

Reclaiming Democracy

A Brief Summary of Chapter 1: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* allows an almost visceral experience of the daily struggle to live in an imposed cultural environment where one is devalued, used, oppressed, and invisible. Freire speaks about the inhumanity of illiteracy and underdeveloped thinking. He speaks about classicism, racism, miseducation, and the wielding of power. He posits two contrary models of education: the banking model and the problem solving model. For Freire there is no need for theory without action; and that action must be toward liberation and the humanizing of society. His concept of pedagogy is rather, a social or anthropological philosophy that is directive toward transformation, liberation, and ultimately a highly ethical love.

In Chapter 1, Freire begins with a discussion of the humanizing responsibility of the human being, and therefore the inevitable recognition of dehumanization. The task of the oppressed is to restore not only their own humanity but that of their oppressors as well. This is a difficult task because the oppressed have internalized the image, teachings, laws, and social constructions of the oppressor; which makes them fearful of freedom. Liberation, like childbirth, is painful. The oppressor and the oppressed being so deeply connected have a journey to run together. However, the resolution of the problem requires the disappearance of the oppressors as a dominant class. For this journey to lead to humanization it must be characterized by a love for life that is not sadistic or perverted. Sadism is a characteristic of the oppressor. The rebirth of the oppressed requires risk and courage, honesty and clear thinking. The oppressed become emotionally dependent, sometimes participating in their own, or others, destruction of life. Often, sadly, choosing to identify with the oppressor. "At all stages of their liberation, the oppressed must see themselves as women and men engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human. Reflection and action become imperative..." Freire, 66.