conscientization and liberation, but he needs to explore more concretely what it means to "do in history" what is historically possible. How do microcosmic, local, personal-



corporate action and reflection relate to the macrocosmic structures and forces of this technological world? At one point Freire distinguishes between systematic education, which can be changed only by radical political power, and educational projects, which can be carried out in the process of joining the oppressed in their organizing and development. At another point he distinguishes between cultural action before massive revolutionary change and cultural revolution as the process that brings about the revolution. More thorough analysis and more widespread illustration of how one acts modestly and yet realistically in educational service would help those who profit from his total analysis but need further guidance in connecting it to their actual work. Further work on the challenge posed by Illich about the technocratic industrial society would provide a fuller context for his political and economic structural analysis and illuminate further his own discussion of cultural myths.

The second point builds upon Freire's magnificent faith in the people as the foundation of democratic education. He counters what looks like an implicit elitism in Illich with a clear affirmation that the people are the change agent. Only a process of engagement by and with the people can be the basis for his radical reversal of traditional educational assumptions about learning. But the scattered references to the specialized roles of certain people, to the role of the revolutionary party in a mass movement, to the characteristics of those who serve as educators in action with the educatees, are as haunting in their lack of completeness and clarity as are Illich's scattered references to the process of change. In history, and not by magic, how do specialists emerge in education for liberation? Are there processes for identifying them and helping them develop further? Are there clear roles to be analysed and developed in the gap between local, personal and group consciousness achieving a critical stance, and the mass people's movement of cultural action that can effect political change?

But why, after all, should we expect each man to be everything? Their major theses have stimulated us fundamentally in our own educational praxis and reflection. Therefore we engage critically in these attempts to help them develop their thought further, because at crucial points we sense a lack of clarity or an undeveloped analysis that leaves us wanting more and leaves them open to the cooption they discussed in the seminar. With gratitude, however, as Huberman testified, we repeatedly find in our own education work moments of illumination and fresh questioning because we reflect on our action with the help of Freire and Illich. Their value as pilgrims of the obvious leads us to challenge each of them to go further in proclaiming the obvious more obviously.



**Philip Potter:** First of all, I want to say that this is a typical exercise in what I call "ecumenical dialectics". Such dialectics promote subversion in order to facilitate conversion. We have two apostles of that ecumenical dialectic with us today in the persons of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich. They have both been great trouble-makers for the sake of change in Latin America, and now they have the world as their parish! It is a delight to have them at the Ecumenical Centre this morning.

We are also very pleased to have with us Heinrich Dauber and Michael Huberman. Dr Dauber is with the Institute for Education of the University of Tübingen, and his doctoral thesis was on "the teacher's role and socialization". Dr Huberman was with Unesco's Department of School and Higher Education until 1970, when he became Professor of Education at the School of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Geneva. Last but not least, I would like to welcome Leo Fernig, Director of the International Bureau of Education, who will guide us during this seminar.

**Leo Fernig:** First of all, may I thank Dr Potter and Dr Kennedy for the idea of organizing this meeting and for their subversive invitation to all of us to attend today!

Paulo Freire will be our first speaker; he will be followed by Ivan Illich, and we shall then have some discussion time, before asking our two other speakers to take the floor.





# paulo freire

By its very title, "An invitation to conscientization and deschooling — a continuing conversation", this seminar is described as an informal and straightforward meeting. We are here to take up a dialogue begun some time ago. With certain people that dialogue has been direct, with others it has been indirect. In both instances communication has been through our writings. However, precisely because today this is a meeting for dialogue, the simplicity and spontaneity which it should have cannot become, in the first case, simplistic, nor in the second, an empty spontaneity.

To dialogue does not mean a haphazard asking and answering of questions ; asking for the pleasure of asking and answering for the pleasure of answering ; being satisfied in touching the periphery of the object of our curiosity in a disordered way. Dialogue is the hallmark of the cognitive act. When that which is to be known is grasped by those who want to know it, and, as it were, surrenders itself as a mediator between two searchers in their critical unveiling of the object to be known, the cognitive act of dialogue takes place.

The importance of understanding the dialogical relationship in this way is made clear inasmuch as we take the epistemological cycle as a totality, without separating the stage of gaining already existing knowledge from the stage of discovery, of creating new knowledge. Moreover, this "corresponds", as Prof. Alvaro Vieira Pinto has said, "to the highest functions of thought — that is to say, to the heuristic activity of the consciousness".<sup>1</sup> In both these stages of the epistemological cycle, the subjects who know must face the object of their knowledge with a critical and curious attitude. Every time this critical attitude is negated through a break in the dialogical relationship, a process is set up where there is mere transference of knowledge ; a process in which "to know" ceases to be a creative and recreative act, and becomes merely a "digestive act".

"Conscientization and deschooling" are words which, without Ivan Illich or myself wishing it, have become magical or quasi-magical. That is why we are

<sup>1</sup> Vieira Pinto, Alvaro : *Ciencia e Existencia, Paz e Terra*, Rio de Janeiro, 1969, p. 363.

gathered here today, so that, by taking them up as objects of our critical inquiry, their real significance may be analysed, in as far as that is possible.

In this analytical endeavour, which all of us are called upon to pursue, there are, nevertheless, specific tasks which, since they constitute the departure point for our joint reflection, should be undertaken by certain of our number : Ivan Illich, Heinrich Dauber, Michael Huberman and myself.

It rests with me today, when the time available is insufficient for the task we undertake, to begin this process. And to do so, I must put some distance between myself and the object of my reflection — the process of conscientization — and begin to question it. It seems to me that my first concern in this self-questioning, which is, in part, a re-questioning, should be centred on the very word "conscientization" which has its origin in the word "conscious". Understanding the process

**It is society which, having formed itself in a certain way, establishes the education to fit the values which guide the society.**

and practice of conscientization is, therefore, closely connected with the understanding one has of consciousness in its relationships with the world.<sup>2</sup>

If I adopt an idealistic position, I separate consciousness from reality and I subject the latter to the former, as if reality were the result of consciousness. And thus, the change of reality comes about through a change of consciousness. If I adopt a mechanistic position, I also dichotomize consciousness and reality and I take consciousness as a mirror which merely reflects reality. In both these cases there is a denial of conscientization which can only exist when, as well as recognizing, I also experience the dialectical relationship between objectivity and subjectivity, reality and consciousness, practice and theory.

Consciousness addresses itself to an object. The consciousness which human beings have of self implies their consciousness of things, of the concrete reality in which they find themselves as historical beings and which they grasp through their cognitive abilities. A knowledge of reality is indispensable for the development of a consciousness of self, in the same way that the consciousness of self is indispensable for a knowledge of reality. Moreover, the act of knowing which, if authentic, always demands the revelation of its object, does not take place in the above-mentioned dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity, action and reflection, practice and theory.

It is, therefore, important that in the conscientization process the uncovering of social reality be grasped not as something *which is*, but as something *which is becoming*, as something *which is in the making*. However, if reality is in the making, in an "interplay" of permanence and change, and if reality is not itself the agent of this "interplay", it is because this "interplay" is the result of the practice of human beings on reality.

It is therefore imperative to understand the *raison d'être* of this practice : the goals, the objectives, the methods, the interests of those who lead it, and whose

<sup>2</sup> See : *Conscientization and Liberation : a Conversation with Paulo Freire* : Institute of Cultural Action (IDAC), Geneva, No. 1, Dec. 1973.

interests it serves and whose interests it threatens. And then in the end we see that this is only *one kind of practice*, but not *the practice*, to be taken as given destiny. In this way, in the theoretical practice, which is revelation of the social reality, the understanding of this reality implies its being seen as a reality which is always in a process of undergoing a certain kind of practice by human beings. Thus its transformation, whatever this may be, can only be achieved by practice also.

If conscientization cannot take place without the revelation of objective reality, as an object of knowledge for those subjects involved in the process, then such a revelation — even if it be a clearer perception of reality — is still not sufficient to make conscientization authentic. In the same way that the epistemological cycle does not end at the stage of acquiring already existing knowledge, but continues through to the stage of creating new knowledge, conscientization cannot stop at the stage of the revelation of reality. It is authentic when the practice of revealing reality constitutes a dynamic and dialectical unity with the practice of transforming reality.

### **Recognizing mistakes**

On the basis of these thoughts some comments could and should be made, such as, for example, some personal self-criticism. In *Education for Freedom*, while considering the process of conscientization, I considered the moment when social reality is revealed to be a sufficient psychological motive for attempting to transform the reality which is discovered. Obviously, my mistake was not that I recognized the fundamental importance of a knowledge of reality in the process of its change, but rather, that I did not take these two different moments — the knowledge of reality *and* the work of transforming that reality — in their dialectical relationship. *It was as if I were saying that to discover reality already meant to transform it.*

Let me say in passing that in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and in *Cultural Action for Freedom* I do not take the same position when confronting the problem of conscientization. My own praxis in the interval between the last two books and

**If education maintains society, it is because it can transform that which it maintains. They always forget that the power which created it will never allow education to be turned against it.**

the first taught me to see things I had no opportunity to see before. However, it is above all in my most recent texts (interviews and small essays such as *Education, Liberation and the Church*, which are the result of my most recent experience) that my approach to the problem differs from that found in *Education as the Practice of Freedom*.<sup>3</sup>

In recent experience I find the mistake which I made at the beginning of my work recurring again and again, sometimes even more markedly, among educators who do not see the political dimensions and implications of their pedagogical practice. This is why they talk about a "strictly pedagogical conscientization", different from that which the politicians develop. This conscientization has its place in the intimacy of their seminars, in a more or less aseptic fashion, with no political involvement whatsoever.

<sup>3</sup> In *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Sheed & Ward, London, 1974.



This kind of separation between education and politics, whether it be done naïvely or shrewdly, is, and we must emphasize this point, *not merely unreal but also dangerous*. To think of education in isolation from the power which establishes it, to detach it from the concrete reality in which it was engendered, gives rise to the following consequences. On the one hand, it reduces education to the realm of abstract values and ideas, which the educator nurtures in the interior of his consciousness, without his realizing the conditioning which makes him think in this way. On the other hand, it converts education into a repository of behaviour patterns. Or yet another consequence is that education is seen as the lever with which reality will be transformed.

### **Education as power**

The truth is, however, that it is not education which forms society in a certain way. It is society which, having formed itself in a certain way, establishes the education to fit the values which guide the society. However, since this is not a mechanical process, the society which structures education to meet the interests of those who hold power then finds in education a fundamental factor for the preservation of this power.

Seeing education as the lever for the transformation of reality is the result, in part, of an inadequate understanding of the cycle which we have referred to above. It is based on the second stage of the cycle — the stage where education functions as the instrument for the preservation of society. It is as if those upholding this view agreed that if education maintains society it is because it can transform that which it maintains. They always forget that the power which created it will never allow education to be turned against it. It is for this reason that the profound and radical transformation of education as a system cannot take place — and anyway never in an automatic or mechanistic way — except when society also is radically transformed.

This does not mean, however, that the educator who wishes and who does take part in the radical and revolutionary transformation of society can do nothing. There is much he can do, even if he does not have prescribed guidelines for his activities,

**In history one does what is historically possible  
and not what one would like to do.**

since he himself must discover them and find out for himself how to put them into effect in his particular historical setting.

It is necessary, therefore, that he recognize clearly his limitations and, accepting them with humility, avoid falling into a paralysing pessimism on the one hand and a cynical opportunism on the other.

The fact, for example, that certain given historical circumstances in which the educator finds himself do not allow him to participate more actively in the process of the revolutionary transformation of his society does not mean that his more limited effort is worthless, since this is the effort that for him is historically viable.

In history one does what is historically possible and not what one would like to do.

From here comes the need for an understanding, a much clearer understanding, of his task, which is political, in the sense that he accepts limitations imposed on



him, so that he can confront, as successfully as possible, the oscillation between pessimism and opportunism.

This is always a difficult existential moment. Many times it is precisely at the moment when the educator is confronted by this situation that he hears about conscientization. For many different reasons, among them his own lack of clarity in relation to his task, he draws near to conscientization like someone attracted by what he hears rather than someone who has grasped its exact meaning. In this way, he makes magic out of the process of conscientization, giving it powers which in fact it has not got.

**It is necessary, therefore, that he recognize clearly his limitations and, accepting them with humility, avoid falling into a paralysing pessimism on the one hand, and a cynical opportunism on the other.**

Sooner or later, however, the magic is broken, at the same time breaking the naïve hope which sustained it. Some of these educators, frustrated by the poor results of their own magic, instead of denying it, deny the very role of subjectivity in the transformation of reality and desert to swell the ranks of the mechanists.

Basically, however, experience has taught me how difficult it is to cross the line between subjectivity and objectivity : in the last analysis, how to be in the world and with the world, without falling into the temptation of making absolute one or other of the dimensions. How difficult it is really, to see them dialectically ! It is not by chance that one of the themes which has always preoccupied philosophy, especially modern philosophy, has been that of the relationships between subject and object, theory and practice, consciousness and reality.

#### **Demythologizing conscientization**

It is because of all this that during the last four years, while working for the World Council of Churches, one of my main tasks has been to strip away the myths surrounding conscientization, and I have become a sort of " pilgrim of the obvious ".

In this pilgrimage, I am learning how important it is to take the obvious as an object for critical reflection and, going into it more deeply, I find that it is not, at times, as obvious as it seems.

As a result, being well aware of the frustration which I often provoke in the public whom I address, I place the accent not on the analysis of methods and techniques in themselves, but rather on the political character of education, from which the impossibility of it being neutral follows naturally.

Once convinced of the impossibility of neutrality, not merely from having heard it said, but also by verifying it through my own experience, I am then aware of the relationship between methods and ends, which is in fact the same as the relation between tactics and strategy. Therefore, instead of naïvely overestimating the methods I see them as serving given ends, and so these methods are formed and reformed.

It is perhaps this making a myth of the methods and techniques (I am now merely thinking aloud) and the reduction of conscientization to certain methods and techniques used in Latin America in the field of the alphabetization of adults which explains, at least in part, the affirmations I often hear — affirmations in which conscientization appears as a sort of tropical exoticism, something which is specifically Third World.

Thus it is concluded that conscientization is something which would be impossible in complex societies, as if the Third World were not also complex.

### **Knowing and being**

Without wishing to return here to an analysis made in previous work about the existence of a Third World in the First World and of a First World in the Third World, I would simply like to draw attention to the fact that conscientization is not a privilege of the Third World, since it is a human phenomenon.

As conscious beings, in a dialectical relationship with the objective reality upon which they act, human beings are involved in a permanent process of conscientization. That which changes, in time and in space, is the contents and the objectives of conscientization. Its original source is found in the far-off moment which Teilhard de Chardin calls *hominization*, since which time human beings have been capable of discovering the reality on which they worked, and not only have they been aware of it but they have also known of their awareness.

The problem which presents itself, therefore, is not of viability or of conscientization in so-called complex societies, but rather the undesirability of transplanting that which is done in different ways in different areas of Latin America to another historical space, without due respect for the different situation. It is unimportant that this other historical space be also part of the Third World. Indeed, as a man from the Third World I know well what it means to suffer the ideological power of alienation from transplantations at the service of domination. I, who have always been against those who dominate, will not be the one to defend them today.

But, apart from the undesirability of "transplanting" conscientization, there is another undesirability: the bureaucratization of conscientization, its institutionalization which, while emptying it of its dynamism, as if suffering from sclerosis, ends in transforming it into a rainbow of solutions — which is just another way of making a myth of it.

With this I shall finish my reappraisal — which I know is incomplete — of a theme to which, rightly or wrongly, I have dedicated myself for quite some time. However, despite its incompleteness I believe that it is sufficient to fulfil its main purpose: to provoke comment and raise questions which can be enlarged upon.

In doing so, I should simply like to say that what I have learned in the World Council of Churches and in related activities has in no way diminished the basic convictions with which I began my work, while still quite young, in my own country: convictions of a Christian in a permanent state of searching. On the contrary, what I have learned has reinforced my convictions. And they are strengthened above all when I am helped to rise above a naïve vision to a more critical vision of certain problems by being challenged by new human realities.

# ivan illich

I would like to say that I certainly consider myself as one of the co-pilgrims of the obvious, as Paulo has just defined us — people who try to state the obvious. Now, in this critical reappraisal I am asked, first, to indicate the degree to which I reject and would like to undo what I wrote five years ago ; secondly, to indicate on which points I believe that I was partially right but also have to correct myself to some extent ; thirdly, to indicate those points concerning education where I believe I have gone further. If I rightly understood him, Paulo has just brilliantly put into one sentence what I did not understand five years ago : “Si a educação pratica transforma e porque mantem o que transforma.” If education transforms, it has the power to transform only because it maintains that which it transforms. This, at least, I had not seen five years ago. Therefore my criticism was primarily directed towards the tools, the devices, by which education was produced, and only in a lesser degree to the very ideology of education as a commodity — indeed, as an industrial mode of production which should be shared by all equally. Even then, in 1968, a close collaboration, if not a friendship, which had lasted for ten years and which enabled me to write the articles collected in *Deschooling*, came to an end because my colleague, Everett Reimer, to whom I owe most of the stimulation for that book, did not accept the beginnings of my insight into the inevitable “commodity” nature of the “output” of education which results from the impact of a system on persons, rather than from the interaction between persons who recognize each other as independent.

Now, what I did not expect five or even three years ago was that Unesco would have a Department of Deschooling — a bureaucracy concerned with deschooling. I apologise for contributing this ugly word, this ugly neologism, to the English language. I share the responsibility with Cas Canfield, a publisher of Harpers, who is evidently a good businessman. He found that word somewhere in a secondary sentence in my book and said : “Ivan, that’s a marvellous title for the book. Let’s call it ‘Deschooling of Education.’” Even five years ago I was sensitive enough and clear enough to say : “No, no, we are not speaking about the deschooling of the process, the particular process in this organization by which education is now produced, but about society becoming such that it does not need this process.”



## Deschooling as a commodity

What I did not expect is that this insight would become general so quickly — that people would become so quickly aware that if education, whatever that means, were to be produced in such a way that it were accessible and satisfactory to educators on an equitable basis, it is still far beyond the economic possibilities of any nation ; that is, structurally it is not feasible. What I also did not expect was the speed with which the system responded : that is, the speed with which non-school devices would be applied in order to produce the same output ! I did not expect that society would switch funds, manpower and prestige from the support of the factory-like schooling method (the assembly line of 30 to 50 individuals around an authority figure who determines what does and does not constitute education for 1,000 hours a year, for several four-year units on top of each other), to that of *l'education permanente*, *l'education interminable*, ending only really with Mrs Kubler Ross training people who can teach the dying how to go correctly

**In my opinion, education has to be treated as a Pharisee.**

through the last of the four stages which face them before the end. I joked five years ago about terminal education by undertakers, but I did not expect that it would be done so soon by the Institute of Thanatology at Colombia University !

Thirdly, I failed to understand at that time another position which can be taken by education-obsessed ex-Christians. In my opinion education has to be treated as a Pharisee. To me, what we call " education " is not conceivable outside the Christian tradition. It is historically inexplicable except against a background of a knowledge of the Catholic doctrine of rituals which will provide grace. It is inconceivable without the theological basis of a fallen nature which must be redeemed through the ritual intervention of society. It is inexplicable for me unless it is seen against the background of a transition from the doctrine that all people are born in original sin, to the doctrine that all people are born in original stupidity, which can be redeemed only through the intervention of some publicly organized institutional treatment. And this treatment is better described as schooling. *L'education permanente*, adult education, parent education, is another one.

### The critique of industrial society

These are some of the major issues which I had to rethink. In my opinion the main reason I did not face the whole issue of education properly was that at the time I was not courageous enough in my critique of industrial society. This courage was not a courage of kind, but a courage of quantitative thresholds. I said to someone this morning : " It was for me already quite a clear philosophical point that there are quantitative thresholds in certain dimensions in the material forces of production, of such a nature that when these thresholds are crossed the material force of production, the instrument of production, the tool, *l'outil* or the *outillage* of the society, assumes characteristics which will inevitably inflict exploitation on the society adopting such institutions". They inflict inequality, inequity, and ineffectiveness on most people in the performance of their specific tasks ; greater time loss, greater social controls, all in favour of a very few. I never believed that these limits that have to be imposed on the industrial mode of production, in order

to avoid it overwhelming and paralysing autonomous production, were as low as they were in the case of transportation, for instance — 20 miles, I believe. I therefore did not see that both of us, Paulo — you less than I because you stay more on the level of feeling and not of technique — were worrying about the need for education because we both believed that it existed, while it wouldn't have to exist in a society which is really modern and organized entirely in favour of an autonomous mode of production.

Now, I am the wrong person to be here : I have definitely been miscast during these last years. The Lima speech<sup>1</sup> was the last time I did any serious thinking on education. But I have been very happy to see that, as a result of the kind of criticisms we made at that time, people half our age have become involved. Last September this was brought home to me by the criticisms of Huberman. At Cuernavaca I became aware of the theoretical criticisms of Wolfgang Sachs and his group, criticisms which were extremely precise and rational. Then criticism of schooling was translated into a criticism of adult education and Wern and others unveiled the basic theme of our work — the latent, hidden programme in all kinds of education. When I saw how far André Goss was going in revealing how the increased division of labour in society was a pernicious ideological commitment, which made social options more and more impossible, I could only rejoice. I would recommend you to read and study the thought of these men. At least in the field of education I am, I think, a has-been.

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<sup>1</sup> Given at the final assembly of the World Council of Christian Education, held in Lima in July 1971.



**Fernig:** With that last sentence, Ivan Illich, you relegated yourself to the past tense too easily; it took everybody by surprise. We respect your statements, of course, as we have always done. Nevertheless, let us at least say that there is room for discussion. Thank you very much indeed for giving us additional material for what I hope will be a very lively discussion.

After these first two very clear speeches, we now have time for questions, comments and remarks around the table, addressed to either or both of the speakers, and they will decide between themselves how they propose to deal with the comments they have generated.

**José Chipenda:** One drawback in education is that it is always promoted by those who are willing to pay for it; this is more or less what we see in the Third World. As soon as some kind of change happens in a country, those who have money are willing to come in, because they know they can pay for it. Now, the new thoughts that Paulo has advanced are extremely good, but very often the people who listen to them are the ones who are in a position in which they can also say: "What can we do?" Now, in your experience, how do you see your theory put into practice in a situation where people are not able to develop and pay for what is relevant?

**Freire:** I think that first of all we need to know what kind of education the people really need. Many times we discuss the content of education for the people, without concerning ourselves with their true requirements. Often the people don't need the kind of systematic education which we try to give them. But once again I think that the central point of your question has to do with the organization of society, that is, how to solve this problem which I realize exists. It depends not only on the material conditions of society, but also on its political and ideological orientation.

**Will Kennedy:** I think one of the key questions that continuously emerges is the relation of education to social change. Both of you have dealt with this in a way, but I wonder if each of you would like to expand a bit on the role you see education playing, either well or badly, in social change. Is it the kind of thing that can contribute to the right kind of social





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change? Is it the kind of thing that blocks social change? How do you see the relationship?

**Illich:** I learned something today. It says better than anything I have heard so far what the problem is. "Si educação transforma e porque mantém o que transforma." *If education transforms, it is granted the power to transform only because it maintains that which it transforms.*

**Unidentified questioner:** Can you please specify the degree of irony in your statement? If you say "maintains that which it transforms", does that not abolish transformation, nullify it?

**Illich:** There was no irony! Let me specify. I am speaking in the auditorium of the World Council of Churches. I consider some of these churches to be quite clearly heretical, but they are Christian and Christian they want to be. We are not speaking at UNESCO, which is clearly the meeting place of what I call different sects, of something I consider also a church, but an entirely heretical one, committed to a ritual of unending progress! Progress in what? Progress essentially in the institutional relation of values. I take this word from one of the people from whom I have learned much, Jacques Ellul, with whom I differ and from whom I stand apart. He is by deep conviction — and it is a Christian conviction — a pessimist. That is, he accepts a pessimism which, in my opinion, confuses what I call pessimism and what I call hopelessness.

Let me explain this. I believe that there are two ways we learn about values. One is essentially based on intimate personal intercourse, on the responsibility taken by the two who face each other. Another way is the heteronomous production of the values which people in general will be expected by the engineer to need. This can range from their needing instruction on how to drive on the right hand side of the road, to having some "agency" decide that people need conscience, so let's conscientize them. That is probably what Paulo meant when he spoke about being coopted. Now I think these two ways of value production (which are never totally distinct) can certainly be put at the two extremes of a spectrum. The word "education" was invented and then remained pretty constant in meaning until very recently. It was used exclusively to designate — look it up in the dictionary — the heteronomous production of a set value of learning (as opposed to the non-

alienated learning in contact with reality). Obviously I'm trying to caricature a complex position. As to "education", however, I strongly suggest that we either put that word into the icebox for the next five years, while we discuss the issues with which we are concerned, or that we use it with a better sense of history – where it comes from, what it means. Education – what is now called education – is essentially planned *production of learning in another*. And if you don't like the word "production", then planned *provocation of liberty in another* – as opposed to the spontaneous, autonomous discovery which comes out of the encounter between you and me.

I have answered your question the way I heard it asked – basically questioning my motives. Now, as for the act of planning, it is one of the distinguishing characteristics of what I call education. Let us turn back to Paulo's phrase – education transforms; it does so because it maintains the correct transformation of that which it transforms, or it maintains that which it transforms – which I meant literally and precisely.

**Potter:** Mr Chairman, I'm puzzled by this phrase which Ivan Illich has quoted from Paulo – the French I have in front of me says, and I translate: "If education conserves society, that means that it does so because it can also transform what it conserves." Now I think we probably need a little exegesis of that sentence because it's becoming a key one in this meeting.

**Freire:** Yes, it's really necessary to explain this phrase. I wrote it in Portuguese and I don't know whether I am able to translate it into English. What I said before, the conception of education as a lever for the transformation of reality, depends on an incomplete apprehension of the cycle I talked about. That is, that education does not shape society, but society shapes education according to the interests of those who have power. I said that precisely because this process is not a mechanical one; in being shaped by society at a certain moment, education establishes for society a special condition, and I said that the conception of education as a lever for the transformation of society seemed to me to be based on the second phase of that cycle, namely that phase in which education preserves what society allows it to transform. Those who defend this process recognize that if education preserves anything, it is because it can be allowed to transform what it preserves. And I think that they forget, nevertheless, that the power which creates education cannot permit that education to work against it if it is to be preserved. I don't know whether I have explained myself. And I further said that, because of that, the radical and deeper transformation of education as a system cannot be made...

**Illich:** Even in that case not in an automatic and mechanical way?

**Freire:** ... except when society itself is also radically transformed. I think that the text is clear.

**Alain Blancy:** Perhaps I can give an example. I have been reflecting on some education material which you have not mentioned and which is probably one of the most imposing, although it is not sold easily. I refer to science.



Science as education is being promoted as a result of the capitalization of people, money and means; and this is really the way society is transforming itself by empowering, within itself, the process of controlled change. A lot of changes occur, but in order to reinforce what exists and not to transform society on another level – which is a political one. My question is: If science, as it has been done, and is being done now, just preserves society, how do we cope with the absurdity of science? How much might we have to go back? This is not just a theoretical question because the result of science, as I see it, is not merely a material matter. Let's say the output of science is people, that's one of the points of the democratic problem as it exists today. Therefore I think it is a more dialectical problem, and I would like to get some clarity as to how you see this factor of science which is so willingly accepted by most, but which some see so pessimistically.

**Illich:** I fully agree with you on the question of science. Let me clarify the point of pessimism. There is a great difference, which I think is realized by most of those assembled here, between expectation and hope. I have certain expectations about how this earphone will function – and a certain suspicion that it won't work. My expectation that it will function is my optimism about it, my fear that it won't is my pessimism about it. Now, if I fall in a coma when we walk together through the woods around Bossey, I do not have any expectations about your medical competence! But I do, somehow, have a deep *hope*, as I lie there, that you will tend to me and do your best. I cannot predict this, and I cannot reasonably calculate statistically what the chances are of your doing it or not.

Now this question of expectation and hope relates to the way in which values are being institutionalized today. We must be very careful that the churches do not collaborate in this institutionalization of values. Then people lose the sense and the sensibility of the proper distinction between expectation and hope. Am I answering your question? The growing institutionalization of values, which in this particular field means the subjugation of hopes and of the power to bear with loneliness and hopelessness, by the introduction of calculated expectations – optimistic or pessimistic – is one of the reasons why the world is becoming such an obscure place, such an impenetrable place, such a complex and complicated place to live in. But I hope that the people who come here are personally unwilling to accept this obscurity in their own life, in their own sphere of action and relationships.

**Benoist Magnat:** You destroyed, or rather, you tried to destroy, the institutionalization of ongoing education – and in other texts the institution of the totality of the school. If I look back I see that education was originally given by the Church. I believe that such institutionalization and scholarization come in part from the Church. The churches, or rather the institution of the Church, in fact practised this kind of education for many years – and this “scholarization” of thought is not necessarily positive.

**Illich:** I am willing to project the analysis of the liturgical and dogmatic, or if you want, the ritual and ideological structure, of major western churches

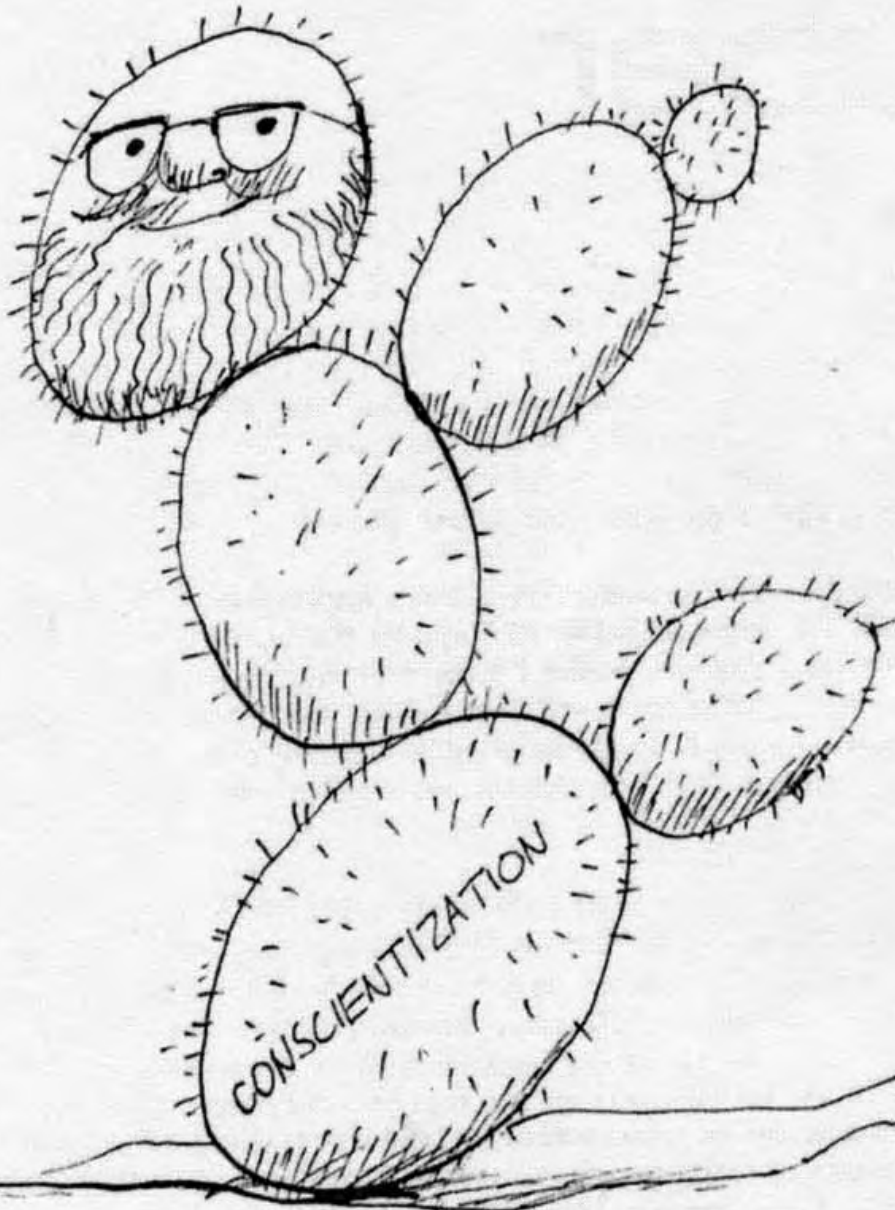
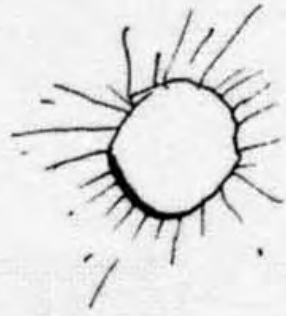


on to the school system as it exists today as a "world church". I am unwilling to allow our vision of the function of the Christian churches during the first two millenia to be coloured by the vulgar pretentiousness of the educational trap assumed by the school in my generation. I am not aware that any but the most recently formed churches have ever applied or ever seen the Church as an educational agency. The Church defined itself as a *teacher*; no doubt some churches define themselves biblically in the image of the mother figure, but then always carefully moderated by the image of the spouse and of the prostitute figure. To be a member of the Church is to admit that one is "a son of a bitch" – I mean those who are willing to identify themselves still as members of a church, as opposed to other organizations in modern times in which you can be a Christian. But as far as I can see, there was always a clear distinction between the education which comes via your parents – which happens in the family, the Christian family, the Jewish family, the instruction for which members in a society need some sense of where they come from – and the education which is separated institutionally from that tradition.

**Unidentified questioner:** But that takes no account of all the Church did in shaping its educational tradition from medieval times. Look at the history of universities...

**Illich:** For an *élite*! For a Church *élite*! For an *élite* which took a vow of poverty, if you want; but these structural functions of the Church were generalized by Luther and Ignatius Loyola. But the Church has always offered opportunities when it was a somewhat free Church, a somewhat presbyterian Church: presbyterian in a very broad sense, for people not to instruct, but also freely to teach, to allow you to participate in their thinking. The idea that churches are educational is something which we have coopted from that low-cast offspring of our institutions which is the world's educational or school system. That is my view on this point. There is very little research and thinking done in this area. How can we encourage people to study the responsibility the churches had in the formation of this lowly language, this disgusting language, which is used by the educational profession? This may be the start of the liberation of educational terminology.

**Fernig:** Well, as the Chairman who accidentally and unfortunately belongs to this disgusting profession and also belongs to the other building – not the house we're meeting in now, Mr Potter's house, but the other house, UNESCO – let me say that it is premature, Mr Illich, to claim that UNESCO has even now instituted deschooling. I think that you're premature in several respects, and in any case, my bureaucracy does not move very fast. It is very much rooted in the past, continues to travel with reasonable optimism, watches the clock and announces now that it is about coffee time!



04/10/75

# heinrich dauber

Let me say two things : First, I was prepared for a discussion in a small group, and certainly not ready to give final statements about trends in German education. Secondly, I came into contact with Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich last year personally in Tübingen, where I work, after having discussed them and their work during recent years. For myself, I am working in adult education, and that means working within the educational system and with the institutions. So their writings have been a constant challenge to my own work within those institutions.

What I want to give now is two things : first, some impressions of how I see German education at the moment, personally, against the background of recent experience in Cuernavaca, Mexico, where I took part in a seminar on modern trends in adult education ; secondly, a manifesto about adult education which picks up the ideas of Freire and Illich which we tried to develop there. I hope this document will help to make clear the consequences which can be drawn from their concepts.

Now, I was asked to make some remarks about developments in German education in the light of conscientization and deschooling. During the last years, the writings of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich have been widely distributed in Western Europe. In the Federal Republic of Germany, between 50,000 and 100,000 copies of their books have been sold. However, it seems difficult for writers as well as for professionals in education to fully take up the analysis and proposals which are connected with the concepts of conscientization and deschooling. Freire and Illich have derived their analyses and proposals, as far as I can see, from their experiential background in Latin America. That experience included both the exploitation of the natural resources by capitalist monopolies, and the exploitation of labour which led to a rapid worsening of people's living conditions. The national bourgeoisies, as well as the international companies, secured their interests by cruel political oppression. The rapid decline of natural units of production erodes individual and collective identity, and leaves behind a cultural vacuum into which the values of the competitive consumption of commodities flow freely. Now in Europe, as far as I can see, organized capitalism transformed all areas of society a long time ago, and is suffering these days from its own contradictions. The development I referred to in Latin America has to overcome the resistance of



some well-guided and some not-yet-organized revolutionary mass movements. In Cuernavaca I learned particularly about Indian peasant movements which draw on social and cultural motives and traditions, rooted in local history as well as in present everyday life.

So according to my own experience in Western Europe and Germany, there are two difficulties in adopting conscientization and deschooling. First, organized capitalism of the rich countries has already gone too far to render visible the immediate destructive consequences which emerge most clearly in Latin America. Secondly, especially in West Germany one may find marginal social groups, for example foreign workers (we call them "Gastarbeiter"), old people, the handicapped, and so on — groups at the bottom of the capitalist class system. But these groups are neither economically nor ideologically integrated in society: they don't have a sub-culture or counter-culture of their own. Of course, some may have national counter-cultures, for example the "guest-workers", but these counter-cultures are very distinct — for example, from their way of working in German factories. But, as far as I can see, they lack a fundamental prerequisite for deschooled consciousness — namely, norms and institutional forms apart from the capitalist culture.

Taking that into consideration, it can then be understood how Freire and Illich have been taken up by the West German public, and how they have been very often used in a biased manner... First Freire: as a genuine pedagogical concept, his educational theory aims at the undissoluble connection between enlightening reflection and practical action. Like all great educationists, he starts with a new foundation of learning relationships. So far as I can see, his ideas have been taken up by two groups in particular in West Germany: (a) the linguists, who have been predominantly concerned with the instructional and semantic problems in adopting his strategy of literacy; (b) groups engaged in social work and political action, which work with those national groups we have mentioned, and which are often connected with a radical student group of a university. The most dangerous use of his concept becomes clear in some of these groups. Conscientization is being conceived as political agitation of so-called underprivileged groups. So they use the term "conscientization" and the name of Paulo Freire, and from the universities they go out direct to marginal groups to look, in competition with each other and even with other political groups, for underprivileged groups which they can "educate". I think this is the most dangerous cooption of his concept at the moment in Germany.

Regarding Ivan Illich: for the last few years Illich, as an analytical moralist, as far as I understand him, refuses to deal with the theory of learning. He told me very often in Cuernavaca not to mention a theory of the organization of learning processes. His analysis now centres on the critique of the industrial production of services, an idea which for him extends the economic and environmentalist attack on limits to growth to social institutions, for example, schools. After that he did some work on transport, health care and so on. So far as the education discussion in West Germany is concerned, his ideas have been taken up explicitly by one educationist: Hartmut von Hentig. In my opinion, von Hentig's reception of Illich's paradigm mirrors the different European situations. Illich's fundamental attack on the service functions of social institutions is narrowed down to the quest for change, especially to the quest for democratization and participation within

the existing institutions. So those institutions are necessarily conceived as instruments of repression, but with a capacity for protecting and facilitating learning with regard to the capitalist surroundings and environments.

In educational discussions in West Germany, the "conscientization" and "de-schooling" of Freire and Illich are very often quoted, but mostly for the sake of exotic decoration. They might gain theoretical significance by linking up the Marxist critique of political economy, which had a long tradition in Germany, with a critique of social life forms, and combining both in the perspective of a cultural revolution. So what I would like to ask them, from the point of view of a German educator, is if they see any prospects in this direction, and if they can give some more explanations on how their programmes and concepts could really be adopted to the special political, institutional and very integrated conditions we have in West Germany. In educational discussions in our country, people refer to Freire and Illich as protagonists of non-school action-oriented learning. To accept their analysis and ideas leads, for me, to fighting very recent temptations — like that of the expansion of youth school to children school or to adult school, or of the expansion of technological instruction or lifelong education — and to developing alternatives to reform programmes imposed from above, such as those proposals of lifelong education Ivan mentioned before. I think these are great temptations — great educational temptations.

So this is the reason why I want to present to you now the Cuernavaca Manifesto, which is strongly influenced by Freire and Illich and which tries to explain some of the conditions we could see in the future of education. The Manifesto was reformulated in the last week of the seminar in Cuernavaca by 15 speakers of different languages, so each day we had another three versions! It is still not worded perfectly in English but I hope you will get the main ideas.

## the price of lifelong education

Cuernavaca, Cidoc Doc. I/V 74/70

Twenty five persons from 14 countries met at Cidoc, Cuernavaca, Mexico, in August 1974, to discuss present trends towards lifelong education. This statement grew out of their discussions. All those who agree with it may make it theirs.

In this manifesto we oppose the trend towards compulsory lifelong education, compulsory by law or by social pressure. We do not need more school systems. In societies where a few people who "know more" give orders and the great mass of people who "know less" carry them out, formal adult education will only give those few greater power over the many.

People shall not be denied the means they feel they need to deal successfully with their problems and to join with others in doing so.

1. During the past 40 years, compulsory schooling has been growing in most countries and still is.

By compulsory schooling we mean that:

- people are required to attend;
- people are grouped by age;
- the schools decide what is to be learned;
- only certified teachers may teach;
- the work people do in school is graded and certified;
- education is separated from living and working.

We oppose all this.



2. More and more people accept or demand prolonged schooling, believing it will bring them the way of life and the level of consumption of the more successful and rich.

3. This hope is disappointed. As more people obtain diplomas, they tend to be worth less. More money spent on education brings ever smaller results. More and more graduates are unemployed or underemployed, while the amount of schooling required for most jobs is growing.

4. Though it may have some value on the labour market, what people learn in school is not, as a rule, useful in their lives, nor does it help them become more self-reliant and creative.

5. Schooling, however, fulfils social functions :

a) By treating alike people of different cultural backgrounds, it translates social inequality into school success and failure.

It takes credit for the learners' success, but denies responsibility for their failure, and so conceals the way in which it reproduces class differences.

b) It says that persons are inadequate unless and until they have had a certain amount of schooling ; it leaves room for personal interests only when they fit into what the school wants people to learn ; it convinces people that they must be taught, in school, how to deal successfully with their environment ; it makes the right to do things depend on credentials which can only be had from schools, and so discourages self-reliance in learning and doing.

c) By making learners compete against each other, it teaches them they can only have success at the expense of other ; it assumes that people do

not want to learn by themselves but must be forced to, and so teaches that learning must be painful.

6. These socializing functions constitute the hidden curriculum of schooling. The effectiveness of these socializing functions is breaking down in industrialized societies. Schools are increasingly questioned both by minors and adults.

Students grow more and more rebellious and apathetic ; employers complain that the schools no longer provide them with an efficient and obedient work force ; parents and pupils begin to doubt that schools do offer equal chances or a sure way to wealth and success.

7. The promoters of lifelong education believe that this crisis of the schools can be overcome by extending education beyond the school years, in particular by different forms of adult education.

They claim it will :

a) offset mass unemployment by retraining the unemployed ;

b) enable adults to keep up with technological changes which might make their skills obsolete, and to do different kinds of work ;

c) enable underprivileged groups (old people, women, minorities, people in developing regions, and so on) to find their proper place in society ;

d) convince people that they always have a chance to rise in society through learning and that their failure to win favourite positions may be made up for at any time.

8. We maintain, however, that :

a) the main cause of unemployment is that there are more workers than jobs ; retraining cannot create jobs that do not exist ;



- b) continued retraining helps to make skills obsolete, and so threatens job security and seniority rights ;
- c) all educational programmes help the privileged more than the poor and so increase the advantage of the privileged over the poor ;
- d) continued education can only improve the position of adults to the extent that unskilled and frustrating jobs are abolished ; unless the working process is made very different, continued education can only be a way for a few to escape at the expense of others.

9. Adult education calls for formal changes in schedules, institutions, media and financing of learning. However, since it has the same hidden curriculum as all school systems it cannot but maintain the prevailing social, political and economic conditions.

10. We believe that all persons, of whatever age, have the right to decide what they want to learn, how, when and where. Knowledge shall be permanently accessible to all. No institutions shall monopolize or certify its distribution. Learning, living and working shall be permanently interconnected.

11. When we live we learn. Learning is a function of living ; people are learning all the time, all their lives. No one's "learning" is superior to anyone else's, only different.

But some people have more "knowledge" than others, which means that they have had power to win greater access to other individuals, information and tools. In order to abolish that power, everyone must have access to all kinds of knowledge, that is, equal time, money and freedom for their learning as well as free and unmediated access to all individuals, information and tools which they may need for their learning.

12. People are the best judges of what they have learned. Using professional educators to evaluate other people's learning is unnecessary and creates a relationship of superior to inferior.

13. We therefore propose that :

- a) it is more important to make existing knowledge available to all than to accumulate expert knowledge ;
- b) experts, as for example teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, scientists, architects, and others have the obligation to share their skills, expertise and knowledge and thereby to give up their professional monopoly ;
- c) time shall be made available at work in which workers may begin work-related research and learning, to enable them to continually reshape the working process and environment to meet their self defined needs ;
- d) grades, certificates and examinations shall be abolished ; it shall be against the law to require scholastic credentials or any kind of personality tests as a condition of having any job ; a person's ability to perform a job shall be evaluated by the co-workers or clients ;
- e) individuals and groups should be encouraged to create community workshops and convivial centres which will be open to all, controlled by their users, and which will promote self-reliance and critical analysis through learning by doing ;
- f) free access to and control over mass media shall be ensured by reducing the complexity and increasing the number of available facilities ;
- g) anyone, regardless of training or credentials, shall have the right to share his experience, knowledge or skills ; we oppose the professionalization of adult educators.

# michael huberman

I was asked to talk about developments in education in Geneva as they relate to the concepts of deschooling and conscientization, and I shall be a little more impersonal and aseptic than I would like to be. First, I shall say what these concepts mean, or how they are interpreted, here in Geneva. Then I shall explain the relationship between "deschooling" and primary education, "deschooling" and secondary education. Finally, I shall comment on a concept of "conscientization" and what it means to people here.

I will be talking almost exclusively about compulsory education and education of children from 6 to 15 years of age in Geneva. At the outset I must say that the ideas of Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire are not generally known here. People are probably more familiar with articles or second-hand information about Ivan Illich, and know a good deal less about Paulo Freire.

The way that "deschooling" is defined or interpreted here is not that schools are abolished but that compulsory schooling is abolished. One may be able to use school buildings, teachers, school books, and so on in creating other kinds of relationships between people who want to learn and people who may help someone else to learn. The concept of deschooling is probably best understood as a way of decentralizing these facilities and particularly — and I think we have heard a lot of that today — by changing the relationships between the people who are teaching and the people who are to be taught.

Here, in a much more modest and, it is implied, perverted way we say "deschooling" simply means carrying learning outside the school by using non-professionals, that is, people who are not formally accredited teachers, by getting back to what is known as incidental learning: learning in a city, learning from living, learning by growing up and not from being institutionalized. When we turn to "conscientization", then, I would define it — and I think it is a very difficult term to define — as having to do with becoming aware of oneself but, in particular, becoming aware of oneself in a social, political and economic context. I think it really has to do with setting oneself apart from the reality one is living in, while at the same time acting in that reality.

When Paulo Freire writes about it, he talks of reaching a stage of what he calls "critical transitivity" and of some characteristics of this, which I would like to mention now very briefly because I shall be coming back to them. It has to do with understanding and interpreting objective evidence; being able to explain the rational causes of events and not talking in magical or totally intuitive terms; dealing with abstract evidence, in other words being able to appreciate or understand or believe

things that may go into print — and not having to hear them from other people ; being able to formulate a coherent ideology ; being open to technical and cultural innovations ; and, finally, taking responsibility for one's actions and not being fatalistic or saying what happens to one comes from someone or somewhere else and therefore one is not responsible.

### **Resisting deschooling**

Now in Geneva primary schools, no one is carrying out any form of "deschooling", and I would think that anyone who manages a school system is certainly not interested in working in this direction. Much of the resistance is not conscious. It is probably structural ; people have certain roles or certain functions and therefore they act on them without really knowing what their own ideas are. But let us look at this some more.

The first kind of resistance is probably the most important one. It is not a conscious one, it is implicit, and it has to do with a very well known concept in sociology called socialization. The reason that schools are obligatory is so that societies can be sure of perpetuating themselves. And I don't think that there is anything hysterical or perverted about that. It is probably done in every society in the world in one form or another. What happens is that the state or society takes children away from their families to educate them because it wants to know what is going to happen to them. The state can't do this in familial education because it can't observe the children in the process. Therefore, to be certain that children behave in certain ways by the time they are adults, that their behaviour is predictable, they set the behaviour patterns of adults before them — so that it is pretty much ensured that they finally insert themselves satisfactorily in a working situation, and that they vote (or do not vote) according to the practice in the country.

We see the same process going on even when there are no schools. But we find that the more complex the society becomes, the more it needs to observe much more closely what is happening to children ; it does not leave them with their families, but creates a law whereby they have to attend an institution to be sure that they absorb the required learning, so that the right behaviour is there by the time these people can vote, work, have children, be put in jail or take on a number of adult responsibilities or duties. So far as the society is concerned, its interests are taught in the school. The teaching is directly related to what children will be doing when they work later on, or when they are citizens, like learning to respect the authority of adults or their own parents.

**But I would say that reading, writing and arithmetic have very little to do with the reason why schools are there, and the reason why they continue to be there is more to do with other social functions.**

The school is probably the first place where children learn this : where they have to obey someone who is not of their own family and who does not have a natural parental authority over them, to do work which they haven't chosen themselves, and so on. These things, as you can see, are directly related to what they will be asked to do when they come into a working situation as an adult : be punctual and orderly ; put off pleasure or gratification ; do a task and only get some reward for it much later on ; suppress hostility and frustration ; not act up with whatever aggressions they may have ; sit there and raise their hand for a very long time and



not be called on ; and not be identified as any particular kind of person by learning to do all this in a very public way. So the child learns to respect national laws and customs — customs like sexual modesty — and of course also learns the skills of literacy and numeracy, which are probably indispensable for the functioning of any technological advanced society.

But I would say that reading, writing and arithmetic have very little to do with the reason why schools are there, and the reason why they continue to be there is more to do with other social functions. What seems ridiculous is the way schools are organized : putting 30 children in a class all together doing the same thing in front of one adult ; competing with each other or walking out of the door in line, and so on. These things may appear absurd until one starts to ask why they are there and what they mean. I think they do have a very important meaning in social terms, but they are certainly not effective ways to learn reading, writing and arithmetic — there are many more effective ways than that ! In terms of socialization, the idea is to do this at an early age, when a child is going to be most easily affected by the environment around him, by taking the child out and putting him in an institution where one adult has an incredible amount of power over him. A teacher is with a child about 1,000 hours a year — and he controls the happiness or unhappiness of a child. Within limits he can do almost anything he wants with a child.

**Schools can control the number of people who are going into the labour market at any particular point in time, by putting them in different streams or by keeping them in the school until they can be absorbed in this market.**

This is one of the differences between school education and adult education. Adults have many more rights when they are in an educational situation : to walk out of it, to criticize it, to "switch it off" or to refute any kind of criticism they get from their teacher.

Finally, socialization is very valuable and effective because parents tell children it is the most important thing they will be doing until they are 12 years old, or even 18 or so, depending on the children. So socialization is one reason why no school system (and I don't think that the Geneva one is different from any other) is interested in "deschooling", or in abandoning social control over how children grow up.

### **School as efficient industry**

Another reason why "deschooling" is resisted in Geneva, and I think elsewhere, is because it happens to be a fantastically good social investment in terms of what it costs to run the primary schools. And I think it's worth stopping for a minute to think about that. You have an institution where you have a lot of children and where very few adults are needed to supervise them ; in relation to other institutions, very few administrators are needed to run the whole enterprise, and it is very easy to manage, especially when it is centralized. You have children in classes of 30 in one building ; they are all doing more or less the same thing at the same time ; they are graded by age. You have this set-up in different areas throughout the city and it is very easy to supervise and control what is happening ; you have the same books for all the children ; and you know who all the children

are. It is in fact a very industrial way of managing children — very much the way in which we manage factories — and I think it can be done at a relatively low cost. You train teachers for fewer years than you train other professionals, doctors and lawyers for instance, and you pay them less. It does not cost very much to maintain teachers and they spend a large amount of time in schools and are available all the time that they are there. Schools are also fulfilling a baby-sitting function. Adults can work or very simply get their children out of the way for a certain number of hours a day.

Schools also perform the function of weaning children from their parents, something which might not happen without obligatory schooling. It gets children used to being somewhere else than at home and to being with adults other than their parents. Then there is the role of enlarging children's horizons, and schools also teach a lot of other things like hygiene, human relations, sex, sometimes even cooking and sewing, which also makes it a very functional place. Lastly, schools identify and "skim off" the elite of a population so that these children can take on, as adults, the managerial or the professional tasks in a society. Schools can control the number of people who are going into the labour market at any particular point in time, by putting them in different streams or by keeping them in the school until they can be absorbed in this market.

Lastly, schools provide an environment where children's efforts are important and that is one of the positive aspects of their role. No matter what a child is doing, it is somehow important at school; often this isn't the case at home.

#### **No effective alternative**

Now some of these things I would consider negative and others positive. All I am trying to say is that this happens to be a very adequate and economic way of dealing with a whole population of children in terms of social investment. There does not seem to be any other alternative nearly as effective, and I think this is one of the reasons why deschooling is having less of an impact on primary education for children up to 12 years old than on secondary education for older children. When we look at prototypes of free, alternative or experimental schools, such as the one I have been involved in creating here in Geneva, we find that in many ways — no matter how innovative we are — what goes on there resembles in the long run a lot of the things that go on in primary schools.

The third reason why deschooling is not being implemented here is simply because the schools exist: the system is established, and social change is inexorably slow for political and economic reasons, and for reasons affecting the interest of the people who are working in this situation and who, of course, wouldn't like to change.

Here, then, are some explanations as to why deschooling is a problem. Without other social changes going on, and I mean massive social changes, there is a basic problem with the theory of deschooling. To change to a voluntary system of education where people have the right to seek out their own educational resources means talking of great changes, and perhaps worthwhile changes, in our society. One of these changes concerns people's motivation. It cannot be taken for granted that everyone is willing to make use of such an innovative educational network. And anyway such motivation means having what I see as an exceedingly middle-class kind of ideology. It is simply not evident that most people would carry on

their own learning in a creative way if you left them entirely to their own devices — that they would carry on learning because they are living. Also, learning doesn't go on unless certain conditions prevail: unless children have certain security, are not threatened physically, and have some kind of psychological stability. And there is a real risk of child labour, of parents just putting their children to work if there is no obligation for them to send them to school. And, of course, there is the basic danger of inequality: namely, that unless we have other kinds of parallel social changes, we would find that children who are now getting the managerial and professional jobs will still be the same children, because they, or rather their parents, will be motivated to prepare them for their examinations and to buy more or better education for them because they have more means and, consciously or unconsciously, understand the system.

### **Realistic alternatives in secondary schools**

The situation is radically different for secondary education. There exists as much resistance to change on the part of school systems here as elsewhere, but I don't see any legitimacy for it, either in terms of socialization, which is already done by that age, or in terms of social investment, simply because secondary schools are incredibly expensive. They try to reproduce the entire world in institutions with laboratories, workshops, and an amazing use of material. However, these laboratories, workshops and materials, as I think Ivan has shown us, are to be found a kilometer away in the city! There is no need to bring them into the institutions.

**It is evident that people who have had a lot of schooling tend to be much more conscious of who they are, of the kind of political situation they are in and of the kind of social situation in which they find themselves!**

Also children 12 and 15 years old quite simply have very different needs: they don't feel the need to be in an institution, nor do they need to be institutionalized or watched over to carry on any kind of learning activity in the same way as younger children. Therefore, as schooling relates to children in this age group, I think that there is not the same kind of justification for it.

What we are going to see all over the world, and even here in Geneva, is that there will be many more attempts to deschool the school, simply in the sense of using resources which are outside the institution and putting the children in touch with them. What is happening in Geneva now is that you have some days spent, say, in a newspaper office, watching how the paper is brought out, or looking at an electrical or some other kind of power plant, and then you are brought back into the school.

Then you have another tendency, which personally I find much more dangerous, and this is to rely very heavily on educational technology: on using television, making documents, making films of the outside world, and then bringing them into the artificial inside world of the institution. I don't think adolescents find this an effective way of learning, but I also don't think that the institution itself is willing to admit it.



## Our own experience

Here again we have been working on an alternative secondary school. We find it takes a different shape from the schools that already exist: for example, we would not have an institution and our plan is that the adolescents will spend at least half their time outside, either in jobs (if they can have jobs) or doing research projects in the city or some kind of internship in an institution to find out how it works. We also found that we moved spontaneously into setting up this network, contacting people who run enterprises or work in some organization, or who are willing to spend some time with these children, and children who are interested in spending time with these people. It seemed quite natural to move in this direction. Of course, even with all this deschooling at the secondary level, the basic problem hasn't changed. If it is that of relationships, then the children still have to be sent out, and there is still apparently a relationship of someone who knows with someone who doesn't know. This problem has by no means been solved either in the deschooling experiments which are going on in other countries, or even in our own experiment here in Geneva.

## Uneasiness about conscientization

Now just a couple of words on conscientization. Frankly, I get uneasy in talking about conscientization when I look back at Paulo's writings. For him it seems to mean a number of things: understanding and interpreting objective evidence, explaining events by rational causes, dealing with abstract evidence, formulating a coherent ideology, being open to technical and cultural innovations, taking the responsibility for one's actions. But all these are objectives that those committed to socially indoctrinating children would equally take to be their own: these are the sort of things primary and secondary schools work at. And perhaps schools are the best place for young people to learn skills of logic and rational inspection. From my experience in Geneva secondary schools, I see there is a continuum between dealing with the environment around oneself and looking critically at social institutions. But it is the sort of thing the school works at, and it is evident that people who have had a lot of schooling tend to be much more conscious of who they are, of the kind of political situation they are in and of the kind of social situation in which they find themselves.

Common sense tells me that it is only partly as a result of their schooling that such people tend to achieve such a level of consciousness. It is also partly the result of the stimulus of their parents, and partly, as the Cuernavaca Manifesto puts it, that they have easier and better access to information, people and tools than those who have had no schooling or much less. And environment has a lot to do with it. So, in my opinion, the level of consciousness has most to do with the social status one has, coupled with the notion of mastering one's environment. Therefore it is to be expected that what one might call "conscientization" occurs in middle-class situations. It is simply that these people *are* in higher social spheres, they *have had* a lifetime of success, they have so many advantages that they can feel — and this is the crucial thing — that they are able to change things. They have little reason to expect frustrations and failure and, therefore, less reason to be fatalistic. This is *not* the case for those who have experienced a lifetime of powerlessness and poverty. They have no reason to feel that they can control their environment. Unless, that is, someone can assure them it is possible. And that is what Paulo Freire wants to do.



# discussion

**Fernig:** Thank you very much for concluding the first round of speeches. I think that by drawing a picture of the general situation of schooling in a large part of the world, you have brought us up to the facts of life. We now have, after these last two speakers, a short time to discuss and to pose questions.

**Unidentified questioner:** May I ask Dauber whether the "hope" the Manifesto shows is really the "hope" of society? For instance, can you really expect people to give up professional monopoly when it is directly connected with privilege? How can one think of sharing knowledge and skills without also sharing other goods – money, power, etc.? Therefore a manifesto such as yours must be connected with a chain of manifestos for changes in society. So we come back to the dialectic between education and social structure – you cannot believe your Manifesto could work in society as it now stands, can you?

**Dauber:** I read this Manifesto in the belief that there are many adult educators in this room who will pick up the ideas and ask themselves about their role. So the first thing is to direct this question to *you* and to invite *you* to take up the ideas. The second thing is to say that of course it is true that adult educators have a lot of privileges, especially as people who are defined as having more knowledge and so on; but if I look at teachers – and I work a lot with teachers in Germany – I see that they are increasingly uncomfortable about their own work, and the privileges of the one who has power. The institution has power to teach other people, which is shown by Paulo and Ivan in many writings, but that privilege is increasingly doubted by teachers themselves. And the socializing functions which Michael Huberman has just mentioned are connected with selective functions; that means the selection of children at any age, the selection of failures and those



who succeed, and so on. These selective socializing functions are beginning to be doubted. The Manifesto was not written for educational planners or officials in ministries, who will of course coopt some ideas of the Manifesto as they coopted ideas from those books and articles containing the ideas of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich. It is written for adult educators, future adult educators, which means teachers, and for those who are compelled to be involved in this movement.

So my only hope is to give some theoretical or conceptual background to people who feel already that there is something wrong with what they have been doing up till now and to invite them to change the relationship, the institutional schedules and so on, to figure out very clearly which steps have to be taken, whether they work in educational institutions, in health care institutions or in factories – each is very difficult. I think there are examples in Europe as well as in Latin America where people have started doing this already.

**Miguel Darcy:** I would like to pursue this point as I believe it is connected with the discussion we had earlier, namely, the relationship between schools and society, education and social change, and so on. I believe that in the Manifesto as well as in the ideas that Illich has expressed, there is without any doubt a radical criticism of the school and of education. What I would like to hear clarified is the following question: To what degree is this criticism so radical that one ends by completely rejecting education and the school as something which is necessarily negative in any context? It might follow that we find ourselves confronted with a lack of possibilities for concrete action.

In other words, I believe that it would be interesting if Illich and Freire, for the clarity of the debate, specify once more their points of view in this respect – I believe that Freire has clarified in a certain dialectic how he sees the relationship between education and society and the double determination that this implies. However, Illich has made a whole series of radical criticisms of education – so we can guess that there is an alternative hidden in the criticism – but I cannot see clearly what is the dialectic which exists between education and society, in other words, how we can put this alternative into practice.

**Fernig:** This is a very sweeping question, and I will invite each of you to answer it.

**Illich:** This is a difficult question, which I would like to direct at Paulo! We have not had the chance of a good conversation, a real conversation, since the kitchen in Cuernavaca, and a lot has happened since then! Since then I, at least, believe I have made a discovery, and that is that the dialectic relationship between the individual, the group and its environment, between the person and his situation, is possible only if and when the extent of technological intervention in the environment stays within certain limits. Real politics, what I call politics, is only possible for the poor. Beyond a certain point the rich cannot engage in politics. In a sense a society which believes in



technology — unlimited, utopian technology — reduces everyone to being its tools, and once it grows beyond a certain dimension then politics, or dialectics, cease to be effective. Therefore a precondition for the restoration of politics, in the language of the class struggle, is that the struggling class recognize the limitations which will inevitably and permanently be a consequence of its struggle and victory.

Let me illustrate this. In a society politics is only possible for people who accept that they will never go beyond a certain speed; all those who believe they have no limits have surrendered their political potential to technological power. This insight is fresh for me, certainly since the last time Paulo and I discussed the matter. And it means that the restoration of dialectics requires first the acceptance of a limiting framework — limits which are set by technical conditions, to some extent, but not finally determined by them. As a friend here from India put it: "When tools cease to be a prolongation of my fingers and become new instruments which cut them off, then I can no longer use my hands for structuring the environment!"

Darcy: Yes, I understand that, but the question for me is a practical one. I accept the function of denunciation, but how do you translate this into action? Moreover, you say that politics belongs to the poor; well, here we are the rich, in developed industrial societies — we are all rich. So I want to know how, in this society, we can get something going — or have we no context for this?

Dauber: This is a very important question which we were discussing all the time at Cuernavaca. The problem with deschooling and, as far as I can see, with conscientization also, is that these are in some way formal topics — they don't give their content. Conscientization to what aim? Deschooling to which limits?

I would like to add to what Ivan said about the necessity of limits, that it should be a task for research and fantasy to figure out the positive chances for change. Discussing abstract examples from different countries in Cuernavaca, we found that if you take our main demand, the permanent interconnection of living, learning and working, you may get a first idea in which field you are involved. The primary task for people working in educational institutions is learning and teaching. But working means more than just the transmission of knowledge. As Paulo defined it such working, which is changing reality, is for the most part separated from the institutions. In the same way so much of our emotions, our experiences, our personal relations are separated from the artificial environment of learning. So people within educational institutions could be guided, as far as I see it, to try and break down their restrictive rules and to achieve an integrated learning, living and working together. At Cuernavaca, we discussed some good examples of factories: for instance, you probably know of the Lip strike in France. The workers started to strike and built up a political struggle; they intended to reshape their division of labour and started to learn as they worked. Then they brought their children to the factory and their women, and they started

to live there as well, part of the time, and in this strike it was very clear that they asked for some learning chances: new opportunities in learning how a factory should be run, and so on. The official administration sent them some teachers who had been teaching about these problems for 30 or 40 years in schools, but they threw them out after three days. They were very theoretical and abstract and far away from what was really going on.

I think in the same way you can give other examples from different countries where people who live together — that means in communities — started to build up for themselves a system of learning, of exchange of knowledge, or of exchange of new working cooperations.

**Illich:** I wish I were as optimistic as you. Consciousness of unspeakably overpowering projects is not something which can be gained and tolerated as human beings. Do you understand what I am talking about? When you reach my age and try in a disciplined way to think, then the frightening realities you see mean you are grappling with your hatred of insights which you cannot digest. It becomes almost impossible to bear what it means to be a man who seeks consciousness and lives in the type of technological world in which we are caught at this moment. One of the conceivable conclusions is a cessation of the possibility for dialectic politics, once we are in such a world. I don't want to sound catastrophic, but I can see this situation coming. I read an article recently which dealt with the issue of why modern man, philosophers, theologians, and so on, cannot deal any more with the concept of the apocalyptic, which is, again, a very Christian concept.

**Freire:** Yes, I think that we really would need to meet again in the kitchen of Cuernavaca or Geneva in order to continue our dialogue. Maybe in the intervening time we have developed from different circumstances some differences of approach, but I agree with you and also with the Cuernavaca text, when you criticize education and not only school, when you speak about some limits and say that at certain speeds education becomes dangerous, but I don't see very clearly what this is based on. While you and the others have been speaking, I had the feeling — maybe I'm not interpreting your meaning properly — that you recognize that education is a human phenomenon, in other words that human beings, for different reasons, created education. But at a certain moment, education lost the human beings and became a kind of diabolical instrument over which they no longer have any control. For me, this is the difference. I continue to recognize first of all that education is a permanent process, and here we are different: it is a permanent process for reasons such as, for example, the very unfinished dimension of human beings, why human beings are beings, historical beings and beings of research, permanent research. Secondly, in this search human beings achieved the ability to know their reality and to know that they know. Because of this, for me, one of the fundamental aspects of education is that it always was and remains a certain theory of knowledge put into practice.



The question now for me is to know what is the theory of knowledge which we put into practice, which determines or is conditioned by its methods. Because of this, instead of denying the existence of education, I criticize it; I may be utopian, but we have to be, and I include myself in the search for another kind of education. In other words, instead of exclusively criticizing education as a diabolical entity, I am trying to understand *why* it is becoming so; and then my concern is much more in trying to understand the concrete situations in which education is destructive, in order then to look for ways of transforming it into a better kind of education.

**Illich:** I follow you. But I make a distinction between walking and being transported, healing and receiving care. So, healing is the thing we are after but it can be done either very personally or at a cool institutional level, in a hospital, which brings in all kinds of professional factors – often necessary, but somehow more detached than the idea of giving care. In the same way I distinguish between learning or teaching and the educational institution. Now I think I know what has to be done to keep education from becoming demonic.

My work over the last few years has been concerned with recognizing the negative design criteria within which educational instruments must be kept. This is in order to prevent destructive education. I want to identify these criteria as postscriptive ones, not as prescriptive rules. If I've followed what you have written, Paulo, you want to make explicit this process which you see as non-destructive education. Now I think our work is complementary.

In all my social analysis over the last five years, I have concentrated on identifying these negative design criteria – not only for education, but also for transportation, and having identified them, on formulating them in such a way that they can become part of everyday discussion amongst typical people, schooled or non-schooled, so that they might become political programmes starting from the base.

In that sense I want to eliminate all educational theory from my mind – my research has been, as much as possible, contentless, so that I can better speak about these negative design criteria and show how and why education becomes destructive whatever the political circumstances.

**Freire:** Yes, but I cannot agree with you. When you analyse education this way, just by doing this, you mythologize it. So then you end by demythologizing a second kind of education – perhaps your own myth – and not education itself. Do you see? Maybe when you take this phenomenological approach, you take the essence of education and try to penetrate it, and you find a lot of bad things about it; then you reach the conclusion that you have grasped the being of education. In my view, when you do this you make a very good argumentation, but you are only understanding a certain kind of education.

**Illich:** I think that, even while you recognize my success, you distort what I am trying to do. My reason for moving away from having to give any





meaning to "education" is because I believe that, in a society which keeps within its natural limits and has not become merely a tool, then discussion about education will not be necessary; education will be natural. And it may come to pass that people looking back will say: "How strange that learning, living, engaging in politics in the 60s and 70s of the last century had to be called by such a wise man as Paulo Freire 'education'." I like to use words properly, traditionally, and for me "education" means bringing little people up as cats; it came into the French language about 1835 - 38 and its definition was taken from Voltaire – "an ugly neologism used by schoolmasters who want to give importance to their trade".

**Freire:** Nevertheless, for me what characterizes education did not start when the word appeared. What characterizes education – the attempt to know the reality which mediates the subjects – the cognitive subjects, is something which appeared before any word like "education". Now here we can discover many distortions and we cannot split working from learning and so on – this is one of the worst dichotomies we have today, the separation of the manual from the intellectual world, which turns schools into houses for the distribution of knowledge and not for the act of knowing. But I absolutely agree with your criticisms, because education is not the business of transferring knowledge but the act of knowing.

**Illich:** But, Paulo, with all due respect, what you say only confirms my opinion that we should get down to pure language. "To educate" and "education" have become so muddy and diluted that when they creep into a conversation they come to mean everything and anything. A major difficulty here is a semantic one, and I suggest a moratorium on the word "education". That may well be the greatest contribution possible to the advancement of thinking on the subject!

**Freire:** Yes, I accept that, but then another word would have to express this certain human procedure which once again would have to be understood in its relationships with society. So, whether we call education "education" or whether we discover another name for it in order to avoid distortions, we would still have to express by this new word certain procedures...



**Illich:** I wish we had a word for it. I believe one of the reasons people grab at the word "conscientization" and then deform it is precisely because they have a chance to restrict the field, the semantic field, now designated by this word "education". But your own willingness to allow people to identify *conscientização* in the way you developed it in the 60s or the 50s as the right or proper or good procedure of education, has contributed to further enlarging the semantic field of education which thus can mean practically anything. And I am critical about that. Look, Karl Rahner once pointed out that there are 59 highly respectable but different meanings which can be given to the concept of "grace". Now in the International Bureau of Education "education" doesn't have 59 species and sub-species; as a friend of mine at Cuernavaca pointed out, your Organization with its history of 20 years has already developed 78 meanings of education in its official documents. Now once a word becomes as elastic as that, it really serves only to maintain the bureaucracy, or the priesthood, call it what you want.

**Freire:** But if we accept your argument, we would have to create 70 new words...!

**Fernig:** I already think there is sufficient risk of that! I would like, sometime, Mr Illich, to get the 78 meanings at length, as a matter of interest. Probably I have helped to draft some! Actually, I am astonished at such an achievement in the short life of my organization; the Church, after so many centuries, hasn't produced anything similar!

\* \* \*

**Dauber:** I would like to ask two questions of our two heroes who have had such an animated discussion. The differences between the two concepts were clear. Ivan deals with negative design criteria and Paulo with a positive process of non-destructive education or conscientization. What I would like to ask is how each of them would avoid being coopted in two ways. First, in an ideological manner, which means that Ivan's concept is quoted as anti-progress, anti-technological, and Paulo is quoted as reformulating the ideology of educational relationship. Both of them have become in Germany a



compulsory part of the curriculum of universities and schools of teacher education and so on all over the country, and both are very commonly used in examination questions. And they are also coopted in a political manner, which means what I tried to say in my statement about developments in German education. Paulo is used by very radical political groups for their own purposes and Ivan is sometimes used by reformist groups who are going to change the school by deschooling schools. Both groups I have just mentioned are very similar. So my question to both is how would they avoid cooption in an ideological manner or in this educational and political manner?

**Freire:** I think that my answer can be given in a few words. It is impossible for Illich, myself or anyone to avoid being coopted. And that means being distorted – it means more or less the same thing. Maybe I will lose my humility now if I say that the only way for someone not to be coopted is not to do anything.

The only thing I think we can do, each one in his own way, is to try to clarify more and more what we are thinking about this and that point. In other words to say: "Look, after this explanation, you can continue to use me in your own way, but it is your responsibility, not mine." Another way of being coopted and distorted is in the theory of the criticisms. Sometimes, for example, I am criticized as a bourgeois educator interested only in preserving the *status quo*. Sometimes I am analysed as a kind of *diablo*, devil, a man who maybe could eat the children as beef. On these occasions, we have to smile, and to understand these kinds of interpretations. Many people do not read what we have written, but what they would like to have written. It means that they are reading themselves and not us – they read what they want to read, not what they should read. And maybe the only positive thing we can do is, first of all, to accept the criticisms, to understand them with an open mind, to understand the distortions, even to learn from them, and to try to explain much better, for sometimes we are responsible for being misunderstood because we did not explain something clearly at the time we said it. Our responsibility here is to accept this with humility and say: "Look, I was wrong, and I think that I am less wrong now", and so on. Besides that, I confess that I don't know how to avoid the situation.

**Illich:** Paradoxically, by doing or saying something one contributes to institution-building. So with, say, conscientization, you make a provisional contribution to thinking – and then it crops up all over the place, even in many languages, as the World Council of Churches has ensured. But all one can do to correct misinterpretations is to write or speak again, and that just increases the momentum, gives more data for analysis and cooption, and increases the risk of bitterness in a personality cult. But I am more interested in prevention than cure. That is, I look once again for negative design criteria. On the other hand it may be good to get ideas into the arena, to risk being coopted, in order to get the discussion started. If one feels one has something important to say, how do you get it heard? The risk of cooption is nothing to the difficulty of being heard.



**Ehrlich:** I was intrigued by Huberman's opinion, or was it a description, of schooling in Geneva. However, you seemed to say that deschooling was almost impossible at primary level because of the necessary socializing – function of the school. Could you explain that judgment? I mean, what possible use is deschooling at secondary level if for six years young people have been submitted to a programme of consuming education?

**Huberman:** It's a problem to which I have by no means a very clear answer. I was talking about different levels. One of the things which interested me was that after a number of years of working at the university, and with teachers, I finally came into a situation where I was trying to set up schools. These were not schools in the sense that they were private, but they were run very differently from the way public schools are run. I found that the sort of universe we wanted to create for children from six to twelve years old was the kind of situation which was not radically different from what one could see in a school, in the sense that it all happened in one building; that the children spent most of their time there; that there were no other adults available to them; that a lot was done in just giving them the environment in which they could interact and carry on their own learning activities the way they wanted to; that we had to use books; that we used people who were adults whom they needed; and in many other ways it resembled what one can find in very good public schools, for example, in parts of England. And, of course, we didn't socialize in any deliberate way, although I don't think the school even knows it's socializing, but we socialized, obviously, because everyone socializes when he's in some kind of society.

When we worked on a secondary level, it took a totally different form: more in line with what we saw as being needed by adolescents, probably more so than anything else at that age when it's a question of their getting ready to enter into some adult role, probably what they almost spontaneously want. So I found that this form was the form that we more or less generated out of our own experience. In analysing compulsory education, I think there is a good reason why it *is* compulsory for the primary school: it has to do with socialization; it has to do with the fact that it's a very cheap and rational operation to run. And in the secondary school these very important criteria are no longer there. There's no reason to keep on socializing children – this has more or less been done or not, but you're not going to be able to recuperate them around that age. And it's a tremendously expensive social investment, and getting more and more so. And the children themselves don't put up with it: they won't be institutionalized.

It was really from those two aspects that I was approaching the question. As for the authorities, I don't think that they are particularly interested in any other way of organizing activities than the way they have done up to now. I think on the secondary level they will come to use the outside environment much more than they do now. Not because they want to change the relationships, but because they are going to find that they can't afford to keep doing what they're doing because the children won't stay



*The community house*



*Dancing class outdoors*

*Working with Montessori equipment*



Our children are one of the most important parts of our community life, and we include them in everything we do. We are therefore very concerned about their education and development, and that they are truly raised in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord". To accomplish this, we have begun our own school where we teach our children not only the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but also love for one another, cooperation, creativity and independence. We use the Montessori method of teaching and the children begin at about





*Riding through an olive grove*

# bambini di dio community

Florence, Italy

the age of three. For our children, school is a natural part of their daily life, since the children, teachers, parents and other members of the community all live and work together. Learning is not confined just to a schoolroom, and frequent trips are made to museums and historical monuments, or simply out to the woods to learn about nature firsthand in the midst of God's creation. We also teach our children Bible stories and help them to learn simple lessons of faith.

We are trying to give our children an education that will not only help them learn to make their own decisions and exercise their creativity, but most of all to have a true love for God and for others.



*Creative painting*



*Lunchtime meal preparation*





*Playing with friends*

**Photos by Samech**



*Working in the library*



*Some  
of the  
teachers*



*Bethany*



*Toddlers' playtime*



*Mesha*

*Bedtime Bible story*



*Miriam*

*Tebea*



still in the institutions. And they are perfectly aware that children are getting so much from outside the institution anyway that they might as well give them access to it.

**Stephen Whittle:** On the one hand, we have a vision and on the other hand we have reality, and trying to link the two together inevitably makes us somewhat schizophrenic. I have felt more schizophrenic this morning than for a long time, as I remember the call for education of the masses in Britain, for example, which came from socialists. It came from people who felt that the idea of education was one that was going to help them to change the world, and that the point of education must be that it was available to all. And now here this morning, I hear socialists of a sort saying precisely the opposite: that education, by its very nature, is a dangerous and somewhat illusive concept; and almost suggesting no education as an alternative – certainly no education in the sense that we presently understand it. And those people who are rejecting it are precisely those who have had all the advantages of such an educational system. “Advantages” in inverted commas, of course, but nevertheless, people who have had privileges and benefits. The people who cannot benefit from the kind of vision that was put forward this morning are those who have never been able to benefit from education, understood either in its present, rather formal sense, or even in the visionary sense. And so I come back to what Paulo also said this morning when he stated that he had to work within the framework of the possible, the visions of the possible; he talks about the most important insight to get across at this present moment in time being that education is itself a political process, and the more people realize that, the more chance there is for a real discussion about what kind of education should take place. But all the time I too am conscious of this very schizophrenic situation whereby we have bourgeois expectations for our own children, we have all sorts of traditional desires and wishes for them, all kinds of hopes and expectations about our own societies, which on the one hand are visionary and on the other are very much tuned in to the realities of what presently goes on. Therefore I think it would be very helpful if at this point we could begin to become a little bit more precise around these signs of hope, the small steps that Mr Huberman’s just been talking about, because I think there lies – at least, for my limited mind – the sign of a step forward.

**Illich:** I would like to comment on that one. I thought the meeting was about becoming aware of the small steps each one of us has to take for himself, that this is a consultation with friends. But if they are taken as planning decisions, as policy decisions, we may only reconfirm what we have. Now you speak about the link between vision and reality, between diverging vision and reality. This link, as far as I know, one calls “myth” – it’s one way of calling it – and that “myth” is generated by a ritual. I consider schooling as the appropriate ritual to create what you call a schizophrenic world society, which believes in the possibility – forgive me, the absurd possibility – that we can move towards justice or freedom by taking the little steps which you recommend for your children. The fact that I have had



unusual privileges in participating in different kinds of very rigorous rituals, and learning how to smile about each one of them, is a tremendous privilege. It logically cannot be shared by many people. I know things better and more clearly because of my schooling and my competence as a pontifical master of ceremonies. And I learned several other such rituals as a university rector, and this by definition cannot be shared. But they belong to a tiny minority, and I will not accept blackmail and be told: "Because you can come to know it, you shall not talk about it to other people, who by definition are under-privileged!" Do you get me?

**Whittle:** I take your point, but I didn't go on to add what you have just added.

**Illich:** Another thing. We have to keep things clear. The fact that what is called socialism today in effect overwhelmingly means "how to render industrial progress and growth more effective, or more efficient, and distribute its fruit or products better", might make it necessary for anybody who wants to speak about what my ideals are as "anti-socialism". I believed until a few years ago that socialism as a term – it's a little bit like education – could still be saved for policies which would have to be quickly undertaken, such as limits to industrial growth, in favour of autonomous productivity, which today, and only today we see as obviously necessary. I'm increasingly more doubtful whether people who share the ideals which have to be identified as socialist can afford to be thrown into the "socialist" camp. It is very difficult for me to say this in a group of many people whom I do not know, because my very closest socialist friends tell me that in the interest of our common goals, which we have very deeply discussed and critically analysed, such a denunciation of the value of a word – such as that of "education" this morning – is dangerous and politically counter-productive. I haven't made up my mind yet if I really want to take this position strongly. Do you understand? But in a meeting called in a place where one ought to be able to be radical, even this question, which is very painful for me, should be raised. Forgive me for speaking so passionately.

**Representative from IDAC (Institute for Cultural Action):** I would like to take up your theme of criticisms of the industrial society, which has come up several times today and also in the works you have written. Several times you have said that this society is an inhuman one. For me there is already a certain ambiguity in the term, and I would like you to clarify what you mean by it. Also, you speak about the need to fix certain limits, which would prevent dehumanization. Therefore my question is on two points: What do you understand by a human society? According to what criteria would these limits be fixed and by whom?

**Illich:** I purposely speak of an inhuman society because that leaves me free to profess my ignorance about what a human society is like. We are again in an attempt to develop a language on which consensus can be reached, a language which basically focuses on proscriptive, and not on prescriptive, agreements, social contract – call it what you will. I call an inhuman society



a society which all people I know (including myself) and whom I can imagine (and my imagination is pretty vivid) would consider altogether inhuman. And if you told me that you wanted to eat your grandfather when he died, I would say: "Well, I don't know whether that is a sign of an inhuman society, but it would be an inhuman act to ask me to join you."

Secondly, I clearly distinguish between thresholds and limits. I believe that we can objectively or scientifically identify critical thresholds, for instance, in the development of the rate of per capita energy consumption in transportation, or in certain kinds of medical treatment beyond which, for the majority of people, the damages are greater than the advantages; economists would call this the marginal disutilities, the growing disutilities. These thresholds in the instruments of production – not in the social organization in which they are used – I believe cannot be identified precisely, but probably the order of magnitude, and certainly their dimensions, can be identified. The limits, according to thresholds which can be identified, can be set – theoretically, at least. They can be set in order to bring industrial production to a maximum level at which industrial growth still remains ecologically tolerable, both in social terms and in terms of speed of change. And I see all around me evidence that, with considerable rapidity, our major establishments are moving towards identifying the general framework of limits established by bureaucrats and technocrats, limits within which we have to stay in order for an industrial growth system to be possible. It is very easy to tell you who should establish these limits – "techno-fascists", to use a slang word. I know what the opposite to techno-fascist limits is, but I can't tell you specifically how it can become functional. The opposite is common sense agreement about what is enough for all of us: enough for our own good, quite independently of technological progress.

Whether such thinking can become generalized outside minority, marginal groups without a sudden major breakdown of our social systems first, I do not know. I suspect not. I believe, therefore, that the only way we can prepare for the acceptance of limits at the moment when their necessity – the necessity of non-technocratically set limits – becomes obvious because of breakdown, is to train now, through our personal responsibility and not



through the creation of some party or school, as many people as possible who can see things as clearly as I am convinced that I see them.

**Fernig:** There's one question I want to revert to, not of my own, but an unanswered open-ended one. Earlier on, as you will recall, we were going around the panel here debating this matter of the role or possible place of education in social transformation, to fully understand the expression that Paulo had given to it in his initial statement. Three of the members spoke. I would like to invite Michael Huberman to speak now.

**Huberman:** One of the problems about this question was that I took it personally: how does someone who is involved in education relate to the problem of social reform, and what does he think he's doing by whatever action he does, in or out of schools, in order to bring about social reform. I don't see how one answers that, except by just talking about who one is or what one's ideology is — in fact, what one is doing. I may have misunderstood the question, but if I haven't, then it very simply calls for personal statements.

When this point was raised, I made some notes about what I believe in, in a very general way, and then about what I believe in about tactical strategy, and then what I'm doing about it, and all I can do is present them as I found myself writing them down. I assume that we have a general agreement on ideology that concerns things like an equal distribution of social resources, especially public and private, finance and property, including access to knowledge — and by access to knowledge I mean access to tools, to people that one needs to learn with, and to information one needs in order to carry on one's own project. We believe in equal distribution of those things, we believe in an equal opportunity to become what one wants to become, principally in terms of work: doing what one wants to do or what one does best. We believe in freedom from physical danger and psychological insecurity, which means not being under threat, not being ill, having enough to eat, being warm enough. And the last thing I suppose that we believe in is what I would call also conscientization, which simply has to do with understanding oneself, but more importantly feeling that one has a good deal of control over what happens to one.



I believe in those things and I think, as the Americans say, that if you don't believe in them, then you're part of the problem and not part of the solution. Without this being a specific ideology in any formalized way, I come back to what I think is a very classic position, what Paulo Freire says: "In history, one does what is historically possible, and not what one would like to do, or not only what one would like to do." I feel that, for myself, this is exactly what I'm doing, by working at the level I'm working at, namely in the schools as they exist right now. I am trying, for instance, to get them more in line with the criteria I've talked about, with the help of teachers and people who run the schools, with whom I have a lot to do. I am trying to work out other ways of being with children and, with a lot of other people, to set up alternatives and make people in the schools look at them and try them out. I do at least half of my work at the university, and I am trying to do research into what I'm doing and understand what other people are doing, to put my ideas into proper perspective. And then, finally, I try to be available to people who want to talk to me. So I have no other programme of dealing with social reforms in schools than what I and my friends, and others who agree with me about these goals, are actually doing. I don't know how to approach the problem in any other way, so this may be a totally inappropriate answer to your question.

**von der Weid:** I am working in India. I believe that there are two civilizations, one of the rich and the other of the poor, and even though we are seeking to understand each other, to carry on a dialogue, it would seem to me, personally, that there is no way at all for these two groups to understand each other: there are two kinds of sociology, two kinds of thought. In a subsistence economy – and this means trying to subsist from day to day, with enough to eat and drink, and somewhere to live – what sort of school do you foresee? Very little research has been done on this problem: because we live in the developed countries, we have concentrated our research on our life here and not elsewhere.

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**Fernig:** In the last few minutes available, it would seem to me more advisable not to have any more questions, but to ask each of the speakers in turn whether he feels, in the light of what has been said, whether he would like to add anything. I think we have had placed before us a number of theoretical, abstract analyses, sometimes bordering on semantic distinctions. I feel we have fluctuated between Thomas More, as the classic Utopian going back to the 16th century, which was the beginning of this terrible process of education, and a 19th century variant of it, characterized by Samuel Butler. You will find that in the rejection of the machine in favour of the tool, the rejection of institution in favour of personal relationships, there is an essential conclusion Butler came to which has not emerged in this discussion: namely, that the human relationship which counts is love.

My last point is that in the discussion we have had today, we have had only one speaker refer to children. It is one of the paradoxes in my life, working

in education as I do, that you can be with educators all the time and hear all manner of discussion about education, but it is very rarely that you get any reference to children, and even more rarely to any discussion on dealing with children.

*(Paulo Freire left before this point.)*

**Dauber:** It was quite helpful for me to hear Ivan and Paulo talking together and discussing the differences between their approaches. But it was also helpful to see again how both approaches are converging. Maybe I can show this in the relationship between school and society. As Paulo said in his first statement, there is no direct mechanistic relationship between schools and

**“Life is one long process of getting tired.”  
Samuel Butler, 1835-1902**

society: there is an indirect relationship. This conceals on the one hand the preservation of given conditions as well as giving some space for transformation. I think the contradictions which we now have in our societies are mirrored in our educational institutions.

I would like to give an example. The public financing of educating people and producing people with qualifications and skills, which can be used in the work process, is in quite flagrant contradiction with the private exploitation of the labour force. You find the same thing in schools: for example, in the contradiction of understanding schools as an agency of equality where everybody has the same chance. Yet the schools become selective institutions which reproduce class structures. Or you can see it in each lesson the teacher gives every morning in the school, when he tries to socialize children so that they accept social functions or social behaviour. This is, I think, the place where Ivan's concept of deschooling – which means de-centralization, de-institutionalization, de-professionalization, and so on – is very important. It means to limit the power of those institutions and, by doing this, to become aware of course of the political and economic contradictions in society. And as you start to work towards changing these institutions, you necessarily enter into a political struggle. And this is, as far as I understand, the process of conscientization, as Paulo often described it.

**Huberman:** I have been working for the last couple of years in adult education because I have been interested in how adults change and how they learn, and we don't know very much about this. One of the first things I got involved in was a project in Canada. We studied people who were trying to learn something about themselves: in other words, somebody wants to learn how to build a house or how to work a farm which he just bought. These were people who didn't go to institutions but simply had this problem they wanted to solve: they wanted to *do* something, or they wanted to *learn* about something for various reasons, and they went about doing it. We went to find out what they did, who they went to for help, how they organized



themselves, where they got materials from, in other words how people go about learning to solve whatever problems they have or finding out whatever information they want, without the help of institutions. The study found out, in talking with people who had taken entire biology courses, who had built their own houses, who had managed to run an entire farm, that they reckoned that "all I am doing is not worth anything *because I haven't learnt it in an institution and it wasn't taught to me by a teacher*". And I remain struck by this because I think it is something we all suffer from, whether we want to admit it or not, and I am part of the machinery that perpetuates that myth. This is precisely the trap that Ivan warns us against.

The other thing I begin to be more concerned about, and it is more related to Paulo, is the question of powerlessness and knowledge. An investigator went around Las Vegas asking people about atomic fission. He found out that the people living in that city, which is within 100 kilometers of most of the atomic and nuclear testing being done in the United States, didn't know anything about it. They knew less about atomic and nuclear fission than people who lived 500 miles away – people who were not in the region of this atomic testing. And then the investigator reproduced this experiment with prisoners, with people in institutions, and the conclusion he came to was that when people feel that they can't control what happens to them, they don't want to know about it. They think that, no matter what they do, it is not going to have any effect, because the decisions are taken in spite of them. And certainly one of the most important things that I have learnt from Paulo Freire is that this is just not true. You can spend time with people showing them that they can in fact change a situation, they have all the means to change a situation – at which point all they want to do is to go out and collect a tremendous amount of information about it; and they are determined to learn about it, because in some real way it affects who they are and how they can control what happens to them.

**Illich:** I would like to pick up the last point. My concern, again, is with the identification of those general technical conditions in society – science and power – which define a framework within which people really have power. I don't think they need the sort of schooling they get for that: I don't think they need education within limits. The second point, Mr Chairman, is your statement that children are almost entirely left out of the discussions, and that the same happens frequently when so-called educators get together. I hope it happens, for two reasons: because educators are either self-centred or really concerned. In your organization I know that it happens constantly.

I consider education an empty machinery of the West – the most heretical church which ever existed. And I avoid talking about children because of the terrible danger of the infantilization of the entire world's population, due to the policies which are being followed by every government at this moment, by international organizations and possibly even by churches, to extend educational therapy to all people; and my only reason for coming here was to sound the alarm, to speak against the social expansion of childhood.





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In 18 countries of Eastern and Western Europe, groups of young people and youth leaders are preparing for the

## **European Youth Conference**

Driebergen, Netherlands, 26 March to 3 April 1975

The theme "Faith today" does not only mean thinking about our own "style of life" but expressing our "hope" ● for ourselves ● for our continent ● for our world ● and practising it. The European Youth Conference, which will unite more than 200 young people from all corners of our continent, will try to do this by:

- worship
- a game called "Eurodrama"
- sports and team-games
- study-groups and workshops (e.g. the third-world, faith and politics, Catholic-Protestant, the problem of Northern Ireland, Christians and Marxists, and other problems of today)

**Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe, 2 av. J.-Perrot, F-38000 Grenoble**



**No. 1, 1974 : Hope Deferred :** "Hope deferred makes the heart sick," says the writer of Proverbs. Yet is there much room today for telling about a hope which is being accomplished? In the context of the search for expressions of hope and stories of faith, **Risk** turned to Northern Ireland. The relevance of the material collected here is not limited to a particular point in time. Many of the underlying problems which people indicate as provoking the troubles in Northern Ireland are longstanding, and will probably remain with us — and these are the problems which give this account of hope its wider and longer-lasting importance.



**No. 2, 1974 : Voices of the Sisters :** What is sexism? Women from 49 countries — 160 of them — met in West Berlin, June 15 to 22, under the sponsorship of the World Council of Churches, to explore what this word means for Christians and to examine the place of Christian women in the worldwide context of women's liberation. This issue of **Risk** is a mosaic of that "happening" — different coloured pieces of an event.



**No. 3, 1974 : Caught in a Web :** Everyone is caught up in a web of social institutions and organizations. These institutions are not static but are in constant change; many of them are widely contested, including those of the Church. This issue can be read in two ways; either as a series of stories about groups of Christians the world over who have tried to come to terms with the institutions which affect their lives and dominate them; or as a primer of practical theology. Either way, some clues begin to emerge and some questions are raised which may help us to understand what God is doing in his world and to share in his action.



**No. 4, 1974 : Ujamaa Safari :** Ujamaa Safari is the story of a meeting. And meetings seem to be the primary business of the ecumenical movement. We meet to discover each other; to plan and to criticize; to search for unity and discover our deep divisions; to find our common strategies and programmes and more often learn how complex and different are the situations we face; to write up our consensus and sadly find how narrow that can be. And sometimes we meet in order to change. Yet changing convictions is no easy matter. One has to discover, sometimes, what one's convictions really are! Ujamaa Safari is the story of Familia 74, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania — a meeting planned to take some of these notions into account.

are you willing to take a Risk?