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Foreword by Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO for The Wiley Handbook on Paulo Freire

2018

Brazilian educator, philosopher, and historian, Paulo Freire, is renowned for his visionary ideas as well as his activism for human dignity and justice. A pioneer of “critical pedagogy”, he contended that education is the foundation of all freedoms and that education alone can give individuals the power to shape their own destinies.

His important intellectual contribution addresses a question at the heart of UNESCO’s work: What is education and what is it for? Defining the purpose and relevance of education is as important now as in 1968 when his seminal text Pedagogy of the Oppressed was first published.

This publication brings together eminent researchers to examine the impact of Freire’s work across the world, to reinterpret his work for our contemporary period, and to explore directions for future educational reform.

In recent years, the philosophical foundations of Freire’s work have gained traction at an international level, particularly through the recognition of the importance of Global Citizenship Education, as part of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Global Citizenship Education equips learners with the skills, competencies, and values they need to solve the social, political, economic, and environmental challenges of our time. UNESCO remains committed to a vision of education for building peace, eradicating poverty, and driving sustainable development and is expanding the transformative power of education through our Global Citizenship Education program.

During his lifetime, Freire collaborated frequently with UNESCO to promote the organization’s educational activities, including as a jury member for UNESCO’s International Literacy Prizes. He himself also received the 1986 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education for his tireless work and unflagging devotion to providing literacy training and education for those most in need.

This collection of essays is a great tribute to his lasting legacy in shaping education as a means to improve the human condition. I would like to thank all of the
distinguished scholars who have contributed to this publication and particularly Dr. Carlos Alberto Torres, a UNESCO Chair, for coordinating this ambitious project.

I hope that these thought-provoking and inspiring essays will continue to arouse the same hope and critical questioning that Paulo Freire has come to be known for, in pursuit of liberation, dignity, and justice, without which human-kind cannot fully realize its potential.

Audrey Azoulay
Part I

History and Context of a Global Public Intellectual
Introduction

Paulo Freire and the Dialectics of the Local and the Global

Carlos Alberto Torres

This introduction situates the life and work of Paulo Freire in the context of the multiple analyses, appraisals, and insights that are presented in 31 chapters plus the introduction of this handbook. Likewise, the introduction offers clues of the narrative thread running through the different chapters.

The work has been done over 3 years, with a large number of experts on Freire collaborating with the original idea: to bring a new perspective on reinventing Freire 50 years after the publication of Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Furthermore, the authors explore the currency of Freire’s contribution for social theory, educational reform, and democratic education.

The authors of this handbook represent different life stories, genders, ethnicities, languages, nationalities, continents, nations, regions, religions, academic experiences, specialties, theories, and methodologies. All together they created a crucial interdisciplinary work in terms of fields of studies as well as analytical and normative premises. Accordingly, all of them found resonance in the voice, theories, methods, and praxis of Paulo Freire. They decided to write, with complete autonomy, a chapter for the book on a generic topic that I initially suggested, given, from their own individual or collective perspective, the orientation, nuances, and articulation of the topic in its final form as a chapter.

A message emerges from the Wiley Handbook on Freire: In pedagogy, today, we can be with Freire or against Freire but not without Freire.

History and Context of a Global Public Intellectual

The violence of the oppressed is not violence, but a legitimate response; it is the affirmation of a being who no longer fears freedom and who knows that it is not a gift, but a conquest.1

Public intellectuals are willing and able, through their research and teaching, their public work in mass media, and their analytical and symbolic work, to
construct narratives that defend and justify specific models of social order, social governance, and even interpretations of history. In the case of Freire, it is imperative to situate his contributions from his inception into the domains of education in Northeast Brazil, to Latin America in the 1960s, and his reception in the rest of the world.

The 1960s impelled fabulous and explosive projects in which the vision that everything was possible, from individual transformation to revolution, reached paroxysmal proportions. This phenomenon seized Latin America and many other parts of the world. In that period as well a very important Latin American literary phenomenon had an impact on the wider world. Known as the Latin American Boom, young writers such as Julio Cortazar, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Gabriel García Marquez among others created original literary works that for many branded forever Latin America as the land of magic realism. Yet the boom was much more than that (Kerr & Herrero-Olaizola, 2015).

Latin America was a laboratory for a new society. Public intellectuals like Freire creatively developed different theoretical perspectives that melded and converged into a single purpose of radical social transformation. These notions of radical change were founded on a group of theories and politico-philosophical, sociological, and theological orientations, which defined the era's spiritual path as daring, libertarian, and creative.

It was Herbert Marcuse who suggested that Hegel’s use of the German neologism *Völkgeist* (spirit of nation)² included a nation’s spirit as well as its history, its religion, and its level of political participation. The Volksgeist of Latin America in the 1960s had direct links to revolution and the transgression of established norms. Its immediate by-products were critical thinking, original scientific innovation and utopian politics.

This Volksgeist was born and raised in a wealth of ancient traditions and millennial cultures that inhabit this diverse continent whose Indigenous, African, Levantine, and European roots protruded through the landscape and shaped the social contradictions in this *bronco* continent.

Latin America was also the fertile ground of distinctive academic and political contributions in the form of theories that sought to explain development (or the lack thereof) and, at the same time, pushed for the transformation of its reality.

Among these was dependency theory, created in the 1950s–1960s in Chilean academic circles, which burst into bloom with the publication of a now classic book, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* by Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto (1979) that spread throughout the continent, articulating one of the most systematic critiques of the traditional capitalist model of economic underdevelopment and, by extension, to theories of democracy.³

Although *Dependency and Development* was a groundbreaking book, many other authors and their works are also worth mentioning: André Gunder Frank (1969) and Theotonio dos Santos (1978); the critical works of the United Nations Economic Commission of Latin America (ECLA or CEPAL in Spanish)⁴; Pablo Gonzalez Casanova (1969); and Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1981) to name just a few scholars who made fundamental contributions by examining and explaining Latin American underdevelopment in terms of the exploitation given the context of capitalism center-periphery and *internal colonialism* of the region.
We cannot forget in this brief *racconto* the extraordinary contribution of Raúl Prebisch (Love, 1980, pp. 45–72) with his theory of unequal exchange that influenced the work of many other noted scholars (with their own appraisal of course) including Arghiri Emmanuel, André Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein, Johan Galtung, and Samir Amin as well as many developmental programs of Latin American governments in the 1950s and 1960s (Love, 1980). Prebisch was the executive director of ECLA and in 1950 released a seminal document titled *The Economic Development of Latin America and its Principal Problems* (*Archivo Cepal*).

Nor can we forget Ernesto “Che” Guevara, the human embodiment of that period’s revolutionary spirit both in his life and his death, whose speech in Punta del Este, Uruguay at the plenary session of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council on August 16, 1961, represented the most ferocious and articulate rejection of the North American development model, exemplified by the neocolonial stance of the Alliance for Progress.

After his death in 1967, Guevara became a model and icon of social transformation in the region and elsewhere. His face was emblematic of the struggles of the New Left, against the traditional communist and socialist parties (the Old Left) that were seen by a new generation as the product of the Cold War accommodating to the establishment. The year 1968 was the culmination of the New Left strand ready to start a new path of social struggles in Paris as well as in Prague, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and many other places (Gould, 2009).

Along with the criticism of these development models, a new perspective called Liberation Philosophy was expounded in academic circles by Latin American philosophers, many of them graduates of European universities. Prominent among these was the Argentinian and Mexican theologian, philosopher, and historian, Enrique Dussel (1973). Freire was without doubt one of the precursors not only of the theology of liberation but also of the philosophy of liberation, though originally filtered through the developmentalist lenses of the *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileros* (ISEB)—see Gadotti, Chapter 1 in this volume.

The philosophical model of the philosophy of liberation had analytical hinges forged by Christian personalism, existentialism, and phenomenology but incorporated a Marxist perspective as well, questioning the notion of “alterity” in Western reasoning and attempting to incorporate the mores of traditional Latin American cultures as options for the articulation of a more rational and generous civilizational model than the patronizing, racist, male chauvinist, solipsistic, ethnocentric, and self-congratulatory European versions. Liberation philosophy was an ideational precursor of current theories of postcolonialism, in the work also of Leopoldo Zea (1969, 1974), Rodolfo Kush (1977), Arturo Andrés Roig (1981) and Augusto Salazar Bondi (1969, 1975) to name just a few scholars.

At the same time, it is clear that intimately attached to this critique of European philosophy, social theory, and theology, this rethinking of the history of ideas from a Latin American cultural ethos and politico-economic perspective also recognized and brought up to date critical modernist European models that did not stem from racist, ethnocentric, or anthropocentric bases, by deconstructing and unpacking them in diverse ways. This epistemological, theoretical and
political Aufheben\textsuperscript{7} was able to recognize and celebrate the presence of diverse emancipatory experiences in the social struggles of Europe and in the Western world, emerging as what we called critical modernism (Morrow & Torres, 1995).

Without the perspective of liberation philosophy, education for liberation would be unimaginable. This is also true of the problem of multiculturalism in Latin America, one of the great themes that emerged at the time, which was tied to the postcolonial perspective that permeates the work of Frantz Fanon (1961, 2004) and Albert Memmi (1965), born in Martinique and Tunisia respectively but educated in Europe, two intellectuals who exerted a powerful influence on Paulo Freire’s thinking when he was writing Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

Apart from the influence of the debates and intellectuals of that era on Freire, he imbibed mainly European sources, as has been noted and sometimes criticized by various scholars (Torres, 2001). One has only to peruse his conversation with Myles Horton, a great North American civil rights activist, to discover one of Freire’s customary acknowledgements of influential writers:

I remember, for example, how much I was helped by reading Frantz Fanon … I was writing Pedagogy of the Oppressed and the book was almost finished when I read Fanon [The Wretched of the Earth]. I had to rewrite the book in order to begin to quote Fanon so that I could cite him … I was influenced by Fanon without knowing it. I had different cases like this … Fanon was one. Albert Memmi who wrote a fantastic book, The Colonizer and the Colonized, was the second. The third one who “influenced” me without knowing it was the famous Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who wrote a beautiful, fantastic book, Thought and Language. When I read him for the first time, I became frightened and happy because of the things I was reading. The other influence is Gramsci … When I meet some books—I say “meet” because some books are like persons … I remake my practice theoretically. I become better able to understand the theory inside of my action. (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 36)

The themes of authenticity and truth, along with the search for the ethos of the Latin American people, articulated the principles of the philosophy of liberation. It is a time-honored practice of the philosophical traditions to honor the discipline while searching for a break with tradition, beginning by including the social actors’ emotions and feelings, the traditions of struggle, the social practices and cultures of the peoples of the region in the analysis.

Moreover, much of what constituted the lives of Paulo Freire and so many other Latin American intellectuals at that time is related to the nascent theology of liberation, in Catholic as well as Protestant circles, within the region.\textsuperscript{8}

This theological perspective aligned its liturgical, canonical, and moral resources with the idea of the “preferential option for the poor” as the origin and zenith of the churches’ religious endeavors, whether they were places where people worshipped or so-called “base communities” where they led marginal but strong spiritual lives in the heart of the city, in the favelas, in the countryside (Berryman, 1987; Gutierrez, 1973). This was a theological option in clear contradistinction to the “organized religion as civilization” doctrine of the
Spanish and Portuguese conquest, a model of religion where the churches are part of the power structure, intimately allied with the armed forces and ruling elite sectors (Mignone, 1988; Torres, 1992).

In other words, when followers of liberation theology put the people at the archetypal center of religious practice and made them the missionary focus of the Latin American churches, they clearly opposed the theology of oppression practiced and supported since time immemorial by the Latin American elite (Berryman, 1987; Gutierrez, 1973; Hinkelammert, 1977).

A historical example of this mortal quid pro quo are the intimate relations of the Argentine military dictatorship and the Argentine Catholic Church under the command of Archbishop Antonio Caggiano in the brutal years of the last Argentine military dictatorship (1976–1983). Their church and state alliance condoned the assassination of priests, nuns, and progressive laity. They ignored the assassination of Bishop Enrique Angelelli of La Rioja disguised as a car accident. Bishop Angelelli was committed to Liberation Theology as was father Carlos Mugica, my professor of theology at the Jesuit Universidad del Salvador, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, murdered as he left his neighborhood parish after celebrating mass.

A tragic epoch of renewed regional authoritarianism ensued in the 1960s and 1970s, especially in Argentina, where military police and chaplains rubbed shoulders in clandestine redoubts, with armed forces chaplains supporting the torturers but perhaps even consoling the victims who were “disappeared” (Dussel, 1979; Hinkelammert, 1977; Mignone, 1988; Torres, 1992).

Freire made his critique of the official church explicit when he says: “As the Word is made flesh, it is only possible to approach it by way of man. That is why theology’s point of departure has to be anthropology. In this way, a utopian theology must be associated with cultural action for liberation by means of which men need to substitute their ingenuous belief in God as an alienating myth with a new concept: God as a historical presence who does not in any way impede man from creating his own story of liberation” (Torres, 2005, p. 137).

It is no surprise that Freire, born to a Catholic mother and a Spiritist father, conceded the prophetic functions of annunciation and denunciation to the revolutionary church and to the seminaries where the seed of this new church gestated and bloomed. This is a theme that remained alive in Freire’s thinking from the beginning to the end of his life. According to Cristobal Madero, S. J., Chapter 23 in this volume, Freire’s Catholic formation influenced his scholarships in ways that have not been sufficiently studied in the social sciences; his chapter provides considerable insight around the topics of Freire’s Catholicism and its impact on the pedagogy of the liberation.

In a letter to a student of theology Freire wrote that “seminaries, in order to become voices in favor of modifying the social structure, must quickly become utopian centers by denouncing dehumanizing structures and announcing that they cannot be committed to anything but structures in which men can be more loving, smiling, singing, creative, and relaxed. Only in this way can seminaries become prophetic and speak authentically of faith” (Torres, 2005, p. 137).

It is remarkable that, despite the liberating impetus of Freire’s emancipatory rationality, his language succumbs to the age-old structural categories of Castilian
Spanish and Portuguese where “man” is the pronominal referent rather than “human being.” Feminism and feminist critique, which Freire took into consideration and generally accepted, especially in his work in the United States, lent enormous support to his intellectual growth (see Sondra Hale and Lauren Misiaszek, Chapters 20 and 21 in this volume).

Even today, it constitutes one of the most important analytical turning points for rethinking popular education, education for the practice of freedom and (Latin American) emancipatory movements in a revolutionary way (Jones & Torres, 2010). In fact, bell hooks, one of the most influential African-American feminists, created a critical but not unappreciative synthesis of Freire and feminism (hooks, 1994).

Paulo Freire himself is a representative of popular education, an educational paradigm born in Spain to socialist and anarchist ideologies emerged as the archetype of public education with open access for unlettered members of the nineteenth-century working class (Puiggrós, 1984; Gadotti & Torres, 1993).

This model migrated to Latin America, embodied in the wave of European immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century as “popular education” with a radical orientation and explicit political goals. In Argentina, the term educación popular was originally appropriated by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (who was president of Argentina in 1868–1874) (Sarmiento, 1961), to nominate free public education (Jones & Torres, 2010; Morrow & Torres, 2002; Torres, 2017). The presence of Freire in Latin America is presented by Adriana Puiggrós in Chapter 6 in this volume.

But the explosive conditions of Latin America civil society were not an exception. During the 1960s revolutions of expectations occurred all over the world, marvelous inventions were created, and sexual ethics morphed into a drug-enhanced quest for free love and emotional nirvana. The era’s soundtrack featured utopian and romantic songs by the Beatles, especially John Lennon’s anarchist anthem, “Imagine.” As the last bastion of conservative culture, public education had to cope with syndical grievances and widespread social restlessness. Meanwhile, the Cold War turned hot in Southeast Asia, engendering harder political schisms and revolutionary resistance throughout the world.

Paulo Freire and his fellow “pilgrim of the obvious,” Ivan Illich, forged a progressive path that left an epochal mark on Latin American education. Each educational iconoclast had his own field of competency, his laboratory of regional insertion and ideological localization (Freire in Brazil and then Chile, Illich in Mexico) and distinct but tangential specializations: Freire predicated the expansion of consciousness and recognition of human cultural contribution whereas Illich recommended outright abandonment of authoritarian schools. Their claims ultimately crossed borders to become urgent, cogent letters to the world (Aparicio, 2004).

From the 1960s until his death in 1997, Freire was recognized as a brilliant and articulate proponent of emancipatory education for people living at the social margins, an education that would motivate egalitarian democracy in a world where traditions and the environment would be preserved along with progress in a permanent revolution of expectations and structures; a world where new generations would be cared for and the older ones invited to exercise utopian
sensitivity while looking back on their achievements and failures. In this way, Freire fervently believed, together we could create a world where it would be easier to love (1972).

One may consider Freire an organic intellectual a là Gramsci. Organic intellectuals create the possibility not to construct organic knowledge per se, that is knowledge that is directly at the service of a certain social category such as subaltern knowledge, because there are several categories of subaltern in contradictory alliances, but knowledge that

- connects emotionally to certain sets of values that were under attack by dominant hegemony, hence constructing a counterhegemonic approach;
- requires a rigorous understanding of the principles of operation of the society in which knowledge takes place but do not subsume that understanding to the hegemonic leadership of the society, or the official knowledge, hence opening up a range of critical thinking;
- avoids assuming that although the power that articulates hegemony is in fact powerful, it doesn’t necessarily rule without constraints (e.g., of conflicts and contradictions inside the power ruling block) or without resistance (e.g., actions, symbolic and practical from political parties, social movements, communities, and individuals) in which the overall confrontation in society takes place;
- takes Gramsci’s aphorism, “pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will” to a new level, the level of linking critique to possibility;
- assumes that ideology takes place at all levels, in all domains, in all circumstances in which social and human interest places a role;
- considers the politics of culture a domain in which the constitution of consciousness and the ability to transform reality given the constant struggle for meaning-making, for control of goods and services, and for grand designs of the society as well as for the definition of the “good life” are part and parcel of education and culture as sites of confrontations and conflict, or what has been defined as a contested terrain (Arnove, Torres, & Franz, 2013);
- joins a specific tradition linked as well to the field (a là Bourdieu) of Critical Theory that refuses to completely dissociate the analytical with the normative; and
- draws from the contributions of Paulo Freire, a tradition that creates a set of constrictors to the academic work that poses extraordinary intellectual and political challenges.

These could be synthesized as follows:

- The politics and epistemology of suspicion. Following Ricoeur, Freire, and a host of phenomenological scholars, the politics of suspicion assumes at the outset that each and every social and cultural relationship involves at least a “moment” if not a clear thread of domination, oppression, and/or exploitation. The implications of the epistemology of suspicion for education and science are very large;
- It questions the ability to differentiate completely the subjective from the objective, chastising the positivist notion of dissociating human interest from
human values in the construction of common sense and knowledge meaning-making. That is, it questions in essence the Weberian twin assumptions that the scientist and the politician are clearly working in two different epistemological and praxis-oriented fields and that there is value neutrality in the production of science, with a strict separation between the object (or subject) of knowledge and the knowledgeable subject or scientist;

● Because it is not possible to have a science free of values, Freire would argue in strict counterposition to Max Weber, the corollary of Freire's assumption is that scientists have to take a position and they cannot and should not remain neutral. Neutrality for Freire is itself a position that becomes one of the possible alternatives rather than a true neutral position. That is the reason that Freire has suggested an *Epistemology of Suspicion* or education and critical hermeneutics as a basic premise for social transformation, education and science (Torres, 2014a, pp. 104–106).

**From Recife to the World: Freire, Pilgrim of Utopia**

While in my last year at Stanford as a teaching fellow (1983), we organized with Martin Carnoy and Arturo Pacheco a seminar around the ideas of Paulo Freire and invited Paulo and Elza Freire to be with us for 2 weeks. Freire at Stanford became a magnet to progressive scholars and militants in the Bay area who wanted to interact with this 'myth in his own life time.'11 The contribution of Martin Carnoy in this volume discusses the Stanford Seminar and his own involvement in progressive work, as well as Rebecca Tarlau coming from a tradition of trade union activism in her family, finding Freire's work during her research in Brazil, as a point of light in the struggle for a better world. Their chapter, in addition to counter story-telling and providing testimonies, what the Brazilian Portuguese calls *depouimentos*, ultimately explores the relevance of Paulo Freire for education.

Perhaps it is interesting to relate a dinner that I had with Paulo and Elza Freire in San Francisco during the seminar. Elza was a lovely woman who for more than 40 years was the material and spiritual backbone of Freire and her family, raised five children, managed the house, family finances, everything, while working full time as a primary education teacher until their exile. She was also an expert on teaching literacy to children and an advocate who worked with and for the poor and marginalized populations.12 Although she was quiet, I found her silence imposing and her personality a quiet, charming presence in the interactions. Spending time with Elza and Paulo, the intense love between them was evident, palpable. They seemed to have been in a love affair for more than 40 years!

During a delicious dinner, talking about their exile from Brazil, Elza reminded Paulo that if the military had not expelled him from Brazil, he would not have reached the stature we were celebrating in the Stanford seminar. Paulo agreed. I also remember that at some point in the conversation, they broached the topic of their death. Paulo insisted that he wanted to go first, but Elza, who had already a pacemaker installed, told him with a smile that requires no description “No, no Paulo, I will go first.”13