

tradition to the conclusions they do. It is also so then that there must be a head-on collision between such a tradition, moving as it must toward a humanistic atheism, and that tradition broadly represented by the authors of

the Appeal.

These issues are at least worth pondering. If there is *any* plausibility to the analysis suggested here, then the Hartford Appeal may be even more significant than most of its critics or

defenders have yet realized, since it would by no means be directed only toward an ephemeral, faddish lunatic fringe, but rather toward what may well emerge as a major alternative to traditional Western religion.

## Reader's Response II

### Freire Revisited

Ernest W. Ranly

The mails move slowly, and a bit of careful study is a little difficult here in the Central Andes of Peru. But, finally, some response must be made to Peter Berger's "The False Consciousness of 'Consciousness Raising'" in the January, 1975, issue of *Worldview*. The last two-thirds of the article is an admirable exposition on "cognitive respect," "cognitive participation," and on the fact that policy and politics can never be value-free. To all of this I take no exception; I respect anew the ability Professor Berger has to take very basic ideas often left confused and make them lucid and practical.

However, the first third of the article, the conclusion, and a general theme throughout is a stinging criticism against what is generally called "consciousness raising" and, specifically, against the thought of Paulo Freire. First of all, let me confess my limitations. I am not in contact with "left-wing ideologists" in the United States who may use this phrase or employ techniques they think derive from Freire's theory. Ideas suffer not so much from language translation as from cultural transference. (Witness how Andrew Greeley rants and raves against Liberation Theology in its North American setting.) Secondly, I have never met Freire; Denis Goulet writes that his personal style is such that one "can no longer dissociate his

written from his oral work." Finally, I have only two written texts on hand: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which I have reread as immediate background, and *Education for Critical Consciousness*, which I will use as my principal text. Therefore, in the spirit of a Paul Ricoeur, I would like to do a hermeneutics of these two texts of Freire against the charges brought by Peter Berger.

Direct confrontation of deeply imbedded ideas often evokes a reaction directly opposite to what is intended. Gandhi spoke of the "creative conflict" of *satyagraha* in his theory and programs of nonviolent action. Yet he and Martin Luther King, Jr., were often accused of instigating violence. King wrote from the Birmingham jail: "We...are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive." So also, it seems, Freire's theory is being criticized for the very points he is openly and deliberately confronting.

Berger asks: "Whose consciousness is supposed to be raised, and *who* is supposed to do the raising? The answer is clear wherever the term is used in political rhetoric. It is the consciousness of 'the masses' that must be raised, and it is the 'vanguard' that will do the job" (italics added). Nothing can be further from these texts of Freire. They speak of the educatee (the

one to be educated) only as Subject. A Subject engages in relationships with others and with the world by creating, recreating, and making free decisions on how they should participate in these relationships. All true education is to engage in open dialogue with Subjects to awaken in them a sense of critical awareness. Knowledge requires the presence of Subjects confronted with the world; teacher and student must take on the role of conscious Subjects, mediated by the knowable object that they seek to know.

The enemy, for Freire, is sectarianism, or, in the context of Chilean peasant education, extentionalism, or, in the context of education, the "banking" concept of education. A sectarian can be rightist or leftist (as Berger correctly points out). A sectarian tries to impose his choice on others; he is arrogant, anticomunicative, predominantly emotional and uncritical. The teacher in "banking" education is the one who knows everything and delivers the knowledge he possesses as objects to his students as to other objects. Rural extension designates the educational and technical assistance that agents, educators, and workers "extend" to rural peasants to improve their farming practices. Extentionalism operates on the assumption that the educators possess knowledge they can simply "extend," transmit globally to the educatees.

Freire condemns all forms of cultural invasion. He considers all forms of cultural invasion to be authoritarian; it "presupposes conquest, manipulation and messianism on the part of the invader." His essay "Extension or

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ERNEST W. RANLY taught philosophy at Saint Joseph's College, Indiana, for some years. He is now engaged in work, which he describes as largely pastoral, in the Central Andes of Peru.

Communication" bristles with condemnations of this kind of sectarian manipulation of people. Educatees should always be respected as Subjects, capable of critical consciousness, with whom the educators should communicate at a level of respective equality in genuine open dialogue. He does not want educators or social workers to be "agents of change." He speaks of the need to understand anthropology and to have faith in people, faith "in their ability to take on the true role of seekers of knowledge." Nowhere do I find that Freire speaks of the "masses"; he consistently speaks of Subjects. He explicitly condemns "massification" as "manipulation of Subjects."

The attitude Berger imputes to "consciousness-raising" is exactly what Freire condemns in extentionalism and sectarianism, which, as we saw, can indeed be leftist or rightist. "They don't understand what is good for them" is the classic attitude of the extension agent, the "banking" teacher, and all forms of cultural invasion. Even in the application of technical methods for immediate increase of agricultural production, Freire resolutely defends his meaning of dialogic communication and respect for Subjects and their cultural world.

The distinction between *nature* as the given objective reality of the universe as opposed to world, which is man's peculiar intentional sphere of experiences, is quite commonplace today. Freire uses this distinction to speak of history and culture, for only the presences and relationships of free, reflective Subjects constitute a human world. It is in this context that Berger's "unfortunate" quotation from Freire occurs. "This level of consciousness...corresponds to such a dehumanized reality that existence in it, for men, means living like animals. It is often impossible for such men to recognize the difference between themselves and, say, horses." In another place Freire writes: "The [peasants] come so close to the natural world that they feel more *part* of this world than transformers of the world....This nearness which identifies them with the natural world makes the act of 'entering into' it dif-

ficult for them."

Now, critical consciousness for Freire means men's ability to reflect "on themselves and on the activity in which they are engaged." People must first "separate" themselves from nature and then "re-enter into it" as a field of action and reflection to create true interrelations between themselves and the facts. In this way men create and recreate culture and history. Subjects must become free, willing, critical, active participants in history and culture.

In the appendix to the essay "Education as the Practice of Freedom" Freire adds a description, with pictures, of ten "situations" his "culture circles"—classes—were to discuss. The first drawing shows a peasant holding a book and a hoe, and in the background is a well with a drawbucket and a house. The point of the discussion is to realize (experience) the difference between nature and culture. "Who made the well? Why?" Man made the well because he needed water. The primary level of culture is that of subsistence. By work man transforms nature into his house, his clothes, the well, his tools, a book. "I know now that I am cultured," exclaimed an elderly peasant emphatically, "because I work, and working, I transform the world." "I make shoes," said another participant, "and now I see that I am worth as much as the Ph.D. who writes books."

By the fifth situation the participants can discuss man as a being who not only knows, but one who knows that he knows. An illiterate can affirm: "Only man is a hunter. [With a bow-and-arrow or gun] they make culture before and after they hunt. The cat does not make culture....He is a pursuer." Therefore, the point of Berger's "unfortunate" quotation is simply Freire's theory that man must first "separate" himself reflectively from nature before he can transform it into his own cultural world.

The whole enterprise is suggestive of a new Socrates, not dialoguing with the cultured sophisticates of Athens, but with the cultured illiterates of the world today. And perhaps Freire is suffering a misunderstanding and distortion similar to that of Socrates. His

crime may well be that he is corrupting the poor, the oppressed, and the illiterate. In his respect and faith in people and in his trust in radical democratization Freire professes that it is better that people be dissatisfied in their critical consciousness than satisfied recipients of sectarian paternalism.

Anthropologists may well avoid "ethnocentrism" and accept Berger's postulate that all available worlds of consciousness are of equal value, that, "moral judgments apart, every human world must be deemed in principle as being equal to every other world in its access to reality." Freire does not articulate this principle as such, but it is surely functioning at all times in his condemnation of cultural invasion. However, he is not a simple student of human culture; his theory and method is not only to study and respect another man's culture ("cognitive respect"), but to have the people of that culture become critically conscious of their own cultural creations. Among the "unprecedented values concerning human rights, human dignity and human freedom" that Western civilization has produced (according to Berger) individual and collective critical consciousness *à la* Socrates and Hegel may very well be a positive and irreversible advance. One need not be only a narrow-minded dialectical materialist to think that in the shrinking global village of today only those cultures will survive that freely, reflectively, and critically participate in the creation of its own emerging interrelations with other cultures and with the all-pervasive presence of modern technology and contemporary economics.

Let us use a North American example. One can have deep "cognitive respect" in his "value-free" study of American black culture. No one will deny the American black his own cultural world of religion, music, dance, and myths, his own peculiar, very rich, cultural access to reality. Nevertheless, to live in a black neighborhood, as in Lawndale on the West Side of Chicago, is to suffer economically from poor quality merchandise in the local stores at high prices and to be at the bottom of a complex legal conspiracy over home purchasing in land contract buying. All the cultural

"cognitive respect" in the world will never give to the local people the knowledge of how they can effectively come to grips with, and alter, some of the most oppressing economic realities of their lives.

"Who does the defining of a real situation?" asks Berger. Freire works out of his Brazilian and Chilean experience and out of the Hegelian master/slave dialectics. He may have a rather naive view of what he calls nature, objective reality, facts, and causes. True knowledge, for Freire, is knowledge of causes, but who is the final arbiter to know when the actual cause of a particular situation is uncovered? Berger, however, quotes W.I. Thomas: "If people define a situation as real it is real in consequence." This is a fine principle in a cultural-social context ("the social construction of reality"), but it surely cannot simply apply to the brute facts of nature, such as storms, pestilence, and plagues.

Today, economic and political forces seem to apply to the poor of the world more like brute nature than like part of a humanized world controlled and directed by free Subjects. Or, in the words of Berger-Luckmann in their deservedly acclaimed book *The Social Construction of Reality*, these very social structures become objective realities ("having a being independent of our own volition") in their own right. Therefore, the illiterate poor tend to accept economic-political realities in the same spirit of religious fatalism as they do earthquakes and hurricanes. The price of wool here in the Peruvian Andes has dropped 25 per cent during a time of sharp inflationary increase in all purchasing prices. Who, indeed, must define the situation, and what makes the situation real? When international conglomerates dictate economic policies, is this the unchallengeable "will of God" in its effects upon the poor? Or again, in the terminology of Berger-Luckmann, effective socialization occurs in the "internalization" of our social structures. It would seem that a positive constructive dialogue could begin by comparing these basic ideas of Berger-Luckmann with Freire's theory of creating in his Subjects a critical consciousness of man's free participation

in the cultural-historical process.

For me this is not merely a moot point in intellectual debate. Among my pastoral responsibilities are some fifteen agricultural peasant communities here in the cold, bare Andes. A close confidante and counselor is a Peruvian priest-sociologist (his father is a Quechua-speaking campesino) who has been working full time within the Peruvian government's agrarian reform programs. He is dismayed to see his own government, in the face of so much rhetoric and public support of local folklore in dance, dress, and language (in late May, 1975, the government made Quechua an official language), become the agent of "cultural invasion" against the self-respect and dignity of the peasants themselves. In reading Freire (and Ivan Illich) and working out of the theories developed in a program called the *Anillos de Desarrollo* (literally, "Rings of Development") the priest-educator is waging a lonely, losing battle in favor of treating the peasants as active Subjects in dialogue to prepare and help themselves participate in the making of their future. The situation no longer obtains where sociologists/anthropologists can stand back with "cognitive respect" in their study of indigenous cultures. Strong forces exist that will shape and form the future of these cultures with or without the direct participation of the people themselves. Freire's theory and method of conscientization is one positive, concrete, and tested way of helping the indigenous cultures of the world take possession of their future.

For, finally, Freire's method of conscientization (the word is hardly more barbaric in English than in Portuguese and Spanish) stands outside and above the severe strictures of Peter Berger. Conscientization does respect the individual cultural worlds of indigenous peoples. It attempts to avoid cultural invasion. It does not ask for a "conversion" to new values, only a reflective awareness of its own values. Its professed aims are simply to make the people reflectively, critically aware of how they can and must assume responsibility for their own history and culture. And the fact is irreversible that world economics is indeed a major

contributing factor to modern reality. Perhaps only through such conscientization can autonomous or quasi-autonomous cultures, like the North American Negro culture and the Incan-pre-Incan cultures of the campesinos here in the Peruvian Andes, survive in any form whatever.

If North American leftists misunderstand and misuse Freire's theory and method, I do not know. If Paulo Freire himself is guilty of imposing values and ideologies and revolutionary action upon people, I do not know. But the close reading of the written texts themselves do not allow such interpretations and applications. It is hoped that the serious critics of Freire would analyze and interpret the texts themselves and let the criticism begin here.

## Peter Berger Responds:

Paulo Freire's prose is not the easiest in the world. In principle, I'm sure, different interpretations are possible. It is also possible, therefore, that Ranly's is better than mine. But my intention in the article to which Ranly responds was *not* to engage in Freire exegesis. Rather, I was concerned with the concept of "conscientization," or "consciousness raising" as it is used today, in Latin America as well as in the United States, by intellectuals who want to instill revolutionary consciousness in "the masses." Freire's writings are used to legitimate this activity. If I misunderstand Freire, so apparently do those who lean on him for this sort of legitimation. Someday perhaps both Ranly and I will meet Freire, and then we'll be able to get all these things clear. In the meantime, my own concern continues to be the fostering of "cognitive respect"—including especially respect for those who view the world differently from the way intellectuals do (and this goes for intellectuals of *all* political colorations).