

**CARTA A PAULO FREIRE: COMO SUPERAR O ASSISTENCIALISMO POR MEIO DE UMA PRÁTICA EDUCATIVA COMO CARÁTER CRÍTICO-LIBERTADOR?**

***CARTA A PAULO FREIRE: ¿CÓMO SUPERAR EL ASISTENCIALISMO A TRAVÉS DE LA PRÁCTICA EDUCATIVA COMO UN CARÁTER CRÍTICO Y LIBERADOR?***

***LETTER TO PAULO FREIRE: HOW TO OVERCOME ASSISTENTIALISM THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AS A CRITICAL AND LIBERATOR FEATURE?***

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**RESUMO:** O texto, em formato de carta, possui como intenção tecer aproximações ao pensamento de Paulo Freire de tal maneira que seja capaz de contribuir no processo de questionamentos e respostas acerca de um trabalho social vinculado a comunidades eclesiais de base. O referido trabalho social está relacionado a práticas que buscam superar o assistencialismo da doação de cestas básicas a famílias em situação de vulnerabilidade social e, também, é tema de pesquisa de doutorado. A partir de um estudo descritivo crítico, fundamentado em uma pesquisa qualitativa, bibliográfica, tem-se como objetivo refletir a partir do pensamento e testemunho de vida de Freire e, ainda, de autores que estudaram sua obra, sobre a formulação de encaminhamentos qualificados sobre a pesquisa de doutorado em Educação Ambiental.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Transformação social. Comunidade eclesial de base. Humanização.

**RESUMEN:** *El texto, en formato de carta, tiene la intención de hacer aproximaciones al pensamiento de Paulo Freire de tal manera que pueda contribuir al proceso de preguntas y respuestas sobre el trabajo social vinculado a las comunidades eclesiales de base. El trabajo social está relacionado con prácticas que buscan superar la asistencia de donar alimentos a familias en situaciones de vulnerabilidad social y también es objeto de un proyecto de doctorado. Basado en un estudio descriptivo crítico, basado en una investigación bibliográfica cualitativa, el objetivo es reflexionar desde el pensamiento y el testimonio de la vida de Freire y los autores que estudiaron su trabajo, en la formulación de referencias calificadas sobre la investigación de Doctorado en Educación Ambiental.*

**PALAVRAS-CLAVE:** *Transformación social. Comunidad eclesial básica. Humanización.*

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**ABSTRACT:** *The text, in letter format, intends to build approximations to Paulo Freire's thinking in such a way that it is able to contribute to the process of questioning and answering about social work linked to base ecclesial communities. Social work is related to practices that seek to overcome the assistance of donating food to families in situations of social vulnerability and is also the subject of a doctoral project. Starting from a critical descriptive study, based on a qualitative, bibliographic research, the objective is to reflect from the thought and testimony of Freire's life and the authors who studied his work, on the formulation of qualified referrals related to doctoral research in Environmental Education.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Social transformation. Base ecclesial community. Humanization.*

## Initial considerations

Dear educator Paulo Freire, it is with great joy that I make this communication with you. Although not directly, I know that my colleagues, as well as the readings of your works and works on your life and writings, will help answer what I want to know. I am a human being and an educator who admires your trajectory, life history, responses to situations of life and education, profession, family, worldview, politics, sensitivity to the deprived of subsistence and so many other essential rights to human dignity.

I will draft this letter directly, granting freedom to reason and emotion, so that you too, through the ways previously mentioned, can express your understanding and opinion about my questions.

I watched your last interview, on April 16, in which you were asked the question of how you would like to be remembered. In replying, you say that you want to be remembered as someone who loved the world, people, land, water and animals.

In your work, *À sombra desta mangueira* (In the shade of this mango tree), it is possible to bear in mind your deep relationship with nature, when you refer to your backyard, how to be in and with the world and its unfolding through the many other spaces in which one can be present. "My childhood's backyard has been unfolding in so many other spaces, not necessarily other backyards. Places where this man of today, seeing himself as that boy from yesterday, learns by seeing better what was seen before"<sup>4</sup> (FREIRE, 1995, p. 27).

At the same time, you have always made it clear, from your dream of freedom, the need for transformation in your homeland, Brazil, in all its concreteness, considering that the our

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<sup>4</sup> "O quintal de minha infância vem como que se desdobrando em tantos outros espaços, não necessariamente outros quintais. Sítios em que este homem de hoje, vendo em si aquele menino de ontem, aprende por ver melhor o antes visto"

land is one that involves, precisely, struggles by different dreams, most of the time antagonistic to the deeply unequal relations between social classes.

I can infer that his love for the world, for nature and for people, brings the earth, its geography, its ecology and its biology closer and, above all, creates the responsibility in human beings to make a fair history based on the conditions lived and possible social changes.

I believe it is opportune to relate, at this moment, its insertion in and with the world to discussions and practices in environmental education throughout Brazil and the planet, of so many people who, knowing the limits of this, have fought for life, individually and collectively.

Environmental education, for having a fundamental axis in the society-nature relationship, sees it in a utopian way, that is, it sees another reality, the construction of social justice, at least in its critical and transforming tendency, the dream of a new society is set. Therefore, themes such as poverty, capitalism, unemployment, hunger, exclusion, racism, among many others, as well as transformative theories and practices are objects of the praxis of transformative environmental education.

Based on these statements, I have the audacity to ask you: as an expert on the poor, on the peripheries and in rural areas, and as someone who set out to think and reinvent education in these environments, what clues would you suggest for research work in such context? Considering the urban periphery in the third decade of the 21st century with an unemployed and hungry population.

The purpose of this letter is to ask you for help to build the theoretical and practical basis for research work in the context of unemployment and hunger in the urban periphery of a city in the south of Rio Grande do Sul. Last year a training was organized with about of 60 participants who are the agents of registration, reception and delivery of a monthly basket of non-perishable food for 130 families in the mentioned community. The topics discussed in the trainings were popular education, inter-ethnic relations, solidarity economy and religious diversity.

From the reading of the work *Paulo Freire: uma biobibliografia* (Paulo Freire: a biobibliography) I highlight some ideas that may contribute towards answering the question posed to you in the context of a research under construction. Your thinking, which brings the experience, the affections, the way of being in the Brazilian Northeast, particularly in the early 1960s, when half of its 30 million inhabitants lived in the “culture of silence”, that is, they were illiterate, aimed to “give them the floor”, through the association between study, life experience, work, pedagogy and politics.

I humbly ask for your permission to list aspects of the small part of your work that I have been able to know until today, so that we can dialogue with the objectives previously mentioned as a horizon. I would like you to make corrections, highlights or comments on what follows.

From these considerations, I understand that the letter is described as follows: **The construction of knowledge in Freire** - I make a discussion about the issue of generating themes and “limit situations” based on dialogical relations with a view to understanding and reflecting on the popular knowledge; **Education and politics** - I carry out a reflection on the need for these two categories of human and social life to be in correlation and that from them human beings can be clearly in favor of whom and what they move about; **Optimism, faith and hope** - I understand the importance of discussing the issue of spirituality, liberation theology and sexuality; **Improving reflection** - I correlate themes such as being more, culture of silence, the role of theory with practical work in the grassroots ecclesial community and the ecological paradigm. Then follow the final considerations and references.

### **The construction of knowledge in Freire**

After the experience of literacy in Angicos, you were invited by the minister of education, Paulo de Tarso Santos, under the João Goulart government, to rethink adult literacy in the country. “In 1964, it was planned to install 20 thousand culture circles for two million illiterates. The military coup, however, interrupted the work at the very beginning and repressed all the mobilization conquered”<sup>5</sup> (GADOTTI, 1996, p. 62).

His method of literacy, as far as I could understand until now, was born within the Popular Culture Movement of Recife, which, in the late 1950s, created so-called culture circles. These did not have a priori schedule. The program came from a consultation with the groups that established the topics to be debated. Educators were responsible for dealing with the theme that the group proposed.

This consultation was born from the dialogue with these subjects. I return to Ghiggi (2010), who states that among the central categories of his work is dialogue. “Dialogue, which takes place in the political dimension of education, that is, that starts from the concrete situation,

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<sup>5</sup> “Em 1964 estava prevista a instalação de 20 mil círculos de cultura para dois milhões de analfabetos. O golpe militar, no entanto, interrompeu os trabalhos bem no início e reprimiu toda a mobilização conquistada”

that rethinks the practice and that institutes processes of transformation”<sup>6</sup> (GHIGGI, 2010, p. 114).

For the author, considering the view on popular education, I realize that the dialogue takes, as a starting point, the anthropological-cultural framework, which is intimately linked to the life of those who participate in the educational relation, in which the thematic universe, as the cultural world of the subjects involved, allows the construction of the vocabulary universe.

I recognize that from the dialogue with the subjects, the problematization of the generator theme will be born as the minimum thematic universe. This minimal universe is composed of themes which, in general, contradict each other, and sometimes maintain existing structures, where a correspondence relationship is established between the generating themes and the historical context of which human beings are part, making it possible to perceive the insertion of those involved in the theme.

You also argued that the generating themes are often covered by what you understand as “limit situations”<sup>7</sup> which present themselves as historical determinants allowing beings to adapt to the reality in which they find themselves. When human beings are not involved and involving “limit situations” their responses will not be authentic. In this way, they end up acting in favor of the dominant elite to which they are submitted, not overcoming the “limit situations”.

An example of a “limit situation” pointed out by you, in a personal meeting with workers in northeastern Brazil, which took place at the SESI social center in Recife is mentioned in the work *Pedagogia da Esperança* (Pedagogy of Hope). You argued for a group of fathers and mothers about authority, freedom, punishment and the prize in education, telling later about Piaget's theory and its positive aspects of not hitting children, also defending a dialogical, loving relationship between fathers, mothers, daughters and sons, replacing the use of violent punishments. At that moment, a father stood up, looking about 40 years old, and asked to speak. He made a speech that you say you can never forget, that accompanied you alive in your memory. You add that many years later you perceived what was said as class knowledge.

In these circumstances, the subject asked to speak and started and asked if you knew where they lived and if you had visited the home of any of them. He then went on to describe the precarious characteristics of the houses where they lived, with tiny limits and no resources

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<sup>6</sup> “Diálogo, que se realiza na dimensão política da educação, ou seja, que parte da situação concreta, que repensa a prática e que institui processos de transformação”

<sup>7</sup> For Osowski (2010, p. 375) the “limit situations” are “[...] constituted by contradictions that involve individuals, producing an adherence to the facts and, at the same time, leading them to perceive as fatalism what is happening to them. As they cannot get away from it, nor do they perceive themselves with any “empowerment”, they accept what is imposed on them, submitting themselves to events. They are unaware of their submission because the very limit situations make everyone feel helpless in the face of what happens to them”.

for the minimum needs. He spoke of the prohibition that was imposed on them to be happy, on the hope for something better.

You also tell us that as the conversation progressed, you would sink into the chair, looking for a way out of the questions. Finally, after a few seconds of silence, he looked around the auditorium, and looking at Freire again he said: “- Doctor, I never went to your house, but I will tell you how it is. How many children do they have? All boys? "Five," he said, sinking deeper into the chair. - Three girls and two boys”<sup>8</sup> (FREIRE, 2002, p. 25).

From then on, the subject described his house in a way that “[...] there was nothing to add, nor to remove”<sup>9</sup> (FREIRE, 2002, p. 25). House with patio, a room for boys and another for girls, a room for the couple, a maid's room much smaller than that of the children and outside the house, a library, kitchen with the "Arno line" and a garden with English grass. He talked about the workers coming home tired from work, finding the children without a bath, hungry, agitated, very different from when you came home and found the children bathed, cleaned and fed. He also added that because he had to get up at four in the morning the other day “[...] to start all over again, in pain, sadness, lack of hope [...] if we hit our children and it doesn't even go beyond the line it's not because we don't love them. It is because the harshness of life does not leave much to choose”<sup>10</sup> (FREIRE, 2002, p. 25).

In the case described by you, there is a “limit situation” expressed in the impossibility of transforming the harsh condition of working life in the context of the periphery of Recife, at that historic moment in the late 1950s. On the other hand, in the capacity of that worker to differentiate his situation of that of a “doctor”, in this case your situation, is the class knowledge, which can be sketched from a critical reading of reality, possible to be the germ of overcoming the “limit situation”.

On the other hand, in overcoming, at the moment when, in action, critical perception is established, “[...] a climate of hope and confidence will develop, which leads men to strive to overcome the 'limit situations’”<sup>11</sup> (FREIRE, 2004, p. 91, authors' highlights). In this context, when human beings perceive themselves on the border between being and “being more”, the “unprecedented viable” is implicit, such as those projects and acts of human possibilities, with affective, cognitive, political and ethical intensity.

<sup>8</sup> “- Doutor, nunca fui a sua casa, mas vou dizer ao senhor como ela é. Quantos filhos têm? É tudo menino? - Cinco – disse ele afundando-se mais ainda na cadeira. – Três meninas e dois meninos”

<sup>9</sup> “[...] não havia nada a acrescentar, nem a retirar”

<sup>10</sup> “[...] pra começar tudo de novo, na dor, na tristeza, na falta de esperança [...] se a gente bate nos filhos e até sai dos limites não é porque a gente não ame eles não. É porque a dureza da vida não deixa muito para escolher”

<sup>11</sup> “[...] se desenvolver um clima de esperança e confiança que leva os homens a se empenharem na superação das ‘situações-limites’”

This dialectical relation between conditioning and freedom persists in reality, because in the same way that the oppressed try to materialize the “unprecedented-viable”, the oppressors try to avoid the “limit situations”. The Freirian proposal emphasizes that the perception of the generating themes happens at the moment when human beings, at the same time, perceive the themes in which they are involved and, still, these themes involve the “limit situations”, thus establishing a dimension critical.

When the generating issues were discussed, you argued about the importance of thematic research. This has the objective, when human beings do not capture the “limit situations” in their entirety, to undertake in peripheral manifestations. Often, the exercise of thematic research is present due to the immobility and existential fragility of the human beings involved.

In the sequence, you called “hinge themes” those that were added at the suggestion of the educators and were inserted as fundamental in the whole body of the theme, to better clarify it.

From then on, it is possible to arrive at the “unprecedented-viable”, which is not a simple combination of letters or a meaningless expression, but an action word, therefore, praxis. The “unprecedented-viable” has an affective, cognitive, political, epistemological, ethical and ontological charge to express the projects and the acts of human possibilities. It is loaded with beliefs, values, dreams, desires, aspirations, fears, anxieties, will and the possibility of knowing, fragility and human greatness. Above all, according to Araujo Freire (2010, p. 224), a word that brings us to “[...] the hope and the seed of the necessary transformations aimed at a more human and ethical future, to reach the ontological destiny of human existence”<sup>12</sup>.

I reflect that the “unprecedented-viable” cannot be apprehended at the level of real or effective consciousness, but at the level of “maximum possible consciousness”, in such a way that it tells us that there is no definitive, ready or, yet, finished. The “unprecedented-viable” is nourished by human inconclusion, it has no end, a definitive term of arrival.

It is always, because it becomes, because the unprecedented-viable we have dreamed about and fought for, of itself, is no longer a dream that would be possible, but the possible dream come true, the utopia achieved, it makes other unprecedented-viable sprout as many as fit in our feelings and in our reason dictated by our most authentic needs (ARAUJO FREIRE, 2010, p. 225).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> “[...] esperança e o germe das transformações necessárias voltadas para um futuro mais humano e ético, para alcançarmos o destino ontológico da existência humana”

<sup>13</sup> É sempre, pois devenir, pois alcançado o inédito-viável pelo qual sonhamos e lutamos, dele mesmo, já não mais um sonho que seria possível, mas o sonho possível realizando-se, a utopia alcançada, ele faz brotar outros tantos inéditos-viáveis quantos caibam em nossos sentimentos e em nossa razão ditada pelas nossas necessidades mais autênticas (ARAUJO FREIRE, 2010, p. 225).

Still according to the same author, the “unprecedented-viable” are collective dreams and must always be at the service of the collectivity. They are democratic and are at the service of the most human that exists in beings, induced to create a new human being for a new society: more just, less ugly and more democratic.

In these considerations, I realize that the construction of knowledge maintains its centrality based on popular knowledge that is emphasized and that is generated in social practice through the participation of and with the people. On the other hand, I also recognize how strong the notion that education happens when there is the transmission of content by those who educate.

Even if you and other educational thinkers like Dewey, Rogers and Montessori inspire a good part of educators in Brazil around the world, institutions in general, and I speak of those who have lived in formal school for thirty years, forge tied practices that are difficult to be overcome.

For you, on the contrary, it is about establishing a dialogue, as it means that the one who educates is also learning. Both students and educators are transformed into critical thinkers. Dialogue is a horizontal relationship that is nourished by love, humility, hope, faith and trust. Zitkoski (2010) states that through dialogue “[...] we can tell the world according to our way of seeing. Furthermore, dialogue implies a social praxis, which is the compromise between the spoken word and our humanizing action. This possibility opens the way to rethink life in society”<sup>14</sup> (p. 117).

Given the question posed initially, remembering, as an expert on the poor, on the peripheries and in rural areas, and as someone who set out to think and reinvent education in these environments, what clues would you suggest for research work in such a context? I believe it is opportune to highlight other categories, based on the reading of other texts by you and other authors who commented on your works and ideas.

## **Education and politics**

I am strongly assuming that what inspires and carries your work are the popular social movements, maybe the marches that you would like to see multiplying in the search for dignity (STRECK, 2011). The commitment to the struggle for democratization and human rights in

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<sup>14</sup> “[...] podemos dizer o mundo segundo nosso modo de ver. Além disso, o diálogo implica uma práxis social, que é o compromisso entre a palavra dita e nossa ação humanizadora. Essa possibilidade abre caminhos para repensar a vida em sociedade”



Brazil and in the different countries you lived in, as well as the construction of popular power in Latin America, shows that education and politics go hand in hand in your thinking and in your practice.

Looking for your words to relate these two great themes of human life and culture, I highlight the following: “one of the fundamental questions [...] in favor of whom and what, therefore against whom and what we do education and in favor of whom and what, therefore against whom and against what, we develop political activity”<sup>15</sup> (FREIRE, 1987, p 27).

I believe in the need, as you yourself have emphasized, that the more it is possible to gain clarity through practice, the more noticeable the impossibility of separating education from politics.

Gadotti (1996) states that reality is not thought of by you in the same way as for a sociologist, who seeks only to understand it, but seeks in the sciences (social and natural) through elements to understand it more scientifically and intervene most effectively in it. I reflect on this aspect that Gadotti referred to a sociologist without critical reading, without commitment to the popular classes and with the struggle to overcome the inequality gaps that exist in Brazil and in countries peripheral to capitalism.

I also believe it pertinent to mention two sociologists committed to political struggles in the field of the left such as Fernandes (1978), in particular in his work *A Integração do Negro na Sociedade de Classes* (The Integration of the Black People in the Class Society), as well as, from his trajectory in the Workers' Party, in which you also participated, and Souza (2017), a contemporary of ours, who seeks to build a sociology that breaks with the reading that Brazil is a mutt country, culturally inferior to the central countries of capitalism, seeking a sociological reference that bases the political left in its clashes with neoliberalism and the prey elites.

“Pope Pius XI said that Politics is the most perfect form of charity. The speech was repeated by Paul VI, through whom he came to be widely known and recently taken up again by Francisco”<sup>16</sup> (FRANCISCO, 2016, p. 1). I confess to you that I have little knowledge of politics, I am not a scholar of Machiavelli, Hobbes and others. But I was a militant of student and union causes, I was a member of the left political party, in ecological movements and today I see my action as a public school educator and in the work engaged in the ecclesial communities of the Catholic Church as deeply political.

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<sup>15</sup> “uma das questões fundamentais [...] a favor de quem e do quê, portanto contra quem e contra o quê fazemos a educação e de a favor de quem e do quê, portanto contra quem e contra o quê, desenvolvemos atividade política”

<sup>16</sup> “Disse o Papa Pio XI que a Política é a forma mais perfeita da caridade. A fala foi repetida por Paulo VI, por meio de quem veio a se tornar amplamente conhecida e recentemente retomada por Francisco”

Politics is at the heart of those who dream and act in favor of social justice and, in this way, education is not only a tool for social transformation, or for maintaining the *status quo*, as it interrelates with politics because has purpose and means, form, way of being made. Thus, it establishes dialogues or limits them, preventing the other from being through the word and the body.

Everything I read, heard and lived about education and politics from my graduation in the 1980s until today leads me to believe that education and politics are like sisters: if they love, hold hands, fight, forgive and in the end, they really need each other.

My dear educator Paulo Freire, I conclude this session, with your work *Pedagogia da indignação* (Pedagogy of indignation) with the following statement: “if education alone does not transform society, neither does society change without it”<sup>17</sup> (FREIRE, 2014, p. 31).

### **Optimism, faith and hope**

From the reading entitled *O otimismo de Paulo Freire* (Paulo Freire's Optimism), I realize that Collins (1996) is close to the roots of the problem that originated this research project, generated in a grassroots ecclesial community, as previously announced.

In addition to being able to dialogue with the question asked, Collins' text is like a word of peace and discernment, a word of spirituality and love, of guidance for the research work of which the question is a fundamental part. And why is that? Because a Jesuit, especially an admirer of your work and life, is a man of faith and, although he does not appear in the adjectives Collins attributes to you, it seems that this is a characteristic of both.

I believe it is important to remember that the research proposal to be carried out on the outskirts of the municipality is born in an ecclesial context, from living faith in service to people who are among the poorest in that region of the city. The parish, a unit that brings together a number of grassroots communities, has been under the coordination of Jesuit priests since 2012.

I call your attention to the first biography of you, published in 1977, which was prepared by a Catholic religious. You had a religious influence on the part of your father, who frequented spiritist circles, and your mother, a Roman Catholic apostolic. According to Streck (2010), you do not understand yourself as a religious man, but that does not mean that you denied or were oblivious to the historical manifestations of spirituality.

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<sup>17</sup> “se a educação sozinha não transforma a sociedade, sem ela tampouco a sociedade muda”

In my youth I see that he perceives the distance between the preached gospel and the practice of Christians. Through Catholic Action, you argue that you were “pushed” into the mangroves and slums of Recife, in such a way that you met and identified with Liberation Theology<sup>18</sup>.

He further argues that he was not a liberation theologian in the academic sense of the word, but his work was and remains a raw material for any theologian committed to the condemned of the land<sup>19</sup>. You were not a Christian philosopher, but an organic intellectual who established committed and creative parallels between “[...] philosophy, pedagogy, sociology, linguistics, communication and, although not explicitly, theology too”<sup>20</sup> (PREISWERK, 2010, p. 392).

Another important element of the proximity of his pedagogy with themes of the Christian faith, and, in this case, in particular with the Jesuits<sup>21</sup> it is to aim to discern the maggis, that is, the vocation to be more of human beings in the Creator's project.

One of the Company's social works of Jesus is the Faith and Joy movement, which has practices against school day with children in socially vulnerable in some large cities in Brazil and Latin America (Porto Alegre, Sao Paulo, Salvador, among others), having its mission tripod based on Ignatian spirituality, integral ecology and pedagogy.

You spoke of a camaraderie with Christ, which, for some, especially when he lived in Europe, was not understood, since he had Marx as one of his main interlocutors.

In an interview with Cortella and Venceslau (1992) he said: “Marx taught me to better understand the gospels. Who introduced me to Marx was the people's pain [...]. I went to Marx and saw no reason not to continue my fellowship with Christ. But I am not a religious man”<sup>22</sup> (CORTELLA; VENCESLAU, 1992, p. 38).

You testify to your faith by stating that it is based, above all, on the belief in the existence of a God, who is not the “doer” of your history, of our history, I would say, but is a presence in the history of human beings, in his belief that “God does not lie, Christ does not lie” (CORTELLA; VENCESLAU, 1992, p. 38-39).

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<sup>18</sup> The work *Teologia da libertação* of Gustavo Gutierrez was published 1971, one year after *Pedagogia do Oprimido*.

<sup>19</sup> Fanon (1968) when comparing the social conditions between the colonist and the colonized (the condemned) reflects that the city of the colonized is a city hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, light, such that it constitutes itself as a city “[...] crouched, a city kneeling, a cornered city” (FANON, 1968, p. 29).

<sup>20</sup> “[...] filosofia, pedagogia, sociologia, linguística, comunicação e, embora não explicitamente, teologia também”

<sup>21</sup> The company of Jesus is a religious order founded by Saint Ignatius of Loyola in Europe in the early 16th century.

<sup>22</sup> “Marx me ensinou a compreender melhor os evangelhos. Quem me apresentou a Marx foi a dor do povo [...]. Fui a Marx e não vi razão nenhuma para não continuar minha camaradagem com Cristo. Mas eu não sou um homem religioso”

In the same article, you comment on your youth, Catholic Christian faith practices, such as confession, and the difficulties of living sexuality within the parameters guided by that same faith..

However, the solution was not the annihilation or repression of sexuality. As you say, it was expressed in the books you wrote, with the love of life you always had. Also your experience at the head of the São Paulo municipal education department, which provided an outlet for the theme of sexuality in a job that opened the secretariat's doors for Mrs. Marta Suplicy and her team in order to carry out a work with 5,000 adolescents in which she treated the critical-loving understanding of their bodies, in order to improve their performance in relation to history, geography and mathematics, among others.

“It is that, deep down, sexuality, without wanting to achieve any reductionism, is very central to ourselves. One thing is the sexuality of the vital phenomenon, of the animal. The other is sexuality that is invented, that becomes a game, that becomes a toy”<sup>23</sup> (CORTELLA; VENCESLAU, 1992, p. 33).

### **Improving reflection**

If the foundation for your emancipatory political-educational action is centered on the concept of “being more”, then I believe that researching and understanding the elements of critical environmental education among families in situations of social vulnerability makes sense because they, being below the line of human dignity, they are called, ontologically as defined by you, the other condition, that of subjects of your own life.

One possibility I reflect on is to deepen this concept of “being more”, to problematize it with the leaders who work in the service of basic food baskets and with the families that receive them and, from that, be sensitive to the demands, to the interests, to the needs that move towards the construction of emancipation.

A second step towards bringing the question and reflections closer is in what Streck (2011) describes: “Paulo Freire reveals himself and builds himself in the clashes of history for liberation from all forms of oppression. It is in this search that dialogue with different cultural disciplines and traditions can also be initiated”<sup>24</sup> (p. 8).

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<sup>23</sup> “É que no fundo a sexualidade, sem querer chegar a nenhum reducionismo, tem muito de centro de nós mesmos. Uma coisa é a sexualidade do fenômeno vital, do animal. A outra é a sexualidade que se inventa, que vira jogo, que vira brinquedo”

<sup>24</sup> “Paulo Freire se revela e se constrói nos embates da história por libertação de todas as formas de opressão. É nessa busca que se pode encetar também o diálogo com diferentes disciplinas e tradições culturais”

In the first dialogues with the families, I noticed the difficulty of pronouncing your word. At the time of the meetings with the leaders and the families themselves who receive the basic food basket in each of the communities (four, each with a group ranging from 15 to 35 families), the question was raised as to with what else we could “help them”. Interventions were almost nonexistent and the meetings almost always ended with speeches from the leaders themselves who tried to answer themselves.

For elements of “cultural traditions” to emerge from the experience and historical trajectory of those people, who possibly live in situations of exclusion, instruments, techniques, strategies appropriate to the pronunciation of their words will certainly be necessary.

The “culture of silence” is “[...] the result of political-cultural actions by the dominant classes, producing subjects who are silenced, prevented from expressing their thoughts and affirming their truths, in short, denied in their right to act and to be authentic”<sup>25</sup> (OSOWSKI, 2010, p. 101).

If the assumption that inspires it is popular social movements, then research, the work of the solidarity network of a grassroots ecclesial community, an institution of the church historically sensitive to popular struggles, is in communion with these assumptions.

Another aspect that seems to me to be a clue to your experience in popular circles is being shared through the reflections of Streck (2011) as the relation between dialogue with different theories and their authors versus practice. According to Streck (2011) the error is in the issue of making a detached theorization of the practice that ends then in mere verbalism.

Thus, a movement is needed to turn to reality, to “aim at it”. Here the act of thinking itself is the object of reflection, making its assumptions and possibilities of interpretation aware. It is also necessary to understand that there is no theory that needs to be related to the practice, but that the theory is the explanation of a practice, both of which are therefore in constant recreation.

The challenge for research may be to be clear about what theoretical elements, building the view on the day-to-day practices of the actors involved in the collection and distribution of basic food baskets, as well as, especially of families.

Reflecting on a work that takes place at the ecclesial level, it seems very appropriate to bring Streck's (2011) observation about immanence-transcendence that he perceives in the work of the Lord. It is a non-dichotomized transcendence of immanence, but one that keeps these

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<sup>25</sup> “[...] resultado de ações político-culturais das classes dominantes, produzindo sujeitos que se encontram silenciados, impedidos de expressar seus pensamentos e afirmar suas verdades, enfim, negados em seu direito de agir e de serem autênticos”

two expressions of human life in tension (STRECK, 2011, p. 14).

I notice here different movements within the Catholic Church, in which, in some, a greater focus on transcendence and, in others, a greater focus on immanence predominate. The tension between immanence and transcendence present in your work can be a signal for a complementary communication between these two dimensions of life and life in the church.

It may seem incongruent that so many themes are addressed in this letter to you. But I would also like, in a final effort, to indicate a perspective that seeks to unite scientific knowledge, and from different fields of science, with knowledge coming from popular media and spiritual traditions. It is the ecological perspective or the ecological paradigm.

The term ecology is discussed in the dictionary Paulo Freire by educator Calloni (2010). The same author reflects, from Fritjof Capra, an Austrian physicist, on “Deep Ecology”, as an emerging concept that points to the perception of recognition “[...] of the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the fact that , as individuals and societies, we are all embedded in the cyclical processes of nature”<sup>26</sup> (CAPRA, 1997, p. 25).

You yourself say that you do not believe in amorousness between humans, “[...] if we do not become capable of loving the world”<sup>27</sup> (FREIRE, 2000, p. 67). Thus, it is urgent to articulate the educational practice of a critical, social and liberating nature with ecological issues, which is also similar to what you stated when referring to the end of the 20th century.

## Final considerations

The categories that were listed and explained in the previous paragraphs signal potentialities from the perspective of the research theme that is in progress. These are the notes that I would like to discuss with you in the context of research on how to think and practice education with families in situations of social vulnerability on the outskirts of the municipality, in the south of Rio Grande do Sul.

Both if they are significant and if they are not important, I am open and desirous of your criticisms and observations, after all I am one of those who intend to learn by teaching and teaching by learning, as you also showed everyone that you are interested in education, freedom, social transformation and humanization.

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<sup>26</sup> “[...] da interdependência fundamental de todos os fenômenos e o fato de que, enquanto indivíduos e sociedades, estamos todos encaixados nos processos cíclicos da natureza”

<sup>27</sup> “[...] se não nos tornarmos capazes de amar o mundo”

I still don't have a clear idea, educator Freire, how to relate each of the themes treated with the research subjects that I propose to do. Perhaps there are many concerns and intuitions. One of them is to provide opportunities for dialogue in the form of action research, in order to problematize aspects that arise from the daily lives of the subjects of the communities with which I work, going in the opposite direction to the “culture of silence”.

It is possible that themes appear that are “limit situations” in the subjects' lives; it is possible that the hope of an “unprecedented-viable” also presents itself. The perspective of liberation theology is in tension with others, a matter more for leaders than for the subjects who receive the food baskets.

The being more of each one, perhaps with the solidarity economy project of the chain, may emerge. The old and always surprising relation between theory and practice may be another tension between research taking place in the midst of an ecclesial project that does not depend on it, but feeds it. Research can also feed the ecclesial project from an emancipatory perspective.

In the theme of ecology, there is a concrete track of work: in one of the meetings held with a group of about twenty people among residents of the community and some colleagues from the graduate school, the subject of “garbage” appeared significantly. In fact, next to the community headquarters, it is surprising to see so much waste being disposed of improperly.

Regarding the tension between education and politics in the context of research, I believe that it is possible to problematize the way the formations are carried out in the ecclesial project, with little dialogue and difficulties about the culture of silence. But, I think that progress has also been made. It is possible that it can be problematized with whom and against whom one is fighting; in favor of and against what everyone's sweat is invested. In an educational practice with a critical, social and liberating character, it is necessary that these arguments are clear, but care must be taken not to fall into dogmatic and authoritarian positions that end up alienating people who have different political perspectives, but not contrary.

I thank you for your contribution simply for motivating me to write and research so that this can happen; for all those who contributed and contribute towards knowing and reflecting on his work and his life; and, finally, for the testimony of humility and love that was his life.

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